Chapter 1

Efflorescence
Legal crime is a post-civilization concept. Pre-civil society man knew no 'crime' for there was no law to identify it as such. The native instincts of Homo sapiens found an expression in violence in the state of nature. With civilization, authority and obedience became the earliest among social complementaries. Any disobedience of authority became 'legal crime'. Man structured even his theology on these lines. The triumph of good over evil has been an endless theme of life and therefore of literature. In literature the idea of virtue-vice dichotomy is projected in terms of social as well as psychological struggle in Man, embodied in endless designs. The human situation cannot escape this syndrome and it would continue to be reflected in literature forever. If the war between evil and virtue goes back to the original religious concept of God vs. Satan and if the detective story narrates the story of the struggle between the perpetrators of crime and the guardians of the
law-abiding, a close civil war between the two
within the personality of one person may result,
which is focussed by the great artist R.L.
Stevenson in his Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The crime and detection theme is inherent
even in very ancient literature, classical or
folk, Western or Oriental; for the criminal
instinct in the human being due either to selfish­
ness or to sheer belligerence, has to be kept in
check by effective detection and exemplary punish­
ment; and literature represents the major trends
in real life. It is however, only within the
space of the last two centuries that the theme
has crystallised into the now familiar genre
called 'detective fiction'; it has acquired a form
and a grammar at the hands of expert authors of
that theme; and it is generally agreed that Edgar
Allan Poe (1809-1849) is the father of modern
detective fiction. It was in 1841 that the first
modern detective story, 'The Murders in the Rue
Morgue', by E.A. Poe, was published. In its
nascent form it has had various expressions and
in the English tradition at least it took nearly
three quarters of a century from Horace Walpole (1717-1797) to Poe for it to outgrow its Gothic, mystery and horror phases of expression. These three phases are best exemplified by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). During this period T.L. Peacock introduced some of the elements of mystery and suspense in his novels *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Nightmare Abbey* and *Crochet Castle* (1831). His *Maid Marian* (1822) was a kind of Robin Hood story in which lawbreakers were lionised. The trend went on till Arsene Lupin. There were two motivations for describing the valour of criminals: (1) to pit them against the police which early in the 19th century were worse than the criminals; (2) it could be done also to exaggerate by contrast the greater efficiency of the amateur detective.

Surely the genre could not have begun with a definition but should have naturally acquired one, at the hands of later critics and some of
the practitioners of the genre, in course of time and in the light of experience. But even beginners and those who were giving a recognizable shape to it must have had in their minds certain essential features which even now are considered indispensable for the genre. Detective fiction has been created by eminent writers like E.A. Poe followed by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, A. Conan Doyle, G.K. Chesterton, Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie and many other more or less distinguished writers. These writers vary the length, complicated nature of the plot, number of issues, characters involved in the story etc. Poe adopts the short story form\(^1\) and length; Charles Dickens\(^2\) and W.Collins\(^3\) use the long novel form; Conan Doyle writes long as well as short\(^4\) stories of

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detection. G.K. Chesterton used the short story form only. The twentieth century has not seen many full-fledged novel-length detective stories though Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie and Erle Stanley Gardner wrote medium sized detective stories. The point is that length as such is no decisive criterion for a detective story and variation in that particular has not affected the quality of the stories. The usually preferred length is that of an average short story. There are, no doubt some understandable reasons for this. The invariable components in the theme of a normal detective story are (1) a crime (or some ancillary crimes designed to prevent detection of the primary crime); (2) its detection and (3) the explication of the process of detection directly or indirectly to the readers. As for crime being a component of detective stories Erick Routley says, "Crime is inseparable from detective stories" and in the very next paragraph says, "in four cases detected by Father Brown no crime has been committed". Apart from the obvious contradiction in the above statements, it is also pertinent

to ask whether concealed virtue cannot be detected and will that not also constitute detection, for virtue can conceal itself out of modesty or tact. W.H. Wright says that the 'crime' simply must be murder, for 300 pages is far too much bother for interest to be maintained in any mere fraud or deception; E.M. Wrong, who seems to sound his opposite, however, agrees with him and says that "murder must come first, chiefly because it involves an intense motive more than any other criminal activity".  

This consideration seems to have weighed at least partially with G.K. Chesterton who has more than thirty murders in his nearly fifty stories in the Father Brown saga. A certain tightness in the construction of the plot and a rapidity of narration together with the need to keep up the eagerness of the reader to go ahead with the reading are all parts of this literary exercise of creating detective fiction; and too long a narrative, even if very well written, can tell on even a patient reader. A foil in the form

of a companion like Dr. Watson, or some incompetent but nevertheless swaggering policeman generally adds flavour to an otherwise too grim and businesslike a theme. W.H. Wright and Dorothy Sayers would prohibit love interest in detective stories. This would be possible and may perhaps be an advantage in the case of detectives like Sherlock Holmes who was a near misogynist, Poirot, an old man and Father Brown a professional celibate. But in many stories by Agatha Christie, for instance, love interest does figure without affecting the story itself. Perhaps the idea is that the detective must not be fooling around after young women when he ought to be appplying his mind to the job of detection. Miss Sayers, however, concludes that "the less love in a detective story the better". And she deplores Freeman's habit of allowing his secondary characters to fall in love with distressing regularity but this seems to be an unnecessary restriction, for Perry Mason is found quite capable of giving equal attention to his client and to Della Street. Dr. Watson is very careful

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in his delineation of the reaction of Sherlock Holmes to Irene Adler. In The Holmesian context love would have been an obtrusive luxury which was reserved for men like Dr. Watson. Theorising on the prescription of puritanism Miss Sayers speaks of the detective story being of Aristotelian perfection of beginning and middle. But she seems to have overlooked the possibility of an innocent but slightly distracting 'side' to it. In G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown, the embarrassment is overcome by his being a Roman Catholic priest. The very nature of the theme renders romance, except very marginally as in the Perry Mason-Della Street dalliance, a handicap to the structure of the story. For a similar reason the detectives have to remain unmarried, but he is usually endowed with eccentric habits or extraordinary mannerisms intended to make him unforgettable. These are all the near essential components of a detective story.

The story has to be provided with one point of basic interest around which everything

else turns. The detective short story is like any other short story and, due to this constraint, has to avoid luxuries like a crowd of characters, numerous events over a long period of time and investing indelible characteristics to the personae in the story. All this can be afforded in a full-length novel whose interest is general portrayal of life in any of its aspects and not too specific and uni-dimensional as in detective fiction. The short story form has thus come to be preferred in the writing of detective fiction.

These considerations weigh with those who attempt a definition of detective fiction. The definition would depend on what the reader or the critic expects in such a story or what the writer hopes to be able to provide. Its function is mainly to provide an intellectual excitement by creating and solving a puzzle. That is achieved by presenting a problem which an expert in the story solves. The excitement consists in the reader trying to outsmart the detective in the story by trying to discover the
criminal with the aid of the few clues provided.
This excitement itself provides an intellectual
pleasure to which there can be no objection except
from those to whom all excitement is objectionable.

It is said by critics like Dorothy Sayers
that all the clues known to the detective must
also be revealed to the reader as and when he gets
them and this they call the fair-play theory. Naturally divine intervention, coincidences, supernatu­
tural occurrences etc. are taboo for the story has
to be as near to the 'humanly possible' as it can.
It is said that the post-First World War human
situation has created a frustrated humanity which
has lost faith in the older values and wants to
indulge in prohibited excitements. This is not
wholly true; for all the stalwarts of the nineteenth
century who wrote detective fiction surely
belonged to the pre-world war milieu. W.H. Auden
says that "the mirror image of the detective story
is the quest for the Grail". Professor Roy Fuller

9) Dorothy Sayers, Introduction. Tales of
Detection, p. vii.

1) Quoted by Julian Symons, in Bloody Murder,
p. 15.
suggests that "it is a harmless and purging surrogate for the Oedipus myth in every writer's and reader's life".\textsuperscript{11} G.K. Chesterton finds "some sense of the poetry of modern life" in it; to him it is the modern equivalent of the Iliad".\textsuperscript{12} Historians of this form of literature insist that it is a "unique literary form"\textsuperscript{13} with a specific structure of its own. G.K. Chesterton the first President of the Detection Club in Britain asked its members to "promise that their detectives would truly detect the crimes presented to them without reliance on divine revelation, feminine intuition, mumbo-jumbo, jiggery-pokery, coincidence or the Act of God".\textsuperscript{14} Father Ronald Knox lists "Ten commandments of Detection" which include the above. \textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} Quoted by Julian Symons, in \textit{Bloody Murder}, p. 15


\textsuperscript{13} Julian Symons, \textit{Bloody Murder}, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{op. cit.}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
None of the above can be considered to be a definition of detective fiction, but treated merely as some remarks, albeit relevant, on it. Tentatively it can be defined as the story of the successful detection usually by an amateur sleuth, of a crime, generally murder, committed by an expert criminal - the story of a success achieved in the teeth of numerous unsuspected and thrilling handicaps.

The detective story must be distinguished from the Gothic, the horror, the terror, the mystery, the spy types which are also sensational; but the detective story is the only genre which like a game of chess provides sheer intellectual exercise mixed with the excitement of looking forward to the solution of the apparently insoluble. These novels have been known variously as 'police novels', 'Newgate novels', 'Whodunits' and so on, but for a differing opinion Julian Symons may be noted. He says, "Detective Story is a unique literary form distinct from the crime or mystery story not to be confused with the police novel". 16

16) [Quoted by Julian Symons, in _Bloody Murder_, p.9]
Crime fascinates man. There is a thirst among the public for crime stories and statistics reveal that about a quarter of all fiction sold in England and America is crime fiction. The fascination for detective fiction consists not only in the violence involved but in the cleverness characterising the commission of crime as well as of its detection. The cleverer the plot and the more difficult its unravelling, the more enthralling the story is. The criminal instinct in Man is almost biological. Hobbes regards man as basically wicked and evil. He says that the original condition of Man was "nasty, brutish and short". His suppressed feelings find an outlet in the vicarious pleasure of reading crime novels. In Freudian terms, man's love of crime stories is the external realization of the sub-conscious desire. The sub-conscious of man cherishes sex and violence even in their most socially objectionable forms. The superego wants to keep it away from public gaze. But at the same time he delights in indulging in the forbidden pleasures on the sly. But in civil society law

prohibits the expression of such instincts. So crime fiction will enjoy popularity as long as humanity is there to want and enjoy it. Dr. Charles Rycroft wrote an article in the psycho-analytical quarterly in which he considers the hypothesis of another psycho-analyst Geraldine Pederson Krag, "that the detective story has its origins in the primal scene of infancy". This scene is supposed to include the clues which are symbolic representation of mysterious nocturnal sounds, stains, incomprehensible adult jokes. As usual the psycho-analytical explanation is involved though possibly it is the ultimate truth about it. As in most psycho-analytical explanations Rycroft's elaboration is capable of acceptance or rejection. 18

Most literature has had an element of crime and detection unobtrusively woven into its general fabric. Stories like the Apocryphal tales, the tales of Chaucer, Virgil's Aeneid, The Book of Daniel, Hamlet deal with episodes where

crimes are committed and criminals are identified. But in these stories the main source of interest does not lie in the logical problem, namely crime and its solution. The word 'crime' has acquired certain overtones over the centuries. The philosophy of life of a group of people and the value system of each society influence the attitude of its people to crime. What was crime in one era may not be crime in another. The progress of civilization and codifications of law bifurcated crime into moral and legal with the Church and the court as sovereigns in the respective areas of human action. Legal systems further narrowed it into punishable and non-punishable categories of human action. Modern society regards crime as the consequence of friction between law and its violators. Crime has been an integral part of human behaviour and its literature has ample scope for excursions into the realm of the underworld. Criminology as a branch of study probes the why, what and how of crime; literary artists exploit the crime and punishment theme delving deep into the psychology, methodology and sociology of crime. Two recognisable modalities of describing crime are
common in current literature. The earlier stages permitted no social justification. But the modern writer looks at the criminal from the point of view of psychology and scientific technology. Detective fiction is a significant part of the literature of mainly the U.K., the U.S.A. and France. It is largely true that this genre cannot grow in the context of totalitarian states where the state is identical with its organized police and where the liberty of the individual is not considered valuable. In such states the official police can have no competitors and least of all a successful competitor. Even such works as were authored by Dostoyevsky of the late 19th century were written before the Communist Revolution of 1917. The new genre detective fiction is devoted to the study of crime and criminals in all their dimensions.

There are two ways of determining the chronological starting point of detective fiction as a genre. It may be taken to very early times to include instances like Oedipus Rex and to
serendipity, a name that derives from Horace Walpole's *The Three Princes of Serendip*. Some, of course, hold that it had its beginning only with E.A. Poe, i.e., early forties of the nineteenth century and it reached its apogee in early late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Still others trace it to Herodotus. A French critic, Ferydown Hoveyda, concludes that the origins of the genre "are lost in the mists of time" and finds elements of the detective story in the early Hebrew tradition, in Bedouin and American Indian legends, Celtic folklore, Herodotus and *The Thousand and One Nights*. These views differ because of the different definitions of 'crime' they adopt. Some extend its scope to include "the unexpungeable character of sins or of transgression against '(sic)' of a superhuman order"; the rest limit it by a stricter definition of crime to legal or profane crime. But a broader view will be needed if evolution of that genre has to be kept in mind. Crime is archetypal, and its mode is bound to change


20) _op.cit_ , p.12.
with the evolution of the mental perceptions of the criminal and the tools available to him to commit crimes. If disobedience of law is crime, Satanic disregard of the Divine order, as also Prometheus' defiance of Zeus could be the beginning of crime in mythology and literature. "Literature that took profane crime as its sole subject matter flourished alongside the canonical works of our literary tradition as ephemeral popular pieces, which in the 17th and 18th centuries took the forms of street ballad, broadsheet and chapbook". Regarding the treatment of crime by Hugo and Dickens it is clear that they are concerned only with profane crime, relating to a desacralized reality, its perpetrators are mostly ordinary, unheroic people for whom crime is an alternative to pauperism. The rogue literature and the picaresque novels of the 16th century celebrated the mundane criminal activities of their heroes. In fact, the real interest in crime stories in England, dates from the 18th century.

21) Ibid.
The mind, milieu and moment of the 18th century were conducive to the growth of the detective story. London society of the 18th century presented an unpleasant sight with dirt and squalor eclipsing the architectural splendour and cultural refinement. London groaned under the burden of over population and unemployment. The Industrial Revolution induced the country folk to migrate to London which however could not supply their needs of food and employment. Squalid and insanitary settlements encircled the aristocratic villas and mansions. The cleavage between the rich and the poor widened and was acutely felt. The existing inequality and frustration brewed an impotent rage in them, so that they resorted to crime and violence. The 'have-nots' and the deprived felt justified in robbing the 'haves' and the endowed, and for some, "crime became an alternative to poverty. The London of that time was reputed to have been one of the most violent and lawless cities in Europe".  

A certain Jonathan Wild proclaimed himself as 'the Thief-taker-General of England and

Ireland' and strove to bring order in the city. This self-appointed guardian of peace detected criminals and restored stolen goods. But Wild's dual role of encouraging and trading with criminals and catching them afterwards led to his execution in 1725. Jonathan Wild had a successor in Jack Sheppard (1705-1754) a professional criminal, notorious for his daring exploits. These men provided materials for writers to present crime at various levels. The picaro of the 17th and 18th century novels is portrayed not exactly as a criminal but as a social bandit of the Robin Hood type. Defoe is supposed to have used his knowledge of Jonathan Wild in Moll Flanders and John Gay used the example of Wild in creating the corrupt character Peachum in his 'Beggar's Opera'. That Peachum was remembered by Charles Dickens, the creator of Fagin, is seen in what he says in his preface to Oliver Twist: "I ask myself whether any man will be deterred from turning thief ... because of the existence of Peachum and Lockit".

23. Ibid.
The spread of literacy created the reading habit among the neo-literate sections of society, especially, the labour class. To cater to their needs, printers and publishers vied with each other to produce cheap and inexpensive reading material in the form of sensational ballads and broadsheets. These gave a highly coloured account of crimes and executions and constituted a large part of the printer's output. The Newgate Calendar published by Reverend John Villette, Chaplain of the Newgate prison, deserves special mention in this category of books. The Malefactors' Bloody Register was the subtitle of the 1773 edition of the Newgate Calendar.

About the same time a fresh avenue of excitement and thrill was thrown open in the literary arena by the mystery stories. Horror has been inherent in literature since Homer and Oedipus. The tragic situation of Menelaus and the sacrifice of Agamemnon supply the horror element in Homer. The puzzle of the sphinx, the tragic situation of Oedipus and the punishment

24) Ibid.
he inflicts on himself constitute the horror aspect in Oedipus. There is abundance of it in Elizabethan drama. Marlowe's Dr. Faustus summarises the tragic predicament of Man. That is why Goethe chose it as the supreme theme of human tragedy. In Hamlet the manner of his father's death is horrifying. In the realistic novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, Defoe's Moll Flanders, Richardson's Pamela and Fielding's Tom Jones are examples. The element of horror was either absent or pushed to the background. It was looked upon as disrespectful and juvenile. But there was a volcanic eruption of it in The Castle of Otranto (1764) by Horace Walpole, at whose hands a new genre, the Gothic novel, took shape. Mystification of the reader with a terrifying atmosphere was its objective. To achieve this, several ingredients like the Gothic castle, subterranean passages, supernatural elements, thunder and lightning, ruffling curtains, creaking hinges, etc., were introduced. These supplied the atmosphere of terror nearly anticipating 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by E.A. Poe. Horace Walpole was the first Gothic novelist who had a
successful follower in Mrs. Radcliffe after thirty years. Her *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) was the next-best after Walpole's *The Castle*. The Gothic, horror, terror and mystery stories as well as the detective story have the common characteristic of providing excitement to the reader. But the detective story is to be treated only as a first cousin and not a uterine brother of the other forms of mystery stories.

The attitude of the public of the day towards criminals was one of sympathy. Certain criminals were made heroes by virtue of their hair-raising adventures and thrilling escapades. There was no organised police force and the public did not trust the guardians of peace. In the struggle between the individual and authority, public sympathy was usually with the individual. Public execution was the punishment for even small crimes before the reform of the penal code. This played a part, psychologically, in their feeling of compassion for the convicts.

After the exit of Jonathan Wild and Jack
Sheppard, London was once again engulfed by lawlessness. Henry Fielding, used Wild to exemplify dishonesty and corruption in his satirical novel, The History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great (1743). Perturbed by the chaotic condition of the public life of London, Fielding, in the capacity of a magistrate, resolved to mend it. In 1753, he established the Bow Street Runners, with seven men, thus laying the foundation for the modern police force. The Bow Street Runners protected the property of the public, brought to some extent peace in the city and gave a new social respectability to the police. The erstwhile sympathy for the criminal now shifted to the Runners, flowering almost into admiration. After Henry Fielding, his half-brother, John Fielding, the blind magistrate, took over the administration of the Bow Street Runners. He enlarged the scope and area of Henry Fielding's work. He introduced the system of maintaining "police records, the exchange of information between magistrates in different areas, and recruited innkeepers, turnpikes and pawn-brokers as informants".  

Ten years of prestigious service of the Bow Street Runners, together with  

the growing population with its frequent riots made Robert Peel establish the nucleus of today's organised police in 1829. *Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Runner, Drawn up from his private memoranda* (1827) published in the name of Richmond presented the hero as an upholder of law and society and not as a rebel.

The *Castle of Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) projected the incredible, the supernatural and the horrid. *The Newgate Calendar* was a mine of information about criminals and their adventurous escapes. Many writers including Dickens have drawn their material from this source. Horror and crime are so intertwined that the definition of one would overlap the other. Horror novels capitalised on ruthless crimes for horrification. The impact of these works on one another and also on the readers and therefore the writers resulted in the evolution of a new genre. In the fertile mystery and crime-loving soil horror and crime stories sowed the seed for the growth of the detective novel and the first two pioneers of the
form were William Godwin and Francois Vidocq.

William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) is an important cornerstone in the history and evolution of the detective story. This novel is an amalgamation of the Gothic novel, radical social novel and the picaresque novel. The first recognizable streak of detective novel can be discovered in the curiosity of Caleb Williams in tracing Falkland and identifying him as the murderer. Melvyn Barnes' statement that --

"As an example of propagandist fiction, as a picaresque novel, or as the first pure detective story, this work merits further study today"\(^{26}\) is not entirely justifiable as the element of detection in it was accidental and not intended. It contains the theme of detection without any deliberate attempt on the part of the author to highlight detection. Godwin was more concerned with the exposure of the evils, the injustice and inequality in society, especially, the upper-class. Hence it cannot be called a perfect detective story; but that it laid the foundation

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for the modern detective story is indisputable, and he anticipated E.A. Poe by three decades.

Vidocq, the French criminal-turned-detective, the first head of the organised police in France, published his *Memoirs* (1828-29) wherein he created a character akin to the modern detective. Vidocq's personal experience as a policeman and a criminal helped him create a personality rivalling the police. In fact, his object was to expose and ridicule the limited capacity of the organised police in tracking down the criminal. After having been forced to resign, Vidocq took to writing and detection as professions. As a writer and a detective, he invented a fresh identity for his hero who is not a regular servant of the police, but is yet more competent than the police in the handling of criminal cases. Maurice Leblanc in his *Arsène Lupin* introduces a reaction to 'the detective who is the discoverer of crime' in the form of 'the criminal who triumphs over the detective'. This glorification of the criminal is as old at least
as Lord Lytton who wrote *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832). In fact the tradition goes back to Rob Roy of Scott (1818) who likens his hero to Robin Hood. He is a forerunner of G.K. Chesterton's Flambeau who would only rob and never murder. But these do not qualify to be called detective fiction.

Thomas De Quincey's celebrated essay 'On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts' (1827) is yet another evidence for the gradual change of treatment of crime in literature. De Quincey holds that "the shock of murder is no longer in the act, but in its aesthetic treatment". Now the commission of crime has acquired more importance from the artistic point of view than its moral or legal consequence.

The mystery stories, the accounts of the criminals, Vidocq's *Memoirs* and De Quincey's aesthetic approach to crime had probably some influence on the inventive genius of Edgar Allan Poe. It was Poe who raised the mystery and crime story to a level beyond mere entertainment through his skilful intermingling of "reason and madness, eerie atmosphere and everyday reality".  

had his own hypothesis about his detective story. He intellectualised crime and mystery story and made it an art by itself. Logic, analysis and psychological insight were his tools of detection. The process of detection becomes a source of lively enjoyment. Poe explains his technique of 'ratiocination' thus --

"As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which disentangles. The detective exhibits an acumen that appears to the ordinary understanding as preternatural". The world's first true detective story—that is the first story which centered exclusively on the process of solving a crime was Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', which appeared in Graham's Magazine in April, 1841. This is the first locked-room mystery by Poe. The world's first ever detective is his chevalier August Dupin. Dupin, the ratiocinating and amateur sleuth, contends that the murders in the Rue Morgue could not have been committed by human

beings. He considers the circumstances and available evidence to arrive at his solution. He ratiocinates from the evidence that the murderer is an ape. The novelty of the method enthralled the reading public.

'The Mystery of Marie Roget' (1842), his second work, is the earliest instance of 'armchair' detection and also for the first time an actual crime is detected. Dupin solves the mystery from random evidence gleaned from newspaper cuttings. Poe brought scientific method into the genre.

'Concealment in the open' is the novel technique that Poe used in 'The Purloined Letter' (1845). Here he takes into account the working of the mind of the criminal besides evident facts. He supposes that the criminal mind would naturally anticipate investigation and may do something to hoodwink or divert the attention of the police. Instead of hiding the letter in a secret place, he may conceal it in the most unlikely and least suspected spot, i.e., he conceals it in the open. Poe delights in the supernatural and mysterious
and creates mysteries and riddles. 'The Golden Bug' is a puzzle story with a cryptogram. 'Thou art the Man' deals with elementary ballistics. In "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The tell tale Heart" Poe concerns himself with remorseless and ruthless murder. Poe always studies the mind of the criminal as he regards him as an artist of crimes. These seven stories, of which the first three have an amateur sleuth, altered the whole complexion of crime and mystery stories which in turn refined public taste. He set a high standard for subsequent masters of the art through his short stories.

The intellectualization of the crime story raised it from the shambles of disrepute, raised its status and widened its reading public. The pleasure of reading a detective story is analogous to that of attempting a crossword puzzle or solving a chess problem. Hitherto novelists, being omniscient, were wielding power over their readers excluding their participation in the unfolding of events. The new form took the reader into confidence, offered him a challenge giving
him a sense of triumph at the end of the book, if his guess happened to be correct. The intellectual thrill attracted poets, presidents and peasants alike. W.H. Auden and President Woodrow Wilson are well known lovers of detective stories. Lord Rosebery was proud of possessing a first edition of the Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes and Freud is known to have praised the detective story of Dorothy Sayers. It speaks volumes of the attractiveness of the genre when it is noticed that even Joseph Stalin enjoyed such literature.

No one has defined detective fiction as bravely and as surely as G.K. Chesterton himself. For example, he says, "every person of sound education enjoys detective stories and there are even several points on which they have the hearty superiority to most modern books." Again why are detective stories read? Undoubtedly such stories are popular and there is no rule that the public prefer bad literature to good. Bradshaw's

30) G.K. Chesterton, 'A Defence of Detective Stories' in The Defendant, p. 157 to 162.
Railway Guide or the Telephone Directory "does not appeal to an excited readership, though their utility may be undoubted; to write a story about burglary is in the eyes of some people a sort of spiritual manner of committing it. To persons of somewhat weak sensibility this is natural enough. It must be confessed that many detective stories are as full of sensational crime as one of Shakespeare's plays... it is the earliest and only form of popular literature in which is expressed some sense of the poetry of modern life... it reminds us that a whole noiseless and unnoticeable police management by which we are ruled and protected is only a successful knight errantry".  

When even the knight is not able to serve or protect, a special Saint George in the form of the amateur detective appears to destroy the criminal dragon.

It is also true that Poe's stories left most American minds unenthused, while in England and France they led to a spate of experiments. Dicken's admiration for the detective police is seen in his articles in the journal, The Household

31) Ibid.
These men were more incorruptible than their predecessors. On closer observation of the lives of police officers, Dickens paid a tribute to their integrity and straightforwardness in the character of Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House* (1853). Dickens, the master of types, presents a typical detective in it. But *Bleak House* is not a true detective story according to the definition cited earlier, as Dickens had various other activities like social reform to promote in that novel, besides the delineation of human character. The method of exposing the criminal to a company of suspects is an innovation in *Bleak House*, which became later conventional in detective stories and is seen much in Agatha Christie. Dickens praised one police officer in four articles in *The Household Words*. This officer was named Field (1850). Dickens also wrote a number of detective short stories. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), his remarkable fragmentary work, came quite close to the 'true' detective story. Perhaps this is

the only unfinished work, next to the poems of Coleridge, which is read and re-read. The Dickens' Society in London even today offers handsome awards for the best ending of the story. If he had completed it, it would have become one of the most admirable detective novels in English literature.

The Recollections of a Police Officer (1856) by William Russells (pen name Waters) appeared somewhat midway between Poe and Conan Doyle and during the later part of Dickens' and Collins' literary career. Russell claimed to be a London Metropolitan Police Officer. Many cheap Yellow Backs complimented his works by imitation.

Wilkie Collins' contribution to the genre was commendable. It commenced with his The Woman in White (1860). The novel has an ingenious villain and an intricate plot, but this again does not belong to the 'true' detective novel category,
though the detective element is predominant. His subsequent creation Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* (1868) is a memorable policeman, outstanding for his mannerisms and investigative methods and appearance. T.S. Eliot was so fascinated with this work that he applauded it as "The first, the longest, the best of English detective novels". The *Moonstone* achieved widespread popularity. In fact, Collins' fame rests on these two works. He has also written, like Dickens, short detective stories.

In France, the thread of the new development in crime fiction was taken up by Emile Gaboriau. His Lecoq was a reformed criminal based on Vidocq. *L'affaire Lerouge* (1863) made him famous and his reputation abroad brought in a train of imitators. Fergus Hume of New Zealand was one among them. His *Mystery of the Hansom Cab* (1887) became the best selling novel of the 19th century. At this point, the works of Poe,

33) Quoted by Melvyn Barnes in *Best Detective Fiction*, p. 20.
Dickens, Collins, Hume and others show significant change in public taste. Between *The Newgate Calendar* and Lytton's *Paul Clifford* the romantic criminal slowly perished. Remnants of him are to be seen in Arsene Lupin. The detective came to be looked upon as the protector of the innocent and the defender of society.

It took more than three decades for the fervour to catch on in America. The striking feature about it is that it saw the entry of Anna Katherine Green (1846-1935). "In spite of some stilted writing, *The Leavonworth case, a Lawyer's story* (1878), is an extremely important work, Ebenezer Gryce is a credible character of the period". She was an important landmark in American detective fiction. Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* (1851) has aspects of the detective story but does not belong to the detective genre proper.

A new wave swept the whole field of the detective story in 1888. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

transformed the prospects of the detective story overnight. What started as a pastime grew to gigantic proportions and brought the whole world under its spell. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes remains the yet unconquered king of sleuths. Conan Doyle, a physician by profession, created a literary version of Dr. Joseph Bell, his professor, with the same astonishing sense of logic and keen observation in his detective. Sherlock Holmes was an instant success. When he made his first appearance in 'A Study in Scarlet' (1887), he was dashing, daring and credible. He, an amateur detective of unrivalled perspicacity, was teamed with Dr. Watson, his foil. He solves the most dastardly of crimes in "The Sign of Four" (1890) and "The Valley of Fear" (1915). Though the invention of the foil is an imitation of Poe, Dupin's companion was nothing compared to Dr. Watson. Conan Doyle convinced the public of the readability of Holmes and the gullible really believed that he lived in 221B, Baker Street. With the publication of *The Adventures of Sherlock*
Holmes (1892), The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1894) and The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902) Holmes became legendary. Conan Doyle never wanted to make a super-hero of Holmes. He painted him as unique in his approach to his problems; yet to give an air of reality and verisimilitude, he presents Irene Adler, who outsmarted him in 'The Adventure of a Scandal in Bohemia' (1891). Holmes is made to admire her. In the famous story 'The Final Problem' featuring Professor Moriarty, Conan Doyle allows Holmes to be killed. He, in fact, wanted to put an end to the Holmes stories. He had built up such a charisma around Holmes that readers would not bear his death. For their sake, since they protested in letters and personal appeals, Conan Doyle resurrected him in 'The Return of Sherlock Holmes' (1905). The respectability for the detective fiction created by Poe was sustained and strengthened by Conan Doyle. Doyle's contribution to the field was enormous and significant. Dorothy Sayers pays
a glowing tribute to him when she says that "His style is clear, witty, workmanlike and persuasive, and that he excites the intellect and the emotion of the reader not by shocks and horrors but by contemplation of the great issues that may hang from a bootlace".  

Sherlock Holmes begot a band of followers and rivals. The floodgates of inspiration were opened and there was a deluge of detectives in the late 19th century. Detective fiction had fallen into a definite framework and had acquired a form and status as a separate literary genre. The success of Holmes resulted in rival productions with distinct traits that set them apart from Holmes. Five recognizable schools of detection have been founded since then. They are (1) the orthodox (2) the academic (3) the intuitive (4) the sensational (5) the psychological. The classification is neither standard nor permanent and varies from critic to critic.


critic. The detective novels became increasingly specialised with the advancement of science. Apart from that law, medicine, chemistry, psychology, criminology, jurisprudence and every other branch of knowledge were in requisition.

'The Problem of Cell 13' (1907) presents a 'thinking machine' in the form of Professor Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen by Jacques Furtrelle, an American. Dr. Thorndyke the medico-scientific detective of Austin Freeman, and Baroness Orczy's 'Old man in the corner' are the British counterparts of scientific detectives or 'thinking machines'. Dr. Thorndyke, an expert in forensic science, solves cases with a meticulous precision coupled with a sound knowledge of science. Austin Freeman is known for his invention of the 'inverted' detective story in "The Singing Bone" (1912). The stories in this volume begin with a discussion of who committed the crime, how and why, and the reader then watches the detective unravelling the clues and moving towards a
solution. This technique anticipates the psychological detective novel by allowing the reader access to the mind and motives of the culprit throughout the story. "Dr. Thorndyke's case book" (1923), "The Puzzle Lock" (1925) and "The Magic Casket" (1927) are some of the famous Thorndyke stories.

Baroness Orczy, the creator of the Scarlet Pimpernel stories, imagined 'an old man' as her detective. This 'old man in the corner' sits at a corner table of an ABC tea shop, eating cheese cake and tying intricate knots with a piece of string as he uses logic to solve cases. Polly Bourton, a young female reporter narrates these stories. She also brings him some of the cases. "The Case of Miss Elliot" (1905), "The Old Man in the Corner" (1909) and "Unravelled Knots" (1925) are some of the well-known stories of 'the old man' in a corner.

In the late years of the 19th century and
the beginning of the 20th century, every field experienced the revelations made by the psychoanalytical methods of Freud. It wielded profound influence on every genre and the detective fiction is no exception. Arthur B. Reeve's Craig Kennedy, a professor of chemistry at Columbia University, uses psychoanalytical methods to solve cases. Craig relies also on machines such as the lie-detector and other gadgets of the early years of the 20th century. These were not imaginary, as Scotland Yard in fact used similar gadgets.

The conflict between science and religion found its way into the detective novel. Instead of science and machines, common sense and intuition were used by a group of 'intuitive' detectives. G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown, the dumpy little cleric is the best example of this type. "G.K. Chesterton made an impressive contribution to this form which is three-fold. He created in Father Brown one of fiction's most
extraordinary sleuths. He introduced a philosophico-metaphysical '(sic)' approach to the riddle of crime. He brought to the genre the highest order of literary artistry since Poe.\(^{37}\) This claim borders on exaggeration because one wonders whether such a statement can be made in spite of Dickens, Collins and Conan Doyle. The Father Brown stories are in a sense religious, psychological and poetic. The stories are collected in five volumes. The Innocence of Father Brown (1911); The Wisdom of Father Brown (1914); The Incredulity of Father Brown (1926); The Secret of Father Brown (1927) and The Scandal of Father Brown (1935). These are also collected in a single volume entitled Father Brown Omnibus. Chesterton's choice of a Catholic priest as the sleuth has a poorly veiled propagandist motive. "The Miracle of Moon Crescent" is a locked-room mystery in which a man is removed from an apparently sealed chamber and hanged by the neck from a tree in a nearby park. "The Flying Stars" features

a jewel thief who uses the idea of hiding gems among the paste stones of his masquerade costume. This is reminiscent of "The Purloined Letter" of Poe. In "The Secret Garden" Father Brown accuses a Vidocq-like police officer of beheading a man in his own garden and then hiding the crime by substituting the head of a guillotined convict for the head of his victim. Flambeau and Valentine are the image and mirror-image as it were of Vidocq. Father Brown reached a wider audience through television. "The Invisible Man" and "The Queer Feet" are classics of the genre. Chesterton's motive was not merely the solution to an intellectual riddle. His primary concern was the salvation of erring man equating crime with sin. "The Blue Cross", the story that introduced Father Brown to literature, lays bare his purpose. Father Brown converts the criminal Flambeau, and we find the same man adopting the pastime of his saviour as his profession. G.K. Chesterton attempts a telescopic vision of the
didacticism of the morality play through his detective short stories. The Roman Catholic priest is the symbolic representation of his religious fervour. He brings in theology wherever possible, Melvyn Barnes comments "If some of the stories are sermons, they are still the most enjoyable sermons ever delivered".  

G.K. Chesterton's scintillating style and paradox put the detective story at a different level and the fact that he was a notable literary figure, who was an ardent practitioner of the 'form', earned it literary respectability. 

G.K. Chesterton could have conceived Father Brown as a rival to or a parody of Holmes. He also resurrected Father Brown just as Conan Doyle brought Holmes back after reporting his death.

There is a strange mixture of logic and intuition in Father Brown. Chesterton successfully brought the name of God into a

detective story without making it sound like a blasphemy which made Dorothy Sayers call him a "voice crying in the wilderness". 39

Another practitioner of the intuitive school is Melville Davisson Post (American). His sleuth Uncle Abner regards himself as the instrument of divine justice to bring evildoers to book. Uncle Abner carries a Bible in his pocket always and in his famous 'An Act of God' he clears a dead man accused of crime by pointing out that a note that man is supposed to have written contains a phonetic misspelling. There are only two collections of Uncle Abner stories in book form: Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries (1918) and The Methods of Uncle Abner (1974). He influenced the character of Uncle Gavin, the protagonist of William Faulkner's Knight's Gambit (1949). 40

S.S. Van Dine's Philo Vance was systematic


and methodical in his investigation. He smokes imported cigarettes with rose petal tips. E.C. Bentley brought in naturalism in detective fiction with his *Trent's Last Case* (1913). This detective showed that a detective need not always behave with the grave self-importance, typical of Holmes and a few others.

Reggie Fortune, H.C. Bailey's well-mannered detective has great insight into human nature and a keen observation. The public craved for a re-establishment of the lost and losing discipline both mental and moral. Reggie Fortune stories emphasise the protection and preservation of moral and social standards. Like Charles Dickens, H.C. Bailey loved children. His 'The Yellow Slugs' is one of the finest stories depicting the love and care the detective bestows on an erring child. Reggie Fortune had his own select readership.

Women writers took giant strides in this
field. In the so-called male theme, a score of women worked and they could create characters rivalling Holmes. In Anne Katherine Green's hand, the form rose to magnificent proportions. Agatha Christie competently continued the tradition, reigning supreme as the 'Queen of crime' as she is popularly known. Her approach is original and her plots are ingenious. She could maintain the tempo of the story from the beginning to the end. Her style is crisp; her characters are realistic and arresting. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple are variations of 'armchair' detectives. Miss Marple, an elderly spinster found knitting most of the time has streaks of the intuitive and psychological detective in her. She makes research in the behavioural pattern of criminals and also of others and uses it as a guideline for her solutions. Poirot, the Belgian detective with a great sense of humour, employs his 'little grey cells' to probe crime. Agatha Christie provides unparalleled intellectual excitement with her clever structuring of plots. She often violates
the rules laid down for the form by pedants. Apart from Marple and Poirot she uses Tuppence, Parker Pyne, Harley Quin and Tommy Beresford as her detectives. Agatha Christie's significant works are The Witness for the Prosecution and other stories (1948), The Labours of Hercule Poirot (1947), Three Blind Mice and other stories (1950). The outstanding testimony of Agatha Christie's achievement is The Murder of Roger Ackroyd. The Three Blind Mice still runs to packed houses in London in its stage version entitled 'The Mouse Trap'. Mrs. Christie specialised in poison cases, and to that end she learned Chemistry. She structured her stories with great care and till the end of the story the reader cannot guess the criminal because of her tight plot-construction.

Dorothy Leigh Sayers (1893-1957) an elder contemporary of Agatha Christie, tried to give a religious twist to the genre. In fact she objected to the exclusion of the chief interests
of life. She felt that detective fiction became over-intellectualised losing itself in the mechanics of detection. She too laid down rules on the writing of a detective story while experimenting with it. Her Lord Peter Wimsey is an aristocrat who dabbles in detection. The bizarre and the fantastic are Sayers' preferences. In 'The Abominable History of the Man with the Copper Fingers' a murdered woman is silver-plated and made into a modernistic sofa. Lord Peter Wimsey pushes the murderer into the electroplating vat, purchases the sofa at an auction and gives it a decent burial. Her short stories are collected in Lord Peter Views the Body (1928), Hangman's Holiday (1933), In the Teeth of Evidence (1939). In her later years she turned from detective fiction to religious writing.

The Golden Age saw a spate of detective novelists in England as well as in America. The standard definition of the Golden Age of detective fiction assigns it to the two decades between the
two World Wars. Deviant opinion such as that of Julian Symons that the "Golden Age of the Short Story which began with Holmes ended with World War I" must also be considered. It is reasonable to suppose from the point of view of literary sociology that it was the product of the I World War. In the economy of the world, one witnessed the great depression; in the political field the rise of dictatorship which was another matter for gloom- and in the World of Fine Arts the extremities of romanticism were reached in Cubism and other fantastic forms. Similarly in the world of literature, crime, its detection and punishment came as a psychological anodyne for the mind which had already seen the rise of Kaiserism and its defeat after a world war. This world war made the average Westerner re-orient his attitude to life. The question of virtue fighting evil necessarily became a dominant artistic theme. This genre grew abundantly on the soil already fertilised by the Edwardian and Victorian

detective story writers. Thus far it is possible to justify the title Golden Age for this period, but it needs a qualification or a reservation. This age produced detective fiction in such large quantities by so many authors and of fairly high calibre, that its accommodation in the history of respectable literature became necessary. But the pioneers like Poe, A.C. Doyle, Edgar Wallace, G.K. Chesterton were the foundation on which the Golden Age was structured. Between the old guard of whom Doyle was the most significant and those who are usually assigned to the Golden Age, G.K. Chesterton stands as a link in that he wrote memorable detective stories though of a decidedly different nature.

It is, however, not to be supposed that there is unanimity of opinion on the definition of the Golden Age. There are two views about it: one assigning it to the twenties and the other to the thirties of the present century. Frank N. Magill assigns it to the years between World
Wars I and II. Colin Watson holds that the years between 1920-39 can be called the Golden Age only on the basis of the considerable volume of production of such stories, i.e. quantitatively acceptable, thereby suggesting that qualitatively it is not.

From the time of its inception, the medium for the detective story was the magazine. In Britain Penny Bloods, Penny Dreadfuls provided cheap sensational reading. In the USA dime novels performed the service, and some weekly magazines were devoted exclusively to the exploits of one hero. Of these Nick Carter deserves special mention. Nick Carter stories were written by a number of co-authors. Nick Carter was an American who was virtuous amidst a society open to all kinds of vices. He never smoked, drank, swore or fornicated. He was intellectually keen, physically strong and morally sound. Nick Carter


is ageless; he changes according to the times. He should now be approximately more than a century old.

Union Jack, one of the most popular weekly magazines in England produced Sexton Blake. Sexton Blake has a young man named Tinker as a Watson figure and a dog called Pedro. Like the Carter stories, the Sexton Blake stories were written by a group of writers. These stories have been extremely popular, very readable and possess considerable story content.

Detective fiction owes its survival to the pulp magazines. They produced them on a mass scale. Many of the stories were forgotten but one group of writers led to forking of the genre into a new sub-genre, the hard-boiled school. The hard-boiled hero is a reaction against the perfect, faultless, infallible and moral detective of the previous generation. Holmes, Poirot, Lord
Peter Wimsey, Dr. Thorndyke, and above all Father Brown appeared to be fairy-land figures. The existing social condition with sordid sex, violence, police brutality and power warranted a different type of a detective with a different set of values corresponding to the declining moral code of the world. The world wars destroyed many old world values. The crime rate and police corruption shot up. The new stories involved also the lowest strata of society besides the upper and the middle and they were a criticism of the sad state of society. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler were famous among the hard-boiled school. Carnell Hopley-Woolrich and Carroll John Daly also contributed to this kind of literature.

Dashiell Hammett based his stories on his personal experience. He was reacting to 'the literary conventions of traditional detective fiction and the absence of social reality in them'.\(^\text{44}\) Sam Spade with the face of a 'fair-Satan'\(^\text{45}\) is alive


\(^{45}\) Ibid.
to the ugly reality of life around him but he is a bit of an idealist. The Continental Op, The Return of the Continental Op, are samples of his brilliant writing.

Raymond Chandler, a Quaker, is reputed for his picturesque descriptions and figurative phrases. Chandler, like Hammett created more romantic than the traditional type of heroes. The hard-boiled heroes are tough guys, referred to as the private-eye. They are far removed from the gentlemanly Lord Peter Wimsey. Philip Marlow is Raymond Chandler's private-eye. The intellectual puzzle gave place to character and realistic emotion. His works include Five Murderers (1944), Five Sinister Characters (1945) and The Simple Art of Murder (1950).

Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason became quite as famous as Holmes. The business-like lawyer handles his cases exploiting the loopholes in the legal system. His usual climax scene is in the court-room. He discards the armchair, stands upright on his toes and does library work.
like a lawyer as well as field work like a detective. The dreary legalities of criminal law are sugar-coated by the pretty Della Street, Perry Mason's secretary who is a far cry from Watson. The occasional flirtation the lawyer and his secretary indulge in is marginal and perpetual, never leading to anything as serious as matrimony. Gardner's style is simple, direct and forthright. Among the pseudonyms adopted by Gardner are Charles M. Green, Robert Parr, Kyle Corning, and Les Tillray. The case of careless kitten, The Case of the Mischievous Doll, The Case of the Howling Dog, The Case of the Silent Partner are some of his remarkable works.

After the emergence of the hard-boiled school, the 'pure' detective story receded to the background. The genre multiplied into several sub-genres as thrillers, national and international spy stories and so on. The pulp magazines also dwindled. A new introduction of pocket-book novels, ideal for a train or a plane
journey, made readers prefer short-stories or short novels to the conventional long novels. With the disappearance of the pulp magazine the short story writers lost some of their popularity. But there are a few detective short story magazines still in existence. The notable magazine among them is Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine which encourages detective short stories by offering prizes for the best Sherlockiana, best riddle stories etc. Ellery Queen stands in high esteem as a modern detective story writer. Ellery Queen is the pen name of Frederick Danny and Manfred Kee. The detective also bears the same name. Queen pays scrupulous attention to the 'fair-play' theory. His stories show a more personal and character-oriented approach. Queen’s stories include The Adventures of Ellery Queen (1934); The Casebook of Ellery Queen (1945); QB: Queen’s Bureau of Investigation (1955).

Carter Dickson alias John Dickson Carr is a specialist in locked-room mystery. Carr’s detective Gideon Fell is modelled on G.K.Chesterton with his two hundred and fifty pound physique. Sir Henry Merrivale and Colonel March are his other detectives. Carr’s short story collections are The Department of Queer Complaints (1940); and Dr. Fell, Detective (1947).

Among the recent women writers, P.D. James toys with the idea of the detective story being
a mortality play. She focusses the moral dimensions of murder and solves crimes with a psychological approach. Her experience as a senior administrator in the police service comes to her aid in writing detective stories.

A few modern detective story writers attempt both hard-boiled and the traditional 'arm chair' varieties, simultaneously. Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe is an 'arm chair' detective but his assistant Archie Goodwin is a mild version of the hard-boiled variety. This suggests that in modern days, to capture the attention of the reader, a hard-boiled hero is necessary, though the real credit of analysis and investigation goes to the traditional 'arm chair' detective. Three at Wolfe's Door (1960), Homicide Trinity (1962) are Rex Stout's famous stories. Margaret Cole and G.D.H. Cole are the well known husband and wife team who wrote detective novels. Nancy Drew is a reputed child detective.
The Second World War intensified international power politics which in turn gave rise to organised spying, though Matahari was the product of the First World War. National Secret Services like the CIA, the KGB, the GESTAPO were recognised in the international political scene. With the establishment of spy organisations, spy stories became popular and fashionable. Leon Uris' *Topaz* is a very good spy story. Frederick Forsyth, Irving Wallace are leading spy story writers. World War incidents were a great source of inspiration for the writers of spy stories. These stories bordered on thrillers sometimes. Alistair Maclean, James Hadley Chase, Ian Fleming and others produced thrillers where murder was as common and casual as the chopping of turnips. These stories were full of suspense and thrill that one cannot put the book down if one begins reading it. The detective story has grown into a full-fledged literary form possessing the potential to give rise to branches of its own.

Detective fiction owes its current immense
popularity to its being a mild anodyne to the bruised consciousness of post-war society. World War I drained Man's faith in humanity and in particular the values held dear by a more staid and cocksure society. A universal 'ennui' set in. The horrors of war burdened his mind and he desperately sought outlets for his frustrated emotions. Agatha Christie sees in the World War an atmosphere of consciousness of righteousness and a period when, "the doer of evil was not a hero; the enemy was wicked; the hero was good". She suggests therefore that the Western World thought the war was being fought to save virtue from evil, and this is precisely what detective fiction also does in one sense. Hence possibly the increased demand for the kind of literature after that war.

It was in some such context that detective fiction provided an escape to those who needed it. Modern man has evidently lost the 'high seriousness' and the disposition to contemplate

'higher' issues in life. Moreover technology offers readymade intellectual distractions with the coming in of mass media gadgets making original thinking and cool contemplation irrelevant. Sex and violence are in the literary air. Consequently the detective story branched off into other hybrid forms to meet the demands of a certain cross-section of the people.

That detective fiction is cheap and juvenile is by now familiar criticism. But that it has stood the test of time over more than a century and has given rise to other branches of literature, is no inconsiderable proof of its popularity. These critics possibly overlook the psycho-analytical theory of childhood memories being carried into adult consciousness. The likes, dislikes and impressions of one's childhood are the core around which one's adult experience is built. The detective story functions as a stimulant to the sagging human spirit. Hence it may perhaps not be quite correct to call the form
juvenile. Even respectable academics like Roy Fuller who was Professor of Poetry in Oxford wrote detective fiction when he was not busy with orthodox novels and poems.47

Classicists find fault with its structure. They say it is anti-cathartic. The criticism is somewhat as follows: it is entertaining and indirectly moralistic but it does not appeal to the nobler instincts of man, as a tragedy of Aristotelian definition does. Murder and tragedy have become pleasures instead of evoking pity and terror purging the emotions. But the essence of the genre is not in the act of tragedy, i.e. crime of some sort but in the detection of it. It is not the crime that is of prime importance in detective fiction. The concern is rather with the discovery of the criminal. The crime is needed only so that its author can be discovered. The content and nature of the form are such that the story cannot be written without a crime. Aristotelian grammar of tragedy, however, cannot be applied to or expected of it. Aristotelian

tragedy denies poetic justice but the detective fiction gratifies the reader with poetic justice in the form of inevitable punishment of the evil doer. Aristotle's tragedy deals with fate, the spiritual aspect of horror, whereas the detective story deals with the secular aspect of the event, leading to detection of the criminal and the punishment. The reader who is not primarily interested in the crime enjoys only the detection of crime and the frustration of the criminal. He is happy about the detective's discovery of the culprit. The reader quickly passes over the details of tragedy, then he follows with excited interest, the discovery of its cause and the act of meting out justice.

John G. Cawelti states that "the popular story patterns are embodiments of archetypal story forms in terms of specific cultural material". 48 The detective story offers emotional security and intellectual satisfaction as it has a familiar pattern which originated from well-established

conventional structures of society. The detective offers a kind of reassurance as the protector of law and order.

Easy readability is another reason for the popularity of this genre. The stories, most of them at least, are enjoyable because they are easy to read. This is due to the nature of the form. The writer has limited scope and has no space for extensive description like Hardy or picturesqueness like Dickens. The author is obliged to keep up the tempo of the story. These considerations made a French publisher prefer a translation of detective stories by G.K. Chesterton into French to his *Orthodoxy*. He must have known the mind of his readership. From this the popularity of this form of literature among continental readers also becomes clear.

Many readers loved Holmes and some even believed him to be real. When *The Sign of Four* appeared it took the reading public by storm. When the story ended with the death of Holmes there

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was such a storm of protest as has no parallel in literary history. The public were greatly interested in the characters and the theme which is clear proof of the popularity of the genre. It evolved a style of its own that appealed to the literate public of England and America.

Hostile critics like Edmund Wilson ask who cares who killed Roger Ackroyd, bypassing the historical reality of the growing demand for detective fiction stemming from a felt need. The obvious answer to that question we know is that 'millions care'. Dennis Porter further says that Edmund Wilson represents "the embattled literary punditry determined to defend highly literary art against the various forms of Philistinism operative in his time". Edmund Wilson's objection is summed up by John G. Cawelti as "their essential standardization and their primary relation to the needs of escape and relaxation. Standard criticism of detective fiction includes its content of predictable problems of no intrinsic

interest, stereotyped characterizations and undistinguished writing-in-short literature for puzzle addicts and thrill seekers produced at best by ingenious purveyors of commodities. This seems somewhat uncharitable since no one can say that Chestertonian writing is undistinguished, that Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty are not characters and that it has no intrinsic interest. It must be remembered that its interests are different from that of Edmund Wilson. Majorie Nicolson's statement that "detective novels escape not from life but from literature" and "after all scholars are in the end detectives of thought" are enough answer to Edmund Wilson.

There can be two kinds of stories; one dealing with the character of persons and the other with the character of events. Critics speak as if the former is somehow superior to the latter. If novels by Thackeray, George Eliot etc. deal with the former, it is the business of the detective stories to analyse the character of events especially the tragic event of murder.

52) John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance
Detection is the logical sequel of a criminal event and the punishment of the criminal is the legal and moral consummation of that event. Of this three-faced contest, detection alone is taken up for specialisation in detective fiction. It will be difficult to establish even from the psychological point of view an inherent literary superiority of the former type.

The insufficiency of the conventional critical attitude towards detective fiction is emphasised by Stephen Knight who says, 'literary criticism has shied away from commercial success for treating a book seriously. Literary critical skills have not been used to study the interests and needs of mass society ... a good literary critic should be able to say why a mass seller works and how it works; traditionally literary criticism has been a discussion of the world of literature alone. It talks of genres developing as if they grew autonomously without social and historic causes'.

The concerned readership is not an aristocratic minority but a growing multitude which might on occasion include the minority. Today in the West the percentage of literacy is very high and detective fiction is demanded by everyone who knows to read and who has the curiosity to know what happened next and 'whodunit'. The credentials of art are undergoing a change in modern society and taste and artistic values are becoming democratic. Under the circumstances critics like Wilson may have to alter their norms of criticism, for one is not dealing with an elitist situation in the context of detective fiction. Erick Routley says that an inherent defect in the detective story genre is that it can 'trivialise' the drama of human conflict and so can appeal to people who are trivial-minded and encourage and nourish 'trivial-mindedness'. But this is a charge which can be levelled not only against this particular genre but against any form of literature. Even a non-detective type of novel can be preoccupied
with obscenity and low sex though it might be contained in an aesthetic capsule and thereby appeal to obscene minds; it could be reasonably held that trivialisation and appeal to obscene tastes are not the monopoly of any form of literature. According to Stephen Knight there are three reasons for the attention which detective fiction compels: (1) it is seen as a substitute for religious pattern as a certainty; (2) several psycho-analysts find the basis of its pattern in the psychic anxieties of writers and readers; (3) modern social attitudes and the pressures of environment.

In no other field is there such an influx of writers as in that of detective story writing. Robin W.Winks makes a somewhat exaggerated statement about the pleasure that is afforded by a detective story, though he is by and large correct in his assessment. The detective story is most likely to remain popular in the days to come because it "not merely entertains but significantly, delightfully, suffocatingly,
Those who predict the decline or even extinction of this genre are confused by its surface transitions. In fact it is but the same old wine in a new bottle, i.e., the same old crime stories finding a fresh outlet in this form. The conditions that warranted the acceptance of this genre in the past are likely only to accentuate in the future, due to the increasing complexities of social life and therefore its place in the literature of the future can be said to be more or less assured.

Since there is no evolution without mutation, this genre which has established itself as a sound and strong literary form would extend to include new forms. The spy stories and the thrillers are offshoots of detective fiction. The genre has acquired nearly the status of a ballad or a lyric. It has its own identity and standard. The form may or may not be in vogue.

54) Robin Winks, Modus Operandi (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982).
in the future as was the case during the Golden Age, but at any rate it will not fade out of the literary scene for the simple reason that it has its own votaries and they are many.

The future will bring in increasing numbers the democratic literate who is not likely to be highbrow in his artistic demands, but will want a literature which can suit his artistic requirements; and so while the critic may be within his rights in continuing to criticise from the highbrow angle; the popularity as such of detective fiction will also increase in due proportion. It is so because the future belongs to the common man who will not only outnumber but even 'outvoice' the elite; he may borrow the cliches of the critics but his personal preference will be for literature of this kind which has three advantages namely brevity, excitement and being intellectually clear unlike very long novels, high level but dull works of superior art.

It is also said that "the impact of the world wars was to have forced the readership of
detective stories further and further out towards the fringes of society". The World Wars have helped the growth of detective fiction because of its being a sort of escapist literature and the fringe tends to become the core. It is interesting to observe at this juncture that it is only after the world wars that we are reading Raymond Chandler and a score of others. These Wars have led to much disillusionment but the disillusioned man redresses the balance by reading a detective story.

The future of the detective story depends upon the social changes in future. Change is natural, inevitable and at times even necessary. This form has already won a set of votaries and at least for their sake it would persist. Satiety will only bring in external changes and will not seriously alter its essence.