The Victorian Approach to Modernism in the Fiction of Dorothy L. Sayers

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-0993-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-0993-1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar and Soucin Yip-Sou of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Christopher Dean, the Chairman of The Dorothy L. Sayers Society, was of great assistance to me in suggesting reading material and in commenting on early versions of my chapters.

Special thanks to Clodagh Kerin, who understands the mysteries of my computer.

INTRODUCTION

Dorothy L. Sayers' first Wimsey novel *Whose Body?* (1923) is a great treat for fans of Victorian literature like me. As he carries out his wicked schemes, the evil murderer Julian Freke resembles Robert Louis Stevenson's Hyde in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The cinema has made us imagine that Hyde is far larger and more muscular than Jekyll. In Stevenson's novella, however, Hyde is the lesser man in both the moral and physical sense. Following every chemically induced transformation, Jekyll's clothes are too large for Hyde and hang loosely about his body. The good and evil aspect of the same man battle for ascendancy until Jekyll begins to change spontaneously without any need for drugs. In the background story of *Whose Body?*, Wimsey's mother the Dowager Duchess recalls the young Julian Freke and the young Reuben Levy competing for a life as Christine Ford's husband. Only one man could win. Embittered by the humiliation of losing the sweetheart of his youth to another man, Freke ruthlessly sets out to kill Levy decades later, at a time when he would no longer seem to be a suspect.

Freke, whose name recalls a freak of scientific experimentation, wears Levy's clothes, uses his door key and sleeps in his bed shortly after killing the innocent old man. On the day after the crime, Peter Wimsey notes immediately that the murderer put "on Levy's boots, and every stitch of Levy's clothing down to the skin" (Sayers 1923/1995, 54). He realises that the killer was smaller than Levy, conjuring up an image of a very sinister figure in clothes that are too big for him. Freke enjoys the work of Stevenson and has read *The Wrong Box* (1889), a novel that he praises for having given him the idea of substituting one corpse for another.[1] He also lives in a "big house next to the hospital" (ibid., 42), just as Dr Jekyll lives next to his laboratory. If there is any doubt that *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is at the heart of *Whose Body?*, Sayers makes the connection clear with an early reference to the killer's escape to "Hyde Park Corner" (ibid., 55).

Sayers' mischievous sense of humour is also evident in *Whose Body?* and there are many sly jokes about Reuben Levy's circumcision. The novel also introduces the policeman Charles Parker, a character who frequently functions as Wimsey's sidekick throughout the series. The choice of name seems intended as a rude joke, since Charles Parker was a

male prostitute who testified against Oscar Wilde at his 1895 trials.[2] The nineteenth century Parker claimed that Wilde had fully availed of his services in the Savoy Hotel. It is difficult to imagine any name that would be less suitable for Sayers' highly respectable, religiously minded and chaste policeman. The fact that a statement from a female prostitute establishes Sir Levy's final movements in *Whose Body?* only adds to the wit, as if Sayers is challenging her reader to spot the real significance of the amusing name. Sayers was well acquainted with the lives of famous nineteenth century writers and would go on to borrow many more elements from Victorian biographies in her fiction, usually with a more serious intent.[3] The unsuccessful marriage of John Ruskin provides the framework for the plot of *The Documents in the Case* (1930), for example.

The Unconscious in Teaching and Advertising

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde seems an appropriate echo in a detective novel, particularly in a story in which the villain is a doctor. The name of a male prostitute also has a criminal resonance. As all Dorothy L. Sayers readers know, however, the author includes quotes in her novels that can seem out of context in murder mysteries, ranging from John Donne to Lewis Carroll. Furthermore, as the Wimsey series goes on the quotes often come in peculiar pairings or groups, so that references to Lord Byron become entangled with Arthur Conan Doyle, or Wilkie Collins with Shakespeare. Somehow the allusions are all the more effective for that reason, since unconsciously we process the unexpected more carefully than the mundane. In *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), Sayers discusses the "power of unconscious persuasion" (Sayers 1941/1942, 122) in literature. Sayers often expresses her dislike of contemporary psychoanalysis in her writing and yet it clearly influences her work. She understands how the unconscious can be put to work in interpreting and decoding a complex web of literary references. Modernist literature of the early twentieth century explicitly asks the reader to follow many intertextual references. While we think we are having simple fun reading a detective novel, however, our unconscious is hard at work analysing all the connections that are beneath the surface. Sayers realises that we can work on literary connections as easily as we can work out the clues of the crime on this unconscious level.

In her autobiography fragment "My Edwardian Childhood," Sayers complains that it is foolish to trace real life murder back to the harmless and escapist games of childhood. Throughout her fiction, she also shows a healthy cynicism for medical jargon when it is used to repress and

marginalise supposedly hysterical women. Dr Penberthy's manipulative behaviour towards Ann Dorland in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) shows how easily psychoanalytical language may be exploited to silence women. Yet Sayers' descriptions of Peter Wimsey's shellshock are realistic and believable and show an awareness of the most up to date psychoanalytical theories. In *Gaudy Night* (1935), Harriet has what Sigmund Freud would dismiss as "an infantile dream" (Freud 1920/2007, 27), dreaming that Peter Wimsey is embracing her. The dream is infantile because it lacks any complexity and Harriet dreams of Peter only because she wants Peter.[4] She has no deep, dark secrets that must be decoded. In *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937), in contrast, Wimsey has a dream that overlays the solution to his current investigation onto his habitual anxieties about responsibility. He is forever chained to other soldiers, but he also recognises unconsciously that a metal chain was used in a murder.[5] This is what Freud would call a "condensation dream" (ibid., 31), a composite dream that has to be talked about to be understood.

Freud's *Dream Psychology: Psychoanalysis for Beginners* (1920) explains why dreams tend to contain elements that do not seem to fit together at first. Fortunately much of *Dream Psychology* does not show a bias against women and is genuinely fascinating in describing the inherent logic of dreams. If I dream that my school friends from decades ago have accompanied me to my workplace, for example, there is some underlying connection in this apparently impossible scenario. Perhaps I feel insecurity in my new job that reminds me of my adolescence. What Freud calls the "chains of associations" (ibid., 28) will make sense once I begin to recognise them. *Dream Psychology* can also be used to understand the effectiveness of advertising. Sayers' remarkable skill at blending apparently disparate pieces of fiction, poetry and biographical elements together may have been honed during her experiences in Benson's Advertising Agency, where she worked from 1922 to 1929 (see Reynolds 1993/1997, 106-228). The post followed a brief teaching stint in a girls' school in Acton (ibid., 103-4). In advertising, it is common to put two seemingly incongruous elements together, such as zoo animals and a pint of Guinness.[6] We know how to interpret and make sense of the strange combination, because dream logic works in the same way. If it is a treat to go to the zoo to visit the animals and it is a treat to drink Guinness, on some level it makes sense to see a seal balancing a pint glass on its nose.

Catherine Kenney has argued that *Murder Must Advertise* (1933), the novel that Sayers sets in an advertising agency, shows "the emptiness of the modern world and its shaky basis on corrupt values" (Kenney 1990/1991, 203). Susan Rowland has further suggested that Wimsey

manipulates Dian de Momerie so successfully in *Murder Must Advertise* because he presents himself to her like an advertisement and "subverts the borders between reality, dreams and death" (Rowland 2001, 52). Since she is not consciously aware of how Wimsey is invading her mind, Dian is at the mercy of the man she knows as Death Bredon. Advertising, Rowland argues, is exposed as "an addictive drug" (ibid., 52) in the novel. In *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), Sayers comments that she was attempting to portray a "cardboard" (Sayers 1941/1942, 62) world in the fictional Pym's Advertising Agency. Yet in the last pages of *Murder Must Advertise*, Wimsey is struck by the influence his advertising campaign for Whifflets cigarettes has on the masses, all because of the medium of communication he has used. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), a novel that Sayers frequently draws upon, the London public is entranced by the appearance of an aeroplane that is apparently advertising everyday products. The jumble of letters that appears in the sky has an almost hypnotic effect on those watching below. Perhaps Sayers decided that she could market good literature to the public instead of beer or mustard.[7] Even today, many readers are lead to discover an author for the first time because of a tantalising reference they have followed up in a Sayers novel or short story. I turn to Richard Harris Barham's *The Ingoldsby Legends* because Charles Parker mentions the collection of stories and poems in *Whose Body?* and thus I learn that the storyline of "The Spectre of Tappington" (1837)[8] involves theft during sleepwalking some years before Wilkie Collins uses the same plot device in *The Moonstone*.[9] Doing the homework that Sayers has suggested allows me to learn something new and valuable. Sayers does her best to advertise her favourite literature throughout her fiction, such as H.G. Wells' "The Plattner Story" (1897) and Wilkie Collins' "John Jago's Ghost" (1874). These stories are named[10] and hence the advertising is very direct and unmistakable.

A.N. Wilson has commented on what he calls "the conceited swapping of obvious quotations which constituted the true Sayers-Wimsey-Vane cocktail" (Wilson 1998, paragraph 7). The direct quotations are clearly in evidence, but many of Sayers' allusions are subtly hidden in the text and play on the reader's chains of associations before surfacing into conscious identification. The title of Wilkie Collins' novel *Poor Miss Finch* (1872) is concealed or implied within the story "The Fascinating Problem of Uncle Meleager's Will" (1925), for example, as I discuss in Chapter Three. This may act as subliminal advertising for a book by one of Sayers' favourite authors. More importantly, the *Poor Miss Finch* clue also suggests an entirely different interpretation of the story, particularly since it is overlaid onto a reference to Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

(1895). Something that Collins and Wilde have in common is key to decoding the story, as in dream analysis. Sayers often puts references to authors together in a way that allows her to suggest an inherent link between their writing. If I put Collins and Wilde together on a module focusing on Victorian Literature, my choice is not a random one. I wish to point out some commonalities between the two writers. Sayers is doing the same thing in a subtle and effective manner that registers somewhere within the unconscious of her reader.

The Curriculum

As an author who was interested in social responsibility and theology, Sayers has a strongly didactic element to her writing. This extends to her detective fiction, an entirely suitable medium since as Peter Wimsey explains in *Strong Poison* (1930): "in detective stories virtue is always triumphant. They're the purest literature we have" (Sayers 1930/1995, 132). Many of Sayers' novels deal with the topical issues of her day, such as society's treatment of war veterans in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, marital breakdown in *The Documents in the Case* (1930) or the dubious morality of capital punishment in almost all of the Peter Wimsey mysteries. Sayers' novels were intended at the time of writing to bring the key moral issues of the early twentieth century to the attention of a wide readership. Today, however, Sayers' didactic fiction can also help the instructor to demonstrate some important characteristics of Victorian and Modernist literature to students in an entertaining and accessible way. We learn that the nineteenth century popular literature genre known as sensation fiction was full of legal advice, for instance, and that high modernist literature was at least as difficult to read in the 1920s as it is today.

Sayers often reflects on the respective successes and failures of nineteenth century and twentieth fiction in relation to the moral education of readers. Modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf may capture the spirit of the age, for example, but many readers such as Wimsey's friend Charles Parker are unable to adjust to her writing style. In *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Parker reveals that he enjoys Henry James but can go no further with the modernists, rejecting the Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence books are displayed in the home of a suspect, Ann Dorland. This hinders his ability to understand the suspect in relation to the alleged crime. Ultimately Ann is proved innocent thanks to Wimsey's better understanding. Chapter One will examine *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* in detail. In this novel Sayers clearly

explores modernist themes such as changing gender roles and the devastation wreaked by World War I, but in a way that is easy for her readers to understand. Sayers uses many jokes and references to the well known and accessible *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) by Lewis Carroll to examine many of the same issues that are found in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. The bewildered George Fentiman wanders through London like a bewildered Alice, suffering in a world that cannot seem to accommodate him.

In *The Documents in the Case* (1930) a young woman solicits the murder of her husband to avoid the scandal of divorce, unaware of the fact that she has a very simple legal exit. Margaret hides an embarrassing secret about her marriage, but since she reads trashy contemporary novels instead of Wilkie Collins' *Basil* (1852) or a biography of the critic John Ruskin, she does not gain any awareness of the Victorian nature of her problem. Nineteenth century literature and culture could have placed Margaret's dilemma into a context she would have understood and made the murder of her husband unnecessary. Indeed, the love triangle that Margaret is trapped in is comically similar to the John Ruskin, John Everett Millais and Effie Ruskin entanglement of the 1850s. There are many Pre-Raphaelite jokes throughout the text to point the reader towards the nineteenth century. Like all the other characters in the novel, however, Margaret erroneously sees the Victorians as being old-fashioned and unnecessary, with nothing to say to the twentieth century world. Chapter Two will examine *The Documents in the Case*, a novel that uses a hint of sensation fiction as an intriguing link between the real life Ruskin annulment case and the literature of Oscar Wilde. In doing so, Sayers makes some striking points about the laws of 1920s and 1930s Britain.

Chapter Three examines Sayers' own sensation style novel *Unnatural Death* (1927) along with *Strong Poison*, *Have His Carcase* (1932) and many of her short stories. This chapter focuses on the connections Sayers draws between some mid-Victorian and fin de siècle literature. She makes fascinating links between Wilkie Collins and Oscar Wilde, but also includes plot twists that relate to the life stories of authors such as George Eliot. Like Sayers herself, the complexities of Eliot's life often seem to contradict the tone of her work. This literary and biographical lesson is entangled with matters that are socially relevant to the 1920s and 1930s, such as inheritance law and partnerships that exist outside of marriage. Inequalities in Victorian law force some individuals into cynically leading double lives as in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, yet Eliot was open about her relationship with George Lewes.

Chapter Four examines the many references to Oscar Wilde in Sayers' Oxford novel *Gaudy Night*. As cynicism turns into despair in literature and society, Sayers establishes a connection between Wilde and the modernist anxiety we see in the work of Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot. Yet Wilde's courage in going through with his trials rather than fleeing the country was not cynical. The hypocrisies of Victorian society forced people into Bunburying double lives in society as well as in literature. Intriguingly, Sayers deliberately exploits the sense of scandal that was still associated with Wilde in her day to suggest that there is something subversive or revolutionary about her own characters, as brave individuals like Harriet try to be open. Since problems with Victorian origins require Victorian solutions, Sayers then attempts to assert a George Eliot morality onto contemporary modernism. She suggests that human relationships deserve the effort that is put into the creation of art. While much of *Gaudy Night* takes an overview of literary history, the ending of the novel proposes a new direction for both literature and society.

Sayers' Teaching Methodology

Sayers establishes in her first novel *Whose Body?* that her reader will encounter some entertaining and educational literary jokes. The reader is expected to pick up on a series of clues and to string elements together, both in the murder mystery and in the web of literary references. It does not matter if we pick up on the clues consciously or unconsciously at first. Often readers feel suspicious of characters in a mystery novel only because the author has used a negative word somewhere to describe them. We follow Wimsey's associative process as he struggles to put two apparently separate elements together and can expect to have the same experience ourselves:

> Lord Peter [was] feeling extraordinarily wakeful and alert. Something was jiggling and worrying in his brain; it felt like a hive of bees, stirred up by a stick. He felt as though he were looking at a complicated riddle, of which he had once been told the answer but had forgotten it and was always on the point of remembering. (Sayers 1923/1995, 134)

Sayers makes many literary connections in her own fiction and only some of them make sense immediately. Others seem as mixed up as dream scenarios. When I recognise a moment from a Wilkie Collins novel alongside a plot point from an Arthur Conan Doyle story, as in *Have His Carcase*, the marriage of two detective narratives seems understandable. When I look at Sayers' fascinating novel *The Documents in the Case*

(1930), I am puzzled to notice references to John Ruskin's life story alongside jokes from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). It is entertaining, but it is also surprising and disorientating. As Sayers says, the puzzle must jiggle uncomfortably in my brain as I work it out. After a while, I recognise a link that is not immediately obvious. Thanks to her knowledge of the law, Ruskin's wife Effie had her unconsummated marriage annulled in the 1850s and then successfully remarried a more suitable man. Wilde's play points out that very young women like Cecily Cardew can benefit from marriages of convenience since the legal step will unlock their trust funds and make them independent of their guardians. We could infer that sex within marriage is not strictly necessary and indeed celibacy might be a useful means to exit from the arrangement at a more convenient time. If Cecily's foppish fiancé Algernon Moncrieff is not heterosexual, then a celibate marriage could be of benefit to both of them for financial reasons. Victorian restrictions on women linger on into the twentieth century. Wimsey's sister Lady Mary almost enters into a marriage of convenience with Denis Cathcart during the events leading up to *Clouds of Witness* in order to establish her financial independence. Although she is a mature woman, Elma Fitzgerald must marry to gain access to the principal of her inheritance in *The Floating Admiral* (1931), a composite novel written by Sayers and other authors in the Detection Club. In *The Documents in the Case*, the real life Effie Ruskin and the stage characters of *The Importance of Being Earnest* are used in contrast to Sayers' character Margaret Harrison, who is dangerously ignorant of her legal rights.

Twists of Meaning and Surprises in Reading

Sayers was very fond of crossword style twists of meaning, where the overly obvious answer gives way to another and more complex solution after some thought. A general rule in good crossword puzzles is that the apparently easy answer is always the one that does not fit at the end. The puzzle master has intentionally misled us. Sayers' original title for *The Documents in the Case* was *The Death Cap*, a reference to deadly fungi. As she wrote to her scientific advisor and collaborator, Robert Eustace (Dr Eustace Barton):

> We must consider the question of the title. I think *The Death Cap* would make an extremely good title in itself. It suggests murder and mystery, and to the person who isn't a mushroom expert it has a flavour of courts of law and the "black cap [of a hanging judge]." (Reynolds 1995, 283)

In the above example, the judge's cap is the obvious or at least the most accessible meaning of the title, while poisonous fungus is the final meaning. Perhaps this title was not quite cryptic enough for Sayers' most challenging mystery novel since she enjoyed a good crossword challenge herself. Eventually she settled on the final title *The Documents in the Case* and as I argue in Chapter Two, the obvious interpretation of case as the formal legal proceedings of a murder trial may give way rather humorously to case as a very famous bag. I tend to find Sayers' subtle literary allusions more interesting than the obvious ones. Some intertextual references such as the direct quotes are immediately apparent. While entertaining, they pose less of a challenge. Other allusions take their time to shape themselves in front of me, like Sayers' example of the anagram word COSSSSRI reforming into SCISSORS in *Whose Body?* (Sayers 1923/1995, 137). It can take a while to identify the "mess" (Sayers 1928/1995, 173) in Ann Dorland's studio as a joke about the painting of Rachel Verinder's bedroom door in *The Moonstone*.

During my research for this book, some surprises were in store for me. I have found it curiously difficult, for example, to say very much about Edgar Allan Poe in Sayers' work.[11] The chain of ideas that Poe's detective Dupin traces for the surprised narrator in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" can be linked neatly to the modernist stream of consciousness technique. Yet Sayers does not seem to connect Poe to later authors as often as one might expect in her fiction. This is because she felt that Poe was a genius who effectively stood alone as a writer. In her introduction to an edited collection of detective stories, *Tales of Detection* (1936), Sayers states:

> In a literary sense they [Poe's stories] are, to all intents and purposes, without beginning or descent, and it is difficult to show that they derive from anything but his own analytical mind, which he enjoyed exercising upon real or invented criminological problems. (Sayers 1936/1963, viii)

Nevertheless, Sayers acknowledges that the team of Dupin and the always nameless narrator provided "the working model of the Holmes-Watson combination" (ibid., viii) that continues throughout many other authors' detective novels and stories. Peter Wimsey makes direct comments about Dupin, noting in *Strong Poison*, for instance, that "Dupin said that before Sherlock" (Sayers 1928/1995, 93). Because the Poe references are so clear, however, they tend to provoke no real impulse of analysis in me. One notable exception occurs in *Strong Poison*, when Rosanna Wrayburn seems to share the fate of Poe's dying character in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." She hovers for a long time between life and death, but

the Valdemar connection is implied rather than overtly mentioned and thus works more effectively upon the unconscious. The beetle shaped scarab that kills Dean in *Murder Must Advertise* may recall "The Gold Bug." The codebreaking of *Have His Carcase* is certainly linked to "The Gold Bug." It is possible that Poe's protagonist in "Berenice" (1835) provides the inspiration for Sayers' murdering dentist in her own grisly tale "In the Teeth of the Evidence" (1939). In general, however, Poe is on the surface rather than in the subtext of Sayers' novels and is thus too much in plain view to cause much of a disturbance in the mind of the reader.[12] A striking contrast to Sayers in this respect is Charles Dickens. His unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) uses many tantalising echoes of Poe's stories as clues, including the supernatural and horrifying tales. On every reading, I always wonder if Edwin Drood is buried alive somewhere in Cloisterham Cathedral thanks to the Poe allusions.

I thought I would discuss a variety of Sherlock Holmes mysteries, since Wimsey often mentions Holmes. Yet most of my avenues of interest seem to lead back to the first short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," which employs many of the features of sensation fiction. Because Holmes' surprisingly sympathetic adversary Irene Adler is a woman, Sayers can make thoughtful links to Wilkie Collins' female characters in echoing this story. I also like Sayers' own essays on Holmes and discuss them in Chapter Four. I have said relatively little about most of Arthur Conan Doyle's fiction, however. Fortunately there is already a great deal of valuable information published on Sayers and Holmes by Trevor H. Hall, Philip Scowcroft, Stephan P. Clarke, Richard Lancelyn Green and Joe R. Christopher amongst others. I have also mentioned Henry James all too briefly. James is both a nineteenth century writer and a modernist and it is interesting that Charles Parker admires his work. Perhaps Parker only enjoys the mysteries like "The Author of Beltraffio" (1884) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), but James demonstrates that is possible to write detective narratives of a sort and ghost stories as well as high modernist literature.[13]

Sayers' unexpected reliance on Victorian biography was also a revelation to me. I am a scholar of Victorian literature above all else and recognised elements from the real lives of John Ruskin, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde and of course Wilkie Collins thanks to my research on other projects. In *Gaudy Night*, Miss Lydgate says it is the mark of an "unsound scholar" (Sayers 1936/2006, 375) to fit the evidence to the theory rather than the other way around. I can say in all honesty that the biographical details presented themselves to me long before I would have thought of looking for them. John Ruskin's personal difficulties are key to the plot of

The Documents in the Case. I have found biographical details from the life of George Eliot throughout Harriet Vane's history. I was surprised at first to find so many echoes of Oscar Wilde in *Gaudy Night*, but now my understanding of the novel is reliant upon those Wildean elements. As Barbara Reynolds has pointed out, Sayers' father Henry was a classmate of Wilde in Magdalen, Oxford (Reynolds 1993, 1-2) and Sayers seems proud of the connection. Wilkie Collins is the most universally recognised influence on Sayers, yet I was struck by how oddly his own life seems divided up amongst the victim and the villains of *Have His Carcase*. The overall effect is to make Collins' life seem difficult and troubled. In *The Documents in the Case*, Jack Munting is comprehensive in his research into Victorian lives and letters. Perhaps Sayers' readers should take the same approach to fully understand her work.

Reading and rereading Sayers' novels, something new greets me every time. If I have omitted an important Victorian connection in this study, it is because, as Wimsey says in *Strong Poison*, it "threads no beads in my mind" (1930/1995, 125) just at present. I have no doubt that there are many other nineteenth century literary trails within Sayers' work that I have not mentioned, because my attention was diverted elsewhere.

Unpopular Material

Sayers seems to have been drawn to art and literature according to her own tastes and her current research interests, regardless of what was in fashion. She displays a remarkable knowledge of the Pre-Raphaelite art movement considering that artists like John Everett Millais were considered dusty and old-fashioned in the early twentieth century, although they were shocking and controversial in the 1850s. Her incomplete and posthumously published work *Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Biographical Study* (1977) demonstrates that she has researched his brother Charles Allston Collins' links to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in detail.[14] She feels it is relevant to understanding the author himself, since "A painter-like faculty of visualisation was Wilkie Collins' heritage from two families of artists" (Sayers 1977, 36). Her novels draw on the sensation novelists like Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon at a time when they were not considered to have any academic merit. Today sensation fiction is taught widely on university modules on nineteenth century literature. She frequently quotes from Oscar Wilde with a mischievous attention to his sexuality although homosexuality was illegal in Britain throughout her lifetime. Sayers also makes little distinction between high and low art and literature, recognising that these labels tend

not to last outside of their historical moment. Once all novels were thought to be frivolous reading and young readers were encouraged to open conduct books instead. In recent years, the chapbooks (inexpensive pamphlets) of the seventeenth and eighteenth century have been compared to the popular literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sayers seems to value the concept that good literature should be widely available and accessible. She also tends to comment on the circulating libraries in her writing. In "The Wimsey Papers," the Dowager Duchess complains that readers place too much value on the latest publications.

As well as examining Sayers' novels, I also look at a number of the short stories. I do not agree with David Coomes' observation that Sayers' stories are sometimes "very substandard" (Coombes 1992/1993, 108). Many Sayers critics have expressed less interest in the short fiction. The short stories often involve a humorous reworking of a particular author or genre and are extremely rewarding if the reader gets the joke. It would be fairer to say that the stories can be challenging, since the limits of the short story form make it much more important that the reader understand Sayers' allusions. Catherine Aird has discussed some of the possible sources for Sayers' stories in her essay "It Was the Cat!" In the novels, there is more opportunity to skip over an apparently pointless section of the narrative that really has intertextual significance. There is a type of reader, however, that particularly enjoys the heightened quality of short stories. Otherwise there would have been no market for the many anthologies of short stories that Sayers edited. In the introduction to the second series of *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror*, Sayers comments "the reception accorded to the first volume [….] suggests that there are plenty of people still in both hemispheres who do enjoy this sort of thing" (Sayers 1931/1948, 20). Writing in this medium herself allows Sayers to appeal to a wider readership. It also forces her to address the challenge of a literary form that "can turn one trick and one trick only" (ibid, 19). I have discussed a variety of Sayers' short fiction in this book and only wish that I could have found an excuse to include every tale. I especially like "The Travelling Rug," a story that has only become available in very recent years, for its resemblance to Wilde's 1887 tale "The Canterville Ghost" (see Chapter Three). Joe R. Christopher has provided a useful checklist of Sayers' short stories with "The Travelling Rug." Dawson Gaillard has also included a notable chapter in the study *Dorothy L. Sayers* that is devoted to analysing the short fiction.

The Authors on the Reading List

Sayers' frequently quoted Victorian and Modernist authors make up an interesting and diverse group that, nevertheless, reveals many unexpected connections to Sayers herself. The following writers are particularly important to this study. I have focused on the biographical details that may have been of the greatest interest to Sayers. The list is not exhaustive and there are many other authors that she would have read and enjoyed. Christopher Dean of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society kindly gave me a copy of Sayers' personal annotations in the Victorian story collection *Old Deccan Days* (1868) by Mary Frere (1845-1911), for instance. The notes reveal that Sayers tended to analyse the Indian fairytales of *Old Deccan Days* with considerable attention to their motifs. Authors like Ernest Bramah and the Detection Club members are entertaining modern writers but are usually not modernist in their writing style. Sayers leads many readers to discover Bramah's detective Max Carrados, of course, but she also makes Woolf's war veteran Septimus Warren Smith easier to approach.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) had a short and tragic life. His mother died during his early childhood and his foster father was often capricious and unreasonable towards him. He lived in England for a time with the Allans, his foster family. Back in America, he married his young cousin but she later died of tuberculosis. He was a journalist who wrote many essays and reviews as well as fiction, and had a great influence on the work of Charles Dickens. He suffered greatly from depression and alcoholism. Sayers seems to avoid referring to his unhappy life and concentrates instead on his impressive literary achievements.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is amongst the most famous British writers of all time. Although often categorised as a realist, Dickens wrote a diverse body of material, including journalistic essays and travel literature. His novel *Bleak House* (1853) is partly made up of a murder mystery that is solved by a clever policeman. His short story "Hunted Down" (1859) involves an undercover amateur detective trapping a murderer. He collaborated with Wilkie Collins and they wrote *No Thoroughfare* (1867) together, which, like Sayers' *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937) was written as a play first and then a novel. Intriguingly, Dickens acted in amateur performances at one time in his life and appeared in plays scripted by Wilkie Collins. In his personal life, Dickens married at a young age and had a large family. One of his daughters Kate married Wilkie Collins' brother. Dickens' own marriage was not a long-term success and he separated from his wife. He began a secret relationship with the actress Ellen Ternan. His sudden death in 1870 meant that he could not finish his

final detective novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The partially written novel remains as an entertaining literary puzzle, since Dickens' notes do not indicate the intended conclusion.

Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) wrote fantastic tales about ghosts and vampires and may have represented a path not taken for Sayers. Admiring Le Fanu's supernatural stories as well as Wilkie Collins' mysteries, Sayers chooses to emulate Collins in most of her fiction. Only rare stories such as Sayers' "The Cyprian Cat" do not offer a rational ending. Harriet Vane is drawn to Le Fanu's work as a research topic when she returns to Oxford in *Gaudy Night*. Le Fanu was born in Dublin and was the son of a clergyman. Like Collins, Le Fanu studied law. He went on to pursue a career as a journalist and author, however. The sudden death of his wife, who seems to have suffered from depression, was a bleak moment in an otherwise successful life. Interestingly, Le Fanu did write sensation novels and murder mysteries including *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *The House by the Churchyard* (1863) just as Collins wrote some ghost stories such as "Mad Monkton" (1855). Few talented authors fall solely into one category of writing.

The realist novelist George Eliot (1819-1880) may seem a less obvious choice in a grouping of Sayers' favourite writers. While Sayers frequently uses echoes from Eliot in her fiction, she says little about her in critical writing. Like Ruskin, Eliot provides a strong moral voice, and murder and crime are not absent from her novels. *Adam Bede* (1859) deals with infanticide, for instance. More significantly, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) involves a kind of murder during an ambiguous moment when an unhappy young wife waits for her husband to drown. It is highly unlikely that Gwendolen Harleth could have saved her husband's life, but her conscience tells her that she has killed him. Sayers was intrigued by deaths that resulted from a moral, if not a legal, failure. Her short stories "Dilemma" (1934) and "Blood Sacrifice" (1936) consider what might be called murder by omission. George Eliot is also interesting in that she made very brave choices in her personal life. She openly lived with her partner George Lewes outside of marriage although it placed her in the socially disadvantaged position of a fallen woman who had lost her respectability. After his death she married a much younger man, John Cross, but the marriage was soon ended by her own death.

The work of John Ruskin (1819-1900) is very well known in academic circles, but his name may not be familiar to everyone. Ruskin was a highly influential critic in the nineteenth century and wrote books on art such as the five volumes of his famous *Modern Painters*. He also wrote some children's literature including a fairytale called "The King of the Golden River" (1850) and *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866), a series of conversations

between a lecturer and children about geology. In later years, he was a lecturer at Oxford and had a considerable influence on Oscar Wilde. His personal life was always full of difficulties and disappointments that contrasted with his professional success. His unconsummated marriage was annulled on the basis of his alleged impotency. He was deeply religious at one time but lost his faith. He also suffered from bouts of debilitating insanity. Ruskin was an important figure in Victorian education, promoting teaching that was aimed at the working man.

If we had never heard of Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) before, we would learn about him from reading the Wimsey novels. *The Moonstone* (1868) is likely to sound familiar in any case to detective fiction enthusiasts. Collins was not only a novelist and an author of short stories, however, but also wrote plays. As Lyn Pykett has pointed out, Oscar Wilde "saw a stunning performance by Clara Morris as Mercy Merrick" in Collins' play *The New Magdalen* (Pykett 2005, 197). Collins is best remembered for his sensation fiction, a type of crime fiction that often involves bigamy, kidnapping or fraud as much as murder. He studied the law as a young man and his plots often turn on quite accurate if bizarre points of Victorian law. Much of Collins' work also sought to raise awareness of social causes, such as the unfair treatment of former prostitutes like his sympathetic character Mercy. Like Sayers herself, Collins took a didactic turn in his writing career. Sayers identified a commitment to worthy matters even in Collins' sensation fiction, since the novels are "solidly preoccupied with such important social questions as the inequalities of marriage law and the legal position of illegitimate children" (Sayers 1936/1963, ix). Collins' own life was full of drama. He had two wives, two names and two families in essence if not in law, since he did not marry either woman. His addiction to opium began as pain relief for gout but became a serious problem in itself. He was related to his friend and collaborator Charles Dickens through marriage, since his brother Charles Allston married Dickens' daughter Kate.

Most readers will be familiar with Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. He wrote children's books with other characters as well, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893). Sayers' little book *Even the Parrot* (1944) is more reminiscent of *Sylvie and Bruno* than the Alice books, although it also owes much to John Ruskin's *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866). Carroll also wrote comic verses that are not aimed at children such as "Phantasmagoria" (1869), a poem about the observations of a ghost. His interests included photography and he took portraits of many famous Victorians, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Ruskin. He was a

deacon in the Anglican Church and held the Christ Church Mathematical Lectureship. Sayers refers to Lewis Carroll through her fiction and it is probably fair to say that he is in a category of his own within her estimation. He does not seem to be categorised as a mid-Victorian or late Victorian as others are in her work. In *Gaudy Night*, however, she acknowledges that Carroll is an Oxford author like John Ruskin and Oscar Wilde. Exploiting Carroll's almost universal appeal, Sayers uses the Alice books to make complex issues seem much simpler. Peter Wimsey transforms into a fully rounded human over the course of the Wimsey series, usually with reference to Alice's adventures. Along the way, she reveals that the Alice novels have more in common with modernist literature than we might realise. Carroll remained single throughout his life, in spite of a rumour that he might have liked to marry the real Alice Liddell's governess. There is a joke about Carroll's love life in *Busman's Honeymoon*, when Wimsey has a vague memory of a curate who "fell in love with our governess" (Sayers 1937/2006, 99).

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) wrote a huge number of sensation novels to support herself and her family and is often discussed as an author who has much in common with Wilkie Collins. Her most famous novels are *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863). Her criminals tend to be women who reject a conventionally feminine life and are punished for their lack of femininity as much as for bigamy or murder. Ironically, Braddon's own life was not in the least conventional by Victorian standards. She lived outside marriage with her partner John Maxwell and cared for his children by his wife as well as their own children. Maxwell's wife was confined to an asylum and eventually died there, allowing Braddon and Maxwell to marry after many years together.

Henry James (1843-1916) portrayed himself as an American in exile for most of his life. Although he is remembered as a very serious and almost inaccessible novelist, he enjoyed playing word games in his juvenile fiction. His nineteenth century short stories and novellas such as *Daisy Miller* (1878) are easy to read in terms of literary style. Much of the shorter fiction conforms to popular literature in its theme, such as stories about love and marriage, ghost narratives and detective narratives. He placed more value on his full length novels such as *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). James was also quite capable of the modernist feat of writing stories that are apparently about nothing. Later novels such as *The Ambassadors* (1903) pose quite a challenge to the reader because of their convoluted sentences. Like Wilde, James can be employed as a useful bridge from nineteenth century literature into modernism. Novellas like *Daisy Miller* and *The Europeans* (1878), while being straightforward in

style, show a satirical undercurrent that questions social norms. James always remained single but much about his writing suggests that he was homosexual in orientation. He became a British citizen shortly before his death.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) had a short but very productive life. The stories in *The Suicide Club* (1878), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Wrong Box* are all crime narratives of a sort. *The Wrong Box* was co-authored with his stepson Lloyd Osbourne. Like Sayers, Stevenson was willing to work on collaborative projects. He also wrote adventure novels or romances[15] such as *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886), texts that have come to be defined as children's literature in subsequent years.[16] The poetry collection *A Child's Garden of Verses* or *Penny Whistles* (1885) was aimed at children by Stevenson himself. He was with his wife in Samoa when he died unexpectedly, apparently from a brain haemorrhage. Although there was no suggestion of foul play, many a crime novel has begun with such a dramatic event.

The Irish born Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) is often remembered today as a gay icon. During Sayers' lifetime, however, there was still a sense of embarrassment or even distaste about Wilde's sexuality in British society. Yet his crime novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and his most famous play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) were too good to be forgotten, even in repressive times. Wilde wrote a variety of short stories, including the humorous crime story "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime" (1887) and some very touching children's stories such as "The Selfish Giant" (1888). He also produced a wealth of critical essays that Sayers clearly read with care. Wilde's mother was the poet Speranza, who was famous in her own right for writing verses in favour of Ireland's freedom. He was educated in Trinity College Dublin and later in Oxford. He was married with children but also pursued relationships with men. Since a double life of some sort was usual for most gentlemen in Wilde's day, Sayers commented in a letter to Ruth Hind that "he was no worse than many other people" (Reynolds 1998, 525). Wilde's love affair with Lord Alfred Douglas resulted in a libel trial instigated by Wilde against the Marquis of Queensberry and then two criminal trials. He was imprisoned for two years for gross indecency and died in Paris relatively soon after his release. Having always felt an interest in Catholicism, Wilde converted on his deathbed. He is an interesting historical figure in that his work is interpreted by different critics both in a religious light and as proof of his sexuality. Sayers does not seem to have been worried about Wilde's romantic preferences, but was troubled by the apparent lack of sincerity in his work.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was trained as a medical doctor like his character Watson. He wrote historical adventure novels as well as the Sherlock Holmes stories, showing the ability to imagine himself into an entirely different time in *The White Company* (1891). Wilde praises such imaginative journeys into the past above realism in his critical essay "The Decay of Lying" (1889). Conan Doyle also wrote science fiction like the dinosaur novel *The Lost World* (1912). He valued his adventure stories more than the detective tales, but Holmes was what the public wanted. The Holmes series began in the late nineteenth century and it is the Victorian stories and novels that most often appear on university modules, for their depiction of gender and race issues. Conan Doyle drew some attention in the newspapers by becoming involved in real life mysteries like Harriet Vane, although his efforts placed him in no physical danger. He campaigned to have an unjustly imprisoned man George Edalji released from prison and was successful. Conan Doyle was married twice, having outlived his first wife, and had children from both marriages. His second wife believed herself to be a medium and he became interested in spiritualism. He was still living when Sayers began the Wimsey series and died in the year that *Strong Poison* and The *Documents in the Case* were published.

H.G. Wells (1866-1946) is known as a famous science-fiction writer today, although some of his writing is quite grounded in reality. His science-fiction novel *The Time Machine* (1895) reveals the late Victorian anxiety about degeneration, or evolution in reverse. Sayers liked his psychological horror story "The Cone" (1897) and included it the first of the *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* anthologies in 1928. The story realistically depicts a gruesome murder with striking parallels to the myth of Venus, Mars and the blacksmith Vulcan.[17] This is interesting considering the attention that modernist writers pay to mythology, although Wells has not traditionally been considered as a modernist. Sayers uses Wells' "The Plattner Story" (1897) as the basis for her own tale "The Image in the Mirror" (1933) and convincingly reveals the modernist elements in Wells' writing. Sayers also demonstrates an impulse towards creating utopian and dystopian literature herself, as in "Talboys" and *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* respectively.[18] Wells was the son of a poor shopkeeper and worked as a pupil teacher for a time. He was married twice and had so many affairs that he would have fit in well with Marjorie Phelps' group of promiscuous artist friends in *Strong Poison*. He was still alive when Sayers apparently championed him as a modernist.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was a highly influential modernist novelist. All her novels are well known but the timing was just right for

Sayers to absorb *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) before her own publication of *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) and later novels. Like Wilde, Woolf was married but she also had a same sex relationship with a writer named Vita Sackville-West. Her father Leslie Stephen was a notable Victorian critic. Woolf's work often comments as much upon the end of Victorianism as the beginning of modernism. As Woolf points out, women benefited from the collapse of the nineteenth century social order and the repression that came with it. In spite of her great talent, Woolf suffered from depression and tragically ended her life by drowning herself. One of her most memorable characters, Septimus, also commits suicide in *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf was still alive when Sayers wrote novels such as *Gaudy Night* that seem to recall her work. She died in the year that *The Mind of the Maker* was published.

The Irish author James Joyce (1882-1941) produced ground breaking modernist literature. The short story collection *Dubliners* (1914) often surprises readers due to the apparent lack of any endings to the tales. Joyce is infamous for his use of the stream of consciousness technique, particularly in *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). His character Molly Bloom drowsily recalls the events of the day in the final chapter of his great novel *Ulysses* (1922), skipping from topic to topic like the Dowager Duchess. Sayers' characters sometimes poke fun at Joyce's modernism, yet his influence is also clearly felt in the Wimsey novels. As The Detection Club's *Ask a Policeman* (1933) reveals, parody is sometimes a form of homage rather than an attack.[19] Joyce lived with his companion Nora Barnacle on the continent and they had two children together outside of marriage. The couple finally married late in life, however. Like Woolf, Joyce died in the year that *The Mind of the Maker* was published.

The novels of D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) are often read for their sexual content, as Sayers demonstrates in *The Documents in the Case*. Many of his books were banned or unavailable in Britain at one time. Lawrence deals with serious modernist issues, however, including miscarriage in *The Rainbow* (1915) and impotence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Many modernist writers express anxiety about human fertility and the failure of the life cycle. Sayers generally refers to Lawrence rather briefly and seems to prefer the work of Woolf. Lawrence was married but childless. His tuberculosis caused a long spell of bad health and finally an early death. Lawrence died in the year that *Strong Poison* and *The Documents in the Case* were published.

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is one of the most pessimistic voices in modernism. Although born in the United States, he eventually became a

British citizen. In his poetic works such as *The Waste Land* (1922), the new roles for women in British society are shown to be threatening rather than liberating. As a working woman, the typist is mechanical and joyless, for instance. Eliot was unhappily married while composing the long poem. His intertextual ability is impressive but his ideology is highly suspect. Eliot had some sympathy for fascism before World War II, which was not uncommon at the time. Sayers must consider and then firmly reject the despairing tone of *The Waste Land* in *Gaudy Night*. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men* (1925) is also addressed in *Busman's Honeymoon*. Eliot became quite religious as the years passed by and some of his later work, such as the play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), is intended to bring a Christian message to the people. After the death of his first wife in an asylum, Eliot's second marriage was more of a success. Eliot was still alive when Sayers passed away in 1957. She had exchanged letters with him on topics such as the ordination of women.

There are many biographies available on Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957) herself, focusing on her life from a variety of different perspectives. Barbara Reynolds, for example, tells Sayers' story from the point of view of a personal friend and provides many valuable insights. There has even been a recent German language study of Sayers' life and work by Manfred Siebald, reflecting the fact that Sayers' novels are widely translated. Her life had its share both of happiness and of difficulty. She was a beloved only child and she read Lewis Carroll's books as a very young girl. She studied at Oxford at a time when third level education for women was still controversial. She worked in advertising and was an author of detective novels. She had some unsuccessful relationships. She gave birth to a son who had to remain a secret, like a plot in a Wilkie Collins novel, and supported him financially. She was married once and was eventually widowed. She wrote religious plays and translated Dante. The bare facts of Sayers' life can be interpreted in a variety of ways. She must have suspected that her decisions would be dissected and analysed one day. Her writing often suggests that she feels an affinity with the great authors whose lives were complex and challenging. She seems particularly sympathetic to individuals like George Eliot, who was legally unable to marry her partner in spite of a genuine commitment to him. It may surprise us to note that Sayers' favourite Victorian writers had such a wide range of unconventional experiences. One does not have to lead a dull or blameless life to write good and even didactic literature. In fact, overcoming personal adversity makes it more likely that the author has wisdom to impart to her readers.

Education through Entertainment

Murder mysteries are formulated to provide the answer to a simple puzzle, the who, how, why and when of the murder. Sayers' novels do much more. There are many hidden literary games in her texts, waiting to be uncovered. She does not need to borrow from contemporary psychoanalysis to invent depraved motives for a killer. As John Scaggs has pointed out, Sayers finds crime and criminal motivation in ancient mythology and in bible stories (Scaggs 2005, 7-8). The first volume of *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* (1928) includes "The Story of Hercules and Cacus" and "The History of Susanna." The lessons Sayers derives from advertising allows her to put "unconscious persuasion" (Sayers 1941/1942, 122) to use, nevertheless, in educating her reader through entertainment. Interestingly, education through entertainment has become a prominent topic in Victorian Studies in recent years. John Ruskin, the critic whose personal life is revealed in *The Documents in the Case*, was a pioneer of the performance lecture. He was adept at bringing props on stage to delight his audience and to enhance the learning experience. Studies such as Sharon Aronofsky Weltman's *Performing the Victorian* explore Ruskin's effective teaching methods in a medium that is thought to fuse the traditional lecture with the theatre. Throughout her writing life, Sayers finds her own ways of teaching the widest possible number of people, from detective fiction that promotes good literature and a better understanding of society to plays that explain the message of Christ. The plays are beyond the scope of this study, but Crystal Downing's *Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers* is dedicated to this part of Sayers' writing career.

Like the Victorians before her, Sayers' writing demonstrates a great desire to teach. This does not place her at odds with the modernist writers. In a new book on Joyce and *Ulysses*, Declan Kiberd has praised the famous novel as "wisdom literature" (Kiberd 2009, 31). Arguing against the notion of an impenetrable modernism, Kiberd suggests that Joyce "offers not only a text but a training in how to decode it" (ibid., 17). Sayers' didactic attempt to bring modernist issues within the reach of her readers may thus be a logical stepping stone to reading Joyce. Literature should help us to learn and to grow as readers and as individuals. It does not matter if we believe that we are just having fun while we are relaxing with Sayers' detective novels. We often learn on a more profound and meaningful level at the very times that we are not consciously aware that we are being educated.

Notes

[1] Freke clearly identifies the novel by mentioning a character named "Michael Finsbury, in Stevenson's entertaining romance" (Sayers 1923/1995, 197).
[2] Wilde's disastrous case for libel that he instigated against the Marquis of Queensberry was followed by two criminal trials in which Wilde was the defendant.
[3] Intriguingly, Wilde also borrows the names Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park from a famous 1870s trial for *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). I discuss the comic use of names in my essay "The Importance of Ernest's Pink Satin: The Boulton and Park Case, Country House Theatricals and *The Importance of Being Earnest*."
[4] Freud seems to find such uncomplicated dreams artistically disappointing. They provide him with no challenge of interpretation.
[5] The chain also jokingly suggests the chains of association in psychoanalysis.
[6] Sayers worked on the highly successful "Guinness is Good For You" campaign, which showed happy zoo animals with pint glasses of Guinness.
[7] Coleman's Mustard was another of Sayers' prominent campaigns.
[8] Instalments of *The Ingoldsby Legends* were first published in *Bentley's Miscellany*, a publication that was briefly edited by Charles Dickens. They were later collected together into book format.
[9] Sayers may also have liked the fact that many of the late Victorian editions *of The Ingoldsby Legends* include illustrations by John Tenniel, who drew Lewis Carroll's Alice.
[10] "The Plattner Story" is integral to the plot of Sayers' story "The Image in the Mirror." "John Jago's Ghost" is mentioned in "Nebuchadnezzar."
[11] As an American author, Poe's place in a book about Victorian influences would be problematic in any case.
[12] Sayers includes Poe's "The Purloined Letter" in *Tales of Detection*. The story reveals how we ignore whatever is in plain view.
[13] "The Author of Beltraffio" involves a murder by omission. In *The Turn of the Screw*, it is never clear whether the detective/governess is seeing ghosts or has lost her mind. She may commit involuntary manslaughter in the course of her investigations.
[14] Charles Allston Collins was Wilkie Collins' brother and the husband of Charles Dickens' daughter Kate. He was strongly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but was not an official member.
[15] Romances are fanciful works of literature that often involve a quest of some sort. The term is often confusing for readers who think of romance in the Mills and Boon sense.
[16] Like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* were not written specifically for children but for a general readership. Abridged editions have made these books popular with younger readers.
[17] In Roman mythology, Vulcan catches his wife Venus having an affair with Mars and humiliates them both in front of the other gods. The husband in "The Cone" takes a more extreme revenge.