

## Chapter 4

### A New Setting of Detective Novels: Industrialization, Urbanization, and Capitalism

The high development of industrialization, with discursive and dynamic “flux of capital,” radically transforms from the traditional experience of physical space and time in an early industrial society to a new “time-space compression” in a high development of a post-industrial society. A social discourse of reflexive modernity rises from this changing social process. The concept of reflexive modernity, according to Ulrich Beck, “designates a developmental phase of modern society in which the social, political, economic and individual risks increasingly tend to escape from the institutions for monitoring and protection in industrial society” (1994, 5). Beck actually points out the trend of social change in a shifting industrial society that foretells a successive emergence of a risk society. This transitory social reality is gradually no more confined to the disciplinary and rational control of an early industrial society, reshaping an alternative perspective of space and time especially for people who live in urban or rural area. Harvey views the urbanization in a later development of industrialization and its sequential prevalence of capitalism in postwar era as radical social changes. This industrialization, with its concomitant development of capitalism, also causes a burgeoning expansion of an urbanizing process that gradually blurs the demarcation of the city and the country. Several Christie’s postwar detective novels, like *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953), *4:50 from Paddington* (1957), *The Mirror Crack’d* (1962), and *Hallowe’en Party* (1969), sketch the picture of this high development of industrialization and urbanization under the impact of capitalism.

Rising from this industrializing and urbanizing process, a new life experience, including an alternative cognition of time and space accompanied by a changing

conception of aesthetics in an age of mechanical reproduction, emerges in the postwar society in England. As noticed previously, Beck regards the industrial society as a modernizing process that forms a first modernity. Whereas, radical social changes in this period threaten the “stability” of the industrial society and consequently lead to a rising risk society, or what Beck calls a “second” reflexive modernity. These risks disrupt the monitoring and protection of the industrial society and implicate a sort of self-limitation for various social relations that “cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society” (Beck, 1994, 6). Thus, this new social reality leads the social masses to feel a sense of uncertainty toward their daily life.

In this chapter, the discussion will be concerned about new perceptions of spatio-temporality and a new kind of aesthetics that produce, other than a traditional country-house ambience, a new setting of industrialization and urbanization under the impact of capitalism in Christie’s detective stories. These new perceptions and spatio-temporal aesthetics are mainly caused by advancement of modern transportations, people’s rising consumption of commercial commodity, massive constructions of new architecture, and mechanic reproduction in manufacturing industry. These social phenomena change the social relations and further make the boundary of the urban and the rural become vague.

England has undergone the industrializing process since the industrial revolution in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Later, in the early 20th century, the industrial revolution characterized some dramatic changes which “came about with the widespread availability of electric power, the internal-combustion engine and assembly lines.”<sup>1</sup> Industrialization resulted in the advanced technology and actually played an important role in the beginning stage of modern England and even the Western society. This industrializing process gradually turns the traditional agrarian

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation is from Wikipedia website. Available FTP: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrialization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrialization)

society into a society of mercantile manufacturing and commodity consumption. The spatiality of agrarian land is also transformed into an abstraction of money value when the land is sold for the purpose of building factories. Henceforth, *laissez-faire* and utilitarianism help engender the individual accumulation of capital and the rise of capitalism in an industrial society. Since then, the industrialization and capitalism have been gradually tied to each other and become interdependent.

After the ravage of the World War II, the British government was in need of enormous capital to reconstruct dilapidated buildings and resuscitating its industrial and economical growth. The Marshall Plan<sup>2</sup> timely offered financial aid to the British government; yet, from then on, the postwar England was under the “threat from the capitalistic culture of the U.S.” (Sinfield 241). This enormous “American” capital also brought about the modernizing process of industrialization that radically changed the “structure of feeling”<sup>3</sup> in the postwar England. The British industrial and capitalistic society is featured with a free market which highlights the “freedom to produce and purchase sufficient commodity to keep the market profitable” (Sinfield 95). More important, this operation of a free market tends to eradicate a sense of class and to glorify personal intellect<sup>4</sup> that further challenges the legal society and its officially authorized truth and justice.

To David Harvey, the triad of money, time, and space in an industrial society “are linked together and given special significance under conditions where the

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<sup>2</sup> The Marshall Plan, officially known as “European Recovery Program,” is a primary plan of the United States for rebuilding the allied countries of Europe and repelling communism after World War II. The reconstruction plan was developed at a meeting of the participating European states on July 12 1947. It provides massive capital to help the recovery of European countries.

<sup>3</sup> The term “structure of feeling” is originally from Raymond Williams. According to him, it refers to a dominant social character, the social meaning and value, of a certain period. See His “The Long Revolution.” in Bob Ashley ed. *Reading Popular Narrative: A Source Book*. London: Leicester UP, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> The spirit of *laissez-faire* and glorification of individuality also coincide the artistic trend, flourishing around the wartime England in London, called Bloomsbury group. The members of Bloomsbury group include E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf, the novelists; Lytton Strachey, the biographer; Clive Bell, the art critic; Roger Fry, a painter; G. E. Moore, the philosopher. The group rejected convention and authority, believing in personal intellect and good taste.

circulation of capital is dominant in social life” (1989, 12). This development of industrialization incurs the circulation of “capital flow” and gradually intensifies a modernization of a political bureaucracy. The flourishing of capital accumulation and circulation in this society dominated by a free market, along with the rising of the middle class and rich capitalists, finally lead to what David Harvey calls “bourgeois social democracy” (2001, 275). Put simply, the rich capitalists, intending to guard their proper right and to manipulate the capitalistic market, seek to incorporate with the governmental state to “gain private profit at public expense and to monopolize the means of production” (Ibid.). This enhances a homogenizing and political control of a national state. Henceforth, the political state embraces the capitalistic modernity and implements a capitalist’s way of “truth” and “justice” to construct a disciplinary and rational control on the general public.

The capital flow geographically produces a kind of urbanization as a “rational landscape” that “presupposes tight temporal and spatial coordinations in the midst of increasing separation and fragmentation” (Harvey, 1989, 22). This “disembedding” fragmentation of “agrarian” land signifies the new “appropriation” of space “for individual and social purposes” (1989, 177). The individual and social using of the segregated “land” gradually forms a place of “consumption” for trading and then an urban center for political/economic institutions. According to Harvey, the “tight scheduling of the newly emerging mass transit system” in modern western countries like England has “profoundly changed the rhythm and form of urban life” (1989, 173). In wake of Harvey’s thought, the “functional” using of land for selling business and the “tight scheduling” of time for modern transportation formulate a disciplinary control of rational modernity that regulates people’s perceptions of space and time in

the age of prevalent capitalism and a high development of industrialization<sup>5</sup> and urbanization.

This capitalism, owing to the “reconstruction of temporal and spatial dynamics of capital circulation” (the rich capitalists’ bringing investment to suburban and rural area) and consequential technological advancement (especially the transportation means in England), discursively expands its “capital flow” from an urban center to its adjacent rural area and subverts the traditional perception of space and time<sup>6</sup> especially to those rural townfolk. The expansion of the capital flux demonstrates this urbanizing process and exemplifies what Lefebvre calls “urban fabric” extending into suburban and rural area.

When “urban fabric” expands its network to the suburban and rural area, an urbanizing process occurs, bringing a new landscape (massive modern buildings and factories) into the rural small towns. More important, the urbanization signifies a transforming spatial dimension and also a changing cultural trend. The invading trend

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<sup>5</sup> The disciplinary space and time can be originally illustrated in the process of automatic manufacturing in Fordism factory for making car parts. The space and time are measured by the automatic machine (the car parts on the conveyor) under the supervision of the division of laborers. This links the disciplinary space and time with the high development of industrialization and the division of labor in a factory. Moreover, owing to the advancement of the modern technology, space “shrinks” and is conquered by modern transportation. The speed transportation, shipment, and broadcasting allow the distance space to be compressed into a simultaneous temporality. These enable an individual subject, without leaving his home and country, to obtain information and access everywhere in a short time. On the other hand, the conception of time is also spatialized. This can be instanced by Henry Ford assembly-line in which the spending time of mechanical production is transformed into multiple spaces for massive manufacture. The once stable link between the material time and material space now is undermined by the increasingly abstract temporality and spatialization of the time and the space [in a later high development of an industrializing process](#). For more detailed discussion of the new perception of the space and the time under the impact of industrialization, please see David Harvey’s “Time-Space Compression and the Rise of Modernism as a Cultural Force” in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Changes*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990. pp.260-283.

<sup>6</sup> In contrast with Henri Lefebvre, who regards time as being in erosion [and being “vanished” into space](#) when discussing the “[representations of space](#)” and examining the space-time in an age dominated by high development of industrialization, David Harvey tries to explain the “measurable” time and represents time through a fragmentation of space (instanced by Ford’s assembly line) when he explores the relationship between the spatial formation and capitalism, thinking that capitalism creates a more and more universal sense of “historical time” (that is, the “time” can be measured and standardized). He [contrarily](#) observes that the capitalism eliminates spatial barrier because “the space is annihilated by time.” See David Harvey’s *Urban Experience*: Oxford: Basil Blackwell P, 1989.

of “consumption of modern commodity” into the rural area may enable a “loss of the peasantry”<sup>7</sup> in rural villages and accelerates the rural people’s “rapid adoption of fashion from the city” (Lefebvre, 1996, 71-2). This adoption of fashion from the urban also affects the style of architecture building and changes the countryside landscape that is usually featured with classical country houses.

The classical country house setting in Christie’s detective novels also undergoes an urbanizing process in the postwar era. Under the development of the urbanization, the rural country houses and village streets are juxtaposed with the massive construction of new buildings. Even the old and historical houses are added with modern interior design and modern technology (electric appliances). This “hybridity” found in the urbanizing process presents a new perception and differential landscape of the rural area. The landscape of “urban-rural hybridity,” concomitant with the juxtaposition of the historical inheritance and the new fashion, nurtures a new artistic aesthetics. The high development of the industrial society results in massive mechanic reproductions. Under this situation, the primary and “genuine” beauty of work of art disappears due to this advanced technology of reproducing “faked” artistic works.

The scholars of Frankfurt School, like Walter Benjamin, observe a negative impact of this new social reality. Benjamin points out that the society is gradually dominated by a capitalist modernity and that people in this reality are likely to be nullified and “intoxicated” by a kind of “ennui (dull and boring) experience.”<sup>8</sup> He also argues that the “aura,” the mysterious halo around a work of art, is degenerating because of the massive manufacturing of replica in the age of industrial manufacture and mechanical reproduction. Echoing Lefebvre and Harvey, who suggest the idea of

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<sup>7</sup> According to Lefebvre, the “loss of peasantry” indicates that a rural village may remain rural when the urban fabric expands into the rural area, but lose what was peasant life experience in the past, including the traditional crafts and small local shops (substituted by modern shopping centers and supermarkets). See Lefebvre’s *Writing on Cities*. p.71.

<sup>8</sup> The word “ennui” is originally from French. It means boredom and feeling of weariness and dullness.

social reality dominated by a rational and disciplinary control of space and time, Benjamin further suggests a possible escape from this control through a human subject's autonomous practice of a space of "elbow room"<sup>9</sup> in a *Messianic* time.<sup>10</sup> Benjamin's thought offers an insight into the complexity and ambiguity of the industrialized and capitalistic society.

Christie's detective novels, written in the postwar age of industrialization and prevalence of capitalism, cannot avoid presenting the everyday life in this trend of social changes. The high development of industrialization increasingly counts on the circulation of money (capital) to improve manufacturing technologies in factories and to promote the selling market. In this sense, the power of money becomes pivotal in postwar industrialized England. It also arouses the rising of "middle class dissidents" who has fought to eradicate the "sense of class" (Sinfield 241-5). It is noteworthy that the hierarchical relationship between the privileged and the underprivileged is changing.

Besides the social relations, Christie's portrayal of some social changes in her age is also demonstrated in the urbanization of her country house setting in rural area. Several Christie's novels present an ambiguous interlocking of the new urban "fashion" and the old rural "atmosphere." The new rural landscape in her novels, under the impact of industrialization and urbanization, represents a new perception of

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<sup>9</sup> Please see the beginning part of Chapter One for more discussions of "the man of the crowd" and "elbow room." Benjamin insists that the flâneur (the aimless stroller in big city streets) is by no means Poe's "man of crowd" who totally loses his individual freedom and buries himself in the tide of the big-city crowd; rather, he demands an "elbow room" of his personal fantasy in order to pursue his individual autonomy. The original discussion of "man of the crowd," "elbow room" and "flâneur," please see Benjamin's *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyrical Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1976. pp. 35-66.

<sup>10</sup> In discussing the role of a historian, Benjamin regards the ordinary historian is content with establishing an arbitrary connection between various moments in history. However, to Benjamin, a historian should stop telling the history in a linear and continuous sequence; instead, he should embrace a new conception of a historicizing process, in which the totality and homogeneity of historical time should be viewed as fragmentary and discontinuous chips of *Messianic time*. See his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illumination*. Trans by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. pp. 253-67.

spatiotemporal dimension and even some new aesthetics rising out of the disciplinary and nullifying modernization of a social reality. Through an ambivalent and somehow negative perspective, Christie actually embraces a great concern about her society and attempts to picture an alternative life differentiating from what Benjamin calls a kind of *ennui* experience of the “boring” and “monotonous” spatio-temporal practices in an industrial society imbued with rational and functional measurements of space and time.

Christie discloses the functionality of space and time in her interwar and postwar detective novels by affiliating the using of space and of time with the abstract value of money. In *4.50 from Paddington* (1957), a rational and functional perception of space and time characterizes an industrial society. Mr. Crackenthorpe, “a manufacturer of sweet and savory biscuits, relishes, pickles... etc., accumulated a vast fortune” (65), is presented as an opportunist who always takes “earning money” into his prior consideration. For this reason, the measurement of “time”<sup>11</sup> is essential to him because he, like other capitalists, needs to use it to determine his laborers’ working hours and wage. He tells everyone that “[p]unctuality and economy. Those are my watchwords” (210). He also plans to sell his father’s country house and land “for industrial and building purposes” (124), thinking selling of the estate “is worth a considerable amount of money” (Ibid.). To him, the space of land signifies value of money.

According to David Harvey, measurement of time and trading of space in an industrial society may bring all space and time “under the single measuring rod of money value” (1989, 177). Money, in this sense, becomes mediator and regulator of all economic relations among individuals. Capitalist’s money may turn up to be “the

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<sup>11</sup> The measurement of “time” is an important issue when discussing the factory manufacturing process in the development of industrialization. It will be mainly examined in later part of this chapter.



abstract and universal measure of social wealth and the concrete means of expression of social power” (1989, 168). The integration of money with space and time in an industrialized society gives rise to the circulation and domination of capital flux, which represents a social function of money.

The social function of money affects the class relation in Christie’s postwar England. Because of postwar economic revival and job vacancies offered by capitalists’ investment, more and more middle-class family can afford to pay for a governor and house servants. In *A Pocket full of Rye* (1953), Miss Marple suggests to Inspector Neele that “it’s really very easy nowadays, with the shortage of domestic staff to obtain a [(job)] post where you want one [(because)] [s]taff are changing the whole time” (203). Christie’s sarcastic view of the “easy access” to working opportunity manifests the fact that it is not impossible for working class to become multi-millionaires if they are willing to find a job and work hard. Viewed from Miss Marple’s words, the working class may accumulate their fortune through their own efforts and then find a possible path to sit in a lap of luxury like rich capitalists do. In this sense, the class consciousness may gradually wane in this age of industrialization.

Mary Dove, an aggressive girl from a poor family who is hired by Rex Fortescue, the rich capitalist in *A Pocket full of Rye*, as the governor of his country lodge household, can be regarded as a (proletarian) working class<sup>12</sup> who exchanges the capitalist’s wage with her hard-working labor in the production mode of an industrial society. Yet, she prides herself on being a hard-to-get employee and endeavors to put on air like a rich middle class does. She tells inspector Neele, a policeman who investigates the murder of Rex Fortescue:

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Edel, in discussing capitalism and urbanization, argues that “the lack of capital and the need to find a job working for others can define the working class, the proletariat.” See his “Capitalism, Accumulation and the Explanation of Urban Phenomena” in Ed. Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott. *Urbanization & Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*. Methuen: London and New York, 1981. pp. 19-44.

I've no feeling of loyalty to my employers. I work for them because it's a job that pays well and I insist that it should pay well. (29)

The class consciousness does not mean a lot to her because she maintains a self-dignity as a great employee who deserves an employer's good offer.

The declining of class consciousness is also demonstrated in other house servants in Fortescue's country house. Mr. Crump, Rex Fortescue's butler, even expresses a grudge against the class relations between him and his "aristocratic-like" master. Grumbling "a fig for the aristocracy" (86) to Fortescue, this butler tends to complain the class inequality and ignore the "aristocratic" stand of his employer. Like Mary Dove, who works without loyalty to her employer, he always timely takes his day-off and never overworks for his employer by murmuring that "[i]t's my day off and I'm goin' off" (Ibid.). Under Christie's portrayal, the relationship between the employee (the laborer) and employer (capitalist) is actually contracted upon the exchange of money; there is no personal loyalty and affection in this relationship.

Besides this changing relationship in the domestic household, Christie's stories also express the social background of an industrial and capitalistic society at that time. She harbors a nostalgic feeling of an idyllic and harmonious social relation in the past generation. To her, the capitalism in her age of industrialization and urbanization disrupts the tranquil and pastoral tradition of Victorian/Edwardian rural life experience and radically changes the social relations. Her detectives witness the rise of rich middle class (the capitalist) and the changing social relations under the impact of industrialization and urbanization. The appearance of a detective hero correspondingly affiliates with the rising need of the bourgeoisie and the development of capitalism.

The middle class (rich capitalists) in Christie's works appeal to a private master detective, not official police, for seeking help when they feel that someone threatens

to grab away their money or even their life. Earnest Mandel, when discussing the origin of detective stories in the middle nineteenth century, observes that the bourgeois protect their private property when they gradually accumulate fortune and become rich in an era of nascent capitalism. He further argues that the state apparatus functions as an institution against the middle class capitalists because the nation state institutionalizes taxation system extracting their fortune. The middle class's fear of the private property being deprived by the state finally turns into "ideological support of private property" (8) and leads them to fight in efforts "to consolidate its economic and social power" (12). These capitalists, therefore, are hostile to state apparatus and even to the police who exert the law endorsed by nation-state bureaucracy.

Seen in this light, when the fortune or the life of the middle class is threatened, they no more "trust" the state apparatus; instead, they appeal to the private detective's assistance, rather than the police's official investigation. In Christie's novels, the private detective's non-official means of spatiotemporal practices may provide the middle class a way to break away from the dominant and discursive control of social institutions. What happened in the middle nineteenth century society which Mandel observes similarly recurred in postwar England in the middle twentieth century.

In *4.50 from Paddington*, the rich capitalist Mr. Crackenthorpe, living in an urbanized rural small town surrounded by manufacturing factories, is hostile to the nation state and distrusts the police force of the state apparatus. The nation-state may serve as a "robber" who enacts a taxation system and threatens to turn a rich capitalist into a miserable pauper (210). In fact, the British government has already posed a threat of "the gradual rise in taxation and death duty" to the rich capitalists since the Edwardian period (Thompson 257). In this regard, the nation-state "is not an autonomous entity; rather, it symbolizes the balance of power among classes at any given time" (Clark and Dear 53).

As noticed earlier, the postwar society also characterizes the rise of rich bourgeois as the ruling class which “conspires” with “bureaucratic elite”<sup>13</sup> and then forms a primary institution “to serve the capitalist interest” (Ibid.). However, when the “national interest” (the need of financial support for massive constructions and social welfare) is higher than the “capitalist interest,” the bureaucratic elite have to enact some policies to extract “money” from capitalists for the “national interest,” which unavoidably conflicts with the “capitalist interest.” A nation-state, to a capitalist, turns out to be a powerful institution exploiting capitalist’s revenue.

The nation-state also symbolizes a political and economic center which *exerts* “a wide range of dispossession” (Twynning 3) and primarily forms an urban city center. The spatial dimension of city space turns segregated, and each fragmentation “performs a special function” (Twynning 4) to support the national consolidation. Besides observing a close tie between the social power of money and national state, David Harvey notices the interrelation of circulation of money and the urbanizing process. To him, the circulation of money (capital) is still “under the ambiguous and often shaky surveillance of the state” (1989, 229). The demand of labor for industrial manufacturing and rising of consumption market lead to a gathering of people with various classes; and then an apparatus of political-economic power is exercised and initiates a space of power that enacts a hierarchical and disciplinary control. This space (building) of authorial administration is proved to be a place for executing an urban plan and the origin of an urban development. Hence, “an urban centre of decision-making, wealth, power, of information and knowledge” (Lefebvre, 1996, 195) is formed.

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<sup>13</sup> According to Clark and Dear, the “bureaucratic elite” refer to the top-ranking officials who perform the political and economical policy of a national bureaucracy. They often have a good relation with the rich capitalists. This punctuates a close tie between the social power of money and national state. The rapid development of industrialization and urbanization accompanied by expansion of capitalism indirectly accelerate the rise of an urban center and a political/economical center of decision—the nation-state bureaucracy.

Yet, the concept of enforcing a decision-making center and that of the distinction of binary oppositions have turned pale in Christie's postwar England. The booming terrace houses and apartment buildings in suburban and rural area blurred the boundary between the city and the countryside. Under the industrialization and urbanization process, more and more rural villages are "swallowed" and then "digested" by the new cultural trend from the urban city. Through modern transportations, the urban center "extends itself into the heart of the rural hinterland" (Murray 197). Henceforth, "[t]he values of the city and the villages it has 'digested' have been carried by commuters into the depth of the hinterland" (Ibid.). Under the development of transport means, like rail system, electric trams, buses and even private car, more and more people, especially rich middle class, move to rural area and become commuters. These transportation means influence "the spatial arrangement of the city and [leads] to the rise of suburb" (Thorns 17). Again, in *A Pocket full of Rye*, Christie's capitalists intend to buy houses in "rural pockets" around London (43) because they do not take much time for going to city for work. The rural pockets indicate the rural area adjacent to London—the urban center—and imply the expansion of urbanization, or the Lefebvrian discursive "urban fabric," into the rural countryside.

Due to the increasing population and the building of factory for industrial manufacture in suburban area, the urbanizing process gradually extends its fabric into suburban or rural domain. This can be exemplified in another Christie's novel—*Hallowe'en Party* (1969), in which Woodleigh Common, a new community located in suburban London, is "one of those places where there are a few nice houses, but where a certain amount of new building has been done" (23). Like the surroundings of "rural pockets" in *A Pocket full of Rye*, the new urban project in *Hallowe'en Party* spreads the urban landscape to rural pockets in order to solve the

problem of over-crowding. These new buildings are not far away from the city center, and in these places “people can commute from there to London” (Ibid.) by public transportation, like railway system. In *A Pocket full of Rye*, the murdered rich capitalist’s country house is located at a small town called Baydon Heath, where is “only twenty miles from London and [is] comparatively easy to reach by car even in the rush of morning and evening traffic” (13). With “excellent train service” (Ibid), the rural pockets are inhabited by rich city people who travel between the city and the country. The ubiquitous railway routes in the rural pockets shorten the physical distance and then bridge the differences of living between urban area and rural area; it also serves as an “urban fabric” constituting an urban network that encompasses a whole area, and then urbanizes it. While the railway connects the big city and small towns, it paves a path for criminal to run to the countryside and to disturb the tranquility of rural small towns. If the urban city can be seen as a hotbed for breeding crime, the criminal’s running away from city to country can manifest that the rural is “contaminated” and “criminalized” by the urban. This process can be regarded as another sequence of urbanization caused by the advancement of industrialization—especially the invention of quicker modern transportations.

Several Christie’s crime stories are focusing on the commuting crime from the urban to the rural. In *4.50 from Paddington*, a murder of a woman takes place on a train departing at London Paddington station and bounding for a rural small town. The murderer is seen getting off and running away into the rural area, where “is ringed round now with building estates and small suburban houses” (29). The detective, Miss Marple, starts her investigation in a country house owned by a rich capitalist. Yet, the country house setting, which the Golden Age detective novelists like to romanticize in their novels, gradually loses its pastoral and serene atmosphere in this novel because this type of setting is little by little absorbed into an industrializing and urbanizing

process.

The rural small town actually turns into what Chris Murray called “urban village” (191). This forming of “urban village” undermines the binary distinction between the urban and the rural as well as that between the city and the country. The investment of manufacturing industry in suburban or rural area accelerates the urbanizing process and helps develop this urban village. Rutherford Hall, the country house built by a rich capitalist in this novel, is surrounded by “railway embankment” and by “a high wall which enclosed some tall factory buildings” (36). The tall factory buildings change the rural landscape and signify the capitalist’s investment and the discursive dynamism of capital flow for “industrial purposes” (175). Also, the building of railway from the city to the rural small town signals the advanced development of industrialization and the expansion of urbanization into the rural area. This country house setting in Christie’s industrialized and urbanized England, notably, has turned into a typical urbanized rural landscape.

These newly massive constructions in suburban or rural area encroach the once peaceful country life and create an area where the boundary of the big city and the small country town becomes vague. More crucially, within this area, “the countryside [loses] itself into the heart of the city, and the city [absorbs] the countryside and [loses] itself in it” (Lefebvre, 1996, 120). Lefebvre calls this ambiguous process “the rurban” (Ibid.), which combines the two words “rural” and “urban” because it is difficult to tell the distinction between the “urbanization” of rural area and the “ruralization” of the urban area. For this reason, the “aura” of traditional country house setting in Christie’s novels gradually turns indistinct, replaced by a new “rurban” landscape.

The classical country house setting in Christie’s detective novels is no more featured with its idyllic atmosphere and secluded countryside. Yewtree Lodge, a rural country house in *A Pocket full of Rye*, is gradually intruded by “the rash of

newly-built red brick houses . . . [spreading] over the countryside” (25). Thus, when Inspector Neele sees newly-built houses surrounding the country house, he feels that the country house actually “[isn’t] in the country” (24). For him, the expansion of urbanization into the countryside has already changed the rural landscape, so the countryside is no more with rural atmosphere. What causes the radical change in country scene is the discursive flow of capital (Harvey, 1981, 103), which consequently changes the landscape in rural area.

Both David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre notice the relation between the capitalism (capital circulation) and spatial dimension in an industrial and capitalistic society. However, Harvey focuses on how the capital circulation forms a new spatio-temporal perception and affects the social relations (especially between capitalist and laborer) within an urban area. Lefebvre, expanding Harvey’s theory of urban experience, concerns not only the capitalism and spatial representation but also the impact of capitalism on the urbanization of rural area. To Harvey, the capital circulation affects an urbanizing process, which extends and reshapes the domain of commercial activity as well as culminates in a “geographical structure of commodity markets” (1989, 18). Similarly, Lefebvre observes that a “place of consumption” (1996, 73) may become an “urban core” that produces a space of buying and selling commodity and burgeons a primary development of an urban center, and it later turns out to be a place of decision-making and of information where more and more population assembles. Then, this urban core soon expands its “urban fabric” (mainly by modern transportation means) into its adjacent (rural) area with massive people’s migration and newly-built houses. This boom of urban expansion radically modifies the old and traditional country house setting in the countryside.

As noted earlier, the land surrounding the country house in Christie’s postwar novels is sold for industrial purpose or is encompassed into a new urban planning.



Although the landscape in high street of most small rural towns remains the same, a new cultural trend has already changed the original rural atmosphere. Poirot, in *Third Girl* (1966), seems to perceive a “loss of peasantry” and an intruding of urban culture when he walks along the high street of a rural village, thinking:

What had lately been the local grocer’s had now blossomed into calling itself “a supermarket”. . . And there was a small establishment with one small window . . . a fashion display of one French blouse, labeled “Latest chic.” (28).

What Poirot perceives is an urban experience reproduced in a small rural town. The traditional and local grocery stores are gradually substituted by modern supermarkets. This substantiates that a trendy fashion is blown into the rural village and the serene life experience in the countryside is sequentially disappearing.

In *Mirror Crack’d* (1962), Miss Marple and her rural townsfolk frequently convey a discontent undertone toward this boom of massive and newly-built housing estates in rural pockets and the new fashionable trend brought from urban city to rural small town. They call this urban cultural trend “The Development,” or “Planning” (2-4) and regard this “big building ‘Development’ of housing estates” as “a new social life [springing] up here” (101). Poirot and Miss Marple, two master sleuths in Christie’s novels, can embody old (late-Victorian and Edwardian) cultural values and witness the emergence of a new industrialized and capitalistic culture.<sup>14</sup> This

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<sup>14</sup> When examining the formation and transformation of culture, Raymond Williams regards that the three elements shaping the cultural formation are emergent culture, dominant culture and residual culture. An emergent culture is the early and burgeoning development of a later consequential dominant culture. A residual culture is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture and vacillates between being-incorporated or not-being-incorporated with the dominant culture. Born and raised in a rich middle-class family and in the age of late-Victorian and of Edwardian, Agatha Christie still embraces the old cultural value and conservative thinking of her age when faced with an emergence (and later a domination) of a new industrialized and capitalistic culture. This old cultural value and thinking in Christie’s postwar detective novels can be seen as a residual culture ambiguously existing as an intermediated phase between the end of previously dominant cultures (late-Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian culture) as well as the rise of an emergent culture and, later, a new dominant culture (capitalistic and postwar culture). For the discussion of cultural formation, please see Raymond

development of urban planning in countryside leads to a “rurban” phenomenon and exhibits a “hybridity” of urban landscape and rural one. The spatial dimension in the urbanization of the rural area or in the “ruralization” of the urban area suggests an ambiguous domain where a new and alternative aesthetic occurs especially in the aspect of modern architecture.

In *The Clocks* (1963), the country house, refurnished with modern interior designs and electric appliances, demonstrates a kind of “modern taste” (4). Yet, this modern taste is featured with its ambivalent mingling of the past tradition and the present trend, thanks to the fact that an emerging new taste is still inseparable from a residual old aesthetics before it becomes an effective and dominant socio-cultural value. In the beginning of *The Mirror Crack’d*, Christie actually delineates an architecture with modern aesthetic that equivocally combines the feature of an “old-world-charm” (3) in previous generations and that of “the brave new world” (10) in a new generation. The old and historical country house, with the “faded Victorian gentility,” juxtaposes with modern architectures which are featured especially with “inhumanity of [the] block of flats” (203). More notably, the ancient architecture in a new social reality actually remains its historical appearance, but its interior, like modern bathrooms, kitchens, and sitting rooms, is refurnished “with a view to immediate and intemperate *modernization*” (3, emphasis mine). This ambiguous combination of the old and the new as well as that of the past and the present indicate a new kind of modernist aesthetics in an intermediate process of social changes, which is reflected on Christie’s country house setting under an urbanizing process in her postwar novels.

Hilde Heynen, when discussing the relationship between architecture and

modernity, gives a definition of “modernization,” stating:

The term *modernization* is used to describe the social process of social development, the main features of which are technological advances and industrialization, urbanization and population explosion, the rise of bureaucracy and increasingly powerful national states. . . and expanding (capitalist) world market. (10)

What Heynen highlights for the definition of “modernization” is the effects of industrialization accompanied by expansion of capitalism, enhancement of nation-state bureaucracy, and development of urbanizing process. This homogenizing and normalizing process in politics (“powerful” institutions), economy (industrial development and commodity market) and urbanization (massively newly-built architecture in rural area) forms a rational modernity and a modern aesthetic.

In terms of Raymond Williams, both the not-being-incorporated “residual” cultural value in previous generations and the “emergent” new culture in the coming age curtail the “dominance” of a mainstream culture, turning the socio-cultural formation into an ambiguous and intermediated phase before a homogenizing and normalizing process of a new culture is stabilized.

Christie observes not only a “residual” late-Victorian/Edwardian cultural value but also an emergence and later a dominance of an industrial and capitalistic society in postwar England; accordingly, she presents an intermediated phase of an industrialization and urbanization development in her detective novels. The ambiguity in the transformation process of social change, like the changing class relations between the capitalist and working class as well as the “rurban” phenomenon in urbanized rural small towns, exhibits a social critique of the homogenization of an industrial and capitalistic society. The revelation and self-consciousness of a modernization process suggest a “breaking with the continuity with the past” (Heynen

221) and nurture a sort of new modern aesthetics, a social discourse of reflexive modernity and a sense of uncertainty,<sup>15</sup> in this new social reality.

In *Hallowe'en Party*, a new aesthetics is conceived by an ambivalent coalescence of a dull landscape of industrial quarry and an artistic design of classical garden. This substantiates that the modern aesthetics is under a process of cultural transition in an age of social change. In this novel, an industrial site, where is later turned into an artistic location, can be regarded as a place signifying this changing trend in Christie's contemporary England. A rich woman buys a big Victorian house with a disused quarry; then, she spends a lot of money turning this quarry into a sunk garden. The disused quarry coincides with the development of industrialization that turns the original natural wilderness into "a dull part of the English landscape" (94). However, Michael Garfield, the architect with artistic talent hired by this rich woman to build the quarry garden, combines the trace of "the pursuit of industry" (96) and the artistic design of an English garden. This juxtaposition of two different features creates an alternative perspective of aesthetics in an industrial society. Poirot praises this young artist for creating "qualities of magic, or enchantment, certainty of beauty, bashful beauty, yet wild" (92). The operation of the quarry stands for an expansion of industrialization and capitalist's investment into the rural wilderness. As mentioned before, this industrial expansion gives impetus to an urbanizing process, which consequently absorbs the rural area into a kind of urban renewal. The young architect in *Hallowe'en Party* can be regarded as an artist who endows an urban renewal with artistic significance by creating a new kind of aesthetics out of a dull and industrial

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<sup>15</sup> According to Hilde Heynen, the modern architecture is featured with a lost balance between "inner experience" and "outward forms" and an eradication of the distinct boundary between the interior and the exterior, the public space and private space as well as the continuity of a tradition and the disruption of this tradition. More precisely, the main feature of modern aesthetic lies in its ambiguous and self-reflexive projection. This projection displays both the homogeneous/normalized modernity and its sense of uncertainty, which indicates the fact that the "center" cannot hold. See his *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology P, 1999. pp. 79-80.

stone-hacking site.

The Swedish scholar Jerker Söderlind discusses the central role of artist in the project of urban renewal, arguing that “[a]rtist could play a more active role in city renewal and planning than today. . . [(especially)] in old industrial areas as well as in socially segregated housing area” (337). In *Hallowe'en Party*, this artistic quarry garden near an undeveloped wilderness within an urban planning housing area can exemplify the urban renewal which “[generates] new neighbourhood spaces and breathing new life into old environment” (Murray 203). In this regard, this novel exhibits a sense of ambiguity, a contradictory between industrialized “culture” and wild “nature,” between new planning (urban) area and old undeveloped (rural) area. Moreover, it may implicate a type of unrestrained aesthetic from a dull, disciplinary and rational (scientific and industrial) control of a social reality.

Turning the “industrial” landscape (the ruin of an industrial site) into an artistic creation, Christie’s young artist in this novel intends to escape from the normalized and rational control of an industrial society and capitalistic modernity with a view to achieving his brand new artistic vision. However, this young artist, whose artistic talent Poirot praises so much, is indeed a murderer. A criminal, he employs his creativity as a possible getaway from the constraint of rational modernity.

In *Hallowe'en Party*, the master detective Poirot regards the young artist is “the follower of Lucifer the beautiful (*sic*)” and his art is “evil” (230), attempting to get away from lawful penalty with his personal artistic vision. Near the end of the novel, the artist even entices a beautiful teenaged girl into sacrificing herself for a heathen ritual worship. He says to the girl:

You die so that other should live. You die so that beauty should live.

Should come into being. That’s the important thing. (214)

This artist’s pursuit of a “satanic” beauty by means of an unorthodox ritual presents an

illegal crime against the secular law. In addition, this unorthodox ritual typifies a sense of fleeting beauty that the rational and normalized modernity in an industrial and capitalistic society cannot keep under control.

This unrestrained and fleeting beauty creates an “artistic atmosphere” (92) in the age of industrialization and capitalism. To Poirot, the rural landscape and its natural wilderness, where remains “untouched” by industrialization and urbanization, may maintain an idyllic atmosphere and mysterious aura of a country house setting, in which a shocking murder takes place. This unique atmosphere can affiliate with Benjamin’s “aura” which evinces an esoteric ambience through a person’s particular perception of a specific space and time. This unique atmosphere of country house seems to fade in *Hallowe’en Party*. In this novel, Poirot does not expect a murder to take place in Woodleigh Common, originally a rural village and later a new community under an urban project. Often investigating murder cases in isolated country houses located in outlandish rural area, Poirot perceives something wrong when he probes into a murder case in a rural small town under the impact of urbanization, saying that this town is “[a] very unsuitable place for a murder” (50). He feels that a unique and mysterious halo that encompasses the rural country house has been lost. Owing to this development of industrialization and urbanization, the original “beauty” of the isolated country house setting in classical detective novels gradually disappears.

Seen in a literary scope, the urbanization in an industrial and capitalistic society affects the development of detective writings, especially the traditional country house setting in detective novels. Christie’s postwar detective works, like *The Mirror Crack’d* (1962), *The Clocks* (1963), and *Third Girl* (1966), move a murder scene from idyllic and isolated countryside to an industrialized and urbanized small town. The changing atmosphere in her works also unveils the fact that the social background of

her detective writing is different from that of other classical detective works.

This changing social background is mainly shown on the shifting from rural country house setting in classical Golden Age detective novels to urban city street setting in hard-boiled detective works. Then, the atmosphere of the British country house setting in these Christie's postwar detective novels begins to partake with that of the urban street setting in American hard-boiled detective novels. Hard-boiled detective novelists, like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, stress an interrelation between criminality and urban space. Their novels are highlighted with "the space in the urban field that had been labeled the 'breeding places' of the criminal underworld" (Heise 506). The Golden Age detective novelists<sup>16</sup> prefer the country house setting as a site of committing crime because it can cultivate a mysterious atmosphere of a crime scene in wilderness as well as a sense of distance and segregation from a rational and urban center. However, the hot-boiled detective novelists bring the main stage of crime investigation back to the urban center and regard the city as a hotbed for breeding crime. Christie's *The Clocks* (1963) and *Third Girl* (1966) reveal a criminal underworld in the urban field of the big city London (see this discussion in Chapter Two). This trend of urbanization affected by industrialization and capitalism enables her country house setting, which is surrounded by factories and modern buildings, to be encapsulated into an urban domain. Poirot mostly remains as usual a gentle armchair detective and favors sitting on his armchair for pondering over entangled murder cases. He often asks all persons to come together in a sitting-room for listening to his analytic and ratiocinative conclusion within a country house. Nevertheless, he sometimes resembles a

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<sup>16</sup> These major detective novelists in Golden Age period, according to Stephen Knight, are including E. C. Bentley, G. K. Chesterton, S. S. Van Dine, Ellery Queen, Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie. See Stephen Knight's "The Golden Age" in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. Ed. Martin Priestman. Cambridge UP, 2003. pp.77-94. In my discussion, it is questionable that Agatha Christie is categorized as a Golden Age detective novelists because she reveals several differences from the writing conventions found in other Golden Age detective novelists.

hard-boiled detective, experiencing an adventurous and hide-and-seek game with the criminals in a nearby suburban community crammed with newly-built block of flat or big streets.

With this ambiguous setting under the impact of industrialization and urbanization, Christie's crime stories in postwar period exemplify an intermediated stage in the development of detective writings, a stage between traditional detective stories and American hard-boiled trend. The juxtaposing setting of rural country houses with urban city streets in her novels manifest that the urban field expands its fabric into the countryside. The countryside gradually loses its peasantry and serene atmosphere.

Under this urbanizing process, the social relations in classical detective novels, as observed earlier, is also shifting. In Christie's postwar detective novels, the victims are no longer upper-class aristocracy in some classical detective stories who inherit abundant legacy from their noble family; they turn out to be rich middle-class capitalists who accumulate considerable fortune by their own efforts. Though the murder motif is the same, the replacement of the aristocracy by the rich upper middle class as victims signifies the collapse of the social hierarchy.

The self-made middle class people may become rich and obtain a better living circumstance in an industrial and capitalistic society, but they also fall into the prey of the "rational" control of the everyday life. Put it another way, the concomitant effect of (scientific) industrialization and (normalizing) urbanization gives rise to a rational mode of a disciplinary and regulating control that formulates people's daily life experience—a perception of dullness and boredom which Benjamin views as an *ennui* experience. This *ennui* experience relatively insinuates a kind of people's primal perception of beauty toward the work of art before the "disciplinary rationalization" of industrialization that starts the massive mechanical reproduction. In wake of



Benjamin's thought, the work of art signals an essence of "thing in flight"<sup>17</sup> that contains an essence of "the truth content" (1996, 297). That is, his definition of "work of art" denotes a quintessential truth and a fleeting and ephemeral beauty that often escapes and cannot be permanently pinned down by human's rational perception for functional practice. Benjamin actually notices the fading "aura" in works of art in an industrialized society and lays stress on an artistic aesthetics for the essence of things.

Similarly, the urbanization process in rural small town described in Christie's novels provides a stimulus to a waning "atmosphere" of rural beauty. As suggested before, Poirot perceives that the rural country house has lost its primal atmosphere and even becomes an unsuitable place as the main stage of a murder case. The disappearing of a unique atmosphere in a country house, where the rural mansion surrounded by the massive "reproductions" of modern urban buildings, may resemble, to a larger extent, a loss of aura in works of art.

In some of Christie's works, her adding the character's concern about the artistic works into the detective novels unusually marks her different treatment of plot from classical detective works in which the theme of rational control is much emphasized.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in Christie's postwar detective novels, artistic works cannot be

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<sup>17</sup> In discussing flâneur, the aimless dandy stroller in big city streets, Benjamin argues that the flâneur, "developing forms of reaction that are in keeping with the pace of a big city," is a true artist because he is able to catch things in flight with his dream-like and artistic vision. To Benjamin, the big city streets imply the disciplinary and rational control of an urban center in a capitalistic society that shackles the human subject's cognition, and only the flâneur can "reprieve" himself from the restraint of the rational control. Henceforth, he can see through the essence of things and find out the truth content of works of art. See his *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Tran. Harry Zohn. London: Verso, 1992. pp. 40-1.

<sup>18</sup> In the development of detective story, both Philo Vance (the great amateur sleuth in S. S. Van Dine's detective works) and Lord Peter Wimsey (the master detective in Dorothy L. Sayers's detective novels) have been described as a connoisseur with erudite knowledge and artistic taste. Christie is not the first detective novelist who affiliates the detective with artistic works. From the early development of Poe's Dupin in his detective stories to the Golden Age detective novel, the detectives, owing to his nobility and upper-class origin, are mostly portrayed as an art adorer who is with artistic taste or likes to collect artistic works. Nevertheless, these detective novelists only focus on the detective's artistic taste and seldom concern the artistic work itself in their detective novels. Christie, for this reason, still demonstrates her different treatment of the affiliation of detective with artistic work from other detective novelists.

separated from their link to the dominant cultural value in an industrialized and capitalistic society at that time. The artistic construction of sunk garden based on a disused quarry in *Hallowe'en Party* actually presents a new aesthetic perception of a dull landscape of an industrial quarry turned into an alive English garden with artistic beauty. What is important, the artist-murderer's artistic design of the quarry garden inspires the master detective Poirot and provides him with some essential clues to break a murder case. In this regard, the artistic work turns into a practical means of solving a murder mystery. More accurately, the work of art is endowed with functional significance in an early trend of industrialization and capitalistic society. This can be instanced by Christie's another novel—*The Mirror Crack'd* (1962).

In *The Mirror Crack'd*, an artistic photo “reproduced” by a modern technological camera and a “replica of an artistic painting “Laughing Madonna” foreground a practical and rational “function” of artistic works<sup>19</sup> in rendering the amateur sleuth, Miss Marple, to pin down the real murderer. In this novel, Christie's Miss Marple stands for a figure who cannot adjust herself to this new cultural trend of social change. When Miss Marple says that “St. Mary mead [(a rural small town)] was not the place it had been” (2), she seems to have a negative impression of urbanization and industrialization which change the traditional life experience and the rural landscape of the small town. Ironically enough, though she does not enjoy the modern life very much, it is the products of modern technologies, a photograph and a simulacrum of a painting, give her the insight into a murder case.

Miss Marple actually finds out a crucial clue in the photograph of a film star, who seems to have witnessed something horrific when this famous actress stares over a murdered victim's shoulder at the wall. This female star's expression is coincidentally

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<sup>19</sup> Benjamin actually interrogates the functional practice of “work of art” by instancing the German Fascist regime, which uses the artistic work for the purpose of “political propaganda.” See *Illumination*. Trans by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. pp. 223-4.

taken as a close-up by a photographer appointed by a film magazine company. Contemplating at this photo, Miss Marple notices that what shocks the film star is a painting copy of Bellini's "Laughing Madonna" hanging on the wall. The theme of the painting copy, a replica of work of art, is the harmonious and happy divine mother-child (the Holy Mother—Mary and Holy Child—Jesus Christ) relationship, but the painting turns out to be the one that gives a pivotal clue to enlighten Miss Marple to explain away the murder mystery. Inspired by a replica of work of art, she finally breaks the case and realizes that all puzzling riddles are the female star's scheme for diverting the police's attention in order to exonerate her murder crime.

In *Hallowe'en Party* and *The Mirror Crack'd*, the doctrine of "art for art's sake" seems to be incompatible with the cultural value of an industrialized and capitalistic society. The artistic painting (though a simulacrum) in *The Mirror Crack'd* and the artistic garden in *Hallowe'en Party* serve as a functional means for detectives to rationally pin down a murderer. This "art for 'functional' sake" undertone signifies the impact of rational control on works of art in an industrialized and capitalistic age. More relevantly, "functionality" is one of the important features regarding modernity (Savage 135), so it is not complicated to understand why Christie's artistic garden in *Hallowe'en Party* is associated with detective's ratiocinating inspiration. Yet, the deeper meaning of the painting copy in *The Mirror Crack'd* does not lie merely in its rational function as a helpful clue for the detective to solve the entangled murder case, but in manifesting something profound in an industrialized and capitalistic society—the loss of aura, which is what Benjamin adumbrates in his discussion of the impact of capitalism on human life.

To Benjamin, aura refers to the "authenticity" of a thing which "is the essence of all that is transmissible from the beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its history which it has experienced" (1986, 221). Put simply, aura indicates a "unique

existence” (in a specific time and space) of a work of art whose original and essential beauty “[withering] in the age of mechanical reproduction” (Ibid.). The fading of aura, according to him, is mainly due to the mechanical reproduction and the development of modern forms of art (such as film), in which there is no actual originality and genuity can be perceived.

In *The Mirror Crack'd*, the replica of artistic work, the painting “Laughing Madonna,” and the close-up photo of a film star illustrate Benjamin’s mechanical reproduction in an industrial and capitalistic society. In order to substantiate the withering of aura, Benjamin suggests that certain statues or paintings of Madonna, which remain “hidden” all year round in the cathedral cella, can instance the concealed beauty found in a “cult value” of works of art. However, once when these artistic works of Madonna come to light and are even reproduced for the function of exhibition, their “hidden” cult value may turn into “exhibition value,” and this leads to the liquidation of the aura in a work of art (1986, 224-5). Benjamin further argues that when the modern technology of photograph is applied by the official police for the purpose of establishing evidences of committing crime in a crime scene, the photograph implies not merely a withering of aura in an original scenery but also a “political significance” (1986, 226) of official and functional control of human life. Viewed in Benjamin’s perspective, the original painting of Bellini’s “Laughing Madonna” and the primary image of a film-star’s portrait in this novel are mechanically reproduced, consequently losing their aura when the “replicas” become exhibition items and even serve as a functional means for solving crimes.

To Benjamin, the film industry and film actor’s performance, too, can illustrate the fading of aura in an age of mechanical reproduction. He observes that the main difference between stage actor and film actor lies in the fact the former is presented to the public by the actor in person; while the latter is indirectly presented by camera, so

the “cult value,” a stage actor’s performing art and personal contact with audience, is withering away due to the invention of the modern technology—the camera (1986, 228-9). He actually poses critical comments on these productions or reproductions of modern technology resulted from the high development of industrialization.

Like Benjamin, Christie, in *The Mirror Crack’d*, seems to unfold a critical stance toward the mechanical reproduction and some social phenomenon under the impact of capitalism, like film industry and film staff. In this novel, a rich Hollywood film star, buying a luxury mansion and moving to a British urbanized small town, should turn out to be a cold-blooded murderer. In *The Body in the Library* (1942), a film director is even regarded as a “[p]oisonous young brute” and the whole film staff as “the decadent useless young jackanapes” (22) by the townsfolk. For her, young film people are “shrieking, noisy crowd” who have parties all night long (Ibid.). There is a generation gap between the young film staff and the old townsfolk.

The generation gap indicates cultural differences between the old cultural virtue and the young people’s new thinking in an industrialized and capitalistic society. The juxtaposition of the old residual culture and the new emergent culture within the framework of a dominant culture echoes what Raymond Williams calls an ambiguous and “non-metaphysical”<sup>20</sup> formation before a shifting of effective cultural dominance is finished. Christie’s nostalgia of her past years and critical attitude toward the “product” of mechanic reproduction in her detective novels disclose her discontent of the cultural trend in early industrial society. More crucially, this social reality is featured with functional spatio-temporal practices as well as a rational control of a disciplinary and repetitive daily life experience.

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<sup>20</sup> To Raymond Williams, the “metaphysical cultural (historical) formation suggest a “false totality.” That is, all dominant cultures are contingent and cannot permanently maintain its totality. The dominant culture may gradually decline and turn into a residual culture. A new emergent culture is also rising and will soon take the placement of the dominant culture. Williams prefers an ideal “non-metaphysical” state in an emergent culture practice without a manipulating control of an effective dominant culture. See *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. pp. 25-6.

Like Harvey and Lefebvre, Benjamin examines the relation between everyday life and spatiotemporal experiences in an industrial and capitalistic society. Yet, besides notifying the artistic value of work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, he explores the disciplinary and normalizing control of this social reality and suggests a possible escape from it. In discussing Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd," Benjamin has already noticed the interrelation between the city crowd and a social reality. Joe Moran, in discussing Benjamin's view of daily life in capitalistic society, argues that the boredom experience is aggravated owing to a homogenizing process of modernity "[penetrating] into the minutiae of ordinary lives by imposing repetitive and mechanical rhythms on work and leisure" (2003, 168). To Benjamin, the crowd embodies a social bond of rational modernity that manipulates a normalizing control on human behaviors. What this Poe's character observes is a "man of the crowd" who buries himself and loses his unique autonomy within a homogenizing process of a disciplinary and normalizing control of an urban city life. As such, a human subject like the "man of the crowd" is unable to "escape from the monotony of life and work under capitalism" (Moran, 2003, 169). This dull and monotonous life experience produces an *ennui* experience under the influence of capitalism.

Some of Christie's postwar detective novels present this kind of *ennui* experience. In *Hallowe'en Party*, Poirot seems to be tired of the disciplinary and regulating "times" and "space" in daily routine; he hates people's asking him of "times, dates and other impertinent questions," saying "*il y a des ennuis, vous comprenez*" (97).<sup>21</sup> Poirot expresses by far his antipathy of the rigid measurement of "time" and "place" for a date and normalizing social etiquette. The measurement of

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<sup>21</sup> This French sentence means "there are some kinds of boredom, you understand." As a retired Belgian police officer, Christie's master detective Poirot occasionally speaks French when he talks to his British friends.

“time,” in terms of Harvey, also indicates “a more and more universal sense of “historical time” (Harvey, 1989, 190) created by the demand of accuracy in industrialization as well as by the disciplinary and rational control of the industrial and capitalistic society. Besides, the selling or buying of “land” by the capitalist for industrial purpose turns out to be a measurement of space for trade. Measurable space and time are perceived as normal ones that function as a disciplinary and rational control to restrain human subject’s spatiotemporal cognition. Poirot suggests here that the younger generation has their own “up-to-date scientific knowledge and shrewd philosophy” (145). The scientific knowledge and logical thinking in the new age of industrialization and urbanization enhance the standardized measurements of space and time in daily life through a disciplinary control of a systematical rationality.

In Christie’s wartime and postwar novels, urban city and its surrounding urban villages are often depicted as a dull and boring place where daily routine and flow of massive crowd may encompass human subject into a modernizing circumstance. In the beginning part of *Hercules Poirot’s Christmas* (1938), a character seems to extremely abhor the city London, saying “London’s rather a terrible place, isn’t it?” (7). To this “observant man” (4), London is a “foul city” full of “incessant crowds—moving, hurrying, jostling” (3). He considers that all the “incessant and innumerable people are “[s]o alike, so horribly alike” (4). It is noteworthy that he may resemble Poe’s gumshoe-detective-like man who observes the massive flows of man crowd in the city London. This feeling of “depressing uniformity” (Ibid.) displays the fact that the social crowd in a capitalistic city and urbanized rural villages are gradually absorbed into a banal and homogenized sameness, lacking critical awareness of the latent enforcement of the disciplinary and normalizing control of space and time.

Seen in Benjamin’s light, these rigid and dull routines, or the disciplinary and

rational perceptions of space and time, cause life to be futile and even spiritually barren—a kind of *ennui* (boredom) experience. The experience of boredom helps develop “a critical awareness of those activities which are ordinarily too banal or repetitive to merit attention” (Moran 175). More precisely, the social crowd, whose daily life is bound to the shackle of normalized spaces and times under the manipulation of industrial and capitalistic modernity, can possess an autonomous space of “elbow room” to “escape” from daily routines and harbor a critical consciousness toward this banal and boring life experience.

In contrast with David Harvey’s measurable “historical time” of a social reality dominated by capitalistic modernity, Benjamin borrows the mysterious doctrine of Judaism to constitute his new conception of the *Messianic time*. To him, people living in an industrialized and capitalistic society are confined to a disciplinary space and time, a fixed historical mode of existence. The *Messianic time* refers to a static state and inconsistent fragments of the progressive and continuous *historical time*. A human subject, in order to separate (or escape) himself from this fixed historical mode of existence, should be like a flâneur, who possesses his own space of an “elbow room” in the moment of *Messianic time* that enables him to flee from the social reality under a disciplinary and rational control. In a similar vein, this momentary alienation<sup>22</sup> from a (capitalistic) social reality blazes a trail to envision a human subject with a brand new perception of life experience and provides a possible path to perceive a sort of momentarily and primarily fleeting beauty (in a unique existence of space and time). The unique perception of life and artistic aesthetics can reshape the dull and boring cognition of modernized spaces and times. More important, this

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<sup>22</sup> Benjamin emphasizes that a human subject (a flâneur) has to return back to his capitalistic social reality and indirectly implies that the human subject cannot be separated permanently from this social reality. However, a temporal state of alienation renders a possible escape from the historical mode of existence (in fixed spaces and times) when a human subject perceives the “ennui” experience of the dull and boring life of daily routine. See also Benjamin’s *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyrical Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1976. pp. 103-54.



temporal alienation from a historical existence of fixed spaces and times enhances a distant but critical consciousness of the disciplinary and rational control of everyday life.

Christie's interwar and postwar novels mentioned in this chapter spotlight a trend of social changes, including various social phenomena in an early development of industrialization and its later development of interlocking with urbanization under the impact of capitalism. More notably, these social changes are acutely demonstrated by social masses' rising questioning about as well as their "dreaming" escaping (with artistic vision) from the rational and functional measurements of space and time that are epitomized by their everyday life experience.

This reflexive consciousness of the daily and repetitive life experience in an industrialized and capitalistic society presents a transitory process of a societal formation. It ambiguously emanates a self-reflexive critique of the disciplinary and rational manipulation of an industrialized and capitalistic society, which resembles Ulrich Beck's first modernization in a social formation of an industrialized society. In a later and high development of this social reality, the cultural dynamic of social changes may lead to a second and reflexive modernization in a new social reality, or a rising Beckian risk society. Christie actually suggests a first modernizing process of industrialization and urbanization and simultaneously punctuates an uncertain state in a process of a second and reflexive modernization. This illuminates her critical awareness of an intermediate phase of a social reality in her age.

Her detective works present an interrogative attitude toward the modernizing process of a social reality in industrialized and urbanized England. In these novels, besides the portrayals of her postwar society, her self-reflexive consciousness of writing evinces her meta-narratives and "intertextual" writing of detective stories. Christie does not just interrogate the dominant social and cultural value but also

criticize the great tradition of literary writing. Thus, a new aesthetic perspective of reflexive modernity and a sort of critical awareness are evinced by her meta-narratives of the socio-cultural value and of literary form of novel-writing. This will be examined in the following chapter.