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RATIOCINATION, ROMANTICISM AND REALISM  
IN THE DETECTIVE STORY:  
A STUDY OF POE, DOYLE AND HAMMETT

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the School of Humanities  
Morehead State University


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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts


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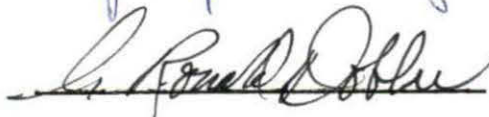
by  
Timothy Jay Roberts  
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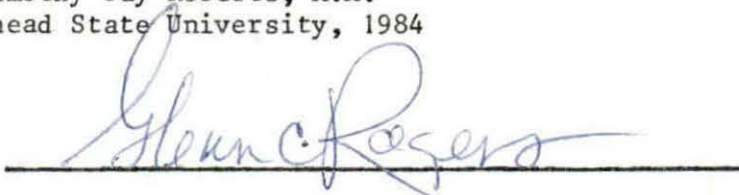
  
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RATIOCINATION, ROMANTICISM AND REALISM  
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A STUDY OF POE, DOYLE AND HAMMETT

Timothy Jay Roberts, M.A.  
Morehead State University, 1984

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This thesis is an influence study of three of the most prominent authors of the detective story: Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Samuel Dashiell Hammett. These authors best represent the three periods of development of the detective genre because of their expansions and innovations of it; I have classified these periods as ratiocination, romanticism and realism. In this study, I show, through plot, characters, characters' philosophies, and settings, how Poe's detective tales influenced Doyle's works and how they both indirectly influenced Hammett, and how each author brought the genre out of its status as sub-literature to make it an art form.

In order to demonstrate these influences, I closely studied short stories and novels by the three authors, paying particular attention to similarities in the way the detectives thought and in their philosophies and criticisms of certain institutions of society. I also wanted to find similar passages that would identify

the detective as a hero, a man with a personal code of honor and commitment to do what is right for his client and himself.

From this study, I have discovered that while the three authors sued and modified the elements of good detective fiction, their only difference, aside from a stylistic one, was the presentation of who and what were good and evil. With Poe and Doyle, the reader knew who the villain was; but with Hammett those boundaries between good and evil were lost.

This study has been assisted by a few critical works from the scant field of detective story criticism. This study has not only enlightened my knowledge of the genre, but has revealed to me the extent that popular literature has in the period in which it was written.

Accepted by:

Glenn Rogers, Chairman  
Judy R. Rogers  
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INTRODUCTION: SOCIETY'S BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

Crime has always been civilization's open wound; it burns and aches when irritated, and if it ever heals, the scar is deep, uneraseable. The basic reason for crime is that major human frailty, want. Marxists say, "if you eliminate want, you eliminate crime." But no matter how perfect a society is, that simple feeling of want is instilled in human nature.

To combat crime we have policemen and detectives who try to enforce and uphold the law that protects human beings from those who want. The process of justice is slow; sometimes it can have the effect upon a criminal of a slap on the hands. Because of justice's snail-pace, courts are bogged down with backlogs of cases, many of which could have been tried quickly if, for one thing, evidence had been obtained easily and quickly and if loopholes had been shut tightly.

There is always one man or woman whose job it is to cut through the fog of paperwork, who does not like to see innocents abused by those who want. This person, referred to in this study as the detective, does not like to see laws bent by political manipulators, dope dealers, mobsters and petty criminals. The detective in literature can be an amateur sleuth like Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, a private investigator like Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, a public servant like Inspector Maigret or Steve Carella of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct

novels. These people are society's blunt instruments. Robin Winks, in the introduction of Detective Fiction, believes the genre has become

. . .a mirror to society. Through it we see society's fears become explicit; for some, those fears are exorcised by the fiction . . .There must be someone who is not bound by the entrapping bureaucracy of a society too complex to do simple. . .justice (7).

The key element in detective fiction is a detective with a mystery to solve; the detective is concerned with explaining what has happened, why, how, with what, by whom, and when. He does this by reason, believed by Poe to be man's finest quality.

In its official form--that is, with a detective and a case to solve--detective fiction began with Poe over one hundred and forty years ago. It has been through radical changes, even being adapted to other genres such as science fiction (with novels like Isaac Asimov's The Caves of Steel, featuring detective Elijah Baley, and Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories). This study centers on the three periods of the genre and the author that represents that period best. First, Poe, in his tales of ratiocination, gave the detective tale a definitive purpose as well as a firm, uniform structure. Next, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle introduced the romantic

superhero detective Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr. Watson in pieces that pitted righteous Victorian Law against scurvy evil.

Finally, Dashiell Hammett, a former Pinkerton agent, drew on his former profession to create realistic characters, situations and settings while maintaining the basic story pattern set down by the other two authors.

The major thrust of this study is to show the direct influence of Poe on Doyle and the indirect influence they both had on Hammett, focusing on characters' philosophies, situations, displaying the modifications the author made on the genre. Furthermore, this study will portray the detective as a hero, a man with a code of honor, a man who knows what is right for him and his clients. He is a man faced with the problem of cutting through the muck that a criminal has put in front of him. He is a man who thinks one step ahead of the other law-enforcers and who refuses to stop in the face of bureaucracy. He is a man who simply wants to help people and to do his job.

Detective fiction has its roots in the Gothic novel with its closed rooms, shadowy settings, its exposure of human nature's blackened soul. But the genre had to bloom much later, for early in the nineteenth century there were no organized detective forces in any large metropolitan area. There were, however, commissioned groups of vigilantes who pursued criminals with the single intent of beating justice into the wrongdoer's head--literally. Sometimes the policemen were reformed criminals using the tricks of their former profession to



hunt down lawbreakers. As long as "justice was done," it did not matter who was punished for what. In France the former criminal Francois Vidocq published his fictionalized Memoirs de Vidocq, which were accounts of his adventures in chasing down crooks in the streets of Paris. Poe's C. Auguste Dupin was the first detective to solve crimes rationally and objectively, both without resorting to violence and only by gathering evidence and solving the mystery from that evidence.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle extended Poe's creation by making a detective for the people. His style was more accessible to the middle class readers of Victorian England. Doyle defended his society, its law and order, its vindication of right. This brand of amateur detective ushered in the genre's "Golden Age," where the setting changed from London's dim streets to country manors.

Social Changes after World War I--working class against ruling class, for example--brought detective fiction from its "Golden Age" to its "Iron Age" (MacDonald iii); settings went back to dirty streets, and detectives became hard; cynical men with jobs to perform. Dashiell Hammett led the school of hard-boiled writers such as Raymond Chandler and Ellery Queen. They wrote stories of the underworld, the other side of high society--drug abuse, sexual infidelity, jealousy. Their style was snappy, simple, colloquial.

The simple fact that each of us belongs in a society that

needs its own trouble shooters is the reason for a study of detective fiction. Through it we know that our protectors can be eccentric introverts, conceited, pipe-smoking Londoners, or hard-hitting, tough-talking private dicks.

The passages quoted in the study are from these collections:

Doyle, Arthur Conan. The Complete Sherlock Holmes. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1930.

Hammett, Dashiell. The Novels of Dashiell Hammett. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1965.

Poe, Edgar Allan. The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, III. Chicago: Stone and Kimball. 1894.

FOE : RATIOCINATION

## I

There are two worlds explored in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe: the first, and the one for which he is most famous, is the morbid world where a massive mansion crumbles into dust, where a drunken man, dressed in a jester's bell-cap, is sealed in a wine cellar; it is a world where a man carries his dead wife's coffin across the sea in a ship's cabin, where a lonely man constantly journeys to the tomb of his dead lover. It is this side of Poe that created the tragic "Israfel" and the somber black bird perched above the bust of Pallas, uttering the ominous "Nevermore." Death, loss, grief, depression surround Poe; yet these morbid tales are only a part of his canon.

There is Poe's other world, which is somewhat smaller in comparison to the images of the "grotesque and arabesque"; it is a world of cold logic and captivating reasoning, of the cunning, murderous deeds done by desperate men. It is a world in the charge of the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, the first amateur "armchair" detective. It is the world of the detective story, the tale of ratiocination, and Edgar Allan Poe is its father.

As mentioned in the introduction, there were "police" stories of

a kind before Poe in which the crooks would be beaten senseless by the "law officers." Poe broke away from that tradition by trading in the blunt instrument for the brain. With what Howard Haycraft, the supreme historian of the genre, calls the "single stroke of a pen," Poe created the essentials of detective fiction that would follow him: the eccentric detective, the admiring and slightly stupid sidekick, the well-intentioned but bumbling police, the locked room, the finger of unjust suspicion, the surprise solution, deduction by putting one's self in another's place (what some call psychology), concealment by means of the obvious, the staged ruse to force the culprit's hand, and finally the condescending explanation when the chase is over (12).

Poe called the pieces tales of ratiocination, not detective stories, because not many cities in America had an organized force during the early 1840's. Paris, however, probably had the first detective squad of any major city, and that is considered to be the non-romantic reason for Poe's setting Dupin's adventures there. But contained in these tales are the bits of horror that he is famous for: the description of Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye when their corpses are discovered, and the appearance of Marie Roget after her lifeless body is dragged from the Seine river (Symons 223).

The three stories featuring C. Auguste Dupin are "Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter." These three establish once and for all the pattern and mold

for the thousands upon thousands of detective stories that followed (Haycraft 11). "The Gold Bug," while it is one of the tales of ratiocination, and even though its main character, Legrand, brilliantly solves the presented puzzle to find a lost treasure, lacks the single element necessary for this study: a detective.

Haycraft has placed the three Dupin stories into classes based on the descriptions and actions contained in them: "Murders" exemplifies the physical detective story, "Mystery" is a purely mental tale, and "Letter" belongs to the balanced category. In the compass of these three narratives, Poe foretold the entire evolution of the genre as a literary form.

## II

After Poe had shown a keen ability for analysis in his features for Graham's magazine, he wondered if he could use this inductive ability in his writing, or to solve crimes as well (Bittner 154-155). When he was with Burton's magazine, he had found, in some back files, "Unpublished Passages in the Life of Vidocq, the French Minister of Police." Poe was interested in the passions of crime, especially murder; as in the London of Arthur Conan Doyle's time, the newspapers in New York often reported sensational murder trials, and they intrigued Poe.

In his writings up to this time, his representations of himself were men who had deep feelings and emotions. For a new representation, he added keen intelligence exclusive of emotion, creating C. Auguste Dupin (Bittner 154-155). Dupin is considered to be the true image of Poe--aristocratic, arrogant, omniscient, extremely logical in expression (Symons 222).

"Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe's first tale of ratiocination, appeared in Graham's in April, 1841, while he was editor of that magazine. In it, Poe sets up the qualities of a man with an analytical mind:

He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of heiro-glyphics; exhibiting in his solution of each such a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural (53).

And along with this, the analytical mind seeks pleasure in ". . . the moral activity which disentangles" (53). Furthermore, there is evidence that the man we are soon to meet in the story does not make analysis such a difficult task:

. . .the higher powers of reflective intellect are more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter. . .what

is only complex is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound (54).

The key to such intelligence is nothing more than close observation. And the story's lengthy introduction points out how a keen observer can analyze his opponents' strategy in a card game by how they assort their cards, count their trumps, how they glance at each other; he can deduce who has what kind of hand, as play progresses, through an opponent's casual words, dropping of cards, and the anxiety displayed.

Yet, observation alone does not yield analytical power-- there is something else:

The analytical power should not be confused with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often incapable of analysis. . . . Between ingenuity and the analytic ability, there exists a difference far greater. . . than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character strictly analogous. . . . It will be found. . . that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the truly imaginative are never otherwise than analytic (56-57).



Since the unimaginative police and their bunglings frequently get in the way of solution, Dupin, with his powers of observation and imagination, always manages to come up with the best, most imaginative solution to the crime. Of course, Sherlock Holmes does the same in his stories, frequently proving wrong the men of Scotland Yard.

The narrator of "Murders" meets Dupin for the first time in an obscure library where they are both looking for the same rare volume; their friendship continues, and they both take up lodgings in a drafty, grotesque old mansion in the Faubourg St. Germain. The narrator describes his friend as a young gentleman from an illustrious family who had, through gambling, probably, lost all his fortunes. This comes from an experience in Poe's life; while at the University of Virginia, Poe had accumulated huge gambling debts from fellow students and credit debts from town merchants. His foster-father, John Allan, refused to pay the young man's debts and pulled Poe out of the university. Like Poe, Dupin had, according to the narrator, "been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes" (57).

After taking up residence in the Faubourg St. Germain, the narrator describes Dupin's eccentricities, especially his love for the night:

It was a freak of fancy in my friend. . .to be enamoured of the night for her own sake; and into this bizarrerie. . .I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with perfect abandon (58).

These whims develop into routines rather quickly:

At the first dawn of the morning we closed all the massy shutters of our old building; lighted a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams-- reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets. . .seeking, amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford (59).

Dupin's amazing power is demonstrated for the first time in what is considered to be one of the most memorable passages in the story. While out on one of their strolls through the city,

Dupin remarks to the narrator: "He is a very little fellow, that's true, and would do better for the Theatre des Varietes." How Dupin knew what the narrator was thinking completely confounds him (And here is a foreshadowing of Dr. Watson's "By Jove, Holmes. It is as if my head were made of glass and my thoughts as readable as The London Times," from forty years in the future.) The narrator was thinking of the actor Chantilly and how his small stature would make him unfit for tragic drama. Dupin explains his statement by telling how he reasoned inductively from when the narrator ran into a fruitier several minutes earlier. After the fruitier, after the narrator steps on loose street stones and mutters "stereonomy" and thinks of the theories of Epicurus and looks at the constellation Orion, Dupin arrives at the narrator's thoughts on Chantilly.

It is after this magnificent display that the two read the Gazette des Tribunaux which tells of the horrible murders of Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye in their house on the Rue Morgue. The journal tells of the screams heard by the neighbors at three that morning, and the subsequent sound of gruff voices, of the blood-smeard raznor, of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye's body, dragged headfirst from the chimney, and the bloody figure of Madame L'Espanaye in the back garden, "with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off" (65).

Both windows in the room had been locked from the inside; the only way in or out of the room was through the door, which was

also locked from the inside. Testimony was taken from neighbors and eyewitnesses and published in the paper the next day, concluding that:

A murder so mysterious and so perplexing in all its particulars, was never before committed in Paris--if indeed a murder has been committed at all. The police are entirely at fault--an unusual occurrence in affairs of this nature. There is not, however, the shadow of a clew apparent (71).

Arrested and imprisoned on suspicion of murder is Adolphe Le Bon, a clerk at Mme. L'Esplanaye's bank, "although nothing appeared to incriminate him" (71).

It is the first locked room mystery. Dupin gets permission from Prefect of police G--, more of whom we will hear later, to enter and make his own examination of the room in the Rue Morgue. So far, we have four of Haycraft's essentials of detective stories created by Poe: the locked room, the eccentric detective, his sidekick, and the finger of unjust suspicion, pointed in this instance at Monsuier Le Bon. This story is of the physical class, according to Haycraft, because of the descriptions of the mutilated bodies, Dupin's visit to the scene of the crime, and his solution of it.

Back at the Faubourg St. Germain, following their survey of the bedroom, Dupin digresses on the quality of the work done by the Parisian police:

We must not judge the means. . .by this shell of an examination. The Parisian Police, so much extolled by acumen, are cunning, but no more. . . . The results attained by them are not unfrequently surprising, but, for the most part, are brought about by simple diligence and activity. When these qualities are unavailing, their schemes fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser. . . . But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close (72).

Dupin, in this passage, criticizes the police investigation because of their over-scrutinizing of the crime scene. It is better, Dupin suggests, for the crime and crime scene to be taken in as a whole; therefore, nothing will be missed.

Based on his examination of the L'Esplanade bedroom, Dupin tells how the murderer got in and got out, and how--in this case, what--the murderer was. Readers familiar with the story know that

both windows in the bedroom were shut, locked, fastened with nails from the inside; however, the nail in the window above Mme. L'Espanaye's bed was cut in half to allow the window to open. Since the door and the other window were locked, the murderer had to have entered through that one. How did the murderer enter? A lightning rod ran alongside the house, five feet from the window, and there were shutters against the wall. The killer must have shimmied up the rod and swung into the open window and onto the woman's bed; he then exited in that same fashion before the neighbors entered, with the window shutting and locking behind him.

Upon examination of a hair taken from the bedroom, the narrator remarks, "Dupin. . .this is no human hair"; then Dupin shows him a picture of a large ourang-outang, the only thing that could have made such deep marks on Mademoiselle L'Espanayé's neck.

As a staged ruse to capture the criminal, Dupin puts a bogus classified ad in a shipping paper, announcing the capture of an ourang-outang; its owner, a tall, muscular French sailor answers, and then Dupin extracts a full confession from him. The ape had been trying to shave itself--as it had seen its master do many times--when the sailor saw it and tried to punish it. Terrified, the beast ran from the house, made its way to the back of the Rue Morgue, entered the house in the manner Dupin had suggested, and, as the sailor saw him, tried to shave Madame L'Espanaye. With one sweep of its arm, the ape tore the woman's head off, and then pro-

ceeded to strangle the younger woman, who had passed out after witnessing the atrocity. It then began to "clean up" its mess and hide the evidence by shoving the young woman up the chimney and throwing her mother out the window.

The Prefect of Police's remark that Dupin should mind his own business--even though he will ask Dupin's help in the next two stories--brings this reply from the sleuth:

Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience.

I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. . .for, in truth, our friend the Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound. . . . It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the Goddess Laverna,--or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish.

### III

In July, 1841, the murdered corpse of Mary Cecilia Rogers was found floating in the Hudson River close to the New Jersey shore. She had been employed at Anderson's cigar store; following her murder, the sensationalizing press gave her the title of "The Beautiful Cigar Girl" (Walsh 8). Such instant notoriety for the dead young

woman did not come from the tragic circumstances but from the police force's inability to solve the crime. Poe was living in New York, at that time, having lost his job as editor of the Southern Literary Messenger in Richmond. He was, in speaking of the force's handling of the murder, "frankly contemptuous in their effort;" he more than hinted that when he wrote "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (Haycraft 16).

Poe placed the baffling murder of the young cigar girl in Paris, turned her occupation to perfume girl, changed her name slightly, and brought in Dupin to investigate it. The story appeared in Snowden's Ladies' Companion in three installments, starting in November, 1842, more than a year after Mary Rogers's death.

In "Mystery," the longest of the tales of ratiocination, Dupin arrives at his conclusions through newspaper accounts of Marie's murder, never leaving his armchair to visit the place where her bloated body was pulled from the Seine. Therefore, the story belongs to Haycraft's mental class; there is no snooping around the scene of the crime, nor are witnesses interviewed by the detective. Dupin solves the case strictly from newspaper stories on it. However, its length and its lack of what Haycraft calls "life blood" makes it the least popular of the trio (16-17).

In the tale, we pick up Dupin's life two years after the



Rue Morgue incident. His brilliant solution to the baffling crime made his name a household word, and the Prefect of Police G-- made frequent attempts to engage his services. Yet Dupin's life had not changed drastically after Rue Morgue; on the contrary, things went back to normal in the Faubourg St. Germain:

. . .the Chevalier dismissed the affair at once from his attention and relapsed into his old habits of moody revery. . .and continuing to occupy our chambers in the Faubourg St. Germain, we gave the Future to the winds, and slumbered tranquilly in the Present, weaving the dull world around us into dreams (101).

On Sunday, June 22, 18--, Marie Roget told her suitor, Jaques St. Eustache, that she was going to spend the day with a relative. She did not return that evening. Four days later, her corpse was found floating in the Seine near the shore opposite a part of Paris.

Once again, the city's newspapers gave descriptions of what was found on the corpse, where it was found, what Marie was seen doing on the day she vanished; they even offered solutions to and theories about how she was molested. Since the Parisian police were, as usual, unable to solve the crime, a reward was offered

to anyone who could solve it and apprehend the murderer; this sum was later upped by G--, and a "concerned citizens group," to thirty thousand francs. Still, Dupin did not bite; but later G-- made some kind of proposal to Dupin that the narrator does not see fit to disclose in the story, saying that "the advantages were altogether provisional" (106).

From the information the narrator gathered for Dupin's solution, two aspects of the murder, both suggested by newspaper speculation, need to be clarified for the whole case to be solved: the length of time Marie's body stayed in the river and whether or not she was assaulted by a gang.

One of the journals, L'Etoile, suggests that the body pulled from the river was not Marie's. Since a drowned body must stay underwater for at least six days before decomposition can bring it to the surface, and since the corpse was difficult to identify, the paper reasons that it was not Marie because she had been missing for only four days; the paper states that the found body must have been underwater for fifteen days. The other journals examined by the narrator and Dupin suggest that Marie was mauled by a gang in the streets of Paris, then taken across the river and murdered. Yet Le Commercial debates this theory by saying a woman as popular as Marie would have been seen by many people if a gang assaulted her. Also, in the woods across the river from Paris, two boys found some trampled women's clothing plus a

handkerchief bearing the name Marie Roget. Furthermore, an inn-keeper reported a young woman matching Marie's description was with a swarthy-looking young man in her inn on the Sunday Marie disappeared. When they left, a gang of boisterous ruffians followed them.

With the facts at hand, as the narrator reported them, Dupin attacks the mystery, along with the police and the newspapers. It is an ordinary case, he states, with nothing unusual about it—unlike, or course, the Rue Morgue mystery. This is its most important aspect, as Dupin says:

You will observe that, for this reason,  
the mystery has been considered easy,  
when, for this reason, it should have  
been considered difficult, of solution  
(117).

Sherlock Holmes says basically the same thing pertaining to the solution of A Study in Scarlet. Aside from the fact that a crime was committed, the most outstanding characteristic of the mystery is that it is, at the immediate outset, such a simple one. The police have no idea of who the culprit is; and even though the newspapers try to shed light and offer solutions, their earnest efforts seem to block the way to a clear solution.

Dupin first clears up the matter of whether or not the body pulled from the river was Marie's. He counters L'Etoile's notion when he observes that a body drowns when it becomes heavier than water, and that comes about when water enters the body while the person is breathing. The body then sinks, rising only when it has decomposed underwater. However, Marie had been strangled before she was thrown in; she was already dead, thus she could not drown.

Could Marie have been accosted by a gang as she walked through the town on the day she vanished? Le Commercial thought so, but Dupin counters:

. . .whatever force there may still appear to be in the suggestion of Le Commercial, will be much diminished when we take into consideration the hour at which she went abroad. "It was when the streets are full of people. . .that she went out." But not so. It was at nine o'clock in the morning. . . . With the exception of Sunday, the streets are. . . thronged with people. At nine on Sunday, the populace are chiefly indoors preparing for church (135).

And there would be different feelings of guilt about the crime if indeed a gang apprehended Marie:

An individual has committed the murder.

He is alone with the ghost of the departed

. . . . His is none of that confidence

which the presence of numbers inevitably

inspires. He is alone with the dead

. . .there is a necessity for disposing the corpse (153).

The most obvious clue to that effect supports the detective's convictions that a gang did not murder Marie. Around her corpse was

. . .found "a slip, about a foot wide. . .

torn upward from the bottom hem to the

waist, wound three times around the waist,

and secured by some sort of hitch in the

back." This was done with the obvious

design of affording a handle by which

to carry the body. But would any number

of men have dreamed of reverting to

such an expedient (154-155)?

We know now that Marie had been murdered by one person, but

who was it? All evidence, including a small boat that was found in the river at the same time as Marie, points to the anonymous young naval officer Marie was allegedly seen with at the inn. The tale's conclusion is interrupted by some "necessary editing:"

For reasons which we shall not specify, but which may to our readers appear obvious, we have taken the liberty of here omitting, from the MSS. placed in our hands such portions as details the following up of the slight clue obtained by Dupin. We feel it advisable only to state, in brief, that the result desired was brought to pass; and that the Prefect fulfilled punctually, although with reluctance, the terms of his compact with the chevalier. . . (163).

John Walsh, as well as other critics, states that this was a trick of Poe's; it is not clear whether or not he was tired of writing the story or if he planned it that way. In any case, "Mystery" is the most tedious of the tales, though fascinating at the same time. It is a variation of the near-documentary technique, according to Julian Symons (223); Dupin does too much rambling about the murder and whether or not a gang did it. What is given here is a sketchy overview of the case. The documentary style of the story can be considered logical Poe's social

commentary about the blundering police, the over-ambitious press, the grapevine of public rumors. A variation of this style is displayed in Joe Gores's Hammett, where the famous writer is placed in a fictitious situation based on the San Francisco of the 1920's.

#### IV

Of Poe's tales of ratiocination, "The Purloined Letter" is the most satisfying structurally and aesthetically (Haycraft 20). It avoids the grizzliness of "Murders" and the verbose, stagnant style of "Mystery" by combining elements of the two. Dupin, in this tale, visits the rooms of Minister D-- to find a stolen letter, paralleling his visit to the bedroom of Madame L'Esplanaye; but he still describes in the most intricate detail how he arrived at the solution, as he did in "Mystery." This, according to Haycraft's classification, is a balanced story, since Dupin actually pays a visit to D-- to find the letter and afterwards explains how he found the document.

Dupin and the narrator are in their residence at the Faubourg St. Germain where they are in the small back library, "enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerscham . . ." (166). After reading that sentence, we can ask: is the

swirling fog of Baker Street approaching this soon?

Prefect of Police G-- arrives to ask Dupin's opinion on some trouble the police are dealing with, concerning a letter that has been stolen from the royal apartments by Minister D--. The letter would bring "in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station" (169). It was originally received by a young woman who remains anonymous throughout the story. G-- says that when the letter was reported missing, a team of police thoroughly searched D--'s apartment, the apartment building, Minister D-- himself; they searched other rooms in the building, cut open and inspected furniture, opened every drawer in hopes of finding a secret one; chairs were taken apart, cushions were probed with needles. Books, too, were painstakingly scrutinized, as the Prefect says:

. . . We not only opened every book. . .  
but turned over every leaf in each  
volume, not contenting ourselves with  
a mere shake, according to the fashions  
of some of our police officers. (174-175).

One month later, G-- tells Dupin that a second search for the document proved to be fruitless; afterward, G-- tells Dupin that fifty thousand francs will be rewarded to anyone who can return the letter. Dupin has G-- write out a check for the amount, then Dupin



produces the stolen letter:

This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check (177).

Dupin believed that in order to find the letter, he had to identify himself with Minister D--'s intellect by using psychology, one of Poe's contributions to the development of the genre, the one device not used in the two previous tales of ratiocination. Prepared with his green spectacles, Dupin had paid a visit to Minister D-- in his apartment.

While the sleuth conversed with the Minister, his green-spectacled eyes scanned the room, until:

At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree cardrack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon. . .just beneath the mantle-

piece. In this rack. . . were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. . . much soiled and crumpled. It had a large black seal, bearing the D-- cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed in a diminutive female hand, to D-- . . . I concluded it to be that of which I was in search (187).

He pretended to talk with D-- as he scrutinized the letter; it had been turned inside out and resealed, he gathered from seeing how chaffed the paper seemed to be. All of this he noticed while wearing green glasses!

Dupin concluded his conversation with the Minister, leaving his snuff box behind as he exited the apartment. He returned to claim it the next day, pretending to continue the conversation for the day before, when suddenly they heard a pistol shot. As D-- went to the window to see the cause of the disturbance, Dupin exchanged the letter in the pouch with one of his own. The gunman outside had been hired by Dupin to cause the commotion, a staged ruse Haycraft lists as one of Poe's contributions to the genre.

Back at the Faubourg St. Germain, the narrator asks Dupin if

he had put anything in the false letter:

Why--it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank--that would have been insulting. D--, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to leave him a clue. . . (188).

The detective stories following Poe are patterned, with some deviations, after the formula of the final Dupin story: the problem, the investigation, the solution. In "Murders" and "Mystery," he may have been experimenting with various forms of detective stories--rather, tales of ratiocination--before he arrived at the one used in the satisfying, witty "Letter."

By bringing the job of the detective to higher levels of intellect, Poe instituted the first stage of the genre's development. Settings, characters and action were not important to Poe; however, the means to the end were. The former three items were

added nearly forty years later with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the arrival of Sherlock Holmes. Poe's tragic, unfulfilled life may be offset by these contributions to a genre that has now been recognized as a literary form.

DOYLE: ROMANTICISM

## I

Mystery and thriller author Eric Ambler said, "The detective story may have been born in the mind of Edgar Allan Poe, but it was London that fed it, clothed it and brought it to maturity" (Lambert 38). Poe's influence on early English detective fiction was indirect at first; Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins were two of the first major writers to use the genre. Dickens was interested in the newly established London Metropolitan Police in his Mystery of Edwin Drood, and in 1868 Wilkie Collins wrote what genre historians call the first mystery novel: the hammy, fascinating The Moonstone. However, the radical change, if Ambler's statement is to hold true, came with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of one of the most famous characters in all of literature: Sherlock Holmes (Symons, The Detective Story in Britian, 13).

Sherlock Holmes is the epitome of the detective; devout Sherlockians raise him to the level of saint: Saint Sherlock, the Bloodhound of Heaven. Who is the smartest detective is a matter for the genre's historians and readers to decide, but the debt that British detective writers owe to Poe cannot go unnoticed, as indicated in the Holmes adventures. The Holmes stories do show, however, less of the process of induction that Dupin spoke about for pages and pages, and more of the action and characters of the tale. The boundaries between the anxious innocents who come to

Holmes for assistance and the villains--the truest scum from the bleakest, darkest pits of Hell--are sharply drawn. Holmes and his ever-faithful, ever-awed companion Dr. John H. Watson hunt down their prey by using rational thought, a slight bit of Victorian righteousness and a great deal of danger and adventure.

Doyle came from a strong Catholic family, a faith he would renounce later in his life; but as a child he listened to his mother tell him the stories of King Arthur and Ivanhoe with her mixture of puritanic and romantic beliefs that "glorified the spirit and disdained the flesh" (Lambert 33). While he was studying in a Jesuit school in Austria, he received a book that not only impressed him but electrified him; he later confessed that the author of this book was to be the one to sharpen his tastes. The author was Edgar Allan Poe.

Doyle instilled in Holmes a code of kindness, courtesy, morality, and opposition to cruelty and injustice, attributes he saw in Dupin. Holmes also appears to have inherited Dupin's proud, aristocratic manner and his desire to solve crimes to prevent boredom. Finally, for settings Doyle chose the dark, menacing, cold and clammy, gothic atmosphere of London where only the bravest of hearts would venture out at night.

Murder is what Gavin Lambert calls "the signature of an angry impulse scrawled across its victims" (39), and Doyle felt that

the diabolic nature of crime, especially murder, was important because it heightened his sense of being on the threshold of shock (Lambert 43). Much like Poe's tales, many of Doyle's stories were derived from newspaper items, along with various bits of public gossip and anecdotes. But it is murder that represents the truly sinister side of human nature. Furthermore, some of the Holmes tales offer twists of actions that originally appeared in Poe's or Wilkie Collins's works (Nevins 5).

Another evident similarity between Poe and Doyle is the use of a narrator/recorder/biographer, a vehicle through whom the stories are told. Dupin's narrator is never personified, but Holmes's adventures are told through the slightly dense Dr. John H. Watson. Doyle made Watson a little less quick-witted than the well-informed, alert reader; yet Watson can often, after thinking along his friend's lines, offer his part to the crime's solution (Nevins 6).

## II

Sherlock Holmes made his first appearance in the novel A Study in Scarlet from the Beeton's Christmas Annual of 1887. At the novel's beginning, Dr. Watson is in London after having been discharged from the second Afghanistan war, where he was wounded by a Jezail bullet in the shoulder. He meets and old



friend named Stamford who tells him of a person who is looking for someone to share an apartment on Baker Street. Stamford takes Watson to St. Bartholomew's Hospital where he meets his future roommate:

"Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,"  
said Stamford, introducing us.

"How are you?" he said cordially,  
gripping my hand with a strength for  
which I should hardly have given him  
credit. "You have been in Afghanistan,  
I perceive" (17-18).

The last seven words of that piece of dialogue have been branded immortal by those who love the Holmes canon; in the story they introduce Watson to the amazing reasoning powers of Sherlock Holmes.

Just as Dupin and his friend moved into their new home in the Faubourg St. Germain, Holmes and Watson set up their residence at 221-B Baker Street. After observing his new friend, Watson said that Holmes:

. . . was certainly not a difficult man  
to live with. He was quiet in his ways and  
his habits were regular. . . . Nothing could  
exceed his energy when the working fit was

upon him; but now and again a reaction would seize, and for days on end he would lie upon the sofa in the sitting room, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night. On these occasions I have noticed such a dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes that I might have suspected him of being addicted to some kind of narcotic, had not the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life forbidden such a notion (20).

Watson learns in The Sign of Four, however, that Holmes frequently takes a seven percent solution of cocaine to keep his mind alert. Watson has a difficult time accepting Holmes's eccentric notions at first; yet it is Holmes's awesome reasoning powers that Watson knows not to file under "idiosyncracies." Holmes tells him:

You see. . .I consider a man's brain is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out

. . . . Now the skillful workman  
. . . will have nothing but the tools  
which may help him do his work (21).

Holmes's turn for observation and induction are displayed in the short segment where he explains to Watson how he knew the doctor came from Afghanistan. To Holmes, Watson looked like a medical person with a military air. A doctor, features tanned by the tropics, his left arm held stiffly, giving evidence of an accident-- where could a physician have suffered such hardships? Afghanistan, of course.

Astonished by Holmes's gift, Watson compares his friend to Dupin, but Holmes replies:

Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow. That trick of his of breaking in on his friend's thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour's silence is really very showy and superficial. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine (24).

Doyle is actually acknowledging his debt to Poe's influence by having his own character place himself above his inspiration;

it may prove that denial is the sincerest form of flattery.

"This fellow may be clever," Watson says, ". . .but he is certainly very conceited" (25).

When a messenger brings a note from Tobias Gregson of Scotland Yard stating that there has been a murder, Holmes and Watson rush off on their first case together. It is implied that Holmes's ability is known by the police; he had acted as "consultant" on many of the Yard's cases, and one should think, knowing the clumsy methods of the police, that he did more than just "consult." Dupin was not called in by the police to investigate the L'Esplanaye house in "Murders in the Rue Morgue"; he took it upon himself to visit the scene with the permission from the Prefect of Police G-- (a possible source for the name and character of Gregson). It was only after he solved the case that Dupin began his career as police "consultant."

Holmes does a preliminary investigation of the clay-like mud in front of the empty house on Lauriston Gardens, the house containing the dead body of Enoch J. Drebber of Cleveland. When they go inside to view the body, they see on a wall, inscribed in blood, the word RACHE; this in addition to a wedding band that dropped from Drebber's pocket as he was taken from the house convinces Lestrade, another Scotland Yard detective, that a woman is involved in the crime and that her name is Rachel. But after Holmes concludes his investigation of the corpse, he announces:

There has been murder done, and the murderer was a man. He was more than six feet high. . .had small feet for his height, wore coarse, square-toed boots . . . . He came here with his victim in a four-wheeled cab. . . . One other thing, Lestrade. . .'Rache' is the German for 'revenge;' so don't lose your time looking for Miss Rachel (32).

Watson, being a physician used to death in many fashions, is upset by the horror of the entire situation; but Holmes, in a sympathetic but also instructive manner, tells him that "There is a mystery about which stimulates the imagination; where there is no imagination, there is no horror" (37).

Next, three of the devices Poe created and used appear in Study: the staged ruse (which fails in this piece), the statements of the newspapers forming public opinions, and the arrest of an innocent suspect.

Holmes places in every London paper an ad announcing the finding of a ring in the Lauriston Gardens and inviting the claimant to pick it up at the Baker Street address. This plan backfires, however, when, instead of Drebber's murderer, a frail, old woman comes in to correctly identify the ring. After she leaves,

Holmes follows her cab in a truly high-spirited, adventurous, Victorian manner: by perching himself on the back of the cab as it takes off (after which Holmes says, "That is an art at which every detective should be an expert"). But somewhere during the ride, the old woman shed her disguise and escaped from the cab. That may be too much to believe, seeming to be an easy way out of a situation for Doyle; nevertheless, it works because, for one moment, all logic, rational thought and action are abandoned for some rollicking adventure. This is also a good plot twist that keeps the reader guessing on the identity of the old woman.

As in Poe's "Murder" and "Mystery," the newspapers in Study give their opinions of the murder: one calls it an act of political revolutionists, another blames liberalism for letting such things occur, and a third believes that other countries are sending their oppressed men to do such desperate deeds of crime in England. All of the opinions expressed in the journals sound slightly paranoid, because dastardly acts like murder apparently shook the foundations on which Victorian society was constructed.

Gregson of Scotland Yard performs what police are noted for in the detective story--apprehending an innocent suspect. He comes to Holmes to tell of his success in arresting a young Navy officer--also a favorite culprit of Poe's--named Arthur Charpentier, who allegedly scuffled with Drebber at the boarding house where Drebber stayed. As he gloats over his "remarkable" arrest, Lestrade arrives with

the news that Drebber's secretary, Joseph Strangerson, was found murdered in his hotel room.

Strangerson had been stabbed next to his heart and again the word "Rache" was scrawled in blood on one of the walls of this room. But this time a new item is introduced into the case: a small box containing two pills that was found in Strangerson's room. Drebber's death is solved when it is discovered that one of the pills is poison; now all that is needed is the murderer. Holmes makes his first digression:

It is a mistake to confound strangeness with mystery. The most commonplace crime is often the most mysterious, because it presents no new or special features from which deductions may be drawn. This murder would have been infinitely more difficult to unravel if the body of the victim been simply found lying in the roadway without any of those outre and sensational accompaniments which have rendered it remarkable (50).

Holmes has a little street urchin fetch him a specific cab to come to Baker Street, and when the driver enters Holmes's apartment, he asks the cabbie to help in buckling a trunk--which

is another staged ruse to catch the criminal. When the cabman starts to help Holmes, he handcuffs the driver and announces, "Gentlemen. . .let me introduce you to Mr. Jefferson Hope, the murderer of Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson" (51).

Doyle then switches time, place, and point of view in the middle part of the novel, giving the background and motive for Hope's killing of the two men. "The Great Alkali Plain," Study's middle chapters, describe how Hope had fallen in love with a young woman named Lucy who, along with her adopted father, had been picked up by Mormons who were on their way to their new home in Salt Lake City. Hope, a non-Mormon, had intended to marry Lucy, but she and her father were not content with the religious regimentation of the settlement. Also, two young Mormons, Joseph Strangerson and Enoch Drebber, had their hopes of winning Lucy. Ultimately, Lucy is forced to marry Drebber; later, her father dies, and eventually she does, too. After her death, Hope begins his campaign against the two men, eventually finding and killing them in England.

The narrative bogs down quite a bit; however, in detective tales the confession of the guilty party usually involves something similar to what happened to Hope: something from the depths of the past has finally risen to be taken care of. Confessions may last for pages and pages in that fashion. Thus even though Doyle's technique slows down the narrative, at the same time it relieves the reader from having to pour over leaves of confession scenes.



This middle chapter also offers a sharp piece of criticism of religion. Doyle, by this time, much to his mother's dismay, had rejected the Catholic faith and all religions as well, because he disliked their stringent, unintellectual dogma and the way people blindly adhered to the scriptures. Coincidentally, Hammett does the same thing in The Dain Curse by criticizing a church for sucking in money from all who believed that it performed "work for the people."

When the novel rejoins Dr. Watson's memoirs, Hope discusses his motive freely:

It didn't matter to you why I hated these men. . .it's enough that they were guilty of the death of two human beings--a father and a daughter--and they had, therefore, forfeited their lives. . . . I knew of their guilt, though, and I determined that I should be the judge, jury and executioner all rolled into one (78).

Hope had hired himself out as a cabman in London after he managed to follow his enemies across the Atlantic; he persuaded a drunken Drebber to let him take him back to his boarding house. A man who rode in Hope's cab earlier that day had left the key to the

Lauriston Gardens house; Hope had it copied and planned to take Drebber there to finish him off.

Hope had made poison pills from chemicals he took from a medical lab at York College in America, where he had a temporary job as a janitor. Drebber took one and died; Strangerson also was destined to die by poison pill, but he tried to stab Hope with the knife Hope held to his throat. Strangerson was stabbed, and Hope carelessly left behind the poison pill box. Hope is jailed, but dies of an aneurism soon afterward.

Our good, conceited friend Holmes then describes his means of solving the murders:

. . .The grand thing is to be able to reason backward. That is a very useful accomplishment, and a very easy one, but people do not practice it much. . . . There are a few people. . .who, if you told them a result, would be able to evolve from their own inner consciousness what the steps were which led up to that result (83-84).

Holmes noticed the impressions of cabman's boots and cab wheels in front of the house; when examining Drebber's corpse, he

noticed the frozen, grotesque expression on his face which told Holmes that the victim had seen his fate before it came upon him. Also, a trace of the poison had been left on the corpse's lips. Finally, the motive: robbery? politics? a woman? When the ring was found, Holmes's mind was made up. To confirm his theories, the detective telegraphed the head of the police in Cleveland to ask about any circumstances surrounding Enoch Drebber. They told him that Drebber had applied for police protection against Jefferson Hope. "The answer was conclusive," said Holmes.

After the case's conclusion, the newspapers, as they did in "Murders" and "Mystery," pointed out and praised the efforts of the police, the true vindicators of law and order, while the efforts of the armchair sleuth went virtually unnoticed. One London paper, the Echo, trumpets the victory of Scotland Yard:

It is an open secret that the credit of the smart capture belongs entirely to the well-known Scotland Yard officials, Messers. Lestrade and Gregson. The man was apprehended in the rooms of a certain Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who has himself, as an amateur, shown some talent in the detective line and who, with such instructors, may hope in time to attain some degree of their skill (86).

"That's the result of all our Study in Scarlet: to get them a testimonial!" says Holmes with a laugh.

### III

If high-school or college general literature anthologies cover the detective genre, there is a ninety-nine percent chance that a Sherlock Holmes story is in them. In all, Doyle wrote fifty-seven short stories about his hero--most of them original, most of them not up to Doyle's standards, all of them loved by devout Sherlockians. The two short stories covered here exemplify Holmes, and Doyle, at his best. "The Red Headed League" is said to be Doyle's personal favorite.

In the story, Mr. Jabez Wilson, a semi-retired pawnbroker, has just had a terribly unfunny practical joke played upon him. He reports to Holmes and Watson that his assistant, Spaulding, to whom he is teaching the pawnbroker's trade, told him of an opening with a club called the Red Headed League--started at the request of some philanthropist in Pennsylvania. The only membership requirement was to have red hair; members received four pounds a week for a minimal amount of work. Spaulding convinced Duncan Ross, the club's proprietor, that Wilson was the man for the job. Wilson was hired to copy, for four hours a day, from the Encyclopaedia Britannica,

and also had to furnish his own pens and paper to do the job.

One morning Wilson went to work on his project and found a card on the headquarters' door announcing the dissolution of the league. He also found out, from the league building's owner, that Duncan Ross's name was actually William Morris.

After promising the gullible pawnbroker that he will take care of the pranksters, Holmes settles down for some thinking:

"It is quite a three-pipe problem  
and I beg that you won't speak to me  
for fifty minutes." He curled himself  
up in his chair, with his thin knees  
drawn up to his hawk-like nose and  
there he sat with his eyes closed  
and his black clay pipe thrusting out  
like the bill of some strange bird (184).

Holmes and Watson later go to Wilson's pawnshop on the Saxe-Coburg Square; in front of the shop, Holmes raps his cane on the ground, then goes up and rings the shop's bell. The assistant Spaulding answers and Holmes pretends to ask for directions, but he is actually observing Spaulding's knees, which are dirty. Holmes now knows the real reason why Wilson was sent out of his pawnshop for four hours a day: abutting the shop is the

Saxe-Coburg Branch of the City and Suburban Bank. That evening, Watson rejoins Holmes at Baker Street; policeman Peter Jones and the bank's president are waiting there with him. Holmes says that the little party will be after the famous murderer, thief and forger John Clay. At the bank, they descend into the vault where they await the criminals. Spaulding, who is actually John Clay, and William Morris, a.k.a. Duncan Ross, pull themselves from a hole in the floor and are nabbed by Holmes and the others.

It was the main objective of the Red Headed league to get Wilson out of his shop for a number of hours each day so that as one thief watched over Wilson in the league's office, the other could dig a tunnel from the pawn shop to the bank behind it. Also, Spaulding pretended to have an interest in photography; when he was supposedly in the shop's cellar developing pictures, he was actually working on the tunnel, which is why his knees were dirty.

Holmes loves these adventures, even ones as simple as the one planned by the Red Headed League:

It saved my life from ennui. . . .  
My life is spent in one long  
effort to escape from the common-  
places of existence. These little  
problems help me to do so (189-190).

Devotees of the canon, as well as Doyle's son, Adrian, think of the story as having one of the most original plots in all of detective fiction. It reads quickly; its plot carries out the diabolical idea of a criminal using an innocent person to assist with the robbery by not being where he can interfere. This is sort of a variation of the device used in Poe's "The Purloined Letter," where the Minister D-- uses the status of a young female royalite whose missing letter would damage her reputation. Hammett's stories will have the criminals pay off city officials to keep them out of the way.

Another story returns to murders most foul and unnatural, adding a difficult puzzle, also. "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" has Holmes solving both. The story begins with Holmes dazzling Watson with his amazing inductive powers. When he asks Watson about his refusal to invest in South African securities, Watson naturally expresses astonishment that the detective had guessed his decision. Holmes says:

. . .it is not difficult to construct a series of inferences, each dependent upon its predecessor and each simple within itself. If, after doing so, one simply knocks out all the central inferences and presents one's audience with the starting point and the conclusion,

one may produce a startling, though possibly meretriculous, effect (511).

In this instance, the chalk Holmes noticed on Watson's fingers was from playing pool; Watson plays pool with a man named Thurston who had an option on some South African property and wished Watson to share it with him; Watson's checkbook, however, is locked in a drawer, and he has not asked Holmes for the key.

The problem in the story revolves around a line of dancing stick figures that Holmes received from Mr. Hilton Cubitt; Cubitt had been finding little notes around his house and a note containing the dancing figures were in a letter his young American wife, Elsie, received from her home country.

Cubitt later arrives at Baker Street to see if Holmes has anything to say about the slip of figures he left with the sleuth earlier that morning. Cubitt also tells Holmes that he saw the man whom he thinks is the culprit wandering around in his manor's garden; he then offers his means of solution:

"My own inclination is to put half a dozen of my farm lads in the shrubbery, and when this fellow comes again to give him such a hiding that he will leave us in peace in the future."



"I fear it is too deep a case for such simple remedies" (516).

Already, Holmes, in the spirit of the tales of ratiocination, reveals his true opinion about violent apprehension of a criminal.

Two nights after Cubitt leaves, he sends another set of dancing men figures; Holmes sees urgency in it and, with Watson, takes a train to Norfolk and Riding Thorpe Manor, the home of Hilton Cubitt. They encounter shocking news when they arrive: Cubitt has been shot to death and his wife has a bullet wound in her head. Already the police have accused Elsie Cubitt of committing a murder and of covering it up with a failed attempt at suicide.

The study in which the Cubitts were shot had its door and window closed, but the manor's servants reported that they smelled smoke after hearing three gunshots. The revolver found in the study had four cartridges left in its chamber; thus the two bullets missing from it killed Cubitt and wounded his wife. Then Holmes finds a bullet hole in the bottom of the window sash, and a spent shell is found in the flower bed that runs from the study's window into the garden. A third shot had been fired, the study's window and door had been open; thus the locked room proved to be a red-herring as in "Murders in the Rue Morgue." The murderer had to have fired into the room some way, and the door must have

been open if the servants smelled smoke. Now all that is needed is the murderer. Holmes has a stable-boy run a "dancing men" message to a farm down the road from the manor.

The solution to the puzzle is similar to that in Poe's "The Gold Bug," where an eccentric man and his friend find a buried treasure after deciphering a complicated cryptogram. The means of solving both puzzles is the same; in both, whatever symbol occurs the most is translated as "e," because it is the letter that occurs most frequently in English words. Between two "e" symbols in the messages are, since the notes are for Elsie Cubitt, L, S and I. By this method, Holmes cracks the code.

Through a fake letter with the figures he brings Abe Slaney, "the most dangerous crook in Chicago," the man who sent Elsie the letters, to the manor. He is arrested, and in his confession Slaney says that he and Elsie grew up together and that they had a secret club that used the "dancing men" code. She left him because of his shady activities. On the night of the killing, she tried to bribe him to go away. As Slaney attempted to pull her through the study window, Cubitt entered and fired his gun. The bullet missed Slaney, but lodged in the bottom of the sash. Slaney then shot at Cubitt, hitting him in the chest, then ran away. After shutting the door and the window, Elsie attempted to kill herself with her husband's pistol.

The impact of Sherlock Holmes on culture is probably more profound than his impact on detective fiction. When a person makes an obvious deduction from material right in front of his eyes, others frivolously call him "Sherlock;" rarely is he called "Dupin," "Poirot," or even "Spade." He is the most frequently parodied detective in the genre; his adventures are filmed more than those of any other detective; and even still, with the advent of Nicholas Meyer's The Seven Percent Solution and The West End Horror, newer adventures featuring the sage of Baker Street pick up where Sir Arthur and Dr. Watson left off. There are adaptations of his accounts for children; there is the massive, multi-volume annotated Holmes collection; authors attempt to create biographies of him; Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe claims him as his father. Whether Doyle's Holmes stories are read for critical evaluation or just for genuine, chivalric, Victorian fun, the gaslight, fog, pipesmoke, and recognizable profile are the apex of the detective story during the second phase of its development.

HAMMILL: REALISM

## I

After World War I, after America went across the Atlantic to "make the world safe for democracy," it saw a period of growth and change that had not occurred since the great industrialization after the Civil War some sixty years earlier. The 1920's embodied two sides of that time: the brighter side showed carefree, high-spirited feelings, flapper girls, the glamor of Hollywood, numerous technological advances; hidden behind that was the rise and the abrupt fall of labor unions, the amorality of politics and male-female relationships, the appearance of mobsters, the threat of Communism. Behind the pretty facade, the society of the 1920's was truly a "waste land" that was jolted back into reality with the Great Depression.

Cynicism entered the detective story at this time, and Samuel Dashiell Hammett was--and still is--the leader of the genre's pessimistic period. Hammett, who was a former Pinkerton Agency operative in Baltimore and San Francisco, wrote mystery novels and short stories during a relatively short career that lasted from 1922 to 1934. He admired the works of, and was good friends with, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Faulkner. He wrote about what he knew or what he had done. This new approach to the detective story gave it strength; Peter Wolfe called him America's most important detective story writer since Poe and the father of

the hard-boiled mystery story (4). And, to paraphrase one of Hammett's contemporaries, he took murder and mayhem from the rose garden of the British manor and put it back on the streets of the big city, thus giving it back to the people who were really good at performing it.

Hammett was known for his privacy, and who should know better about concealment than the man who wrote all his life about liars, hypocrites and manipulators (Wolfe 1). Even when the FBI followed him around because of his socialist activities in the 1940's, they had some difficulties in tailing the man who knew all the tricks of shadowing and ducking. His friend and confidante during the last thirty years of his life, Lillian Hellman, said that he kept his works and plans in privacy; he was unpredictable and he corresponded very little. Yet his impact on detective fiction has yet to be surpassed.

The hard-boiled school of the genre, published mainly in Black Mask, the most popular detective magazine of that time, reflected the cynicism that contrasted the otherwise high-spirits of the 1920's. In his introduction to Hammett's The Continental Op, Steven Marcus says that Hammett saw the same elements in respectable society as he did in the gangster society (xxiv); there was phoniness in each, and his detectives had to go up against the fabricated worlds of both. Marcus states that Hammett often conceived the notion of organized crime taking over a society,

making it "fictive," where the leaders would conceal the actuality of what controlled it (xxiii). Moreover, within "accepted" society, whoever ruled the house or business would never willingly tell of a daughter's abortion or drug-abuse, or of a wife's infidelity. The hard-boiled sleuth would be the one to sift through the phoniness to get his answers clearly.

Hammett's works, especially his novels, are character-oriented; the stories unfold through narration by the character or through the developing events affecting each character. Of course, the hub of any Hammett detective story is the detective himself, free of sentiment but very sympathetic toward deserving clients, free of the fear of death, free of the temptations of money and sex. He is independent, capable of any action; he has the powers necessary to reach his goals, answer questions, solve mysteries, reconstruct motivations of the innocent and the guilty (Nevins 99).

Structurally, Hammett's novels impressively weave plot and subplot to throw what seem to be insignificant clues into the detective's and reader's path. These frequently burden the detective who, in all actuality, just wants to do the job he is hired for and to go home. In the first part of The Dain Curse two men have been seen around the Leggett house and are believed by everyone, except the detective, to be the thieves of the missing diamonds. As it happens, they are nothing more than



blackmailers who are trying to extract money from Mrs. Leggett. Poe did not use subplot in his Dupin stories, but Arthur Conan Doyle did in The Hound of the Baskervilles, where the Baskerville Hall servants are suspected of being associated with the mysterious death of Sir Charles Baskerville.

Poe and Hammett share a structural problem: wordiness. Poe's wordiness comes with Dupin's prosy, roundabout, exhausting explanation of how he solved the crime; but while Hammett's solutions are also long, he avoids bringing in unnecessary mathematical theories to prove his point. Often, Hammett's solutions are awkward, anti-climactic dissertations of the information necessary to explain all the action that occurred in the piece (Layman 64). During the final six pages of The Thin Man, Nick Charles unravels the mystery to his wife Nora, who says, as an appropriate summary to all she has just heard, ". . .it's all pretty unsatisfactory" (726).

In his reviews of mystery novels for the Saturday Review of Literature, Hammett always explained his reasons for criticizing a sub-standard work. He believed, first of all, that a good mystery must be realistic with believable characters; it should be intelligent enough to interest the reader without withholding clues or introducing irrelevant subplots (Layman 80-81). His detectives are professionals, not amateurs or part-timers like Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsey, or, alas, C. Auguste Dupin. His first true-



to-life detective was a nameless, faceless, overweight, middle-aged operative for the San Francisco-based Continental Detective Agency--a fictionalization of the Pinkertons--named The Continental Op, who made his first appearance in "Arson Plus" in the October 1, 1923 issue of Black Mask.

## II

In 1929 Op was featured in Hammett's first novel, Red Harvest, a story about a mining town that has been ruled by mobsters since they came in to quell labor riots. Op, acting in vengeance, cleans up the whole city by having the gangsters kill each other off. The Dain Curse has Op, at the beginning, investigating a diamond robbery at the home of Edgar Leggett, later facing religious charlatans at a cult temple. Finally, he convinces Gabrielle Leggett that the Dain curse is not real, while getting her off her morphine addiction at the same time.

Curse is considered Hammett's weakest novel; its highly literary structure--its symbolism and imagery patterns--slows it down, and it borders on being a detective story set in a mystical, almost supernatural, world (Layman 100), as does The Hound of the Baskervilles. Its style is reminiscent of Gothic romance with its use of the temple, the family curse and the sole heir's complete

belief in the curse. The hero who saves her from her belief is by no means a dashing, young and virile suitor, but a grumpy, mature detective who sees it as his duty to convince her that the curse is not legitimate.

The curse stems from an incident in Gabrielle Leggett's childhood: Edgar Leggett, who was a young French artist, was in love with the Dain sisters, Alice and Lily; Leggett married Lily and had Gabrielle by her. Alice, jealous of her sister, devised a little game for five-year-old Gaby to play in which Alice would lie down on the bed, give the child an unloaded gun, have her point it at Alice's head, then pull the trigger. Gaby and Aunt Alice would often play the little game; then one day, while Lily rested on her bed, Alice told her niece to play the game with her mommy--this time with a loaded gun. Edgar came into the room just as little Gabrielle pulled the trigger. He was charged with his wife's murder and sent to Devil's Island, from which he later escaped. Since then Gabrielle has been convinced that her soul was darkened with blood.

Edgar Leggett had used his talents as an artist to set himself up in San Francisco as a glass colorist, experimenting with tinting discolored diamonds that a jeweler had given him; the stones he was using were the ones that were stolen. The man who recommended him to the jeweler was Owen Fitzstephan, a novelist who had once worked with Op on a case in New York. All through the novel's

first two parts, Fitzstephan plays foil to Op by using his cocky attitude and spry imagination against the detective. Op describes his counterpart as:

a long, lean, sorrel-haired man of thirty-two. . . . A man who pretended to be lazier than he really was, would rather talk than do anything else, and had a lot of what seemed to be accurate information and original ideas on any subject that happened to come up, as long as it was a little out of the ordinary (154).

Just as Dupin and the narrator are projections of Poe and Holmes and Watson are two sides of Doyle, Op and the author represent the logical and romantic versions of Hammett. Even though Fitzstephan is not a recorder like the narrator or Watson, according to Peter Wolfe, he is an eccentric Watson whose "Novelist's curiosity about motives helps him interpret the novel psychologically" (106). Though Op likes the novelist, he does not seem to trust him. When Fitzstephan asks, "What's Leggett been up to?", Op replies:

We don't do it that way. . . . You're a story-writer. I can't trust you not to build up on what I tell you. I'll

save mine till after you've spoken,  
 so yours won't be twisted to fit  
 mine (156).

Op also distrusts the author's judgement of the Leggetts when  
 Fitzstephan asks:

"Are you--who make your living snooping--  
 sneering at my curiosity about people  
 and my attempts to satisfy it?"

"We're different. . .I do mine with  
 the object of putting people in jail,  
 and I get paid for it, though not as much  
 as I should."

"That's not different. . .I do mine  
 with the object of putting people in  
 books, and I get paid for it, though  
 not as much as I should" (157).

Not only does this passage demonstrate Peter Wolfe's opinion that  
 Fitzstephan psychologically interprets the novel, it shows that  
 Hammett the writer is drawing experiences from Hammett the detective;  
 furthermore, the passage identifies the pair of characters as both  
 sides of Hammett.

Curse's first part climaxes with the murder of Edgar Leggett,

which is made to look like a suicide. He leaves a letter describing his escape from Devil's Island, the murders he performed out of self-defense in South America, the blackmail involving two former detectives, Upton and Ruppert, both of whom were suspects in the diamond robbery. Leggett's pocket is full of money, which leads Op to question his suicide. Obviously, Leggett intended to leave the city, so he left the letter to clear Alice and Gabrielle of any wrongdoing. But it is Alice who killed Leggett and set up the diamond robbery. After a struggle with Op, Fitzstephan and others, she shoots herself.

Op's literalness with the author comes though again during the summary of the first part. Fitzstephan says:

"You'd reduce the Dain curse, then,  
to a primitive strain in the blood?"

"To less than that, to words in an  
angry woman's mouth."

"It's fellows like you who take all  
the color out of life" (185).

The middle section of Curse takes place in Joseph and Arronia Haldorn's Temple of the Holy Grail, where Gabrielle is resting after the events at the Leggett home. Op has been called back on the case to look after Gabrielle at the temple; dark, shadowy images in this section emphasize the confusion and

eerie-ness of the temple, and Op summarizes his feelings about the setup and the case thus far when he settles into his room in the Temple, across from Gabrielle's, cursing the world: "I thought of Tad's blind man in a dark room hunting for a black hat that wasn't there, and knew how he felt" (193).

What also seem like human sacrifices, but are actually murders, prove that Gabrielle is in the wrong hands for her rehabilitation. Op and Eric Collinson, Gabrielle's fiance, stumble upon Gabrielle in the Temple's cathedral; she is holding a long dagger and her clothes are wet, stained with blood. At the bottom of the altar is the mutilated form of Dr. Reise, the young woman's physician, further convincing Gabrielle that she is cursed:

Are you surprised? . . . You were there when  
my step-mother told of the cursed Dain blood  
in me, and what it had done to me and those  
who touched me (198).

Twice Op gets his chance to fight God--literally: while he is gassed by some concoction in one of the temple's rooms, he sees a pale, bright, ghostlike image--actually steam pushed through a lighted pipe--that speaks to him. He tries to hit, bite and wrestle with the image, then tells it to go to hell. Later, he comes upon Gabrielle and the Haldorns in the chapel, where Arronia is sprawled over the altar, waiting to be sacrificed by



her husband. When Op calls for Joseph to stop, he replies:

There is no Joseph. . . . You may now  
know. . . that he who went among you  
as Joseph was not Joseph, but God  
himself (207).

With the automatic pistol he took from one of the residents, Op shoots Joseph/God seven times--a nice, religious number--and, after wrestling with him, manages to drive a dagger into Joseph's neck.

The two incidents--in fact the whole Temple of the Holy Grail--act as Hammett's criticism of the church and the wealthy people who pump more and more money into false ministries. The church and the wealthy, two very respected institutions, according to Hammett, are no better than the gangsters who rule the city streets. This criticism parallels Arthur Conan Doyle's feelings about the strict dogmatism of the church in general in "The Great Alkali Plain" section of A Study in Scarlet.

The Haldorns were involved with the cult only for the money. They were once actors who, after seeing how a former professional had succeeded in the religion business, set up a cult of their own. Joseph Haldorn used his "mysticisms" and his knowledge of Gabrielle's belief in her curse to tie her to him just so he could get some of

the Leggett estate. After the Temple incident, Collinson and Gabrielle marry in Reno. Afterward, they travel to Quesada, a place Fitzstephan suggested, for their honeymoon, which will end in tragedy and where the novel will climax.

A telegram from Collinson takes Op to Quesada; at the bottom of a cliff close to the house where the couple is staying, Op finds Collinson's body. Gabrielle is not in the house. He and the deputy sheriff, Ben Rolly, try to find Gabrielle and discover that she was seen riding in a car with a man named Harvey Whidden. Meanwhile, back in San Francisco, Fitzstephan receives a ransom note for Gabrielle along with a phone call about money. The Leggett's lawyer, Madison Andrews, offers a thousand dollar reward for information leading to Gabrielle's whereabouts; then Collinson's father puts up an additional twenty-five hundred dollars for the arrest and conviction of his son's murderer. As in "Mystery of Marie Roget," thousands of dollars of reward money are offered for solution of the mystery; and, of course, with all the money being offered, just about everyone grabs a spyglass for some attempt at finding the girl. Op says, "Half the population of the county turned bloodhound. . . . In the woods you were likely to find more amateur gumshoes than trees" (232). When Andrews wants to post more reward money, Op advises against it:

That's the wrong play. . . . Enough reward



money has been posted. The only way to handle a kidnapping is to come across. . . . Buy the girl free, and then do your fighting (235).

A second murder, that of Daisy Cotton, the wife of Marshal Dick Cotton, aids Op in finding Gabrielle. Mrs. Cotton, who once had an affair with Harvey Whidden, left a note telling of Whidden's hideout at the bottom of the cliff called Dull Point. The team of investigators, including Fitzstephan, who had come down from the city, find him there with Gabrielle; she is freed when Whidden is killed by gunfire.

Whidden had no visible motive for kidnapping Gabrielle, but Op cannot figure out why he did. Fitzstephan sees this confusion:

Do you admit you've met your master, have run into a criminal too wily for you? Not you. He's outwitted you: therefore he's an idiot or a lunatic (249).

Just before Op seems to have the case under control, characters from the novel's temple section return to convince him of the person masterminding the whole Dain curse. Tom Fink, who

created the Temple's special "ghost" effects, comes to Op's hotel room, where he and Fitzstephan are discussing motives and matchups. From somewhere close to the author a glycerine bomb explodes, tearing off half of his body. He survives, however; now the facts begin to click together in Op's already overworked mind.

He shows sympathy for Gabrielle by helping cure her of her morphine addiction; furthermore, he begins to convince her that the Dain curse is "hoey." Back in her room at the house she and Eric rented, she tells Op that her curse comes partly from her animal characteristics: she is described as looking something like a jackal. Op completes her description, but corrects her thinking:

Haven't you got cloven hoofs? . . . Your step-mother was a Dain. . .but where were her physical marks of degeneracy? Wasn't she. . .as wholesome-looking as any woman you're likely to find (258)?

She adds that she is confused about her past, that thinking about it only mixes her up even more. Op consoles her on that, too:

Thinking's a dizzy business, a matter of catching as many of those foggy

glimpses as you can and fitting them together the best you can. That's why people hang on so tight to their beliefs and opinions; because. . .even the goofiest opinion seems wonderfully sane, and self-evident. . . . Evidence of goofiness is easily found (258).

This statement can also be applied to solving crimes. The amateur detectives of the genre's "Golden Age" worked by saying, as Sherlock Holmes did, that when all possible means, motives, methods are eliminated, the one remaining, no matter how absurd or impossible it sounds, is the correct one. As Dupin said, the most difficult crimes to solve are the ones that appear simple, and as with Dupin and Holmes, goofy solutions come with Op's job:

I'm a hired man with only a hired man's interests. . .and some of them have made me groggy. . . . I'm supposed to be a detective. Since this job began, I've been riding around on a merry-go-round, staying the same distance behind your curse. . .but never getting there. I will now (259, 261).

It turns out to be Fitzstephan who was behind all the Dain curse idea in the first place. In the final confessional scene, Op tells us that Fitzstephan's imagination allowed him to cook up the curse, to convince the Haldorns to set up their cult, to get Edgar Leggett the job of coloring diamonds, to get Gabrielle hooked on dope. Fitzstephan himself was a Dain; his mother and Gabrielle's maternal grandfather were brother and sister. He set up all of this just for one thing: to possess Gabrielle, to possess her "body and soul" (Layman 101). He pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity at his trial, was sent to an asylum, and was released a year later, in no physical shape to be dangerous again.

Since each section concludes with Op and the author discussing the case, The Dain Curse ends with an ironic twist. Op says: "Owen Fitzstephan never spoke to me again."

### III

The theme of possession is explored again in Hammett's third and most popular novel, The Maltese Falcon. The image of Sam Spade is projected differently in John Huston's film version, starring Humphrey Bogart, than it is in the novel; Bogart is sharper tongued, more sexist. Regardless of the conflicting images, Spade is the

model of a private investigator: tough, slick, womanizing, defiant. Yet the novel's Spade is also sympathetic and understanding--especially to clients of the opposite sex. Like the Continental Op, he lives by a private investigator's code: he cannot be bought, he is cautious, his social activities are limited, he knows what his job is and will go to any extreme to finish it.

The object of desire in this novel is not a person, but the small statue of a falcon, enameled black. It is supposed to be a jewel-encrusted gift that the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem paid to emperor Charles V as rent for some islands in the Mediterranean, including Malta, sometime in the sixteenth century. For almost four hundred years the statue had been kicked around Europe, smuggled in and out of countries, and covered black in the process. In the novel, the bird is somewhere in San Francisco, with three people desperate for it.

In the novel's beginning, Spade receives a visit from Miss Wonderly, who reports that her sister is living in the city with Floyd Thursby. Spade's partner, Miles Archer, agrees to shadow Thursby that night to find where Miss Wonderly's sister is. Archer is shot and killed while on the job; Thursby is killed half an hour later. Immediately, blame for the murders is placed on Spade: either he shot Thursby for killing Archer, or he shot Archer so he could marry Archer's wife, Iva, with whom he is having an affair.

Spade knows his reputation is on the line because of the double killings; having a partner killed like that is bad for the whole private detective business, so Spade is determined to force the truth from Miss Wonderly. She is actually Brigid O'Shaughnessy, a woman who never plays straight with Spade, who whines constantly about her corrupt past, who demands sympathy from the detective, and who uses sex freely to get what she wants. Simple but odd murders disconcerted Victorian London and mid-eighteenth century Paris in Doyle's and Poe's tales, and Spade tells Brigid that the murders of Archer and Thursby create havoc for him and the rest of the city:

. . .a couple of murders. . .coming together like this get everybody stirred up, make the police think they can go to the limit, make everybody hard to handle and expensive (315).

He knows, further, that she will not play straight with him no matter how much she cries or complains:

You won't need much of anybody's help. You're good. You're very good. It's chiefly your eyes, I think, and that throb you get into your voice when you say things like "Be generous, Mr. Spade" (317).

Spade next meets the homosexual Levantine Joel Cairo, the first character to mention the black bird. He offers Spade five thousand dollars to find the statue; "quite a lot of money," Spade repeats to Brigid when he next sees her. Already he has associated her with Cairo, and he arranges a meeting among them.

Spade then tells Brigid about a man named Flitcraft, who gave up living life the way he did--a good job, a wife, two kids, financial security--after a falling steel beam nearly killed him. It was then, as Spade puts it, that someone "took the lid off life to let him see the works." All his life Flitcraft had not been used to beams falling; he had security, a good life, but he never would have thought his security would be shaken by having a steel beam fall so close to him.

Spade is a man who is used to having beams fall; Brigid is always getting by with her questionable activities by using money or her body, and she is not used to having beams fall, nor are the other characters in the book--especially Cairo. Dupin was once a wealthy young man, but he lost all his money and did not care to retrieve it. He, too, is used to expecting the worst that life can care to offer. Not much is known about Holmes' past, but it is evident that he cares little for financial security or social standing, always expecting the worst. Too much success, then, clouds reality, according to Hammett, and a simple--nearly fatal--accident can completely alter a person's life forever.

To round out--literally--the trio of bird-chasers, Caspar Gutman, Esquire, enters the novel when he wants Spade to come talk to him about the statue. Gutman is probably the epitome of a crime boss: he is physically big, overbearing, calm in his discussions, dangerous to double cross. He represents the final block in the novel's triad of vice.

There was an inner sickness within the glamorous city of San Francisco, and nobody knew this better than Hammett. He worked there for some time as a Pinkerton agent and knew that "Most things in San Francisco can be bought or taken," as Spade tells Cairo; greed was rampant, as were immoral sex and attitudes. Brigid uses empty and meaningless sex to get what she wants; Gutman uses his power and money (like Minister D-- in "The Purloined Letter"); Cairo represents the city's inner sickness, but through sneaky deals and possibly homosexual love, he, too, can get what he wants. One more character that deserves mentioning is Wilmer Cook, Gutman's young, scrawny, high-handed hit man whom Spade calls a punk and Hammett describes as "an undersized shadow."

Gutman, when Spade first meets him, is described as nothing but fat bulbs:

The fat man was flabbily fat with bulbous pink cheeks and lips and chins and neck, with a great soft egg of a belly that was



all his torso. . . . As he advanced to meet Spade all his bulbs rose and shook . . . in the manner of soap bubbles not yet released from the pipe through which they had been blown (363).

Gutman is another person who does not play straight with Spade, and there is a tone of irony in Gutman when he toasts Spade, saying ". . . here's to plain speaking and clear understanding" (364). Of course, Gutman never explains fully why he and Spade should talk, so the detective becomes defiant:

I'll tell you now that you'll do your talking today or you are through. . . you and your lousy secret! Christ! I know exactly what that stuff is that they keep in the subtreasury vaults, but what good does that do me. I can get along without you (367).

Spade's attitude toward city officials is displayed when he is called into the District Attorney's office to be questioned on the Thursby and Archer killings. When Brigid's name is brought up in connection with the killings, Spade explodes:

My clients are entitled to a decent amount

of secrecy. . . . I'm not going to advertise my clients' business until I have to. . . . As far as I can see, my best chance of clearing myself of the trouble you're trying to make for me is by bringing in the murderers--all tied up (394).

Spade's predecessor, the Continental Op, does not take such a hard-line attitude toward the cops, nor do Dupin and Holmes; they cooperate with the law but feel that police have a tendency to jump to conclusions. Sergeant Tom Polhaus is Spade's friend on the force, but even he can push Spade's patience to the limit.

The falcon comes to Spade in the arms of the dying ship captain, Jacobi. Now Spade has something he can bargain with, and the novel's finale takes place on a Saturday night at Spade's apartment.

When Spade tells Gutman that someone needs to be a fall-guy for the murders of Archer, Thursby and Jacobi, Gutman is concerned about how they should handle the police in this matter. Spade tells him:

I know what I'm talking about. . .  
at one time or another I've had to tell

everybody from the Supreme Court down  
to go to hell and I've gotten away  
with it. . . . I never want to forget  
that when the day of reckoning comes  
I want to be all set to march into  
headquarters pushing a victim in  
front of me, saying "Here, you  
chumps, is your criminal" (412).

In the line of work, Spade believes no exceptions are to be made,  
and what has to be done is done and done right. But he knows  
that, regardless of his day of reckoning, he could never again  
try the things he has done so far.

Wilmer, they decide, is to be the fall-guy; Gutman has  
no regrets, showing that only one thing matters:

Well, Wilmer, I'm sorry indeed to  
lose you, and I want you to know that  
I couldn't be any more fonder of you  
if you were my own son; but--well, by  
Gad!--if you lose a son it's possible  
to get another--and there's only one  
Maltese Falcon (424).

The falcon is, of course, nothing more than a lead statue

covered in black enamel, so all has been done for nothing. When the three men leave Spade's apartment only to be met by police at Gutman's hotel room, Brigid confesses: she was the one who killed Archer. She could tell that Archer wanted her, so she led him up an alley and shot him. Archer would not have done that with any other person; he was a detective whose hormones got involved with his work. When she found out that Gutman was after the falcon, Brigid needed a protector and came to Spade for help. He now knows that he must give her to the police, though he is hoping to keep their love alive while she is in prison, providing she doesn't get hanged. He tells her why he cannot let her go free:

Listen. When a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partner and you're supposed to do something about it. Then it happens we were in the detective business. Well, when one of your organization gets killed it's bad business to let the killer get away with it. It's bad all around--bad for the organization, bad for every detective everywhere (438).

In John Huston's film version of the novel, the final scenes

have the statue lying broken on the floor of Spade's apartment; when asked what it is, he replies, "That's the stuff dreams are made of." Dreams of possession of something or some person, and the passions for those dreams, always end negatively. Spade sees this when he has to send Brigid to the police; he subscribes to the Neoclassical idea of reason above passion, the head above the heart. He regrets having to do it and knows he will never again become too involved with a client. In order to run a clean business, Spade loses a love.

Hammett demonstrated in his five novels that passionate lusts, greed and sickness of the soul cause loss of sanity, love and friends. Throughout the novels his detectives have a strong sense of commitment--of duty--to their work and to what is right according to the detectives' code of honor. Even though Hammett himself was a heavy drinker, a partier, a womanizer, he seemed to know what his commitments were. Poe gave the detective story a purpose, Doyle gave it character, Hammett gave it reality; but through the hard-boiled surface of his works, Hammett's ideas of commitment are prominently displayed.

## CONCLUSION

According to G.K. Chesterton, detective tales signify the sanguine and heroic truisms on which civilization is constructed, and civilization does not exist without truisms. It is true, then, that our detective heroes in this study--Dupin, Holmes, Op, and Spade--and their creators knew the fiber of civilization as nothing more than a conflict between good and evil. The difference among them came in presenting who and what were good and evil.

We have seen human nature's diabolical side portrayed through Poe, Doyle and Hammett, through both lower (John Clay and the mysterious French naval officer) and upper (Minister D-- and Caspar Gutman) lifestyles. Each author made better what the preceding writer set down, each one made an outstanding contribution to the three periods presented here. Detective fiction--like science fiction--has indeed risen from its status of sub-literature to become a viable vehicle through which society is explored, criticized, satirized.

Our fictional detectives are heroes without a fanfare--they do their jobs, finish them, then go back to their homes or offices to await another adventure. Their authors may not have had such easy lives--least of all the three presented in this study--yet they, in spite of their lives, believed in what their creations did, said and felt. They are truly the heroes without fanfare.

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