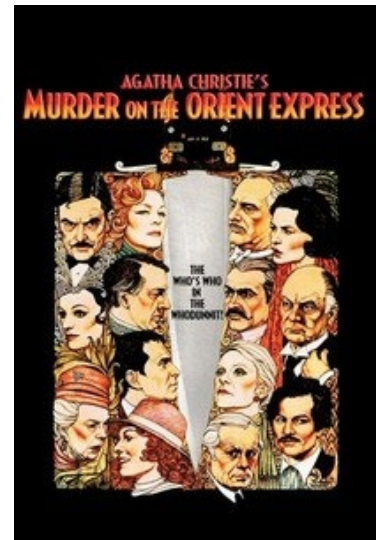


MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Film versions

1974 feature film directed by Sidney Lumet, starring Albert Finney as Hercule Poirot (all-star cast included Lauren Bacall, Ingrid Bergman, Vanessa Redgrave, Sean Connery, John Gielgud, Anthony Perkins), 128 minutes

2001 CBS made-for-television starring Alfred Molina as Poirot (with computers!), 100 minutes



2010 ITV; part of long-running ITV series featuring David Suchet as Poirot, 89 minutes

2015 Japanese mini-series *Orient Kyuukou Satsujin Jiken* featuring new character based on Hercule Poirot, Suguro Takeru, following main plot with story taking place in Japan. 4 hours 40 minutes



2017 feature film directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh as Poirot, 114 minutes

Crime fiction with trains

Agatha Christie, *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928)

Graham Greene, *Stamboul Train* (1932)*

Agatha Christie, *Murder in the Calais Coach / Murder on the Orient Express* (1934)*

Agatha Christie, *The 4:50 from Paddington* (1957)

Mary Roberts Rinehart, *The Man in Lower Ten* (1906)

Dorothy B. Hughes, *Dread Journey* (1945)

Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train* (1950)

Paula Hawkins, *The Girl on the Train* (2015)

Sulari Gentill, *Five Found Dead* (2025)*

Eva Jurczyk, *6:40 to Montreal* (2025)

Quotations from books:

“What to my mind is so interesting in this case is that we have none of the facilities afforded to the police. We cannot investigate the bona fides of any of these people. We have to rely solely on deduction. That, to me, makes the matter very much more interesting. There is no routine work. It is a matter of the intellect” (Christie 192).

“We are cut off from all the normal routes of procedure. Are these people speaking the truth or lying? We have no means of finding out—except such means as we can devise ourselves” (Christie 232).

M Bouc comments to Poirot early in the novel, looking around the dining car, that “If I had but the pen of a Balzac! I would depict this scene. . . . It has not been done, I think? And yet—it lends itself to romance, my friend. All around us are people, of all classes, of all nationalities, of all ages. For three days these people, these strangers to one another, are brought together. They sleep and eat under one roof, they cannot get away from each other. At the end of three days they part, they go their separate ways, never, perhaps to see each other again” (Christie 28).

Later, Poirot reflects on M Bouc’s comments: “the company assembled was interesting because it was so varied – representing as it did all classes and nationalities. . . . I tried to imagine whether such an assembly were ever likely to be collected under any other conditions. And the answer I made to myself was – only in America. In America there might be a household composed of just such varied nationalities—an Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nurse, a French lady’s maid and so on. That led me to my scheme of ‘guessing’—that is, casting each person for a certain part in the Armstrong drama much as a producer casts a play. Well, that gave me an extremely interesting and satisfactory result” (Christie 301-02).

“A murder on a train . . .”

“It’s been done,” I murmur. “And rather well, if I recall.”

“I agree,” Joe says, still typing, “but I wondered if it was time for a new take. [Sometimes] the stories we know become part of the setting.”

“Like Murder on the Orient Express?”

“Exactly. . . . It’s everywhere here; it’s in the furniture and the staff, every flourish, every detail. It’s the reason most of us are on board. . . . It’s the story we’ve come to be part of. Poirot and Christie’s suspects linger here as well as in her pages, as do Highsmith’s and White’s, not to mention Hitchcock’s depictions of the same, and sometimes we catch a glimpse of them in the periphery of our vision.”

“So how does that---”

“Well, it’s interesting. It’s the like the old story is a character in the new one.” (Gentill 29).

Meanwhile, the Australian podcaster “has this notion that the Orient Express is haunted by its place in literature, the inequities it romanticizes.” Joe shakes his head. “He thinks that passengers can’t help but be possessed by the novel, that by traveling they absorb the social sensibilities of that era---

“The social sensibilities?”

“Wealth, class, privilege, propriety, and so forth—Ben and Felix are political science majors, Meri. And idealists. Riding the Orient Express was never going to be about a train ride for them” (Gentill 48).

