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AFFECT, SPATIAL PRACTICES, AND THE CITY IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S "THEY CAME TO BAGHDAD"*

Agatha Christie'nin "Bağdat'a Geldiler" Adlı Romanında Duygulanım, Uzamsal Bağlantılar ve Kentsel Uzam

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ABSTRACT

They Came to Baghdad (1951), one of Agatha Christie's mid-career books, could be categorized as a political thriller that unravels the ideological conflicts during the early Cold War period and the fight over Iraqi oil reserves. The scenes of the novel, like an adventure movie alters from a spy hunt to an archaeological theme, then to a romance, and finally a murder story and a thriller, in which fear comes up unexpectedly. Particularly, the setting provides the grounds for the female protagonist of the novel, Victoria Jones, to cross cultural and social boundaries and explore the space as a naïve pseudo-spy working for the international forces in Baghdad. By the lens of Nigel Thrift's concept of "affective cities" and "spatialities of feeling", this paper aims to explore how the setting of the novel–Baghdad–creates an intensive field of conflicting cultural and social forces that inscribe the female body, which runs in parallel with the narrative tactics Christie uses in revealing the affective emplacements of fear, suspicion, increasing levels of anxiety and insecurity in the cityscape. This paper, in other words, offers a spatial analysis of the novel in order to explore how the cityscape is mobilized and altered by the shifting perceptions of it by Victoria Jones while she defies the patriarchal demarcations of space. Through her adventures, it becomes possible to comprehend how power is distributed and circulated within this Middle Eastern society.

Key Words: Affect, spatialities of feeling, urban space, Baghdad, Agatha Christie.

ÖZET

Agatha Christie'nin casusluk hikâyelerine örnek teşkil eden *Bağdat'a Geldiler* (*1951*) adlı romanı, Soğuk Savaş döneminin ilk safhalarında, uluslararası diplomatik çatışmalara ve Irak petrol rezervleri üzerindeki gizli savaşa da ışık tutan siyasi bir arka plana sahip olmakla birlikte türsel açıdan bir gerilim hikâyesi olarak da ele

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alınabilir. Romanın sahneleri, casus kovalamacalarından Orta Doğu'daki arkeolojik kazı alanlarına, gülünç bir aşk hikâyesinden cinayet öyküsüne beklenmedik bir hızla geçiş yapmakta, Christie'nin alışılageldik dedektif öykülerinden farklılaşmaktadır. Agatha Christie'nin romanları türsel açıdan çeşitli çalışmalara konu olmuştur ancak, bu çalışma, söz konusu romanı türsel ve biçemsel açıdan incelemek yerine, uzam kuramlarını kullanarak Orta Doğu'nun konumlandırılışını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Öykünün uzamı, hikâyenin ana kahramanı Victoria Jones'un kültürel ve toplumsal sınırları aşmasına imkân sağlamakla birlikte, Bağdat'ta konuşlanan uluslararası güç odaklarının planlarını aydınlatma konusunda imkan sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Nigel Thrift'in şehir, birey ve duygulanım arasındaki ilişkiye dikkat çektiği çalışmalarına dayanarak, Bağdat'ı "akışkan bir şehir" olarak incelemekte, romanın türsel özellikleriyle de örtüşen korku, kuşku, kaygı, güvenlik ihtiyacı, yer-yön kaybı gibi uzam (*space*) ve beden (*corporeality*) arasındaki duygulanımsal bağları (*affective relations*) incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Duygulanım, uzamsal duygulanım, kentsel mekân, Bağdat, Agatha Christie.

Introduction

Along with novels such as *Destination Unknown* (1955) and *Passenger to Frankfurt* (1970), *They Came to Baghdad* (1951) is usually categorized as one of Agatha Christie's espionage novels overlapping with the sub-genre of political thrillers. Set in Baghdad in the early 50s, it unravels the ideological conflicts between competing nations and the operations of several intelligence services to sabotage the upcoming meeting of world leaders in a Middle Eastern setting. The novel offers us a parade of spies, intelligence officers, field agents and international bankers, as well as, other Western subjects who lead the politics in the Middle East in the first phase of the Cold War period. Meanwhile, the espionage theme is skilfully blended with a murder story, an adventure motif and pseudo-romance qualities, then a few scenes about archaeological sites. Christie dedicates the novel "[t]o all [her] friends in Baghdad", the city she became familiar with due to her husband's archaeological work in the Middle East in the late 1920s. Having such a close contact with the city of Baghdad and other Middle Eastern locales, Christie relished in using these places as the setting of several of her novels. The use of "exotic locales", as Matthew Bunson argues, is one of Christie's "strongest devices" in her fiction (2000: 141). Against the backdrop of Nigel Thrift's envisioning of "affective cities" and "spatialities of feeling", this paper aims to explore how the setting of the novel—Baghdad—creates an intensive field of conflicting cultural and social forces that inscribe the female body, which

runs in parallel with the foregrounding of the major affective qualities of a thriller such as fear, suspicion, increasing levels of anxiety and insecurity in the cityscape. Moreover, Christie's choice of a Middle Eastern city provides the grounds for the female protagonist, Victoria Jones, to cross cultural and social boundaries and explore the space as a naïve spy working for the international forces in Baghdad. The spatial references in the novel are closely interlinked with the affective representations of the city, which enables a disruption of predefined gender, ethnic, and class hierarchies in this non-Western locale. The spatial analysis of the novel by the lens of Nigel Thrift's discussions, therefore, follows the protagonist's trajectory, her performative engagements with a series of enclosed and public spaces in Iraq.

In his seminal book, *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, Nigel Thrift describes cities as "maelstroms of affect" and presents 'affect' as one of the "vital elements of cities" (2008: 171). These affects become manifest both in the events mobilizing large number of people such as "the mass hysteria occasioned by the death of Princess Diana … or the deafening roar from a sports stadium" and in everyday urban practices like "the mundane emotional labour of the workplace, the frustrated shouts and gestures of road rage, the delighted laughter of children as they tour a theme park" (2008: 171). With the recent affective turn in spatial studies, Thrift admits that the term has gained multifarious uses in different fields and meant "a lot of different things" (2008: 175): "words like emotion and feeling, and a consequent repertoire of terms like hatred, shame, envy, fear, disgust, anger, embarrassment, sorrow, grief, anguish, love, happiness, joy, hope, wonder…" (2008: 175). Such emotions are accompanied by a perpetual movement or vigour in the cityscape, "continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there" (2008: 171). The understanding of affective cities relies heavily on relationality, the interactions between a human/non-human body and the cityscape, which sort of produces a renewed understanding of identity and spatial practices. The focus on the body and emotions revealed precognitively prepare the ground of reconfigurations of selves or appropriation of the cities through their emotive capacities. By contending that "body practices rely on the emotions as vital element of the body's apprehension of the world" and sensations being "a vital part of the body's anticipation of the moment," Thrift seems to be introducing a post-Cartesian understanding of how emotions matter in making sense of the cityscapes at large (2008: 187). Thrift clearly locates his argument in urbanism and spatial studies; how-

ever, he also draws attention to the significance of literary works in uncovering the qualities of affective cities. Accordingly, he suggests that, in order to understand the affective realm of cities, "it is necessary to resort to the pages of novels and the tracklines of poems" (Thrift, 2008: 171). Charles Altieri's definition of affect might also inform us about the term's relation to the literary scholarship: "immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension" (2003: 2). Such a definition might illuminate Thrift's efforts to understand the spatial organization of feelings in literary works as in literature such a connection might be discovered when those "feelings are based upon how [a particular character] experience[s] the presence of boundaries and the force of the relational fields that these boundaries activate" (Thrift, 2008: 241).

They Came to Baghdad

In *They Came to Bagdad*, the main action centres around the upcoming meeting of world leaders in Baghdad, the city revealed through the perspective of the female protagonist of the novel who starts an adventure after one of the daftest romance stories. Victoria Jones is introduced having a simple life in London as a short-hand typist, without a family or close circle of friends. Recently fired from her job in the opening chapters, she encounters a man named Edward Goring at Fitzgerald Gardens and rather brusquely learns that he is flying to Baghdad the other day to work as a personal assistant for a mysterious man named Dr. Rathbone and expected to "fraternize" with a "kind of glorified youth movement—all nations together in a united drive for uplift" (Christie, 2011: 20). After a ten-minute talk, she is convinced that Edward is the one and she should follow her heart and go after him. Adopting a fake identity and with help from a disabled couple, she arranges a flight to Baghdad as a caregiver and books a room at the Tio Hotel, where most of the European guests choose to stay. Quite directionless, her decision to follow and find Edward in Baghdad dominates the first half of the book, eventually making her an important eyewitness of the murder of a British spy and immediately targeted by secret organization named The Olive Branch. So, her quest after Edward in this hostile setting provides us with a series of spaces without a coherent order: The Tio Hotel named after its owner Marcus Tio, the riverbanks of Tigris, the hectic business streets of Baghdad, the Copper Bazaar, the British Consulate garden by the Shatt el Arab, the ancient city of Babylon, Tell Aswad, and so forth. Through these disconnected spaces, the city of Baghdad and the Middle Eastern landscape are revealed as a

meeting point of cultures, international forces and several organizations run by "ambitious masterminds rising from the confusion and unrest of a transnational world" (Wang, 2012: 2).

What makes Christie's espionage story interesting itself is not Victoria Jones's fruitless pursuit after Edward, but how she experiences the space through its affective qualities and discovers the boundaries that she has to cross in a largely male-dominated space and among predominantly Western secret agents. In time, Jones develops an affective image of the city–[through] her feelings and emotions about places or having "a cognitive map" of it from a gendered perspective as Thrift terms (2008: 374). Such a cognitive map embodies the city's heterogenous elements situated within "tangled threads of threads with no easy beginnings or endings" (Amin and Thrift, 2017: 68). Christie's intrusive narrator pays great attention to describe Victoria Jones' mood before she leaves for Baghdad. Her feelings at the airport before the flight has been described with sheer happiness and excitement–the airport being the liminal point that she has to cross to meet the new and the unknown. Victoria has been advised by more experienced travellers like Mr. and Mrs. Clipp about lack of hygiene, disorderly urban space, and uncivilized manner of people in the Middle East from an Orientalist perspective: "–and nothing really clean if you know what I mean. I'm always very very careful what I eat. The filth of the streets and the bazaars you wouldn't believe. And the unhygienic rags the people wear … you just couldn't call them toilets at all!" (Christie, 2011: 64). Victoria disregards these obviously prejudiced remarks about Iraq and Iraqi people, as the narrator notes, with a "sense of glamour … undimmed" (Christie, 2011: 64). When she hears the announcement about boarding, particularly the names of the cities "Cairo, Baghdad and Tehran," Victoria naively dreams of them as magical places to discover as a Western traveller: "Magic names, magic words … Trivial boring everyday happenings! And now: Cairo, Baghdad, Tehran–all the romance of the glorious East (and Edward at the end of it)" (Christie, 2011: 64). Here, she is romanticizing and orientalising the East, simultaneously, showing us how naïve and youthful her thoughts about adventure and travel are.

It is quite clear that the terms "adventure" and "travel" are overburdened by Western imperial past and the gendered nature of previous travel accounts in Western fictional/non-fictional narratives. Therefore, Christie's approach to the quest or the adventure theme in the novel can be read as a parody of the adventure stories of the entitled, white, European, and male hero. Such characters are usually depicted as leaving the

so-called "civilized" European city to explore the unknown, the other, or the dark corners of the world for material profit, more knowledge, battalions or the mission of civilization, as "the white man's burden" (Kipling, 2013: 111). Victoria's hasty decision and motivation to embark on a journey not only provides us with a subverted travel trope but also a wide array of material for the spatial discussion of the story from a non-privileged, unemployed, penniless female figure whose adventure finally fails to represent masculinized rites of passage. Victoria Jones is not totally aware of what awaits her in Baghdad and does not undergo a spiritual awakening after what she experiences. Her so-called desire for "adventure" turns into an inevitable survival story after she becomes the eyewitness of Agent Carmichael's murder. Though rather listlessly, she learns to read the codes of this new city, particularly depending on her intuition rather than methodical reasoning—a quality usually associated with male detectives in crime fiction—which is frequently juxtaposed with Edward's chess-moves to prey Victoria.

The narrator's accounts of Iraq given through free indirect speech after the protagonist lands in Baghdad do not offer us a formerly romanticised vision of a mystical East. The dull plot of the story is yet energized by the descriptions of this affective city which has speed and movement of its own. The protagonist's body is located within a set of flows, "disjointedly connected to random others and objects through the city's spatio-temporal layout" (Grosz, 1995: 387). In the following passage, the mundane rhythms of public spaces in the city are invoked by powerful tactile and auditory senses. The narrator zooms into another major character, Agent Carmichael, through external focalization and describes the chaotic street life as he moves through the bazaar:

> "Here all was noise and movement. Energetic tribes—men strode along pushing others out of their way–laden donkeys made their way along, their drivers calling out raucously. *Balek—balek*... Children quarrelled and squealed and ran after Europeans calling hopefully, Baksheesh, madame, *Baksheesh*. Meskin-meskin. ... Here the produce of the West and the East were equally for sale side by side." (Christie, 2011: 46).

All these sounds "form their own acoustic ecology, noises which become their own associative landscapes intensifying and fading" as Victoria Jones and other European travellers try to comprehend the sensuous intake (Amin and Thrift, 2017: 52). The character's immediate emotional responses are prompted through an affective language to prepare the

grounds for Jones' entry into the espionage story: "growing uneasiness," "a vague sense of menace," "indefinable certainty of danger," "Once more he was on his own, in hostile country… There were enemies to fear within the system" (Christie, 2011: 46, 49). Thus, the "acoustic ecology" of Baghdad in the early chapters both overlaps with the generic assumptions of an espionage story and estranges the Western newcomers. The noise, the dust, the shouts and roaring of engines in the busy streets of Baghdad re-emerge intermittently as Jones strolls in the cityscape.

Victoria Jones initially finds it hard to "localize herself" in the "city's heterogeneity" and her body remains as a sign of "gendered and ethnic otherness" (Pleßke, 2014: 326). The early days of Jones' stay at the Tio Hotel was mainly based on her state of immobility given the gendered divisions of space for the Western female traveller. As a safe heaven, she chooses to stay at the hotel before she was forced to explore the city and outskirts of it which prove to be utterly dangerous and threatening to her. The narrator notes that her immobility is largely caused by "the smell of *fear,*" even "deadly fear," and lack of certainty and transparency since "[n]othing could [be] diagnosed in concrete terms" in Baghdad (Christie, 2011: 52, 53). Jones' anticipation of fear and chaos upon arrival leads to a self-imposed detainment in a small room, which can perhaps be analysed through Doreen Massey's comment on gender relations and the spatial practices:

> "From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood. The limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover the two things—the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted consignment/ confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other—have been crucially related." (*1*994: 188).

Jones's initial "otherness" in Baghdad "enhances her alienation from the cityscape" and sometimes, as we understand through external focalization, she reiterates "cultural and racial stereotypes" from a Western female perspective (Pleßke, 2014: 326). It was not easy for Jones to come to terms with the codes of Iraqi society, which firstly looks fascinating to her, then frightening and disorienting.

Her first experience in the cityscape is described through a mélange of sounds, smells and kinaesthetic senses, depicting the protagonist astounded in the middle of a dust storm:

> "Victoria, breathing in hot choking yellow dust, was unfavourably impressed by Baghdad. From the Airport to the Tio Hotel, her ears had been assailed by continuous and incessant noise. Horns of cars blaring with maddening persistence, voices shouting, whistles blowing, then more deafening senseless blaring of motor horns ... Victoria arrived at the Tio Hotel in *a dazed condition*" (Christie, 2011: 86, emphasis added).

So, Victoria's initial experience of the city is rather disorienting, marked by her defamiliarization process and making her even more confused in her "adventure." She immediately questions her preconceptions about the idea of travel as liberating and fascinating, and the city of Baghdad as fully exotic and engulfing place as advertised in travel flyers. The following passage is similarly reflective of the affects associated with her first contact with the city—utter disorientation and puzzlement:

> "*Baghdad was entirely unlike her idea of it*. A crowded main thoroughfare thronged with people, cars hooting violently, people shouting, European goods for sale in the shop windows, hearty spitting all round her with prodigious throat-clearing as a preliminary. No mysterious Eastern figures, most of the people wore tattered or shabby Western clothes, old army and air force tunics, ... Whining beggars came up to her – women with dirty babies in their arms. The pavement under her feet was uneven with occasional gaping holes. She pursued her way *feeling suddenly strange and lost and far from home. Here was no glamour of travel, only confusion*" (Christie, 2011:101, emphasis added).

Her confused state of mind relies heavily on her inability to process all these sensual data that suddenly overwhelm her as an "other". When she finally arrives at the Tio Hotel from the airport, the accelerated narrative of the first explorations in the cityscape abruptly slows down and the scene focuses on a premature epiphanic moment. The narrator dwells more on the baffling effect of the dust and dust storm and how it produces a feeling of alterity for the protagonist—a process of becoming a "weather beaten Englishwoman":

> "She looked at herself in the glass. The dust had changed her hair from black to a strange reddish brown. She pulled aside a corner of

the curtain and looked out on to a wide balcony which gave on the river. But there was nothing to be seen of the Tigris but a thick yellow haze. A prey to deep depression, Victoria said to herself: 'What a hateful place'... Prolonged and active ministrations would be required of her here before she could attend to her own cleansing and rehabilitation." (Christie, 2011: 88).

The city as a place to be explored and engaged through enthusiasm and curiosity leaves the "weather beaten" adventurer with a fading taste and growing disgust. The last part of the passage above makes it clear that she needs to treat and reorient herself before engaging with this odious cityscape again. Therefore, she spends days of seclusion at the Tio Hotel, the seemingly secure place for the European travellers in Baghdad, in which Christie skilfully plays with the feelings of anxiety, fear, and defencelessness as opposed to safety, assurance and invulnerability. The exact locale of the murder, or the triggering action of the story, is set in Victoria's room. She is disturbed by a hasty knock on the door and an injured man entering her room and asking for help. With the rising tension and a true espionage trope, Victoria's panic is doubled by another knock and entrance of a couple of agents who violate her privacy, so "[t]he outside has to enter before it can be apart" (Metcalfe and Ferguson, 2001: 261). The door which was supposed to protect Victoria from the outside world make the readers realize that "(a)ll doors are reversible, all insides are the outsides of somewhere else" (Metcalfe and Ferguson, 2001 :249). The only safe haven of the female protagonist falls apart, blurring the expectations of the security of a confined space and dangers of an unknown cityscape.

The protagonist's act of continuous walking, her traversing and transgressing the boundaries in the cityscape become the main stylistic narrative quality in *They Came to Baghdad*. As mockingly noted by the narrator–"walking, at least, required no money," (Christie, 2011: 73)–Jones has to explore most of the city by walking, which allows her to discover and reproduce the "non-representational" aspects of the city. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau argues that the bodies of the walkers in the cityscape "follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text'...[and] make use of spaces that cannot be seen" (1984: 93). Thrift is more interested in how Michel de Certeau's argument foregrounds "'tactile apprehension and kinesic appropriation'" which results from the act of walking and how the footsteps create "an innumerable collection of singularities" rather than a sequence (de Certeau, 1984: 97). For the walk-

ers, the city might look readable at first; however, the experience of walking is more complicated and productive than it looks:

> "Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it "speaks." All the modalities sing a part in this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker. These enunciatory operations are of an unlimited diversity. They therefore cannot be reduced to their graphic trail." (1984: 99).

Moreover, perambulatory practices of space might manipulate the panoptic control within a cityscape since they allow "manipulations of the fundamental elements of a constructed order," "plays with spatial organizations" and "creates of them shadow and ambiguity" (de Certeau, 1987: 136). Thrift also points out the fact that affect is usually connected with "perceptual registers like proprioception," the movements of a corporeal entity, which are hard to grasp through concrete terms (2008: 172). During her walks in the city, Jones is thus not only struggling with the physical qualities of the city—the dust, the noise, moisture, crowd, intricate city planning— but also trying to solve the "new intensities and speeds and the attendant navigations of discipline" associated with the power structure in the city (Thrift, 2008: 189).

Victoria's early disorientation gradually grows into curiosity and fascination again by improved understanding of the city's personality and inherent power relations within it. Only then she becomes actively involved with a broader spatial territory than that would be expected from her at the onset of the story. Jones steps out of her hotel room and starts her so-called "quest" after a prolonged period of rehabilitation. Strolling on the Rashid Street with the aim to find the headquarters of the Olive Branch, she discovers the city's multicultural identity, "intrigued by the mixture of things" and surprised by the variety of goods to serve the needs of "a mixed population" (Christie, 2011: 101). The River Tigris stands as a reminder of her route in the West Bank of the city; through her walks by the river the protagonist observes the class-conscious architectural differences amongst several neighbourhoods. She peeks through the gardens of the opulent houses, discovering "an agreeable air of secrecy" in the more well-to-do parts of the bank; she is fascinated by a courtyard and voyeuristically gazes at the private corners for a deeper knowledge of its domestic spaces (Christie, 2011: 172, 173). On her way to the Beit Melek Ali, also known as the House of King Ali, she later finds herself in a labyrin-

thine track through "a litter of confusion and dark passages" and "palm gardens in thick groves" (Christie, 2011: 173). The riverbank finally takes her to poorer quarters, the inner city, "a more squalid part" where "tumbledown houses inside rough brickwalls, and small shanties with children playing in the dirt and clouds of flies hanging over garbage heaps" (Christie, 2011: 173). The vivid descriptions of the cityscape are followed by Edward and Victoria's expedition to the ancient city of Babylon, "vast proud city" which at present "lay dead and abandoned" (Christie, 2011: 175). Their visit to Babylon serves a digression from the main plot of the novel and foregrounds the city's ancient past to create "a feeling of-of greatness" (Christie, 2011: 176). Nigel Thrift's argument on affective cities is based on the nature of the capitalist, mainly Western cityscapes, which are "[t]ransfixed by the idea of a totally safe and calculable environment, the capitalist city is fixed and unbending in the face of unexpected events: 'it has rooted itself in midair'" (Thrift, 2008: 133). The depiction of Baghdad in the novel defies the notions of safety and predictability given the performative nature of the secret organizations. Therefore, the text foregrounds a "self-conscious cityscape" in which nothing is 'calculable' and simply controlled, which wonderfully parallels with the generic potentials of the novel (Soja: 2003, 276). In the upcoming chapters, Victoria is kidnapped, taken to an unnamed village in the middle of the desert, and then rescued by Richard Baker and taken to Tell Aswad archaeological site. The events unfolding after Victoria's capture, escape, refuge at Tell Aswad and reunion with Edward reveal the "hierarchies of nested relations" in a large-scale power game (Amin and Thrift, 2017: 159).

Victoria survives in this threatening space by improving her knowledge of the power axis among the trans-national intelligence services operating under cover and underground organizations to sabotage world peace in Baghdad. Notwithstanding the novel's simple plot structure, Christie manages to depict the menacing and aggressive nature of multinational "underground networks that infiltrate and permeate the city's functioning" and that produce "chaotic, deregulated, and unregulatable flows" (Grosz, 1995: 384). The novel actually ends with the so-called meeting of American and Russian leaders, as enigmatically announced in the title of the novel, which utterly alters the image of Baghdad. In *The Intelligible Metropolis*, Nora Pleßke similarly points out how spatial exploration, dominion, and familiarization are intricately linked with hideous, and often corrupt, power structures: "spatial practices implicate power-relations; (sic.) because as tools of spatial arrangement

categorization, organization, and semantisation of space are effective devices of exerting power over social systems and individual people" (2014: 64). The spatial structures in Baghdad, hosting an international secret meeting of the leaders of two conflicting forces of the Cold War period, have been designed and manipulated through trans-national and trans-cultural power structures. Within this scheme, the narrator introduces Baghdad as a space in which Iraqi people themselves do not have any agency over: "Baghdad was transformed. Police lined the streets– police drafted in from outside, the International Police. American and Russian police stood side by side with impassive faces" (Christie, 2011: 274). It is discovered that the setting has another significant function here; it turns into a "smooth space" in Deleuzean sense, space which offers "continuous variation" and simultaneously reinforces the performative nature of secret organizations such as The Olive Branch or trans-national intelligence services (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 536). As Mr. Dakin, Victoria's employer in Baghdad, once explained to Victoria, "the whole system is penetrated and infiltrated with agents" (Christie, 2011: 136). The interconnected urban spaces in *They Came to Baghdad,* thus, enable the spies and the secret agents to manipulate the politics in a non-Western locale, producing a highly risky society. The climactic event, the conference of world leaders finally takes place in the closing chapters, laying bare the underground operations that complicate the Middle Eastern politics and imperialistically claim rights over its riches: "At last the historical Conference had begun. In a small anteroom certain events were taking place which might well alter the course of history" (Christie, 2011: 274). As David Seed argues, such elements of spy fiction "promise the reader access to processes taking place behind official history, to what [Arthur] Conan Doyle describes in one of his stories as 'that secret history of a nation which is so much more intimate and interesting than its public chronicles'" (2003: 117).

Congruently, Luc Boltanski (2014) argues that there are two competing factors in connecting the real world politics with spy fiction, both of which are closely connected with "forces that *flow* throughout the territory" (22). These forces of "heterogenous components" function whether "on the political level" or through "the workings of capitalism" (Boltanski, 2014: 22). Secrecy and intelligence gathering atmosphere also obscures the demarcations of the public space in the city as "the substance of [heterogenous components'] activity knows no borders" (Boltanski, 2014: 22). Boltanski's argument illuminates Christie's highly dangerous interna-

tional networks operating in the novel as they are both establishing a new world order and also trying to make profit "beyond the bounds of civilization" (Christie, 2011: 275). The novel's long passages and intellectual discussions about the Cold War politics—the clash between the new world order and Communism—serve as the narrative digressions supporting the espionage theme and pronouncing the city's performative character. So the agents of this "heterogenous components" such as spies, disguised travellers, scientists, bankers, terrorists in *They Came to Baghdad*, actually deterritorialize the nation-state and intentionally manipulate its politics. Their performative actions all over this exoticized setting involve frequent border-crossings and violations of national interests. Christie aims at a realistic portrayal of the early Cold War politics and quite prophetically envisions the present conflict in the Middle East as a result of this espionage work of competing nations. Towards the end of the novel, one of the members in this exclusive meeting, wishfully advocates peace as the ultimate aim of these conferences not only about the Middle Eastern politics, but also the world itself: "We have got to have peace—peace to lick our wounds and make a new world—and to do that we *must* try to understand each other" (Christie, 2011: 277).

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, the affective register of the novel is largely constituted through the female protagonist's performative engagement with the cityscape and her growing anticipation of the political intensities in a non-Western locale. The cityscape, mainly the central Baghdad, in this respect, is mobilized and altered by the shifting perceptions of it by Victoria Jones while she defies not only the patriarchal but also cultural demarcations of space during her adventures. Despite the fear of the unknown, Victoria Jones tries to comprehend how power is distributed and circulated within this Middle Eastern society, which leads to a discovery that the city of Baghdad is "full of affective energy" (Thrift 57). Jones' inexperience and artlessness in her espionage work, or sometimes utter stupidity or practicality, seems to be helping her a lot in her frightful exploration of the city. Her development from a naïve reader of space in Baghdad moves from affects of disgust (with the dust and sounds of the city), fear (of the unknown), fascination (spirit of adventure), anxiety (after witnessing the murder) to terror (once held a hostage). Through her reflections on the cityscape, the tacit rules of the city and operating intelligence services are both explored and transgressed. By appropriating her body into this performative environment and through city's 'affective en-

ergy,' she evolves into an amateur double-spy and also complicates the generic assumptions about Christie's handling of the crime and espionage theme. Against the backdrop of Edward's insidious intent to exterminate her, she wanders through the hellish circles of the city and manages to survive through her imagination, deceitful personality, and growing anticipation of Baghdad's perilous routes.

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