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Throughout the twentieth century, domestic service had a compelling presence in British economic, social, and cultural life. For the first half of the twentieth century, it employed the largest numbers of women of any labour market sector in Britain. Households at all social levels employed domestic help. 'Servant problems' were painstakingly analysed in the periodical and daily presses, parliamentary investigations, and philanthropic reports, as well as featuring very prominently in comics, music hall, cinema and radio, drama and novels. Complaints and observations about employing servants were a staple of middle-class conversation; as Vera Brittain noted during World War I, 'The universal topics of maids and ration-cards... completely dominated the conversation in every household.'<sup>1</sup> 'The servant question' also influenced state policies, of housing, welfare, immigration, training, and education, and played out in courtrooms. Domestic service was extraordinarily prominent, as a socio-cultural and policy problem, as a widely experienced institution, and as a symbolic resource for social criticism and nostalgia. It formed a uniquely significant site in which individuals of different classes, generations, and migrant origin encountered each other and negotiated their social boundaries and identities.

Being employed or employing a servant had been a widely shared experience for large numbers of women at the start of the century, and though this was not so for the generations working after World War II, there

seems to have been no corresponding diminution of cultural interest in domestic service. During the 1950s, when service has been judged by most historians to be definitively 'over' for Britons, the organization of domestic spaces and tasks was still permeated by talk of servants and how to live without them. In 1960, Katharine Whitehorn reviewed a book of reminiscences about domestic service in *The Spectator*, and admonished readers not to:

think of having maids simply in terms of having someone else to make the beds and chop the spinach. A book like this is a reminder that the very existence of servants imposed a way of life. It was a life without privacy; weaknesses, deviations from the social norm were all instantly remarked; *pas devant les domestiques* became an unconscious code affecting people's ideas of behaviour in everything.<sup>2</sup>

p. 2 There is little sign, however, that her contemporaries ever took service to be just the sum of domestic duties. Domestic service had, and has, a high cultural profile in post-war Britain, in family history, light comedy, reality television, nostalgia cinema, and Britain's heritage industry. Its discomforts and encounters have been taken to stand in for much wider horizons—the 'spirit of the times' or social change in general. Simply put, domestic service has served as a foundational narrative amongst the stories British people tell about the twentieth century and its changes—about the formation of classes, about intimacy and individualization, about homes and housework, about 'modernity' and gender. This book sets out to explore why and how domestic service has had this powerful, continuing role in narrating the twentieth century and shaping our sense of the past.

Doing so requires a rethinking of the 'when' of domestic service. The underpinning 'rise and fall' domestic service narrative, ending variously at the death of Queen Victoria, or either of the World Wars, has been a convenient shorthand for talk of an 'end of an era', or the final demise of social relationships or forms of labour variously imagined as old, traditional, Victorian, or feudal. An 1890 'servant problem' article by Ellen Darwin (the wife of Francis Darwin and daughter-in-law of Charles Darwin), for example, noted the 'stale odour of feudalism' around domestic service, which had not kept pace with the 'modern spirit of human relations'.<sup>3</sup> Edwardians sometimes used domestic service as providing an index to the development of civilization or modernity in a society, in ways that paralleled attention to the condition of women. Amy Bulley, a suffragist writing in the *Westminster Review*, argued in 1891 that 'Domestic service, as it has existed hitherto, is a survival from a social state of things which has passed away, and, being now an anomaly, it is disappearing with as much rapidity as may be.'<sup>4</sup> The feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman declared in 1903, 'As fast as industrial evolution progresses we find men less and less content to do [household labour] in this way; or, for that matter, women either.'<sup>5</sup> In 1927, J. B. Priestley termed domestic service 'as obsolete as the horse'.<sup>6</sup> Domestic service has been counterposed to ideas of modern living or 'modernity', which came to be articulated not simply through ideas of industrialization or post-industrialization, but also through new forms of domestic organization—'servantless' or 'labour-saving'—and associated material objects such as the long-handled floor polisher or the washing machine.<sup>7</sup>

p. 3 'Modernity' as an analytical concept tends to stress discontinuity with the past, and thus has lent itself to narratives of the decline or obsolescence of domestic service. 'Modernity' has, however, been too blunt a tool to uncover the ongoing ways in which servant-keeping was *reworked* rather than discarded in the twentieth century. It proves unhelpful to recognize the very contingent factors that have led to the fluctuating employment of domestic workers, and to discern the ways in which servant-keeping might be understood as modern, or amenable to modernization.

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In the twentieth century, new ways of thinking about service were offered by feminism and trade unionism; new scripts and aspirations for working-class young women were offered by the radio or cinema, and the organization, rituals, and material contents of British homes were transformed. Domestic service was shaped by the interventions of the state in labour markets, family life, and fiscal and welfare policies, though politicians were always unwilling to intervene in the conditions of work for private servants. Perhaps most significantly, alternative work, new forms of leisure, and better access to education for young women became widespread. Servants and other domestic workers had more labour-market choices, as well as opportunities to speak and write and became more culturally visible. 'Knowing their place' was no longer simply a form of knowledge generated by the middle classes, but a form of self-fashioning and reflection on the part of servants. This book departs from an account of economic and social marginality and will explore domestic service through an account of the cultural and emotional centrality of service in British society. The familiar account of service as a location for the establishment of class will be re-assessed, and set alongside attention to other features of social experience—generational divides, regional and local diversity, gender, migration and ethnicity.

p. 5

## Notes

1 Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925* (London: V. Gollancz, 1933), 404.

2 Katharine Whitehorn, 'Service Hatch', *The Spectator*, Sept 16, 1960, 416.

3 Mrs Francis (Ellen) Darwin, 'Domestic Service', *The Nineteenth Century*, Aug 1890, 287.

4 Amy Bulley, 'Domestic Service', *Westminster Review*, 1891, 182.

5 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Home: It's Work and Influence* (New York, 1903), 107.

6 J. B. Priestley, 'Servants', *Saturday Review*, Mar 19, 1927, 430.

7 The prism of 'modernity' has proved productive, though historically slippery. Traditionally, modernity has been associated with the growth of an urban, middle-class 'public sphere', and thus with masculine worlds, though recent historical accounts of women's participation in civic, philanthropic, and professional activity has allowed more inclusive versions of modernity to emerge. 'Modernity' has been redefined as bound up with the emergence of suburban, working-class, or lower-middle-class lifestyles, suggesting its plurality (Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004)).

And in a significant extension to the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, attention to consumption amongst historians has expanded the realms in which modernity and its associated gender and class identities can be traced (Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)), 19–24;

Mica Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City and the Department Store', in Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds), *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 38–76.

Indeed, it has proved productive to envisage diverse forms of modernity being marshalled against each other in the twentieth century, in contests to gain social and cultural capital and to stabilize class or gender identities in the twentieth century.

[...772]

the stereotypical detective of the golden age of the genre was the gentleman sleuth. Even a cursory survey of transatlantic interwar detective fiction reveals a disproportionately large number of amateur, elite crime solvers, beginning in 1913 with E. C. Bentley's Philip Trent in *Trent's Last Case* and including H. C. Bailey's Reginald Fortune, Anthony Berkeley Cox's Roger Sheringham, and Miles Burton's Desmond Merrion. American versions of the type include S. S. Van Dine's Philo Vance and Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe.<sup>5</sup> Amateur detectives after Trent collectively exhibit the Holmesian qualities of "penetrating observation, highly developed logical powers, wide knowledge, and a brilliantly synthetic imagination," filtered through the sensibility of the English gentleman.<sup>6</sup>

Like other ephemera, much interwar detective fiction is long out of print, but the work of one group of writers, the so-called Queens of Detection—Margery Allingham, Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L. Sayers—endures. Agatha Christie's 1920 publication of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* is generally acknowledged as inaugurating the golden age of detective fiction, with Christie, Allingham,

Marsh, and Sayers defining the genre for subsequent decades.<sup>7</sup> Most of these authors' books have been reissued multiple times; many have remained continuously in print.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, three of these four authors, whose books have sold millions of copies over the past eighty years, found success with aristocratic heroes. In 1929, Allingham introduced Albert Campion, whose noble origins are obscure but possibly royal. He featured in ten novels and two short-story collections before the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> Sir Roderick Alleyn, Marsh's series detective, emerged in 1934. The younger brother of a baronet, a "hardworking, untitled professional" and "gentleman detective," Alleyn solved nine cases between 1934 and 1940.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the best known of these aristocratic detectives, and to a large extent the prototype for them all, was the diffident aristocrat Lord Peter Wimsey, whose exploits Sayers chronicled in a dozen novels and twenty-four short stories between 1923 and 1937.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Christie's Belgian detective Hercule Poirot, as Alison Light illuminated two decades ago, came from outside the British class system and spoke to and for an explicitly bourgeois audience.<sup>12</sup> All four writers' books were consumed avidly by middle- and upper-middle-class readers—and perhaps by working-class readers, too—but the popularity among readers of novels featuring aristocratic detectives *qua* aristocrats—among American and British readers across classes—bears further scrutiny.

[...774]

There is as yet scarce evidence of readers' responses to this literature. Historians of reading have yet to mine the correspondence and reading diaries of individual readers to determine how they responded to the worlds created by authors of detective fiction. Nor have they fully explored the possibilities of letters from readers to authors. Scholars have, however, provided a variety of explanations for the popularity of these three detectives, and of the genre of detective fiction in general, in the interwar period. A consensus has emerged that the 'tec novel, as it affectionately became known, was a nostalgic and backward-looking genre, a place where Britons could find glimpses of the prelapsarian world of preindustrial Britain, where aristocrats

ruled a compliant polity and all lived harmoniously.<sup>20</sup> Historian Alison Light famously describes the genre as "a literature of convalescence," a therapeutic treatment necessary to heal the nation's traumatic experience of the Great War.<sup>21</sup> Others see in it a more generalized assertion of traditional values. David Grossvogel understands the form as an inherently conservative assurance that law, order, and property are protected, while Marxist literary critic Ernest Mandel argues that the detective story legitimizes bourgeois society and its values.<sup>22</sup> Most critics concur that class anxiety lies beneath the popularity of the genre in the 1920s and 1930s, with some seeing the aristocratic detective satisfying aspiring middle-class ambitions and responding to middle- and upper-class nostalgia for a return to an ordered world.

More recently, literary critics posit the genre of detective fiction as playing a key role in interwar discussions about culture and mass media, an analysis that depends on an understanding of the genre's change over time, from the puzzle and locked-room mysteries of the 1920s, to the 1930s, when novelists increasingly used the form to illuminate contemporary social issues.<sup>23</sup> These critics suggest that the golden age of detective fiction "is an attempt, in some cases discreetly muted, in others glaringly explicit, to articulate a vision of social reconstruction . . . in which the desire to conjure up a new reading public becomes part of a wider project of imagining a whole new set of relationships between men, women, and social classes."<sup>24</sup>

This emphasis on social reconstruction points toward another, and more nuanced, understanding of the significance of the era's aristocratic detectives. Rather than viewing the prevalence of the gentleman detective in the popular genre as evidence of the triumph of a conservative and backward-looking political and social vision, we might instead look to the fragility of the social worlds constructed in these novels, and at their engagement with various forms of the modern, imagined in all of these authors' works as democratic and consumerist.<sup>25</sup> Each author uses the genre to explore changing meanings of class in modern Britain (and in Marsh's case, the emerging Commonwealth, as she sets a number of Alleyn's stories in her native New Zealand) and to imagine social worlds in which certain aristocratic values remain essential to the maintenance of the social order. Allingham, Marsh, and Sayers, all middle- and upper-middle-class writers, used their detective fiction to comment on possible roles for the aristocracy in an age of

universal suffrage.<sup>26</sup> They used similar plot devices and generic strategies in the production of serials that sold impressively large numbers to readers from varying class backgrounds. Part of a larger trend in interwar fiction that sought to make connections between aristocracy, national identity, and social cohesion, these novels shaped how a certain segment of the British reading public would come to see the ongoing significance of a class whose cultural influence and imaginative resonance in the first half of the twentieth century has been underestimated by historians.<sup>27</sup>

### REPURPOSING ARISTOCRACY

Any discussion of aristocracy in the age of universal suffrage must begin with the fact that Britain, virtually alone of European countries, emerged from the First World War with its monarchy and aristocracy intact. Political discourse around aristocracy in Britain after 1917 was tinged with the fate of the Russian monarchy and aristocracy, lending a sometimes strident tone to its defense. Conservative prime minister Stanley Baldwin used the language of democracy to build conservative consensus into the nation's identity, and this sensibility infuses the work of all three novelists.<sup>28</sup> Having stared into the abyss of world war, revolution, and regicide, interwar Britons frequently viewed domestic political problems in catastrophic terms,<sup>29</sup> which may explain why repairing rents in the social fabric became a feature of middlebrow fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. However, much interwar detective fiction, for all its invocations of the rural and the country house, takes place largely in an urban—and urbane—world, with London at its center. And at the center of London stood “society,” by 1919 a porous, confused intermingling of aristocratic, plutocratic, and industrial influence.<sup>30</sup>

#### [...777]

Allingham, Marsh, and Sayers all grapple with the remnants of traditional aristocratic identity through the figure of the gentleman sleuth. The British aristocracy historically had provided social cohesion through disinterested governance and the dispensation of charity and hospitality;<sup>33</sup> in the early years of the twentieth century, professionalization of state function and a widening electorate challenged these traditional means of maintaining aristocratic influence. Professionalization, however, also offered a way to repurpose traditionally aristocratic values. Professional associations justified their leadership on the grounds of both skill and service to the greater good. The gentleman sleuth as portrayed in these novels thus promotes a kind of meritocracy binding the aristocracy and the middle classes and downplaying class conflict.<sup>34</sup>

Novels by Allingham, Marsh, and Sayers participate in remaking aristocracy by reinterpreting its traditional purposes. Through the genre of detective fiction, these writers created worlds that offered aristocrats new roles that simultaneously served the function of protecting and legitimating the social order—arguably detective fiction's main imperative—and navigating the treacherous terrain between the aristocracy's traditional role as disinterested amateur and its new identity among the professional classes. Allingham, Marsh, and Sayers—three middle-class novelists—thus repackage a traditional role in the new polity for the aristocracy by drawing on its historical social functions in the interest of facilitating social cohesion. Each writer created fictional detectives who made meaningful contributions to society *because* they were aristocrats and could bring special skills and perspectives to the task.

Read serially, the novels reveal an evolution in each author's thinking about both the role that aristocrats could play in British political culture and the wider conversations about the utility of the aristocracy as a class. Sayers and Allingham began writing in the 1920s; when Marsh introduces Alleyn in 1934, he enters a conversation underway already for a decade, which explains partially why his characterization is so different from the beginning. Both Wimsey and Campion start out in the so-called Silly Ass tradition shaped by P. G. Wodehouse's facetious stories of Jeeves

778 ■ MAYHALL

and Wooster. Bertie Wooster, archetypal upper-class twit, negotiates the social world of his class largely through the assistance of his wise and practical manservant, Jeeves. Wodehouse published the first collection of these stories in 1919, and a second appeared in 1923, the year that Sayers published her first Lord Peter Wimsey novel, *Whose Body?*, in which Wimsey is drawn into the mystery surrounding the appearance of a naked dead man in the bathtub of a middle-class household. Wimsey waltzes through the investigation, defying the unimaginative Inspector Suggs and utilizing his personal connections to gain access to witnesses and evidence. Sayers pointedly describes Wimsey with reference to his caricature in Labour papers "as a typical aristocrat." Wimsey's primary mien is garrulous and imbecilic: he quotes poetry to police inspectors, recalls limericks by way of analogy, and trades on his family history as he collects information about possible suspects.<sup>35</sup>

But we can also see in Sayers's early novels a parody of this portrayal of the aristocracy. In *Whose Body?*, she replays a scene familiar to readers of Wodehouse's Jeeves stories, in which Wimsey's valet, Bunter, reprovingly challenges his choice of trousers for a luncheon with Lady Swaffham.<sup>36</sup> Sayers pokes fun at stereotypes about the aristocracy, something few critics note.<sup>37</sup> She also portrays Wimsey sympathetically, as a victim of shell shock suffered in the trenches on the Western Front. A number of scholars have commented on this aspect of Wimsey's characterization, seeing in it the creation of an antihero, an aristocratic male so traumatized by the violence of war that he is in some sense emasculated.<sup>38</sup>

[...780]

Roderick Alleyn enters the conversation somewhat later, in 1934, when both Allingham and Sayers were rethinking their main characters and what they represented.<sup>46</sup> Alleyn is no amateur; when the series begins, he is a detective chief inspector, a professional sleuth at Scotland Yard. Marsh is intentionally opaque on the question of Alleyn's class. The reader has to glean his aristocratic origins from reading the novels in succession, and Marsh uses other characters' inability to read Alleyn's class background as a sign of his modernity. Clinging to outmoded notions of class hierarchy, those encountering Alleyn in his professional capacity insist that the upper class adhere to a set of codes they can read; confronted by Alleyn, they cannot understand how he fits into that world. Alleyn confounds class expectations up and down the social scale. Received at Lady Cicely O'Callaghan's in *The Nursing Home Murder* (1936), Alleyn bewilders the butler: "At Catherine Street he [Alleyn] was received by Nash, who stared like a boiled owl at the inspector. Nash, who carried in his head a sort of social ladder, had quietly decided that police officers of all ranks were to be graded with piano-tuners. Chief Detective-Inspector Alleyn did not conform, in appearance or in manner, to this classification. Nash performed a reluctant mental somersault."<sup>47</sup>

the transgression of class in detective fiction is in the service of justice. Tellingly, these aristocrats convey discomfort with their class positions. Wimsey is apologetic about his privilege; Campion eschews it (while his butler parodies it); and Alleyn is uncomfortable with it but uses it to his advantage. The predominant aspect of aristocracy revived in these novels is service: the detective as a public servant, acting in a disinterested fashion. Privilege of birth as such is either satirized, as in the early Wimsey novels, or rejected, as in Alleyn's demeanor, or masked, as in Campion's obfuscations, but all three men essentially put the public good above personal interest.<sup>50</sup>

782 ■ MAYHALL

Together, the novels point toward the transformation of their detectives' status from amateur to professional. We see through these tales a microcosm of the larger phenomenon underway in the 1920s and 1930s: the gradual integration of the British aristocracy into the professional middle classes.<sup>51</sup> Fundamentally, each sleuth grapples with the question "What is a gentleman?" The term itself had become ambiguous as it shifted from its older association with the service and disinterestedness of a non-commercial class to a more middle-class understanding of the gentleman as one who subscribed to a particular set of values and behavior.<sup>52</sup> Significantly, it is these sleuths' ability to detect social distinctions in the solving of crimes that confirms their positions as gentlemen, bringing together aristocracy's traditional emphasis on family and rank with a middle-class professional appreciation of skill and training, all in the service of justice.

## Notes

<sup>5</sup> Still further examples include Phillip MacDonald's Anthony Gethryn, Nicholas Blake's Nigel Strangeways, G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole's Everard Blatchington, Carter Dickson's Sir Henry Merrivale, and Michael Innes's John Appleby. See George Grella, "Murder and Manners: The Formal Detective Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 4, no. 1 (1970): 30–48; T. J. Binyon, "Murder Will Out": The Detective in Fiction (Oxford, 1989), 58–63; Ernest Mandel, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story* (Minneapolis, 1986), 28.

<sup>6</sup> Grella, "Murder and Manners," 36–37.

<sup>7</sup> John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (London, 2005), 26. Others see the golden age of detective fiction beginning with E. C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case* in 1913; see also P. D. James, *Talking about Detective Fiction* (New York, 2009), 50; and LeRoy L. Panek, *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain, 1914–1940* (Bowling Green, 1979), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Only in the last decade has the work of lesser-known authors of the period been republished and made available to new readers through the British Library Crime Classics series, edited by Martin Edwards. See his very useful volume, *The Story of Classic Crime in 100 Books* (Scottsdale, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Colin Watson, *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience* (London, 1971), 189–90; B. A. Pike, "Margery Allingham," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 77, *British Mystery Writers, 1920–1939*, ed. Thomas F. Stanley and Bernard Benstock (Detroit, 1989), 3–12, at 6.

<sup>10</sup> Marvin S. Lachman, "Ngaio Marsh," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 77, Stanley and Benstock, *British Mystery Writers, 1920–1939*, 198–213, at 198–99.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Benstock, "Dorothy L. Sayers," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 77, Stanley and Benstock, *British Mystery Writers, 1920–1939*, 254–72, at 256.

<sup>12</sup> Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London, 1991), chap. 2.

<sup>20</sup> On the golden age of detective fiction and nostalgia, see, among others, Curtis J. Evans, *Masters of the "Humdrum" Mystery: Cecil John Charles Street, Freeman Wills Crofts, and the British Detective Novel, 1920–1961* (Jefferson, 2012), 2; Mandel, *Delightful Murder*, 29–30; Symons, *Bloody Murder*, 20; Watson, *Snobbery with Violence*, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Light, *Forever England*, 69.

<sup>22</sup> David I. Grossvogel, *Mystery and Its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (Baltimore, 1979), 52; Mandel, *Delightful Murder*, 121.

<sup>23</sup> James Gordin, *British Fiction in the 1930s: The Dispiriting Decade* (New York, 1992), 156.

<sup>24</sup> David Glover, "The Writers Who Knew Too Much: Populism and Paradox in Detective Fiction's Golden Age," in *The Art of Detective Fiction*, ed. Warren Chernaik, Martin Swales, and Robert Vilain (Basingstoke, 2000), 36–49, at 47.

<sup>25</sup> Recently, some literary scholars have begun to analyze the era's "deep unease about interpersonal relationships, societal structures, and senses of the self"; see Brittain Bright and Rebecca Mills, "The Revelations of the Corpse: Interpreting the Body in the Golden Age Detective Novel," in *New Perspectives on Detective Fiction: Mystery Magnified*, ed. Casey A. Cothran and Mercy Cannon (New York, 2016), 32–51, at 32.

<sup>26</sup> Numerous biographies, literary and otherwise, have been written about Sayers; Allingham and Marsh have received far less attention. See Mary Brian Durkin, *Dorothy L. Sayers* (Boston, 1980); Dawson Gaillard, *Dorothy L. Sayers* (New York, 1981); Catherine Kenney, *The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L. Sayers* (Kent, 1990); Martin, *Ink in Her Blood*; Lewis, *Ngaio Marsh*; B. J. Rahn, ed., *Ngaio Marsh: The Woman and Her Work* (Metuchen, 1995). For a good overview of women writers of the golden age of detective fiction, see Susan Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction* (Basingstoke, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Len Platt, *Aristocracies of Fiction: The Idea of Aristocracy in Late-Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Literary Culture* (Westport, 2001), 132–33. Other scholars have noted the prevalence of the gentleman in interwar fiction but ascribe it to nostalgia; see Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (New York, 1982), 11.

<sup>28</sup> Bill Schwarz, "The Language of Constitutionalism: Baldwinite Conservatism," in *Formations of Nation and People*, ed. Formations Editorial Collective (London, 1984), 1–9; see also Stanley Baldwin, *On England and Other Addresses* (London, 1926).

<sup>29</sup> Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> On the presumed rural setting of interwar detective fiction, see K. D. M. Snell, "A Drop of Water from a Stagnant Pool? Inter-war Detective Fiction and the Rural Community," *Social History* 35, no. 1 (2010): 21–50; Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 50. The complexity of the stratum known as "society" preoccupied many in the interwar years; for a contemporary assessment, see Patrick Balfour, *Society Racket: A Critical Survey of Modern Social Life* (London, 1932).

<sup>31</sup> See Lucy Bland, "The Trials and Tribulations of Edith Thompson: The Capital Crime of Sexual Incitement in 1920s England," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 3 (2008): 624–48; Matt Houlbrook, *Prince of Tricksters: The Incredible True Story of Netley Lucas, Gentleman Crook* (Chicago, 2016); Angus McLaren, *Playboys and Mayfair Men: Crime, Class, Masculinity, and Fascism in 1930s London* (Baltimore, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Nancy W. Ellenberger, "The Transformation of London 'Society' at the End of Victoria's Reign: Evidence from the Court Presentation Records," *Albion* 22, no. 4 (1990): 633–53, at 651.

<sup>33</sup> M. L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester, 1984), 4.

<sup>34</sup> My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who emphasized this point; see also Harold Perkin's discussion of the transformation of aristocratic landlords into businessmen in the years following the First World War in *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London, 1989), 251–66.

<sup>35</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *Whose Body?* (1923; repr., New York, 1961), 33, 37, 55–56, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Sayers, *Whose Body?*, 111. See "Leave It to Jeeves," and "Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest," in P. G. Wodehouse's collection *My Man Jeeves* (London, 1919).

<sup>37</sup> Most scholars emphasize her snobbery; see Watson, *Snobbery with Violence*; Latham, "Am I a Snob?," chap. 6, views it as satire.

<sup>38</sup> See Ariela Freedman, "Dorothy Sayers and the Case of the Shell-Shocked Detective," *Partial Answer: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 8, no. 2 (2010): 365–87; Gill Plain, *Women's Fiction of the Second World War: Gender, Power and Resistance* (New York, 1996), esp. chap. 3; Stacy Gillis, "Consoling Fictions: Mourning, World War One, and Dorothy L. Sayers," in *Modernism and Mourning*, ed. Patricia Rae (Lewisburg, 2007): 185–97.

<sup>46</sup> On the development of Lord Peter Wimsey, see Brittain Bright, "The Maturity of Lord Peter Wimsey and Authorial Innovation within a Series," in *Serial Fiction: Dying for More*, ed. Jean Anderson, Carolina Miranda, and Barbara Pezzotti (Basingstoke, 2015): 87–98.

<sup>47</sup> Ngaio Marsh, *The Nursing Home Murder* (1936; repr., London, 2009), 480.

<sup>50</sup> Melissa Schaub makes the point that Sayers's and Allingham's detectives put "the public good above personal benefit, even the benefit of a loved one rather than oneself." Melissa Schaub, *Middlebrow Feminism in Classic British Detection Fiction* (New York, 2013), 94.