

## **CHAPTER - I**

### **A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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#### **Introduction**

The present chapter deals with the theoretical framework. It attempts to discuss the concept of Thriller, as well as Thriller Fiction. In order to understand the thematic concern of a given author, it is essential to understand the literary tradition to he belongs. The present topic of the research work concerned with Thriller and Thriller Fiction is one of the important subgenres of Popular Fiction. However, it is necessary to take a brief survey of Popular Fiction. This chapter contains the points: a concept of Thriller, Popular Fiction, Thriller Fiction, definition of Thriller Fiction, features of Thriller Fiction, sub-genres of Thriller Fiction and a brief history of Thriller Fiction.

The study consists of a close reading of the select novels of Eric Ambler from the perspective of Thriller Fiction. The theoretical frame helps to understand the concept Thriller and its use in the work of literature. It is also useful for the analysis of the select novels of the present study.

#### **A Concept of Thriller**

Thriller is one of the most remarkable literary phenomena of the twentieth century. It is a broad genre of literature now it is considered as one of the most popular genres of genre fiction. Not only plays, film and novels, but other forms of art like music, dance, songs, paintings, and sculptures create thriller in the mind of people. In short, if anything thrill while reading or seeing, definitely it is a thriller.

In the novels, films and plays the concept of Thriller is used with an exciting plot typically involving crime or spying. It frequently employs the

themes of fearful excitement, suspense, surprise, tension, terrorism, political conspiracy, and the pursuit or romantic triangles leading to murder. It is said that the aim of thriller is to keep the readers alert and on the edge of their seats.

Thriller is a vague term which contains the elements of other genres of popular literature i.e. excitement, adventure, mystery, suspense, surprise, and tension. There is a common misperception that thriller is subgenre of mystery fiction. Now, it is often found at many bookstores under the genre fiction as a separate subgenre. Modern novelists through their novels prove that like mystery fiction, science fiction, horror fiction, fantasy fiction, romance fiction, thriller fiction is also separate subgenre of popular fiction.

Thriller stories are adventurous which contain numerous scenes of action. Limited characters are developed in them. The protagonist goes through the dangerous or deadly situation while achieving his goal. The shocking incidents are created by the novelists. Thriller stories often overlap with both mystery and crime stories but they distinguished by the structure of their plots. Violence, menace and threat are often present in the plot of thriller stories, but these things are found very little in mystery. Thriller are based on fast action, on the other hand crime fiction tends to be more leisure-paced.

The stories of good thrillers start with a serious problem and the protagonist tries to solve the problem. At that time, he is trapped in the striking situation. He takes a great risk to fulfill his ambition. The plot of thriller stories is both scary and full of alarm. So the readers feel to read the tremulous exciting stories continuously. The construction of the plot makes the readers to turn the page.

✓ It is difficult to define a clear definition of thriller because it crossovers many genres of writing. It shares the elements like excitement, mystery, suspense, surprise, and tension. The following definition shows some features of Thriller Fiction:

A thriller provides the sudden rush of emotions, excitement, sense of suspense and exhilaration that drive the narrative, sometimes subtly with peaks and lulls, sometimes at a constant, breakneck pace thrills. In this genre, the objective is to deliver a story with sustained tension, surprise, and a constant sense of impending doom. It keeps the audience cliff-hanging at the “edge of their seats” as the plot builds towards a climax. Thrillers tend to be fast-moving, psychological and threatening, mysterious and at times involve larger-scale villainy such as espionage, terrorism and conspiracy (Web).

✓ Thriller fiction focuses on thrilling incidents including terrorism, intrigues, violence, horror, and terror. Mystery, suspense, puzzle, and shock often present in it. David Glover defines it:

the thriller was and still is to a large extent marked by the way in which it persistently seeks to raise the stakes of the narrative, heightening or exaggerating the experience of events by transforming them into a rising curve of danger, violence or shock. (137)

✓ *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines thriller is “a novel, play, or movie with an exciting plot, typically involving crime or espionage.” (1767)

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* thriller is “a novel, play or film with an exciting and gripping plot especially one involving crime.” (1337)

*Longman Active Study Dictionary of English* defines Thriller as: “a book, play or film that tells a very exciting story, especially of crime or violence.” (634)

Thrillers may be defined by the primary mood is that fearful excitement. In short, if it “thrills”, it is a thriller. In the introduction of the book *Thriller* (June, 2006), James Patterson explains about thriller:

“[T]hrillers provide such as rich literary feast. There are all kinds. The legal thriller, spy thriller, action-adventure thriller, medical thriller, political thriller, romantic thriller, historical thriller, political thriller, religious thriller, high-tech thriller, military thriller etc. The list goes on and on, with new variation constantly being invented. In fact this openness to expansion is one of the genre's most enduring characteristics. But what gives the variety of thriller a common ground is the intensity of emotions they create, particularly those of apprehension and exhilaration, of excitement and breathlessness, all designed to generate that all-important thrill, it's not doing its job.” (Patterson 11)

Thriller Fiction is calculated under the popular fiction or genre fiction. Like other genres of fiction, the function of Thriller Fiction is to entertain the readers. Thriller Fiction and other genres of Popular Fiction show stylish, witty and insightful writing of different authors; hence, it is necessary to take an overview of Popular Fiction.

## Genre Fiction or Popular Fiction

Popular fiction is emerged in the twentieth century as a new genre of literature that is considered as the secondary form of the literature. The main intention of the authors of it is to attract most of the readers and entertain them. It is called the popular fiction because it is popular and best seller. A large number of the readers are attracted towards it due to its popularity.

It is popular in the fields of literature, films and television. It intends to design for the masses. The readers are in the favor of it due to the stories are adventurous, and they create excitement among the readers. The nature of this fiction is different that evokes the feelings of readers. In the book of *Writing Genre Fiction: A Guide to the Craft*, Thomas H. Milhorn explains the nature of genre fiction:

Genre fiction is the fiction of emotions. Its primary function is to evoke feelings. The writer's goal is to entertain the reader. Any consideration of self-express, if one exists, is usually secondary. Genre fiction is typically characterized by a great deal of dialogue, characters that readers can easily identify with, and almost plots are fast paced. (02)

Because of the elements in it like excitement, suspense, tension, surprise, terror, and horror, it evokes the feelings of readers. So it is true to say that genre fiction is the powerful fiction of emotions. It has achieved a significant place in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. It distinguished from the mainstream fiction because it has different intentions and style. Genre Fiction is a plot driven, worthy of thought, easy to understand, and fiction of emotion. In the other words, the Mainstream Fiction is a character-driven, serious, difficult to understand, and fiction of ideas. Usually, there are flat

characters in popular fiction, and lifelike or holistic characters are portrayed in mainstream fiction.

✓ Creativity and originality are found in the Mainstream Fiction. Production and hard work are found in popular fiction. It is regarded that the Popular Literature is inferior to the Mainstream Fiction because there is a lack of seriousness. So it is sub standard. The target of the popular fiction is to attract the audience. The mainstream fiction has no such target. It is an artist's self expression. The readers read popular stories only for their time pass.

The aim of the authors of Mainstream Fiction is not to entertain the readers, ✓ but they provide moral and ethical lesson to the readers. In the opposite side the authors of Genre Fiction provide such elements but their intentions are different. For instance- In the case of James Joyce's *The Portrayed of the Artist as a Young Man* provides some ethnic and moral lessons to the readers. It is not only made for entertainment. In other cases of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* is to entertain the readers.

Some of the elements of the Popular Fiction are found in the Mainstream Fiction. For instance- thriller, romance, mystery, crime, suspense, surprise, horror, terror, and fear are found in the works of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Voltaire and Charles Dickens. However, the difference is that like popular fiction, the authors of Mainstream Fiction are not intentionally focused on these elements in their works.

Popular Fiction writes for the commercial purpose and entertainment. In the book *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* by David Glover and Scott McCracken defined the concept of popular fiction.

Popular fiction is frequently thought of as those books that everyone reads, usually imagined as a league table of bestsellers

whose aggregate figures dramatically illustrate an impressive ability to reach across wide social and cultural divisions with remarkable commercial success. (1)

The main function of the Popular Fiction is to entertain the readers. The readers read them during their spare time. In her *Feminist Popular Fiction* (2001), Merja Makinen points out:

Popular formulaic fiction is usually defined as the fiction that is read purely for pleasure, as a form of escapism. This is the sort of fiction that is read wholly for pleasure and is therefore part of one's leisure activity...the popular novel is there simply to entertain and to divert: if it fails to do this then it fails in its main function. (11)

Genre Fiction is generally refers to non-literary works which includes the categories of Thriller Fiction, Science Fiction, Romance Fiction, Fantasy Fiction, Horror Fiction, Adventure Fiction, Mystery Fiction, Crime Fiction, Detective Fiction, and Historical Fiction. The Popular Literature is the literature of masses because it provides both pleasure and entertainment to readers. It has social and philosophical point of view.

All the genres of fiction are difficult to define because they include some elements of other genres. There are lots of similarities in the stories, settings, characters, themes, and style. So it is essential to understand the other genres of Popular Fiction in short:

First, Science Fiction is a concept that tells about real technological development. The ideas of future realities are explained scientifically. It is speculative fiction, usually, tells about future reality. It explores social, moral, intellectual, philosophical, and ethical questions. The settings of the novels are against everyday reality. The authors create another world or time



which is unknown for the readers. In a chapter on Science Fiction in *Genreflecting*, Diana Texier Herald defines:

✓ Science fiction novels are those that deal with scientific topics, space travel, aliens, and recognizably Earth-variant worlds or life-forms that have not been touched by magic. Time travel, not occasioned by magic, is here, as are stories of distant civilizations (whether present-day or set many years in the future or in the past) that show some relationship to Earth or Earth life-forms. (269)

It involves the elements of science and technology. The story gives technical and scientific details. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is the first novel on Science Fiction.

✓ Fantasy Fiction is another genre of fiction commonly employs magic and supernatural powers. The story line is frequently based on myths or legends. Many authors of this fiction have created an imaginary world in their works. Magic and magical creatures are often present in it. C. N. Manlove expresses his opinion about Fantasy Fiction is:

... a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become one at least partly familiar term. (01)

It is closely associated with Science Fiction. The world reflected in it is a magic, sorcery, enchantment and all are live in a fantasy. According to Rosemary Jackson, "It (fantasy) focuses, recombines and inverts real but it does not escape from reality. The fantastic cannot exist independently of that real world which it seems to find so frustratingly finite" (10).

Horror Fiction is a fictional work which includes unnatural and supernatural powers. Its aim is to frighten the readers. It produces thrill, extreme violence, sense of menace, and terror. The atmosphere of the horror novels is horrific and menacing which contains the theme of violence, sensuality and sexuality. It includes the stories of ghost witches, vampires, demon etc. So it creates fear among the readers. According to Saricks:

Horror Fiction has as its goal producing fear in readers. It contains a monster of some type, and supernatural elements figure prominently. Thus, Horror certainly includes stories of ghosts, souls, and vampires of wide variety. (107)

Historical Fiction deals with the past incidents. The aim of the author of it is to bring history in the form of the novel. The settings of the novels depend upon past incident, before the author's lifetime and experience. So he has drawn the events and incidents from history. It is based on historical facts and details and it contains details of society, manners, customs, beliefs, culture traditions, and habits of particular period. The characters are historical or fictional but believable. In the words of Orville Prescott:

The characters in historical fiction must seem human and interesting; but they must be creatures of their own time, believing many things we no longer believe, feeling, emotions we no longer share. (134)

The story line emphasizes on particular time or event which reveals the lives of characters.

Romantic books are always best-sellers than other genres of fiction. The readers are naturally attracted towards it. They show the romantic love relationship between men and women. Hero and heroine develop romantic

love for each other. In the book *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*, Kristin Ramsdell defines:

Romance is a love story in which the central focus is on the development and satisfactory resolution of the love relationship between the two main characters, written in such a way as to provide the reader with some degree of vicarious emotional participation in the courtship process. (5)

There are more sexual scenes. The characters are emotionally satisfied in each other's company. There are love, emotions and commitment between them. If due to any cause the hero or heroine is separated from each other, they are united at the end of the story. The story ends happily and optimistically. So the readers mostly prefer all these things.

✓ Mystery Fiction is an interesting genre of fiction. It is the most popular and attractive form where mystery plays a vital role. It is a synonym for Crime Fiction or Detective Fiction that uses investigation and whodunit technique. It brings the investigation of a crime and solves crime mystery. Investigator tries to solve the mystery or who commits the crime with the help of some clues. There is a puzzling situation because of un-solving serious crime. Along with puzzle it includes the elements of suspense, supernatural, and thriller etc. Like Romance Fiction, the stories of Mystery Fiction have happy ending. For instance- Agatha Christie's works *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934).

✓ Crime Fiction is about crime, its detection, arrangement, judgment, punishment for criminal and its motive. It is also concerned with lives of prisoner, child theft, rape and prostitution. It has several subgenres including legal thriller, detective fiction, courtroom drama, hard boiled fiction etc. According to H R F Keating, "...it is fiction that is written primarily for its

entertainment value which has as its subject some form of crime. Crime writing is fiction that puts the reader first, not its writer” (1). Crime Fiction shows how the act of crime is punishable under the law. If someone commits a crime, the reputation of that person is damaged. So the Crime Fiction helps the readers to be aware of the criminal activities.

✓ Detective Fiction is a sub-genre of Crime Fiction or Mystery Fiction. Here an investigator or a detective investigates a crime of murder. The period of the 1920s and 1930s is called ‘the Golden Age of Detective Fiction’. Wilkie Collins is regarded as the ‘Grandfather of English Detective Fiction’. His *The Moonstone* (1868) is first and best modern English detective novel. Edgar Allen Poe is also considered as the ‘father of the Detective Genre of Fiction’. The majority of detective stories are followed ‘whodunit’ format; it means who-dune-it. The stories contain the themes of crime, violence, investigation, and terror. Not only male but female authors also emerged in this period. Agatha Christie is one of them. Other female authors like Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh and Margery Allingham are well known for Detective Fiction.

✓ Adventure Fiction, usually, focuses on the physical action which is adventurous. It overlaps with thriller and suspense stories. Hero faces difficulties to achieve his mission. He goes life-and-death situation. He is a strong person who overcomes the situation at the end of the story that ends happily. John G. Cawelti defines, “Adventure fiction is the story of the hero-individual or group- overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission” (39). The act of protagonist is adventurous. The setting of such stories is exotic.

✓ Each and every genre of Popular Fiction has got its separate names because they have some separate themes and characters that are different

from other genres. For instance: romances are about romance, mysteries are about mystery, adventures are about adventure, crimes are about crime. So thriller has got its separate name because it is about thrilling incidents. It has power to create a thrill in the mind of readers.

### **Thriller Fiction**

✓ Thriller Fiction has achieved a significant place in the history of Popular Fiction or Genre Fiction. It has categorized in the Popular Fiction with other genres of fiction like mystery, fantasy, horror, adventure and science fiction. It contains tense, exciting, ingenious plot, sweet action, continuous suspense and surprise. Homer's *Odyssey* is one of the oldest stories in the Western World which is regarded as an early prototype of the thriller. It is a Greek poem in the form of epic. There are monsters, tragic plot twists, and hero's struggle for returns to his home. Another epic poem such as *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Mahabharata* also use similar narrative technique as the modern thrillers. The Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson is considered as a pioneer of the thriller fiction whose *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Kidnapped* are successful novels. Other authors like John Buchan, Bram Stoker and Agatha Christie are followed him.

There are various names of authors who belong to it. They dealt with different type of themes and covered various kinds of Thriller Fiction. In *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, James M. Cain adopts hardboiled style. He made the criminal is the narrator of his novel. He produces up market publications such as *American Mercury*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *Saturday Evening Post* rather than the pulps. Dashiell Hammett uses images of corrupt or gang-ridden city in his *Red Harvest* (1929). Different cities like Chicago, Los Angeles and Colton are portrayed in the works of W. R. Burnett's *Little*

*Caesar*, Paul Cain's *Fast One* (1932) and Horace McCoy's *No Pockets in a Shroud* (1937).

Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* is a revenge thriller published in 1844 which explores the themes of justice, vengeance, mercy, and forgiveness. Published in 1915, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is the best thriller novel by the Scottish author John Buchan, which is told in the style of an adventurous story. Published in 1963, John Le Carre's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* is an espionage novel. It is a more realistic thriller fiction based on profession of spies. *The Bourne Identity* (1980) is a spy thriller novel by Robert Ludlum which is written in the modern style.

Today, the thriller stories are popular because they provide a rich literary feast. They cover a wide variety of worlds such as the law, espionage, action adventure, doctor and medicine, police and crime, romance, history, politics, high-tech, and religion. The professions of their protagonists are a lawyer, a doctor, a journalist, a soldier, a spy etc. They are the ordinary persons who face life and death situation to achieve their goals.

The thriller stories also have got fame because they contain fast paced plot, numerous action scenes and limited characters development. The plot is driven by a villain or team of villain and the hero always tries to overcome obstacles. The heroes are often ordinary persons who get sympathy from the readers. They take a big risk to fight against a danger. The stories start with serious problems and protagonists try to solve them. They are written in superb manner that compels the readers to turn the pages.

### **Definitions of Thriller Fiction**

✓ Thriller Fiction creates an excitement, suspense, tension, and surprise in the mind of readers and also provides a thrilling ride to the readers while reading. It is a very sensational fiction which focuses on illegal activities,

international espionage, sex, terrorism, and violence. It deals with thrilling characters, events and incidents. There are some definitions which give some ideas about it in brief. About Thriller Joyce G. Saricks opines:

“a gripping, plot-centered story, set in the detailed framework of a particular profession that places heroes or heroines in dangerous situations from which they must extricate themselves.” (313)

According to International Thriller Writers, a Thriller Fiction is characterized by:

“the sudden rush of emotions, the excitement, sense of suspense, apprehension, and exhilaration that drive the narrative, sometimes subtly with peaks and lulls, sometimes at a constant, breakneck pace.” (Web)

The following definition covers various characteristics of the Thriller Fiction. It shows the story, setting, plot, characters of thriller stories in short:

“Thriller is a genre of fiction in which tough, resourceful, but essentially ordinary heroes are pitted against villains determined to destroy them, their county, or the stability of the free world. Part of the allure of thrillers comes from not only what their stories are about, but also how they are told. High stakes, non-stop action, plot twists that both surprise and excite, settings that are both vibrant and exotic, and an intense pace that never lets up until the adrenalin packed climax.” (Web)

These definitions point out that the thriller stories deals with a gripping plot, high stakes, and non-stop action. Its setting is vibrant and

exotic. However, such stories create horror, terror, and fear while reading them.

### **Characteristics of Thriller Fiction**

Thriller Fiction has certain characteristics. Some of them are found in the other genres of Popular Fiction. These characteristics as follows: Thrill excitement, curiosity, mystery, puzzle, adventurous-action, suspense, surprise, tension, fear, who-dun-it, police procedural, and pacing.

#### **Thrill**

Thrill is one of the major characteristics of Thriller Fiction. *Cambridge international Dictionary of English* defines the word thrill is: “a feeling of extreme excitement usually caused by something pleasant” (1515). It is often present in all stories of Thriller Fiction. It has got its name thriller because of the incidents are full of thrills. There are strong but sudden feelings of excitement, pleasure, or fear. There is depiction of various crimes: murder, rape, theft, smuggling, gambling, terrorism, and prostitution. They create thrill in someone’s mind. The readers experience the thrill when the hero encounters a dangerous situation. They enjoy thrilling incidents while reading them.

#### **Excitement**

Excitement is the main characteristic-feature of Thriller Fiction. It often present in all thriller stories as well as other genres of popular fiction. Thrilling stories have exciting plot takes readers to the next page. Adventurous actions of the protagonist also create fearful excitement in the mind of readers.



## **Curiosity**

Curiosity is also another important characteristic of Thriller Fiction. It is found in thriller stories and also in crime and mystery stories. There is an exciting plot, continuous suspense, and surprise which create curiosity in the mind of readers. Only curiosity is one thing which creates excitement in their minds. The stories contain amazing or mysterious plot structure. However, the readers are very curious and wait for what will happen next.

## **Mystery**

Mystery is one of the significant elements of Thriller Fiction. It is present in thriller stories and is found in several books. Investigator plays major role to investigate the hidden truth or the secrets and tries to solve the mystery related with the different cases. In the case of crime especially murder, investigator attempts to discover who done it, why done it, and how done it. He follows clues one-by-one and solves the mystery at the end of the story. The story ends after solving mystery.

## **Puzzle**

Puzzle is found in all the genres of fiction. Mystery and puzzle are not separated from each other. The protagonist or detective or investigator is always found in the puzzling situation while solving mystery. He attempts to solve the puzzle but it cannot be solved easily. With the help of some clues, he solves mystery. After solving mystery, puzzle is solved automatically.

## **Adventurous action**

Adventurous action is the next prominent characteristic of Thriller Fiction which is based on the physical action of the protagonist. An adventurous act create thrilling ride among the readers. The protagonist of the stories tries to achieve his mission, where he encounters the battle for

achieving it. He is chivalrous and strong person who goes through hazardous situation to overcome the physical dangerous. At the end of the story, he triumphs over all of his troubles. All these adventurous elements create a thriller in the mind of readers.

### **Suspense**

Suspense plays a significant role in thriller stories. Like surprise, it often presents from the beginning to end of the story. Thriller stories take place in dark, rainy, and menacing atmosphere. Such suspenseful setting threatens to the readers because they are unknown about what might be happen. So they wait for further action.

### **Surprise**

Surprise is another characteristic of thriller fiction. Thriller stories are full of surprise which creates thrill. It is presented at the beginning to the end of the story. The story contains a lot of surprises for the heroes and the readers. Violent action, sudden attack, and unexpected incidents create surprise which is mostly found in the thriller stories. However, the element surprise is used continuously in the plot.

### **Tension**

Again suspense creates tension among the readers. They wait for further action because they are in tension for what will happen next. The protagonist faces life and death situation during the journey. However, the tension automatically comes in the mind of readers.

### **Fear**

Suspense and tension also create fear in the minds of characters as well as readers, they fear because what is happening and what will happen

with the protagonist. In the strange atmosphere protagonist is in the fear of death. His fearful journey threatens to the readers.

### **Whodunit**

Crime, mystery, detective as well as thriller stories use the technique of who-dun-it, why-dun-it and how-dun-it. It means who done it, why done it and how done it. There is suspense about the name of murderer and the readers are very curious about it. The protagonist of the story investigates who is murderer and purpose behind it. He tries to find out what is exact happened. At the beginning and middle of the story no one knows who done it, but at the end of the story all come to know the real name of murderer. The protagonist investigates why-dun-it and how-dun-it such kind of acts by the murderer.

### **Police procedural**

Police procedural is a type of technique in which the actual methods and procedures of police work are employed. Usually it occurs in thriller stories as they are related with a crime. It focuses on the role of the police or team of police in the society. Police officers are main characters of the novels. Many authors try to depict the routine activities of a group of police officers who are frequently investigating one case. Sometime there is a detective who is associated with the police department. He participates in the work of investigation of a particular crime. The work of police procedural emphasizes on forensic technology, interviewing of suspects and records searches. Sergeant Cuff plays important role of police detective in Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*.

## **Pacing**

Thriller stories are fast-paced. The pace must be quick. These are compelling stories because the readers are pulled into the hero's moral dilemmas. They contain the key elements such as mystery, suspense, excitement, violence, terror, and horror. The readers are very curious to read them. They turn pages quickly to read what will happen next with the protagonist.

## **Story line**

There is a big and complicated story line in Thriller Fiction. The structures of the stories are unique which contain non-stop action and plot twists. These are at the centre of the plot and the action which contain national or international elements. The story presents the sudden violence: crime and murder. The atmosphere in thriller novels is a creepy menace as well as dangerous and violent world is presented in it. It also reflects very dark and corrupt society. According to Saricks:

Story lines in Thrillers tend to be complicated, with frequent plot twists that surprise protagonist and reader alike. Power is often at the heart of the action: The antagonist plots to gain power for his own ends, and the hero is out to stop him or her. There is violence or the threat of violence, and a sense of constantly changing action and movement, thus increasing the pace of the story. (315)

The whole story moves around the protagonist who encounters the frightening situation to achieve his goal. He fights both physically and emotionally. The hero or heroine overcomes the evil things at the end of the story. The stories create excitement, suspense, and surprise, so the readers

are very curious about what will happen next. The stories are full of technical language and extensive details.

### **Setting**

The setting of these stories deals with vibrant and exotic locations. It is full of a dark, rainy, and menacing atmosphere. It can be realistic, a supernatural, a historical, and contemporary or future. Mostly they take place in ordinary suburbs, cities, foreign cities, deserts, polar-regions, and high seas. Some of the novels are set on the boat where the fearful atmosphere is depicted by the author. These settings of the stories threaten to the readers while reading.

### **Plot**

There is a complicated plot and action with big storyline. It is complications and also intricately twists. It is driven by a villain or a group of villain. There is a surprise for the protagonists and reader. The plot of the stories is fast-paced. Due to it the readers are curious for further actions. Violence and a threat of violence are often present in the plot. It contains exciting stories. The plot of these stories is so much compelling that's why readers feel to move quickly. It focuses on a particular profession such as espionage, medical, researcher or legal.

### **Characterization**

The protagonists of these stories are teachers, journalists, lawyers, spies, soldiers, seamen, and pilots. They face dangerous situation to achieve their goal and win at the end of the story. Usually, the stories portray the strong and sympathetic characters and the secondary characters are less developed. The hero's are portrayed as very good and the antagonists are as very bad. The main characters unknowingly involve in a dangerous situation

and are trapped in menacing situation where they escape after facing a lot of difficulties. At that time life is threatened them. Saricks says:

Any reader of the genre also recognizes that these heroes are faced with a serious dilemma: Whom of the characters who surround them-and often appeal to them for assistance-can they really trust? This dilemma creates moral questions and drives the plot, often even turning the hero away from the police or anyone in authority as a possible betrayer, and forcing him to use his own skills and knowledge to overcome all obstacles in his way. (315)

The characters in thriller stories are convicts, criminals, stalkers, assassins, murderers, innocents, victims, menaced, dark past, psychotic, individuals, terrorists, world-weary men and women, and people involve in twisted relationships.

### **Purpose**

Purpose of thriller authors is not only to entertain the readers, but through the entertainment it provides some moral things to the readers. Through these stories, they show what is going on in the world. For instance- the stories of crime, legal, and political thriller provide the information about their fields. The authors of Thriller Fiction show the world of spies, lawyers, doctors and engineers. They try to evoke an awareness of insecurity and violence in the society.

### **Sub-genres of Thriller Fiction**

Apart from the elements, it has several subgenres including Legal Thriller, Medical Thriller, Political Thriller, Crime Thriller, Espionage Thriller, Techno Thriller, Psychological Thriller, Suspense Thriller, and

Religious thriller. The novelists: Robert Ludlum, Eric Ambler, David Morrell, Frederick Forsyth, Dan Brown, James Phelan, Tom Clancy, Michael Crichton, Ian Fleming, Ken Follett, John Grisham and Alistair MacLean are closely associated with Thriller Fiction. They handle these subgenres in their writing. Above characteristic are utilized in each and every subgenres of it. However, it is necessary to understand these subgenres properly.

### **Legal Thriller**

Today, it is considered that Legal Thriller is the most popular among the thriller stories because of the characters, their lives and how these cases affect them. Usually, a lawyer or someone is associated with the legal system. Hero or heroine is caught in an intricate web of corruption and greed. They are likeable characters face the battles. The professions of the characters are legal, so they are involved in solving their cases. They fight against corruption. Justice is important in the legal thriller. According to Saricks:

The typical Legal-thriller story line finds the hero/heroine caught in an intricate web of corruption and greed forced to make a difficult decision that will have far-reaching implications both for him and others connected to the case. Moral and social issues often figure prominently. Justice is served in the end. (317)

There is a use of technical language and details of the law. The stories are based on the law and legal system. The law is an integral part of the plot. They are justice and law stories. It is considered that the origin of Legal Thriller is from Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent* (1987).

### **Medical/ Scientific thriller**

Medical Thriller is significant subgenre of Thriller Fiction. The story deals with the medical and scientific themes. Hero or heroine may be a skilled doctor or researcher who is caught up in a dangerous situation. He/she tries to fight against the wrongs in their profession. There are strong female protagonists in Medical Thriller than in any other subgenre of Thriller Fiction. There are medical and scientific background and details. In the words of Saricks:

Medical and Scientific details remain of prime importance. Readers relish this inside look at the profession. Although they expect details about the operations of the hospital or research lab, medical procedures, and the nature of the disease or virus, they want them to be presented in an understandable fashion, rather than as dry, and perhaps overwhelmingly incomprehensible, facts. (322)

The stories are fast-paced and crusading. Robin Cook is the master of the genre. James Patterson's *When the Wind Blows* is a best novel of the Medical Thriller.

### **Political Thriller**

Political Thriller is a popular subgenre of Thriller Fiction that is also called as a corporate or financial thriller. The plot of it deals with the corporation or financial details. The main character may be a member of a political party or government employee. According to Saricks:

The newsworthy nature of the story lines remains a consistent thread, running through the Thriller genre, in this subgenre as in the others. Here readers find the political terrorists, the



conspiracies to overthrow governments, the non-espionage assassination attempts, and frequently revenge, as well as financial schemes and machinations within corporations and governments. (324)

The stories of Political Thriller deals with the current issues like conspiracy or corruption in which the personal, national, or international implications are found. There is a realistic description of corporate life, finance, and politics of government.

### **Crime or Caper thriller**

Crime is a social phenomenon which is an act that is very harmful to the society. It is a serious problem in the society. John Gillin has defined the term crime as, “an act that has been shown to be socially harmful by a group of people that has power to enforce its beliefs and that places such act upon the ban of positive penalties.” (Paranjape 7)

The stories are told from the criminals’ point of view. The real picture of criminal’s world is depicted there. Antiheroes are the protagonists. The criminals become the protagonists, they are often amoral. The plot focuses on the criminals and their escape from the prison. There is a collection of the evidence. The police try to discover the real criminal. Lawrence Sanders’s Edgar Award-winning novel *The Anderson Tapes* is a classic example of Crime Thriller.

### **Spy /Espionage Thriller**

Spy Thriller is a common sub-genre of the Thriller, which deals with the subject of fictional espionage in a realistic way and on the basis of fantasy. It portrays about the actual life of spies. Threat, spies, espionage, conspiracies, and assassins are common themes occur in the spy thriller

stories. The protagonists are government agents who take violent action against agents of rival government terrorists. Historically, the heroes of spy novels were male protagonists and currently it seems that there are some female protagonists. They may be highly trained intelligence agents who are caught in the game of spies. They do not know to whom they can trust. It is always unclear who is good or bad in these stories.

The stories take place in the worlds of international spies and intrigue. Only the hero or heroine saves the world. He or she passes through both physical and mental trouble. There is a sense of alienation for him or her. The world presented in these stories is dangerous and treacherous. D. H. Lawrence declared in the reviewing of Somerset Mougham's *Ashenden* in 1928, "Spying is a dirty business, and secret service altogether is a world of underdogs, a world in which the meanest passions are given play" (Priestman 115).

The spying is not a dirty business, but it is a secret service of an agent who is a strong man and hard worker. He is trained the person who is appointed for a special task. He takes a lot of efforts for completing his appointed task which is not simple. He never thinks of his dangerous life. Being a bold person, he faces life and death situations.

### **Techno Thriller**

Most of the modern thriller stories can be called Techno Thrillers, which are based on the technology. Some technical elements are found in the work of authors. The stories highlight on technical details and military activities. Saricks points out:

These are stories that prey on cold war paranoia and, more recently, fear of terrorists. The villains are always evil, in

contrast to the more personable heroes. Pacing is fast, as the action-filled plots, along with clear-cut war between good and evil, pull readers into the story and keep them turning pages. (338)

The protagonists are almost exclusively male, often part of a community or team of men. Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain* and Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October* are gripping example of Techno Thriller. These both authors are considered as 'the fathers of the modern Techno Thriller'.

### **Psychological Thriller**

In Psychological Thriller the common elements are mind games, horror-of-personality and obsession. Psychological Thriller emphasizes on the mental states and unstable emotional aspects of the characters. It focuses on motivations and mental activities rather than on exterior events. Scaggs defines it as:

The psychological-thriller is a subgenre of the versatile thriller genre in which crime is represented as an outward manifestation of the internal workings of the pathological individual psyche. (129)

In the Psychological Thriller, characters rely on physical as well as mental strength to overcome their enemies. It is a process about emotional and mental development of different characters. It deals with common themes: death, perception, identity, and existence.

### **Suspense Thriller**

Suspense plays a key role in the thriller novels. Apart from thriller stories, mystery, crime, romantic, suspense, horror and adventure stories also

rely on suspenseful situations to intensify their stories. So it is said that suspense is an important element in other genres of fiction. The readers are kept on the edge of their seats because something will happen soon that is a danger lurking and yet perhaps unseen that is suspense. In the article *The Uses of Suspense* Andrew Klavan comments, "Suspense is not about the things that are happening: it's about the things that might happen, that threaten to happen" (213).

The protagonist faces a dangerous situation, and the readers are always anticipating the danger to come. The danger is an un-expectedly occurs in the life of the protagonist. Along with the protagonist, the readers are very curious about what will happen next and why and how. Like a mystery, it contains puzzle. Because of suspense the stories deal with a dark, sinister, evocating and menacing atmosphere. The action of the story takes place at night, on rainy season and in cloudy days. The suspense is necessary found in a thriller stories and all the genres of literature.

### **Adventure Thriller**

Adventure thriller stories show the physical actions than mental actions of the protagonist. The hero or heroine appointed on the particular task regarding his or her field. He or she goes through a dangerous situation to overcome the obstacles in his path and to complete his or her mission. The stories end with happily because the protagonist is successful in his adventurous journey.

### **Religious Thriller**

Religious Thriller is based on religious teaching, customs, events and incidents. There are some religious prophecies, evil unleashed and ancient scriptures are often found in it. It uses history and myth of religion. It deals with religious themes, includes religious questions, ceremonies, and objects.

The stories move around a specific church, exorcism, and demon possession. *The Da Vinci Code* is the best example of the Religious Thriller.

To take any subgenre of thriller, the main characters have some goal. They take efforts or sacrifice themselves to achieve it. Sacrifice is essential to overcome obstacles and reach there. The novels create thriller and provide some valuable information about the legal system, medical procedures, police and crime, and inner world of spy. Alistair MacLean's *The Last Frontier* is the best example of Spy Thriller, which depicts the real life of a spy.

### **A Brief Overview of the History of Thriller Fiction**

The origin of Thriller Fiction can be traced back to the literature of terror and the gothic novels which were flourished in the latter part of 18<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is developed by the novels of sensation or Newgate Fiction such as the crime stories, the police procedural, the roman policier, the cloak-and-dagger stories, the ghost, horror and detective stories. Especially, it was particularly developed by Edgar Allan Poe's short stories named *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), *The Mystery of Marie Roget* (1842) and Wilkie Collin novels *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). Poe and Collins are experts in crime, mystery, detective and suspense stories. Nearby six hundred authors dealt with Thriller Fiction since turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The vast majority of the authors are from Britain and American. Some of them have become prolific authors.

Near the turn of the century Rider Haggard, Anthony Hope, and Stanley Weyman achieved great popularity with some of their fine romance and adventure novels. Rider Haggard is very famous for his some fine adventure- thriller novels: *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) and *She* (1887).

Anthony Hope is another author who achieved great popularity with his wonderful novels especially *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *Rupert of Hentzan* (1898). His contemporary Stanley Weyman also produced romance and adventure novels of the thriller kind. A. E. W. Mason is a prolific writer of 20<sup>th</sup> century. His *The Four Feathers* (1902), *At the Villa Rose* (1910) and *The House of the Arrow* (1924) etc. are the successful thriller novels.

Alistair Maclean is a Scottish novelist, born on 21 April, 1922 who wrote popular adventure thriller stories. His best know stories are *The Guns of Navarone*, *Ice Station Zebra*, and *Where Eagles Dare*. All three are made into remarkable films. John Buchan is a Scottish author and his *The Watcher by the Threshold* (1902), *Prester John* (1910), *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), *Greenmantle* (1916), and *The Three Hostages* (1924) are famous examples of thriller novels. His *The Riddle of the Sands* remains a classic novel of the Thriller Fiction.

In the early part of the twentieth century Edgar Wallace is one of the prolific writers of Thriller Fiction. His novel *The Four Just Men* (1906) is very famous novel. His next novels: *Sanders of the River*, *The Angel of Terror*, *The Green Archer*, *The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder*, *The fellowship of the Frog*, *The Dark Eyes of London* and *The Hand of Power* are successful gripping stories. Sydney Harler, Sapper, Sax Rohmer and Darnford Yates are achieved fame in the interwar period.

During 1920s, American writer Dashiell Hammett wrote hard boiled private-eye type of Crime Thriller. His novels: *The Dain Curse* (1929), *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *The Glass Key* (1931), and *The Thin Man* (1934) are the great examples of thrillers. Raymond Chandler is next writer of thriller fiction who began with pulp stories. He wrote the best thriller novels: *The Big Sleep* (1939), *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), *The High Window* (1942) *The*

*Little Sister* (1949), and *The Long Good-Bye* (1953).

The contemporaries of Eric Ambler, Geoffrey Household and Raymond Chandler were Pater Cheyney, John Creasey, Rex Stout, James Hadley, Chase Leslie Charteris, Erle Stanley Gardner, Dennis Whealey, Nevil Shute, Nigel Balchin, and George Bagby are extreme prolific authors of their time. Highly successful thriller writers are found since the 1950s. Julian Symons is one of them. His *Broken Penny* (1953) and *Bloody Murder* (1972) are the kinds of crime thriller novels. Hammond Innes was contemporary of Julian Symons. His *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1959) is an interesting thriller novel. Ian Fleming's novel *From Russia with Love* (1957) is an example Techno Thriller.

During the 1960s Lionel Davidson produced several well-written and witty thriller novels: *The Night of Wenceslas* (1960), *Rose of Tibet* (1962), *A Long Way to Shiloh* (1966) and *Making Good Again* (1968). In the 1970s, Frederick Forsyth achieved great success with his complex thriller novels notably *The Day of the Jackal* (1971), *The Odessa File* (1972) and *The Dogs of War* (1974). Francis Clifford contributed in a number of excellent spy and thriller novels: *The Naked Runner* (1966), *Amigo, Amigo* (1973), and *Drummer in the Dark* (1976).

Also during the 1970s Gerald Seymour became well-known for his novels *Harry's Game* (1979) and *Red Fox* (1979). Douglas Hurd wrote good political thrillers namely *The Truth Game* (1972) and *Vote to Kill* (1975). He wrote some thriller novels in collaborated with Andrew Osmond namely *Send Him Victorious* (1968), *Smile on the Face of the Tiger* (1969) and *Scotch on the Rocks* (1971). Michael Francis Gilbert is a British writer of both mysteries and thrillers. His writing deals with police procedurals, spy novels and short stories, courtroom dramas, classical mysteries, adventure

thrillers, and crime novels. His *The Empty House* (1978), *The Night of the Twelfth* (1976) and *Ring of Terror* (1995) are the best novel of thriller kind.

Three best-known novels of Gavin Lyall are *The Wrong Side of the Sky* (1961), *Judas Country* (1975) and *The Secret Servant* (1980). James Barlow is an outstanding thriller writer who wrote *The Patriots* (1960). William Garner, James Leasor and Martin Cruz Smith are also famous thriller writers in the modern period. John Grisham is an American novelist who is well known for his popular Legal Thrillers. His first best seller novel was *The Firm*. His half dozen novels have been turned into films. He began his writing, his first novel *A Time to Kill*. His next novels are *The Pelican Brief* (1992) and *The Client* (1993) also good examples of Thriller Fiction.

Desmond Bagley is a British novelist who is known for a series of best-selling thrillers. He wrote sixteen thriller novels. *The Golden Keel* (1963), *High Citadel* (1965), *Wyatt's Hurricane* (1966), *Landslide* (1967), *The Tightrope Men* (1973), and *The Enemy* (1977) are very famous novels. Diana Bachmann is a British writer who tries to handle the historical and thriller fiction. She wrote thriller novels under the penname Max Marlow in collaboration with the prolific writer Christopher Nicole. Her *Tides of the Heart* (1987) and *A Sound Like Thunder* (1996) are the best novels.

Scott Turow is an American novelist began to write legal thrillers: *The Burden of Proof*, *Presumed Innocent*, *Pleading Guilty*, and *Personal Injuries* which are the best sellers. He received multiple literary awards notably the Silver Dagger Award of the British Crime Writers' Association. Tom Clancy is considered as the father of Techno Thriller. He wrote seventeen novels. *The Hunt for Red October* (1984), *Patriot Games* (1987), *Clear and Present Danger* (1989), and *The Sum of All Fears* (1991) are the best Techno Thriller novels.



Robert Ludlum was born on May 25, 1927 in the New York City. He is an American author who wrote twenty-seven thriller novels. These novels have been published in thirty three languages and fourteen countries. His *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (1971), *The Scorpio Illusion* (1993), *The Apocalypse Watch* (1995), *The Matarese Countdown* (1997), and *The Prometheus Deception* (2000) are famous thriller novels.

Ken Follett is a Welsh author of thrillers and historical novels. He wrote twenty-nine books in the past thirty five-years. His *Eye of the Needle* (1978), *Triple* (1979), *The Key to Rebecca* (1980), *The Man from St Petersburg* (1982) and *Lie Down with Lions* (1986) are spy thrillers and best sellers. His next novels *The Hammer of Eden* (1998) and *Whiteout* (2004) are the contemporary thrillers. Child Lee is a pen name of Jim Grant. His first thriller novel *killing Floor*, won the Anthony Award for the Best First Novel.

Charles Cumming is a British writer of Spy Thriller of the new generation. His *A Spy by Nature* is first spy thriller novel published in 2001. His novels *The hidden Man* (2003), *The Spanish Game* (2006), and *The Trinity Six* (2011) are famous spy thriller novels. *Typhoon* (2008) is his best Political Thriller novel. His *A Foreign Country* published in 2012 and in the same year it received CWA Ian Fleming Steel Dagger for the best thriller of 2012. Jeffrey Archer is an English author of Thriller Fiction. He quotes about the better writing of British thrillers as' "The tradition of thriller writing should never be allowed to die, not least because we are better at it than anyone else in the world" (8).

To sum up this chapter, it can be said that Thriller Fiction is one of the genres of Popular Fiction, which emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was essential to take a brief survey of Popular Fiction. To understand the

concept of Thriller, it was also necessary to mention the characteristic, subgenres and a short history of Thriller Fiction. The chapter helps the researcher to analyze the novels of Eric Ambler selected for the present study.