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The Plotting of Criminal Relevance in the Story of Crime: Agatha Christie's *Five Little Pigs*

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Abstract

The way a cause-and-effect relation between events is organized in a plot-based crime story depends upon a *hinge point* in the discourse, which unravels a competing story logic that shapes a “story of intentionality” embedded first in the *story of crime* and second in the *story of investigation*. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the “intent.” If intent is considered as a *hinge point* against which the causality of events takes place, then it is necessary to work out the *causation*. Following a “discourse-based” frame analysis, an “intent frame” is evaluated using an “inference-making” process. The intent frame is then mapped along the horizontal and vertical axes of a narrative frame in the application of a *logical fallacy*. Such application of narratological concepts with stylistic strategy is effective for the revelation of participant relevance to an offense in the story of crime adapted from Agatha Christie's *Five Little Pigs*.

*

1.1 Introduction

A perpetrator distorts the original sequence of events for concealment and reader suspense in a crime story. There is a systematic application of *logical fallacy* by the teller in the way of forming *consequential* relations (chronology) that confuse the *consecution* (the logic) of events so that “what comes after is being read in the narrative as what is caused by,” inducing *causal reversal* in the sequence of events (Barthes 94). To evaluate this post-murder causality in the story, we need to follow the *plot line* in the way the readers move from one narrative level to the next.

Narrative “is about the organization of experience. Often the complaint of the writer is that linear presentation constrains what is actually a circular affair” (Goffman 155) when the cause-and-effect linearity is *distorted* at a structural level (*dystaxia* in Barthes 119) because of participant intent in the story. As a result, there is tempering of causality or “discontinuity” in a narrative that causes,

1. Conflict between narrative *curiosity* and narrative *suspense* in *prospection* relating to a process of gapping (*curiosity gaps*) in the *chronological direction of the missing or the desired information* (e.g. the narrative past vs. the future), or
2. Conflict between narrative *curiosity* and narrative *surprise* in *retrospection* relating to the perceptibility of the process of gap-filling (*surprise-gaps*) relating to *the awareness of the existence of the gap*, not foregrounded at the outset, but delayed in the narrative. (Sternberg, “Universals [I]” 327-28; emphases added)

Malmgren distinguishes the “centered” world of mystery fiction from the “decentered” world of a detective fiction (126-28). Detective fiction overtly displays the “double logic” (Brooks 23-29) in whodunit narratives with double stories: the story of crime and the story of the investigation (Todorov 44). Detective fiction is preoccupied with its hero. Its narrative shifts from the hermeneutic code (that emphasizes the

mystery in mystery fiction following Barthes's five narrative codes on aspects of plot) to the proairetic code (the code of actions), which brings the detective into the foreground. However, application of narrative code for textual analysis is not effective for understanding the way *causality* is constructed in the narrative frame of a story of crime. Additionally, to realize the causal reversal of events for participant relevance to an offense, it is necessary to analyze the cause-and-effect chain in a non-linear plot structure of the story of crime in detective or mystery fiction.

Mitchell discusses the shape of “modern formula Western” (235) when the author evaluates structures like “embedded narrative” and “captivity plots” in the basic narrative line. The basic plot is prior to the details. The narrative detail is provided in traditional features like the narrative syntax, diction, scenery, allusions, and rhetorical tropes. These formal features serve as an ideological function; they show how the details in the novel's language can tell us about ideals and any recurrent anxieties that are popular in the period. The reception of such details involves *reconstructing* the way the plot is understood for an accurate account of a text's historical reception (237).

It is also necessary to recognize causality in the narrative frame for unfolding the story of crime. A “discourse-based” frame analysis provides a plot summary of the first story of crime in detective fiction, when it is possible to evaluate an intentional fallacy in the reconstruction of the cause-and-effect chain in the narrative thread.

The term *frame* belongs to cognitive theory and is an organizational principle relating to a number of concepts. In artificial intelligence, frame denotes a conceptual structure and represents a part of our knowledge of the world. For instance, restaurant-frame organizes the knowledge that a restaurant is a building where one can eat publicly and food is ordered. Frame is then organized and is culturally dependant (Van Dijk 159). *Frame analysis* (in Goffman 155) is about the organization of experience, where it is defined as situations built in accordance with principles of organization which govern events such as participants' relevance to crime.

In *contextual frame theory* (Emmott 127, 162), *contextual frames* are a mental store of information about the current context built from the text itself, and also from inferences made from the text. *Episodic links* are created between a character and a context or between characters in the same context in the intervening text which is true at a particular point in the text (*episodic*), while *non-episodic frames* are true beyond the immediate context. By relating frames to contexts, the readers make sense of the narrative events in which they occur in the text world.

In Minsky, frame is equivalent to schemata, plan, or a script and serves as a two-dimensional ingredient of the perceptual processing of the patterns (schemata), but fails to cope with the complicated scenery that involves concealment and restricted revelation in a scenario like in the fable when it is difficult to spot the wolf is lying when the real desire of the wolf in the story is to eat the lamb (3). The story is, the wolf accuses the lamb for stirring the water and prevents it from drinking from the river, when in reality the wolf is himself upstream. The wolf's *desire frame* to eat the lamb is *withheld*, but inferred in the narrative (Dutta-Flanders, *Language* 18).

A criminal motive or need is *withheld*, and offender *intent* or action can be obtained only from a two-dimensional mystery or detective fiction by a three-dimensional reevaluation of the offense in criminal orientation when processing the organization of discourse in a crime narrative. This is because intent is not an anaphoric or a cataphoric referent that can be retrieved from the intervening text. In a non-linear, plot-based story the intent is implied. It has to be searched in the organization of events in the first story, when the search is carried out over a horizontal

set of narrative relations, but to be effective the search also operates vertically, because the meaning is not at the end of the narrative—it runs across it; meaning eludes unilateral investigation (Barthes 86-87).

A “discourse-based” frame analysis evaluates the sequence of events provided in the first story, when it is possible to cluster frames as scenarios based on specific themes (thematic frames), and consequently singularize frames as a “motive” or “intent” frame in a non-linear narrative (Dutta-Flanders, *Language* 5, 15). If intent is an utterance in prospection that brings into focus a *cluster of events* to contextualize a participant motive in anticipation, then the *story of intentionality* is in relation to an intent embedded in the first story of crime in detective fiction. This *backstory* is an effect of an “offender theme” such as jealousy or power or control. *Offender theme* is what influences criminality. It is not the crime that defines the criminal, but it is the influences before and after the crime, or personal circumstance that thematizes the crime, making crime, *not the cause but an effect of a theme* (a contrary logic) that links to a background that is changing or developing pre- and post-crime (Dutta-Flanders, “Offender” 723).

In detective fiction, adventures of the detective take the foreground, when prospection takes the place of retrospection (Malmgren 126), and through frame analysis thematic links are made in the narrative discourse, which are episodic such as in *assumption* (Frames 7, 12, and 13 in Appendix 1). Within the narrative’s overall intersequencing of events, “intent” is in prospection in the *discourse-Now* of the *narrating-I* encoded in the retrospective *story-now* of the *experiencing-I*. *Discourse-Now* is what the narrator anticipates while situated in the *discourse-Now* of the *narrating-I*, rather than in the retrospective *story-now* of the *experiencing-I*. This intersequencing of narrative relations is due to the *bidirectional* function of the narrative “hinge point” in the discourse. The bidirectional function alters the sequence of events along the horizontal narrative setting and subsequently affects the hierarchical relation on the vertical setting, when the temporal sequence of past vs. events in the narrative future changes in relation to a hinge point at the narrative present. The intent frame hypothesized as a hinge point becomes the “mainspring” in the narrative. It is a “climactic moment” synonymous to the double functionality of a *nuclei* or a *cardinal function* (Barthes 94), which is at once chronological and logical. From here the reader traces the competing story logic in relation to the offense, which is a “circular affair.”

As a framework for analysis, from post-structuralist narrative theory I use the concept of functional units (like nuclei, cardinal point, catalyzers) to analyze narrative elements like a “discourse referent” and the “narrative object” in relation to an offender intent in a recounted detective discourse using an inference making process in reference theory. Processing of the narrative for intent and relevance analysis relates to the concept of frame theory, the adopted frame analysis builds on the idea of organization of experience by integrating theory with practice suitable for the evaluation of a multidimensional context. For instance, by integrating frame theory with narratological concepts, it is possible to evaluate the organized *circularity* of experience when mapping the *intent frame* on narrative levels, by taking intent as the point of departure, as well as being the end point of a narrative thread in a crime narrative. Consequently, the way the narrative departs into alternative routes is in relation to the relevance of the *concealer* (perpetrator) and the *revelator* (the narrative object) to an offense in the *story of crime*. Before going on to the analysis and findings, the first story of crime in the novel is as follows.

1.2 Contextual Information: The Story

The information about the crime in “Five Little Pigs” (2003) is provided by friends and family members of Amyas Crale, a well-known painter, who is murdered in the story. The criminal is identified fourteen years after the death of Caroline Crale, who was wrongly convicted of her husband’s murder and died a year after the trial. Following Amyas’s murder and Caroline’s conviction, their daughter Carla, who was only ten at the time, was sent to Canada where she was brought up by her aunt. This case was reopened fourteen years later, when Carla, who was then twenty-one, received a letter posthumously from her mother Caroline stating that she was innocent and did not kill her father.

According to detective Hercule Poirot, on the morning of the death (Frame 11), two episodes occur *concurrently* manifesting the point of view of perpetrator Elsa (in episode 2) and of the Narrative Object (NO) Caroline (in episode 1). A poisoned drink (the murder weapon) remains at the heart of these episodes represented as *Repeated Frames* 10, 21, and 25 in the narrative thread following a “discourse based” frame analysis of Poirot’s narration (in Appendix 1) leading to Amyas’s death in Frame 11. Other types of *microcontexts* are also identified: *Withheld Frame* 3, *Recall Frames* 5 and 6, *Assumption-Making Frames* 7, 12, and 13, and *Omitted Frame* 19.

At this point, readers may familiarize themselves with the frame analysis in Appendix 1 for the sequencing (or the numbering) of events as narrated by the detective and the respective screen grabs of the episodes from the film in Appendix 2. A summary of the contextual information in Appendix 1, from Caroline’s and Elsa’s point of view about the crime is as follows:

Episode 1 (+ inferred contexts 1a and b):

Caroline suspects that her sister Angela poisoned Amyas in Frame 7 (SB 3 and SB 4) because of Frames 5 and 6 (SB 1 and SB 2), when Angela threatens to kill Amyas for forcing her to go to a boarding school (in Frame 6). On *assuming* that Angela carried out her threat in Frame 12, initially made in Frames 5 and 6, she went on to poison Amyas’s drink in Frame 7 (12 and 13). Caroline tries to protect her sister; she makes Amyas’s death appear as a suicide. The authorities did not believe her, and Caroline was convicted.

Repetition of intent Frame 10 (21, 25). Unlike an offender narrating the crime story, such as in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the detective in *Five Little Pigs* is narrating the criminal pathway in Appendix 1. Yet *patterning* of intent as Repeated Frame remains consistent when evaluating the narrative discourse in mystery and detective fiction respectively (Dutta-Flanders, *Language* Chapter 1).

Episode 2:

Elsa poisons Amyas’s drink (in Frames 18 and 19; SB 5), after realizing that he was leading her on (in Frame 15) when she heard him telling Caroline that he would send Elsa packing after he finished his painting. In Frames 14 (20) and 15 we know *why*, and in Frames 22, 23 (SB 5 and SB 6) *how* Elsa poisoned Amyas. The *patterning* of frame sequences is noteworthy for reconstructing the *coming about* of an offense scenario in the story of crime. Like Frame 10 (21, 25), Frame 17 (22) is also *repeated* in the detective discourse. This is the perpetrator context, where Elsa is taking advantage of Caroline

stealing cat poison from Meredith's lab. At this point in the narrative there is *disnarration* because the reason for Caroline stealing cat poison is not evident. Additionally, the repeated utterances of the fatal drink (in Frames 10 [12], 21, and 25) is in *reverse consequential relation*, where the first poisoned drink (served by Elsa in Frame 25) appears in the discourse after the unpoisoned drink served by Caroline (in Frames 9 [21]). This is consistent with the principle of *logical fallacy*. In order to understand the organization of this intentional fallacy, in the grammar of narrative discourse there is need for an inferencing process which will go beyond the scope of a narrow stretch of text to work out the intent from where it is possible to trace participant relevance in the causality of events. With the help of a discourse-based frame analysis of narrative, the inferencing process below becomes scientific in approach.

1.3 Framework: The Inferencing Process

As the criminal *intent* (due to a theme of jealousy in *Five Little Pigs*) remains implicit in the discourse, the set of events that will contextualize this intent is an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Decoding of an "intent frame" is not possible using referential functions like the cataphoric and anaphoric references in reference theory such as examples a-c in Appendix 1. Such a referencing process is contextually limited in its application. For instance, the murder weapon *coniine* is a *discourse referent* (DR) for the pro form *Everything* in the repeated utterance, "*Everything tastes foul today.*" The full referential content cannot be recovered from the immediate context of Frame 10 (21, 25). The *discourse content* for proform *Everything* is about "the coming about of the crime" and "the change of state" of Amyas being murdered in Frame 11. Following the frame analysis of the narration by Poirot (Christie 301-31) in Appendix 1, it is necessary to contextualize in the cause-and-effect chain of events, the antecedent that gives meaning to the pronoun *Everything* in Frame 10 (21, 25). The antecedent *coniine* is the murder weapon and is represented in the proforms *Everything* and *it* respectively; readers need to form thematic links from the surrounding context of Frame 10 that will link referent *coniine* to its proforms in Frames 10 and 12. It is therefore necessary to construct the referential layer (as context) for *antecedentless* proforms to contextualize intent (action) embedded in Frames 10 and 12. Synonymous to Barthes's functional unit *nuclei*, it is necessary to locate the participant intent that opens up alternative narrative routes embedded in the story, which is of direct *consequence* for *subsequent* development of the crime carried out in the first story.

"In order to conduct a structural analysis [of a narrative], it is . . . first of all necessary to distinguish several levels or instances of description [or representation of a DR such as *coniine*,] and to place these instances within [a] hierarchical perspective" (Barthes 86). This should be in a way so that *referent coniine* for pronoun, *Everything* will line up and then converge with the intent in a stratified relation on the horizontal setting showing in the hierarchy of events the coming about of death in Frame 11 due to Frame 10, and also becoming the "end point" in the crime narrative. From a criminal perspective, the processing of intent is of consequence to trace participant relevance to crime in the jigsaw puzzle of events and utterances. It is therefore necessary to locate first the *hinge point* in the narrative discourse and then plot the intent for criminal relevance.

An inference-making process of *priming* and *focusing* (Emmott 221-23) is employed to locate the hinge point. *Priming* is for providing the overall context for intent frame by *focusing* (or drawing) our attention to events that will link to a perpetrator intent in the narrative frame. This inference-making process is effective for making long-distance links in large stretches of intervening text, where the context for a discourse referent (DR), unlike a cataphoric or anaphoric pronoun referent, is not selected by means of an immediate cohesive link like the *hit/fell* causal link. Additionally, the inferencing of a DR is not complete when the antecedent *coniine* for pronoun *Everything* is located in the plot form. Readers need to further work out the context in which the antecedentless pronouns, *Everything* and *it*, appear by evaluating how other *contextual frames* in the discourse are functioning as *textual antecedence* for DR, it is possible to see how information when gathered from the surrounding text provides context in relation to a *context of utterance* in prospection (Frames 10, 21, and 25), and subsequently how all this information is in relation to an offender theme of jealousy in Frame 15. The reader thus builds up a *mental model* from the *primed* frames (in Figure 1), which are functioning as textual antecedence for pro forms, when the intent encoded in Frame 10 is *resolved*.

However, the process of contextualizing intent is not direct like *priming*. While intent is inexplicit in the utterance in prospection, the pronoun *Everything* for referent *coniine* is a direct antecedent for the death in Frame 11. The DR for pro form *Everything* is an indirect “mental representation” (mental store of the information) where a change of state is embedded due to the effects of the poison, *coniine*. By *priming* and *focusing* information from the *immediate* as well as from the *surrounding* text of Frame 10, it is possible to contextualize the *textual antecedence* for antecedentless proforms that relates to pre-crime events like perpetrator Elsa’s *intent* or desire for painter Amyas, and to Caroline’s *motive* to protect her sister Angela, who threatened to kill Amyas.

Such an inferencing process is functionally synonymous to the mental processing of proform *it*, as in the example below (Brown and Yule 202). The reader must *amalgamate* the NP, active plump chicken (i.e., *Everything . . . foul* in Frame 10) with the verb kill (i.e., *tastes* in Frame 10) to form a new *mental store* for pro form *it* (or *Everything*) like the *chicken* that is killed (or *poisoned*):

“Kill an active plump chicken, prepare *it* for the oven.” (my emphasis)

This is an *assumption-making* process, and is a combination of,

- a. An assumption in *anticipation* (like “focusing” for the *forward-oriented* anaphora), and also,
- b. A *common sense* assumption from the surrounding context (like “priming” of a context).

The task is then to amalgamate events and utterances for formulating relevant “context” for the repeated Frame 10, and seek *optimal relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 569) for the utterance “*Everything tastes foul today*” that will draw out Frame 10, repeated over 2 episodes, as being contextually relevant as an intent frame. Primed episodes in Figure 1 are functioning as *encyclopedic knowledge* for an intent encoded, but are backgrounded as implications and must be gathered to formulate an *offender theme* of jealousy (in Frames 14 and 15). This offender theme will then consecutively

link to the murder weapon implied in Frames 17, 18, and 19, forming a *microcontext* of *intentionality* encoded in the Repeated Frame 10 (21, 25). As a hinge point, Frame 10 (as a point of departure on the horizontal setting, as well as an end point on the vertical axis of narrative levels) swings the narrative to alternative paths, instantiating a *narrative object*/NO (a victim) distinct from the perpetrator. Using discourse-based frame analysis of the detective story, inferred *microcontexts* are bridged in retrospect that provide narrative focus like the intent and motive. As scenarios, these microcontexts also provide the participants' Principle of Relevance to an offense in the story of crime (Dutta-Flanders, *Language* 10).

To put this in another way, if optimal relevance for Amyas's death in Frame 11 is because of an *offender theme* of jealousy in Frame 15, then a *competing logic* (as in Figure 3) is generated in the narrative due to flawed *assumptions* in Frames 12 and 13, and also due to Recall Frames 5, 6, 7, and 8 in NO perspective (as in Figure 2) forming thematic links with the intent embedded in Frame 10. As a consequence, following the new cause-and-effect chain in the narrative thread, the causality instantiates a NO (Caroline) when perpetrator Elsa goes unidentified for fourteen years until the second *story of investigation*.

The alternative narratives are then formulated due to the *assumptions* in the *recall frames*, when two options arise:

Option 1: Amyas dies of poisoning because of the first drink served by Elsa.

Option 2: Amyas dies of poisoning because of the second drink served by Caroline.

When the phone rings (Barthes 94) the preference is to answer or not, which will carry the narrative along different paths. From a *perpetrator perspective*, the relevant option is to take advantage of Caroline's mistaken assumption, and as a consequence, a perpetrator theme is opened up in *Caroline's perspective* (in *Repeated* Frames 10, 21, and 25) and in *Elsa's perspective* (also in *Repeated* Frames 19, 24, and 25). Such is the referential layer for the intent frame *repeated* in the discourse, and it is possible to identify when the story is reconstructed following discourse-based frame analysis of the narrative frame in detective fiction.

Processing of "assumption-making" Frames 12 and 13, due to Recall Frames 5-7, is additionally of value when the embedding of Caroline's *guilt factor* is foregrounded as the *victim theme* due to an injury accidentally caused by Caroline when Angela lost her left eye; the guilt factor brings forward assumptions that prompt Caroline to falsely think that her sister Angela carried out her threat in Frames 5 and 6. To protect her sister, Caroline staged Amyas's death as a suicide. Her sense of guilt is a logical conclusion drawn from the assumptions in Frames 12 and 13. Like polysemous words, these assumption frames enable readers to *associate* statements or utterances in the discourse with an assumption in the discourse that will maintain a *continued existence of an entity* (Emmott 224) in the *microcontext* of *Repeated* Frames (10, 21, and 25) such as the *Caroline motive* due to Angela intent, and the *Elsa intent* due to jealousy.

By taking intent as participant relevance to an offense, *the coming about* of *Elsa intent* is provided over the set of Frames 17, 18, 22, 23, and 24, when Elsa stole conium from Caroline's bedroom in episode 2. Similarly, the *coming about* of *Caroline assumption* due to *Angela intent* is also provided over the set of Frames 7 and 9, due to Recall Frames 5 and 6 in episode 1. The above information is collated by forming

episodic/thematic links, but is not possible from the immediate *context of situation* of Frame 10 in the way Brown and Yule state when,

- a. The mother is remarking about her son, “Adam’s quick,” in response to her mother-in-law commenting about Adam’s father being slow at Adam’s age when chasing ducks;
- b. Everyone in the group laughs at John’s joke except Adam. Then Adam does laugh. A student remarks (sarcastically), “Adam’s quick” (35-49).

By forming thematic links of singularized frames to the text world, the process also foregrounds a *disnarration* when the reason for Caroline stealing coniine from Meredith’s lab in the first place, in Frames 16 and 20, is not available in the narrative; this narrative gap (*the disnarrated*), or what is left out of the narration, remains unresolved.

Relevant contextual information that links to the referent coniine as being the murder weapon is not collated from a signaling pronoun *Everything* repeated in decontextualized sentences (or frames) in the discourse. The signaling is contextualized only when the processing effort (i.e., the *cost*) and the contextual implications (i.e., the *benefit*) are available for inferencing that allows the readers to evaluate *why* repeated instances of an antecedentless *Everything* appear in the discourse. Disclosure of a story is an artful reconstruction in which the plot rearranges, expands, contracts, or repeats events of the story (Abbott 43), when *repetition*, as a feature, foregrounds a *message* like the representation of a participant intent to a forthcoming crime in “Five Little Pigs.”

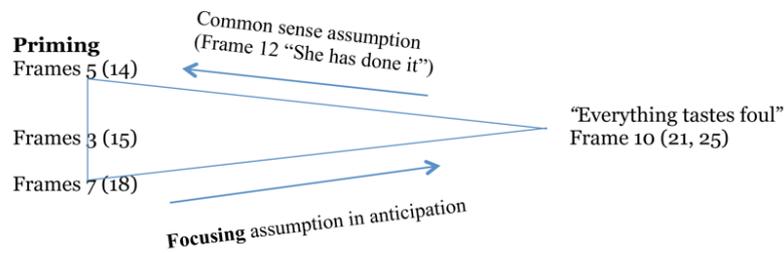
2.1 Findings: The Hinge Point

Using the above *reference resolution* process of *priming* and *focusing*, a referential layer for the repeated utterance in Frame 10 (21, 25), “*Amyas tosses it [the beer] off, making a face and says, ‘Everything tastes foul today’*” is analyzed as being the mainspring in the narrative. As mentioned in the introduction, the linearity of events is distorted for illusion in a criminal context, and the *narrative outcome* is steered towards desired paths by the participants’ involvement. For the purpose of relevance, an *intent Frame* as a *hinge point* must then work at the level of both the concealer (Elsa) and the revelator (Caroline).

Figure 1 *contextualizes* this hinge point and then demonstrates the linearity of events with relevance to crime in Figure 2. The primed frames in Figure 1 help to reveal the *vantage points* of Caroline and Elsa to the offense. At the midpoint, in the diagram below, the proform *Everything* links *back to bring forward* information in the primed frames, when *the effect of the causes* comes to the forefront such as,

- A concealer intent (being an effect of *offender theme* of jealousy in Frame 15) and
- The revelator relevance (being an effect of *intent* to protect Angela due to Frame 12).

Figure 1. The Discourse Referent (DR):



Recall Frames 5, 6 (14): Angela throws a paperweight at Amyas and wishes Amyas dead (*revelator theme*).

Frame 14: Amyas speaks to his wife Caroline following breakfast on the day of his death explaining, “how he had been infatuated with Elsa, but it was all over. Once he’d finished the picture, he’d never see her [Elsa Greer] again” (*offender theme*).

Withheld Frame 3 (15): Angela swam across to MB’s lab and pinched valerian (the cat stuff) to play a practical joke (the mischievous prank) on her uncle Amyas.

Frame 15: Elsa sitting outside the library window overhears the conversation between Amyas and Caroline that “Once he’d finished the picture, he’d never see her again” (*Frame 14*).

Textual antecedent (for proforms in Frames 10 and Frame 12):

Frame 7 (18): Caroline finds Angela tampering with the beer.

Frame 18: Elsa making excuse to get a pullover, goes up to Caroline’s room to look for the poison, and on finding the poison in a drawer (Christie 329), she draws off the fluid into a fountain-pen filler (328) and returns back to battery garden to resume her posing.

From both Elsa’s and Caroline’s perspectives, Frame 7 (18) is a *direct* textual antecedence for the utterance “*Everything tastes foul today*” (“*She has done it*”). Frame 10 (21, 25) is then working at the level of both the concealer (Elsa) and the revelator (Caroline) to show perpetrator relevance in Figure 2, which also points to the *coming about of crime* in Figure 3. Like Barthes’s *cardinal function*, this repeated utterance should be *at once* logical and chronological to work for the Elsa and Caroline plot line in the story of crime. This frame is positioned at the mid-point of the telling and showing of the narrative levels, when the past vs. the future temporal sequence in the horizontal axis alters (as in Figures 2 and 3) with reference to the utterance in narrative present, causing alternative narrative relations in the narrative thread.

The converging of events with the intent frame at median point, as we see in Figures 2 and 3, causes a *circular narrative relation*. As a result, the criminal intent is *functioning* as an *effect* of an *offender theme* that links back to a *cause* with reference to participants’ vantage point with reference to the offense (the poisoning of Amyas’s drink). There is a *linear effect* when the sequence of events is sequential to the intent, such as the screen grabs of the drink episode from the film version in Appendix 2 when compared with its (logical) consecution or causality in the written version in Appendix 1.

2.2 A Linear Effect or a Circular Narrative

A brief analysis of comparing the drink episode in visual medium with the consecution of frames in Appendix 1 shows that in the film adaptation, the consecution of the drink episode is linear in structure when the medium of (aural or visual) prominence shifts from a *diegetic* (part of the naturally depicted situation) to an *evaluative extra-diegetic aural and visual* medium (like background music added externally to the situation). The shift affects the *reader focus*. However, it is not possible to see the concealer and revelator *relevance* to the offense unlike the written medium. For example, in Caroline's (revelator) perspective, Angela's threat to Amyas (in Frames 5 and 6) is a *linear* cause for Caroline to suspect that Angela has tampered with the beer bottle (in Frame 7), which resulted in Amyas's death in Frame 11; whereas in Elsa (concealer) relevance, Elsa serving the poisoned drink to Amyas (in Frames 18 and 19), while taking advantage of the second drink in Frame 10 (21, 25) is the *effect of offender theme* of jealousy in Frame 15 (14).

As a consequence of reverse causality, there is need for *backward-oriented inferencing* of Angela intent using *assumption* Frames 12 and 13 to *link forward* with the event when Caroline plays into the hands of Elsa in Frame 21. With reference to the causality of events, Frame 21 (21a) links Caroline and Elsa episodes together in the written medium. This is unlike the visual sequence, which is more sequential and linear as a narrative structure. Therefore, "meaning [constructed in the film] is [more unilateral and is] at the end of the narrative, and is [unlike the written narrative, where] meaning runs across it . . . [and] eludes all unilateral investigation" (Barthes 87). As a result, the concealer and revelator *storyworlds* are fused together in the written adaptation to produce,

- a narrative conflict in prospection relating to a *process of gapping* (as *curiosity gaps*) in the chronological direction of the desired information, or
- a conflict in retrospection relating to the process of gap-filling (as *surprise-gaps*) when there is awareness of an existence of a gap not foregrounded at the point of the opening, but delayed in the narrative, such as Poirot revealing how Caroline unknowingly played into the hands of perpetrator Elsa.

There is *surprise gap* when the unpoisoned second drink (Frame 10) is sequenced before Elsa's first poisoned drink (Frame 24) which becomes evident in Frame 21. Caroline consequently becomes a NO and is framed as a *suspect*. Such sequencing is also an instance of *contrary logic*,¹ when "events are [presented] . . . prior to their discursive representation [thus there is] . . . priority of event to meaning [in the

¹ In Freud, the logic of signification (logic 1) is one in which events are conceived as prior to their discursive representation—the priority of event to meaning. For example, a prior event has made Oedipus guilty, and when this is revealed he attains tragic [disposition] in accepting the meaning imposed by the revealed event. However, there is a contrary logic (logic 2), which resists the logic of signification by arguing that being his father Oedipus cannot kill him (the contrary logic); therefore, more evidence is necessary for Oedipus to acquire his tragic status. Hence, the force of the narrative relies on the contrary logic, in which *event is not a cause but an effect of theme* (my emphasis). The play (narrative) thus brings to light a deed which is so powerful that it imposes its meaning irrespective of any intention of the actor. These two logics cannot be brought together in harmonious synthesis; each works by the exclusion of the other; each depends on hierarchical relation between story and discourse which the other inverts. (Culler 175)

discourse]” (Culler 175). Consequently, there is a *storytelling world* and a *storyworld*. For example, after having narrated an incident of being held at gunpoint, the speaker explains to other listeners her inability to remember the person who was holding the gun to her head, and says, “If it ever happens to you . . .” As continuation of *exit talk*, the speaker is making it clear her inability to remember what her assailant was wearing. In this *swing phrase* in story context, the speaker switches the talk back into the story in the pronoun “you” (the listeners) instead of the general “you” in the *storytelling world* (Polanyi 165-66).

2.3 Alternative Storyworld: Participant Relevance

The decoding of a criminal pathway for *criminal relevance* in plot line analysis is now carried out by mapping the sequence of events in relation to the intent along narrative levels as set out in Benveniste (86),

- at the *horizontal axis* of narrative thread where the narrative relation is a complementary act of *telling* or *describing the setting* on which the temporal sequence of events changes in relation to the intent frame in the narrative present; and
- on the vertical axis which is the world of the offender to the reader; it is a *higher-level act showing the coming about* of the crime when events are sequenced within a hierarchical perspective of the offender where the intent frame is the end point on the vertical axis.

Retrospective description of the fatal act along the narrative levels is not a cause; the cause is an effect of offender theme, when the description is a *dual function* (Sperber and Wilson 751) of *telling* at the lower level of a fictional world (the *distributional layer*), and then *showing* this world to the reader as an *integrational* perspective, which is at a higher level of narrating act. As a result, a criminal pathway is decoded, which is a *post hoc anticipation* of the hinge point from where alternative plot lines are mapped for criminal relevance.

Post hoc anticipation of the criminal relevance is possible when the setting of relevance along the *horizontal axis* and the “coming about of crime” along the *vertical (or hierarchical) axis* merges to a median point (or the hinge point) of two narrative levels, fixing the intent as an *end point* in the vertical plot line. This process is synonymous to the relational hierarchy as analyzed in *grammatical logic* (Bock and Warren 50), when the hinge point is the highest point in the hierarchy of events to which other events stemming from it are related to, presenting the organization of participant relevance as being a *circular affair*. Since narration in a crime narrative is an issue of *calculability*—why this interpretation and not that interpretation (Sperber and Wilson 37)—affected by *what has gone before*, such as in Frames 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 in Elsa perspective and in Recall Frames 5 and 6 in Caroline perspective, these clusters of frames as *microcontexts* create *expectations of relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 77) for *what comes after* (in Frames 7 and 23 in participant perspective), dictating a relational hierarchy of events on the vertical axis. As a result, separate *conceptual accessibility* (Bock and Warren 50) is created at the horizontal level (as competing settings in Figures 2 and 3), dictating independent consecution of events that merge logically and consequentially with the intent and thereby becoming the end point in the vertical plot line. In other words, different relevance manifested in Figures

2 and 3 show how the past and futurity of events changes with reference to the hinge point in the narrative present. As a consequence, in the relational hierarchy of events in Figures 2 and 3, readers access a concealer plot line tied to participant *intentions*: Elsa intent due to Frame 15, and Caroline motive (or Angela intent) due to Frames 5 and 6. As a result, the relational hierarchy of events configure as storyworlds:

Figure 2. Concealer Elsa Storyworld:

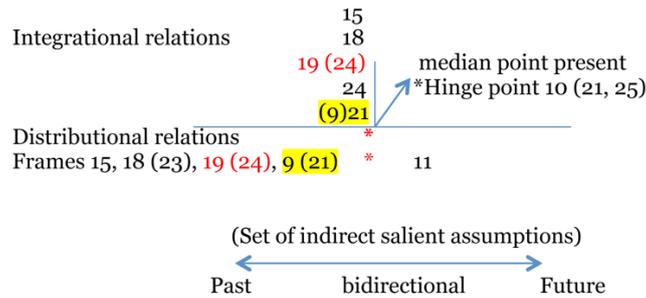
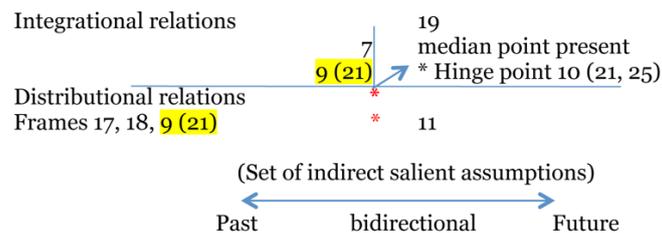


Figure 3. Revelator Caroline Storyworld:



Assumption Frame 7: Caroline finds Angela tampering with the beer bottle (due to *Recall Frames 5 and 6*).

Frame 10 (21, 25): Amyas drinks and comments, “Everything tastes foul today” (*hinge point*).

Repeated Frame 9 (21): Caroline takes the bottle of beer from Angela and serves the drink to Amyas, who is painting at the Battery Park.

Frame 21: Caroline brings the iced beer taken from Angela (Frame 7) and pours it out for her husband. Amyas tosses down the beer and comments, “Everything tastes foul today.”

Withheld Frame 15: Elsa sitting outside the library window overhears the conversation between Amyas and Caroline that “Once he’d finished the picture he’d never see her again” (*Frame 14, offender theme*).

Event Frame 17: Elsa is speaking to MB, who is waiting for Caroline to leave the lab when she sees Caroline take the poison (coniine) the night before Amyas died (*disnarration*).

Event Frame 18 (23): Elsa, making an excuse to get a pullover, goes up to Caroline’s room to look for the poison, and on finding the poison in a drawer (Christie 329), she draws off the fluid into a fountain-pen filler (328) and goes back to Battery Park to resume her posing.

Frame 23: Elsa steals this coniine from Caroline’s room.

Omitted Frame 19: Elsa pours Amyas a drink (omitted in the sequence when she adds the coniine).

2.4 The Principle of Relevance

An encoded referential layer as participant relevance is decoded in Figures 2 and 3 by aligning events on the horizontal axis with the hinge point marked by an *. The temporal sequence of the past vs. futurity of events changes with reference to the intent frame on the setting, showing alternative narrative relations when merging with the intent frame at the midpoint of the telling and showing narrative levels. As a result,

- there is *causal reversal* (Frame 24 before Frame 9) in Elsa’s plot line in the formula *post hoc* (Barthes 94) for systematic application of *logical fallacy—what comes after*, i.e., Frame 11 due to first poisoned drink in Frame 19 (21, 24)—is read in the narrative as *what* (the death in Frame 11) *is caused by* the poisoned second drink in Frame 9 (21);
- an *omitted Frame 19* comes into focus in the plot line; and
- Frame 9 (21) *overlap* on the horizontal and vertical axis of the secondary narratives.

The *causal reversal* foregrounded is for a desired outcome, when Caroline becomes a narrative object (NO) or a victim of circumstances (second unpoisoned drink being mistaken for first poisoned drink).

While *Omitted Frame 19* is about the omission of poison in the first drink, this information is not available until revealed in Frame 21a. As a consequence, there is *narrative conflict in prospection* when Caroline plays into the hands of perpetrator Elsa causing *narrative suspense*.

Additionally, there is *fallacy* when the *cause* (the *Omitted Frame 19*) is sequenced after the *effect* of offender theme of jealousy (Frame 15) in the principle of *contrary logic*. A close analysis of a contrary logic has not been carried out due to space constraint. The principle of contrary logic has been applied in this paper on “offender theme analysis” (Dutta-Flanders, “Offender”). However, very briefly, it is *the deed* (intent/effect) that is *pre-destined* and not a consequence of a cause. In the first story of crime in “Five Little Pigs,” the cause for Frame 19 leading to Frame 10 and subsequently death in Frame 11 is due to a prior theme of jealousy (Frames 15 and 22). The corrective sequencing of the drink episode (the poisoned drink in Frame 24 sequenced after the unpoisoned drink in Frame 9) is not obvious at the point of opening of the crime story; its discursive representation in the way of causal reversal in the plot form frames Caroline as an alternative suspect. Such is a *narrative twist for narrative suspense*.

Other narrative themes that also come into focus due to the frame analysis are

- Frame 14: Amyas’s *infatuation*,
- Frame 15 (20): the *betrayal* when Elsa overhears Amyas saying he will send her packing after he completes the picture, and
- Frame 17: *disnarration* of why Caroline stole coniine in the first place.

These could have been *climactic moments* like Frame 10—story points when Elsa, out of jealousy, decides to murder Amyas for leading her on, and for taking advantage of Caroline stealing the conine—but these themes are not part of the victim/perpetrator scenario in the secondary plot lines. The direct antecedent *conine* in Frame 17, for its indirect referent *Everything*, is associated with the cause of Amyas’s death; but its *semantic or cultural load* is sequenced in a way that is not high enough to create microcontexts like *Overlapping Frames* when the inferencing is in relation to the inexplicit intent in Frame 10. Therefore, Frame 17 does not have the *double functionality* (at once logical and chronological) of a hinge point in Frame 10. Moreover, the repeated occurrence of utterance in Frame 10 adds to the high cultural relevance with reference to the concealer and revelator relevance to crime.

3. Conclusion

A “discourse-based” frame analysis of a detective narrative is necessary for situating the criminal intent. Frame analysis of the narrative form also foregrounds *microcontexts* (such as repeated, withheld, overlapping frames) that otherwise remain obscure in a non-linear story. It is also possible to analyze competing storyworlds encoded in the narrative when mapping the criminal intent across narrative levels for criminal relevance, when the organization of experience is a *circular affair* as opposed to a more unilateral configuration in visual medium.

Finally, an “*inter diegesis*” space of the perpetrator is formulated in the comprehension of participant relevance to crime when,

- *Referential layer* for an antecedentless DR is an evaluation focus for intent,
- *Bidirectional functionality* of intent frame initiates alternative routes to crime,
- *Logical fallacy* is evidenced in the consecution for criminal relevance, and
- *Contrary logic* shows the cause of murder being an effect of an offender theme.

Inter diegesis space is an intermediary space constituted by an offender in a crime narrative when countering its autobiographical you (an experiencing-self) making the perpetrator (or narrating-I as in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*) distinct as a person in relation to its criminal behaviour (Dutta-Flanders, *Language* 147-49, 416). Contextually, this is the *villain’s tale* which focuses on the villain’s *motive* (Tapply) showing how the offender theme, the motive and the ultimate act, all align together manifesting the perpetrator relevance as in Figure 3. However, the plot line of a sleuth’s tale (the *story of detection* in Tapply), following the findings in section 2.4, is complimentary to the *tale of the narrative object* or the revelator, and also follows the same structural and logical analysis of a villain’s tale.

A “story of intentionality” is decoded in this way enabling a three-dimensional reading of an effective two-dimensional “whodunit” narrative (within a first *story of crime* and a second *story of investigation*). Structural analysis of a crime narrative also provides in this way a comprehension of participant relevance to crime, whilst showing alternative ways of reading crime fiction through a plot line analysis of the discourse.

Appendix 1

In the morning of the crime, two episodes took place (Christie, Chapters 3 and 4):

Episode 1. The Mischievous Prank

Frame 1	Meredith Blake (MB) heard sounds in his lab and insists there was a cat in his lab (neighbor and childhood friend of Amyas and Caroline).	
Frame 2	MB briefly met Miss Williams (Miss W) who was looking for Angela. (Miss W was Angela’s governess. Angela was Caroline’s sister.)	
Frame 3	Where Angela swam across to MB’s lab and pinched valerian (the cat stuff) to play a practical joke (the mischievous prank) on her uncle Amyas.	Withheld Frame
Frame 4	Miss W found Angela bathing with Philip Blake (MB’s brother and Amyas’s friend and neighbor).	

1a. The Inferred Fictional Context in Episode 1

by Caroline, the entity representation of character Angela relating to Frame 3 (the pro-representation)

Frame 5	Angela throws a paperweight at Amyas.	Frame Recall
Frame 6	Angela shouts she wishes Amyas dead.	Frame Recall
Frame 7	Caroline finds Angela tampering with the beer (a <i>causal link</i> for frame 11).	Assumption Frame
Frame 8	Angela looks guilty in Mrs. W’s word (a <i>causal link</i> for Frame 11).	Assumption Frame
Frame 9	Caroline takes the bottle (of beer) from Angela and takes it to Amyas, who is painting at the Battery Park.	
Frame 10	Amyas drinks and comments, “Everything tastes foul today.”	Repeated Frame
Frame 11	Caroline finds Amyas dead.	

1b. The Inferred Fictional Context in Episode 1

from Caroline’s point of view, the post-murder *entity representation* of character Caroline

Frame 12 (Thought 1)	Amyas has been poisoned. “She [Angela] has done it?” (319).	
Frame 13 (Thought 2)	Angela responsible.	

(The inference [*backward-oriented*] is drawn from Frame 7, where “Angela tampering with the beer” [318] is the antecedent acting as a trigger for the entity representation of “She [Angela] has done it?” [319].)

Episode 2. A Bombshell of Tragedy

Frame 14	Amyas spoke to his wife Caroline following breakfast on the day of his death, explaining “how he had been infatuated with Elsa, but it was all over. Once he’d finished the picture he’d never see her [Elsa Greer] again” (327).	
Frame 15	Elsa, sitting outside the library window, overheard the conversation between Amyas and Caroline that “Once he’d finished the picture he’d never see her again” (Frame 14).	Offender Theme (Jealousy)

Frame 16	Amyas came out of the library following his conversation with Caroline, found Elsa with Philip Blake, and ordered her to go back to her sitting.	
Frame 17	Elsa speaking to MB and MB waiting for Caroline to leave the lab, when Elsa saw “Caroline take that poison [coniine]” (328) the night before Amyas died.	Disnarration
Frame 18	Elsa, making an excuse to get a pullover, went up to Caroline’s room to look for the poison, and on finding the poison in a drawer (329) “she drew off the fluid into a fountain-pen filler” (328) and went back to the park to resume her posing.	
Frame 19	Where Elsa adds the coniine to Amyas’s drink (<i>omitted</i> in the drink episode).	Omission Frame
Frame 20	Caroline has another conversation (post Frame 14) with Amyas regarding Angela when Amyas comments, “It’s all settled—I’ll send her packing. I tell you” (329).	Offender Theme
(Frame 20a)	Also a <i>false trail</i> in the way of Blake’s misunderstanding of Caroline’s comment is relating to Angela, when in fictional reality it is about Elsa (Frame 15) said by Amyas Crale, “It’s all settled—I’ll send her [Elsa] packing. I tell you” (311).	
Frame 21	Caroline brings the iced beer taken from Angela (Frame 7) and pours it out for her husband. Amyas tosses down the beer and comments, “Everything tastes foul today.”	Repeated Frame
(Frame 21a)	This <i>covert</i> frame is made <i>overt</i> by Poirot about Caroline playing into Elsa’s hands when she brings another drink for Amyas (Frame 9, 329).	

2a. The Inferred Fictional Context for representation of character Elsa as the murderer

Frame 22	Elsa saw Caroline steal coniine from Meredith’s lab (Frame 17).	Disnarration
Frame 23	Elsa steals this coniine from Caroline’s room (Frame 18).	
Frame 24	Elsa pours Amyas a drink, and Amyas tosses it down in his usual way, commenting, “God it’s warm” (Frame 19).	
Frame 25	Amyas tosses down the beer and comments, “Everything tastes foul today” (329).	Repeated Frame

2b. Antecedents and Referent

a. Cataphoric antecedent (forward pointing)	“Look at <i>that</i> .”	(Direct Reference to an Antecedent)
b. Anaphoric antecedent (backward looking)	“Look at the moon, I can’t see <i>it</i> .”	(Direct Reference to an Antecedent)
c. Discourse referent (bi-directional)	“Kill an <i>active plump chicken</i> , prepare <i>it</i> for the oven.”	(Indirect Reference to an Entity Representation)

Appendix 2

The Drink Episode: Storyboard (SB)

Episode 1. Contextual Information

Amyas and Angela are arguing over Amyas's decision to send her to a boarding school. Caroline (Amyas's wife) is trying to reason with her sister Angela about this decision. Angela is not convinced, and thinks her sister and stepfather want to get rid of her. Caroline tries to reassure Angela that they all love her. But Angela contradicts this by saying, Amyas doesn't and would not care if he never saw her again.



SB 1 @ 00.31.27

Appendix 1, Frames 5, 6



SB 2 @ 0.35.12

The following narration is made by witness Mrs. Wilson, Angela's governess.

Amyas, being fed up with Angela's past pranks, answers back saying that Angela was too right and how she was screeching like a fishwife. Following this heated exchange, Angela picks up a paper weight and throws it at her stepfather Amyas, saying, "I wish you were dead."

Angela starts crying.

Contextual Information

Soon after SB 1 and SB 2, Caroline finds Angela with a beer bottle, trying to unscrew the lid. She suspects Angela is about to drink the beer, and according to Mrs. Wilson, "Angela appeared guilty." Angela is 13 years of age and has been a handful around the house with her challenging ways.

Finding her sister with a beer bottle Caroline exclaims, "What on earth are you doing with that?" Angela: "I was just—" (interrupted).

Caroline: "I hope you were not thinking of drinking it? I'll take it if you don't mind. Would you [Angela's governess, Mrs. Wilson] mind serving the others? I will pop this to Amyas."



SB 3 @ 00.51.16



SB 4 @ 0.57.27

Appendix 1, Frames 7, 8, 9

Episode 2. Contextual Information

Elsa is the model sitting for Amyas, a professional painter. Before Elsa served Amyas the drink, she heard Amyas telling Caroline about sending her away after he finishes with the portrait, when Elsa was of the impression that Amyas, who was having an affair, was going to marry her.

The following narration is by witness Elsa.

Amyas orders Elsa to get back to her sitting as he wants to get on with the painting. To which Elsa replies, “I will go change.” . . . Which I did, then I went to join him, and I poured him a beer.”



SB 5 @ 0.14.03

Appendix 1, Frames 18, 19



SB 6 @ 00.18.08



SB 7 @ 00.33.00



SB 8 @ 00.35.12

Amyas drinks the beer Elsa serves and grimaces saying, “God, it’s warm.”
Elsa to Amyas: “I can get you a cold one?”
Elsa is ordered by Amyas to go back “on that seat, sit down now.”

Contextual Information

At this point in the narrative, Caroline is unaware that Amyas has already been served with a drink that was poisoned by Elsa (SB 5 and SB 6). Caroline is thus unaware of the first drink given by Elsa. Amyas collapses soon after the second drink served by his wife Caroline, which she had retrieved 10 minutes earlier from her sister Angela (SB 4). When Amyas collapses, and subsequently dies in

Frame 11 (Appendix 1), Caroline recalls SB 1 and SB 2. She *assumes* that Angela has carried out her threat that she made earlier to Amyas (SB 1) and poisoned his drink, which Caroline has unwittingly served Amyas. Assuming this, Caroline protects her sister; she makes it appear that Amyas committed suicide, but Caroline was not believed. She was convicted of murder.

Also in the past, Caroline had accidentally injured her sister with a pair of scissors, when Angela lost an eye, and since then Caroline has been very protective and tries to shield her assuming Angela has carried out her threat in SB 1 and SB 2.



SB 9 @ 0.51.00



SB 10 @ 1.08.26



SB 11 @ 1.12.15

Amyas to Caroline: “I could kill for a cold beer.”

Caroline to Amyas: “I’ll send some down.”

Elsa (narrator): “She [Caroline] must have known what she meant to do. She brought it back about ten minutes later.”

Caroline pours Amyas a second beer. Caroline hands the beer she pours for Amyas.

Amyas drinks and grimaces, saying, “Tastes foul. Everything tastes foul today.”

To which Caroline remarks, “Too much bile, my dear, will choke you one of these days.”

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