

The Chivalry of Detection: Golden Age British Detective Fiction as Modern Medieval Romance

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“Nostalgia for a privileged society accounts for one of the prime attractions of the traditional English detective story.”

– Ross MacDonald¹

I am a recovering detective fiction addict. Like many addicts, I was once ashamed to admit that private vice and endeavored to overcome my addiction by rationing, by using that next mystery as a reward after I'd finished a set of student papers or my next conference paper. Then I took a bolder move and taught courses in detective fiction. I even went so far as to give a paper at conferences on detective fiction; indeed, this paper is an update of that effort. And that seemed to work; I had sufficiently intellectualized my habit so it was no longer simple fun or a secret activity. But like Don Quixote and his friends the curate and doctor, I still have my standards and personal likes and dislikes. While I have enjoyed American hard-boiled (Hammett and Chandler) my first love is still British Golden Age detectives, and I don't mean Agatha Christie.

Instead I mean Margery Allingham and Dorothy Sayers. Allingham wrote only detective novels (or thrillers) and the best of her 24 novels push the envelope of the genre. Sayers tired of her series character Lord Peter Wimsey, “the kind of man God would have created,” she said, “if he had enough money,” and turned to Roland, Dante, and theology. Yet she did write 10 novels and 21 stories, most of which are still in print. To explain my continuing interest in these foreign and often snobbish novels, I tell people that both novelists were writing medieval romance in high modernist drag. This paper will try to justify that claim.

In *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle takes leave of his readers:

I thank you for your past constancy, and can only hope that some return has been made in the shape of that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating change of thought which can only be found in the **fairy kingdom of romance.**²

Years before his first Father Brown story, G. K. Chesterton defended the detective story as expressing “some sense of the poetry of modern life”:

When the detective in a police romance stands alone, and somewhat fatuously fearless amid the knives and fists of a thieves' kitchen, it does certainly serve to make us remember that it

¹ Ross MacDonald. *On Crime Writing* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1973), 298.

² *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), vii, emphasis added.

is the agent of social justice who is the original and poetic figure, while the burglars and footpads are merely placid old cosmic conservatives, happy in the immemorial respectability of apes and wolves. The romance of the police force is the whole romance of man. It is based on the fact that morality is the most dark and daring of conspiracies. It reminds us that the whole noiseless and unnoticeable police management by which we are ruled and protected is a **successful knight-errantry**.³

Dorothy Sayers echoes this idea in the introduction to her *Omnibus of Crime* (1929):

In the nineteenth century the vast unexplored limits of the world began to shrink at an amazing and unprecedented rate . . . In place of the adventurer and knight errant, popular imagination hailed the doctor, the scientist and the policeman as saviours and protectors. But if one could no longer hunt the manticore, one could still hunt the murderer; if armed escort had grown less necessary, yet one still needed the analyst to frustrate the wiles of the poisoner; from this point of view, **the detective steps into his right place as the protector of the weak—the latest of the popular heroes, the true successor of Roland and Lancelot**.⁴

In “Custom House,” his introduction to *Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne reminds us that romance is only made possible by “the imaginative faculty” and “Moonlight” so that “the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary meet.”⁵ This meeting and mixture seem to be taking place in detective fiction.

“The romance,” Northrup Frye reminds us, “is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish fulfillment dream.”⁶ It is the product of “the ruling social or intellectual class” who “project” their “ideal in some form of romance where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threat to their ascendancy.”⁷

The history of the form also suggests another connection. Its American creator Edgar Allan Poe gave his detective, Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, a French name and Parisian setting in both “The Murders of Rue Morgue” and the “Purloined Letter.” He even transferred an American event—the murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers—to Paris under the title “Marie Roget.” The French form makes this connection to past forms even more explicit *roman policier*.

³ G. K. Chesterton, “A Defence of Detective Stories,” in *The Defendant* (London: Dent, 1901), 128, emphasis added.

⁴ Dorothy L. Sayers, ed., *The Omnibus of Crime* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929), 12, emphasis added.

⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Larzer Ziff (Columbus: Ohio State Press, 1962), 36.

⁶ Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 186.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 186, 189.

Douglas Kelly's *Art of Medieval Romance* uses Chretien de Troyes to establish the three important elements of medieval romance: *aventure*, *merveille*, *et quest*. Kelly takes *aventure* to be the spirit of adventure, the knight's motivating force for leaving court, for seeking challenges in order to prove himself.⁸ *Merveille* encapsulates the effects of Hawthorne's "moonshine," the imaginary and unreal mixed with the ordinary—the giants, dwarves, maidens, enchanted castles and dangerous woods. By *quest* Kelly means, of course, the grail, the mysterious/magical object which will provide the answer to questions and give meaning to all previous experience.

Since the Renaissance there has been a reaction against Medieval French romances. Roger Ascham, a serious-minded intellectual and educational reformer (always a dangerous combination) sneered at them. "Certain books of chivalry" were read in our "forefather's time when papistry, as a standing pool, covered and overflowed all England."⁹ These dangerous works, used "for pastime and pleasure" were:

made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton canons. As one for example, *Morte Arture*; the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two special points, in open manslaughter and bold bawdry.¹⁰

Indeed, these *topoi* which Chaucer lists "Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envy / Poyson, manslaughter and mordre in sondry wyse" (62-3)¹¹ have been the stock in trade of detective fiction. But most naysayers about detective fiction, I have in mind here Edmund Wilson (who on a bad day could sound a bit like Ascham), also object to the stuffy pretense of Golden Age British mystery. Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler suggested, had given murder back to people who were good at it.

One might reply to Ascham et al that in Golden Age mysteries the slaughter is never open (or there would be no mystery), and if there is bawdry, it is not often bold but quaintly British. Emphasis is on indirection; as Tzvetan Todorov puts it, the whodunit has two parts; "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. The first story . . . ends before the second begins."¹² And in the second story "the investigator does not so much act as learn."¹³ Thus the two stories have different status and importance "one is absent but real, the other present but insignificant."¹⁴ How these theories aid my argument will emerge as we consider our two English authors.

⁸ See *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

⁹ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (London: John Daye, 1570), 1: vii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Former Age," in *The Wadsworth Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Wadsworth, 1987), 650-1.

¹² Tzvetan Todorov, "The Typology of Detective Fiction," (1966) in *Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

They give us detectives who are in many ways alike. Both are aristocratic. Born in 1890, Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey (2nd son of the Duke of Denver) is a damaged nobleman with a DSO and is still haunted by WWI—a battered Bertie Wooster with a conscience and “the ultimate valet,” Bunter. Margery Allingham's Albert Campion is 10 years younger but almost seems a parody of Lord Peter, though he is a Cambridge man. His private flat is above a police station, Bottle Street off Piccadilly.

What I am suggesting then is that we have two knight-errant detectives without armor but with hints of *amor*. Peter does finally connect with Harriet Vane (like Sayers a graduate of an Oxford college, a detective novelist, and woman with a past). Albert Campion courts and finally marries Amanda Fitton, the ingénue he first meets in *The Fear Sign* (1933). At the end of that novel she takes charge: “Look here ... I shan't be ready [for a partnership/marriage] for about six years yet. But then—well, I'd like to put you on the top of the list.”¹⁵

They are both unlikely heroes, like Malory's Beaumains/Sir Gareth of Orkeney. Each rescues a damsel in distress (Harriet Vane or Amanda Fitton) but, like the lady in “Beaumains,” neither lady is easily courted or convinced. Instead, she is more practical than our hero and agrees to marry only after a series of adventures and rejections. Their love is “courtly” in that both are ennobled by it and both marry and even have families. As “knights errant” they engage in combats of wit and intrigue against dark figures who threaten their ladies and the order of their society.

ii

When we first meet him in *Whose Body* (1923), Lord Peter Wimsey is clearly a caricature, using what Colin Watson calls the “silly ass convention . . . presenting an apparently foolish, irresponsible young man to readers or audiences and then surprising them by revealing his unexpected depths of intellect and courage.”¹⁶ Farce certainly controls *Whose Body* when Wimsey enters as “Sherlock Holmes, disguised as a walking gentleman” who decides to “toddle round to Battersea now an' try to console” the family architect who has found a nude corpse in his bathtub.¹⁷ Wimsey is aided by Mervyn Bunter, his ultra-correct gentleman's gentleman. Physically, Wimsey is a “cross between Ralph Lynn and Bertie Wooster,” a “supercilious-looking blighter” with “horn-rims” who at times sports a monocle.

If anything, Margery Allingham's Albert Campion is even more exaggerated; “he's quite inoffensive,” a bright young lady explains in *The Black Dudley Murder* (1929), “just a silly ass.”¹⁸ He resembles Wimsey, a “fresh-faced young man with tow-coloured hair and foolish, pale-blue eyes

¹⁵ Margery Allingham, *Fear Sign* (New York: Avon, 1933), 191. This volume was published the same year by Heinemann in the UK under the title *Sweet Danger*.

¹⁶ Colin Watson, *Snobbery With Violence: English Crime Stories and their Audience* (New York: St. Martins, 1972), 185.

¹⁷ Dorothy Leigh Sayers, *Whose Body* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923).

¹⁸ *The Black Dudley Murder* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1929). The volume was published the same year by Heinemann in the UK, under the title *The Crime at Black Dudley*.

behind tortoise shell-rimmed spectacles.” He has a “slightly receding chin and mouth . . . unnecessarily full of teeth” who speaks with an “absurd falsetto drawl.” But if Campion sounds too much like a Wimsey double, the pattern is upset by his “personal servant and general factotum,” Magersfontein Lugg. This “immense and gloomy individual” with his “drooping mustache” and “the quick keen eyes of a cockney” is as unlike Jeeves/Bunter as possible. A former burglar, his lugubrious expression is seldom subservient, and his cockney patois makes the elegance of Campion even more farcical. The closest clue we have to Campion’s real identity (behind all his disguises and names) is from Jacques Barzun, who notes that “Miss Allingham once confided to a well-known sister novelist that Campion’s destiny was to inherit the British throne.”¹⁹

Both of these “noble” sleuths are well educated. Lord Peter is a Balliol man, a bibliophile, quotation-capper, and talented musician with a special love of Bach, while Campion is a Cambridge man who reads manuscripts at the British Museum and is a facetious expert in a number of occult areas.

The worlds in which these detectives operate is also “highly stylized,” what Colin Watson calls “Mayhem Parva,” almost cozy and a virtual “museum of nostalgia” in which the eruption of violence in the midst of the ordinary is especially shocking.²⁰ What seems at first almost pastoral (a village) or pleasantly ordered (an exclusive apartment or club) becomes the place of violent death and disorder, and our aristocratic educated heroes must deal with rural backwardness or cockney cunning. In *Clouds of Witness* (1927), Peter must discover why his older brother, the Duke of Denver, stands mute when he is faced with murder charges before the House of Lords.²¹ And of course he does after a series of misadventures worthy of a medieval fabliau (the anti-type of romance) as it involves Gerald’s affair with an all-too willing wife of a grim and threatening country neighbor. *Five Red Herrings* (1931) has Peter mastering a complicated mix of fishing, painting, and timetable alibis (complete with a map for readers).²² *Have His Carcase* (1932), Sayers admits in her preface, is unlike *Five Red Herrings*, in which “the plot is invented to fit a real locality; in this book, the locality was invented to fit the plot.”²³ The setting of an ocean-side resort allows for the body of a gigolo with his throat cut to be found, photographed, and then disappear.

The Nine Tailors (1934) involves the rich recreation of an East Anglian rural parish as well as a whole complex layer of lore about bell-ringing. Even the London settings are fanciful rather than merely factual so that we have roof-climbing in *Whose Body*, the morgue-like quiet of a gentleman’s club in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) in which a corpse goes undetected for hours, or the double worlds of pretense—empty advertising or artificial society flings in *Murder Must Advertise*

¹⁹ Jacques Barzun, *A Catalogue of Crime: A Reader’s Guide to the Literature of Mystery, Detection, and Related Genres* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 32.

²⁰ Watson, *Snobbery with Violence*, 128.

²¹ Dorothy Leigh Sayers, *Clouds of Witness* (New York: Harcourt, 1927), 128.

²² Dorothy Leigh Sayers, *Red Herrings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1931).

²³ Preface to *Have His Carcase* (New York: Harper & Row, 1932).

(1933). Finally, of course, the nuptial cottage in Pagleham in *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937) provides Peter and Harriet with the grimly comic problem of a corpse in their honeymoon cottage.²⁴

Though the later Allingham novels are marvelous instances of London intrigue and atmosphere (especially *Tether's End* and *Tiger in the Smoke*), her early novels use a rural, seemingly innocent setting in which Campion discovers witchcraft, demonology and other traces of the occult in addition to murder and super criminals bent on destroying Britain.²⁵ *The Black Dudley Mystery* begins as a simple house party in Suffolk, though soon the party becomes a farcical mixture of Holmes' "Musgrave Ritual," an ominous "Hun," one Eberhart von Faber "the most dangerous and notorious criminal of modern times," and hide-and-seek games with baddies using secret passages and convenient priest holes. Final rescue is provided by "Guffy" Randall and the local fox-hunting crowd outraged by the Hun's shooting of a hound. *Mystery Mile* (1930) is again set in Suffolk, this time a remote village manor, connected to the mainland by only a single road, where Campion hopes to guard an American judge from the Simister gang.²⁶ Madcap dashes back and forth to London allow for a roof-climbing kidnap rescue in Beverly Garden, Kensington. In *The Fear Sign*, Campion discovers rural witchcraft in an isolated Suffolk valley where a rustic mill provides him with old riddles which finally lead to the proof of an extinct title and introduce him to his future wife. *The Gyrrh Chalice* (1931) has Campion guarding a national treasure (the "true" Grail, it is hinted) from exploitation and foreign thieves in an ancient gothic tower.²⁷ All of the early Allingham novels are filled with legendary lore from old manuscripts or local antiquarians and pit him against dragon-like super criminals or dangerous (and at times ridiculous) evil sorcerers. Four later novels—*Death of a Ghost* (1934), *Flowers for the Judge* (1936), *Dancers in Mourning* (1937) and *Fashion in Shrouds* (1938)—form a group that examines the art world, publishing, theatre and the world of fashion.²⁸ All are London-based and populated by extravagant and brittle characters. Yet a more mature Campion finds his way through each of these mazes and solves the mystery.

Both of these series are interested in power as well as perfect justice. Both detectives are aristocrats and so, however ludicrous they may have seemed at times, are part of the establishment. And of course, they have friends in the police. Charlie Parker of Scotland Yard becomes Peter's brother-in-law and has a deep interest in theology. Campion can depend on his friend Stanislaus Oates, Chief of Scotland Yard.

²⁴ See Dorothy Leigh Sayers, *The Nine Tailors* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934); *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (New York: Harper, 1928); *Murder Must Advertise* (New York: Harper & Row, 1933); and *Busman's Honeymoon* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937).

²⁵ *Tiger in the Smoke* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952) and *Tether's End* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).

²⁶ Margery Allingham, *Mystery Mile* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1930).

²⁷ *The Gyrrh Chalice Mystery: An Albert Campion Detective Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1931), published in the UK as *Look to the Lady* (London: Heinemann, 1931).

²⁸ *Death of a Ghost* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1934); *Flowers for the Judge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1936); *Dancers in Mourning* (New York: Garland, 1937); and *Fashion in Shrouds* (London: Heinemann, 1938.)

C. S. Lewis is said to have desired a medieval romance so extensive that he could continue reading it for his whole life. This is also true of the modern Golden Age mysteries of Sayers and Allingham, for although the sequence may be related in separate episodes, each also maintains aspects of continuity. Though it has not taken me my whole life to read and renew my acquaintance with these novels while writing and revising this paper, I have been reminded of the earlier pleasures I had reading these reassuring adult fairy tales. Both authors provide their readers with escape and reassurance, order is challenged, chaos lurks but is finally overcome by a single hero and his friends who confront murderers, master-criminals, or wizards in their quests for justice as they finally rescue their maiden from death or dishonor. The *merveille* of these modern medieval romances are those villains they confront, the *aventure* the clever and at times close to profound double plots. By that I mean that Todorov suggests the detection is a process of learning which we readers share without heroes. The *quest* is the continual need to restore an order we share in making through the projection of our wishes and hopes. Our heroes began as callow over-confident “silly asses” who, as we follow them, mature and engage in the issues and problems that come with family and an ever-changing society. It is almost as if, down these marvelous paths, we have followed a hero who is not mean, and whose chivalry is sophisticated and convincing, who provides us with values that just may save us from the chaos we fear may soon overwhelm us.

iii

Most of these novels are still in print and many of them have been adapted for television by the BBC. There are learned societies (or if you prefer “fan clubs”) providing outlets for discussion of the works and lives of both Sayers and Allingham. Another mark of continued popularity is the continuation of the canon of each writer. William Makepeace Thackeray burlesqued Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1820) in his *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850), in which Scott’s characters are given the mates and fates a later generation deemed appropriate.²⁹ Such is also the case with continuations which “update” Golden Age British Mysteries.

But continuations and sequels are notoriously difficult when invention and imaginative vitality are no longer fresh. Such, alas, is the problem when Philip Youngman Carter, Margery Allingham’s husband, completed *Cargo of Eagles* (1968) after her death in 1966 “using her own outline.”³⁰ Most of the novel marks a return to the delightfully quirky rustic England of her earlier novels, though now Campion and Lugg have secondary rather than primary roles. Youngman Carter provides a specially drawn map of “Saltey,” the Essex “back door to London” first featured in Ned Ward’s *The London Spy* (1703). It is a closed community of smugglers and long-time locals who resent Londoners and includes “a genuine minor poet” and a series of poison pen letters addressed to a young woman who has been willed a property. Campion has a minor role in solving issues and saving the day, but after

²⁹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Rebecca and Rowena* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), and Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Constable, 1820).

³⁰ Margery Allingham and Philip Youngman Carter, *Cargo of Eagles* (London: Chatto & Windus 1968), 235.

the earlier flair and fun, it falls flat, even with the map of Salty Carter includes. He also wrote two other novels himself: *Mr. Campion's Farthing* (1969) and *Mr. Campion's Falcon*, published as *Mr. Campion's Quarry* (1970) in the US.³¹

Jill Paton Walsh provides a more successful continuation of Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey. Walsh does this after Sayers' death and at the request of her literary executors. Sayers might even have approved, since she seems to have welcomed collaboration with a number of other professionals (Robert Eustache and Muriel St. Clare Byrne) before she left the manuscript of *Thrones, Dominations* for Dante and Roland.³² In 1998, Paton Walsh completed the novel Sayers had abandoned in 1936, the year before Walsh was born. Walsh had been inspired by reading *Gaudy Night* in her teens.³³ She has written several mysteries of her own and was awarded a CBE for her contribution to Children's literature. Her continuation was so successful that the British mystery writer Ruth Rendell observed, "it is impossible to tell where Dorothy L. Sayers ends and Jill Paton Walsh begins" (*London Sunday Times*).

The novel takes its title from Satan's renunciation of his angelic status in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (II.310-13) and begins with the death of George V (1936) and echoes Edward VIII's abdication. The chivalric concept of duty, the antithesis of abdication, is important in the novel. Harriet Vane, now Lady Peter Wimsey, comes to recognize that Peter's "detective urges" are his form of *noblesse oblige*: "In your case brains and privilege put you under an obligation to see justice done . . . even though these thrones and dominations [his family and title] were not of your choosing."³⁴ Peter solves the double murder, and the culprit is a rich and privileged husband who in a fit of jealousy strangles his innocent wife and later a young woman who is black-mailing him. He regrets the first murder, but, snobbishly enough, not the second: "she was a stupid little bitch. . . . She doesn't matter."³⁵ "Pitiful," Peter reports to Harriet, "A man without self-control, and without self-respect."³⁶ Peter is an example of both of these qualities. They are part of the code of his chivalry. As the novel ends, he recognizes that his children "will claim or renounce their inheritance [their titles and attendant obligations], and make and break the time accordingly. . . . If there's another war we shall have to face it, and we shall have to win."³⁷

Walsh uses the words of the Dowager Duchess (Peter's mother), which Sayers called "Wimsey Papers" (*Spectator* 1939-40) to frame a second novel which is otherwise her creation. *A Presumption of*

³¹ *Mr. Campion's Farthing* (London: Heinemann, 1969) and *Mr. Campion's Falcon* (London: Heinemann, 1970), published in the US as *Mr. Campion's Quarry* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1970).

³² The completed volume was published in 1998, in London by Hodder & Stoughton, and in New York by St. Martin's Press.

³³ *Gaudy Nights* (London: William Clowes and Ltd./Victor Gollanez Ltd., 1935).

³⁴ *Thrones, Dominations*, 132-3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 302.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 313.

Death (2003) is a Pagglesham provincial procedural mystery set in 1940.³⁸ Since Peter is on a secret mission, Harriet is asked to help local authorities when a “land girl” is found dead after an air-raid warning. The puzzle involves “pig clubs” and a paranoid retired dentist pursuing elusive German spies one of whom turns up dead. When Peter returns, they together solve the mystery.

The Attenborough Emeralds (2010), though set in 1950, has Peter returning to his first case from 1921 and provides an intriguing mystery puzzle with murders and multiple related Indian emeralds. Yet in addition to solving these mysteries, Peter becomes the 17th Duke of Denver when his brother Gerald dies of a heart attack while the ancient family home is almost destroyed by fire. What the fire reveals is the original stone castle: “the original house . . . brought into the family in the fourteenth century” with walls four feet thick. The “timber-framed Elizabeth house, behind the Jacobean frontage” is burned away and the stone stops the flames and saves much of the contents (pictures and library).³⁹ Peter solves the mystery of the emeralds (there are actually three of them). But unlike the Attenborough heir who chooses to live in New York and the Riviera rather than “live like a fuddy-duddy landowner,” Peter decides to pay the “death duty,” restore what he can, and even assume his place in the House of Lords. Though chivalry is not an overt theme, it is implicit again in Peter’s recognition of *noblesse oblige*, of duty to friends, family and country.

In *The Late Scholar* (2013), Walsh returns to the scene of *Gaudy Night*, the novel which, when she read it as a teenager, convinced her to go to Oxford. Peter discovers that the Duke of Denver is a “Visitor” of St. Severin College, Oxford, called upon when the faculty are deadlocked on an issue—which is the question of the sale of an early medieval manuscript of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, which may have been King Alfred’s copy text and may bear his annotations.⁴⁰ This is Oxford in 1953 (there are C. S. Lewis and Tolkien sightings), but all is not safe and simple. A series of assaults and finally three murders are solved by Duke Peter (two of these murders draw their method from Harriet’s novels). An acid anonymous *TLS* review had caused a suicide and provides the final clue for a mad murderer who is institutionalized. Confronted with the Boethius Ms., Peter discovers he is “a worshipper of relics” (73), and though scornfully charged with “chivalry” (119), proves his “impossible loyalty” to Oxford ideals, which he maintains “like chivalry, in the face of open bawdry and bloody manslaughter.”⁴¹ He has “saved Boethius for the college and reestablished order.” Walsh gallantly pays tribute to her Anglo-Saxon tutor at St Anne’s, Elaine Griffiths (1909-96), in her “Acknowledgements” and in the novel as “a woman who lives up to her reputation.”⁴²

Walsh’s continuations show Peter and Harriet as parents and finally as Duke and Duchess. They have faced a series of challenges, matured and still maintained the witty style and idealism that made

³⁸ Jill Paton Walsh, *Presumption of Death* (New York: St. Martin’s Minotaur, 2003).

³⁹ Jill Paton Walsh, *The Attenborough Emeralds* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), 238.

⁴⁰ Jill Paton Walsh, *The Late Scholar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73, 119, 133.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 138.

them initially attractive in Sayers' novels—the enduring imaginative charm of the chivalry of detection.