THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND MODERNITY
IN MARGERY ALLINGHAM’S DETECTIVE NOVELS OF THE 1930S

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Program in Popular Culture
of Brock University

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
• Master of Arts in Popular Culture

JAMES A GIBSON LIBRARY
BROCK UNIVERSITY
ST. CATHARINES ON

Carol Barbara Bott
© June 2005
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a part-time student in Brock’s MA Program in Popular Culture, it has been my good fortune to have met and been assisted by a number of talented and dedicated teachers and scholars during the past four years. Foremost among these has been my thesis supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Rose, Professor of English and Dean of Graduate Studies, whose patience, insight and wholehearted support and encouragement made the completion of this thesis possible. I am also sincerely grateful to my second reader, Dr. Jeanette Sloniowski, whose comments and suggestions have been invaluable.

I am indebted to Dr. Rosemary Hale, Dean of Humanities, as well as to Dr. Rose and Dr. Sloniowski, for course work that provided challenges, which were particularly relevant to the successful completion of this thesis, and for encouraging me to meet them. I should also like to thank Dr. Jim Leach for introducing me to the potential of theoretical studies and for his ongoing interest in my progress over the years, as well as Dr. Bhodan Szuchewycz and Dr. Barry Grant for the knowledge that I gained from their respective courses. Thanks also to Anne Howe, Program Co-ordinator and to Heather McGuiness of Graduate Studies for their help over the years in navigating the administrative waters of graduate school.

I extend sincere thanks to the members of my examining committee for their thought-provoking questions and their helpful suggestions: my external examiner Dr. Brian Diemert, Brescia College, University of Western Ontario, Dr. Nick Baxter-Moore, Program Director, Dr. Jane Koustas, Chair, and of course, Dr. Rose and Dr. Sloniowski.

I should also like to acknowledge the significant and positive role that Brock University has played in my personal as well as my professional life over the course of many years. It was at Brock that I earned my teaching credentials in the mid-1960s. In anticipation of a career change, I returned to Brock in the 1980s for an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Language. This thesis, however, represents the fulfilment of a personal goal and I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to complete it at an institution that has become somewhat of a second home for me.

Finally, I am truly grateful to those friends and family members whose interest, enthusiasm, support and encouragement have helped to make the achievement of that goal possible. My sincere thanks to my friends Shirley and Carol, to my daughter Angela, and especially to my husband John to whom this thesis is dedicated.
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines *Death of a Ghost* (1934), *Flowers for the Judge* (1935), *Dancers in Mourning* (1937), and *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938), a group of detective novels by Margery Allingham that are differentiated from her other work by their generic hybridity.

The thesis argues that the hybrid nature of this group of Campion novels enabled a highly skilled and insightful writer such as Allingham to negotiate the contradictory notions about the place of women that characterized the 1930s, and that in doing so, she revealed the potential of one of the most popular and accessible genres, the detective novel of manners, to engage its readers in a serious cultural dialogue. The thesis also suggests that there is a connection between Allingham's exploration of modernity and femininity within these four novels and her personal circumstances.

This argument is predicated upon the assumption that during the interwar period in England several social and cultural attitudes converged to challenge long-held beliefs about gender roles and class structure; that the real impact of this convergence was felt during the 1930s by the generation that had come of age in the previous decade—Margery Allingham's generation; and that that generation's ambivalence and confusion were reflected in the popular fiction of the decade. These attitudes were those of twentieth-century modernity—contradiction, discontinuity, fragmentation, contingency—and in the context of this study they are incorporated in a literary hybrid. Allingham uses this combination of the classical detective story and the novel of manners to examine the notion of femininity by juxtaposing the narrative of a longstanding patriarchal and hierarchical culture, embodied in the image of the Angel in the House, with that of the relatively recent rights and freedoms represented by the New Woman of the late nineteenth-century.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social difference forms the theoretical foundation of the thesis's argument that through these conflicting narratives, as well as through the lives of her female characters, Allingham questioned the "social myth" of the time, a prevailing view that, since the First World War, attitudes toward the appropriate role and sphere of women had changed.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPETER ONE: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margery Allingham's Campion Novels Before 1934</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a Ghost, Flowers for the Judge, Dancers in Mourning, The Fashion in Shrouds:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Generic Hybrids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Novels of Manners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Classical Detective Stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Difference: habitus, capital and strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Concepts: Modernity and its Meanings, Femininity as Represented by the Angel in the House and the New Woman, Androgyry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND MARRIAGE</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margery Allingham's Marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Woman and Marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage in Death of a Ghost, Flowers for the Judge, Dancers in Mourning, The Fashion in Shrouds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chivalry: The New Woman as Hero and the Feminized Man of Post-war England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chivalry in Death of a Ghost, Flowers for the Judge, Dancers in Mourning, The Fashion in Shrouds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND DOMESTICITY</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home: The Victorian Sanctuary and the Blurred Boundaries of Modernity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home in Death of a Ghost, Flowers for the Judge, Dancers in Mourning, The Fashion in Shrouds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENDNOTES</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CONSULTED</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that a group of four detective novels of manners written by Margery Allingham during the 1930s contains complex, oppositional discourses on women's proper role and sphere. These discourses are emblematic of the contradictory and ambiguous nature of modern English society in the interwar years, a period in which the author herself came of age. Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds were published, one after the other, between 1934 and 1938. They are distinguished from Allingham's other work by their generic hybridity—that is, these four books are a divergence from the type of mysteries that she wrote both before and after them, in that each incorporates a novel of manners within its classical detective plot. As novels of manners these books question and critique the current social order at the same time as their detective stories focus upon its preservation. In doing so they comment upon a society, whose attitudes toward the proper role of women reflect the ambiguity and contradictions of modernity, within a popular genre that would have reached a broad spectrum of English readers during the 1930s.

Allingham carried out her critique through the use of two contradictory narratives regarding the nature of true femininity. The first, which viewed women's role as domestic, subordinate and self-sacrificing, was manifested in the Victorian image of the Angel in the House. The second and opposing figure was that of the New Woman, who was portrayed by feminist writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century as androgynous in her ability to function equally well within both the private and public spheres. Both of these ideals were in circulation between the 1890s and the 1930s, a period in which major political and economic changes had allegedly freed women to vote, obtain a divorce and earn their own living. However, for most women in the 1930s, these freedoms were counteracted by a society in which work for women "was still low-paid and undertaken to assist the family exchequer rather than for its own sake" (Lewis 208), and a culture that was still imbued with a longstanding and powerful notion of femininity in which marriage, motherhood and the creation of a home were assumed to constitute women's proper role. In her juxtaposition of these conflicting social and cultural messages, Allingham explores, through the lives of her female characters, the various ways in which she and other women of her generation may negotiate within a society characterized by ambivalence and confusion. In doing so, she also demonstrates the potential of one of the most popular and accessible genres, the detective story, to involve its readers in a dialogue regarding important and timely cultural issues.
Margery Allingham was a skillful and prolific producer of popular fiction who sold over 3 million copies of her works in Britain and North America during her lifetime. Predominant among these were 33 mystery novels which told stories of adventure and detection, a combination that Allingham had adopted in her first book *Blackerchief Dick* and which, according to the January 1927 issue of *The Bookseller* magazine, enjoyed a vogue toward the end of the 1920s that was "indeed extraordinary" (Thorogood *Margery* 125). Twenty-one of those books were novels that, during the late 1920s and '30s, featured an amateur detective named Albert Campion, and employed these two elements within the broad conventions of the most popular mystery of the time commonly known as the "cozy." Susan Oleksiw describes the cozy as a "subgenre of the novel of detection defined by its light tone, elements of fun, and closed world [in which a] detective, amateur or professional, investigates the eruption of violence in an apparently tranquil world, [and in which] the cast of characters is limited and suspects are known to each other" (97). She also notes that "the typical cozy relies on a wide range of stock characters... the solution to the crime lies within the given community or class... [p]lots are intricate... the murder is planned, the motive being one of four—gain, hatred, envy or fear... [and] the murderer usually acts alone, rather than as part of a gang or conspiracy" (98).

Albert Campion is a vapid young man of aristocratic background who, according to his entry in *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, resembles Dorothy L. Sayers’s Lord Peter Wimsey in that he embodies "the dedicated frivolity of the post-World War I period which also produced P. G. Woodhouse’s Bertie Wooster" (Thorogood 53). Campion first assumes his role of “silly-ass sleuth” (P. Woods 414) in *The Crime at Black Dudley* (1929) in which he helps the central character, George Abershaw, solve a murder. Even though this novel is written according to what Allingham refers to as the "plum pudding" principle, "whereby anything may be stirred into the mixture to enhance its richness” (Herbert 14), the general conventions of the cozy are clearly identifiable in its setting, a weekend party at an isolated manor house, as well as in its group of stock characters, which includes several young upper-class couples, two foreign men, a doctor and the murder victim, Colonel Coombe. Also indicative of its genre is the fact that the murderer is Coombe’s nephew, whose motive is hatred and who admits to having “planned what [he] thought was a perfect killing” (*Crime* 210). The light tone and sense of fun that characterize the cozy are supplied by elements such as eccentric characters like the hypocritical Mrs. Meade, whose "religious satisfaction at the coming punishment of the wicked" (103) is equaled only by
her malicious delight in contemplating their deeds, and the self-effacing comments of Campion himself who, upon delivering two young women from the villain's clutches, says things such as "Goods as per instructions . . . Sign along the dotted line please" (119).

Allingham’s next four novels continue to employ the conventions of the cozy. In *Mystery Mile* (1930), Campion takes on the central role of amateur sleuth when he investigates the hounding of an American judge. The stock characters again include young people: Campion’s friend Giles and Giles’s sister Biddy, the American Marlowe Lobbett and his sister Isopel, along with two clergymen, an aristocrat who practises magic and the buffoonish Alistair Ferguson Babar. In this book, Campion acquires the requisite detective’s helper, his manservant Magersfontein Lugg, who assists him in defeating the Simister Gang on a lonely island in rural Suffolk. An ancient castle in Suffolk is also the setting of *Look to the Lady* (1931) while *Police at the Funeral* (1932) occurs in a staid Victorian manor in Cambridge. Both novels also feature the conventional lone murderer driven by greed, and, in *Police at the Funeral*, Allingham introduces two other elements typical of the detective genre: a reference to Sherlock Holmes in Campion’s London address at 17A Bottle Street, and a friend on the police force, in the person of Inspector Stanislau Oates. *Sweet Danger* (1933) sees the completion of Campion’s persona with the addition of a love interest, his future wife Lady Amanda Fitton.

By this time Margery Allingham’s reputation as a writer of popular detective fiction was equal to that of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. Not only had her novels sold well in Britain, but the rights to *The Crime at Black Dudley*, *Mystery Mile*, *Look to the Lady* and *Sweet Danger* had been acquired by Doubleday and Company and published in the United States as *The Black Dudley Murder*, *Mystery Mile*, *The Gyth Chalice Mystery* and *Kingdom of Death*, respectively. And by the mid-1930s, her detective fiction was so popular that she was able to purchase a large country estate and support her husband and a group of live-in friends, as well as employ servants. Her short stories appeared in widely circulated magazines such as *The Strand*; some of her earlier work that had been serialized in magazines was being published in book form; and her detective novels had become regular book-of-the-month selections in Doubleday’s Crime Club. It was at this point in her life that she wrote the four Campion novels that are the focus of this study.

*Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning* and *The Fashion in Shrouds* represent a divergence for Allingham from the familiar and successful formula that she described as a
"box" with four sides: "a Killing, a Mystery, an Enquiry and a Conclusion with an Element of Satisfaction in it" and which, according to one of her biographers, she saw "as at once a prison and a refuge" (Pike Campion's 14). Allingham herself viewed these four novels as different from her previous work and from the work that followed them: she described the formulaic detective story of each as simply the "box" in which she chose to pack [another] tale" (Thorogood, Margery 201). This other tale, in its critical examination of social life in England during the 1930s, particularly the increasingly public role of women within a culture that still defined a woman's place as in the home, displays the elements of another genre altogether, the novel of manners.

Charlotte Morgan traces the roots of the novel of manners to early Modern times when seventeenth-century romances, novels and conduct books gained popularity. During that period, as in the 1930s, literary fiction and popular fiction had become clearly differentiated by audience and form. Literary works like John Lyly's Euphues were written for the aristocracy (considered to be the avant garde of their day due to their interest in literary style) and adhered to a set of strict artistic rules. On the other hand, the fiction that was written for the public at large consisted of redactions of Elizabethan romances and "journalistic narratives imbued with the political and religious temper of the times" (Morgan 2). Morgan claims that the novel of manners, as a genre, was born between 1700 and 1740, a time that also resembled the years between the World Wars in that it was rife with significant social, political and economic change. This change was due to the expulsion of the Stuarts, the consequences of which included the breakdown of a patronage system that forced English writers of the day to become more dependent upon public taste, as well as the rise of a commercial class that preferred commonplace themes, prosaic details and a morality of a practical nature in their reading. The results were a larger reading public and a potential market for popular fiction.

However, of the novel of manner's precursors, it was the conduct book that really appealed to this new and influential class, a group that like the middle-classes of the 1930s had in many instances risen from the working class and placed great store on "propriety and compromise" (Morgan 89). Because, in the seventeenth-century, it was concerned mainly with social behavior or etiquette in aristocratic circles (as in Castiglione's The Courtier), the conduct book was easily adapted to reflect the ideals of the middle-classes in the eighteenth-century, ideals that are also identifiable in these four Allingham books, with their emphasis upon the behaviour of their characters. Morgan describes these as
a preference for that which was

objective and ethical, making its appeal not through the imagination but the intellect; it was a morality neither lofty nor inspiring but eminently practical. People were not concerned with spiritual themes or moral problems, but with conduct, the practice of morality in all the affairs of life . . . [The conduct book hence became] adapted to the needs of a much more general public . . . [and] to treat as much of general questions of character and conduct as of questions of etiquette. The rules of good form were made dependent upon the principle of right living. . . . (89 - 90)

Indeed, Morgan goes on to say that these books influenced the fiction of the time to such an extent that they became "in subject-matter and sentiment almost identical with the novel of manners. . . . [Samuel Richardson’s 1740 novel] Pamela, it will be remembered was ‘Published in order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Mind of the Youth of Both Sexes’" (91). It was, however, Daniel Defoe who popularized the novel of manners, since in Robinson Crusoe (1719) he was the first to perfect many of the devices associated with the conduct book. Morgan notes that he incorporated in his book a moral didacticism that is characteristic of the novel of manners and that his story featured a hero who very much reminds us of that truant from the aristocratic life, Albert Campion, in that what has led him into the dangers of detection has been his discontent with the place in life that God has given him.

Further evidence of the similarities between pre-nineteenth-century popular novels and the twentieth-century detective novel of manners is offered by A.E. Murch who points out that:

before the nineteenth century opened, there were already present in popular literature several features that later combined with others to form detective fiction. Readers enjoyed tales of crime and criminals, and had some perception of the purposes inductive reasoning could serve. Defoe had provided models of crisp realistic prose, and a self-reliant hero who captured the imagination of the general public. Mrs. Radcliffe had written mystery novels in which her readers could expect the riddles to be finally explained, often in conversations between a clever observant character and his less quick-witted friend. William Godwin not only created an amateur crime-investigator, but invented a new technique, and, by concentrating on his plot before his characters, worked out a method of construction that was especially appropriate to detective fiction.
Brockden Brown co-ordinated most of these factors, added a touch of 'science,' and introduced the figure of a highly-skilled interpreter of material clues. (34-5)

Scholars such as Jean A. Coakley also support Morgan's contention that the twentieth-century novel of manners is descended from the "restoration comedies of manners . . . [and] polished to perfection by eighteenth and nineteenth-century novelists including Henry Fielding, Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope" (314). Others, however, cite the nineteenth-century novels of Jane Austen as being the first of this genre. They call the novels of Daniel Defoe, Swift and Bunyan "realistic" ("Novel" 381-2) and Samuel Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa "sentimental" (388-9). They cite the latter as the catalyst for the novel of manners as it was created by Austen, that is, a reaction against and social criticism of the cult of sensibility and human perfection that these works epitomized. In terms of subject matter, social behavior is most commonly cited as the defining characteristic of the genre, although what is meant by that varies widely.

The goal of the novel of manners, according to Coakley, is an Austen-like social critique which highlights "society's verities and bursting pretensions and social codes . . . [and its] writer must be concerned with presenting a penetrating view of society" (314). Social historian Will Durant sees it as more of a record of everyday practices, concerned primarily with the "natural happenings in ordinary life" (409-10), while Harvard's introductory course in the novel again stresses its relation to the conduct book, describing it as "centred on behaviour, conduct, character and, above all, on language and verdicts" ("English" 151). Interestingly enough, Virginia Woolf in her essay "On Re-reading Novels" does not differentiate it in any way from other novels all of which, she says, are simply a combination of emotion plus convention—also an apt description, albeit a somewhat simplistic one, of the detective novel of manners.

Margery Allingham's Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds, published in quick succession between 1934 and 1938, are representative of the detective novel of manners—what Michael Holquist calls "a third stream [of detective fiction] . . . impure and . . . an exception" (147). He sees it as having been born during the 1930s when, he says, there arose a new kind of detective story [whose aim was to] break away from the rigid conventions of detective fiction . . . [It] depended for [its] appeal on the devices of mainstream fiction; literature, if you will. [Its authors] sought to write novels not detective novels as such.
The characters were more fully rounded, the settings more ordinary—or at least less formulaic—the plots less implausible. The detective is more human and so are the criminals and victims. . . . books in this third stream are obviously not—whatever their other merits may be . . . the classical detective story. (146)

Indeed, the similarities are evident between the essential elements of the conventional novel of manners, whether it originated in the eighteenth-century or with Jane Austen, and those of the detective novel of manners as it was conceived in the 1930s by Margery Allingham. The two share a romantic narrative structure, surprise and suspense, the hero as a model of conduct and behaviour, and morality of a practical nature in which virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. They also both feature a commonplace theme and prosaic details in the form of realistic manners and dress, and a reflection and/or critique of the social temper of the times according to a middle-class sensibility. These Allingham novels contain all of these elements, along with the conduct book's use of the stock characters and devices inherited by the twentieth-century cozy.

Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds also reflect many of the characteristics of what Morgan sees as the genre's significant romantic precursors, of which she considers four to be significant. As in the chivalric romance, Allingham relates "the whole life and principal adventures" (7) of her detective hero Campion, albeit through a series of novels rather than just one. As in the heroic romance, these novels may be seen to teach the principles of right living "by rewarding virtue and punishing vice" (30). As well, Campion's conduct is controlled by the intellect not the heart, although comic or picaresque elements of the anti-romance frequently appear. For instance, when faced with the reality of his own emotional weakness, such as his love for his friend's wife in Dancers in Mourning, his judgment fails. Allingham has also mastered the "art of matter-of-fact description . . . of giving the semblance of reality by an abundance of minute and consistent detail" (23) that Morgan says characterizes the political or allegorical romance. And like that of the classical romance, the theme of these novels is the hero's quest (in this case, for the solution to a crime), "surprise and suspense are two of the[ir] most striking qualities" (12), and their resolution involves a return to peace and order or what passes for it in its day. The narrative and point of view of Allingham's novels are also those of the classical romance in their passivity and indirectness: the story often begins in the middle of things with a murder and then moves backward in time (in order to review the events that led
up to the killing) as well as forward as the investigation into the crime progresses, all the while being interrupted by the personal ruminations of the detective and his helper, descriptions of the setting, suspects and social milieu of 1930s England, and even the narrator’s “hortatory passages” (Morgan 13).

Finally, those who differentiate between the detective novel of manners and the novel of manners because they believe the former is somehow inferior or at least less “literary” than the latter, most frequently cite the fact that the detective novel’s theme, point of view, narrative, structure and style are ordered around what Coakley calls, “a puzzling plot” (314) rather than a story about love; that is, its principal subject is the mind rather than the heart, the triumph of reason rather than of emotion. In response to this, Murch reminds us that the detective novel’s “roots lie not in puzzles merely, but in puzzles as they affect people” (243). Hanna Charney also cites Auden’s formula to illustrate how a novel of manners can actually grow out of the most basic of plots: “a murder occurs; many are suspected; all but one suspect, who is the murderer, are eliminated; the murderer is arrested or dies” (xx). For instance, she notes that while the first element of the formula, the murder, assures momentum and arouses curiosity in the classic detective story, in the detective novel of manners it goes further by establishing “the philosophical framework from the start [and placing us] in a social world, where evil is man-made” (xx). The second element, a pervasive suspicion, creates and maintains “a certain distance . . . in the view we have of most characters [and thus creates] . . . the general perspective of the novel of manners” (xxi). The elimination of the suspects necessarily involves connecting the characters, and the arrest or death of the murderer provides the pleasure of a satisfying resolution. However, it is between the first element of the formula and the final one where

we find the special opportunities of the detective novel, as each work uses the conventions in its own way and for its own meanings. What Auden’s sentence leaves out is the active corollary of the passive voice, which may be the most typically novelistic element of all. The detective himself is a crucial figure through whose mind the action unfolds. His methods, his profession (if he is an amateur), his conception of his role (if he is a policeman), his point of view, his ideas, his tastes, are the psychological and moral background of the whole work. (Charney xxi)

In fact, then, given their similarities, it is not surprising that the detective story and the novel of manners should be quite compatible: both are concerned with essentially the same subject matter and both are
children of modernity, as is a fluid English middle-class that for centuries has used the novel of manners to identify and monitor the impact of the kind of social change that is also a primary concern of the detective story.

Therefore although Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds form a hybrid genre in their incorporation of the elements of the literary novel within a murder mystery, this does not detract from their appeal as popular detective stories. In each of them the reader finds the stock characters, conventional milieu and familiar narrative of the mystery novel: murder disturbs the well-regulated life of a closed, upper or middle-class world; the crime is investigated and solved by the detective, often with the help of a friend; the criminal, who is often a megalomaniac or psychopath and therefore the sole source of evil, is brought to justice; and the social order is restored. For instance, Death of a Ghost is set in Little Venice, an artist's conclave in London. Presided over by Belle, the widow of famous artist John Lafcadio, it houses a close-knit community of his discarded models and assistants. The murder mystery centres on John Lafcadio and his attempt to ensure that his reputation as a great artist outlives that of his major competitor. He therefore leaves his wife Belle instructions that twelve never-before-seen paintings of his are to be displayed to the public, one each year, beginning eleven years after his death. At the 1934 showing, the lights go out and a young artist, Tom Dacre, is stabbed to death with a pair of jewel-encrusted scissors. The prime suspect is Dacre's fiancé Linda Lafcadio and the motive appears to be her jealousy of the artist's relationship with his new model. Then Claire Potter, another amateur artist and resident of Little Venice, is found poisoned to death. With the help of Inspector Stanislaw Oates, Campion discovers that the common link between the two victims is Max Fustian, the flamboyant and self-promoting custodian of John Lafcadio's posthumous works. Fustian has been using the skills of both Tom Dacre and Mrs. Potter to create fake paintings that he substitutes for the real ones. He murders them both to ensure their silence. Once Fustian realizes that he is a suspect, Campion acts as a decoy. In a thrilling scenario, the police catch Fustian in the act of attempting to murder Campion. He confesses everything; his delusions of grandeur worsen until he loses his mind altogether and he dies in prison. Life, under the benign supervision of Belle, returns to its previous rhythm in Little Venice.

The second book in the series also preserves the familiar conventions of the detective genre. Flowers For the Judge is set in London within the closed community of an old family business, Barnabas
Publishing. Paul Brande, a family member, is discovered in a locked-room in the company basement, dead from carbon monoxide poisoning. His cousin Mike Wedgwood, who was the last person in the room, is arrested. His motive is seen by the police to be a desire to free Brande's beautiful American wife Gina from an unhappy marriage and ultimately to have her for himself. While Wedgwood's trial proceeds, Campion attempts to find the real murderer. He is aided by his manservant Lugg, as well as the misfit of the family, Ritchie Barnabas. Just as he did in Death of a Ghost, Campion acts as the decoy in a dangerous game with the real murderer, John Barnabas. Like Max Fustian, John Barnabas also suffers from an exaggerated sense of his own power and importance and his motive for murder is essentially the same. Before John Barnabas can be arrested Ritchie kills him and disappears forever. Mike Wedgwood is freed, leaves the country and Gina eventually joins him in France. Despite the fact that all of the principals of Barnabas Publishing are gone, "[e]verything seems to have blown over" (235) and the firm resumes business as usual under the watchful eye of its oldest employee, Miss Curley.

Dancers in Mourning is set in White Walls, a country estate. Its owner Jimmy Sutane, a dancing idol, also uses it as a rehearsal hall for the company of his current hit show. The members of this company form the community in which the murder takes place. This novel finds Campion investigating the death of Chloe Pye, a has-been vaudeville performer with whom Sutane has had a previous relationship. As a result of that relationship, he has given her a role in his current London stage production. During her stay at the estate she is run over by his car and what at first appears to be an accident turns out to be murder. A series of incidents leads Campion to suspect that Sutane was Chloe's husband, that she was blackmailing him, and that he murdered her to prevent exposure as a bigamist. Lugg and Inspector Oates are again on hand to aid in Campion's enquiries, which are complicated by a second murder in which Benny Konrad, Sutane's ambitious understudy, is blown to bits by a bomb. In the end, Campion discovers that Chloe's husband—and her murderer—is actually Squire Mercer, Sutane's friend and composer. Mercer, considered a musical genius in theatrical circles, is like Max Fustian and John Barnabas in that he "honestly thought himself all-important" (236); he killed both Chloe and Konrad in order to avoid the inconvenience of dealing with this past relationship. The crime solved, the show goes on, only with a bit of a twist: the Sutanes decide to take it to America where Jimmy is even more popular than he is in England.

The milieu of The Fashion in Shrouds is London, again, and the plot is familiar to readers of the
detective genre. The community consists of a group of acquaintances all of whom are associated in
some way, either as clients or employees, with the House of Papendeik, a fashion house where
Campion's sister Valentine is the head designer. Campion investigates a series of seemingly unrelated
murders and discovers that each of the victims is somehow related to Georgia Wells, a stage actress
who patronizes the fashion house. The solution reveals the murderer to be Georgia's manager, Ferdie
Paul, who has killed two of her husbands in order to keep her from giving up the stage for love and thus
ruining his business. And according to Inspector Oates, his motive predictably involves "exalted ideas of
his own importance . . . the belief that a bit of their cash or a bit of their convenience is worth someone
else's life" (254).

The fact that these four novels satisfy the conventions of the detective genre and the
expectations of Allingham's wide readership also means that they serve as ideal camouflage for more
sophisticated cultural commentary. By embedding a novel of manners within their murder mystery plot,
Allingham is able to use a conventional form to explore and critique her own society during a period of
great flux which is commonly known as "modern" or "modernity," a term referring to the ambiguous and
contradictory ways in which changes to the social structure were perceived. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of
social difference offers one explanation of why the hybridity of the detective novel of manners is
especially suited to a discussion of social life during the 1930s. In his introduction to Bourdieu's work,
Craig Calhoun states that Bourdieu sees objectivist and subjectivist sociological approaches as
inadequate in explaining social life because "both are one-sided in that they divorce action from
structure" (260). That is, the objectivist stresses the ways in which structures "guide and constrain action"
but ignores the extent to which they, in turn, are "structured" by the actions of individuals. On the other
hand, he says that the subjectivist approach "tends to miss the cultural or material constraints that shape
people's actions" and "[a]s a result, commonly present[s] social life as much less structured, and much
more contingent, than it really is." According to Calhoun, Bourdieu's theory therefore "insists on a
dialectic of structure and action" (260), a process which takes place within a class-specific cultural
unconscious that Bourdieu calls the habitus. Allingham's hybrid genre is representative of just such a
dialectic: by embedding the novel of manners, with its emphasis upon the actions of the individual, within
the constraining structure of the formulaic detective plot, she emulates and embodies the contradictory
nature of social life in England in the 1930s, a society in which the middle-class is attempting to
negotiate a modernity characterized by increasingly porous boundaries between classes and gender roles within a *habitus* that tends to contain them. Hanna Charney agrees that the hybrid form is uniquely suited to just such a task, since

the detective novel of manners shapes its own society, where understanding of social and moral norms is expected, where crime must be taken into account, where conventions provide a shorthand for a morality asserted and reasserted, where distinctions become a matter of life and death and where narrators can speak to readers through the pervasive guise of an accepted fable and without the intricate guile of a torturous "sincerity." (xi-xii)

Indeed the formulaic box in which Allingham packs these four tales often bursts, spilling out its novelistic elements in ways that we do not anticipate. Thus, we expect a classical detective story because we recognize certain basic elements of its formula, which Ernest Mandel describes as "the happy ending. The criminal is always caught. Justice is always done." Yet at the same time that expectation is challenged when these books do not always conform to the remainder of Mandel's dictum that "[c]rime never pays. Bourgeois legality, bourgeois values, bourgeois society, always triumph in the end" (47). For example, *Flowers For the Judge* contains a complex message about the law, crime and punishment. Unlike the conventional detective story, which eschews the public trial and hanging in favour of the detective's revelation made in the privacy of the closed community, a major portion of this book is devoted to the description of a lengthy court proceeding against an innocent man. This trial, held by the public institution in which bourgeois legality resides, becomes a public spectacle much like those that went on before the public hanging was replaced with the prison sentence and "the crowd . . . a collective effect, [wa]s abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities . . . that can be numbered and supervised" (Foucault 211-212). As well, retribution for the murder is finally meted out, not in public by the justice system, but in private, although not by the detective (who also represents the law). Instead, a kind of rough justice is served up by Richie Barnabas, a member of the murderer's own family—for whom crime does seem to pay. After Richie kills his cousin, using the same method that the latter used on his own victim, he escapes his stifling life as a reader at Barnabas Publishing to join a carnival. There, in an ironic twist, he performs as a clown in the manner of *The Lord High Executioner* à la Gilbert and Sullivan.
This is only one example of how the novel of manners in the hands of Margery Allingham calls into question things that the classical detective story does not. The resulting texts, although they can be read as socially conservative, are not always so. This is especially evident in their discussion of the significant notions about the role of women during the 1930s, ideas upon which this thesis focuses in its reading of four Margery Allingham novels as complex modern fictions that simultaneously portray and question the British habitus of this period. In particular, the discourses of *Death of a Ghost*, *Flowers For the Judge*, *Dancers in Mourning* and *The Fashion in Shrouds* constitute an ideal lens through which the reader may see the various ways in which women negotiated a social and cultural condition called modernity. Because these four books belong to the detective genre, which "was in fashion at all levels of the literary marketplace towards the end of the 1920s" (Thorogood 125), they may be construed as articulating the concerns and preoccupations of a broad cross-section of readers during the time they were published. However, as novels of manners they are especially related to the lives and conduct of women, and as such reflect and critique the ways in which women of this period attempt to deal with contradictory and confusing messages about their role and sphere. On the one hand these books foreground the social manners, or tastes and lifestyles which, as widely known markers of middle-class gender roles, have always aimed to keep the existing roles, and consequently the social fabric, intact. On the other, they use the conventions of the mannerist detective story, particularly the dialectic of social conduct associated with murder—a potent symbol of the threat to social order—to direct our attention toward the aspects and expectations of the postwar Englishwoman that appear to threaten those roles.

In summary then, it is the hybrid nature of these four novels that forms the basis of this discussion, with special attention paid to the ways in which they exceed the murder mystery genre by marrying detective fiction with the novel of manners. The contradictions that are at the heart of the modern condition are mirrored in the contradictions between the familiar conventions of these two different genres, a condition upon which the success and popularity of the detective novel of manners rests. Although Allingham structures these books according to the three major elements of the classical detective story: "the murder . . . (or crime) at the beginning and its solution at the end; . . . the innocent suspect(s) and the unsuspected criminal; and . . . the detection, not by the police, but by an outsider" (Alewyn 73), she makes her detective an insider as well; as a result Campion participates in the life and shares the emotional experiences, both good and bad, of the community that he enters. Again,
Allingham follows most of Van Dine's rules² except those that prohibit displays of human emotion, specifically that "love has no place in detective fiction" (Todorov 49). Yet Campion's love for Linda Sutane is central to the plot of Dancers in Mourning, as are the love triangles between Val, Gloria and Allen in The Fashion in Shrouds and Gina, Mike and Paul in Flowers For the Judge and even the protective and tender love of Mr. Potter for his alcoholic wife in Death of a Ghost. Allingham also balances traditional motifs, such as the detective as hero, the discovery of a corpse, and the classic closed community in which the criminal is resident but law and order define goodness, with settings that have "an everyday and peaceful and deceptive surface [but] with abysses of mystery and danger underneath" (Alewyn 77). The result is what David Grossvogel calls "the perdurable mystery" (252) which, unlike the whodunit, does not create the expectation of a solution since it contains romantic elements that insist upon the limits of our ability to understand or find the truth. And finally, she gives us a detective, who is not only capable of finding his way through what Eco calls the "Mannerist maze . . . a model of the trial-and-error process" (Ewart 187), but who does so with the sprezzatura of the Renaissance man. Indeed, it will become evident when I examine each of the novels more closely that, although Albert Campion's solution of the crime results in the restoration of the surface order in Barnabas Publishing, Little Venice, The House of Papendeik and White Walls, it also leaves the women who have inhabited these microcosms of a changing society, as well as the detective and the reader, with the uneasy feeling that "mystery is the condition of [their] world and all external appearance is merely the hieroglyph of a concealed meaning" (Grossvogel 74).

It is my thesis, then, that the hybrid nature of these four novels enables a highly skilled and insightful writer like Margery Allingham to negotiate the contradictory notions about the place of women that characterize the 1930s; and that in doing so, she also reveals the potential of one of the most popular and accessible genres, the detective story, to engage its readers in a serious cultural dialogue. This capacity for social critique has been illustrated in this chapter's overview of Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds and in its discussion of them as generic hybrids. In the chapter that follows, I shall offer a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and historical foundations of this argument. These include Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital, which are useful in understanding life in a stratified society, critically contested notions of modernism and modernity out of which the perception of this period as contradictory,
discontinuous and fragmented arises, and the two popular and opposing ideas regarding the proper role and sphere of women, the Angel in the House and the New Woman, which were in circulation simultaneously during the 1930s. From here I shall turn to a close reading of the novels themselves as rich detective fictions whose simultaneous work as novels of manners reveals a complex investigation into women's attempt to negotiate a modernity in which their roles are characterized by inconsistency, conflict and paradox. Chapter three examines the contradictory notions regarding women's role in a "modern" marriage as well as women's fear that any change in their traditional role would be perceived as a loss of their femininity and, consequently, the end of their marriage or of their chances for marriage. Chapter four continues this discussion but focuses upon the perception that Englishmen have lost their masculinity. This belief that, as a result of women's experience in World War I, they have usurped men's place and thus somehow inverted the Victorian paternalistic relationship between the sexes is aptly summed up in the title of Leigh Wilson's essay "She in Her Armour and He in His Coat of Nerves" (179). Chapter five considers the significance of the private settings in these four novels that are not blessed by church and state. It examines the homes of three women who, as mistresses, appear to have taken the place of the modern wife as the provider of home as private sanctuary. These homes, unlike the marital homes in these books in which the boundaries between private and public have become increasingly blurred, appear to challenge the modern view that the domestic role of women in the private sphere is antithetical to self-fulfillment. The conclusions that result from the close reading of these texts will support my contention that in these four novels Margery Allingham's integration of the novel of manners into the detective story has created a unique and fertile forum in which critical social commentary regarding the role and sphere of women in a modern society may be carried out within a popular genre.
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The conflict between deeply rooted assumptions about the proper role of women and a society in which these roles have become unstable to the point that they are perceived as being in constant flux is particularly evident in the lives of women during the interwar years. On one hand, women are allowed a greater presence and role in the public sphere; on the other, they assume that role within a dominant middle-class value system that still perceives a woman's proper place to be the home and her natural role to be a subordinate one. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social difference, particularly his concept of habitus as the repository of such assumptions, is useful as an aid to understanding the origin, influence and longevity of such assumptions, even in the face of a rapidly changing social landscape.

According to Bourdieu, the habitus is a "system of dispositions," a set of internalized social and cultural preferences that is shared by individuals of the same class. These dispositions are manifested as social, political and cultural "tastes" or "manners" in areas as disparate as "music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle." They also determine the norms, powers and privileges of various groups within a society, thus "legitimating" the dominance of one class's taste over that of another (Distinction 6). Indeed, Craig Calhoun goes so far as to define the habitus as "the site of our understanding of the world" and the source of our particular "orientation to action and awareness" (261). However, he differentiates between habitus and ideology, in that "[o]ne can shake the effects of specific ideologies, but one cannot live without taken-for-granted assumptions that come with habitus" (262). The habitus is then, as its name suggests, where we live, socially and culturally speaking. It is class-specific in that it determines the individual's place and role within a stratified social system, as well as distinguishing between his or her place and that of others; and since the habitus is acquired unconsciously and perpetuated over generations, and its preferences and values therefore seem natural and "right" (261), they tend to persist across time. For instance, one of those values, the longstanding middle-class assumption that a woman's natural place is in the home and subject to the wishes and the wisdom of her husband or her father, is central to this thesis and the concept of habitus offers an explanation as to why this attitude should persist, despite the fact that World War I and the social changes that surround it may suggest differently.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus also provides insight into several other aspects of this thesis. It
allows us to explain why the setting of the cozy and even of the detective novel of manners during the 1920s and '30s is an upper middle-class world and why the world of Golden Age mystery writers such as Allingham and her contemporaries, Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, is resistant to the changes in class and gender roles that characterize modernity. Central to these questions is the notion of "capital." According to Calhoun, capital "provides the basic structure for the organization of fields" (262), the social positions that individuals occupy in relation to those of their own class and others. The family and the school, the two institutions that Bourdieu sees as responsible for the formation of a habitus, are the repositories of capital in a class-conscious society. There are three kinds of capital that individuals may either acquire or inherit: economic (money and property), social (connections made through one's family, friends or colleagues) and cultural capital, which is the prestige or status that accrues from the family's position either through birth or marriage and/or through attending the right school. Ultimately, all capital is social because it "derives its meaning from the social relationships that constitute different fields;" that is, material things are never simply "valuable in and of themselves" (263), but are symbols of one's status in the society.

Capital can also be, and often is, converted from one form to another. Indeed, Bourdieu claims that capital and the symbolic goods that it acquires (for example, a degree from the right school, a country house) signal not only the individual's or family's position or status within their own social milieu, but their degree of power or dominance in the society. And although he points out that these attitudes and values are acquired through social and cultural means, he also admits that they are perceived by those at all levels of society as innate or natural and therefore as ultimately moral or ethical in their assumptions about everyday practices. It follows, then, that by the 1930s, the values and attitudes of an upper-middle class that is rich in cultural capital should dominate all levels of English society, even—or perhaps especially—the fictional worlds of popular detective fiction in which the importance of a moral social order is a primary tenet.

Further insight into this unquestioning acceptance of the upper-middle class, not just as the arbiter of taste but as the natural keeper of authority and order, may be gained by an understanding of the "entitlement effect" (Distinction 22), a sense of legitimacy that Bourdieu claims "is the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school" (23). The latter reinforces this sense of legitimacy, which is already integral to the habitus of the
individual's family, 
by imposing 'titles,' a particular case of the attribution by status, whether positive (ennobling) or negative (stigmatizing), which every group produces by assigning individuals to hierarchically ordered classes. Whereas the holders of educationally uncertified cultural capital can always be required to prove themselves, because they are only what they do, merely a product of their own cultural production, the holders of titles of cultural nobility—like the titular members of an aristocracy, whose 'being', defined by their fidelity to a lineage, an estate, a race, a past, a fatherland or a tradition, is irreducible to any 'doing', to any know-how or function—only have to be what they are, because all their practices derive their value from their authors, being the affirmation and perpetuation of the essence by virtue of which they are performed. (23-24)

Thus the site of social order in Margery Allingham's detective novels of the 1920s and '30s is an upper-middle class setting whose inhabitants take a privileged upbringing and a private school education for granted. Bourdieu's theory would interpret these settings as reflections of their characters' *habitus* since they reflect a "unity of style" that is characteristic of that class:

One of the functions of *habitus* is to account for the unity of style, which unites the practices and goods of a single agent or class of agents (this is what writers such as Balzac or Flaubert have so finely expressed through their descriptions of settings ... which are at the same time descriptions of the characters who live in them). The *habitus* is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristic of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices. ("Social" 272)

This "unitary lifestyle" would then be the reason that the milieux of Allingham's *Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning* and *The Fashion in Shrouds*, like the country house settings of the conventional cozy, are virtually, if not literally, closed to those of other classes. That is, Little Venice, Barnabas Publishing, White Walls and the House of Papendeik are closed to those whose manner makes it plain that they do not belong. Bourdieu explains that the *habitus* [is] also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinctions between what is good and what is
bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so forth, but the distinctions are not identical. Thus, for instance, the same behavior or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else, and cheap or showy to yet another. (272)

Thus how to differentiate between the legitimate holders of power and those who would pretend to be is a serious issue during the interwar years when the boundaries of class are being constantly contested by a new group of individuals who aspire to the middle-class by right of employment or financial means. Bourdieu points out, however, that despite their material status, these newcomers are still identifiable by their manner:

Manner, by definition, only exists for others, and the recognized holders of the legitimate manner and of the power to define the value of manners—dress, bearing, pronunciation—have the privilege of indifference to their own manner (so they never have to put on a manner). By contrast, the parvenus who presume to join the group of legitimate, i.e., hereditary, possessors of the legitimate manner, without being the product of the same social conditions, are trapped, whatever they do, in a choice between anxious hyper-identification and the negativity which admits its defeat in its very revolt. (Distinction 95)

This indifference to their own manner by the upper-middle class is modelled by the characters in these novels who are perceived by the narrator to be good or right. Such indifference is evident in Belle Lafcadio’s eccentric dress, in Miss Curley’s placid disregard for what others think of her, in Linda Sutane’s dowdy dress and lack of makeup, and in Madame Papendeik’s willingness to remain behind the scenes of her own business. We also see it in the self-deprecating humour of John Lafcadio or William Faraday, in Dr. Bouverie’s ingenuous pride in his roses, in Ritchie Barnabas’s indifference to outward appearances, and especially in the unassuming manner of Albert Campion.

In contrast to the legitimate manner, which is no particular manner at all, is the “anxious hyper-identification” of the criminal and the victim. This is reflected in Max Fustian’s desperate attempts to gain status in the exclusive art world represented by Little Venice as well as those of Tom Dacre and Mrs. Potter, in both John Widdowson’s and Paul Brande’s overwhelming concern with appearances and their personal identification with the reputation of Barnabas Limited, in Squire Mercer’s exaggerated air of
"superiority which was somehow adolescent but none the less irritating" (Dancers 66), a description which also applies to his victims, Chloe Pye and Benny Konrad, and in Ferdie Paul’s perpetual demeanour of contemptuous amusement, a posture emulated by Ray Ramilies and Caroline Adamson.

Not coincidentally, the revolt by the criminal against the assumptions of this closed world takes the form of murder, the ultimate sin that results in the ultimate penalty, death. But the victim’s efforts to penetrate the closed world of the dominant class also ends in removal, not only from the society, but from this world. The only exception to the rule of the outsider is Albert Campion. The confidence placed in the amateur detective, who is, after all, only what he does and therefore is called upon to prove himself again and again, rests upon the fact that, at the same time, he is entitled to membership in the legitimate society. As an aristocrat and holder of even more substantial cultural capital than members of the upper-middle class, he can be relied upon to restore order to their world.

Unlike her contemporary Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham is not a member of the upper-middle class; yet in her fiction, at least, she seems to identify with them in many ways. One may suppose that despite the fact that her own habitus, and that of many of her readers, is that of the lower, middle or working classes, Margery Allingham chooses to populate her detective fiction with upper-middle class characters simply to cater to a populace that is curious about the lifestyle and foibles of their betters. Bourdieu’s notion of the entitlement effect, however, suggests another explanation. In his essay “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” Bourdieu comments upon the power of this effect upon all classes, including the creators and consumers of popular culture. He points out that the “cultural producers who occupy the economically dominated and symbolically dominant position within the field of cultural production (the avant garde), tend to feel solidarity with the occupants of the economically and culturally dominated positions within the field of class relations” (296). Given the increasing significance in a post-war modern society of economic capital as a marker of one’s class, or at least the class to which one can now realistically aspire, might not the reverse also hold true? That is, if members of the avant garde identify with a working class with which they share only an economic disadvantage, might not economically dominant but symbolically dominated popular fiction writers like Allingham also see their shared economic position as a point of identification with a culturally dominant class? Such a preference would also offer another explanation for the fact that even though Allingham’s detective fiction is written for popular consumption, the characters whom she paints most sympathetically
and whose goodness and power appear (at least in the conventional mystery plot) to go unquestioned are members of the upper-middle class.

Interestingly, in 1934 Margery Allingham moved from the safe and familiar formula detective story to a "literary" genre with which Dorothy L. Sayers, with her Oxford education and her country parsonage upbringing, was far more likely to feel comfortable. The interrelatedness of the habitus, capital and field within the literary world is significant here, as is Bourdieu's metaphor of social life as a game. This notion of a game played upon a "field," in which cultural capital is the prize, is especially useful in understanding what enabled Allingham to abandon her highly marketable "field" of formula fiction and attempt to succeed in a more "artistic" genre. According to Calhoun, status is also the prize in the game of literary life:

Bourdieu shows that while the literary field has its own organizing logic, it is not completely separate from considerations of power. Oppositions between different sets of positions are structured simultaneously by relation to the economic market and by claims to artistic purity. High status in the field demanded not just talent, or vision, but also a commitment to "art for art's sake." This meant producing works specifically designed for the field of art, rather than the market. (264-5)

According to B. A. Pike's brief biography on the web site that is devoted to her, Margery Allingham came from a family of writers that she described as "second generation London Irish," who provided the popular press with melodramas, stories for magazines and serials for weekly newspapers. She attended the Perse School for Girls and later the Regent Street Polytechnic where she studied drama. However, by the early 1930s, Margery Allingham had amassed and converted significant economic and social capital into considerably more cultural capital than her family or educational background would have ordinarily provided. She had moved, as the new owner of a country estate with servants, to a large house just down the road from the one from which her own family had been evicted in 1916, when their publications could no longer compete with the flamboyant style or the monetary backing of the new popular periodicals. She had also achieved far wider professional status than had her parents: she was already being spoken of in the same breath as Agatha Christie and, more importantly, Dorothy L. Sayers, an upper-middle class graduate of Cambridge. Sayers had recently published a detective novel of manners called Strong Poison (1931) in which her detective Lord Peter Wimsey falls
in love with his future wife, the feminist Harriet Vane, and portents of Allingham's venture into a similar type of detective fiction may be seen in the appearance of a similar character, Lady Amanda Fitton in *The Fear Sign* which she published in 1933; like Harriet Vane, Lady Amanda was an independent young woman and her aptitude for all things electrical signals her reappearance five years later in *The Fashion in Shrouds* as a New Woman of the post-war generation, a professional engineer and Campion's future wife.

Despite all of this, in her next four novels, which are also the focus of this thesis, Allingham showed no commitment to "art for art's sake" or to the abandonment of a marketable product; and while Bourdieu's notion of the power and longevity of *habitus* suggests why she could not contemplate such a profound change in her professional status, Craig Calhoun's elaboration upon his metaphor of social (and literary) life as a game sheds light upon how she managed to make even the move that she did. Calhoun compares the dispositions of the *habitus* to the rules of a game and notes that even though a game has certain basic rules, there is considerable latitude in how those rules are observed. Therefore, he says, even though the *habitus* has been shaped by generations of social practice, it is "flexible" (261). And even though its dispositions "are deeply rooted," they can be "applied to new settings" through the use of "strategies." The result is a set of characteristic social positions, that are expressed through practices or manners, but whose expression may change according to "what meets with approval or doesn't, what works or does not, [thus enabling us to] develop a characteristic way of generating new actions, of improvising the moves of the game of our lives" (261). Michel de Certeau sheds further light on these "strategies" which he calls subtle "combinations . . . [that] navigate among the rules, play with all the possibilities offered by traditions, make use of one tradition rather than another, compensate for one by means of another . . . Strategies do not apply principles or rules; they choose among them to make up the repertory of their operations" (*Practice* 54). In choosing to hybridize two traditions, Margery Allingham does just that. She navigates among the literary rules and plays with the possibilities offered by both the conventions of the classical detective story and the more plastic novel of manners. By doing so, she is able to determine what works for her and what does not, what meets with the approval of her *habitus* and what is outside its realm and therefore beyond her own comfort level. In short, she is able to navigate within a more "literary" genre, but still observe the rules of the game by virtue of her formulaic safety net.
At the same time as she ventures into new professional territory, however, Margery Allingham's personal life still reflects the prewar notions concerning the proper place of women as the private sphere and their role as subordinate. According to her biographer, Julia Thorogood, despite her success in the public sphere and the fact that she is the sole support of her artist husband, Pip Youngman Carter, and of a group of live-in friends and a large country estate, Allingham still accepts her husband's criticism of her work, as well as his 'friendships' (168) with other women. In light of this, Calhoun's reminder of how deeply rooted such notions as the subordination of women are seems timely:

*habitus* is acquired through repetition, like a habit; we know it in our bodies, not just our minds. . . . The resistance we confront in struggling to do well teaches us to accept inequality in our societies. Although it often reflects class or other aspects of social structure, it comes to feel natural. We learn and incorporate into our *habitus* a sense of what we can "reasonably" expect. This shapes how we choose careers, how we decide which people are "right" for us to date or marry, and how we raise our children.

(Calhoun 261)

Allingham's family background and education are a testament to this. She did not so much choose the role of popular fiction writer and working woman as she was born into it. As far back as the early nineteenth-century, her ancestors were writing melodramas and popular stories set in boys' schools. Her female relatives all wrote for a living. Her mother Em co-owned *The London Journal* with her father and regularly produced "light tales of detection" that featured the adventures of a female sleuth, billed as "the beautiful and famous lady-detective, Phinella Martin" (Thorogood 36). Her Aunt Maud wrote, owned and published magazines for young women to which Allingham contributed from an early age. Indeed, at the tender age of seven, Margery was equipped with her own tiny office, complete with desk, calendar, paper and pencil and encouraged to join the family firm. She also expected to receive guidance and criticism from men. Her father Herbert wrote serials, one of which featured a sleuth called The Duffer, whom Allingham's biographer speculates may have been the prototype for Peter Wimsey, as well as Albert Campion (36). Allingham was trained to "plot" at his knee and he supervised and critiqued her work until she married, requiring her to submit a synopsis of every assignment that she undertook before she began to write (33). She also accepted, apparently without complaint, criticism from her father's friend, William McFee, a successful author of "serious" literature, whom Thorogood suggests also "thought of
himself as Margery's literary godfather... and did not hesitate to express his displeasure [when he believed that] Margery was spending too much time on murder mysteries" (39).

In the essay "Structures, Habitus, Practices," Bourdieu's theory offers further insight into why Allingham and others of her class should have been resistant to the change in women's sphere, even as they assumed the role of breadwinner and achieved a professional success previously enjoyed only by men:

The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. (278)

During the interwar years, those formal rules are also legal ones that guarantee women the right to vote, to own property and to divorce a husband who abuses them. Bourdieu's concept of the cultural unconscious also helps to explain why, even though these changes in women's lives may have been seen as a break with the past, given the nature of *habitus* they often made little difference in actual social practice:

This system of dispositions—a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted—is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it... Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expression and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning. (278-9)

It is the conflict between this proclivity of the *habitus* toward a "continuity and regularity" that perpetuates the idea of women as naturally subordinate to men and a feminist rhetoric that proclaims women to be as competent as their male counterparts that characterizes women's lives during the 1930s. It is this conflict, too, that is reflected in the lives of Margery Allingham's female characters as they attempt to
negotiate a modernity also characterized by these contradictory notions.

What does “modernity” mean within the context of this thesis? In Introduction to Modernity, Henri Lefebvre’s major work on the topic, a brief chronological history of its use confirms not only that there are many meanings of “modern,” but that its meaning is contextual, that is, specific to a time and place. In the Middle Ages, he says, “modern” had a cyclical connotation, signifying “renewal and . . . regularity in renewal” (168). He cites as an example newly elected French magistrates who were called “moderns” simply as a way of distinguishing them from those who had completed their term and were called “ancients.” Lefebvre claims that, by the end of the Middle Ages, the term had developed polemical connotations. Due to its association with avant-garde innovation and experimentation, it became synonymous with a rejection of all that was “old-fashioned,” a meaning exemplified by “the famous querelle des anciens et des modernes” (168) at the end of the seventeenth-century and still with us today. By the nineteenth-century, the connotation of “modern” had also taken on political overtones; it referred to a stage in what Marx saw as the natural and inevitable evolution of western society, specifically the “rise of the bourgeoisie, economic growth, the establishment of capitalism, their political manifestations and, last but not least, a critique of these historical facts as an ensemble” (Lefebvre 169). During this same period, however, Baudelaire used the term “modern” to express quite the opposite: its connotation being aesthetic, “modern” for Baudelaire referred to the abstract, the artificial, the contingent and “in particular, the ephemeral, the fleeting” (170). To be “modern” for Baudelaire meant to be unpredictable, spontaneous and innovative just for the sake of being so. In the twentieth-century modernity became associated with technology, mass reproduction and communication and, according to Lefebvre, its defining characteristics became discontinuity (of structure, type and form which overcame continuity and consequently changed reality) and contradiction, in which “modern” consciousness [wa]s made up of equal parts of certainty and uncertainty, seriousness and superficiality . . . the cult of the everchanging here-and-now and a neoclassicism” (184).

By the 1930s the rise of an artistic and literary movement known as Modernism had further confused the meaning of modernity as well as calling its time frame into question. Lefebvre, an intellectual historian, defines Modernism as “a social and ideological fact,” and he cites as an example “the cult of innovation for innovation’s sake, innovation as fetish” (169), as opposed to modernity which he understands as a “bid for knowledge” (1). “Modernity,” he says, “differs from modernism just as a
concept which is being formulated in society differs from social phenomena themselves, just as a thought differs from actual events. [Yet at the same time, the two are intertwined, since] the history of modernism cannot be written without the history of the concept of modernity (and vice versa)” (2).

Modernity, according to Lefebvre, is “best characterized, not as an already established structure, nor as something which clearly has the capacity to become structured and coherent, but rather as a fruitless attempt to achieve structure and coherence” (187). He cites as evidence the contradictions of modern life, such as individual loneliness amid crowds, separation and totalization, the individual in opposition to the state or culture, security and violence, the prizing of mobility over the yearning for stability, and the reprivatization of everyday life and globalization.

Understandably, literary scholars draw somewhat different distinctions between “Modernism” and “modernity.” Scott Christianson, who places the beginning of modernity with the Enlightenment, sees modernity as “a culture or metadiscourse,” which reflects a way of thinking and within which the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century art and literary movement known as Modernism was simply “subsumed” (136). Margaret Boe Birns and Nicholas Birns and Alison Light argue, using Agatha Christie’s mystery stories as their exemplars, that to be modern is to privilege formalism and to use the social mask in order to conceal or confuse reality. Light also cites Christie’s “modern sense of the unstable limits of respectability . . . modernist irony [and] . . . language of reticence” (61-2) as indicators of the modernness of her writing. Lawrence Rainey talks about Modernism as essentially the purview of the avant garde but, citing the works of James Joyce, T.S. Eliot and others of their time, he still characterizes it as contradictory. In fact, he goes so far as to suggest that it is hypocritical in its simultaneous opposition to commodity culture and its use of marketing practices and cites Modernism’s references to “patrons” such as The Dial or Sylvia Beach who were, in reality, just in the business of selling print. He also notes the paradox between “the ordinary edition and the limited edition [which] entailed antithetical and incompatible understandings of production, audience and market dynamics [that] could not coexist” (56).

On the other hand, social historians like Noel Annan and Marshall Berman see modernity through the lens of ordinary people’s lives. Annan writes that during the interwar years, “Modernists valued Style, Experiment, Originality and Mockery” (52). In this, he would appear to agree with Christianson and Rainey that modernity (and its artistic movement Modernism) was a way of thinking.
However, his account of its arrival suggests that, at least in its early twentieth-century form, its effect was one of deep social rupture and personal upheaval for every English person:

There is, however, considerable agreement on the date modernism arrived in England. Frank Kermode will not date it before 1907 . . . All agree that it could not possibly be put later than 1925 . . . Virginia Woolf cited "in or about December 1910 [as the time that] human character changed . . . All human relations shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature." (Annan 56)

Marshall Berman, an American scholar, goes even further when he talks about the nature of modernity: "to be modern is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air" (345). Berman, like Lefebvre, defines what it means to be "modern" as diverse and contextual, that is, determined by the demands of the culture and society of a specific time and place. And like Lefebvre, he also distinguishes between modernity as a concept and modernism as an attempt to realize that concept:

To be a modernist is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own, to move within its currents in search of the forms of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows.

The modern world has changed radically in many ways over the past two hundred years; but the situation of the modernist, trying to survive and create in the maelstrom's midst, has remained substantially the same. (345-6)

Indeed, for Berman, as for Lefebvre, to be "modern," at least in the twentieth-century, is to be in a constant state of contradiction: Berman's modernist attempt "to make oneself somehow at home in a maelstrom" becomes by its very nature LeFevre's "fruitless attempt to achieve structure and coherence," both apt descriptions of life during the 1930s.

To live in England during the 1930s, then, is to feel the full impact of the social, political, cultural and economic upheaval that characterized the interwar years. Precisely when this massive shift began is the subject of debate, but Noel Annan selects 1918, before which, he says, England was governed by
the culture of the gentleman . . . [in which] most of the educated classes were not
disaffected . . . parents, teachers, managers and foremen, above all the older
generation, were vested with an authority and respect that would be regarded as
astonishing today . . . [and] Britain had not yet become a mass society . . . no woman
had the vote . . . universal male suffrage was still a novelty [and the] welfare state was in
its infancy and much scorned. (23)

And, although in hindsight historian Adrian Caesar questions what he calls "the myth of England tottering
on the brink of revolution or about to sink under the depression," he does acknowledge the radical
change in the English social order that was felt during a decade which he says had been

neatly framed by the Wall Street Crash and the outbreak of the Second World War, at a
time of "crisis" dominated by extremist politics [and] images and events [such as] dole
queues, the Jarrow Crusade, Moseley and the British Union of Fascists, the "King and
Country" debate at Oxford, the Peace Pledge Union and the Peace Ballot, the activities
of the Left Book Clubs . . . all of which contributed to the notion that the 1930s was a
time of widespread political agitation and activism. (10)

Indeed in The Oaken Heart her autobiographical account of life in England in the late 1930s, Allingham
recalls her own generation's dilemma, as well as that of her parents and grandparents:

Those of us who were in our teens when the [First World] war ended came out . . . into a
disillusioned world wherein everything, including God, was highly suspect. . . . Nobody
knew anything at all for certain. The most elementary morals were in considerable doubt.
Every formula for behaviour whose use was not instantly apparent had been thrown
overboard. Our parents, school-teachers and clergy, sickened by a catastrophe which
everybody said was the direct outcome of a world in which most of them had lived
happily and innocently, turned from any thought of instructing us with weary self-disgust.
Having lost their younger brothers and their elder sons, apparently through some
unspecified fault of their own or their fathers', they had nothing they dared tell us. We
were given doorkeys and the freedom of a shambles. . . . Since then the whole
generation has had to find out how to live by trial and error, with the main result that it
has learnt what little it does know very thoroughly indeed. It has found out from bitter
personal experience the consequences of most of the commoner sins and the value of many conventions. Above all things it has learnt to watch, to hesitate, and never to be surprised by the worst. (21-22)

In a society already reeling from the cultural disillusionment, economic and technological change and working-class unrest that followed the Great War, it is hardly surprising, then, that by the mid-1930s the centuries-old patriarchal and hierarchical social order of upper-middle class England should be perceived to be in grave danger of collapse and that any move to increase women's role in the public sphere should be seen as a serious threat to that order.

At the root of these fears are two widely popular and opposing notions of the role of women that were in circulation simultaneously. The "Angel in the House" and the "New Woman" both have their origins in the Victorian period, but are still very much alive in the cultural unconscious of English men and women during the 1930s. According to Sarah Eron’s article on the Internet site victoriaweb.org, the image of the Angel in the House is the earlier of the two, first appearing in 1854 as the title of a poem by Coventry Patmore. The poem is published in two installments, each of which "takes the form of two sections (or "books")." The first installment, entitled Angel in the House is divided into "The Betrothal" and "The Espousals" ... [and] the second, which appears in 1862 under the title Victories of Love, into "Faithful Forever" and "The Victories of Love." They are combined "into one complete revised edition [The Angel in the House] in 1863." However, it is the first installment that is considered to be the most popular and influential of its day, especially after Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert. In tracing the background to her Internet article on "Charlotte Bronte and Jane Eyre," Lilia Melani indicates that it is largely because of Victoria’s "devoting herself to a domestic life [that] the ideal spreads throughout nineteenth-century society."

The first installment of the poem, Angel in the House, tells the story of the courtship and marriage of Felix Vaughan and a rector's daughter Honoria and it paints, according to Melani, a picture of "the ideal woman and the male-female relationship" of Victorian times. The poem claims that the strength of the ideal woman is in her "beneficent power ... to make brutes men, and men divine" (Ousby 30), a task which appears to demand enormous patience, sacrifice and self-abnegation. Patmore portays the ideal male-female relationship as one in which "man must be pleased; but him to please/is woman's pleasure" (Melani). Melani describes the world of the Angel in the House, the world in which Charlotte
Bronte wrote her novel:

Conventional wisdom held that men and women had separate "spheres" and duties, with women's sphere being the house, family, and self-sacrifice. The popular image for the ideal woman was "the Angel in the House," who was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all—pure.

As evidence of the latter, she notes that Jane Eyre, which "was published in 1847 [and] became a bestseller [enjoyed] reviews [which] were on the whole favorable . . . [until] it became known that a woman had written such a passionate novel and seemed so knowing sexually [at which time] the reviews became more negative." Melani goes on to say that when Charlotte asked the poet laureate Robert Southey to evaluate her writing his response reflected the view that a woman's place was in the home and her work was of the house and family: "Literature," he said, "cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation."

The woman, then, who aspires to emulate the potent symbol of Victorian female virtue that is the Angel in the House is required to be entirely devoted to her husband yet never demanding, always unconditionally loving yet sexually innocent. This woman's only sphere is the domestic one and her only role is to serve others, an image that Woolf describes, in "Professions for Women" (a paper read to the National Society for Women's Service on January 21, 1931), as one whose "purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace [and who was advised when dealing with men] 'Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure'" (336). Indeed, this image of womanly virtue was still sufficiently powerful during the interwar years for Woolf to proclaim the necessity for the woman writer of "killing the Angel in the House" (339).

Kimberly Reilly tells us that, in direct opposition to this image, the New Woman's "most salient features are her participation in the labour force, forthright sexuality, and autonomy." She also indicates that the New Woman is seen as a "figure who symbolized the demise of the Victorian doctrine of separate sexual spheres . . . [an] ideology . . . [that] had underwritten not simply beliefs about masculinity and femininity, but, more profoundly, the meaning of selfhood throughout the Victorian era." First
portrayed by the popular media of both England and the United States during the 1880s and 1890s, the New Woman is frequently compared to the Decadent male, in that both are seen as "degenerate and amoral in their reversal of gender roles" (Manos 49). In response to these accusations, Sarah Grand's New Woman trilogy, Ideals, The Heavenly Twins and The Beth Book, published during the 1890s, champions the New Woman as a force for, rather than against, the moral values of the Victorians. These books portray the New Woman as a social reformer intent upon helping prostitutes and other women victimized by unscrupulous men. They are successful because this portrayal does not stray far from the qualities that defined the Angel in the House and because they meet the requirement of Victorian readers that fiction should fulfill a practical function, standing as they do in stark opposition to the new stylists who embraced the "art for art's sake" movement.

Talia Schaffer points out that the actual New Woman of the pre-war period in England "agitated for greater autonomy in everything from etiquette to employment" (39) and that she demanded the vote because she believed that suffrage would automatically result in better private and public lives for all women. She saw political power as automatically giving women the power to create social programs, such as birth control information and antenatal care. Her goal was to improve the health and welfare of working class women as well as the conventional Victorian middle-class wife whose life was lived almost entirely within the home and whose body, like her money, was considered the property of her husband. Schaffer also admits that after the Great War these women were to be sorely disappointed. Despite their victories in gaining the right to vote and to own property, the majority of English middle-class women did not exercise their considerable political power as a bloc. Instead they often voted the way their husbands told them to, thus demonstrating just how deeply embedded in the cultural unconscious of both women and men was the ideal of a femininity that was passive and subordinate to the wishes of men—a femininity represented by the image of the Angel in the House.

Nevertheless, various images of the New Woman continued to appear throughout the period between the 1890s and the 1930s. These included the suffragette, which Talia Schaffer describes as the "unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world" (39), the turn-of-the-century devotee of rational dress and bicycle riding, May Sinclair's Joan of Arc figure, and the flapper that Cecilia Tichi associates with the "1920s Jazz Age . . . with the bobbed hair and boyish figure that proclaimed the personal freedom foreclosed to her grandmother" (590). The authors of "Clash of Cultures in the 1910s
and 1920s: The New Woman* tell us that among those women who participated in expanding women's public roles . . . between the 1890s and the 1920s . . . were glamorous performers, female athletes, "working girls" employed in city factories and rural textile mills, middle-class daughters entering higher education and professions formerly closed to women, and reformers involved in women's clubs, settlement houses, trade unions, and suffrage. (History "New Women")

Whether these images were associated with political, social or personal issues, according to Cecilia Tichi, they were all seen to "challeng[e] the foundations of a patriarchal society" and to "flout[] middle-class convention" (590) in their questioning of the received wisdom, that is, the assumption that for women the only path to personal fulfilment lay in a marriage in the mode of the Angel of the House rather than in the kind of work that many women are already performing in the public sphere.

However, Tichi also tells us that despite these challenges to middle-class values, the New Woman was, like the Angel, "very much a middle-class figure, since women lower on the socioeconomic ladder, laborers for decades as domestics and as factory operatives, were not at liberty to shape their lives according to such principles." In fact, "the lives of most nineteenth-century women—especially middle-class women but also domestic servants . . . tended to revolve around home life" (592). And even though, by the 1930s, women had made substantial gains in many areas the situation was much the same. In 1857 the Matrimonial Causes Act had enabled a woman to divorce her husband on the grounds of cruelty, desertion or rape. In 1878, the same Act had been amended to grant maintenance payments to a woman whose separation from her husband was the result of an assault. And in 1923 the law had finally allowed a woman the same right that men had always enjoyed—the right to sue for divorce on the grounds of adultery. Yet divorce was still seen as a last resort, especially for middle-class women of the time since "women remained economically and politically subordinate to men" (History "New Women").

And in the "popular magazines throughout the period, writers called for a return to old-fashioned morals and codes of behavior that had been discarded by much of the younger generation. Men and women alike were critics of the new woman and social agencies joined parents in attempting to return to Victorian standards of conduct in which women were supposed to be sexually passionless" (History "Opposition"). Indeed, the New Woman was criticized by both liberal and conservative-minded folk: "Conservative forces in society, including churches . . . vehemently opposed women's new roles. Others
who supported change, such as . . . reformers and suffragettes . . . criticized the new woman for her disinterest in politics and careers in favour of commercial entertainment" (History "New Women").

Contradictory messages about the relationship between moral purity and domesticity, then, are prevalent prior to, as well as throughout, the interwar period. Melani, in her outline of "Contemporary Responses to Jane Eyre," indicates that reviewers criticized it for its "coarseness" and its connection "with the grosser and more animal portion of our nature," while Cecilia Tichi tells us that at the same time "[c]entral to literary portrayals of the new woman [i]s the idea of women's sexual freedom, including the right to abstain and to choose sexual partners in or out of marital relationships" (591). Works of popular fiction such as George Meredith's 1879 novel The Egoist and others, by fin-de-siècle writers such as George Gissing, Grant Allen, William Barry and Mona Caird, attacked the romanticized version of marriage directly. Literary novels such as Barry's The New Antigone, published in 1887, and Allen's The Woman Who Did, published in 1895, feature middle-class heroines who see the role of wife as slavery; Mona Caird's article of 1888, entitled "Marriage," called the institution "the established system of restriction" (Tichi 166) for women and believed it undesirable under any circumstances; and George Gissing "document[s] in his novels the dimensions of new kinds of relationships, unconventional and disturbing, between men and women" (198), as well as using the misogyny of the typical middle-class Victorian husband to undermine the idea that a woman can find a fulfilling life by making a home for a man and his children.

Finally, a woman's fear of being perceived as unfeminine or her husband's feeling that he has somehow been emasculated are also deeply implicated in women's and men's ambivalence about the New Woman's demand for a greater role in the public sphere. Several popular English journalists and novelists address that fear during the interwar years by suggesting that the modern woman really can, as Betty Friedan put it decades later, "have it all," that is, she can participate fully in a man's world and at the same time retain her femininity in the domestic one. For instance, Ann Heilman tells us that May Sinclair responded to WWI by "[r]eshaping the fin-de-siècle feminist trope of feminism's evolutionary role . . . [and] construct[ing] in her novels Tasker Jevons of 1916 and The Romantic of 1920 the New Woman as a paragon of superior physical and mental strength. . . . Sinclair's use of Joan of Arc within the context of the trenches resulted in a
"radical redefinition of the concepts of chivalry" and romantic desire. As in Salome's _Der Mensch als Weib_, lack is codified as an essentially male attribute, while woman embodies military valour, public "manhood," and human wholeness. (13)

Sinclair's idea of chivalry is not, however, a simple inversion of the heroic male knight's quest. Indeed, her New Woman needs to look no further than herself for the feminine and masculine qualities that allow her to perform well in both the private and public spheres. In other words, she is complete in herself.

During the 1920s, Vera Brittain's brand of feminism argued that women can have the best of both worlds, that is, a successful career as well as a husband and family. Brittain sees the solution to the femininity-equals-domesticity dilemma in a marriage that is an equal partnership, with wives enjoying the same freedom as their husbands to work outside the home. Anticipating the views of twentieth-century feminist, Friedan,

[Brittain's articles] offer practical advice gleaned from her own experience. She suggests that the "acceptance by all professions of a certain number of part-time members" would enable "the majority of married women" to continue working during "the early years of motherhood." One of her more radical demands was that "English husbands learn . . . to take their full share of domestic responsibility" by sharing household chores and childcare with their wives. . . . [and] by the mid 1920s . . . Brittain's journalism . . . [has] the New Feminist wife . . . negotiat[ing] an alternative "wifestyle" with her New Feminist husband. (Peterson 32)

Brittain also believes that modern labour-saving devices can facilitate this arrangement and in this idea she draws upon the works of several New Women of the nineteenth-century. According to Heilmann, Brittain's idea of the "semi-detached marriage," in which both husband and wife lead independent lives, at times apart from one another, seems likely to have been inspired by Mona Caird's 1915 novel _The Stones of Sacrifice_ in which the husband and wife live in separate apartments but share a living room, an arrangement that "combined independence and companionship" (Heilmann 5). As well, Brittain is perceived to have been influenced by Olive Schreiner's _Story of an African Farm_ and _Woman and Labour_, both of which urged women to "reclaim the right to work" (Peterson 29). Her brand of feminism is also indebted to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's _Women and Economics_, which called for "communal kitchens . . . laundries, creches and nursery schools" (33). However, Heilmann claims that
Brittain differed from these particular forerunners in her conviction that women really can practise the traditional role of wife and mother as well as pursue a professional life in the public sphere. Indeed, she practised what she preached, in that between 1925 and 1930, she married, had two children and published 287 articles and four books.

On the other hand, Dorothy Richardson, author of a novel cycle entitled Pilgrimage, which was published between 1915 and 1967, urges women to look within themselves where she believes they can find the moral and emotional strength required to live with some contentment regardless of the time, place and circumstances of their lives. Richardson's feminism, according to Ann Heilmann, differentiates between male and female modes of consciousness and perception, juxtaposing a fact-oriented mind thinking in propositions and centred on "becoming" with the holistic (and Romantic) conception of a "synthetic consciousness" predominantly concerned with "being." This synthetic consciousness distinguished the "womanly woman" from men. Richardson's womanly woman (a concept she used differently than fin-de-siècle New Woman writers) aims at a state of consummate unselfishness which, paradoxically, is achieved only by a consummately self-centred consciousness. (13) Richardson attempts to illustrate this process within her female character Miriam who speaks in, what Virginia Woolf calls, "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender" (Gregory ix).

Although the inward focus of Richardson's "womanly woman" would seem to set her at odds with Sarah Grand's pre-war "womanly woman," whose sense of public responsibility and social involvement defines her as a New Woman, Heilmann points out that Richardson's novels do reflect an awareness of the social factors that denied women equality in the professional world. The actual difference between the two views would appear to be the source from which they believe that real power emanates. In this regard Brittain is more like Grand since they both believe that change is achieved through social activism. At the same time, there are parallels between the perspectives of Sinclair and Richardson who share an equally fervent belief that it is through individual self-development and confidence that women are enabled. What all of these approaches have in common, however, is a desire to create "a recognizable identity, one derived largely from the rational, analytical demystification" of the nineteenth-century image of the "fair sex" (Tichi 591) most commonly represented by the Angel in the House. In doing so, they also become ways to negotiate the contradictions of an interwar society that, on one hand,
declares the New Woman's right to the same freedom and equality in the public sphere enjoyed by men and, on the other, still sees true womanliness embodied in the opposing figure of the Angel in the House.

Richard Raskin suggests that one of the ways that the detective novel influences its readers' perception of the social world, as well as their personal values and thought patterns, is by reinforcing or subverting what he calls "social myths which serve the purposes of groups enjoying or aspiring to privilege and power with respect to other groups" (96). One of these social myths, during the 1930s, was that women's lives had changed since World War I. However, surrounding this notion there were ambiguities and contradictions that suggested otherwise. These are revealed by Allingham through two different narratives that examine gender roles and relations. In such a process, Elaine Showalter says, "[t]he orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint" (Gilbert and Gubar Madwoman 75). In these novels, the orthodox plot is that of the conventional detective plot which reinforces the current notion that modernity has freed women from the traditional roles of Victorian times. The unorthodox plot subverts this myth by issuing what Patricia Meyer Spacks calls "subterranean challenges to truths that [the narrator] appear[s] on the surface to accept" (75). This subversive narrative suggests that the relationship between men and women, as it has been prescribed by the upper-middle class since Victorian times, is still dominant in the cultural unconscious of both sexes; that gender roles are, like many other social constructs of the time, in flux; and that attitudes towards women's changing roles, particularly in marriage, are fraught with confusion and conflict.

Implicit in this social myth that women's role and sphere have broadened is the notion of androgyny. The concept of androgyny that is predominant during the 1930s is linked specifically to gender roles that, according to the The Free Dictionary, are "a set of behavioural norms" imposed by society "through a process called socialization. . . . Gender roles are different social roles for men and women, which vary with changes in culture. As people gradually became aware of their facility for self-determination, gender, and the established roles within society, began to be tested with this newfound concept of self," which we call androgyny. Androgyny, then, for the purposes of this discussion, is the individual's capacity to assume both male and female social roles as they are defined by English society. This capacity is reflected in the figure of the New Woman as she is portrayed in the ideals of feminist writers such as Mona Caird, May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson and Vera Brittain, that is, a
woman who has found a way of being in both the public and the private spheres, a way that Woolf describes in “A Room of One’s Own” as “woman-manly or man-womanly . . . a marriage of opposites . . . consummated” (97). Indeed I would argue that Allingham goes so far as to create an androgynous form when she writes these detective novels of manners; that her marriage of the ‘masculine’ popular detective story whose narrative and conventions are those of the dominant cultural myth and the ‘feminine’ novel of manners, which traditionally challenges that myth, is a reflection of the notion of androgyny that prevails at the time; and that the result is a genre that provides an ideal forum for her exploration of how women negotiated these conflicting notions in the 1930s.

In these four novels, then, Margery Allingham’s objective is similar to that of Virginia Woolf, whose journey with Mary Beton through the halls of Oxford is an attempt to portray, as John Burt puts it, “how a mind attempts to come to terms with its world” (Bloom 239). I would suggest that Allingham’s attempt to do so is reflected in the investigations of her detective, Albert Campion. In fact, Julia Thorogood supports this by a quotation from the author herself. When asked whether there was a link between “the increasingly androgynous post-war figure Campion and his creator, [Allingham] finally admitted as much in a 1958 article that she wrote for the magazine Time and Tide called ‘What to Do With an Ageing Detective.’ “As the only life I had to give anybody was my own,” [she] explained, [Campion and I] grew very close as the years went by” (28). In his efforts to come to terms with the contradictions and ambiguities of the modern worlds of Little Venice, Barnabas Publishing, White Walls and Caesar’s Court, Campion’s method, like the hybrid genre employed by Allingham, is androgynous. He relies upon the ‘masculine’ logic of the conventional investigation with its clues and evidence, as well as a ‘feminine’ intuition that he describes as a “miraculous sense which is either second sight or the lightning calculation of the subconscious mind which nothing escapes” (Flowers 210) and which warns him of dangers as yet unseen or experienced, such as the door that leads to a certain death in Flowers.

At the same time, Campion may be perceived as androgynous in the sense that he reflects the conflicting roles that men and women (but especially women) are attempting to negotiate during this period. On one hand, this unassuming and self-effacing, “lank, pale-faced young man with sleek fair hair and horn-rimmed spectacles” (Death 3), whose “[vacant] expression . . . counteracted the pleasant angles of his face and lent his whole appearance an indefinable quality” (Dancers 7), models the feminization of a post-war generation of men that is seen to be lacking masculinity as it was defined by
the Victorians. He is, in this regard, the quintessential "modern" man: classless, effeminate and complicated. A disenchanted aristocrat, whose relatives are forever "dash[ing] off another note to the family solicitor disinheriting [him]" (Fashion 11), and a far cry from the caricature of the silly-ass sleuth of The Crime at Black Dudley, Campion reflects the complexity required by a hero who is to make himself at home in Berman's maelstrom of social ambiguity. In other words, he views life in the 1930s through the eyes of a modernist, a perspective that has been previously defined by Light, Annan and the Birns, respectively, as a "sense of the unstable limits of respectability . . . [and] irony," a predilection for "Style, Experiment, Originality and Mockery," and particularly, the use of the "social mask" and ambiguous and often contradictory methods of investigation. These latter traits might very well also describe Allingham's perspective as a working class woman whose role and sphere changes dramatically during the interwar years when she attempts to assume the conflicting—and androgynous—role of conventional wife and well-known author and family breadwinner.

On the other hand, the women that Campion feels he must rescue in his role as "conventional" detective are those who conform to a nineteenth-century view that sees true femininity as subordinate, self-sacrificing, sexually innocent and devoted to the needs of others: Belle Lafcadio, devoted to her dead husband's art; Gina Brade, innocent of her husband's philandering and seemingly ignorant of Mike Wedgwood's feelings for her; Linda Sutane, dedicated to her husband's career; and even Campion's sister, Valentine Ferris, who declares herself "as female as a cartload of monkeys" (Fashion 6) and whom he thinks is "better than [he is] in one or two ways, but [he's] always glad to note . . . [has] sufficient feminine weaknesses to make [her] thoroughly inferior on the whole" (7). These conventional women are also the women that Allingham, as narrator, tends to portray most sympathetically. It is not surprising, then, since Allingham herself (as I noted on page 21) was attempting to negotiate between her *habitus* which defined true womanliness as subordinate and subservient to her husband and the reality of her life as a successful working woman, that she should conduct her investigation into the social myth of the time through the female characters in these hybrid novels—a myth which claimed that women should and can retain their femininity at the same time as they participate fully in a public sphere that has for centuries been exclusively masculine,

The life of Chloe Pye of *Dancers in Mourning* offers an excellent example of how Allingham uses Campion, the notion of androgyny and the two narratives described above, to interrogate what Gilbert
and Gubar call the "sex roles necessitated by an age of surprisingly rapid sex changes" (No Man's 57). We are at first shown Chloe through the eyes of the conventional detective, a viewpoint characterized by Dorothy Smith as a "male social universe, even when women have participated in its doing" (311):

She was dressed in a small white swim suit, high-heeled shoes and a child's sunbonnet, and managed to look every one of her forty-odd years. Off the stage she, too, presented some of that self-exaggeration which had been so noticeable in Sutane. Her body was hard and muscular and one saw that her face was old rather because of the stuff it was made of than because of any defect of line or contour. She was swinging a long bright scarf and carried a book and a deck chair. At the sight of the visitors she threw the scarf round her shoulders, and stood hesitating, arch and helpless. "How providential!" she called to Uncle William as soon as he was within earshot. "Come and help me, darling." (19)

What Campion sees in Chloe's androgynous physical appearance and behaviour is a kind of bizarre monster from the past whose overt sexuality and exhibitionism he associates with the decadent image of the nineteenth-century New Woman and the 1920s Flapper. As such, Chloe Pye is, in his eyes, a parody of womanhood. This image of Chloe, which juxtaposes her powerful male dancer's body and her playful "arch and helpless" pose represents the dangers of the androgyny which many women still equate with the New Woman's demand for political and sexual equality with men. After all, Chloe appears to have ended up as pathetic, poor and alone, a not-so Bright and no-longer-young Thing, an image that challenges the social myth that modernity has freed women from the strictures of a Victorian past.

When Virginia Woolf warns women who wish to write that they must kill the Angel in the House, it is because the power of that image makes it impossible for a woman "to have a mind of [her] own." The Angel, Woolf says, acts as a kind of censor and prevents the writer from dealing "freely and openly" with "questions" about "human relations, morality, sex" ("Professions" 337). She does this by invoking the displeasure that men feel when a woman no longer lives up to the ideal of the Angel of the House. The realization that she should speak of such things, "[m]en . . . would be shocked" (338), stops the creative process dead in its tracks. Indeed, we see a demonstration of such displeasure when we witness the force with which Campion, the conventional male, reacts when he compares Chloe to the Angel of the House, as she is represented by a supposedly "modern" woman such as Linda Sutane, the chatelaine of
the aptly named White Walls. Indeed, Linda bears a striking resemblance to her nineteenth-century ancestor who, Virginia Woolf says

was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others. (336)

Actually, all Chloe does is offer Linda some kindly advice—and yet, in Campion’s eyes, she is a threat, a painted, tainted creature, who has no place within the private confines of White Walls and the presence of his pure and ideal woman. The usually urbane “Mr. Campion look[s] up into her face, which [i]s so distressingly raddled on that strong, trim body and control[s] a sudden, vicious desire to slap it” (28).

Neither feminine nor masculine, Chloe Pye and women like her who do not conform to the ideal must then be evil and can atone for this only by the ultimate act of self-sacrifice—dying. Therefore, Campion’s conventional “detective” story, which is based on no real evidence, is that Chloe Pye, a fallen and desperate woman, has returned to London in order to blackmail her husband, a man whom she has lied to and then deserted more than a decade ago. As Campion sees it, “[her husband’s] first reaction was fear, naturally . . . and then rage. He caught hold of her by the throat and before he realised at all what had happened, her knees sagged and he felt her go limp” (233). In Campion’s eyes, the “unnatural” Chloe Pye deserves to die, inciting as she does her husband’s “natural” fear and rage and then thoughtlessly dying before he has even had time to realize what he has done.

And then there is the “other” story, in which Campion’s search for the truth among the people who really knew Chloe Pye—her young fiancé, Peter Brome and her longtime landlady, Renee Roper—unearths the real scenario and subverts the social myth of the “modern” woman’s equality. This buried story reveals what life during the interwar years looks like from the standpoint of an aging woman in what purports to be a new world. It reminds us that women’s rights and freedoms are subject, not only to the whims of rapidly changing post-war social norms and political forces, but to the judgments of a pre-war cultural unconscious that still insists that the only respectable role for a middle aged woman is that of wife and mother and the only safe sphere is one that enjoys the protection of a man. Thus, no matter what role she plays now, Chloe Pye seems to lose, even though her repertoire is vast. Her range
extends from the conventional Victorian idea of femininity in its various forms—the helpless child, the coy seductress, the sentimental wife (of Squire Mercer) and the surrogate mother to Peter Brome—to a second generation feminist model of assertiveness, self-preservation and pragmatism that finds her "favour[ing] wealthy men friends . . . especially in her latter years" (Dancers 121) and threatening Jimmy Sutane in order to get work. What really happens, then, is another story altogether from that which Campion devised. Chloe Pye, having no other options, returns to London, not to blackmail Squire Mercer, but because she has finally realized that her only remaining option is marriage, even if it is to the idealistic young man Peter Brome. In order to do that she needs to ask the husband that she deserted during her salad days for his co-operation in obtaining a divorce. However, she loses again, only this time it is her life that she forfeits.

If we agree with Harold Bloom when he says that androgyny, in the mind of the writer, is simply "the disinterestedness that Shakespeare teaches his deepest readers, Woolf included" (443); or with Burt, that the kind of contradictions inherent in "A Room of One's Own" are signs of how a mind attempts to come to terms with its world, then Allingham as the author of these four novels qualifies as androgynous on both counts. That disinterestedness is evident in her creation of Campion's androgynous investigative methods and of the hybrid genre in which she uses them to explore how she and other women may come to terms with what are essentially contradictory messages regarding a woman's role and place during the 1930s. This exploration might be compared to a Dorothy Richardson-like pilgrimage, in which Allingham searches for ways in which a woman might live her own authentic life in a role that is masculine and public and still fulfill that Victorian ideal of femininity in the private world of her home and family. The writing of such a story by a woman, according to Carolyn Heilbrun, is a "search for an identity "other" than [her] own" and one of the ways that she may do so is "to create in her writings women characters, and sometimes male characters, who might openly enact the dangerous adventures of a woman's life, unconstrained by female propriety" (Writing 111-112). Allingham takes her journey in the company of her alter ego Campion and a host of female characters whose lives reflect a variety of feminist notions, some of which may have seemed quite dangerous to her and to women of her generation.

The concept of androgyny also informs the lives of those female characters as they attempt to negotiate a modernity in which deep-rooted cultural assumptions about their femininity, within and
outside of the traditional institution of marriage, are at odds with a post-war rhetoric that insists upon seeing its period as new and different from the late Victorian and Edwardian era. They will do this within the context of the discourse of the New Woman, as Allingham would have known it in both pre-war and post-war popular fiction and journalism, as well as in the ways in which it would have been relevant and meaningful to her personal experience as a member of "a generation of women" that Elaine Showalter describes as "in rebellion against the traditional feminine domestic roles, they tried free love, only to find themselves exploited; if they then chose marriage, they often felt trapped. . . . D.H. Lawrence could maintain that the secret of artistic stability was to love a wife. Women, however, found themselves pulled apart by the conflicting claims of love and art" (Literature 244). Indeed, the predicament of women of Allingham's generation during the 1930s might also be seen as a state described by Carolyn Heilbrun as liminality, in which a woman is said to "contain irreconcilable oppositions" (Women's 37). In terms of these four novels, those oppositions are between messages that, on one hand, express a deeply embedded cultural view that limits women's role and sphere to the subordinate and private and, on the other, tells them that they can have it all by aspiring to the power and influence available only in the public arena.

The time in which Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds were written is one of which I have no first-hand experience. However, having come of age some thirty years later than the period in which Allingham wrote these novels, I can personally testify to the propensity of Bourdieu's habitus to "perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices" ("Structures" 278). The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a post-war relegation of women to home and hearth that was similar to that of the 1930s. The resulting discontent and ennui that afflicted young middle-class women of my generation, who had been prepared for a career and then told that we must choose between it and a home and family, was dubbed "the problem that has no name" by Betty Friedan. The Feminine Mystique, first published in 1963, equated this problem with what Friedan called the "man-eating myth" (94), the assumption that any woman who chose a role outside of wife, mother, or helpmate, particularly if it was in the public sphere, risked not only losing her femininity, but robbing men of their masculine power. Further evidence of the longevity of such assumptions can be found twenty years later in her introduction to the paperback edition of the same book. Here Friedan is still urging her readers to reject the "single static image enshrined in the
feminine mystique" (xxi).

As well, my habitus is, like that of Allingham and the characters in her novels, that of the English middle-class—a set of dispositions that Élie Halévy describes as of a contradictory nature. He identifies this as English Puritanism, which he claims left “deep marks on the popular consciousness” (38) of the English middle-class during the early Modern period, and like Bourdieu, he sees it manifested as a cultural set of beliefs and practices, as well as a state of mind, a lifestyle, and a world view. Puritanism, Halévy says, is of a contradictory nature because it is rooted in two ancient and diametrically opposed world views. One is the acceptance, as a norm, of a social structure dating from medieval times, a hierarchy, which shows itself in a deference to authority, a liking for order, a top-down organization in its institutions and the expectation of direction and protection from those in the class above. Opposing this view is a fierce individualism manifested in a belief in self discipline, individual enterprise, and a democratic outlook. It is the latter that lies at the root of the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with its demands that women assume responsibility for their own lives and for the welfare of those less fortunate and that men give them the political power to do so. The former is evident in the reactionary response to this movement. I can identify with both.

Still, I am keenly aware of the fact that I have no direct experience of this period, and I have attempted to mitigate that fact in a number of ways. In view of the fact that in this thesis I question the reality of a rupture between the feminism of prewar England and that of the 1930s, I have been cognizant of one of those heterologies in historical narratives that Certeau calls “the discourse of separation.” He sees this as a discourse that is unique to modern Western culture in its need to differentiate the present from the past, and in the process, to promote “a selection between what can be understood and what must be forgotten in order to obtain the representation of a present intelligibility” (“Writings” 25). I have also paid attention to Hayden White’s views on the unreliability of narrative which he expresses at length in his Tropics of Discourse, and which Henri Lefebvre sums up as follows: “Every aspect of praxis must be mediated by discourse. Discourse strives for totality. It must strive for totality. Yet it is never more than incomplete. Something is always left unsaid” (5). And I have heeded literary theorists such as Jan Mukařovský and Mikhail Bakhtin, whose observations are also relevant to this thesis. In his 1936 work, Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts, Mukařovský proclaimed that “[t]here is nothing . . . which possesses an aesthetic function regardless of place, time or the person
evaluating it, and nothing which could not possess such a function in appropriate conditions" (Eagleton 100). In his *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* of 1928, Bakhtin's answer to "Saussure's "objectivist" linguistics . . . [as well as the] subjectivist alternatives . . . [was that] language was to be seen as inherently 'dialogic;' it could be grasped only in terms of its inevitable orientation towards another . . . It was not simply a matter of asking 'what the sign meant,' but of investigating its varied history, as conflicting social groups, classes, individuals and discourses sought to appropriate it and imbue it with their own meanings" (Eagleton 117).

Finally, I have taken seriously Dominick LaCapra's warning that "an appeal to the context is deceptive; one never has—at least in the case of complex texts—the context . . . one has a set of interacting contexts whose relations to one another are variable and problematic and whose relation to the text being investigated raises difficult issues in interpretation" (254). At the same time, however, LaCapra encourages us to make an attempt to interpret and understand texts, despite the difficulties involved because, he says:

the process of gaining perspective on our own interpretations does not exclude the attempt to arrive at an interpretation we are willing to defend. . . . Of course, this is not to say that the interpretation one offers is definitive and exhaustive. . . . and it should be agitated by the realization that we are inevitably blind to certain dimensions of our own perspective and what it fails to see. But we interpret nevertheless. (261)

Therefore, in the chapters that follow, I have attempted to at least minimize the effect of my own expectations by following LaCapra's prescription. I have interpreted these discourses within a variety of contexts, most particularly, the factors which may have motivated Allingham to diverge from the formula detective fiction that was her oeuvre, that is, the culture in which she lived and out of which the discourses of these four novels grew, and the society which, as novels of manners, they describe and critique.

Allingham's foray into the detective novel of manners was limited to the four novels that are the subject of this thesis. After the publication of *The Fashion in Shrouds* she and Campion returned to familiar formula fiction in the espionage thriller *Traitor's Purse* (1941), adventure tales like *Coroner's Pidgin* (1945) and whodunits such as *More Work For the Undertaker* (1949). And while I do not pretend to know what Margery Allingham's intentions were when, one after the other, between 1934 and 1938,
she wrote *Death of a Ghost*, *Flowers For the Judge*, *Dancers in Mourning* and *The Fashion in Shrouds*. I do suggest in the chapters that follow that there is a relationship between her personal experience and her use of the two narratives in the examination of women’s lives in these books. In doing so, I rely upon Carolyn Heilbrun’s assertion that women’s writing, prior to the last quarter of the twentieth-century, almost always contains “another story . . . [which] [not] even . . . they recognize . . . [and] only in hindsight, or through a biographer’s imaginative eyes, can the concealed story be surmised” (Writing 108). It was also Heilbrun who reminded me that the “concept of biography itself has changed profoundly in the last two decades, biographies of women especially so” (31). This is because “in the past, biographies of women were what Phyllis Rose has called ‘partial biographies’” (29), that is, much of a woman’s life was omitted from her biography simply because it was “unthinkable” (28) even to her biographer in terms of the cultural consensus of the time. Thus “[t]he choices and pain of the women who did not make a man the center of their lives seemed unique, because there were no models of the lives they wanted to live, no exemplars, no stories” (31). Therefore, for evidence that Allingham’s segue into this series of detective novels of manners may have been motivated by personal as well as professional considerations, I have, out of necessity, relied primarily upon Julia Thorogood’s 1991 standard biography *Margery Allingham*. This is partly because it is relatively recent. As well, it is the only full-length and comprehensive biography of Allingham that has ever been undertaken and the only one in which the author has been given unrestricted access to all of Allingham’s personal journals and papers, as well as the opportunity to speak with her younger sister, Joyce, about her recollections of Allingham’s life. However, it is also a work that reflects an attention to the tasks that Carolyn Heilbrun tells us are inherent in the writing of women’s lives: the need “to choose one interpretation over another, but far more difficult, actually to reinvent the lives their subjects led, discovering from what evidence they could find the processes and decision, the choices and unique pain, that lay beyond the[ir] life stories of these women” (31). Interestingly, Thorogood has also been responsible for the reissue of *The Oaken Heart*, Allingham’s autobiographical account of her experiences in World War II. Now Julia Jones, Thorogood is also a contributor to the 2004 Margery Allingham festchrift and, according to the web site dedicated to that publication ([http://www.margeryallingham.org.uk/festchrift.htm](http://www.margeryallingham.org.uk/festchrift.htm)), is currently at work on the life of Allingham’s father, Herbert.

I have also consulted other less comprehensive biographical works as checks upon the accuracy
of Thorogood's material. Of these, Richard Martin's *Ink in Her Blood: The Life and Crime Fiction of Margery Allingham* which links aspects of Allingham's life to her fiction, confirms the fact that she was aware of the contradictory messages that professional women such as herself were receiving during the interwar years. For instance, Martin sees a connection between Allingham's cognizance of these opposing notions and the narrator's observation, in *The Fashion in Shrouds*, that the modern career woman's failure to relinquish "their femininity, within them, touching the very core and fountain of their strength, was the dreadful primitive weakness of the female of any species" (233):

In seeing "falling in love," and the expected social consequences as the essential weakness of the sophisticated career woman, Marge was by no means being as traditional as one might suppose. Far more, she put her finger on the essential male-oriented nature of the society of her times: women may have gained enough freedom to pursue a career, theoretically they may even have achieved a measure of equality *in certain professions*, but men presumed that in the process they would have "relinquished their femininity"; that is, become masculine women without physical attraction, or, more significantly, without the traditional surface willingness to be submissive. The only alternatives for the professional woman in love were to revert to conformity and accept the subordinate role of the "beloved," or, by remaining single, to confirm male prejudices of her lack of attraction or her essential immorality. (Martin 119)

The Margery Allingham Society's web site also provided some general biographical information, especially during the centennial celebrations of her birth during 2004. That material included a biographical essay by B.A. Pike, in which he confirmed the fact that Allingham's marriage was far from satisfactory during the early years since "it was threatened by her husband's restless philandering and extreme social ambition." Other sources that were helpful in confirming the facts of Allingham's life were Ned Blake's web site, *The Margery Allingham Archive*, and Benstock and Staley's *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol 77: British Mystery and Thriller Writers 1920-1939*.

In researching the cultural and social context in which Allingham wrote these books, I have taken into account their relation to feminist discourses in the fiction and journalism of both pre-war and post-war times. Because this thesis examines the extent to which the ideals of second generation feminists were actually rooted in the fictional images of the late nineteenth-century New Woman, I have also
heeded Lefebvre’s warning that any valid interpretation “has discourse and a critique of discourse as a necessary precondition” (5). As well, since this thesis argues that one war does not necessarily a social rupture make, especially when it comes to attitudes that have been present for centuries, I have again followed Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus* in relation to marriage, the social institution within which this thesis examines the notion of femininity. Jenni Calder says marriage has “always [been] there to provide a staple of plot and action, of assumptions about what people wanted, how they behaved, and what the roots of life were. It [i]s as basic to the thoughts of readers and writers as four walls and a roof” (204). As such, it functions, like the *habitus*, as a stable and long-lasting repository of moral judgment that is resistant, if not impervious, to the whims and winds of time and place, in particular those of the modern age and as a meeting ground between the present and the past, and, in some instances, even the future.

This thesis, then, is predicated upon the assumption that during the interwar period in England, several social and cultural attitudes converged to challenge long-held beliefs about gender roles and class structure; that the real impact of this convergence was felt during the 1930s by the generation that had come of age in the previous decade; and that that generation’s ambivalence and confusion were reflected in the popular fiction of the decade. These attitudes were those of twentieth-century modernity—contradiction, discontinuity, fragmentation, contingency—and in the context of this study they are embodied in a literary hybrid, the detective novel of manners, in which Margery Allingham examines the notion of femininity by juxtaposing the narrative of a longstanding patriarchal and hierarchical culture, embodied in the image of the Angel in the House, with that of the relatively recent rights and freedoms represented by the New Woman of the late nineteenth-century. Allingham’s exploration of modernity within these four novels is an attempt to determine whether or not these changes are permanent, or even real, or whether like much else that is “modern” they are simply contingent upon the chaos that occurred in the wake of a cataclysmic World War.
CHAPTER THREE: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND MARRIAGE

In 1927, after years of hesitation, Margery Allingham married Philip (Pip) Youngman Carter. In doing so she left a large, extended, but unusual family in which, according to her younger sister, “the female members . . . tended to take their independence for granted and to focus their attention on the work that earned their livings” (Thorogood Margery 55). Having spent her youth as the “industrious apprentice” of her father, a Victorian gentleman, who had been her teacher, her mentor and her employer, she entered what she believed would be a relationship of creative endeavour as her artist-husband’s equal partner, a life that, according to her biographer, was supposed to be “a long way from [that of] the child-wife of the patriarchal Victorian marriage in which the woman remained dependent upon and protected by, her father-husband” (124). Theirs was to be a collaboration of equals and friends, their own version of what was currently referred to as a “companionate” marriage, an arrangement that, significantly, was typical of the happy ending of an Agatha Christie mystery and that Alison Light describes as “a modern couple [in] an ideal relationship, more instrumental, de-sentimentalised, and without fuss” (102), a fiction that reflected the modern reaction against the subordination of women. The fact that, by the middle of the 1930s, it had not turned out quite that way may be a factor in why Allingham used the four novels that form the basis for this study to examine a variety of marriages.

There is a suggestion that, from the very beginning, Margery Allingham had reservations about her “companionate” marriage, particularly about her ability to maintain her femininity (or what was defined as femininity in the conventional wife of Victorian fiction) and at the same time be herself, a personality of considerable complexity and force. Thorogood offers us several glimpses into situations, where, in the early years of the marriage, Allingham attempts to reconcile these elements in the time-honoured fashion, by subordinating her own personality and preferences to those of her husband. According to Thorogood, Pip immediately stepped into her father’s place, in terms of editing and criticizing her work. But because he brought a sense of fun to the process, Allingham interpreted his involvement as collaboration rather than supervisions: “We had been married two months when we decided to write The Crime at Black Dudley. The world was our oyster and a good one. I dictated it to Pip who took it down in longhand and we argued over every word. It took us three months of hilarious endeavour. Never was writing more fun” (Thorogood Margery 126). Allingham’s repeated use of “we,” “our,” and “us” and her emphasis upon the hilarity involved minimizes the fact that she was actually able
to write a full-fledged mystery novel in three months, despite constant interruptions and objections from her husband. An introvert, she nevertheless also took great pains to fit into her husband’s social circle, a group that Thorogood characterizes as:

playing up to the newspaper image of Bright Young Things, yet inwardly uncertain and bereft of direction, this first generation to have escaped decimation in the Great War were intent on maintaining their personal facades of sophistication. Poetry, current art exhibitions, Shawian drama and clever comment were ‘in’; notions of conventional love and marriage ‘out’. Sentimentality was a pit to be avoided at all costs. (90-1)

That Allingham was uncomfortable in the role of clever cynic is revealed in her apologetic response to questions about their lifestyle: “I can only plead the conventions of the age and group in which I live. I love my sweetheart as much—I make bold to say—as ever you did yours but to admit such a fact is as indecent today as appearing without a bustle would have been forty years ago, and about as serious” (118). Her choice of metaphor—pleading her case in a defense of the casual and facetious way in which she must speak about her relationship with her husband—reflects the conflict that she feels between herself as a loving and conventionally “feminine” wife and her need to be accepted by her husband’s friends.

A year later, in a letter to a relative, she again defends her attempts to fit in with the group, this time arguing against her father’s objections. Thorogood tells us that by the spring of 1928 Allingham felt that she was “getting quite good” at keeping her end up in such conversations “but the strain on a respectable high school girl is terrific—purity of everything except style is apparently such bad taste... ‘all damn silly’ as the old boy says but I find it interesting because it’s so universal and such a change.” There was “no repression” and they were “not all fools” (123). Indeed, in an attempt to become one of them, Allingham dedicated her first Campion mystery to this group, which she called, somewhat cryptically, “The Gang.” The Crime at Black Dudley, published in 1929, was a novel in which a similar group of fatuous young men and women find themselves “up against the most dangerous and notorious criminal of modern times” (74) whose defining tactic is, significantly, the wearing of a social mask. The social mask was common during this period according to Rene Cutforth, who “reflecting upon the calculating quality of life between the wars said, ‘there was a Thirties face, a Thirties expression... in the Thirties you were on stage the whole time and tense with the effort of playing the part of a thoroughly
relaxed and secure individual'" (Light 97), a social mask that appears to also have been worn by the members of her husband's "Gang" to which Allingham tried to belong. According to Thorogood, Allingham even went so far as to invent Campion solely for their amusement: "The Campion of the early novels was however a type, not a personality. Black Dudley had been dedicated to the Gang and Campion had ousted Abbershaw as its central character just because he was the goon, the zany, 'the private joke-figure of we smarter youngsters'" (128).

By 1930, Pip's best friend, nicknamed Grog, had taken up residence in their house and although Allingham's writing was by now their main source of income and her confidence in her creative abilities had increased accordingly, Thorogood indicates that Pip was still dominating her writing:

Grog recalled that in the mornings Pip and Margery used to walk or sit together in the vicarage garden discussing the next episode. Pip sometimes jotted down notes on the development of the action. Margery would then spend the day writing and finally dictate to Grog who was now 'employed' to do her typing. . . . As Pip sat at his work, he listened to Margery reading aloud or dictating her story to Grog. (132)

Thorogood goes on to quote Margery's recollection of these days: "And any word, let alone incident, to which he took exception was commented on there and then at the top of his voice. It has always seemed a miracle to me that our marriage let alone our collaboration survived this baptism of cross-fire, but it did and even flourished" (132). No longer "hilarious endeavours," their writing sessions are now wars in which the "cross-fire" between her urge to create and his to control that creation threatens the marriage. Predictably, the marriage did not flourish for long. Thorogood tells us that after the move from London to the country in 1933, and during the years when Allingham completed Death of a Ghost (1934) and wrote Flowers for the Judge (1934-35), Dancers in Mourning (1936-37) and The Fashion in Shrouds (1938), her diary and letters increasingly reveal underlying anxieties . . . [chief] among [which] was her relationship with Pip. . . . The uninterrupted writing time for which she had come to Chappel was too often purchased by leaving Pip to go out by himself. If she had imagined that he would stay at home and work at his drawing as she worked at her writing, this hope was disappointed. The two 'boys', he and Grog, took up cricket and ratting and dances and cocktail parties. (167-8)

She goes on to note several indications of Pip's flirtations, if not downright infidelity, but states that
"[o]nly once, on diary evidence, does Margery seem to have risked an overt confrontation with [him] over his pursuit of pleasure: ‘Had a scene [sic] with Cocky - he doesn’t (won’t or can’t) see that he ought to behave a bit like a married man since he makes me look so bloody cheap if he doesn’t” (169).

Significantly, this was also the last year that any of Pip’s work was shown in the Royal Academy and Thorogood tells us that the disappearance of his name from the registers of practising artists “was difficult for Margery to accept [and as] she began to see her own achievements outstripping [his] she grew increasingly concerned lest this damage the equilibrium of their marriage” (170). Just how deep Allingham’s need to either prove her ‘femininity’ or to preserve the fiction of her companionate marriage and of her husband’s status in the relationship is revealed in an entry in her diary on September 15, 1935: “Cocky beat me up.” Given the fact that Margery Allingham was a woman of formidable size, when compared to her husband, we might very well give credence to Thorogood’s speculation that “such exaggerated forms of male dominance and female submissiveness were an occasional, even an enacted, counterbalance to the greater degree of artistic success and household responsibility that was falling to Margery” (161).

Allingham’s dilemma, her need to somehow preserve her ‘feminine’ role in the marriage in the face of her ‘masculine’ role as the major breadwinner, superior artist and public success was, in fact, at the heart of the work of late Victorian and Edwardian writers, such as George Meredith, Sarah Grand and Mona Caird, as well as that of post-war novelists and journalists like May Sinclair, Vera Brittain and Dorothy Richardson. And although all of these writers would have spoken against the idea of marriage as a commercial arrangement in which women were treated as commodities and in which “men chose their wives for their value, whether it was economic, moral or decorative or, if very lucky, all three” (Calder 33), none acknowledged the deep-seated sense of obligation that women felt, once they were married, to fulfill the expectations of a culture that still saw the role of wife in these terms, or their discomfort if they fell short of this ideal. Indeed, such a notion would appear to have been the basis, not only for Allingham’s efforts to please her husband by fitting in with his Gang, but also her guilt about surpassing him both creatively and financially and her consequent reluctance to confront him about his neglect and his relationships with other women.

In fact, making a marriage work, or making a marriage at all, was largely the responsibility of the woman in most of the late nineteenth and twentieth-century popular fiction and journalism with which
Allingham’s generation would have been familiar, and success in that venture depended largely upon the kind of femininity that Joan Rivière, in her essay “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” refers to as artifice. The only exception was the early Victorian literary novel which featured what Jenni Calder, in her excellent study of *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, calls the “moral marriage,” in which the couple “defies[ convention and marr[ies] for love without money.” Calder points out, however, that despite this, it was still “the concept of marriage as a financial transaction” (31) that dominated the popular fiction of the period. She cites, as evidence, the women in Thackeray’s fiction who “trade on the elements of their ‘value’ which may be cash, or rank, or beauty, or devotion, self-sacrifice, usefulness” (34). The idea of wife as commodity, Calder says, is most graphically illustrated in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*:

> The marriage issue is most rawly exposed in the Lydgate household. Neither Lydgate nor Rosamond have thought about what marriage might mean as a human relationship. They have seen it as a social arrangement, as a professional arrangement, as a mutually attractive institution, but neither has looked at the other as an individual with individual needs and expectations. Lydgate proposes to Rosamond almost accidentally because he has recognized her as the kind of woman who would make a good-looking, socially acceptable wife for a rising young doctor. Rosamond expects a proposal from Lydgate because he appears to be going through the motions of an upper-class lover. Both of them see their wants in terms of the performance. But what Lydgate really wants has nothing to do with women. (140)

The only novels of this period that portray what Calder refers to as “the uncommercial marriage” feature working class wives who, because they must out of financial necessity go out to work, are able to participate in a community just as their husbands do. She offers as an example “Mrs. Gaskell, one of the few major Victorian writers who shows us marriage from a woman’s point of view, as something other than an escape, a reinforcement of social status, or a utilitarian contract” (81).

Ironically, it was this image of a working class woman, whose role in the public sphere was not seen as “unfeminine,” and thus a threat to her husband’s masculinity, that was at the heart of a debate on middle-class marriage that reached its peak during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. And out of this debate grew the two quite contradictory notions of how a woman might preserve both her femininity and
her freedom within marriage. One school of thought, represented by Vera Brittain, saw the solution in a lifestyle that reflected both material and social equality for husband and wife; the other, promoted by Dorothy Richardson, saw it in a female aesthetic that claimed that women's freedom was innate and could be claimed anytime and anywhere. And implicit in both of these is the concept of androgyney, an explanation of how men and women are to participate fully in both the public and the private spheres.

The first notion is manifested in the companionate marriage which according to Alison Light had become socially acceptable among those who had come of age in the 1920s:

It seems that the First World War made visible and precipitated further into the mainstream of English life what might otherwise have remained eccentric, sporadic and minority protests. Thus by the 1930s it was no longer simply bohemians and suffragists who argued for equality in marriage: the idea of 'companionate marriage' had become a matter of course. (18)

This union of equals had its roots in Mona Caird's pre-war "ideal marital relationship" which she describes in an article in the March 1, 1890, issue of The Fortnightly Review, entitled "The Morality of Marriage," and in which she claims that in such a union women would

secure a liberty as great as that of men, in all the relations of life[,] marriage, as we now understand it, would cease to exist; its groundwork would be undermined . . . In a marriage true to the modern spirit, which has scarcely begun to breathe upon this institution, husband and wife regard one another as absolutely free beings; they no more think of demanding subordination on one side or the other than a couple of friends who had elected to live together. (Light 167)

Not quite 15 years later, Grant Allen's notorious novel, The Woman Who Did, takes Caird's ideal a step further. His heroine is not just against marriage, but against any domestic arrangement with a man, even one not blessed by church and state. By the 1920s, Vera Brittain, whose public image was "overtly feminine and fashionable" (Peterson 33), would be claiming that women really could 'have it all' and promoting the "semi-detached" marriage as the way in which this could be achieved by the "modern" wife. Brittain's interest in assisting women to return to or stay in the workforce after marriage and motherhood was ongoing during the 1920s and 1930s. Andrea Peterson cites several of Brittain's key concepts in the end notes to her essay. For instance, she notes that in an article entitled "Wasted
Women: The Tyranny of Houses," published in the June 10, 1927, edition of The Manchester Guardian. Vera Brittain advised “all households [to] take full advantage of the latest labour-saving devices.” In 1928, Brittain’s article, "The Husband in the Home" in The Evening Standard, claimed that “the ideal households of the future will be those in which, by labour-saving devices, all necessary work has been reduced to a minimum, and that which is left is shared between the wives and husbands who delight in making homes for one another.” And in 1930 in Modern Weekly, she explains “how women’s lives could be made easier by the creation of labour saving houses, properly trained domestic workers, more community kitchens, laundries and well-run restaurants, [and] more open-air nursery schools” (33).

Given the practical nature of such advice and Allingham’s disillusionment with her own attempt at such a union, it is not surprising that there are very few companionate marriages in Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds—at least as Brittain would have defined them during that period. First of all, Margery Allingham was not domestically-inclined: writing was her vocation and her avocation; she was accustomed to having servants perform household chores; and there is no mention in her biographical material of her having wanted children at this point in her life—rather “she was not convinced that she had the necessary qualities to make a good mother” (Thorogood 176). Furthermore, what upset her the most during this period was precisely the "semi-detached" nature of her relationship with her husband; they lived virtually separate lives—she stayed at home and wrote while he pursued an active social life, especially with the ladies. For the most part Allingham relegates the companionate marriage to the stock image of the “modern young couple,” in which the classical detective story’s restoration of the ordered society conventionally resides. Hence, we do not know, and Allingham does not appear to care, how this type of marriage turns out for Linda Lafcadio and Matt D’Urfey of Death of a Ghost, Gina Brande and Mike Wedgwood of Flowers For the Judge, or Eve Sutane and Socks Petrie of Dancers in Mourning. She does, however, make it clear in her examination of the marriage of Gina and Paul Brande that she doesn’t rate its chances for success highly. The lives of Gina and Paul Brande are clearly separate and the marriage is portrayed as a dismal failure, even before Paul is murdered. We see this clearly in the tentative and defensive nature of Gina’s description of a union from which she is already seeking release: “I suppose some wives would have gone haywire by this time, but with me—I mean with us—it’s different. We—well, we’re post-war people, Albert. Paul leads his own life, and so do I, in a way . . . It’s not unheard of,” she said, half defiantly. ‘Lots
of people do the same sort of thing in our crowd" (Flowers 13). The Brandes lack the two ingredients that Vera Brittain herself maintained were crucial to the success of a marriage in which the partners spend significant amounts of time apart: friendship and equality. In fact, we are told that Gina had to give up her work as a designer when she married into the Barnabas middle-class establishment and there is nothing friendly about Paul's repeated refusal to discuss their situation.

In fact, the closest that Allingham comes, in these four books, to acknowledging the possibility of success for the kind of marriage that Vera Brittain champions, is what we might call the 'companionable' relationship of Belle and Johnny Lafcadio or that of Albert Campion and Amanda Fitton in The Fashion in Shrouds, one in which the partners love and respect one another enough to collaborate in pursuit of a shared goal rather than going their separate ways in search of personal fulfillment. This is what the Lafcadios had as they "sat up one night after Charles Tanqueray . . . had been to dinner" (Death 6) composing the letter that would set in motion John Lafcadio's plan to have his work "outlive [Tanqueray's] even if he ha[d] to die to do it" (5). This is what is still reflected in "the hundred and one . . . curios," the mementoes of their life together, which "live together in equal harmony" (3) in their sitting room. This is also what, in describing her hopes for her own marriage, Allingham called "bread and butter stuff" (Thorogood 116) as opposed to the romantic "cake love" (255) in which Amanda Fitton expressed such little faith in The Fashion in Shrouds, the final book of this group of novels.

The second solution to the problem of how a woman might preserve both her femininity and her freedom within marriage was the idea of a female aesthetic that, although it bore a close resemblance to the notion of 'different but equal,' actually posited, in its concept of the "synthetic consciousness," women's superiority over men. Dorothy Richardson claimed that, as a result of an innate ability to see the world holistically, women could claim their freedom anytime and anywhere (Heilmann 12). This is likely to have been a more appealing notion to those women of Margery Allingham's generation who had gained the freedom and equality to operate within the public sphere, but who still struggled to banish the image of the Angel in the House and the fear of men's censure should they not live up to that ideal. For instance, even though as a single woman, Allingham had been educated or trained in a profession and was capable of surviving economically on her own, the goals that she had always worked toward had been those of her father and his friend William McFee, each of whom acted as her mentor and critic. It is hardly surprising, then, that she should see a marriage like that of the Lafcadios, in which the shared goal
was that of the husband rather than that of the wife, as more achievable than the companionate marriage in which a woman pursued her own goals without the permission or sanction of her husband. Even less surprising is the appeal to a professional writer like herself of Dorothy Richardson’s claim that a woman could be free to create and still conform to the conventional image of femininity, thus avoiding the risk of incurring the kind of male disapproval that Virginia Woolf claimed was a major obstacle to the creative process.

Whether, after her wedding, a young woman should, could, or even if she should want to maintain the kind of freedom and self-sufficiency that the New Woman had demanded, was a question that was the focus of a lively debate during the 1880s and 1890s among novelists and other writers of popular fiction. As I have noted above, those who wrote about women’s role in marriage during the fin de siècle agreed on only one thing and that was the fact that marriage as a business arrangement, even among the upper classes, was contemptible. George Meredith fired the first literary salvo against aristocratic marriages of this nature in his 1879 novel The Egoist. Meredith’s major characters, Sir Willoughby and Clara Middleton, are examplars of the two facets of egoism and their role in a marriage. Sir Willoughby’s egoism is limiting, destructive, and eventually self-destructive, in its selfishness and self-aggrandizement. Jenni Calder describes how Willoughby sees his fiancée Clara as only a potential “ornament [to his] house and his life. She will be static, at home . . . awaiting his return from masculine pursuits; it is the classic Victorian male image of the wife. Closely linked with this is the image of possession, of enslavement, which recurs varied and insistent throughout [the novel]” (184). Clara’s egoism, on the other hand, gives her a healthy sense of herself and a sensitivity to the Self in others. This sense of herself eventually leads her to “Clara’s Meditations,” the chapter in which George Meredith “represent[s] in words . . . what actually goes on from moment to moment within [Clara’s] consciousness” (Miller 105). The result is what Meredith calls her “insurrection” (129) against a man who cannot or will not see beyond the social mask that he himself wears and the one that he has forced upon her; she eventually flees from him.

We see, if not the direct influence of The Egoist, the popular interest in its subject echoed again and again in both prewar and post-war popular images of marriages in which wives escape from the role of male possession through the kind of self-knowledge and knowledge of others that fueled Clara’s rebellion. The major difference is that in these images, women do not flee, but use this inner feminine
knowledge to recognize their own real value within marriage, as well as in the public sphere. In fact, according to Calder this particular womanly ideal was present in literary fiction even before it was personified in Meredith's Clara, harking back to the heroine of early Victorian novels, whose purpose was to improve the character of her husband and through him, society in general. This figure, according to Calder, "becomes entwined in [the] late-century feminism" (34) of writers like Sarah Grand, whose New Woman is both a crusader against "immoral husbands and the horror that such behaviour could cause" (Kersley 18) and an "idealized nurturer" (Schaffer 43) who carries her unique feminine sensibility and skills into the public sphere where she rescues the helpless and needy, particularly those women and children who are victims of men's sexual exploitation.

In Allingham's time, we find this emphasis upon women's superior form of egoism in the writings of Dorothy Richardson. She believes that the solution to the notion of the wife as commodity lies in women's own recognition of their unique inner strengths, their true womanliness, which consists of spiritual, intellectual and moral resources that men lack. It therefore seems more than coincidental that we also find the notion of egoism reflected in the central theme of Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mouning and The Fashion in Shrouds in which it is used by Allingham in two ways. She employs it as a structural device to bridge the detective story and the novel of manners, that is, egoism is the major factor in both the crimes and the relationships in the books. She also uses it as a narrative device, that is, Clara's brand of egoism is a major factor in the successful marriages, while that of Sir Willoughby is the motivation for murder. The scene in Death of a Ghost, between the "magnificently condescending" (68) Max Fustian and the "habitually even-tempered" (144) widow Belle Lafcadio, shows us these two kinds of egoism in action. Fustian, whose selfish egoism has driven him to forgery and murder, is no match for Belle, whose sense of her self and recognition of Fustian's conceit combine to produce a type of insurrection in her that, although it is certainly not "the speechless insurrection" (129) that Meredith describes, is not unlike what happened to Clara Middleton: "Really!" said the old lady, her brown eyes positively flashing. "I never heard such monstrous impudence in all my life. Will you be quiet, sir! I have told you, no. The present arrangement holds. My husband's pictures remain in this country" (145). Significantly, in this instance Belle's spoken assertions result in the man fleeing the woman's premises, rather than vice versa.

In Belle Lafcadio we recognize the "synthetic consciousness" that Dorothy Richardson ascribes
to the wife who is truly free, the “womanly woman” that she examines throughout her novel cycle *Pilgrimage*. Richardson’s woman is empowered by her ability to maintain a self-centred consciousness along with an impersonal approach to others that ensures her ability to cope where they cannot. Certainly Belle has achieved a “consummately self-centred consciousness.” She knows who she is. As an aristocrat, “Arabella Theodora, d[augher] of Sir J. and Lady Reid of Wendon Parva, Sussex,” (*Death* frontispiece) has always had that sense of “entitlement” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 22). In addition to this self-knowledge she has what Heilmann describes as Richardson’s “notion of ‘impersonality,’ which resembles Woolf’s concept of the androgynous mind in *A Room of One’s Own* [and] posits absolute detachment as the precondition for the state of subjectivity, an ideal that only the womanly woman is able to attain. Freedom is therefore an inner quality and as such not directly contingent on external surroundings” (12). We see, therefore, that she is also Belle Darling, a wife who knows her husband as well as herself and has the kind of detachment that enables her to accept the fact that John Lafcadio was, “if half genius, also half buffoon” (*Death* 206). We also see Belle’s detachment in her lack of jealousy and “consummate unselfishness” toward her husband’s cast-off models. And in her kindness toward them after his death we even note something of Sarah Grand’s womanly woman whose concern was for the victims of men’s exploitation. Not only does Belle’s absolute detachment enable her to live with these women, it allows her to tolerate the belligerence of Lisa Capella and the idiosyncrasies of Donna Beatrice (a.k.a. Harriet Pickering), whose lack of self-knowledge stands in sharp contrast to Belle’s attainment of the ideal that is Richardson’s “womanly woman.”

Although Linda Sutane of *Dancers in Mourning* aspires to this ideal, she falters when faced with the cold reality of the situation. This “small gold girl trimmed with brown, not very beautiful and not a vivid personality, but young and gentle and, above all, genuine” (*Dancers* 27) is, in almost every way, a post-war version of sweet-natured and candid Belle Lafcadio, a woman who also “had never had the disadvantage of being beautiful” (*Death* 2). Linda too is from an upper class background and she finds herself, as did Belle, married to a creative genius who, like John Lafcadio, brings strangers into their home in the service of his art. She also shares Belle’s “consummate unselfishness” in her tolerance of the embarrassment and inconvenience that these house guests bring to her life. In Linda Sutane’s quiet centredness amidst the chaos of thoughtless performers, curious and suspicious neighbours and angry servants, we see the promise of the synthetic consciousness and detachment that Dorothy Richardson
says enables the womanly woman to be "simultaneously in all the warring camps' without having to take sides" (Kilian 159). In fact, when Linda elaborates upon her observation that Campion is "intelligent rather than experienced" she is also attempting to differentiate between the two modes of consciousness and perception that Richardson ascribes to the male and female ego, the intellectual detachment of the observers of life and the empathy of those who participate in the human experience:

There are roughly two sorts of informed people, aren't there? People who start off right by observing the pitfalls and the mistakes and going round them, and the people who fall into them and get out and know they're there because of that. They both come to the same conclusions but they don't have quite the same point of view. You've watched all kinds of things but you haven't done them, and that's why you'll find this crowd so unsympathetic. (Dancers 30)

Linda Sutane contrasts Campion's way of seeing others with what Richardson would call the womanly woman's "'gift of imaginative sympathy' also referred to as 'sympathetic imagination', a faculty that," Kilian claims, "allows the subject to identify with another person completely and experience reality from their point of view" (38). Ironically, it is in the exercise of this gift that she ultimately fails. When she goes to Campion's apartment to ask him for help, she "draw[s] back into the chair and tuck[s] her feet up under her so that it contain[s] her entirely" (Dancers 183). She is so involved in her own fear, now that "the rats are right in the house," that she "sit[s] looking out at him, like a wren in a nest" (184), unable to identify with his inability to help her, much less his distress at being unable to do so.

Ultimately, it is Valentine Ferris, the mirror image of Campion and, we suspect, the alter ego of Margery Allingham, who has the greatest "potential of a higher knowledge" (Kilian 157) that Richardson attributes to the womanly woman. Allingham uses the scene in which Alan Dell proposes to Val to vividly illustrate many of Richardson's concepts and to give us, for the first time in these novels, a hint as to the nature of her own solution to the difficulties in her marriage to Pip Youngman Carter. She does this by creating her own version of what Virginia Woolf called Richardson's "psychological sentence of the feminine gender ... [which Allingham] has fashioned ... consciously, in order to descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of [Val's] consciousness" (Gregory ix). For example, Val's thoughts about her relationship with Dell show us the womanly woman's "consummately self-centred consciousness" at work:
Her own exacting intelligence, her own insufferable responsible importance, weighted her down like a pack. She was desperately aware that she wanted something from him that was neither physical nor even mental, but rather a vague moral quality whose very nature escaped her. It was something of which she stood in great need and her fear was not only that he did not possess it but that no one did. Her unhappy superiority made her feel lonely . . . . (Fashion 232)

In this complex mixture of objective self-observation, which we see in Val’s awareness of her own need, and subjective emotion, which we see in her fear and loneliness, Allingham provides us with a prime example of what Heilmann calls Richardson’s “synthetic consciousness,” as well as an echo of the spirit of Clara Middleton’s meditation.

In stark contrast, here is Alan Dell’s proposal, a model of Richardson’s male urge “to fix life in one-sided positions” (Kilian 155), and a “fact oriented mind thinking in propositions and centred on ‘becoming’” (Heilmann 12):

Will you marry me and give up to me your independence, the enthusiasm which you give your career, your time and your thought? That’s my proposition. . . . In return—and you probably won’t like this either—in return, mind you (I consider it an obligation), I should assume full responsibility for you. I would pay your bills to any amount which my income might afford. I would make all decisions which were not directly in your province, although on the other hand I would like to feel that I might discuss everything with you if I wanted to; but only because I wanted to, mind you; not as your right. . . . You would be my care, my mate as in plumber, my possession if you like. (Fashion 233)

And finally, we are privy, through Val’s acceptance of Alan’s proposition, to what Kilian calls one of the womanly woman’s “intense moments of heightened awareness [which] lead to the perception of an ‘ultimate reality,’ an experience for which she uses terms like ‘enchantment,’ ‘magic’ or ‘transfiguration’ and which serves to make everything appear ‘new’ and ‘strange’” (156):

“Yes,” said Val so quickly that she startled herself. The word sounded odd in her ears, it carried such ingenuous relief. Authority. The simple nature of her desire from him took her breath way with its very obviousness and in the back of her mind she caught a glimpse of its root. She was a clever woman who would not or could not relinquish her
femininity, and femininity unpossessed is femininity unprotected from itself, a weakness and not a charm. (Fashion 233)

We suspect that Valentine Ferris, like Belle Lafcadio, will be “the perfect wife for [her husband], 'with the wit to understand him, and the heart to worship'” (Calder 182). Like Belle, she will be neither a New Woman nor a companionate wife but a companionable one, a helpmate. She will, however, be free to be herself, androgynous, but uniquely so, since she has discovered that, as an individual, she cannot be free, that is, "clever," modern and successful in the fashion industry without being “possessed” in the privacy of a conventional relationship. By marrying Alan Dell she will have it all, in the sense that she will, as she says, get “exactly what [she] needs to make the world that place in which [her] own particular temperament may thrive” (Fashion 233). On the other hand, because she is willing to “charm . . . conciliate . . . to put it bluntly—tell lies . . . [in order to] succeed” (337), she will never feel, as did Virginia Woolf, that in order to pursue her creative life she must kill The Angel of the House; neither need she fear the kind of men’s censure that Woolf claims kills true creativity.

While we can never know whether or not this is a solution that Margery Allingham herself was considering at the time, we do know that there was a change in her relationship with her husband shortly after the completion of this novel. According to biographical as well as autobiographical reports, her attitude and behaviour toward Pip Youngman Carter became more like that of Valentine Ferris toward Alan Dell, that is, she appears to have developed “the wit to understand him, and the heart to worship.” For instance, Julia Thorogood tells us that Allingham’s diary for 1940 shows that they are spending more time together, playing cards, talking and going out locally” (224); and in her 1941 autobiographical work The Oaken Heart, Allingham herself speaks again and again, and with some pride, about the “authority” that her husband displays in their village as war approaches. In this account, “Cocky,” the insecure and ineffectual little man has become “P.Y.C,” the image of the strong military protector and defender of the village people. Her autobiography is filled with detailed accounts of his role in ensuring that their neighbours knew about and practised the black-out procedures, gas masks and other safety measures that were to be their protection in case of an air attack. And as war gets underway, she grants interviews with journalists, not as Margery Allingham the famous writer, but as “Mrs. Carter,” her husband’s helpmate. Indeed, in their village Margery Allingham and Pip Carter become known simply as “The Carters.” His goals apparently have become her goals as they work together, along with Cooee,
Christine, Grog and the other members of their unconventional family, to make their small community of Tolleshunt Darcy safe against invasion.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY

The enormity of the gap between the popular middle-class Victorian image of the ideal woman and that of the New Woman is nowhere more revealing than a description in Ruskin's 1865 work, *Sesame and Lilies*, that Jenni Calder calls "a condensation of all that is pre-eminent in the Victorian sentimental ideal... reflected in innumerable Victorian novels, the best and the worst" (88-89):

The best women are indeed necessarily the most difficult to know; they are recognised chiefly in the happiness of their husbands and the nobleness of their children; they are only to be divined, not discerned, by the stranger; and sometimes, seem almost helpless except in their homes. ... So far as she rules all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation, wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fall from his side; wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman.

(Ruskin 51)

The other image that dominated popular fiction during the Victorian era really was an accurate reflection of the role played by the ideal wife among the aristocracy. This role, attacked by George Meredith in *The Egoist*, is the one expected of Clara Middleton, the woman that the selfish and self-absorbed Sir Willoughby of Patterne Hall coveted as a wife only because she would proclaim his good taste and raise his status among his peers. No matter which of these pictures of ideal womanhood one looks at, it is not difficult to understand the concern regarding what has been called the "feminization" of post-World War I England, a concern predicated upon the perception that, as a result of the masculine roles played by women during the Great War, the society had lost not only its womanly women but its manly men.

Margery Allingham's detective novels of the 1930s examine this perceived inversion of the Victorian paternalistic and possessive relationship between the sexes, a reversal of gender roles neatly described by Leigh Wilson in the title of her essay on May Sinclair as "She in Her Armour and He in His Coat of Nerves" (179).

Leigh Wilson tells us that Sinclair's New Woman's "armour" after World War I is constituted by "her knowledge, her awareness, her ability to face the truth," which in Sinclair's post-war novel *The
**Romantic** is not only an acknowledgment of her own strength, "that is bravery, a commitment to her work, a place in the public world" (188) and her own sexual desires, but also of the possibility that a man may lack these traits and need her protection. This notion that there was something missing in men was not new. In her 1899 essay, "Der Mensch als Weib," Lou Andreas-Salomé anticipated the post-war theories of feminist writers like Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair when she argued that it was not woman, but man, in whom there was a lack, that women's femininity was autonomous and whole in itself, rather than simply the opposite of the masculine; or as Ann Heilman puts it, that "lack is codified as an essentially male attribute, while woman embodies military valour, public 'manhood,' and human wholeness" (13).

Alison Light agrees that "something happened to middle-class femininity after the Great War which sees it taking on what had formerly been regarded as distinctly masculine qualities, in particular the ethics of a code of self-control and a language of reticence" (210). However, in her discussion of Daphne du Maurier's 1934 biography of her father, *Gerald: a Portrait*, Light also claims that the idea that something had been lost was a fiction and that, in reality, the time between the wars was one of transition rather than complete rupture, "an unhappy mix of late-Victorian inheritance and sentiment, and a nervous modernity" (186). She offers as evidence du Maurier's description of her father's reaction to the post-war world: "the future and the past were in conflict within him, and they dragged him in different ways. He possessed the sentimentality of the one and the cynicism of the other; the moral conventions of the Victorians and the unscrupulous shrug of the twentieth-century; the high standards of the 1880s, and the shallow weakness of 1920" (186). We see something quite similar in Thorogood's observation that Allingham's father Herbert's "Victorian family optimism and . . . confidence in his role on earth were consumed in the moral chaos of the Great War;" indeed, Allingham herself described her father as "a man who had been trained and bred to be a gentleman, and who had come to believe that gentlemen were ungentle; a man who had been taught to believe in God and who had come to believe that God was hypocritical" (Thorogood 51). It is precisely this kind of coexistence between Victorian and post-war attitudes that pervades Allingham's exploration of the reality of the female as heroic, heroic in the sense of May Sinclair's notion of chivalry as the key to a woman's freedom in both the public and the private sphere.

Just such a notion is reflected in the lives of Claire Potter, Gina Brande and Linda Sutane, all
seriously unhappy women, each of whom has had to dissociate herself from her situation in some way in order to function in the role of wife. Claire keeps busy and drinks to escape her regret and frustration at being reduced to one of the “handmaids-of-all-work to the arts” (Death 24) while married to an “artist who isn’t good enough” (Pike 46), but doesn’t know it. Gina, waiting for the Paul Brande of “fake enthusiasms and windy lies” (Flowers 10) to agree to a divorce, exists in a sort of emotional fog, “a merciful unreality” (71) similar to Campion’s “mental semianaesthesia,” with which he “save[s] himself [from] the emotional reactions which he would ordinarily have experienced” (Dancers 225). And Linda Sutane exhibits a weary resignation to her status as a stranger and outsider in her own home, “profoundly used to . . . [being separated from Jimmy Sutane by] the brilliant company which surrounded her husband . . . kept apart by something as vital and unsurmountable as a difference in species” (28). In order to find a common cause for these three women’s unhappiness (and perhaps Allingham’s as well) we need to examine what they think is lacking in their husbands, and to do that it would be helpful to determine what the two relatively happy wives in these books see in theirs.

Belle Lafcadio and Val Ferris see Johnny Lafcadio and Alan Dell as having, what Val calls “Authority!” (Fashion 233), a synonym for a kind of heroic chivalry which combines aggressive force with a paternalism that is widely perceived to have disappeared, along with an entire generation of men, during World War I. Miss Curley articulates this sense of rupture when she compares the “Old Man,” who founded Barnabas Limited in the nineteenth-century to his nephews who are running it during the 1930s:

   Curley’s old mouth pouted contemptuously as she considered them: John with his irascibility, his pomposity and his moments of sheer obstinacy; Paul lathering and shouting and making an exhibition of himself; and now the dark horse Mike, who had never really wanted anything before. Would any of them go out bald-headed for their desires, sweeping away obstacles and striding over impossible barriers to attainment, to get clean away with it in the end as the Old Man had done time and time again? Curley did not think so. (Flowers 9)

In fact, Miss Curley’s romantic view of the Old Man’s pre-war masculinity bears a startling resemblance to that of the elderly Belle Lafcadio’s memory of her heroic “flamboyant, swashbuckling” (Death 148) cavalier, Johnny. Unlike the cautious, diffident and modern young Campion, Belle says that if her Johnny were still here, he would scoop her up and together “[they]’d get the pictures [from Max Fustian], sell
them for what [they] could, and go away to Capri until the money was spent. [Then she says] I should lie in the sun and listen to him telling the story and improving it" (174). Indeed, Valentine Ferris sees that same combination of forcefulness of action and protection, although a much subdued and more pragmatic post-war version of it, in the "calmly comforting" Alan Dell, whose masculinity "create[s] in her that unaccountable excitement" (Fashion 232) as he "le[a]d[s] her out onto the little lawn . . . pilot[s] her through [the meadow]" (231); and proposes to "assume full responsibility for . . . [her if she will be his] possession" (233).

On the other hand, we might also find in Belle and Val, something of Sinclair's Joan of Arc figure. Both show a "commitment to [t]he[i]r work and to "[t]he[i]r place in the public world." Belle is committed to her role as the conservator of Lafcadio's reputation in the art world and Val to the promotion of her own art in the world of fashion. But at the same time, both are also courageous in "[t]he[i]r ability to face the truth" about their husbands' weaknesses, as well as their own "romantic desire" (Heilman 13) to see these men as heroic. That ability, which is in essence the acceptance of contradictory truths, is illustrated by Belle's response to two quite different portraits of the great artist. The first is that of his public—and highly romantic image, a portrait by Sargent that occupied the place of honour over the carved mantel . . . in [which] John Lafcadio appeared a personage . . . the captured distinction of a man great in his time. . . . [H]e looked like a big brother of the Laughing Cavalier, even to the swagger. He was smiling, his lips drawn back over very white teeth, and his moustache was the moustache of the Cavalier . . . his quick dark eyes, although laughing, were arrogant. (Death 9)

The second is that of the private man, a self-portrait that reveals his weaknesses and which Belle hides under lock and key:

a small unframed canvas . . . in the impressionist technique only appreciated in a much later day. It showed the same face which smiled so proudly from Sargent, but there was a great difference. John Lafcadio's famous beard was here only suggested, and the line of his chin, a little receding, was viciously drawn in. The lips were smiling, their sensuous fullness overemphasized. The flowing locks were shown a little thin and the high cheekbones caricatured. The eyes were laughing, or at least one of them laughed. The other was completely hidden in a grotesque wink. It was cruel and revealing, the face of
a man who was, if half genius, also half buffoon. (206)

However, Belle's response to both of these images is the same: a kiss can be a sign of greeting, parting, love, desire or reverence, and is emblematic of Sinclair's chivalry in its ability to accept all of the truths inherent in both of these images—the lack in her husband, her wish to protect his heroic public image, and her own romantic desire, not only to believe in the latter, but to hide the former even from herself.

This same ability also allows Valentine Ferris to face the truth about her own and her future husband's weaknesses and strengths. In her case, however, that means acknowledging and accepting the fact that masculinity and femininity in the post-war generation is more fluid than the simple opposition of Victorian gender roles. Chivalry in the post-war man may bear little resemblance to the swashbuckling defender and protector of the innocent maidens in pre-war romances. Therefore, at the same time as she recognizes that, as a mechanical engineer in a modern technological society, Alan Dell is "a man, a genius . . . [whose] life's his work and . . . a very great man" (63-4), Valentine Ferris is also aware that, like Lafcadio, he has been a buffoon in his relationship with Georgia Wells, an alliance in which his Victorian sentimental idealism towards women has bordered upon child-like naivete. Indeed, in his demand that Val "give up to [him her] independence, the enthusiasm [she] give[s] her career, [her] time and [her] thought" (Fashion 232), Dell has displayed the same egoism as Lafcadio and George Meredith's Sir Willoughby of Patterne Hall, in that each assumes his right to "rule arrogantly in [a] world of women . . . without individuality . . . whose major interest in life derive from him" (Calder 182). Unlike these two men, however, Alan Dell has also shown the moral discipline of the Ubermensch in his self-awareness and honesty about both "the fine old exhibition [that he made of himself] with Georgia" (232), as well as the inequity of the arrangement that he offers Val, one that he admits to her is not a very good proposition, since it "means the other half of my life to me, but the whole of yours to you" (233).

Val also recognizes that her attitude toward femininity is contingent upon the time in which she lives. "In common with most modern-thinking women, [Val] [i]s pessimistic where her own emotions [a]re concerned" (231). In a public sphere that still values the masculine traits of rationality and assertiveness, she sees those emotions as threatening to betray her at every turn. Therefore, as "a clever woman who would not or could not relinquish her femininity," she feels her work is in constant danger of being undermined by a "femininity unpossessed [which] is femininity unprotected from itself" (233). As a result, Val's solution is the ultimate separation of her lives in the private and the public spheres. For her, then,
what Alan Dell sees as the whole of a woman's life is actually only a part of it, an emotional aspect that Val calls her "femininity" and that she sees as a liability in terms of her work. In surrendering that part of herself to her husband in the private sphere, she gains an outlet for the emotions that previously have threatened her work in the public sphere. Consequently, in Val's mind her marriage will result, not in slavery, but in a "freedom which lies in getting exactly what one needs to make the world that place in which one's own particular temperament may thrive" (233). She believes that she will have the best of both worlds: as Alan Dell's "feminine" wife she will have finally satisfied her own need for a conventional middle-class (Victorian) relationship with a man; she will also have gained the freedom to continue to be a New Woman, "a clever woman" at work, for she will no longer be distracted by that need.

What Belle Lafcadio and Valentine Ferris have in common, then, is the ability to create and sustain an egalitarian relationship within a conventional form, a structure much like their creator's complex tale contained within the formulaic box of the detective plot. This kind of relationship reflects, on the outside, the traditional opposition of gender roles—Belle and Val as dependent "wives" and Johnny and Alan as their heroes and protectors. However, within each relationship the definition of masculinity and femininity is contingent upon the individuals and the situation—or as Ann Heilmann puts it when she speaks of a similar notion in Dorothy Richardson's idea of the synthetic consciousness, "[f]reedom is therefore an inner quality and as such is not directly contingent on external surroundings" (12). Unlike May Sinclair's notion of chivalry, which is as oppositional and narrowly defined as the Victorian one in that it is also predicated upon the weakness of the opposite sex, Allingham's definition of chivalry in a happy marriage is fluid. In the Lafcadio and Dell unions, both courage and weakness are to be found in both parties and the relationship thus becomes one of mutual defense and protection. In other words, what we see in the relationship of these two couples is Allingham's reinterpretation of Sinclair's idea of chivalry as a form of androgyny. Virginia Woolf describes androgyny in "A Room of One's Own" as a state in which husbands are "man-womanly" and wives are "woman-manly" (97). All of these characters are manly in their commitment to their respective work and place in the public world and womanly in the considerable emotion which they invest in it. For example, Belle, transformed from a mild-mannered chatelaine into a "hot-headed old lady," defends her role as the official keeper of her beloved Johnny's legacy and throws Max Fustian out of the house (Death 148); and we hear of Lafcadio roaring and cursing as he creates the masterpieces that mark him as a genius. We are told that Alan Dell's "work's
his life" (64) and Val’s designs "w[i]n the hearts [even] of . . . professional buyers" (5). The same fluidity of roles is true in both marriages, where each party has the courage to face his or her own weakness and not simply the weakness of the other. John Lafcadio does so in his self-portrait, as does Belle in her deliberate hiding away of that image from herself. Like Belle, “Valentine, the valiant” is as brave in her ability to face the truth about her own desire for romance—“Only twice shy, you know, only twice, not forever” (7)—as she is in recognizing Alan Dell’s weakness for the fluttering helplessness of Georgia Wells; he, in turn, shows himself able to face the folly of his own infatuation, as well as Val’s weakness for the trendy and superficial—“[Marrying me is] the only unfashionable thing you’ve ever done” (233). Nor do any of them fear acknowledging and indulging their mate’s “romantic desire” to see them in the conventional feminine or masculine role: the only difference is that the pre-war “Belle Darling” and her “Laughing Cavalier” would appear to have metamorphosed into a more prosaic and far less carefree pair in the modern “plumber,” Alan Dell and his “mate,” Val (233).

Allingham thus uses Belle and Johnny Lafcadio to illustrate the kind of mutual “chivalry” that makes a happy marriage in pre-war England and Val Ferris and Alan Dell to show us a successful post-war adaptation of the same. She also goes to considerable trouble to examine why marriages fail to achieve this, and when they do, what the alternatives are for the woman. It would appear that the inability to establish a marriage in which both parties enjoy the defense and protection of the other leaves the modern woman only two choices: as Val Ferris puts it, she has “either got to ask too much or go maternal” (Fashion 57). And what “too much” is, in the 1930s, is essentially what was “too much” at the turn-of-the-century, that is, an ideal masculinity embodied in the images of a Sir Lancelot or the swashbuckling cavalier that John Lafcadio’s self-portrait tells us never really existed, except as a social mask. For instance, in Death of a Ghost, Allingham uses the Joan of Arc trope to effectively illustrate the weaknesses in the marriage of Claire and Tennyson Potter. The Potters’ union stands in stark contrast to that of the Lafcadios, in that they are not armed with the kind of self-knowledge that will allow them to acknowledge and accept their own weaknesses or those of the other. Tennyson Potter’s collaboration in his wife’s need to be seen as “very strong” (122) blinds him to an insecurity in her that requires a life of “conventions, manners, affectations” (118) and the occasional drunken binge in order for her to continue to present herself as a New Woman and a legitimate artist. In reality, she has ended up as one of those efficient handmaids-of-all-work to the arts who are capable of undertaking
any little commission from the discovery of a Currier & Ives to the chaperoning of a party of society-girl students across Europe. She was an expert embroideress, a connoisseur of bookbinding, and supported herself and, it was said, her husband by sundry art classes at fashionable day schools and a few private students. (24)

At the same time, Mr. Potter is also unable to acknowledge the power that the patriarchal perspective still exercises over his own view of his wife, a fact that becomes evident when he talks about the painting in which she appears:

Immediately the picture sprang into prominence. It was a big canvas, the subject the trial of Joan of Arc. The foreground was taken up with the dark backs of the judges, and between their crimson sleeves one caught a vision of the girl. "That's my wife," said Mr. Potter unexpectedly. "He often painted her, you know. Rather fine work, don't you think? All that massing of colour... See that blue on her scarf? That's the Lafcadio blue." (11)

Here is the young artist Claire Potter, painted by Lafcadio as just a "girl" in whom the "vision" of a new kind of life for a woman is already hardly visible. She is obscured not only by the backs of the judges, whose gaze represent the norms of a patriarchal society, but by the blindness of her husband to his own hypocrisy, since like Lafcadio, he sees her presence in the picture as only incidental and the blue(stocking) colour in which she is portrayed as significant only in terms of the male artist's technique.

Claire, who as "a little dowdy woman with iron-grey bobbed hair, capable hands, and an air of brisk practicalness" (24) projects the image of the turn-of-the-century New Woman, is also blind to her own weakness. She denies her feminine desire for the kind of flamboyant and aggressive masculinity that she saw in Lafcadio, the Great Artist, a desire untempered by the awareness that chivalry may not take the fairy-tale form of the heroic mask that he wore so easily. That mask, which he wears in his public portrait shows him "smiling, his lips drawn back over very white teeth, and his moustache the moustache of the Cavalier. His studio coat... has a careless bravura of folds and his quick dark eyes, although laughing, are arrogant" (9). In sharp contrast, Mr. Potter is described as "a tall thin figure in shirt sleeves... with a thin red melancholy face whose wet pale eyes are set too close together above the pinched bridge of an enormous nose... and a voice of unutterable sadness" (9-10). Hence, we see Claire Potter's contempt for a husband who can never live up to the image of Lafcadio and her conclusion that he can be "of no possible help to her in her terrible situation" (86). Claire's situation
reflects the contradictions of a post-war society that seeks to conceal, at the same time as it decries, the feminization of Englishmen. This predicament is revealed in the scene where Mr. Potter tries to cover up his wife's alcoholism: "Campion and the inspector felt they were peering in at a secret. The vision of the tragic, ineffectual husband protecting his masterful wife in his small, worried way seemed indecent, sad, and to be covered" (122). Like Claire, Campion and the inspector are unable to conceive of the kind of chivalry that Potter, the stereotypical feminine male, practises daily in his protection of her against the kind of humiliation that would result from the exposure of her drunkenness; in the personal sacrifices that he makes in an attempt to sustain the pretense of a bohemian life that he believes she still wants, by teaching when he really wants to be working on his own creations; and in his humility and good-natured acceptance of his own homely art being constantly compared to the spectacular paintings of Lafcadio.

Allingham returns to the notion of chivalry in Flowers For the Judge, this time using it as the central trope within which to examine the relationship between Gina and Paul Brande, whose marriage is an exemplar of a couple lacking the kind of courage required to sustain a mutually satisfactory relationship in the 1930s. The effect of Gina's armour, although determinedly feminine rather than masculine in its outward appearance—what Gilbert and Gubar call "true womanliness [as] pure artifice" (No Man's 57)—is the same as that of Claire Potter, in that it traps her rather than protects her in the masculine egoism of a Sir Willoughby. Gina's ego, like Claire's, relies upon "conventions, manners, affectations" (Death 118) and is limiting, destructive, and eventually self-destructive in its selfishness and self-aggrandizement. We learn at the outset that Gina, like Claire, has also chosen the first of Val's two alternatives; rather than "go maternal" she has apparently asked too much of her husband Paul, who is also a "[g]reat egoist " (Flowers 48). She has been badly disappointed when, having been swept off her feet by Brande, she discovers that he has "the disconcerting habit of working himself into a fever to get hold of beautiful things and then forgetting all about them" (60). As a result, like Sir Willoughby's Clara, Gina decides to flee the relationship. Unlike Clara, however, she wishes to leave, not because her husband has ignored her humanity, but because he is "[n]ot in love with Gina" (48), a woman whom we are told repeatedly throughout the novel, is an objet d'art of her own creation, the embodiment of a modern aesthetic that privileges form over function and style over content:

When Pavlov, the décor man, spoke of her as "the young Bernhardt" he did her a little less than justice. Her small-boned figure, tiny hands and feet, and long modern neck
would have disappeared into nothingness in the corsets and furbelows of the 'eighties. Her head was modern, too, with its wide mouth, slanting grey eyes and the small straight nose whose severity was belied by the new coxcomb coiffure which Lallé had created for her and which brought her dark chestnut hair forward into a curl faintly and charmingly reminiscent of the "bang" of the last century. She was wearing one of her own dresses. The narrow gown, in a heavy dark green and black silk, accentuated her foreignness and her chic, which was so extraordinarily individual. At the moment she looked a little weary. (3-4)

Allingham reminds us of how Gina 'looks' again and again and of the impression that she makes because of that look: "Gina was sitting in one of the big white armchairs in a tailored black wrapper which contrasted with the pallor of her face and the brilliance of her eyes and hair. She made a pathetic attempt at a smile" (50). "Her black clothes suited her. They were smart yet very severe. The only touch of softness was the crisp white ruff at her throat" (66). "She sank back again, her slender body in the sleek, man-tailored gown lifeless and pathetic" (133).

Gina is also represented as one of Judith Fryer's faces of Eve, the American Princess, who holds court amidst the hopelessly old-fashioned bourgeois British family into which she has married:

Gina had folded herself on the big white sofa with its deeply buttoned back and exaggerated curves. As usual, she looked odd and lovely and unexpected amid that sober gathering. . . . The firm, or rather John Widdowson in the person of the firm, had not countenanced his cousin's wife continuing her career in England, and she now only designed for herself, and sometimes for Pavlov, in a strictly dignified and semi-amateur way. (3)

As befits visiting royalty, Gina has "inspired a spirit of protection in the most unlikely breast" (31) of young Mike Wedgwood, in whom the conventional chivalrous "protection of and courtesy towards women" (Wilson 179) of the knightly sort is perverted into an abject worship that borders upon masochism: "[Mike] did not speak, but nodded to her, his whole body expressing urgency and unconscious supplication. . . . Bewildered and half amused, [Gina] dropped the burning fragment into [his] hand and Campion glanced away involuntarily so that he might not see the man's satisfaction at the pain as he carried the stub over to the fire" (15-16).
While we at least recognize the form of male chivalry from which Mike Wedgwood's bizarre behaviour springs, there is no hint of Guenevere, much less May Sinclair's Joan of Arc in Gina Brande. She can in no way be seen as "manly," not even "woman-manly," in her commitment to her work or to her place in the public world, both of which she effectively abandons as soon as they meet with John Widdowson's disapproval. Nor can we credit her with the willingness to acknowledge either her own romantic desires or those of her husband. On the one hand, she denies her own disappointment at his neglect of her by pretending that, as a modern woman, the marriage suits her: "I suppose some wives would have gone haywire by this time, but with me—I mean with us—it's different. We—well, we're post-war people, Albert. Paul leads his own life, and so do I, in a way. . . . It's not unheard of. . . . Lots of people do the same sort of thing in our crowd" (12-13). On the other hand, she denies even the possibility that he could prefer another woman to her, even though his "[r]unning round the lovely Mrs. Bell" (14) appears to be common knowledge among the family. Indeed, even though in 1923 a law was passed that allowed a woman to sue for divorce on the grounds of adultery, Gina pretends that the only basis upon which she can obtain a divorce is if Paul should "desert [her] or beat [her]" (62), and she continues to maintain this fiction even when she has "visited a solicitor and found out exactly how I was placed. I realized that I could not get a divorce from my husband unless he assisted me" (89). At the same time, her bewilderment at Mike Wedgwood's behaviour suggests that not only can she not acknowledge her husband's rejection, she also seems totally unaware of Mike's feelings of love for her. Indeed, her reaction to his trial for murder shows that she actively cultivates the "innocence [that New Woman writers argued was actually] ignorance and, as such, profoundly damaging to women" (Wilson 179):

Gina shrank back in her seat and waited for a merciful unreality to settle over the proceedings. In the past embarrassing or even harassing situations had always had for her this mitigating quality. . . . She tried to dissociate herself from it all, and to look upon the enquiry as though it were a play, but it was not possible even when she forced her eyes out of focus and persuaded her ears to hear only meaningless unrelated sounds.

(71)

And if innocence and ignorance of self are damaging to Gina, they are, according to Allingham, equally dangerous to Mike Wedgwood, whose behaviour toward her reflects the feminization of men that so
worries the post-war middle-class. Mike Wedgwood, who has just "missed the war by a few months" (Flowers 8), is as reluctant to face reality as Paul Brande, and like Gina, he dissociates himself from it, "[d]eliberately . . . forc[ing] his eyes out of focus so that he should not see his cousin's face" (19) when he views Paul's corpse.

The trial of Mike Wedgwood, which constitutes a major part of Flowers For the Judge, traces Gina's and Mike's quest for the kind of marriage that Belle and John Lafcadio had, one that on the outside acknowledges the romantic desire to see one another in the conventional masculine or feminine roles, but within aspires toward, but does not quite achieve, the post-war form of androgyny that is fully realized in the union between Val Ferris and Alan Dell. At the inquest we see Gina Brande as an advertisement for the fashionable middle-class woman, a fragile paper doll dressed in severely tailored clothing presenting a carefully constructed image of androgyny that, in the 1930s, defines her as modern, as opposed to the compassion and old-fashioned, practical womanliness of her servant, Mrs. Austin:

The two women came out into bright sunlight completely unaware of the extraordinary picture they presented. Gina, with her hair sleeked beneath her Schiaparelli hat and her severe black suit clinging to her exquisitely fashionable figure, made a contrast with Mrs. Austin's exuberant Sunday Best which was positively arresting. . . . Somebody in the crowd laughed hysterically and Mrs. Austin grips her firmly by the arm. "If you ask my opinion," she said firmly, "what you want is a small port." (81)

Gradually, during the trial, we see both Gina and Mike discard their notions of chivalry. Her femininity emerges from the prison of a false androgyny and Mike leaves his innocence behind to become an ordinary man. As the trial gets underway, "Gina [i]s amazed at herself. One part of her mind [i]s half irritated, half amused by the banality of [Mrs. Austin]. But there [i]s another which [i]s timidly grateful for her support. . . ." (81). As the trial progresses and Mike begins to look more and more guilty, Gina appears less and less innocent: "Campion, who ha[s] not seen her for some weeks, [i]s shocked by the change in her. She [i]s harder, more sophisticated, older. Nervous exhaustion ha[s] been replaced by general deterioration. She look[s] less chic, less graceful, less charming" (132). And on the day that Mike is freed, she declares her own desire to escape—"I want to get out! She said wildly. I want to get out!" (222). Gina wants out, not only of the "Alice in Wonderland" atmosphere of the court (223) but out of the prison of her own world of conventions, manners and affectations.
In the end, we find that Gina, "the commanding personality" (224), has become the conventionally feminine "radiant and coolly excited . . . woman . . . [whose] complete attention" (235) is focused on Mike; and Mike, the romantic, "has everything in perspective now . . . [and his] own troubles don't quite fill up the landscape anymore" (235) enabling him to assume the day-to-day authority associated with the conventional masculine role. Both are now ready to enter "the walled city" (marriage) arm-in-arm, but via a "new bridge [which] [i]s better than the old Pont d'Avignon of the nursery rhyme because there [i]s enough of it to reach to the other side" (236). In this picture, Allingham paints a couple who, while they have returned to the conventional gender roles, have done so in a 'companionable' way, arm-in-arm, each building a bridge to the other. However, while it is clear that they have rejected the modern "companionate" model of marriage in which they would have participated equally in the work of both the private and public spheres, nothing in this 'happy' ending suggests that they yet have the same level of insight or the same sense of mutual protection and defense that will characterize the relationship of Val Ferris and Alan Dell.

If Gina asked too much of her husband Paul, then we might presume that Linda Sutane asked too little of Jimmy. Allingham continues her exploration of chivalry within marriage in Dancers in Mourning by examining a union in which a woman "goes maternal," the alternative, according to Val Ferris, to asking too much. And it is quite clear that while Linda Sutane is certainly Jimmy Sutane's defender and protector, it is equally evident that he does not return the favour. She thus ends up in the role of the Great Mother to a man around whose life her own revolves and for whom she plays the perfect Victorian Angel in the House: "enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise - wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation, wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fall from his side; wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service" (Calder 88). If Linda settled long ago for "going maternal," it would seem that she had good reason, since it would certainly have been asking too much to expect "chivalry" in any genuine form from her husband. Right from the start, the fact that Jimmy Sutane is a child playing at being a man is attested to by "several odd indications of [his] personal interests. Two or three cheap mechanical toys lay upon the dressing table beside a box of liquorice all sorts . . . while on a shelf in the corner sat a very nice white Hotel and a tear-off calendar, complete with an astrological forecast for each day of the year"
(12). We are told, in one breath, about the force of his personality which, upon his entrance “into the room made the place seem to have become smaller and the walls more solid,” and in the next, that it is not genuine, but simply a “larger-than-life edition of his stage self” (Dancers 13), a social mask of sorts. In a further example of Allingham’s subversive narrative, we learn that his “authority” is also an act, since “his old nervous authority... was only possible to disobey and not to ignore” (144). And by the end of the book, we are certain that Jimmy Sutane, a “man who recognize[s] his responsibilities, [but is also] secretly appalled by them” (237), lacks much more than the simple authority of a mature man. In his unwillingness to tell on Mercer, we not only see Gerald du Maurier’s “unscrupulous shrug of the twentieth-century... and the shallow weakness of 1920” (Light 186), but the reduction of the chivalric code as it is represented by “the fellowship of the Round Table” (Wilson 179) and a misguided sense of school boy loyalty, as witnessed by his final words:

“I couldn’t give him away. We were together in Paris after the war, I was his only friend and, oh, my dear chap, don’t you see, I was the beggar who pinched his wife.”... The crooked smile was on his lips and, surprisingly, his black eyes had tears in them. “How could I, old boy?” (Fashion 239)

Here we see, in Jimmy Sutane’s inability to see beyond a code of conduct so intrinsic to his upbringing that it seems to him only natural and therefore right, an example of the power of the cultural unconscious about which Bourdieu speaks. We also see what Virginia Woolf calls a sign of immaturity, [and] an attitude that belongs to a patriarchal society that keeps women from any hope of self-actualization: “All this pitting of sex against sex, of quality against quality; all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority, belong to the private-school stage of human existence where there are ‘sides’ and it is necessary for one side to beat another side... As people mature they cease to believe in sides...” (“Room” 99). Indeed, Jimmy Sutane’s “old-boy” reluctance to tell on his friend placed everyone else on the other side: the hapless Chloe Pye, Squire Mercer’s other victims, his wife and child, and even Campion.

Leigh Wilson tells us that what May Sinclair’s novel The Romantic “is struggling towards, in particular through the figure of Joan of Arc, is a vision of wholeness for a woman—an integration of work and passion, of the public and the private, of being both protector and protected” (188). We might see Linda Sutane’s desire to be rescued by Campion as a part of that same struggle if it were not for the fact
that it is somewhat misdirected. Even if Campion’s personal protection were to provide some balance to her life’s work as the protector of the very public figure of Jimmy Sutane, it would not bring her the kind of wholeness that is envisioned through Sinclair’s Joan of Arc figure. Unfortunately, when Linda Sutane does finally get around to asking a man for help, rather than asking for too little, she asks for “too much.” What she asks Campion for is the stuff of romantic fiction and it is too much because she asks for the wrong thing, at the wrong time, from the wrong man. The “modern” man Campion mocks the romantic version of chivalry which she has in mind—a wholly masculine form of aggressive force and paternal protection that is quite foreign to the post-war androgynous detective that Allingham has created:

“But, my dear lady,” her said, “if there was anything I could do, believe me, I should be wandering round your delightful garden, badgering your servants, leaping about from flower bed to flower bed with a reading glass, and generally behaving like the complete house-trained private tec. But as it is, I really don’t see how I can impose myself upon you. What can I do?” . . . “My dear,” he said. “I’ll hold the whole blithering universe up, for you. I’ll stop the whole dizzy juggernaut of British police procedure for you if you want me to. I’m all-powerful. I’ll wave a little wand and we’ll find it all isn’t true. (Dancers 183)

Predictably, when the story does not go as it should and her would-be hero violates her expectations, Linda Sutane “look[s] hurt and puzzled and remind[s] him irritatingly of [the child] Sarah” (185).

The chink in Linda Sutane’s armour, and hence in her marriage, has clearly been her lack of ability to face the truth about the nature of her own femininity, that is, her desire, not only to protect Jimmy Sutane, but for him to protect her as well. Lacking that, she is left only with the fairy-tale version of chivalry, a wholly masculine fiction that a post-war man such as Campion can no longer imagine, much less deliver. Unlike Belle Lafcadio and Val Ferris, both of whom acknowledge their need for a conventional relationship with their husbands and thus gain a “freedom which lies in getting exactly what one needs to make the world that place in which one’s own particular temperament may thrive” (Fashion 233), Linda Sutane denies that aspect of her femininity to the very end. We know this because she once again puts Jimmy’s interests ahead of her own by agreeing to go to America and saying, without a trace of irony: “They like Jimmy over there, you know, and it’s a wonderful country, especially for children” (228).

Margery Allingham once said that “if you have to hold a man up, you might as well make sure
you hold him up the right way" (Thorogood 161). We can be fairly certain, by now, that May Sinclair’s way would not be one that she would recommend. In her exploration of the relationships between men and women in the 1930s, Allingham has, for the most part, rejected the image of Joan of Arc. We see this in her portrayal of Sinclair’s figure as Claire Potter’s masculine stoicism, as Gina Brande’s “mental semianaesthesia,” and as Linda Sutane’s self-sacrifice, none of which turn out to be effective in these women’s attempts to integrate, what Gilbert and Gubar would call their “inner feelings and outer mask” (No Man’s 59). In terms of these women’s marriages, Allingham sees Sinclair’s concept of chivalry as inequitable, since it simply reverses Victorian gender roles and posits a lack or weakness in the post-war man while placing the responsibility for coping with it squarely on the shoulders of women. Indeed, Allingham appears to suggest that the form of chivalry that is supposedly lacking in the post-war man is nothing more than the same kind of social mask adopted by post-war women like Claire, Gina and Linda Sutane. This is evident in the self-sacrifice, masculine stoicism and “mental semianaesthesia,” shown by Mr. Potter in order that his wife might maintain her illusions, by Mike Wedgwood in his relationship with the unresponsive Gina, and even by Campion in his efforts to deny the fact that he covets his friend’s wife.

Allingham looks instead to Woolf’s notion of androgyny for an answer to why post-war men are somehow lacking. That notion is illustrated in the union of Val Ferris and Alan Dell and takes the form of a ‘shared’ chivalry in a relationship of ‘mutual’ protection and defense. In such a marriage, the feminization of men and the masculinization of women for which the Great War was blamed become assets rather than liabilities, since it frees each party from the straightjacket of Victorian gender roles. But more about those roles in the next chapter, which will find Allingham looking beyond the conventional marriage to the lives of women who appear to enjoy the advantages of a Victorian femininity without the disadvantages of being a Victorian wife.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE NEW WOMAN, FEMININITY AND DOMESTICITY

If the settings of a novel “provide valuable indices to the author’s more or less consciously held beliefs” (Porter 189), then the contradictory nature of the homes in each of these four novels suggests, at the very least, that Margery Allingham, like many other women of her generation, was seriously questioning women’s roles in both the private and the public sphere. One of the major side effects of what Alison Light calls “the continuing process of modernisation” (9) is an ever-increasing blurring of these roles, from the time of the New Woman’s fight for the vote during the 1890s, through her defense of England during the Great War, to her demand for equal rights through the companionate marriage of the 1920s. Certainly we find this reflected in the homes of the four women in these novels who live with their husbands. Their position in what would have been conventional homes before the Great War, “refuge(s) in a world where the harsh realities of life were becoming increasingly difficult to disguise” (89), becomes ambiguous as the invasion of those realities make their homes into the perfect settings for murder in the mid-1930s. Hence, Belle Lafcadio’s ‘home’ has become an exhibition hall and Claire Potter lives with her husband in a bohemian studio-cum-workshop-cum classroom; Gina Brandle holds court in her ultramodern flat above the ‘family firm,’ and her ‘home’ is the site of the weekly business meeting of Barnabas Publishing; and Linda Sutane harbours the entire cast of The Buffer in White Walls, her art deco country house that now doubles as a rehearsal hall. And as previous chapters have illustrated, each of these women struggles and the younger ones frequently fail to reconcile deeply entrenched images of femininity and masculinity with the reality of life as they experience it during the interwar years. Indeed, in her critique of interwar British fiction, Forever England, Alison Light tells us that:

The recognition that domesticity is ‘a feminine achievement’ and even ‘a feminine idea’ becomes a troubled awareness in the inter-war period right across the cultural board, and not just amongst feminists. A sense of the painful contradiction which women’s own attachment to domestic ideals and practices can create in women surfaces in many of the novels. Having to represent ‘insideness’—intimacy, deep and rooted emotionalities, privacy—conflicting pulls of the set of emotions which domesticity itself implies, and which the home is meant to harbour, it is this that makes the house one of the dominant metaphors and physical settings in the novels. (139)

In order to explore these contradictions, Allingham turns from the conventional scene of the crime to a
quite different kind of home where the domestic ideals and practices of another time still define the principal role of a woman. Here a woman, in the role of mistress, is still the provider of a man’s sanctuary and the keeper of a sphere that is entirely private and Allingham examines that role within the context of both the image of the Angel in the House, which prevailed before the Great War, and that of Mrs. Miniver, the most popular model of domesticity during the interwar years.

According to Jenni Calder, during the 1890s:

[w]hile the media were, with reservations, encouraging the new spirit amongst women, they were at the same time sustaining a heavily and artificially romanticized version of the female role. This is very clear in fiction magazines, which might include simultaneously a serious discussion on rational dress and incomes for ladies, and also a shallow tale of fainting females marrying baronets. (165)

During the same period, authors like George Gissing were painting a much less positive picture of a married woman’s life. In his novel, The Odd Women, Monica marries in order to escape the fate of her sisters, "ageing spinsters struggling to maintain an existence, living on rice, lapsing into alcoholism, despised by society, exploited by their employers when they are lucky enough to find any . . ." (167). However, Monica’s life as Mrs. Widdowson offers little in the way of a palatable alternative to spinsterhood. Here is Gissing’s description of Widdowson’s attitude toward his wife, an attitude that, not surprisingly, bears a close resemblance to the megalomania of Allingham’s murderers, Max Fustian, John Widdowson, Squire Mercer and Ferdie Paul:

In no woman on earth could he have put perfect confidence. He regarded them as born to perpetual pupilage. Not that their inclinations were necessarily wanton; they were simply incapable of attaining maturity, remained throughout their life imperfect beings, at the mercy of craft, even liable to be misled by childish misconceptions. Of course he was right; he himself represented the guardian male, his wife[s] proprietor, who from the dawn of civilisation has taken abundant care that woman shall not outgrow her nonage.

(202)

At the same time as authors like Gissing were contesting the idea that the marital home was the only sphere in which true womanliness was to be found, members of the opposing camp were holding it up as the ultimate repository of femininity. Writers of popular romance fiction routinely implied that
marriage and a home of her own was the only happy ending for an upper class woman, with "property and status the rewards for love and virtue" (Calder 204). And even though novelists such as Ouida and Marie Corelli, whose female protagonists would sacrifice anything including themselves for love, included adultery and divorce in their plots, the outcome was essentially the same. Novels in which middle and working class protagonists were featured tended to follow Dickens's ideal of home as a sanctuary in the midst of a dangerous and immoral society:

In all this, marriage is ideally an island. No man is an island, but man and woman joined in holy matrimony should be. . . . [I]f it is necessary to work for a living . . . the battlefield of toil should not be brought within the home. . . . [M]en hunting their prey and . . . women bitterly nursing their defeats are firmly shut out of the domestic abode. And that is the reward of the just, to be able to close the door. (Calder 118-119)

Alison Light adds that, at the same time, the "need to shake off what Leonard Woolf called 'the fogs and fetters' of the Victorian age was nowhere felt more strongly than in the one place which was the distinctive cultural creation of the Victorian middle-classes: its version of 'home'" (34). This ideal, again very much in keeping with that of Dickens, appeared in Ruskin's work of 1865, Sesame and Lillies:

This is the nature of home— it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only of that outer world which you have roofed over and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by threshold Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love,—so far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light,—shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea;—so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home. (Ruskin 31)

However, Calder also talks about the contradictions inherent in families as early as those in the novels of George Eliot: "Here is the family as a network of frustrations and enmities, all the more intense for 'natural' closeness. . . . Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, live together,
simultaneously linked and separate, aware of natural ties and resentful of them, submitting their
individuality and protecting it" (131). She adds that the version of home-as-sanctuary "becomes [even]
less tenable . . . [in] post-Victorian fiction [where] life's battles are brought within the home, in fact life's
battles very often become, precisely, family conflicts" (89). It is significant that such conflicts are still very
much present in the cultural consciousness during the interwar years when they are expressed as one of
the core conventions of classical detective fiction in the form of the closed community that harbours a
murderer. Allingham would appear to have been well aware of them too, since an excellent example of a
family at war may be found in her earlier novel Police at the Funeral (1931), in which the petty jealousies
among the siblings of a large Victorian family and their cousin George's downright hatred of them is at
the basis of the crime. Interestingly, the same William Faraday whom George attempts to frame for the
crime in this book appears again in Dancers in Mourning. Indeed, Light argues that:

[p]art of the appealing fantasy of the whodunit lies not so much in the desire to murder
one's relatives but in its being done for you with the minimum of pain and loss. Murder
cheerfully rids the individual or the family once and for all of the burden of its past . . .
Murder is in many ways the nicest thing that can happen to a family, being, as Christie's
second husband argued (without any trace of irony), a no-nonsense business without any
'degrading features.' (102)

By the time Margery Allingham writes the four detective novels of manners that are the focus of
this study, the "modern" woman is still receiving mixed messages about the relationship between
femininity and home. These messages also still contain the essence of those heard half a century earlier.
On the one hand, women like Allingham, who had come of age during the 1920s, are reading writers who
echo Mona Caird's supposition that homemaking can never provide them with the means to a fulfilling
life and who portray it as a barrier to their development as individuals. Light cites Daphne du Maurier as an example:

When du Maurier starts writing in the late 1920s she takes for granted the idea that the
scope given women in their usual social position and their own ideas of 'self-fulfilment'
do not tally, and remain incommensurate after, as well as before, marriage. The settled
domestic life and romantic notions of individual feminine selfhood are seen as
antithetical, and a seed of discontent makes every woman divided, fraught with a
modern 'self' consciousness. Gone is the faith in marriage as the healer of all ills, and in the peaceful domestic life as woman's best option. (167)

On the other hand, that national icon of homemaking, Mrs. Miniver, whose privileged life, like that of the heroine of turn-of-the-century romantic fiction, would appear to be her reward for love and virtue, dominates the popular press. Light tells us that "[w]hen Mrs. Miniver comes home after the holidays, the kettle on the fender, the fire glowing and the barrel organ's strains drifting on the wind in the street outside, this is already a Little England, best characterised by a love of privacy and home comforts" (154), an image which "suggested that it was private life that constituted the real and important life of the nation. And it is a private life whose benefits and deepest pleasures can be found in affectionate and particular details" (145). And despite, or more likely because of, the fact that Mrs. Miniver represents an upper-middle class which distances itself from everything domestic, including children and servants, by framing it within a literary or philosophical perspective, she becomes not only a justification for the woman who devotes her life to making a home which is a sanctuary for her family, but an ideal toward which lower middle and working class women may also strive. According to Mrs. Miniver:

Household matters should 'be low, unobtrusive humming in the background of consciousness', analogous perhaps to the ideal place of servants who represent the material world of 'domestic labour' (a term which covered both the work and people who did it). The physical presence of children (and servants) ranks firmly on 'the debit side of parenthood'. . . . What makes it all worthwhile. . . is to contemplate her children's pleasure from a distance ('without dramatics') and to derive a wise self-possession from the scene. . . . 'Eternity framed in domesticity. Never mind, One had to frame it in something to see it all.' (Light 142)

And then there are journalists like Vera Brittain who tell young women that they can "have it all," that is, careers of their own plus the conventional feminine experience of homemaking and even motherhood by entering into a marriage that Alison Light describes as:

semi-detached, spacious and companionate . . . [indebted to] the 'equal but different' view of the sexes . . . a modern reworking of the philosophy of 'separate spheres' of activity and personality for women and men, which, though it clung to certain notions of what was feminine and what was masculine (child-rearing, for example, was always
assumed to be the woman's business), nevertheless allowed for some idea of female autonomy. (123)

In the mid 1930s, Margery Allingham's personal experience reflected none of these ideals. Indeed, the role that she assumed in her home (as the sole support of the entire household), the conflict in her marriage and the fact that she had no children— and according to her biographer had some doubts that she was even suited to the maternal role— would seem likely to have resulted in precisely the kind of "painful contradiction" that Light speaks of at the beginning of this chapter. In fact, in the details of her biography there is an uncanny similarity between the difficulties she experienced in her own marriage and those of her parents' union. Thorogood tells us that in 1917:

[h]er parents did not return to London on the same terms of unity and partnership in which they had set out to live in the country. . . . Both had changed, developing in ways which accentuated their antipathetic qualities. Herbert had moved further in his rejection of the class and attitudes with which he had been brought up. Em had become devoted to a man who exemplified so many of these in their most extreme form— Dr. J.H. Salter. (51-2)

She notes that by the time Allingham began Death of a Ghost this same kind of antipathy had developed between herself and her husband:

The General Strike tested many people's political attitudes. . . . Pip was exhilarated by Churchill's extremist right-wing stance. He left The Daily Herald (a socialist paper) and dashed about the town, busy, like many others of the middle-class young, 'keeping things going.' He never afterwards deviated from a Conservative position. His social and political attitudes hardened as he aged—to such a degree that one wonders how Margery, taught by her father that all -isms and opinions would reduce her powers of observation and understanding, could have lived with him—or why she agreed to marry him in the first place. (115)

Given Allingham's background and her personal situation, we might surmise, then, that Little Venice may be the setting in which she begins her exploration of whether the kind of matrimonial harmony which had eluded her parents and now herself might actually reside in the Victorian ideology which they have all dismissed, an ideal in which femininity is strictly defined as a maternal instinct and expressed in the
making of the conventional home as private sanctuary. Little Venice harbours an eclectic group of individuals and probably resembles most closely Allingham's own experiences of 'home,' from her earliest days in her parents' home to the mid 1930s in her own. Here is Thorogood's and Allingham's description of her childhood home: "Herbert and Em [Allingham] peopled the house (at Layer Breton) with other members of their family and with Fleet Street colleagues who used the Old Rectory as a haven to get on with their work. 'Father, mother, aunts, and uncles, weekend visitors and novelist guests who stayed the whole summer, all sat down with a pen and paper after breakfast as a matter of course'" (27). Indeed, we cannot help but think of Little Venice when we read this description. Little Venice is also a home in which Belle and John Lafcadio (and after his death, Belle alone) shelter artists such as Claire and Tennyson Potter, models Donna Beatrice and Lisa Capella, and general dogsbodies like Fred Rennie, all working toward the same goal. And we see a similar set-up in Allingham's own home, D'Arcy House, in which she supports artists like her husband, who illustrates the covers of her books and his best friend Grog, who transcribes her work as she dictates it, along with a variety of retainers and servants, some of whom, like Lisa Capella and Fred Rennie, have lived on the property most of their lives. She also harbours single women, like Christina, Valentine and Cooee, all of whom, in some way or another, assume the domestic and personal duties that would ordinarily be hers, especially Cooee, "an attractive young girl, who was also an ex-actress [and] r[o]d[d[e] through the village... regularly with Margery's husband Pip" (181).

In the setting of Death of a Ghost, then, Allingham begins to examine the notion that femininity might actually be inextricably bound up with the domestic role, an idea that was already under siege by the time that the New Woman became an icon of popular culture in the late nineteenth-century. Writers like Sarah Grand urged women to take their maternal instincts into the public sphere in order to succor the poor, the sick and the abused women and children of the brutish Victorian male; and by the interwar years, the idea of the New Woman was enjoying a revival of sorts, since "[h]ome was... the place where women were, after 1919, in the majority" (Light 7). In her examination of this notion, Allingham offers us "a way of reading forwards into the 1930s from the 1890s" so that we might also determine whether 'the continuing process of modernisation" (9) really did include any change in the belief that, as Vernon Lee put it, "woman's love is so essentially maternal that it were tedious to enumerate possible deviations from this basic character" (Showalter Literature 189). And Allingham particularly looks at the
idea that this essence of womanhood that we call femininity is only truly expressed by making a home which revolves around the comfort and wishes of a man, an idea that must have offended and at the same time worried young women of the time, including Margery Allingham, whose position in her home, as both a wife and a breadwinner was, by the mid 1930s, ambiguous.

Allingham conducts this exploration by using a form of narrative that, according to Robert Fulford, was first described by Aristotle as combining “recognition, something familiar to us, and also reversal, a turn of fortune” (3), and was adapted to the detective novel by writers like Agatha Christie:

It was at this moment (when she wrote The Murder of Roger Ackroyd) that Agatha Christie adopted the approach of twentieth-century literature, even if only in a mechanical way, and joined with all those forces that were undermining through literature the conventions of rational self-confidence on which culture had based itself since the eighteenth-century. Christie methodically betrayed the expectations of her readers and found her own expression of the Freudian idea that turned out to be the century’s principal slogan, the idea that can be paraphrased as “Things are never what they seem.” (109)

If we keep this in mind, the private sanctuaries provided by women like Belle Lafcadio in Death of a Ghost, Teddie Dell in Flowers For the Judge, Renee Roper in Dancers in Mourning and Anna Fitch in The Fashion in Shrouds will allow us to read forward, in terms of the relationship between femininity and maternal domesticity, from the conventions of rational self-confidence of the 1890s to the uncertain, superficial and unpredictable modernity of 1930s society.

There are, in fact, two Little Venices: the one before John Lafcadio died and the one after his death. In the narrative of recognition, that of rational self-confidence which tells of the detective’s investigation, it is clear that in both pre-war and post-war times Belle Lafcadio’s major focus is the comfort and happiness of her husband. While he lives, she makes his home a unique and private sanctuary, “personal . . . a place of strange curios but comfortable chairs” (Death 2); later she carries out his wishes by using it to ensure the success of the annual posthumous, public exhibition of his paintings. There is, however, another interpretation which is the reversal of this presumption: Belle Lafcadio can also be seen to be the New Woman, as Sarah Grand defines her, since it is the women that Lafcadio uses until their “beauty passe[s]” (15) and then discards, his models and by implication his mistresses,
who are the real recipients of Belle Lafcadio's maternal impulses and of the sanctuary she provides. Both
during and after her husband's life, Belle is portrayed as an example of Grand's womanly woman in that
she is a good mother (rather than a jealous wife) to Donna Beatrice, Lisa Capella and Claire Potter. Her
tolerance for the self-absorbed Donna Beatrice, a.k.a Harriet Pickering, who is a "widow with a small
income" (12) when she becomes John Lafcadio's model and mistress in 1900 at the age of thirty, is that
which we feel for a backward child. For instance, Belle humours Beatrice when the latter offers to "share"
the Great Artist with her, by suggesting that they "keep it a secret from Johnnie," and "having prevailed
upon Belle to permit her to take up her residence" (13), Beatrice remains in the house where, thirty years
later, Belle continues to mother her "naughty" child—she tends to her even during the aftermath of Mrs.
Potter's murder when Beatrice takes to her bed and "refuses to [eat] unless [Belle] is there" (135). Lisa
Capella, who is brought to England by Lafcadio in 1884, also becomes "deeply attached" to Belle,
despite the fact that she is acknowledged to be Lafcadio's "favourite model" (15); once he discards her,
she becomes another of Belle's children, taking up residence as her longtime housekeeper and carrying
on a sibling rivalry with Beatrice which she expresses in frequent "glare[s] of hatred at the unsuspecting
"Inspiration"" (77), as well as with Claire Potter, whom she proclaims "a domineering woman. A great
fool" (104). Indeed, Claire Potter, along with her hapless husband, is also allowed to remain "at home" in
the little studio behind Little Venice; and Belle mothers her as well by giving her dinner once a week: "'As
you're so busy on Thursdays, my dear, I'm sure you haven't had time to get anything ready'" (93), an
invitation that she manages to make appear "spontaneous every time" (94) in order to spare Claire
embarrassment.

Allingham, having used Belle Lafcadio as an exemplar of Sarah Grand's wifely nineteenth-
century New Woman (although a somewhat unconventional one since she did her public service within
the confines of the private home that she shared with them), continues her exploration of the role of
women in the home in a twentieth-century setting. In Flowers For the Judge she creates a womanly
woman, who although unmarried, is quite unlike Gissing's pathetic spinster. Teddie Dell, who assumes
the role of care-giver and mother to Paul Brande, provides a private sanctuary for a feminized man of
the 1930s and in doing so usurps the role of wife, not only as it was idealized in the 1890s but as it is
interpreted by the modern-day Mrs. Miniver. And here again Allingham challenges the familiar views of
femininity and domesticity to reveal that things are never what they seem. Campion's view of Teddie
Dell, as Paul Brande's 'kept' woman, reflects modern assumptions that see the domestic role of women in the private sphere as antithetical to the individual's development or discovery of her true self. As such, Teddie Dell represents everything that is either outdated, lower class or in bad taste. This is evident upon their first encounter when Campion describes her as a rather pathetic romantic figure of Victorian fiction: "not a usual type . . . [with] something indefinable about her which he could only describe to himself as passive rather than active grief" (106); we see it again, at the end of their final meeting, in his irony-laden description of her declaration of the love between herself and Brande as "high tragedy itself" (146). As the voice of an upper class Englishman, he notes with mild contempt her cut-glass accent, which despite the fact that it is not "vulgar or uneducated [i]s not quite genuine;" her dress, which although smart, "ha[s] none of Gina's essential style;" and the fact that she is "middle-aged" (106), which he interprets as leaving her no other choice than to be Brande's mistress. He also presumes that the outside of her home, which he likens to a play-house, with its "preponderance of bright colours . . . no more in bad taste than a painted Noah's Ark" (143), indicates that it is she who is "childish or at least uneducated" (142) and that it is she who is under the illusion that her relationship with her lover is 'modern' and therefore "clean and new" (143). What is far more likely, is that the exterior of the house is representative of the taste of the "impulsive, excitable, slightly ridiculous" (145) Paul Brande, whose life illustrates the modern experience as it is described by Baudelaire in The Painter of Modern Life and which John Lechte tells us is

'[t]o be away from home and yet to feel at home'—this according to Baudelaire distinguished modern experience from all other. Here, to be away from home means being opened up to the new and the ephemeral, the fleeting and the transient. Prior to modernity, experience could be 'homely'—i.e. predictable and familiar. Modern experience, then, is confronted with, if it does not actively search it out [as did Beaudelaire and Paul Brande], the unpredictable, the unfamiliar, change and novelty.

(213)

Once inside the house, however, it becomes evident that things are not what they seem, at least to Campion; he is simply interpreting everything he sees to fit an image of Teddie Dell that is increasingly undermined by the reality of a woman who is neither inferior to nor dependent upon her modern lover. Although Campion tries to convince himself that "the room in which they sit[an]d reflect[s]
the outside of the building," he is clearly mistaken; it is simply a clean, comfortable and ordinary home, a predictable and familiar haven in which "the floor [i]s covered with imitation red and grey tiles and sh[i]ne[s] like a ship's deck. The dark oak furniture [i]s ordinary and unpretentious. There [i]s a divan under the windows and a comfortable chesterfield, flanked by two chintz-covered easy chairs by the fire." Campion also interprets what are simply good manners on the part of Teddie Dell, as she offers him the most comfortable chair, as proof that she "belong[s] to that most ill-used sisterhood, some of them wives, some of them mothers, and all of them lovers, who really believe that there is in the mere quality of manhood something magnificent and worthy to be served" (144). And despite his last-ditch attempts to use her appearance to maintain this notion that femininity, as essentially domestic and maternal is old-hat: "her fairish hair . . . cut in a thin unfashionably curled fringe . . . and unsuitably dressed in a very smooth blue skirt and a very frilly blouse" (143), the genuine Teddie Dell who emerges is a reversal of Campion's modern assumption that domesticity and female individuality don't mix.

In the real Teddie Dell we find a woman who, in terms of New Woman thinking, appears to have it all. She is a living testament to the views of fin-de-siècle writers like Mona Caird who saw marriage as a prison for women, a spinster, who has found a way to express her femininity and maternal impulses and still maintain her freedom. Thus she enjoys the domestic advantages of a Mrs. Miniver without the constraints of marriage and children. Like May Sinclair's Joan of Arc, she is physically and emotionally strong, with a "smooth, capable body [that] [i]s sturdy" . . . [a] square jawbone and thick cream skin . . . good teeth and wide-set blue-grey eyes" . . . [and] her self possession [i]s unconscious and superb" (143). Like Dorothy Richardson's womanly woman, and unlike her lover's fragile wife Gina, she is capable of facing the truth head-on. For example, when describing her "dear old boy's . . . temper . . . her eyes [go] blank and her mouth very hard" (145), and she is under no illusion that he will ever be seen with her in public. Like Vera Brittain's companionate wife, she appears to be financially independent—we are told that her "high-heeled black patent shoes and fox fur" (107) are expensive; and her statements that there would not be much money anyway, since "he spent like a lunatic" (146), and "I've had this place since '23" (my italics 145) suggest that even though Paul Brande may have chosen the house, she owns it.

At the same time, we hear echoes of Sarah Grand's womanly woman. She shares Belle Lafcadio's detachment and selflessness, a trait that we may read, not as the kind of servile adulation of
"the mere quality of manhood" that Campion sees in her "solicitude for his comfort" (144), but as the maternal feeling associated with the kind of woman whose impulse is always to protect and comfort others. Like Belle, Teddie Dell's maternal impulses are not limited to the man for whom she has made a home and they are not solely domestic in their expression; like Belle, they move her to protect those people that Paul Brande has used and abused in his pursuit of "the unfamiliar, change and novelty" of Baudelaire's modernity. Her meeting with Campion is meant, not only to protect Brande's memory by trying to avoid publicity, but to spare his young American 'trophy' wife and his staid middle-class family: "I didn't want to go to the police for obvious reasons. He wouldn't have liked it and she's only a kid, isn't she, and mixed up with nice people who don't understand this sort of thing" (144). And out of concern for Gina, she refuses Campion's offer to secure her share of Brande's estate: "Better let her have it," she said, "There isn't much." At the same time, she demonstrates the intellectual and moral strengths that Richardson and Sinclair attribute to the truly womanly woman: "It would be charity too. I haven't any rights" (146). Teddie Dell's only illusion appears to be the reason why Paul Brande is "such a busy man." Unlike Belle Lafcadio, who is well aware that her husband is "half buffoon" and that his egoism is at the root of "[s]uch a lot of trouble . . . [s]uch a lot of trouble" (Death 206-7), Teddie Dell still believes that her man is a kind of metropolitan white knight in that she thinks that his constant activity "held the business together" (Flowers 145) when in reality he was endangering Barnabas Publishing by his attempts to display and thus expose the unauthentic Congreve manuscript.

In Dancers in Mourning, Allingham again allows us to read forward from the 1890s into modern notions of home and femininity. Here, Renee Roper's boarding house serves as a metaphor for what appears to be a continuing belief in the English middle-class ideal of home as sanctuary and of the womanly woman as its provider. Renee Roper's boarders live in a neighbourhood where "[t]he tall houses, their stained sides and chipped stucco hidden in the lamplit half-light, rose up with all their original Georgian symmetry, and only the brightly lighted scenes within their many uncurtained windows betrayed their descent in the social scale of an unfaithful city" (119), and while they may not enjoy the privacy of the turn of the century single family home, they are also not bound by its conformities and restrictions. What Renee Roper provides to these people who, in the 1930s, live in a society characterized by what Lefebvre cites as one of modernity's inherent contradictions, "the prizing of mobility and the yearning for stability" (191), is simply another form of the middle-class ideal of a refuge
that is "quiet and homely and forgotten" (Dancers 119). Renee Roper's kitchen not only epitomizes this contradiction, it shows us that the spirit of the Gay Nineties, in the person of its mistress, has indeed lived on into the 1930s. Fond memories of a time when she was free are still alive in her mind, as well as in the heart of what is now her home, a kitchen that is described as "a neat little room, bright in spite of its utilitarianism . . . cosy and clean . . . the panel over the shelf above the range . . . papered with stage photographs" of its mistress, "with a saucy little bow . . . "kicking her heels about . . . on tour" (120). These pictures were taken at the turn-of-the-century when Renee Roper was free to move at will, a period that she quite evidently remembers with pleasure and pride: "'Miss,' she corrected [Campion] and sat smiling, her eyes bright. 'They never married me, duck,' she said, and her laugh was gurgling and happy as a child" (121).

Allingham uses Renee Roper and her home, then, to examine yet another example of the womanly woman whose role is not limited to the creation and maintenance of a home as a sanctuary for her husband and children. Renee Roper has no husband, nor does she have children, yet she still mothers those whom she harbours in her home. This is clear when she begs Campion to talk to the effeminate Peter Brome, Chloe's young lover:

"I'm worried out of my mind about him . . . this has bowled him clean over, poor kid. He won't eat and he can't sleep. He's half enjoying it, mind you, but its not good for him. He's got it into his head that she committed suicide and he's to blame." She laughed but her face softened. "Aren't they wonderful at that age? If you told him he was too sure of himself by half he'd either not believe you or cut his throat. Just see him and tell him it was an ordinary accident. Be a dear—to please me." (125)

Since she has no lover of her own that we know of, Renee Roper appears to live that aspect of life vicariously through others, even through Campion, whose every look and every word she interprets as proof of his clandestine affair with Chloe Pye, and, therefore, as someone in need of her protection and help:

"Don't tell me any more." The woman leaned across to pat his arm. "I understand. All her things are going to those terrible relations. And you've got a wife. So if there was a letter or two from you lying around it might be very awkward. Don't go into it, my boy. You're not the first good-looking youngster who's come to me in the same sort of trouble, I can
In Renee Roper, we are reminded again of Sarah Grand's New Woman. Like Belle Lafcadio, she looks after the men who live in her house, as well as the women, especially those who are used and abused by men. Although unmarried and childless, she nevertheless gives credence to Vernon Lee's claim that woman's love is essentially maternal, since her tolerance and empathy always outweigh her personal feelings. She treats Peter Brome like a son, seeking to rescue him from his depression despite the fact that it has all the earmarks of a self-indulgent melodrama; and she is appalled by the fact that she believes Chloe Pye, who "was old enough to be his auntie" (125) has used him for her own purposes. At the same time, even though she finds Chloe "spiteful and mean and a sight too possessive for [her] taste" (121), she has repeatedly offered refuge to Chloe, whose fortunes always depended upon men who "tired of her quickly" (121), as well as to "plenty like her [who] [a]re not all on the stage" (122). With Renee Roper, as with Belle Lafcadio at Little Venice—and even with Allingham at D'Arcy House—both men and women who can find no place for themselves in the outside world still find sanctuary with a good mother.

In The Fashion in Shrouds Allingham returns to a home over which a man's mistress presides. Anna Fitch, however, is no Teddie Dell, although we come to recognize in her the same inner strength and pragmatic self-sufficiency that Allingham appears to see as a basic requirement for women during a time when, according to Alison Light, "the meaning of domesticity is itself up for public debate: what it is, how much it costs, how women live and cope at home in their different social groups, all are the subject of intense and widespread concern and argument" (137). As with Teddie Dell, Campion first meets Anna Fitch in public, is unaware of her identity, and attempts to categorize her according to conventional class and gender roles as a middle-class, middle-aged "matron," who, despite the fact that she is "very correctly dressed" cannot achieve the "elegance" natural to the aristocratic Lady Papendeik and the modern Valentine Ferris. Indeed, since "she d[oes] not by her manner appear to be very rich, nor d[oes] she seem to belong to anybody" (that is, to a man who is very rich), Campion assumes that she is out of her element in a house of haute couture and that that is the reason that she finds the deferential treatment by the fashion house employee, Rex, "very comforting" (Fashion 22). He is, of course, wrong on most counts. We learn, as the novel unfolds, that Anna Fitch is no middle-class matron nor is she "ill-at-ease" with anybody. Rather, she is Ferdie Paul's mistress, she is accustomed to material comforts,
and Rex was actually “anxious to placate [her] at Papendeik’s dress show” (77).

Campion meets Anna in Ferdie Paul’s main living room and a part of the Victorian love-nest “which a great actor-manager had built for a charming leading lady on top of the Sovereign Theatre.” In this “vast, untidy room” (147) which is “a quarter as large as a church and not at all unlike one in structural design” (146), we hear once more the voice of nineteenth-century rational self-confidence in Campion’s assumption that Anna’s role is a submissive and subordinate one. He assumes that this is “her home” and that she feels “the same hidden discomfort which [he] had noticed in her when he had first seen her at Papendeik’s dress show and later with Ferdie at the Tulip” (my italics). He notes that “she [i]s self-contained and polite without being friendly,” but sees that as a sign that “because they were Ferdie’s friends they were delightful and exalted beings on whom it was her duty and privilege to wait.” Despite his admission that “it is odd,” he actually presumes that the fact that she is wearing a hat and “that her bag and gloves lay conspicuously on the side table . . . made this position even more apparent” (147), hence ignoring the obvious assumption that she was just passing through. Indeed, just as he did with Teddie Dell, Campion interprets everything he sees to fit his preconceived image of Anna Fitch as solely dependent upon and devoted to Ferdie Paul, a position that he sees as “natural” in the relationship between a man and a woman:

She was the mistress of the house and the handmaid of Ferdie Paul, and it occurred suddenly to Mr. Campion that what she really represented was an old-fashioned pre-Chaucerian wife, entirely loyal, completely subject, her fortunes inescapably her husband’s own. The notion amused him, since he reflected that in view of all the excitement in the past century over the legal status of females the only way for a man to achieve this natural if somewhat elementary relationship with a woman at the present time was to persuade her to love him and never to marry her. (147)

But once again, we find that things are not what they seem. When Campion leaves, we discover in her conversation with Lady Amanda Fitton that Mrs. Fitch has more in common with the Wife of Bath than with the pre-Chaucerian wife to which Campion compares her. Like Chaucer’s Wife, who “despite the loss of youth and beauty, her best weapons, faces her future not only with a woman’s ability to endure and enjoy what she cannot reshape but also with a zest for life on its own terms that is almost more than human” (Abrams 126), she goes into “paroxysms of laughter” as she tells Amanda the tale of
Ferdie Paul's latest victim, Caroline Adamson, who has been involved with "[t]wo men! Both Georgia's specials!" (Fashion 151). And in her almost certain knowledge of who Ferdie Paul really is and what he is capable of doing: "Never see round your own man, that's the secret. . . . Even if you have to blind yourself" (152), we find her, also like the Wife, "[m]aking the best of the world in which [she has] arbitrarily been placed" (Abrams 126). Therefore, she both endures and enjoys her relationship with the much younger Ferdie Paul. She treats him like a son, and he, typically, seems "supremely unaware of her save as an added comfort" (Fashion 147). For instance, like any teenage boy, he resists all of her efforts to protect him, such as teasing her about packing "four pairs of socks for twelve hours in Frogland" (147) and drinking the brandy that she says he shouldn't have, all the while "laughing at her over the glass" (148). Like all mothers, she worries about his health, yet considers him unique and the most clever of men: "There is a clever man for you. Ferdie Paul is in a class by himself. If he told me to jump off the roof I'd know he was right" (153). However, her maternal impulses are not limited to Paul. She treats the young Amanda with the "half- sentimental, half-patronising" attitude of the older, wiser woman and offers her advice on how to get the best of Campion when they are married: "You don't want to be too tolerant," she said at last and added feelingly, "if you can help it" (150). Yet, she is also surprisingly tolerant of other women, especially those whose lives are controlled by men. She refers to the prostitute, Caroline Adamson, as "a naughty girl" and, although she doesn't particularly like her, she openly admires the promiscuous Georgia Wells for her talent: "Georgia is an artist. I spotted her as a winner years before I met her up here" (151). There are, however, two things that Campion was right about when he first observed Anna Fitch: that she seemed to belong to no one and that, by her manner, she does not appear to be very rich. No one possesses Anna Fitch, and she does not appear to be well off, even though she is. In essence, although she may provide protection and comfort to men, she has learned not to expect the same in return and she has acted accordingly. We see this in her final encounter with Campion, when she responds to his observation that Gaiogi had lost two or three thousand pounds of her money for her at the Poire d'Or:

Suddenly, however, she laughed and a flash of the insouciance which is the keystone of her profession appeared in her smile. "I've learnt a thing or two since then, ducky," she said. She did not display her hands but his eyes were drawn to them. They were ablaze with stones. Her square, ugly neck was alight too, and the clips on her dress shone with
the unmistakable watery gleam of true diamonds. (246)

In the setting of this encounter, as well as in the actions and demeanour of Anna Fitch, Allingham allows us to read forward from the days in which mistresses were "kept, literally as well as financially, in secret flats that were sumptuous in the main [though] a trifle furtive about the entrance," to the 1930s, when women like Anna Fitch, even though they now appear in public with their lovers and have learned to look out for themselves financially, still enter his home in the same way—through a door that is "smaller and even meaner in appearance" (146) than the stage door. On her final day as mistress of Ferdie Paul's home, the "vast untidy room" that Campion had first entered is no longer a scene of "jolly chaos" but reeks of "a cold loneliness, an air of going away" (248). This time Ferdie Paul does not sit surrounded by "manuscripts, books, papers, sketches and even patterns of material, in happy confusion," nor do we find Anna Fitch kneeling on "the floor before an open suitcase" (147).

Nevertheless, she remains essentially the same woman: maternal, protective, comforting and careful to maintain the sense of sanctuary in this home, even if it does resemble a church only in its structural design: "She . . . moved quietly about the room, tidying up odds and ends, replacing books in their shelves and plumping up cushions on the couch. There was an indefinable air of neatness about her, a suggestion of making all safe in her very walk, and a finality in the pat of her plump hands on the upholstery" (245). She offers Campion "a nice cup of tea," observes that he looks tired, offers her sympathy regarding his breakup with Amanda, "a nice little girl" (246), and points out the liquor and cigarettes so that he can help himself. She then moves on, knowing that Ferdie Paul will not be coming back and that it is time to cut her losses. And she is free, both emotionally and financially, to do so.

What Anna Fitch shares, not only with Teddie Dell and Renee Roper, but with Belle Lafcadio, is a femininity that is maternal rather than submissive, a selflessness that is altruistic rather than self-sacrificing and a self-sufficiency that recognizes the reality of all women's lives in a society which is still hierarchical and patriarchal in nature. When we read forward from 1890 to 1930 through the homes over which these women preside, we realize—and we can safely assume that by this time Allingham did too—that there is no such thing as a conventional "home" and that there are now and were, even during Belle Lafcadio's time, many variations of "private" and many ways that a feminine aesthetic based upon the need to provide sanctuary, protection and comfort, may be expressed.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The four detective novels that are the focus of this study are rooted in a long and familiar literary tradition that goes back to the seventeenth-century. Before World War I, popular fiction in Britain served every class, in that it restored the certainties of the old order, if only in the mind of the reader. Those certainties were comprised of a pastoral England stewarded by a benevolent aristocracy, a grateful and respectful working class, a sober and virtuous middle-class, a clear vision of right and wrong and appropriate rewards and punishments for both, and a Britain that still enjoyed political and economic hegemony. In her contribution to They Wrote the Book, Helen Windrath’s collection of essays by authors of detective fiction, Penny Sumner says that she does not “believe there’s a world of difference between genre and non-genre writing” (4). Such a statement by a contemporary writer suggests not only that popular fiction would appear to have come full circle, but that by using the detective novel of manners to address the near-universal interest generated by the “Woman Question” during the interwar years, Margery Allingham anticipated the postmodern blurring of the borders between genres that has become commonplace today. Indeed, claims like that of Craig Bell for The Moonstone seem like understatements when applied to these four Allingham detective novels of manners:

... quite apart from its merits as a tale of mystery and detection it is at the same time 'literature'—a word and status easy to understand but difficult to explain. A novel is 'literature' when it fulfills certain vital criteria: when it has style, intellect, individuality; when its characters live and the narrative does not date; when even if its theme is detection and crime, it can be enjoyed apart from its theme; can be read again and again with pleasure. (199)

While this is certainly true of Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds, these novels are also historical documents, in that they are repositories of a time and a place that Bromley sees as “particularly problematic [since] [s]o much of 'popular memory' about this period has emphasized its pastness, concentrating on the personal and the familial, constructing it as unitary, non-contradictory, and closed” (5). In their expression of attitudes toward gender roles that hark from Victorian times and survive even to the present day, Allingham’s fictional characters contradict such an interpretation of the interwar years and deny that it was a period isolated in time and book-ended by two political world events.
At one point in "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf blames the Great War for sending women scurrying back to home and hearth. The women in Margery Allingham’s novels end up proving Virginia Woolf wrong, at least in this respect. Their lives testify to the fact that it takes more than one event, no matter how momentous, to alter a concept of femininity that is so deeply rooted in the cultural consciousness of the English; evidently such a concept is capable of surviving centuries of wars, not to mention countless messages from both popular and literary fiction and journalism that loudly proclaim, or frequently complain, about the liberation of women. Nor do political and legal rights or even a popular notion such as androgyny manage to uproot the image of the private, as well as the public, role of a "real" woman as one that is diametrically opposite to that of a man. This image of woman as subordinate, subservient, self-sacrificing and maternal is one whose staying power, even into the 1960s, I can personally attest to. Therefore, in these four novels, ‘modern' women in creative professions, like Margery Allingham, end up in conventional relationships despite their denials and rationalizations. Gina Brande’s 'companionate' marriage is a farce. She gives up her work and waits at home for a husband who spends most of his time "running round" with other women both in public and in private. Claire Potter, the Joan of Arc of Lafcadio’s painting, abandons her dreams of being a bona fide artist to work at home on a series of menial jobs, including those of model, cleaner of wood blocks, teacher of dilettantes and the accomplice of Max Fustian; at the same time her husband is free to produce bad art and teach in a public school. Val Ferris may or may not keep her job designing clothes for rich women, but the enthusiasm with which she agrees to be Alan Dell’s kind of wife tells us that she too has found it just too difficult to deny the power of, what Bourdieu would call, the English *habitus*, that repository of cultural and moral judgment that is resistant, if not impervious, to sudden shifts in the social and political arena.

By the same token, however, ‘modern' women in these novels prove Woolf right in terms of how difficult it is to overcome the two obstacles to freedom and equality in either sphere. Those roadblocks are a deeply entrenched view of femininity embodied in the Victorian image of the Angel in the House and the fear of male censure that arises out of the conventionality of men, who are shocked if a woman varies too far from that ideal. This fear is so powerful that Georgia Wells, the model of the "female female impersonator" not only plays the part on stage, but off-stage in her personal life as well. We see this same fear in Gina Brande, Claire Potter and Chloe Pye, career women each of whom finally enters into a conventional marriage. We take for granted that Gina will marry Mike Wedgwood, but we are left
wondering if she will do so more out of guilt than love, since it was his devotion to her and her lack of insight into the nature of that devotion that nearly convicted him of a murder that he didn't commit. Claire Potter maintains the illusion of herself as a New Woman amidst the homely details of life with her ineffectual William only by periodically drinking herself into unconsciousness. And Chloe Pye, known for her dependence upon wealthy older men, finally settles for marriage to a romantic boy to whom she can be both wife and surrogate mother, a role that mistresses like Teddie Dell, Renee Roper and Anna Fitch also settle for rather than attempt to challenge the entrenched view of women's place as essentially private and domestic.

While it is impossible to know whether Allingham wrote these novels with the intention of resolving her personal dilemma, a marital problem that is carefully documented in her standard biography by Julia Thorogood and attested to in the writings of B.A. Pike and Richard Martin, there is considerable material within the books themselves that would have been relevant to her predicament. Given the growing discrepancy between her financial and professional success and that of her husband, along with the significant rift that had developed between them by the time she began these books, it would be strange if Margery Allingham had not wondered, along with other working women during the interwar years, how to retain her femininity and at the same time operate effectively within the public sphere, a place that had for generations been seen as exclusively masculine. This issue had become even more problematic after World War I and this question is posed repeatedly in these novels' examination of two quite contradictory views of womanhood: a deeply entrenched cultural view that equates femininity with the Victorian image of the Angel in the House and a vision of the New Woman as equal and sometimes superior to men, as it is interpreted by feminist writers both before and after the war. In the course of her examination, it also seems probable that Allingham has heeded Virginia Woolf's warning that, for a writer, "[i]t is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple" ("Room" 97). Therefore, at the same time as Allingham gives us the male perspective, she issues subterranean challenges to that view by showing us the reality of her female characters' lives; and she does this through the use of two plots, two genres and an increasingly androgynous, ambiguous and self-conscious detective. Indeed, by the time he appears in Dancers in Mourning, Campion has come to recognize the danger of being blinded to the truth by his emotional involvement with characters like Linda Sutane; at the same time he also consciously rejects the masculine egoism inherent in the temptation to see himself as the White
Knight in the looking glass of her romanticism. It is also interesting that by the time Margery Allingham has completed these four novels she appears to have had, like Valentine Ferris, some sort of epiphany and decided to become Pip Youngman Carter's "wife," rather than his martyr or his meal ticket. Of further interest is that she apparently manages to do so without abandoning her position as the Belle Lafcadio-like provider of sanctuary for a variety of women and men, in a home that is as unconventional as is her role as a 'modern' mother-figure.

It also appears that Allingham may have been influenced by Woolf's declaration that a "woman writing thinks back through her mothers" (92). Unless she was very different from countless middle-class women of her time as well as those of past generations, Margery Allingham was afraid of being perceived—and treated—as unfeminine. Thus she examines the lives of her female characters in light of the concepts of popular pre-war feminist writers like Sarah Grand, Mona Caird and May Sinclair, as well as Vera Brittain, Dorothy Richardson and Jan Struthers, whom she could have read during the 1920s and '30s. Implicit in the work of each of these writers is the notion of androgyny, a concept that Allingham utilizes in her exploration of whether a woman can realize and live her femininity and still participate fully in both the private and the public spheres of a society that has, for centuries, viewed her as subordinate, subservient and by nature incapable of rational thought. This ideal has been articulated in more recent feminist rhetoric as "having it all," and the attempts of her woman characters to do so, whether it be through Grand's notion of the "womanly woman," Caird's "ideal marital relationship," Sinclair's New Woman as "nature's double vitality experiment" (Foster 166), Richardson's "synthetic consciousness," or Brittain's "semi-detached marriage," reveal elements of pre-war New Woman thinking adapted to post-war feminist ideals. More significantly, the lives of these characters hold out faint hope that women, who adopt these ideals without taking into account their own temperament and that of their husband or lover, can overcome the kind of cultural conditioning that makes freedom and equality so difficult to achieve. Indeed, in this Allingham would again appear to side with Woolf, who says: "When I rummage in my own mind, I find no noble sentiments about companions and equals and influencing the world to higher ends. I find myself saying briefly and prosaically that it is much more important to be oneself than anything else. Do not dream of influencing other people, I would say, if I knew how to make it sound exalted. Think of things in themselves" (102-3).

We therefore see in Gina Brande, a seriously unhappy and unproductive woman who denies,
Allingham’s speculated whose androgyny, with her “woman-manly” clothing and figure, she is a poor advertisement for the companionate marriage that she claims is hers, a version of the semi-detached relationship idealized by Caird and adapted by Brittain and one in which the “husband and wife regard one another as absolutely free beings” (Calder 167). Through characters like Teddie Dell and Anna Fitch, Allingham also challenges the notion, implicit in Caird’s and Brittain’s semi-detached relationship, that women can somehow shrug off the maternal impulse that is behind their making of a private sanctuary for a man. Whether or not these two women have acknowledged that impulse, they have chosen to make a home for their men, despite the fact that it means a life of loneliness and insecurity. And in her depiction of the attempts of the alcoholic Claire Potter and the “profoundly weary” Linda Sutane to deny their need for a conventional relationship, Allingham appears to also reject the idea at the core of Sinclair’s image of Joan of Arc.

In contrast to these women, she shows us characters like Belle Lafcadio and Renee Roper, whose lives suggest that resident even in the “new” type of woman who incorporate[s] the best qualities of both genders” (Heilmann 13) is still the old one who makes a home a refuge, whether it be for the feminized man or the displaced woman of the 1930s. Belle Lafcadio and Renee Roper display maternal impulses which honour the work of Sarah Grand’s womanly woman, as well as Sinclair’s ideal of feminine chivalry, in their offer of sanctuary and protection, not only to men like Tennyson Potter and Peter Brome, but to women like Chloe Pye and Harriet Pickering, who would otherwise drown in the maelstrom of a post-war society; and they do so in a home very much like that of Margery Allingham in that it also reflects the modern blurring of public and private spheres.

Finally, there is reason to suggest that if Allingham did resolve her own dilemma through the writing of these novels it was, at least in part, in the person of the fashionable and successful Valentine Ferris, the protagonist of The Fashion in Shrouds, Allingham’s final novel of the 1930s. In chapter three of this thesis, I speculated that Belle and Johnny Lafcadio’s “companionable” marriage (as opposed to Brittain’s “companionate” one) was the kind of union that Allingham had hoped for herself and Pip Carter, indeed had convinced herself that they had during the early days of her own marriage. I would do more than speculate, at this point, that as the mirror image of her androgynous brother, Albert Campion, and
thus quite likely as Margery Allingham's alter ego, at least in *The Fashion in Shrouds*, Valentine Ferris may very well be articulating Allingham's own solution to the difficulties she faces in balancing her professional and personal life. At first reading, the decision by the very modern Val to become Alan Dell's traditional wife rather than surrender the experience of romance and marriage leaves the 'modern' reader surprised, if not stunned in disbelief. Yet this is a decision that draws heavily upon many of the notions of Dorothy Richardson's womanly woman. Perhaps the best evidence for this may be found in the conversation between Alan Dell and Val Ferris, in which we see represented two distinctly different modes of thinking: Dell's is a straightforward proposition that, according to Eveline Kilian, models Dorothy Richardson's idea of the masculine approach to relationships. According to Horace Gregory, this "one-sided" proposition also contains a reference which Richardson used in her novel *The Tunnel*: in admitting the weakness in his proposal, since it "means the other half of my life to me, but the whole of yours to you" (233), Dell paraphrases the lines from Byron's satirical poem *Don Juan*, "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart/Tis woman's whole existence," a reference that Richardson mistakenly attributed to Tennyson "as an example of a typical Victorian attitude" (41). Gregory also suggests that Val's speech reflects what Virginia Woolf, in describing Dorothy Richardson's narrative, refers to as "a woman's sentence... in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex" (ix).

I mentioned in chapter three that Allingham's relationship with her husband apparently changed after she completed *The Fashion in Shrouds*. Julia Thorogood surmises that one reason may have been the approach of World War II and the "prospect of parting [which] drew Pip and Margery closer" (224). However, she also notes the new respect with which Allingham spoke of her husband, both in private and in public, a change in attitude that suggests that even though "[w]ives [w]ere out of fashion" (*Fashion* 233), like Val Ferris, she had made her own discovery about the psychology of her sex and decided to become one. The diary entries about "P.Y.C" as opposed to "Cocky," repeated references to his "authority" in the village and her substitution of "Mrs. Carter" for "Margery Allingham," all make one wonder whether, at the same time that Val Ferris discovered that Alan Dell wanted neither "a mistress [n]or a companion," perhaps Margery Allingham decided that neither did Pip Youngman Carter.

Allingham's professional focus changed as well at the end of the 1930s. After the publication of *The Fashion in Shrouds* she returned to her familiar formula fiction in books such as the thriller, *Traitor's
In light of this, we might also speculate that she came to recognize, through her creation of characters like Belle Lafcadio and Val Ferris, the synthetic consciousness of the womanly woman in herself and thus to accept her professional role, as William McFee had described it long before, as a teller of lies rather than as a literary artist. As a result, she may very well have developed a more chivalrous attitude toward a husband who also lacked whatever it took to become a bona fide artist. Unlike Johnny Lafcadio, however, it was not until after her death that Margery Allingham’s genius was recognized, and ironically much of that was due to the fact that Philip Youngman Carter, like Belle Lafcadio, devoted himself to protecting and publishing her work, an act that some might see simply as a way to preserve his own income, but others might interpret as an act of chivalry worthy of a relationship based upon the kind of mutual defense and protection enjoyed by the Dells and Lafcadios of Margery Allingham’s fiction.

By the time of her death in 1966, Margery Allingham had sold over three million copies of her works in England and North America, three of which had been adapted to film. Allingham’s continued financial success during the 1930s would indicate that the four books that are the focus of this thesis were among the most popular mystery novels of the interwar years; as such they demonstrate the potential of popular culture for intellectual engagement and social critique during times of social confusion and conflict. During this period when a stratified British society was in a state of flux and the role of women was widely contested in journalistic as well as literary circles, Allingham’s creation of a hybrid genre that married the detective story with the novel of manners resulted in a popular forum for serious social commentary. In this forum Allingham was able to explore current and often revolutionary notions regarding gender roles and their impact upon women’s lives without sacrificing an entertaining and formulaic mystery plot. Indeed, the compatibility of these two popular genres, each of which, in its own way, is concerned with social change within a modern, middle-class culture, makes Death of a Ghost, Flowers For the Judge, Dancers in Mourning and The Fashion in Shrouds, ideal vehicles for the discussion of complex issues that concerned women after World War I, as well as a subtle and frequently subversive comparison of a pre-war and post-war cultural consensus that questions the reality of the changes in women’s lives touted by popular journalism and fiction.

Margery Allingham’s work is still very much part of today’s popular culture. Her short stories have been gathered into collections, such as The Allingham Minibus: More Short Stories (1973) which was
reprinted as Mr. Campion's Lucky Day and Other Stories (1992). Eight of her Campion novels, including the four books which this thesis has discussed, have been made into television movies. The Margery Allingham Society, founded in 1988, publishes a journal, The Bottle Street Gazette, and maintains a web site devoted to her life and work at http://www.margeryallingham.org.uk. The Society celebrated the centennial of Albert Campion’s birth in 2000 by publishing The Albert Memorial and observed the one-hundredth anniversary of her birth in 2004 with events and exhibits featuring her life and work and the publication of a festschrift, Margery Allingham: 100 Years of a Great Mystery Writer. And even though she returned to her familiar formulaic oeuvre during the 1940s, Margery Allingham’s decade-long foray into the detective novel of manners might also be seen as an inspiration for present-day mystery novels, many of which are also written by women who are equally clever and subversive in their use of this popular form to question the social status quo.
ENDNOTES

1 According to Paula Woods, "silly-ass sleuths" were a phenomenon of Golden Age mysteries and included Dorothy L. Sayers's Peter Wimsey and Albert Campion. These "private detectives or amateur sleuths were distinguished by foppish demeanor and appearance . . . came from the British upper class . . . [and] cover[ed] up their real abilities and serious nature with silliness both of action and language" (414).

2 In his The Poetics of Prose, Todorov condenses into eight points the twenty rules, listed by Van Dine in 1928, to which detective fiction must conform. They are as follows:

1. The novel must have at most one detective and one criminal, and at least one victim (a corpse). 2. The culprit must not be a professional criminal, must not be the detective, must kill for personal reasons. 3. Love has no place in detective fiction. 4. The culprit must have a certain importance: (a) in life: not be a butler or a chambermaid. (b) in the book: must be one of the main characters. 5. Everything must be explained rationally; the fantastic is never admitted. 6. There is no place for descriptions nor for psychological analyses. 7. With regard to information about the story, the following homology must be observed: "author : reader = criminal : detective." 8. Banal situations and solutions must be avoided (Van Dine lists ten). (49)

3 A phrase coined by Betty Friedan in her feminist critique of 1964, The Feminine Mystique.


[w]hat most requires interpretation in A Room of One's Own are what John Burt saw as "irreconcilable habits of thought," with a "feminist" central argument—the patriarchy exploits women economically and socially in order to bolster its inadequate self-esteem—and a Romantic underargument. The underargument gives us women not as looking glasses for male narcissism but (Woolf says) as "some renewal of creative power which it is [in] the gift only of the opposite sex to bestow [sic]." This gift has been lost,
Woolf adds, but not because of the degradations of the patriarchy. The First World War is the villain, but what then has happened to the book’s overt argument? Was the Victorian Period the bad old days or the good old days? Burt’s summary seems to me eminently just: “The two arguments of *A Room of One’s Own* are not reconcilable, and any attempt to reconcile them can be no more than an exercise in special pleading. *A Room of One’s Own*, however, is not an argument but, as Woolf proclaims in its opening pages, a portrayal of how a mind attempts to come to terms with its world. (238-9)

5 In *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (Oxford University Press, 1976), Judith Fryer describes the images of women in terms of four types of female characters: the Temptress, the American Princess, the Great Mother, and the New Woman.

6 A Hotei, often called the laughing Buddha, is the Japanese god of happiness, the patron of children, fortunetellers, bartenders and politicians. Like our own Santa Claus, he carries a large bag over his shoulders which contains gifts or fortunes and he is often shown surrounded by children.

7 Note that John Widdowson in *Flowers for the Judge* bears a striking psychological resemblance to Gissing’s Widdowson, the quintessential Victorian egoist.

8 A term coined by Simone de Beauvoir which describes a woman who plays a role based on a particular notion of how a woman should be.
Works Consulted


- - -. The Oaken Heart. London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1941.


http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Androgyny


http://www.idir.net/~nedblake/allingham_07.html


http://history.osu.edu/Projects/Clash/NewWoman/newwomen-page1.htm


http://www.margeryallingham.org.uk/biography.htm


