CHAPTER : FIVE

CONCLUSION

The thirties produced many considerable talents. Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham belong to this period. They dominated the field in this period. Each was noted for her individuality. Of the three Agatha Christie is very popular and known to a large number of the reading public while Sayers and Allingham are known only to the literary public. The popularity of Christie is mainly due to the simple narration and plot construction. According to Julian Symons

Her skill was not in the tight construction of plot, nor in the locked-room mystery, nor did she often make assumptions about the scientific and medical knowledge of readers, but in the conjurer's trick.1

While Christie enjoyed a uniform popularity Sayers has a limited crowd of admirers, "a diminished but still considerable band, she is the finest detective story writer of the twentieth century, to those less enthusiastic her work is long winded and ludicrously snobbish".2

In the beginning of her literary career Margery Allingham wrote a novel almost every year. They are considered be classical and charming works by her admiring readers.

2 Ibid., p.112.
She was sufficiently talented to write graceful and perceptive prose, sensitive enough to character to make human beings out of victim, criminal and detective alike. The detective story reached a point of maturity in the hands of Margery Allingham. Though Sayers and Allingham contributed some special effects of indispensable importance to the scenic beauty, none of them, perhaps, would have attempted anything so bold and original like the skilled hand of Agatha Christie.

Certain common features are found in the writings of these three authors though they differ in various aspects. All three wrote short stories, plays and non-fiction. As far as detective fiction is concerned they believed that good should triumph, bad should be punished and justice should be done. The criminals are ultimately punished whether by the judiciary or by Providence.

The cause of crime is money, valuable articles and hidden treasures. Murder is the crime that is mostly committed. Crime is just reported and never described in detail. They also avoided nauseating descriptions, violent actions, sex and politics. Punishment is off the stage (except in Margery Allingham's Mystery Mile, the suffering of Simister is described in detail and in The Tiger in Smoke we are told how the Tiger runs deep into the water).
All the three writers are well-known through their detectives. Poirot, Wimsey and Campion are better known than their authors. They also form a Holmes-Watson combination in their novels which includes pairs like Poirot Hastings, Wimsey-Bunter, Campion-Lugg. Christie's detective is a Belgian retired officer while Sayers' Wimsey is a Lord and Allingham's Campion has some aristocratic connections whose nature is never revealed. Poirot is elderly while Wimsey and Campion are young. Poirot is single and Wimsey and Campion court through several books, marry and have children. Poirot's death is announced in the obituary column of the New York Times something unheard of in the history of detective fiction. Wimsey and Campion simply disappear. Poirot is serious and believes in his grey cells while Wimsey's investigation is based on his observation and inference. Campion is clownish in the beginning but becomes serious in later books.

Greed for money and the exposure of blackmailing are the common themes handled by Christie. Whereas in the stories of Sayers along with money it is jealousy that leads to murder (Whose Body), crime is not murder Gaudy Night but the vengeance of an illiterate girl Anne destroying the university property, causing mental agony to the faculty members because she believes that her husband's suicide is due to the
wilful punishment exercised by one of the faculty members who exposes his guilt and disgraces him which results in his suicide.

Almost all the criminals in these works are arrested though there are a few exceptions. The criminals in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie) and *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (Sayers) are asked to commit suicide considering their position in society. Ackroyd and Pentberthy are doctors. The criminals commit suicide in Christie's *Curtain*, *Elephants can remember*, *Ten Little Niggers* and in Sayer's *Unnatural Death*. The criminals escape in Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* since they act like the Jury and Justice is done. In Sayers's *Five Red Herrings* the criminal escapes since the murder is not wilfully done and the victim is not a desirable person but one who often disturbs society. In Allingham's *Crime at Black Dudley* the associates of the victim escape and no justice is done. But the victim who is the master brain behind many thefts and else trains innocent people to commit sins is punished. So when the criminal escapes justice is rendered as the victim is the real criminal. So the criminal is both a murderer and a martyr. In *Mystery Mile* and in *The Tiger in Smoke* the criminals die.

As far as the venue is concerned Christie always portrays the English country side while Sayers and Allingham present
London City and its suburbs. The plots of Christie are always simple and are based on a single fact or are constructed round a single event. Her plots are simple with basic English words, relatively short sentences and short paragraphs. She caters to a vast reading public right from Professors of logic to enthusiastic children at school. She paints English country life particularly the life of villagers with their characteristic traits that make her novels more interesting. She never presented town life and its commercialism. Her plots are skillfully drawn and the reader is never able to identify the murderer. She is a master craftsman who succeeds in maintaining the element of suspense till the end of the novel.

Sayers and Allingham presented city life. Sayers's style is literary with quotations from Shakespeare and Milton. Allingham's work reflects her literary knowledge. Both provide complicated plots. Allingham's plots especially have the element of the thriller in them. The incidents in Murder Must Advertise (Sayers) and Mystery Mile (Allingham) and Beckoning Lady (Allingham) are too unwieldy and intricate. We can easily guess the criminals and the authors skill is revealed in explaining how the crime is committed.

The criminals of all these novelists are shrewd contrivers. In fact they are over cautious and are not able to realise that such over caution is itself to be responsible to expose their
guilt. Men and women are murderers. The husband murdering his wife, the wife murdering her husband, a lover murdering his lady love's husband out of jealousy, etc. and a good variety of criminals presented in the books of these writers indicate that these are the people whom we meet in our daily lives whose disappointments, anger, and possessive nature turn them into criminals. Ultimately, the detective emerges as the most intelligent and more powerful instrument. He functions as a representative of Almighty and succeeds in punishing the criminals and thereby restores order peace and harmony to the disturbed world.

Time and time again Christie, Sayers, and Allingham rehearse the archetypal ritual of crime and cleansing using the Priest and the 'Pharmakos' figures of the detective and the criminal.