

‘Much learning hath made thee mad’: Academic Communities, Women’s Education and Crime in Golden Age Detective Fiction

Dr Elizabeth English

Department of Humanities, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, Wales, UK

Tel: 07970507832 Email: eeenglish@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Twitter: @E_C_English

Orchid ID: orcid.org/0000-0003-1939-9421

Postal address: 14 Denton Road, Canton, Cardiff, Wales, UK, CF5 1PE

Dr Elizabeth English is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff Metropolitan University in Wales. Her research focuses on modernist and early twentieth-century popular fiction with a particular interest in women’s writing. Her first monograph, *Lesbian Modernism: Censorship, Sexuality and Genre Fiction*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2015 (and in paperback in 2017). In addition to this, she is the author of a number of published articles and essays, the most recent of which explores the use of queer time travel in Katharine Burdekin’s speculative fiction. She is also the Co-Chair for the Modernist Network Cymru (MONC), which brings together scholars and professionals working on modernism in Wales to encourage collaboration and communication.

<https://cardiffmet.academia.edu/ElizabethEnglish>

<http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/education/staff/Pages/Dr-Elizabeth-English.aspx>

<http://modernistnetworkcymru.org/about/>

‘Much learning hath made thee mad’: Academic Communities, Women’s Education and Crime in Golden Age Detective Fiction

Keywords: women’s education; female communities; women teachers; golden age detective fiction; academic crime fiction; the university novel; Dorothy Sayers; Gladys Mitchell; Josephine Tey; Mavis Doriel Hay

Abstract:

In the history of education women and their communities have always posed a threat to the male stronghold. Turning on the idea that women have historically been perceived as interlopers, and thus symbolically criminalised by their desire for, and ultimately successful, admittance to scholarly and educational spaces, this article examines a cluster of Golden Age detective novels from the 1930s and 1940s (published at a time when it was still possible for women to study for but not receive a degree) in which educated women and criminality come into violent contact. Dorothy L. Sayers’ *Gaudy Night* (1935), Mavis Doriel Hay’s *Death on the Cherwell* (1935), Gladys Mitchell’s *Laurels are Poison* (1942), and Josephine Tey’s *Miss Pym Disposes* (1946) are all set in women’s residential academic communities and place the question of women’s right to learning at the crux of their narratives. By invoking the concomitant history of women’s education, this article examines the way in which these authors use the genre to perform contemporary concerns about educated women and more specifically the fear that women are made monstrous, deviant, or corrupt by their contact with Higher Education. In the process they reveal the vulnerability of women’s institutions in the 1930s and 1940s and acknowledge the competing and incompatible demands of educated women’s personal and professional lives. Much of this is communicated through a preoccupation with territory and the act of trespass: the communities, and the women in them, are perceived as dangerous and threatening and yet are themselves consistently under attack. By staging the educated woman as a criminal, or at least a suspected criminal, these texts make manifest her symbolic position

in early twentieth century society: she is a woman made transgressive by her crossing of figurative and literal boundaries

Virginia Woolf's exploration of women and writing, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) begins with a daring, if unintentional, invasion of hallowed Oxbridge ground. This foundational feminist text originated as a 1928 lecture to the women students of Cambridge's Girton and Newnham Colleges and its genesis is evident when the author tells the reader that in preparation for her address she sought inspiration on the riverbank of an unspecified Oxbridge college.¹ Enervated by the 'wash and tumult of ideas' that follow, she absentmindedly 'walks with extreme rapidity across a grass plot' of an unnamed men's college only to be remonstrated by a male figure, a Beadle.² She is sharply informed that '[t]his was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for [you]'.³ Woolf's train of thought is derailed and she is left with the feeling that she has somehow 'audaciously trespass[ed]'.⁴ In pursuance of yet another idea, Woolf then seeks out the college library but is again reproached by a 'gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction'.⁵ In this precise moment and location, then, Woolf is made transgressive by her encroachment onto male terrain, namely the bastion of tradition that is the Oxbridge men's college.⁶ As a trespasser on another's property, she is criminalised because her contact taints

¹ Jane Marcus explores Cambridge's somewhat mixed reception of Woolf's talk and text in *Virginia Woolf, Cambridge and A Room of One's Own*.

² Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.* Woolf refers here to college rules determining who may walk on the lawn.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶ Woolf herself had an interesting relationship with education. She was an autodidact or what Hermione Lee calls 'self-educated' and as a teenager read voraciously from her father, Leslie Stephen's library (*Virginia Woolf*, p. 143). From 1897, she attended classes in Greek, Latin, and the Classics (most notably with Cambridge classicist Janet Case), though she took no examinations in these subjects (Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 143). It is often noted that unlike her brother, Thoby and other men in her family, Woolf did not go on to study at university in a formal way, but Christine Kenyon Jones and Anna Snaith's article on Woolf's relationship with education makes the case that 'Woolf had much more first-hand experience of women's higher education than either she or her biographers have acknowledged' ("Tilting at Universities", p. 1). Woolf tackles the subject of women's education on numerous other occasions. See, for instance, 'A Society' (1921) 'A Woman's College from Outside' (1926), and *Three Guineas* (1938).

the pure fraternity of the scholarly environment. Not only is she denied access to these privileged male spaces, but the hostility that she encounters is fundamentally detrimental, even lethal, to any female creative and intellectual process. Far from unique, her experience and the emotions it stimulates are representative of British women's struggle for education and their strained relationship with its institutions.

It was not until the mid nineteenth century that women began to make small and gradual advances into higher education. The first women's colleges, Queen's College and Bedford College, were founded in the 1840s (1848 and 1849 respectively) with the intention of catering to governesses who wished to improve their financial prospects.⁷ In these pioneering early years, women attended classes and took exams as any male student might, but they could not officially receive degrees until the late nineteenth century. In 1878 the University of London became the first institution to award degrees to women (excluding medicine) and by the turn of the century, universities across England, Scotland and Wales had followed suit. The University of Durham was the last English institution (with the exception of Oxford and Cambridge) to grant degrees to women in 1895 and by this point many universities were purporting to make "no distinction of sex".⁸ While the newer, civic universities were admitting and awarding degrees to women by the turn of the century, motivated in part by financial need, Oxford and Cambridge were famously slow to participate in this cultural shift, resisting change until 1920 and 1948 respectively.⁹ Figures demonstrate that the number of women attending university rose slowly but steadily in the early twentieth century, falling slightly to 23% of the student population in the decade before the Second World War and stagnating there until the late

⁷ Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 123.

⁸ Quoted in Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, pp. 3-4.

⁹ Dyhouse discusses these financial motivations in *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 8.

1960s.¹⁰ The number of female scholars employed at universities mirrored this pattern: women continued to represent a mere 13% of the academic body up until the 1970s.¹¹ Thus, while the doors to higher education had certainly opened for female students and scholars by the time Woolf published *A Room of One's Own*, admittance and treatment that could truly be deemed equal was yet to be achieved.

However, women who wanted to pursue Higher Education did have another, in some ways more accessible, option—the teacher training college. Although a distinctively different kind of institution, the narrative of the women's teacher training college is undeniably interwoven with the women's university college. Like its more highly regarded counterpart, its history also began in the early nineteenth century with the foundation of the first women's teacher training institution, Whitelands, in 1841.¹² The success across the century of this kind of institution was fuelled by a number of social and political factors, including changes to educational law and the consequent increased demand for teachers.¹³ As Carol Dyhouse states, '[h]istorians have often emphasized the very close links between the entry of women into higher education and the country's need for schoolteachers'.¹⁴ The women attracted to teaching and thus to the training college were generally of a lower social class than those who attended university, and this disparity is in part explained by the financial burden of university education. This was a significantly more expensive choice than the teacher training college and while institutional and local authority grants and scholarships for university study were

¹⁰ Dyhouse notes that in 1930 the proportion of women in Scottish and Welsh universities was higher than that in English universities. She also discusses this 'stagnation' of numbers (Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, pp. 82-3).

¹¹ Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, pp. 137-8.

¹² Edwards, *Women*, p. 5.

¹³ The 1870 Education Act stated that children between the ages of 5 and 13 should receive an education. For a historical account of the many factors behind the success of the teacher training college, see Edwards, *Women*.

¹⁴ Dyhouse, 'Signing the Pledge?', p. 208.

available, the majority were awarded to men.¹⁵ Women did have the option of Board of Education scholarships which provided students with the option to attend university while also training to become a teacher, but these were dependent upon a 'pledge' or commitment, taken seriously by both student and Board, to enter the teaching profession upon graduation.¹⁶ This custom was in place at least until the years before the Second World War. Financial pressures, then, pushed women towards the teacher training college and a commitment to a career in education. In the 1944 McNair Report it was noted that women accounted for 70% of the teaching profession, working mostly within primary schools.¹⁷ The Report also recorded that there were 83 training colleges, 60 of which were women-only and 7 of which were co-educational.¹⁸ In contrast to the traditional university, then, women dominated the student body by far, with 7,500 female students to 2,500 male students.¹⁹ Certainly, one might read this as a sign of progress and, undoubtedly, training colleges more readily offered women-only spaces and educational and employment opportunities. But we must remember the extent to which this was born of necessity and shaped by the choices which women were denied. Teaching was a heavily gendered profession in the sense that it was one of the few acceptable, and accessible, forms of employment for women.²⁰ And even though women dominated that profession, they still found themselves at a disadvantage, working for the most part in primary schools while male teachers (and university educated women) were assigned

¹⁵ For figures regarding the percentage of financial support awarded to women, see Dyhouse, 'Signing the Pledge?', pp. 209-10.

¹⁶ Dyhouse points out that 'grants for teacher training were a very significant source of funding for women attending university before the Second World War' ('Signing the Pledge?', p. 217). But, notably, even these grants were more generous for male students than female (*Ibid.*, p. 209). On the nature of these agreements or 'pledges' see Dyhouse, 'Signing the Pledge?', pp. 217-18.

¹⁷ Edwards, *Women*, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Dyhouse's study of 800 women who graduated before 1939 provides fascinating insight into how women students felt about their 'pledge' to teach and the way in which it shaped, and often limited, their scholarly and professional choices and ambitions ('Signing the Pledge').

to the more respected and specialised roles in secondary education. We must recognise that while freedom was found at and through the training college, it had its limitations.

What both of these educational settings had in common, and what was crucial to their success, was the creation of women's separatist residential communities. Certainly, more women than men lived in university halls of residence, most likely because women's options for 'respectable' independent accommodation were fewer.²¹ Women's universities and university colleges were undeniably marginalised, under-resourced, and under-funded but, as Dyhouse amongst others posits, 'segregation as opposed to integration could guarantee a protected space' where women could flourish both as individuals and as a collective, supporting one another in their intellectual and professional endeavours, protected from the conventional demands of family life.²² However, Vicinus' study of women's communities between 1850 and 1920 has also shown that these environments were often perceived as threatening and consequently subject to ridicule, hostility and violence.²³ To get a sense of why this was the case, we might look ahead to the 1944 McNair Report which warned against staff residence in training colleges because:

there is no doubt that many men and women eminently suited for training college work will not accept posts which involved residence; while some others, we fear, become in the long run so accustomed to residence that they

²¹ In 1937-8, 38% of women lived in halls of residence compared to 21% of men. 19% of women lived in lodgings compared to 37.5% of men. The numbers of men and women living at home were much more even: 42.6% of women compared to 41% of men (Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 93).

²² Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 7. The beginning of what Dyhouse calls the '[e]rosion of the separatist tradition' at Oxford and Cambridge began with the move towards co-education in the 1960s (*Students: A Gendered History*, p. 163). Outside of Oxbridge, coeducational universities already existed but as Dyhouse points out, Oxford and Cambridge were 'profoundly structured by sexual difference' (*Ibid.*, p. 161). Other female colleges—Bedford, Royal Holloway, Westfield, and Kings College of Household and Social Sciences—also transitioned to coeducational establishments around this time (*Ibid.*, p. 129). The teacher training college underwent a similar change with the admittance of men in the early 1960s and the wholesale shift of training to university Institutes of Education later in the same decade (Edwards, *Women*, pp. 4 and 14).

²³ Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

shrink from the alternative even when, in the interests of themselves and the college, they should cease to be resident.²⁴

The Report seems to suggest that there may be something unhealthy, even regressive, about life within a single-sex collegiate community. But it is worth noting that because the majority of the colleges referred to here would have housed only female students (60 out of 83, in fact) the concern here is predominantly for the propriety of women living together in closed environments. It therefore produces what Edwards calls ‘a subtle attack on the whole ethos of the women’s college’.²⁵ As I will explore in more detail as this article progresses, the debate around women’s right to higher education and the status of their scholarly communities was often framed through the lens of both individual and social health. Commentators, often but not always male, expressed concern for the damage that might be done to women students’ mental and physical well-being by pursuing higher studies: would their bodies be made unfit for reproduction and motherhood, would higher learning take a too heavy toll on their mental health, might living amongst a community of likeminded women unfit them for marriage and even incline them towards those of their own sex? Education, it was posited, might pervert womanhood. Of course, these irrational concerns were intended, consciously or otherwise, to demonise and disempower female students. These anxieties were arguably borne less from genuine concern for women’s health and more from fear about what this meant for men: women’s access to education and the options this opened up for them signalled a shift, however gradual, in the gender status quo. As Sherrine A. Inness posits, women’s colleges were perceived as more threatening than coeducational institutions because ‘[w]ithin the separatist environment provided by a single-sex college, females escaped male control, and raised the

²⁴ Quoted in Edwards, *Women*, pp.14-15.

²⁵ Edwards, *Women*, p. 14.

disturbing spectre that men might be an expendable component of women's lives'.²⁶ Although Inness is concerned here with an earlier time period and American context, the point holds true. Women's education promised (though it did not always deliver) female independence, the possibility of more than just marriage and motherhood, professional choices previously limited to men, and financial autonomy. This of course posed a threat to those who had the most to lose in a system predicated on male power and raised the terrifying prospect that women were encroaching upon male terrain and privilege, potentially superseding them. Therefore, more was at stake in this debate over women's education than simply their right to higher learning. While women's communities were undoubtedly disadvantaged in comparison to those of their male peers, they were still perceived to pose a threat to the male stronghold over education and, by implication, over society.

It might be said, then, that women have historically been positioned as transgressors, and thus symbolically criminalised by their desire for, and ultimately successful access to, the realm of higher education. With this in mind, I turn to a genre of writing for which criminality and transgression are at the core — that is detective fiction and, more specifically, Golden Age detection fiction. This term refers to a particularly prolific period for detective fiction between the wars, though critics have questioned the usefulness and validity of such hard chronological framing.²⁷ What we find during this era are novels that are codified and formulaic, underpinned by a set of principles and rules (such as 'fair play' and 'rationality') which evolve from authorial attempts to theorise the genre.²⁸ In this article I step slightly beyond the common chronological

²⁶ Inness, *Intimate Communities*, p. 7.

²⁷ The 'Golden Age', according to Rosalind Coward and Linda Semple refers to work published between Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in 1920 and Dorothy L. Sayers's final novel, *Busman's Honeymoon*, in 1937 (Coward and Semple, 'Tracking Down the Past', p. 39). Victoria Stewart states that the term 'Golden Age' originates with John Strachey's 1939 article 'The Golden Age in Detective Fiction' (Stewart, *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain*, p. 7). Stephen Knight argues for evidence that the Golden Age continued after 1940 (Knight, 'The Golden Age', p. 77).

²⁸ We might look to *The Detection Club* (which Sayers co-founded) and 'The Detection Club Oath', which members were required to take, as an example of this. S. S. Van Dine's 'Twenty Rules for

definition to examine a cluster of British detective novels from the 1930s and 1940s which make use of the enclosed community trope that is so common in this period. These novels—Dorothy L. Sayers’s *Gaudy Night* (1935), Mavis Doriel Hay’s *Death on the Cherwell* (1935), Gladys Mitchell’s *Laurels are Poison* (1942), and Josephine Tey’s *Miss Pym Disposes* (1946)—each share the specific setting of the women’s residential academic community and they speak both to and of their historical context.²⁹ Published at a time when it was still possible for women to study for but not receive a degree, they show women’s education and criminality coming into violent and explicit contact. Set in the fictional Shrewsbury College, *Gaudy Night* opens with Harriet Vane, a famous mystery novelist, returning to her alma mater for the annual Gaudy Night celebration. Although Harriet is dismissive of the poison pen letters she receives during her stay, it becomes apparent that the college has a criminal within its midst, someone who vandalises its property and terrorises its inhabitants. The college Principle later asks Harriet to investigate, but in the end it is Peter Wimsey’s expertise that solves the case when he discovers the college maid, Annie, to be responsible. Hay’s novel is notably published in the same year and is also set in an imaginary women’s Oxford institution, Persephone. Despite these similarities, the plot, while intriguing, lacks the complexity of its sister offering, is less politically charged and less concerned with the quotidian existence of the female community. In *Death on the Cherwell*, a group of students find the college Bursar’s lifeless body adrift in a canoe but all evidence suggests that she has died by drowning. With the help of an inspector, they attempt to solve the mystery and protect the college’s reputation. Her death is in fact accidental, although less so its subsequent concealment by a male colleague, whom the Bursar

Writing Detective Stories’ and Knox’s ‘A Detective Story Decalogue’ are similar instances of detective fiction writers setting out the principles of the genre. Of course, these rules and conventions were both adhered to and flouted in equal measure.

²⁹ Sayers is among a number of women writers at this time referred to as the ‘Queens’ of the Golden Age. Victoria Stewart traces the etymology of the term ‘Queens of Crime’ in *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain*, note 11, p. 4.

has blackmailed. With *Laurels are Poison*, we stay within the realms of tertiary education but turn our focus towards a women's residential teacher training college. Mitchell's serial detective, Mrs Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley, arrives at Carterat Training College posing as a warden, but her real intention is to investigate the disappearance of her predecessor, Miss Murchan. As with *Gaudy Night* a series of pranks occur, but these culminate in the murder of the Hall's cook.³⁰ The genesis of these events is found to be the death of a young girl at Miss Murchan's previous school, a death that she in fact orchestrated to exact revenge upon her sister, the victim's mother. Mrs Bradley discovers that Miss Murchan is not missing but is in fact hidden in the college premises. *Miss Pym Disposes*, also set in a teacher training institution though one solely concerned with physical education, is a somewhat less conventional detective novel though murder does occur. The novel opens with Lucy Pym, a feted psychologist and literary celebrity, who visits Leys to deliver a lecture but finds herself drawn into the rhythms and drama of collegiate life. As the year progresses, graduate jobs are assigned by the Principle, Henrietta, with the most prestigious awarded to her favourite but academically mediocre student, Rouse, who is subsequently fatally injured in a gymnasium accident. We discover that this has been arranged by another student, Beau, to allow her own friend, a more distinguished and deserving student, to take Rouse's place. Tey's novel does not follow the usual narrative pattern of this genre: the criminal is not denounced (in fact, only Miss Pym and two others know that a crime has occurred) and Tey's detective ultimately conceals evidence and allows the murderer to escape unpunished.

These writers were themselves highly educated and each draws on their own experience for their fiction. Both Sayers and Hay studied at Oxford around the same time (Somerville and St Hilda's respectively), although it appears that Hay, unlike Sayers, did not go on to receive

³⁰ Megan Hoffman offers an interesting discussion of how these pranks 'employ gender play' (*Gender and Representation*, p. 134).

her degree when Oxford finally conferred awards upon women in 1920. Both Tey and Mitchell were secondary school teachers, the former having trained at the Anstey College of Physical Education in Birmingham and the latter at Goldsmiths College.³¹ Mitchell went on to further study as an external student at University College London and received a degree in English and History in 1926.³² This impression of authenticity, of writing truthfully of what one knew, characterised the wider literary trend that these novels might be said to be part of—the Oxford Novel.³³ In these same years, the sub-genre of academic crime fiction—that is crime narratives set in universities or schools—also gained traction amongst male and female authors alike.³⁴ Thus, although Sayers, Hay, Mitchell and Tey’s choice to set narratives, and crime, in academic environments was not in itself unusual (although Mitchell and Tey’s focus on the teacher training institution rather than the Oxford college is distinctive), what each of these women writers do with that setting is worthy of particular attention.³⁵ These novels explicitly evoke a

³¹ On Tey, see Roy, *Josephine Tey*, p. 13, and on Mitchell, see Kungl, *Creating the Fictional Female*, p. 105.

³² Kungl, *Creating the Fictional Female*, p. 105.

³³ On this trend of the Oxford Novel and what Bogen calls the ‘boom in middlebrow university fiction’ (“Neither Art Itself nor Life Itself”, p. 262) see Bogen and Inness (on American college fiction). Bogen comments on the drive for authenticity in university fiction (‘Compton Mackenzie’, pp. 15 and 20) and notes the problem this posed for women authors writing about institutions already under scrutiny. As Bogen states, ‘[f]or women writers trying to expose to a greedy public the details of “what each term was like,” this documentary aspect was apt to become conflated with a sense of sexual notoriety’ (“Neither Art Itself nor Life Itself”, p. 263). On university fiction more widely, see Bogen, *Women’s University Fiction*.

³⁴ Adam Broome’s *The Oxford Murders* (1929), Cecil Masterman’s *An Oxford Tragedy* (1933), G.D.H. and Margaret Cole’s *Off with her Head* (1938), and Gladys Mitchell’s *Spotted Hemlock* (1958) are all set in higher education establishments (although Mitchell’s is concerned with a women’s agricultural college). James Hilton’s *Murder at School* (1931), R.C. Woodthorpe’s *The Public School Murder* (1932), Gladys Mitchell’s *Death at the Opera* (1934), *St Peter’s Finger* (1938), *Tom Brown’s Body* (1949), Josephine Bell’s *Death at Half-Term* (1939), Edmund Crispin’s *Love Lies Bleeding* (1948), Nancy Spain’s *Poison for Teacher* (1949), and Agatha Christie’s *Cat Among the Pigeons* (1959) are all set in school environments. These few novels alone convey the popularity of the academic crime narrative. A number of critics have commented on the prevalence of academic crime fiction: see, for instance, Hoffman’s *Gender and Representation*, Susan Leonardi’s ‘Murders Academic’ and Lois Marchino’s ‘The Female Sleuth in Academe’.

³⁵ There is significant scholarship on Sayers’s work and *Gaudy Night* in particular (Auerbach, Bogen, Heilbrun, Kenney, McClellan, McFadden, and Taylor, to name but a few), but much less on Mitchell (see, for instance, Hoffman, Kungl, O’Brien, Peppis, and Turner) and Tey (see, for instance, Hoffman, Martin, and Turner) and nothing to my knowledge on Hay. This disparity could be

keen sense of the contemporary status of women's education, and the question of women's right to learning is at the crux of each narrative. The crucial question, then, is why would a detective novel serve as an apt venue for the staging of such crucial material? In Victoria Stewart's study of interwar crime narratives, she states that '[c]rime is not just of interest as a topic in itself but as a means of exposing, and potentially critiquing both historical and contemporary sociocultural attitudes.'³⁶ More than this, she argues that Golden Age detective fiction is not a 'self-enclosed genre', somehow separated from the real world, but in fact 'grants access to the extra-textual world, the historical world' through its referencing of historical and contemporary criminal cases.³⁷ My interest is not in this instance in Hay, Mitchell, Sayers, and Tey's reference to factual criminal cases but I do argue that their work 'grants access to the extra-textual world'.³⁸ Their work is informed by historical context and in turn forces the reader to confront the reality of women's exciting but fraught relationship with higher education, so acknowledging unpalatable contemporary attitudes towards the educated woman.

Transgression, that is the crossing of social, moral, and legal boundaries, is at the heart of detective fiction. As G.K. Chesterton once stated, crime stories tackle 'the traitors within our gates', those who compromise or trespass upon the ostensible stability of the hegemonic

attributed to assumptions around literary value and the perception of *Gaudy Night* as more experimental than Sayers's previous novels (and, one could add, other detective fiction) and therefore worthy of serious scholarly attention. Sayers herself said that she aimed to write something 'less like a conventional detective story and more like a novel' (quoted in Heilbrun, 'Sayers, Lord Peter and God', p. 328). My article positions Sayers alongside her peers to intentionally distribute this attention. My choice of two texts set in women's teacher training colleges is also deliberate. As Dyhouse points out, in the 1920s and 1930s less than 1 in 10 female university students attended Oxford or Cambridge, meaning that our scholarly interest in the Oxford Novel/academic crime set at Oxbridge is also somewhat disproportionate ('Signing the Pledge', p. 211). This article therefore attempts to acknowledge the wider range of women's educational destinations.

³⁶ Stewart, *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain*, p. 3. Hoffman similarly argues that 'the formula of transgression and resolution 'allows a 'safe' textual space for the exploration of anxieties surrounding constructions of femininity in the period' (*Gender and Representation*, p. 1).

³⁷ Stewart, *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain*. p. 102 and p. 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 18.

community.³⁹ In the history of higher education, women, both students and scholars, have always been classed as interlopers. What is evident is that these novels recognise that women are criminalized by their desire for admittance, both physically and intellectually, to scholarly and educational spaces, much like Woolf was on that grass plot. By invoking the concomitant history of women's education, this article examines the way in which these texts make literal the metaphorical association with transgression and criminality with which the educated woman had been tarnished. Each novel is concerned in some way with territory and the act of trespass: the communities, and the women in them, are perceived as dangerous and threatening and yet are themselves consistently under attack, both from within and without.⁴⁰ Each novel performs the societal fear that access to learning and knowledge will create monstrous women who, in this context, are capable of criminal acts and even murder. And, finally, each of these texts, to varying degrees acknowledges the competing and seemingly incompatible demands of educated women's personal and professional lives in the early twentieth century.

Territory and Trespass

Sayers' *Gaudy Night* opens with an epigraph that reflects upon on the nature of the university:

The University is a Paradise, Rivers of Knowledge are there, Arts and Sciences flow from thence. Counsel Tables are Horti Conclusi, as it is said in the Cantides. Gardens that are walled in, and they are Fontes Signati, Wells that are sealed up; bottomless depths of unsearchable counsels there.⁴¹

³⁹ Chesterton, 'A Defence of Detective Stories', p. 6.

⁴⁰ Interestingly, Bogen points out that the college wall is 'a stock feature of university fiction' ("Neither Art Itself nor Life Itself", p. 266).

⁴¹ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, Author's Note.

John Donne's striking image of an Edenic enclave immediately conjures thoughts of Eve's transgressive desire for knowledge, symbolised by her eating of the fruit. Like that biblical first woman, in seeking equal access to education and pursuing the creation of their own 'walled in' scholarly paradise, 19th and 20th century women were also perceived to be violating the rules. Even after their admittance to universities, women were marginalised and disadvantaged, their movements and behaviour monitored and controlled, their colleges poorly resourced, underfunded and often simply ignored. As Dyhouse states, '[i]n the years between the wars the women's foundations in Oxford and Cambridge existed in an atmosphere of uneasy tolerance, feminine encampments on the margins of a male-dominated university and society'.⁴² To varying degrees, a culture of segregation was in place at most universities in the early twentieth century and both Sayers' *Gaudy Night* and Hay's *Death on the Cherwell*, painfully aware of this inferior status, are engaged in reclaiming territory and a position at the centre of university culture.⁴³ Hay even accompanies her novel with a map so that her reader may visualise the college, notably smaller than its male sibling, St. Simeon's. These two novelists have, after all, invented colleges, thereby adding to women's physical presence in the landscape of Oxford. Shrewsbury in fact breaks collegiate law by its very existence since both Oxford and Cambridge operated on a quota system (in place until 1957 and 1960 respectively) in order to limit the number of female students admitted.⁴⁴ Sayers recognises this breach when she, rather insincerely, apologises for adding a 'college of 150 women students, in excess of the limit ordained by statute'.⁴⁵ And it is Balliol's 'spacious and sacred cricket-ground' that is sacrificed to make way for Shrewsbury, thus making an intervention in the terrain of male dominated

⁴² Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, p. 124.

⁴³ Dyhouse notes that this culture of segregation was still in place in the 1960s. In 1966 a questionnaire designed by the men's union at the University of Edinburgh showed that 85% of 800 male students were against admitting women to the union (*No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 191).

⁴⁴ Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, p. 84.

⁴⁵ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, Author's Note.

education and, one could add, sport.⁴⁶ The very name of Hay's college, Persephone, suggests an existence for women students and scholars on the margins or even exiled to the classical underworld.⁴⁷ Persephone is itself located on an island in the middle of the River Cherwell, unlike its real-life counterpart, St Hilda's, which has a somewhat more secure position on the East bank. This purposeful alteration implies the physically precarious position of Persephone: an island may be eroded, flooded or washed away in time but walled in by water, it can also be more easily defended.

It is striking that the two main suspects in the murder of Miss Denning, Ezekiel Lond and James Lidgett, are men determined to protect the boundaries of their own land.⁴⁸ They either dispute the women's right to the land and thus, by extension, to an education, or try to take advantage of the college. Persephone is built upon land sold to the college by Lond's father and his antagonism towards the community is heightened by their use of a footpath across his estate. Lond 'regards his family estate as a sacred inheritance and the loss of part of it and the trespass [...] of women on another part of it [...] as a form of insult'.⁴⁹ Before her death, Miss Denning not only insisted upon their right to use the footpath but also undertook research to prove this. The students might be frightened of encountering Lond, but the access is symbolic because as one student comments, 'the right of way is a sort of tradition and the women's colleges have so few traditions, we hang on to any we have got'.⁵⁰ The other suspect, Lidgett, is also obsessively concerned with preventing trespassers and controlling the college through

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Both Taylor and McFadden also note the significance of the name Shrewsbury and the gendered connotations of 'shrew' ('Villainy and the Life of the Mind', p. 151 and 'Queerness at Shrewsbury', p. 262).

⁴⁸ Hay's choice of names is purposeful. Ezekiel references the Hebrew prophet who was amongst those exiled from Israel and who prophesied their return. His surname, with its similarity to the word 'land', is no doubt also intentional, as is his father's name, Adam. Lidgett is a name that originates from the word Lidgate, meaning a gateway (Wareing, *Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames*, p. 482). Again, these names raise questions over the right to territory as well as the importance of boundaries.

⁴⁹ Hay, *Death on the Cherwell*, p. 48

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

property. He unsuccessfully tries to manipulate the Bursar into buying land at an inflated price and is subsequently frustrated by her in his attempts to cover the field with ‘cheap, ugly houses’, which we might read as significant for their conventional domesticity.⁵¹ For much of Hay’s novel, then, we are led to believe that the crime has resulted from a territorial power struggle between men and women and that the Bursar’s murder should be read as a direct attack on women’s education and more specifically her attempts to shore up the gains of the college, to bring them from Persephone’s underworld into the daylight. It is not insignificant that the Bursar’s niece, Pamela, pursues her studies at Cambridge, which one character observes to be a rather odd decision given that ‘she couldn’t even get a degree’.⁵² This is a novel keenly aware of the current status of women in education, and while Lond and Lidgett do not directly represent the male educational establishment, they certainly share some of the contemporary privileges and attitudes of those opposed to women’s admittance. Cambridge’s refusal in 1921 to award degrees to women, for instance, was approved by the 1922 Royal Commission which accepted the university’s right to be ‘mainly and predominantly a “men’s university”, though a mixed type’.⁵³ Moreover, when Cambridge considered the possibility of admitting women to degrees first in 1897 and then again in 1921, only to maintain the status quo, male students responded with acts of aggression, mocking the women students and vandalising their buildings.⁵⁴ Both Lond and Lidgett represent this same fear of women’s tainting presence. Lond even vandalises the college while it is under construction, attempting to disassemble that which they are in the process of physically and symbolically creating. The women students of this

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁵³ Quoted in Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, p. 83-4.

⁵⁴ Dyhouse explains that in 1897 male ‘students had lowered an effigy of a woman wearing ample breeches and ludicrously stuffed and padded out with straw and riding a bicycle, from a window outside the Senate House’ and in 1921 ‘a mob of [male] undergraduates descended on Newnham with catcalls and chants of: “We won’t have women”. They barged the bronze memorial gates of the college with a handcart, causing serious damage to the lower panels’ (Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 239).

novel, as in history, are thus in a contrary position, at once accused of defiling male terrain, while at the same time themselves subject to attack and invasion. Although the criminal, if we can call him such, in Hay's novel turns out to be a fairly innocuous male scholar (himself a victim of blackmail), the real enemies are the male landowners whose properties hem in the female college.

Gaudy Night also emphasises the fact that the women's college must continue to fight for its survival, although its criminal is motivated less by literal trespass and more by social and cultural. Annie embarks on what she sees as revenge for the suicide of her husband, a scholar whose work Shrewsbury's research fellow, Miss de Vine, exposed as fraudulent. Annie is also motivated by her revulsion at the thought that women might choose a profession over a partner. For Annie, women's colleges 'teach women to take men's jobs and rob them first and kill them afterwards' and it is this theft of masculine privilege that motivates what Wimsey calls her 'antischolastic' crimes, targeted at the community's spaces and property.⁵⁵ More symbolic still is Annie's destruction of women's scholarship: Miss Barton's book, *The Position of Women in the Modern State*, is set alight in one incident, while in another, Miss Lydgate's proofs for her long awaited *English Prosody* are defaced beyond rescue. In the latter instance, Annie obscures Miss Lydgate's writing with 'thick copying-ink' and blacks out all 'manuscript alterations', thus literally erasing female scholarly endeavour.⁵⁶ In Sayers' novel, as in Hay's, female education and scholarship and the community that enables them, are under attack, but in this instance the perpetrator is another woman who although part of the community has been indoctrinated by an external patriarchal ideology.⁵⁷ We might also consider the way in which many of the Shrewsbury women, including Harriet, have internalised this same gender ideology

⁵⁵ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p. 486 and p. 472.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵⁷ Of course, we might also consider the class dynamic at work here. Annie is a working-class woman serving middle-class women and is thus on the periphery of this female community.

to less violent effect, as is evident in their response to the presence of the vandal. Miss Barton diagnoses some kind of 'sexual disturbance' in the criminal, while Mrs Goodwin identifies the problem to be typical of 'celibate communities'.⁵⁸ Harriet makes a rather poor detective and is blind to the clues that point in Annie's direction because, as Wimsey observes, Harriet's own anxieties about her life choices 'distort' her judgement and make her overly focussed on a theory of 'sex repression'.⁵⁹ The College Dean even suspects herself, 'wondering whether I didn't perhaps prowling round in my sleep, spitting at people'.⁶⁰ Her comment is of course in jest but it is also indicative of the way in which many of these women have internalised the misogynistic stereotypes circulating around the educated woman, leaving them plagued by self-doubt and paranoia.

Although significant gains had been made in women's education by this time, as Dyhouse comments, 'there is evidence to suggest that both teachers and students judged their position uncertain in the 1920s and 1930s'.⁶¹ This defensiveness is evident in each of the four novels: these are communities conscious of their vulnerability to external criticism. What recurs is a fear that the respectability of these female spaces will be brought into question, so eroding any progress. The crimes in both Sayers' and Hay's novels are reported unfavourably in the press; the women students are demeaned as 'undergradettes', 'Lady Undergrads', or 'sweet girl graduates' while the college Principle is merely a 'Lady Head'.⁶² Similarly, the Principle of Tey's teacher training college instructs her lawyer to speak to the local press to minimise coverage of the inquest. Each institution is concerned with the public's propensity to denigrate women's education and seeks to maintain the appearance of respectability, something that

⁵⁸ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p. 108 and p. 214.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶¹ Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 242.

⁶² Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, pp. 73-4 and Hay, *Death on the Cherwell*, p. 76.

women's institutions at this time worked hard to do. In an attempt to maintain a low profile, each community recruits (either formally or informally) its own members, that is educated and professional women, to solve the mysteries that plague them and thus protect their reputation. These are female communities held under a microscope and although they are perceived as trespassers upon literal and metaphorical male ground, very often it is they who are under attack and in need of protection. It is only their own members, fellow educated women, who can be entrusted with their defence.

Poisoned Laurels

The title of Mitchell's novel, *Laurels are Poison*, immediately suggests that women's achievements or honours are both worthless and dangerous and, indeed, there is the sense in each of these texts that educated women are, if not directly responsible, then certainly somehow implicated in the chain of criminal events. Katharina Rowold's study of the educated woman has shown that in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, concerns about the effect of education on women's health, and in particular their ability to reproduce, were used to argue against their access to learning.⁶³ These novels both reflect and feed that hostility by suggesting that in these enclosed environments, women wield too much power and are pushed too far by their endeavours. In Tey's *Miss Pym Disposes*, for instance, it is the college Principle's affection for her favourite student that leads to her unfair promotion and untimely death. Moreover, these texts ostensibly confirm Annie's biblical accusation that 'much learning hath made thee mad', or that too much education will warp reason and dismantle sanity.⁶⁴ Sayers's Harriet is convinced that the vandal is a scholar made mad, not by excessive learning per se but more by her unnatural environment and stunted life:

⁶³ Rowold, *The Educated Woman*.

⁶⁴ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p.128.

The warped and repressed mind is apt enough to turn and wound itself.

‘Soured virginity’—‘unnatural life’—‘semi-demented spinsters’—‘starved appetites and suppressed impulses’—‘unwholesome atmosphere’—she could think of whole sets of epithets, ready-minted for circulation.⁶⁵

Mitchell’s *Laurels are Poison* also seems to subscribe to these same scaremongering stereotypes. The first murder suspect, Miss Paynter-Tree is a physical training teacher and, we later learn, the mother of the murdered child who she surrendered at birth because ‘it would have ruined her career’, thus suggesting that a woman who prioritises her profession over maternity is capable of highly violent acts.⁶⁶ The truth is not far from this, since the actual murderer is the child’s aunt, the missing Miss Murchan, who is described as ‘learned and talented’ and possesses both arts and science qualifications.⁶⁷ It is in fact her knowledge of the latter, stereotypically masculine, discipline which facilitates her crime, since she knows how to rend the flesh from the bones which she then uses to stage her own death.

Both suspected and actual criminals are women whose educations or careers appear to explain their criminal activity, but this predisposition for crime is also evidenced by their bodies because they are notably masculine and therefore deemed ‘unnatural’. Elsewhere in Mitchell’s novel it is claimed that there is ‘always something a bit inverted about these P.T. wallahs. [...] there’s something horribly unnatural about physical training. Too much muscle warps the intelligence’.⁶⁸ Each of these criminals, then, is characterised not just by excessive intelligence but also physical ‘abnormality’ and the tendency to transgress appropriate feminine bodily behaviour. Miss Paynter-Tree, a suspect in *Laurels are Poison*, and Beau, the murderer in *Miss*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.

⁶⁶ Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, p. 158. We are also told that Miss Paynter-Tree once masqueraded as a male garage hand (Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, p. 164).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Pym Disposes, are of course both practitioners of physical training, while the vandal in *Gaudy Night* is reported to be surprisingly strong. Both Mitchell and Tey had experience as teachers of physical training and their novels, according to Ellen Turner, explore contemporary attitudes to women's exercise and sport.⁶⁹ As Turner points out, 'it was still thought by some medical professionals that excessive physical activity could "unsex" a woman' and make her unfit for reproduction.⁷⁰ At a 1935 educational conference, one medical professional warned against the dangers of physical activity for the female character when he claimed that:

You cannot confine the desire and aptitude for combat to cricket and football [...]. They inevitably appear in the whole character, and what was originally a gentle, feminine girl becomes harsh and bellicose in all relations to life. The women who have the responsibility of teaching these girls are, many of them themselves embittered, sexless or homosexual hoydens who try to mould the girls into their own pattern.⁷¹

The onus here is on the female professional's responsibility for the sexuality and gender of her charges and, in turn, her power to pervert those identities. This fear of female physical prowess is echoed loudly in Mitchell's *Laurels are Poison*. In her search for Miss Murchan, Mrs. Bradley visits the missing woman's former employer, the school at which Miss Murchan killed her niece, and she is told that the dead girl's grandmother 'did not approve of the physical training being taken in shorts and blouses; she wanted the girl to wear stockings; she did not want her to be included in team games, in case she became hoyendish'.⁷² The similarity between

⁶⁹ Turner, 'Exercise is Murder'.

⁷⁰ Turner, 'Exercise is Murder', p. 76. In her study of turn of the century American women's college fiction, Inness also explores the fear that team sports could make women more masculine (*Intimate Communities*, Chapter 3). On the British context, Richard Smart comments on the late 19th and early 20th century fear that physical exercise could damage women's reproductive capabilities and incline them towards members of their own sex ('At the Heart of a New Profession', pp.133-35).

⁷¹ Dr Williams quoted in the *Daily Herald*, 5 September 1935, cited in Oram, 'Embittered, Sexless or Homosexual', p. 105-6. However, Turner notes that by the mid-1930s 'accepted medical opinion [was] that there was little evidence to support the claim that strenuous physical activity was detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of girls and woman' ('Exercise is Murder', p. 87).

⁷² Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, p. 153.

these and the conference delegate's concerns is striking. Tey's novel also obsessively returns to this question of normal and abnormal physical activity for women. One student observes that her peers are bound to have become perverted by the physical and mental exertion of learning because '[i]t would be difficult to go through their years of training here and be quite normal'.⁷³ This comment haunts Miss Pym as she tries to navigate the events at Leys and her feelings for the women there, but as Turner points out, athleticism and masculine identity are ultimately not responsible for the criminal activities in either Tey's or Mitchell's novel.⁷⁴

The other texts share this tendency to portray educated women as pathological, that is somehow mentally and physically corrupted by their contact with education, the all-too-heavy, masculine demands placed upon them, and the unnatural all-female environment in which they find themselves. One strand of this is the way in which non-heteronormative sexualities are associated with the educated women in these texts, thus criminalising them in another sense. Accusations of lesbianism were levelled, either implicitly or explicitly, against women scholars and teachers of the period, and women's communities and relationships were under increased suspicion around this time. As scholars such as Katharina Rowold and Elizabeth Edwards have outlined, sexology, particularly popular in the 1920s and 1930s, cemented this association between non-heteronormative sexualities and women's education.⁷⁵ Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, for instance, claimed that sexual inversion 'has been found, under certain conditions, to abound among women in colleges and convents and prisons'.⁷⁶ The spectre of sexual 'aberrance', or as I have termed it elsewhere, 'lesbian criminality', hovers in

⁷³ Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*, p. 36.

⁷⁴ Turner, 'Exercise is Murder', p. 85.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 5, 'Masculine Minds in Female Bodies: Sexology and Women's Higher Education, 1869-1914' in Rowold, *The Educated Woman*. See also the section on 'Homoeerotic Relationships' in Edwards, *Women*, pp. 129-32.

⁷⁶ Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 195.

each of these texts to varying degrees.⁷⁷ *Gaudy Night*'s Harriet falls prey to these stereotypes when she assumes that the culprit is made sexually deviant by her same-sex environment.⁷⁸ *Laurels are Poison*'s suspect, Miss Paynter-Tree is implicitly likened to a sexological invert by the nature of her profession and physique, while her sister's behaviour is symptomatic of a 'morbid psychology of sex'.⁷⁹ The murder victim of Hay's *Death on the Cherwell*, the Bursar Miss Denning, is also described in distinctly masculine terms and much is made of her physique and keenness for rowing, thus again paying pointed attention to women's physical activity and their bodily capabilities. While Miss Denning is the victim and not the criminal, she is in some sense the architect of her own fate having blackmailed the man who could have prevented her death if he chose (he witnesses her accidental drowning and does not intervene). These communities are also shown to promote intimacy between the female students and staff; raves, violent friendships and crushes are prolific and part of everyday life.⁸⁰ As Tey's Miss Pym reflects after she is inadvertently seen bathing by a student, 'the gaffe was less important in these surroundings than it would have been elsewhere'.⁸¹ Miss Pym is, of course, visiting the college as a favour to her old school crush, its principal, Henrietta, and she spends much of her time admiring the students.⁸² Mitchell's teacher training college is much the same and it is possible that the annual Twilight dance, in which women students and staff partner, is a

⁷⁷ On the spectre of 'lesbian criminality' and for more on the exploration of lesbian desire in Sayers's and Tey's novels, see English, *Lesbian Modernism*. Hoffman also investigates the way in which lesbian desire is introduced and then neutralized in Tey's and Mitchell's novels (*Gender and Representation*).

⁷⁸ McFadden argues that 'Sayers uses violence in *Gaudy Night* as a pretence for exploring the homoerotic desires and fears that surface at a women's college when an anonymous aggressor is presumed to be a woman driven mad with sexual repression' (McFadden, 'Queerness at Shrewsbury', p. 356).

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, p. 90 and p. 234.

⁸⁰ Inness' study *Intimate Communities* features a chapter on 'Mashes, Smashes, Crushes, and Raves' in American women's college fiction.

⁸¹ Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*, pp. 27-8.

⁸² Turner views this admiration as a kind of reverence for girls' athletic bodies ('Exercise is Murder', p. 86).

reference to the use of the word ‘twilight’ to connote relationships between women.⁸³ What is permissible clearly shifts within these enclosed communities to open up a safe space in which various kinds of intimacy between women can flourish. But these bonds are strangely pathologised and normalised at the same time. As Sherrine A. Inness argues in reference to American women’s college fiction, ‘representations of women’s colleges were simultaneously subversive and conservative’.⁸⁴ These texts similarly both indulge in and then challenge hostile stereotypes of academic women’s sexualities.

Christina R. Martin believes that this ‘absence of masculinity in the closed community of the college is a lack that leads to disaster’ in Tey’s *Miss Pym Disposes*.⁸⁵ Martin refers here to Henrietta’s blind devotion to the college and her tendency to treat it as ‘father, mother, lover, and child’ thus replacing a heteronormative structure with an institutional one.⁸⁶ But Martin forgets that although the Principle plays a part in the chain of events and must take responsibility for her nepotism, she is not herself the criminal. On the contrary, these crimes can often be traced back to heterosexual bonds. In *Death on the Cherwell*, a woman gives birth to a child outside of wedlock but refuses marriage because it would damage her lover’s academic ambitions. The child’s aunt, Miss Denning, blackmails the father, which inadvertently leads to her own death. In *Gaudy Night*, Annie is motivated by a sense of duty to her dead husband. In *Laurels are Poison*, Miss Murchan and her sister both care for the same man, thus leading the former to kill her own niece, also an illegitimate child. As these texts demonstrate, if we dig a

⁸³ Faderman discusses the use of the phrase ‘twilight lovers’ (*Odd Girls*, p. 298). Edwards points out that such all-female dances were a usual occurrence and that they ‘evolved curious rituals which echoed the courtship customs of the middle-class home’ (*Women*, p. 44).

⁸⁴ Inness, *Intimate Communities*, p. 16. McClellan offers a similar argument in relation to *Gaudy Night* when she states that the novel ‘makes conscious all of the kinds of gender stereotyping women experience—both as mothers and intellectuals—in order to challenge them’ (‘Alma Mater’, p. 332). Other critics have acknowledged the ideological ambivalence of women’s Golden Age detective fiction. See, for instance, Hoffman, *Gender and Representation*, and Schaub, *Middlebrow Feminism*.

⁸⁵ Martin, ‘A Mystery About This’, p. 127.

⁸⁶ Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*, p. 48.

little deeper, the heteronormative family and its potentially limiting structures breed their own dangers and deviants.

Heart or Brain

The real weakness in each of these fictional communities stems not from the absence of men, but from the historically gendered split between mind and body, which speaks of the challenges and dilemmas with which the educated woman had to contend, and more specifically the tension between the demands of her professional and personal lives. While women have historically been characterised by the body and its functions, men have traditionally been associated with the intellect or mind. Rowold has shown that in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe the debate over women's education often centred on the question of the female mind and its relationship to the body.⁸⁷ If the mind was indeed sexed, it was posited, women might be less mentally capable of the intellectual rigour of university life.⁸⁸ There were all-too-convenient concerns that mental capacities and physical health, notably fertility, would be damaged by the demands of higher learning.⁸⁹ Thus a belief that too much mental exertion would render the feminine body broken and useless, corrupted by an overuse of the masculine mind, dominated debates around women's education. Each of these texts touches on this tension between the mind and the body. Students in both Tey's and Sayers' novels experience mental breakdowns, while the undergraduates of Hay's novel are described by the narrator as not 'quite sane'.⁹⁰ The Principle of Persephone College similarly claims that the students are 'more highly developed in the brain than in the heart' while, in return, the academics are perceived as having 'cultivated

⁸⁷ Rowold, *The Educated Woman*, pp. 1 and 6-7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 134.

⁹⁰ Hay, *Death on the Cherwell*, p. 11.

their intellects so assiduously [...] that “the humanities” [...] suffer’.⁹¹ This split between the body and mind is most evident in Sayers’ university novel because of Harriet’s obsessive preoccupation with her choice between a life of the heart or the brain, that is a life of the body or intellect. Still traumatised by her experience in *Strong Poison* (1930) in which she stands trial for the murder of her lover Philip Boyes, and faced with the dilemma of whether to marry Wimsey, Harriet seeks solace in the women’s educational community because ‘to be true to one’s calling, whatever follies one might commit in one’s emotional life, that was the way to spiritual peace’.⁹² For Harriet, it is impossible to reconcile both heart and brain, the seemingly incompatible pull between the personal and the professional; she cannot marry Wimsey without sacrificing something of herself because, to her way of thinking, a marriage of equals is unfathomable. As we witness at the Gaudy Night celebration when she is reunited with her class, Harriet is preoccupied with her peers’ occupations and she later recalls to Wimsey ‘a list of promising scholars, distinguished in their studies and subsequently extinguished by matrimony’.⁹³ Harriet also envisions the current students’ lives taking one of two distinct paths, ‘destined wives and mothers of the race; or, alternatively, so many potential historians, scientists, schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers’.⁹⁴ And so, Harriet herself fears being extinguished by marriage and seeks refuge in an intellectual life as novelist and scholar. It is this preoccupation with the mutual exclusivity of heart and mind that finally sours Harriet’s scholarly idyll since she soon becomes convinced that a life in academia, a life of the mind in isolation, has made one of their number ‘potty’ because ‘that seems to be what happens to one if one keeps out of the way of love and marriage and all the rest of the muddle’.⁹⁵ It is this

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 269 and 241.

⁹² Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p. 29. Philip convinces Harriet to live with him out of wedlock only to renege on that arrangement and propose.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

irrational fixation that blinds her to the more obvious criminal, Annie. As if intuiting Harriet's weakness, Annie accuses the women dons of having '[n]o heart' and while the scholars 'haven't flesh and blood enough to make you fit for a man', she claims to have done nothing but 'stand up for my own flesh and blood'.⁹⁶ Annie is a woman rooted in her body, defined by the fact that she has been a wife and a mother, but the women of Shrewsbury reject (by both choice and necessity) such corporeal definitions. The agent of Annie's distress, Miss de Vine, has prioritised her work at every step (and has herself rejected a marriage proposal) and although she regrets her lack of interest in Annie's husband's fate, she remains adamant that it was her duty to report him and to be true to her professional code of conduct.

Like Harriet, Tey's detective, Lucy is distanced from certain aspects of life by her decision to prioritise work. Lucy is very much a self-made professional woman and autodidact: she attends university, going on to work as a teacher of French, and then, once freed by a small annuity, she turns her attention to the study of psychology and becomes a celebrated author. This is undoubtedly the reason that Lucy becomes so embedded in Leys, because like Harriet, and to a lesser extent Mrs Bradley, she is attracted to their culture of professionalism. Henrietta has made the college her life's work and raised it up from a mere 'dame school' to an academically rigorous institution.⁹⁷ The students (apart from Teresa who becomes engaged on graduation) are all destined for careers, primarily in teaching or medicine, thus prioritising their professional lives and seeking alternative, non-heteronormative paradigms for living. But as Lucy's maid informs her, 'It is no life for a woman writin [sic] books and not havin [sic] no young company', again suggesting that a life of merely the mind is somehow lacking or detrimental to wellbeing.⁹⁸ In fact, Lucy has also rejected a marriage proposal and, like Harriet,

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 128 and 487-8.

⁹⁷ Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

she understands her identity as fractured in two. When calculating whether to report her suspicions after Rouse's death, she reasons that while she would be prepared to keep quiet:

there was always her other half—the Laetitia half—which stood watching her with critical eyes. She could never get away from that other half of herself. It had sent her into fights with her knees knocking, it had made her speak when she wanted to hold her tongue, it had kept her from lying down when she was too tired to stand up'.⁹⁹

The battle between Lucy and Laetitia (her middle name) is essentially that between the body and mind; while her body is fearful, silent, and passive, her mind forces her to be assertive and to be heard or, essentially, to be a 'professional' woman. Henrietta's situation is similarly explained by a clash between the professional and personal demands of her role. The Principle must feel love for Rouse because, as Lucy reasons, '[o]nly love could have blinded her to Rouse's defects', and although the nature of this affection—romantic, maternal, or pastoral—is undetermined, it undoubtedly compromises her management of the college.¹⁰⁰

Edwards argues that at the teacher training college, a 'culture of femininity [...] pervaded and underlaid the academic and vocational work [...]. [T]he family organisation of the middle-class home, and some of its social practices were translated from their domestic setting to provide new meanings in the institutional "setting"'.¹⁰¹ Teaching as a profession has historically been conceived of as a vocation of service and sacrifice, the giving of oneself to others or a higher purpose (which is not dissimilar from traditional ideas of mothering).¹⁰² With its focus on femininity and respectability, both of which were absolutely key to solidifying

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *Women*, p. 4. Interestingly, Richard Smart comments on the difference between the ethos of the teaching college (specifically the physical education college) and that of the women's university. While the teaching college replicated a familial dynamic, the women's university followed the 'collegiate model' of the male university ('At the Heart of a New Profession', p. 141).

¹⁰² Oram discusses the connection between teaching as a vocation and maternalism in her study of women teachers in the early twentieth century (*Women Teachers*, p. 17). See also McClellan's article, 'Alma Mater' for an examination of maternity in Sayers's novel.

gains made in women's education, the residential college replicated familial structures meaning that, as Edwards points out, these communities were not necessarily politically radical or feminist in nature.¹⁰³ Henrietta treats her students as daughters and the college as her familial home, though in all other aspects of her management she is authoritative and even dictatorial. A number of scholars have highlighted the difficulty with which women navigated these competing ideologies in universities and colleges and the conflict between the professional and personal demands of their roles.¹⁰⁴ As Edwards points out, the college principle had to be both mother and father, caring and yet authoritative, and to some extent it is these incompatible demands which lead to Rouse's death.¹⁰⁵ Hay's Bursar, Miss Denning, also fails to negotiate the competing aspects of her role in a female community. She is disliked for the tight financial reign she holds over the college, which manifests itself in poor food, amongst other things.¹⁰⁶ Daphne, a student, describes her as 'one of those hard-faced business women; definitely unsympathetic. [...S]he seemed hardly human'.¹⁰⁷ Unlike Henrietta, who allows emotion to determine her actions and is thus deemed too personal, Miss Denning fully embraces her professional role as a business woman, and it is her arguably masculine preoccupation with money (including her blackmail of her niece's father) alongside her lack of empathy that contribute to her death.

¹⁰³ Edwards, *Women*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁴ Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 39 and Edwards, *Women*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Edwards, *Women*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ The importance of food and diet is apparent in each of these novels. *Gaudy Night* comments on the poor quality of the food served at Shrewsbury (Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p. 24); the students of Leys are forced to supplement their disappointing meals with cakes and biscuits and seem to be ever-hungry (Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*); while Mrs. Bradley is said to feed the students well during her time as warden, at her own financial cost (Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, pp. 214-15). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf famously complains about the quality of the food served at the women's colleges, not least the '[p]runes and custard' (*A Room of One's Own*, p. 16). Rather than snobbery, this is Woolf again decrying the second-rate resources allocated to women's colleges in comparison to men's because '[o]ne cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well' (*A Room of One's Own*, p. 16).

¹⁰⁷ Hay, *Death on the Cherwell*, p. 97.

Unlike her fictional peers, Sayers' Harriet ultimately comes to the conclusion that she has both heart and brain and that these may co-exist in a marriage of equals (so agreeing to marry Wimsey). But the tension between those women who marry and those who do not remains unresolved and raw in the text, arguably because combining marriage with scholarly work would have been incredibly difficult in reality. As Dyhouse points out, in some universities in the interwar period, 'opposition to the employment of married women became more pronounced'.¹⁰⁸ In fact, an explicit fault line between married women, those who might be perceived as defined by the body or heart, and professional women, those defined by the mind, makes itself felt in each of these detective novels. *Gaudy Night* shows an interest in women's lives after graduation and makes a division between those who have married and procreated and those who have pursued careers. Even Phoebe Tucker, who manages to combine marriage and motherhood with her interest in history, only does so vicariously through her husband's career as an archaeologist, 'helping by toning down his adjectives and putting in deprecatory footnotes'.¹⁰⁹ Ann McClellan argues that 'the most realistic aspect of *Gaudy Night* is its dramatization of these ideological oppositions and the self-doubt and paralysis women can be prey to amidst them' (p. 333-34). And, indeed, as tensions heighten at Shrewsbury, this question of women's allegiance to personal or professional commitments, to marriage and motherhood or intellectual ambitions, comes to the fore and renders the staff body in two, ultimately erupting in open conflict and turning the women against one another. While Harriet appears to reconcile these two facets of her existence, many of her colleagues do not.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁹ Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Harriet worries that 'if I once gave way to Peter, I should go up like straw' (*Gaudy Night*, p. 490). McClellan points out that *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937), which shows us Harriet and Peter's married life, neglects 'Harriet's career, her writing, or anything else remotely professional other than her duties as Lord Peter's wife and the mother of his child' ('Alma Mater', p. 339). We might then wonder whether despite her hopes and intentions, Harriet is engulfed by her marriage to Peter.

When Sayers' Harriet laments the women graduates 'extinguished by matrimony', she is perhaps tapping into the concern, prevalent from the 1930s onwards, regarding women's 'wasted degrees'.¹¹¹ This discussion initially focussed on the absence of graduate jobs for women, which was temporarily alleviated by the advent of the Second World War and the dire need for a larger workforce.¹¹² But after the war, when jobs were scarcer and women began marrying earlier and thus working for shorter periods, the tone of this discussion shifted and became increasingly hostile.¹¹³ As Dyhouse explains, '[t]his imagery of sinks, blocked ambitions, drained energies and wasted investments proliferated and permeated the whole debate about the higher education of women in the postwar world. Should girls be educated for domesticity or the labour market?'.¹¹⁴ This situation is of course complicated by the ban on married women working in schools and some universities. By 1926 three quarters of Local Education Authorities had a marriage bar in place, meaning that a meagre 10% of teachers were married.¹¹⁵ Although the marriage bar was not always strictly or consistently imposed, it remained in existence until the 1944 Education Act. This cluster of novels echoes this rhetoric of 'wasted degrees'. *Laurels are Poison* addresses this situation directly in that Carterat Training College is full of reluctant students and educators, quite possibly because some see marriage on the horizon and thus an inevitable cessation of their careers. One of the teachers, Miss Crossley, has her own term for the women who will marry and are unlikely to ever see a classroom — 'the two-year brigade' because they 'will be married in two years' time [...]. Then good-bye to all the time and trouble spent on [...] training'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, *Laurels are Poison* opens

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹¹² Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, p. 88.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81. Elsewhere, Dyhouse mentions the belief that women who married wasted their degrees appeared in the 1930s as well (*No Distinction of Sex?*, p. 242).

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *Women*, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Mitchell, *Laurels are Poison*, p. 221.

with Deborah on her way to her new post as an English lecturer, with her degree and teaching experience in hand, but by the end of the novel she is engaged to Mrs. Bradley's nephew, Jonathan and forced by him to leave her job, so abandoning her charges before their examinations. Similarly, despite Deborah's academic expertise she is employed primarily for a domestic purpose, that is to run the residential house. We might also look to the aggression and coercion which characterises Jonathan's pursuit and conquest of Deborah as an example of the overwhelming power of heteronormativity. As Hoffman argues in her convincing analysis of their dynamic, '[t]he conventional marriage plot that is forcing Deborah into a passive role is made conspicuous by its hyperbolic trappings, revealing its contrived nature and creating an image of violence that is particularly jarring, as it exposes unequal power relations between the sexes.'¹¹⁷ The issue here is not, then, women's propensity to 'waste' their education and training, but rather the difficulty of resisting the pressure of heteronormativity and the fact that conventional life choices were made socially and culturally incompatible with a profession.¹¹⁸

Mitchell's and Tey's novels also make plain the damaging feminisation of the teaching profession. Martin Pugh notes that women accounted for 5% of workers in the 'higher professions' in 1921 and that by 1966 this had risen to only 9%.¹¹⁹ It is fair to say, then, that teaching was one of the few realistic career options available to women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women were not only thought to be predisposed to teaching but, compared to a university education, entering a teacher training college was the quicker and cheaper route to both employment and freedom.¹²⁰ The education system and labour market

¹¹⁷ Hoffman, *Gender and Representation*, p. 137.

¹¹⁸ Hoffman's chapter on women's education and work in Golden Age crime fiction also explores this tension between traditional expectations and new opportunities for women. Specifically, Hoffman states that 'many plots introduce a successful woman only to have her "natural" inclinations towards marriage and motherhood move her to abandon her career at the novel's conclusion' (*Gender and Representation*, p. 113).

¹¹⁹ Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, p. 288.

¹²⁰ On women's perceived predisposition to teaching see Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 24.

had cultivated a scenario in which, outside of wartime, women's professional choices beyond teaching were really very few.¹²¹ Tey's character, Mary Innes, sees teaching as a 'passport to freedom', an escape 'from living in a small market town', although she demonstrates an aptitude for medicine and an astute intellect that could take her in many other directions.¹²² In Mitchell's and Tey's novels, then, we are presented with a number of women who perhaps could have made different use of their intellect but who turn to the teacher training college and the teaching profession from necessity and pragmatism. Education certainly provides freedom and professional choices but as these texts explore, it is of a limited kind, on conditional and not always favourable terms.

Boundaries and Barriers

To conclude, I return to Woolf's writing once more and to her short story, 'A Woman's College from Outside', which explores many of these same issues, not least of all the passport to freedom offered by education.¹²³ Hovering over Cambridge's Newnham College, an omnipotent narrator observes the female students who resist sleep to talk, laugh, and flout the rules, thus wonderfully conveying the collegiality of the women's community. Amongst these women is Angela Williams, there 'for the purpose of earning her living'.¹²⁴ Angela's character communicates the promise of independence that education and female community offer. Prompted by a rapturous but coded erotic experience with Alice Avery, Angela realises 'that after the dark churning of myriad ages here was light at the end of the tunnel; life; the world.

¹²¹ After her Cambridge lecture, Woolf reflected in her diary that the students were '[d]estined to become schoolmistresses in shoals' (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, p. 200). Dyhouse's article 'Signing the Pledge?' demonstrates the way in which women's professional choices were severely limited by the educational funding available to them.

¹²² Tey, *Miss Pym Disposes*, p. 221.

¹²³ 'A Woman's College from the Outside' was published as a short story in November 1926 in *Atlanta's Garland: Being the Book of the Edinburgh University Women's Union* but was originally intended as part of Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room* (1922).

¹²⁴ Woolf, 'A Woman's College', p. 146.

Beneath her it lay – all good; all lovable. Such was her discovery'.¹²⁵ She feels compelled to see this imagined 'good world, this new world' for herself and rushes to the open window only to find 'something murmuring in the distance, the world of course, and the morning coming, 'Oh,' she cried, as if in pain'.¹²⁶ What Angela confronts here is uncertain: perhaps it is the disappointment that the world outside, far from 'new' or 'good', will not allow her to live up to her potential (she will, after all, leave Cambridge without the degree that she has fairly earned) or perhaps that, as Kathryn Simpson suggests, this imagined world sits in 'conflict with the heteropatriarchal and capitalist world she knows exists beyond this woman-centred space'.¹²⁷ As with Shrewsbury, Persephone, Leys and Carterat, the boundaries and barriers of Woolf's Newnham, separating it from the outside world, are significant—while the narratorial presence peers in to the college from outside, the women students look out, literally and figuratively, to potential futures. Like Woolf's short story, the detective fictions examined here explore the threshold and the relationship between the women's college and the outside world. In each it is clear that the ambitions, values, and community cultivated within a halcyon women-only space might not survive beyond the walls and that, in fact, the outside world might seep past the college's borders to weaken it from within. I return here to Stewart's proposition that Golden Age detective fiction is not self-contained but 'grants access to the extra-textual world'.¹²⁸ Tey, Sayers, Mitchell, and Hay imagine enclosed female communities troubled by crime, but these are not escapist stories disconnected from reality. They use crime fiction to reveal the precarity of women's institutions and the vulnerability of educated women in the 1930s and 1940s and, more specifically, the fear that women are made monstrous, deviant, or

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-8.

¹²⁷ Simpson, *Gifts, Markets, and Economies*, p. 146.

¹²⁸ Stewart, *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain*, p. 18.

corrupt by their contact with Higher Education.¹²⁹ The central question that runs through these texts is this: what happens to women's bodies and minds when they are exposed to higher learning and how does their pursuit of academic ambitions transgress society's concept of normative womanhood? By staging the educated woman as a criminal, or at least a suspected criminal, these Golden Age texts make manifest her symbolic position in early twentieth century society: she is a woman made transgressive by her crossing of figurative and literal boundaries. But to my mind the more significant observation that can be gleaned from these novels is their common exploration of women's internalised fear and paranoia regarding their life choices, with which these university educated authors would undoubtedly have grappled first-hand. The women in these texts are burdened by society's perception of them, forced to choose between artificially polarized professional and personal desires and basic needs, expected to meet incompatible and unrealistic demands, and made to limit their ambition to gender specific professions. Most of all, these novels tell us, women are made to fear themselves and to fear each other and that means, essentially, to police, criminalise and punish from within.

Word count:

(excluding footnotes): 9419

(including footnotes): 12464

¹²⁹ On the educated woman in literature, see for instance, Susan J. Leonardi's *Dangerous by Degrees*.

Works Cited

Auerbach, Nina (1975), 'Dorothy Sayers and the Amazons', *Feminist Studies*, 3.1/2, pp. 54-62

Bogen, Anna (2006), 'Compton Mackenzie, Liberal Education, and the Oxford Novel: "Sympathy for the Normal"', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 49:1, pp. 14-30.

——— (2016), "'Neither Art Itself nor Life Itself": *Gaudy Night*, the Detective Novel, and the Middlebrow', *Genre*, 49.3, pp. 255-272.

——— (2014), *Women's University Fiction: 1880-1945*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Chesterton, GK (1946 [1901]), 'A Defence of Detective Stories', in Howard Haycraft (ed), *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, pp. 3-6.

Coward, Rosalind and Linda Semple (1989), 'Tracking Down the Past: Women and Detective Fiction', in Helen Carr (ed), *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World*, London: Pandora Press, pp. 39-57.

The Detection Club (1946), 'The Detection Club Oath', in Howard Haycraft (ed), *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, pp.197-9.

Dyhouse, Carol (1995), *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*, London: University College London Press.

——— (1997), 'Signing the Pledge? Women's Investment in University Education and Teacher Training Before 1939', *History of Education*, 26.2, pp. 207-223.

——— (2006), *Students: A Gendered History*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Edwards, Elizabeth (2001), *Women in Teacher Training Colleges, 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity*, London: Routledge.

Ellis, Havelock (1924 [1897]), *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume II Sexual Inversion*. 3rd ed., Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

English, Elizabeth (2015), *Lesbian Modernism: Censorship, Sexuality and Genre Fiction*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Faderman, Lillian (2012), *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: The History of Lesbian Life in 20th Century America*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hay, Mavis Doriel (2016 [1935]), *Death on the Cherwell*, London: The British Library.

Heilbrun, Carolyn (1968), 'Lord Peter and God', *The American Scholar*, 37.2, pp. 324-34.

Hoffman, Megan (2016), *Gender and Representation in British 'Golden Age' Crime Fiction*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Inness, Sherrine A. (1995), *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press.

Kenney, Catherine (1991), 'Detecting a Novel Use for Spinsters in Sayers's Fiction', in Laura L. Doan (ed), *Old Maids to Radical Spinsters: Unmarried Women in the Twentieth Century Novel*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 123-38.

Kenyon Jones, Christine and Anna Snaith (2010), "'Tilting at Universities": Virginia Woolf at King's College London', *Woolf Studies Annual*, 16, pp. 1-44.

Knox, Ronald (1961 [1929], 'A Detective Story Decalogue', in Howard Haycraft (ed), *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, pp. 194-6.

Kungl, Carla T (2006), *Creating the Fictional Female Detective: The Sleuth Heroines of British Women Writers, 1890-1940*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company.

Knight, Stephen (2003), 'The Golden Age', in Martin Priestman (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 77-94.

Lee, Hermione (1997), *Virginia Woolf*, London: Vintage.

Leonardi, Susan J. (1989), *Dangerous by Degrees: Women at Oxford and the Somerville College Novelists*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

——— (1995), 'Murders Academic: Women Professors and the Crimes of Gender', in Glenwood Irons (ed), *Feminism in Women's Detective Fiction*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 112-26.

Lund, Ellen (2013), 'Exercise is Murder: Physical Culture in Josephine Tey's *Miss Pym Disposes* and Gladys Mitchell's *Laurels are Poison*', *European Studies in Sports History*, 6, pp. 75-91.

Marchino, Lois A (1989), 'The Female Sleuth in Academe', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 23: 3, pp. 89-100.

Marcus, Jane (1996), *Virginia Woolf, Cambridge and A Room of One's Own: 'The Proper Upkeep of Names'*, London: Cecil Woolf Publishers.

Martin, Christina R (2001), 'A Mystery About This: Justified Sin and Very Private Memoirs in the Detective Novels of Josephine Tey', PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde.

McClellan, Ann (2004), 'Alma Mater: Women, the Academy, and Mothering in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Gaudy Night*', *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 15:4, pp. 321-346.

McFadden, Marya (2000), 'Queerness at Shrewsbury: Homoerotic Desire in *Gaudy Night*', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.2, pp. 355-78.

Mitchell, Gladys (1961 [1942]), *Laurels are Poison*, Middlesex: Penguin.

O'Brien, Lee (2017), 'Gladys Mitchell's Mrs. Bradley: Detection, Difference, and *The Rising of the Moon* (1945)', *Clues*, 35.1, pp. 63-74.

Oram, Alison (1989), "'Embittered, Sexless or Homosexual': Attacks on Spinster Teachers 1918-39", in Lesbian History Group (ed), *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985*, London: Women's Press, pp. 99-118.

Oram, Alison (1996), *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics 1900-39*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Peppis, Paul (2017), 'Querying and Queering Golden Age Detection: Gladys Mitchell's *Speedy Death* and Popular Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 40.3, pp. 120-134.

Pugh, Martin (2000), *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Rowold, Katharina (2010), *The Educated Woman: Minds, Bodies, and Women's Higher Education in Britain, Germany, and Spain, 1865-1914*, New York: Routledge.

Roy, Sandra (1980), *Josephine Tey*, Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Sayers, Dorothy L (2006 [1935]), *Gaudy Night*, New York: HarperTorch.

Schaub, Melissa (2013), *Middlebrow Feminism in Class British Detective Fiction: The Female Gentleman*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simpson, Kathryn (2009), *Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire in Virginia Woolf*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smart, Richard (2001), 'At the Heart of a New Profession: Margaret Stansfeld, a Radical English Educationalist', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 18.1, pp. 119-48

Stewart, Victoria (2017), *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain: Fact and Fiction in the Golden Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Helen (2002), 'Villainy and the Life of the Mind in A.S. Byatt and Dorothy L. Sayers', in Stacy Gillis and Philippa Gates (eds), *Villainy in Detective Fiction and Film*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 147-57.

Tey, Josephine (1998 [1946]), *Miss Pym Disposes*, New York: Scribner.

Turner, Ellen (2013), 'Exercise is Murder: Physical Culture in Josephine Tey's *Miss Pym Disposes* and Gladys Mitchell's *Laurels are Poison*', *European Studies in Sports History*, 6, pp. 75-91.

Van Dine, S. S. (1946 [1928]), 'Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories', in Howard Haycraft (ed), *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York:

Grosset & Dunlap, pp. 189-93.

Vicinus, Martha (1985), *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, London: Virago.

Wareing Bardsley, Charles (1901), *Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames with Special American Instances*, London: Henry Frowde.

Woolf, Virginia (1980), *The Diary of Virginia Woolf Volume III: 1925 – 1930*, London: The Hogarth Press.

——— (1993), *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Middlesex: Penguin.

——— (1989), 'A Society', in Susan Dick (ed), *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, San Diego: Harcourt, pp. 124-36.

——— (1989 [1926]), 'A Woman's College from Outside', in Susan Dick (ed), *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, San Diego: Harcourt, pp. 145-8.