CHAPTER FOUR

MARGERY ALLINGHAM: THE CLOWN AND THE CRIMINALS

Margery Allingham, an English mystery writer and social historian, is known primarily as the creator of Albert Campion. J.E. Morpurgo evaluates Margery Allingham's achievements as a detective story writer.

In the decades before the Second World War most often with Nicholas Blake and Michael Innes as companions, Margery Allingham was hailed as a leader in that new generation of writers which was reviving British detective fiction. Later, but not so very much later, she was elevated into even more resplendent company and settled, with Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, as one of the triumvirate of queens regnant which, since Conan Doyle dismissed Sherlock Holmes, has dominated the genre, until recent years without much trouble from potential usurpers.

Few would dispute this claim particularly when Agatha Christie herself rated her contemporary as a memorable fellow practitioner as H.R.F. Keating says

Agatha Christie paying a tribute to Margery Allingham shortly after her death in 1966 said that instead of asking whether she herself read others detective stories, people ought to ask her how many of those she did read she was able to remember, 'not very many', she answers, with that lemon-zest sharpness she sometimes had. But she added, Margery Allingham stands out like a shining light.


Allingham's detective Albert Campion is aristocratic and has royal connections and may even be an heir to the throne. Talking about the detective T.J.Binyon says,

Campion is of course a pseudonym: his real surname is too eminent to be mentioned, though we learn that his first name is, in reality not Albert but Rudolph.

Campion's appearance in the Crime at Black Dudley (1929) is comic. His eccentricities save him, in this first book, at least from the dangers of conventionality. There is after all nothing exceptional about his heroics at Black Dudley, "The courage, the resilience, the resource, constitute the stock-in-trade of the most standard model of fictional adventure." Julian Symons describes him as "lank, pale, fair-haired, spectacled and 'the general impression one received of him was that he was well-bred and a trifle absent minded." He is indeed well-bred, having close connection with the upper reaches of the peerage, and perhaps distant ones with royalty. His servant, Magersfontein Lugg, is a comic cockney described in an early book as a "Vulgarian in the service of Mr.Campion".

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6 Ibid., pp.129-130.
Campion is represented both as a clown and a man of action. Just as Lord Peter Wimsey has his man servant Bunter, Campion has his Lugg; if Inspector Charles helps Peter Wimsey Stainslaus helps Campion. He, like Wimsey courts Amanda Fitton over several books and marries her.

Where Wimsey is flamboyant, Campion is pale and withdrawn, designedly difficult to get to know.7

Allingham's mystery novels are generally divided into two periods; the early works, which are characterised by their fast paced plots with much physical action, and the later works which have more subtle character development.

Albert Campion was introduced in The Crime at Black Dudley (1929) where he appears as a minor crook and a slightly comic figure. Black Dudley is a mansion where Colonel Gordon Coombe, the invalid old uncle of Wyatt Petrie lives. He throws frequent parties to young people. He likes "the society of young people so much that he persuaded his nephew to bring a houseful of young folk down to the gloomy old mansion at least half a dozen times a year".8 To one such party, a chosen group of people are invited. The party starts with a Black Dudley ritual with a dagger. The story behind it as narrated by Wyatt is that one of the Petries was killed with the dagger; the superstitious

belief that if the murderer touches the dagger it would bleed afresh helped Quintin Petrie to find out the culprit. Afterwords this became a ritual. The game was played in the dark, passing the dagger for twenty minutes and when the lights were on, the person found with the dagger would have to forfeit whatever he wished. This made the group interested in playing the ritual. Dr. Abbershaw and Campion escaped into the garden. Abbershaw's fiancée Meggie meets him in the garden and tells him that the colonel has had a heart attack and is taken to his room by Dr. Whitby, his physician, Gideon his lawyer, and Dawlish, a guest. She tells him that she suspects it to be a murder as during the ritual when the dagger came to her hand, it was sticky with blood; but suddenly somebody seized it from her.

Dr. Abbershaw learns from Michael lrenderby that the old man is dead and his physician Dr. Whitby and his guests want him to sign the cremation certificate. But Michael refuses to comply with his request. Dr. Whitby requests Dr. Abbershaw to sign the certificate. Abbershaw goes up where the dead body is only to realise that he is not allowed to see the body though he manages to see the face wearing a mask. He signs the certificate but decides to go to Scotland Yard the next day without realising that the group against them is the most dangerous one and they will not be allowed to leave Black Dudley. Dr. Whitby says that the party can continue according to the dead man's wish.
The invitees realise that they are imprisoned and they have to fight against a powerful group. They cannot escape as their cars are drained of petrol and the servants employed there are those of Gideon and Dawlish. Wyatt is angry but can do nothing. The contents of the wallet that this gang is searching for is unfortunately burnt by Dr. Abbershaw into whose possession it had come accidentally. All their attempts to escape fail. When interviewed individually by the group Abbershaw tells them that he has burnt the papers and doesn't know anything about them as they were written in code. The gang refuses to believe him. Abbershaw understands that Gideon and Dawlish are the members of a deadly gang, the notorious bank thieves of the state. This gang has a leader who doesn't directly involve himself with the activities of its members. There is a master brain behind it and the papers in this particular case may be plans of some bank robbery. Campion realises that he has been appointed by the rival gang, the Simister to get these papers. Though he was successful in getting the papers he couldn't escape with them; it is these papers that Abbershaw has accidentally taken and burnt. Dawlish knowing that he has been double-crossed keeps these people as prisoners under his control. Since the papers are burnt he doesn't want the guests to escape since they know something about his plan which they may expose to the police if sent out. His attempts to burn them inside the mansion fail.
a worse fate. "The car leapt forward, swerved over the narrow turf border into a small draining ditch, and, with a horrible sickening grind of smashing machinery, overturned". Though these three are after the papers they have not killed colonel Coombe. Whitby alone escapes. We do not hear anything about Campion. He simply disappears. The mystery is solved by Dr. Abbershaw who spends most of his time in the British Museum, libraries and book shops and discovers that the dagger ritual is only Wyatt's invention and it is he who has murdered his uncle. When his uncle proved to be the master brain behind the robbery and responsible for the creation of a criminal society he killed him in order to prevent further destruction to humanity. Abbershaw satisfied with the explanation and knowing that Wyatt is going to settle in Spain, leaves the place satisfied as justice has been done.

The crime here is murder. The victim is not an innocent person but a wicked and dangerous criminal. Colonel Coombe is the brains behind an organisation which trains people from their childhood to commit sins. They "were the catspaws - specially prepared implements with which to attract certain men or acquire certain information". The mind of these chosen people are "trained from childhood, deliberately warped, deliberately

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developed along certain lines". Apart from Colonel Coombe there are also others who can turn people into dehumanized machines. Wyatt comes to know about these things when he falls in love with a girl - Dolly Lord. The girl is incredibly stupid. She "was innocent with the innocence of a savage. She knew nothing. The elementary civilized code of right and wrong was an abstruse doctrine to her. She was horrible". When he studied her he found out that the girl was trained to deliberately commit sins without realising the seriousness of her action. She is not the only victim. It is a society, a highly organised criminal concern. Wyatt's girl and others like her are little wheels in the machinery. The men working behind the making of such machinery can easily be bought. They have to plan the crimes that other men would commit. This mass production of crime is revolting and ghastly. So Wyatt has decided to get these people who plan and control such organisations. If the police is informed of such an organisation these people - the masterbrains will be sent to jail only to be back and start afresh. So he turns to be a particularly militant type of social reformer".

The victim and his group are properly punished for their sins. Gideon, the driver and Dawlish meet with the severe

12 Ibid., p.209.
13 Ibid., p.209.
punishment that they deserve. The driver is cut in the face, Gideon is rendered unconscious, Dawlish, the doctor thinks that even if "he keeps' im alive 'is brain may go". Colonel Coombe, of course, is dead.

The archetypal pattern here is different. The criminal here is both "a murderer and a martyr". He doesn't get anything by his uncle's death. In fact, it is he who is his uncle's benefactor. In the absence of a priest detective punishing the wicked, the criminal plays the part of the priest and kills the wicked. As far as the criminal's escape is concerned the archetypal pattern resembles that of Dorothy L. Sayers's Five Red Herrings. In Sayers's book the criminal is acquitted since he has killed Compbell the victim by accident. When the murder in Black Dudley is taken into account Wyatt's is a planned one. The unravelling of the mystery is not done by Campion, the detective but by Dr. Abbershaw. If Abbershaw solves the mystery Wyatt plays the part of the priest and sacrifices the victim. Justice is done by Providence in the case of Dawlish and Gideon. So we have different types of punishment for the organisers and the brains of the organisation. Ultimately justice is done, good is rewarded and bad is punished.

In The Crime at Black Dudley, as in her other novels there are many details and encounters of the wicked and the

15 Ibid., p.214.
prisoners. It is a sort of thriller. "The first novel sets the tone for the four "adventure" stories that form a distinctive group at the beginning of Miss Allingham's Oeuvre. Although there is a definite murder mystery, which seems of central relevance, but is in fact no more than incidental, it is rather as a novel of action and atmosphere that The Crime at Black Dudley continues to make its effect". 16

The next novel Mystery Mile (1930) is less melodramatic than The Crime at Black Dudley. Campion has not changed much. He is the same pale young man with enormous spectacles jesting his way to the solution of mysteries. He, of course, doesn't disappear as he does in his first novel.

Judge Crowdy Lobbett has been the intended victim of an extraordinary series of crimes. First his secretary was shot, his butler was poisoned, then his chauffeur met with a mysterious accident and finally a man walking with him down the street was killed.

At the beginning of the novel there is a magic performance by Satsuma, the world famous Japanese conjurer. His last item is to ask any member of the public to get into a cabinet, and make him disappear and reappear in the cabinet itself. Judge

Lobbett volunteers. Campion interferes and saves the judge by sending his mouse unexpectedly into the cabin. The mouse dies. This incident frightens Marlow, Judge Lobbett's son who meets Campion with a request to save his father. In the course of the conversation Campion understands that the secret enemy of Judge Lobbett is The Simister. Campion was employed earlier in *The Crime at Black Dudley* by this Simister gang on some errand in which he fails. He knows this Simister is evil and dangerous to society.

Apparently he's a voice on the telephone, a shadow on the road, the gloved hand that turns out the light in the crook play; but with one big difference - he is never caught.  

One of the gangsters is caught by the police and punished by the Judge. The gang is now after him and Marlow feels that his father may have got some definite clue about the Simister gang as to its identity. While Campion and Marlow are talking they hear about the judge's narrow escape. Campion decides to take up the case.

Campion takes Judge Lobbett, his son Marlow and his daughter to Mystery Mile, a quiet house of the present Squire Giles Paget. The squire and his sister Biddy are twins. Campion

tells them that he wants to save the judge since in this place any stranger is easily identified and any attempt at murder may be avoided. Since the judge does not allow any police protection there is less danger here than in the city. Reverend Swithin Crush, the rector wants to know how long the judge will be there. Campion doesn't know as he feels that the judge may try to escape and go back home.

A fortune teller Anthony Datchett comes there to tell their fortune. After telling the fortune of Giles he takes the rector a little away as not to be disturbed. When they come back the fortune-teller is happy but the rector is thoughtful. The rector leaves for his home. Later on it is learnt that the rector has committed suicide immediately after reaching his house. The reasons for his suicide are known only to him.

Campion tells the judge that his enemies want to know the secret information he has got about them. After knowing this they want to kill him. The judge confides in Campion that the day the enemies learn that he knows their real identity then that day they would end his life.

In the meantime the judge disappears while exploring the maze at Mystery Mile. They find a note "Am safe if the blue suit-case is not lost". They open the suit-case only to

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find forty or fifty gaudily bound children's books as if 'a supply for an infants' school prize day. They cannot find anything else from these volumes. The Judge's clothes are found by Kettle's daughter and it is concluded that Labbott is dead.

Biddy is found missing. Campion realises Kettle is one of the gang. Kettle pleads guilty but begs them not to expose him to the gang. He receives his orders through the phone calls. With the help of Knapp Biddy is rescued. Campion tells them that the disappearance of Lobbett is only a trick played by him. Getting a telegram from Biddy they go to a hut in a far away place only to know that it is a trick to bring them to such a lonely place. Campion sending everybody back home sits there with a book Sinbad the Sailor. It is in this book that he finds the clue to the real Simister. Now it is clear to him that Barber known as Ali Fergusson Barber is the Simister. Campion has met him earlier at the beginning of the magic show. Barber himself comes there and wounds Campion seriously. While escaping Barber falls into a stretch of slimy mud and is buried only after his confession that he is the Simister. The second in command Datchett is arrested and is never allowed to appeal.

The crime here is a series of murders though not directly committed. The head Simister is very clever to make his employees commit murder. He is very proud of his power. When asked
by Campion whether he has committed all the murders he replies proudly.

I work from my desk as a rule.
I know everything; I am behind every coup of any consequence.19

His position in society is safe.

I am safe, as well respected, and undisturbed as any other man of my wealth. I go where I like, live as I choose .... I am a respected citizen in every district where I have a house.20

This man who is a respectable member of society is "a representation of one of the cleverest organisations in the world".21

Realising Campion's shr. 6dness he even offers him a place. "It may interest you to know that I and my superiors have now considered it worthwhile to offer you a position in our organisation".22

Such a person, appearing as a respectable member indulges in antisocial activities, murdering every one who is in his way. He is dangerous and a permanent threat to the security and peace of people. Unless he is sacrificed society is not safe.

20 Ibid., p.370.
21 Ibid., p.366.
22 Ibid., p.366.
The archetypal pattern here is again different. Campion and Barber fight with each other and the evil (Barber) seems to have conquered in his attempt to kill the priest (Campion). But in reality it is evil that is ultimately punished and the priest figure Campion succeeds in sending him to the quicksand which ends his life. In spite of being seriously injured Campion escapes. The criminal who escapes judicial punishment is punished by Divine Law. When he is caught in the quicksand and his desperate attempts for help are in vain.

He fought fiendishly to escape, realising suddenly that the slime was past his waist .... It reached his shoulders and oblivious of any other danger he screamed aloud, calling upon Campion, straining his lungs until he felt that the village must hear.23

He never realised the value of life and the agony of people tortured by him. When he tortured others to get the necessary information he wanted he never felt the agony of his victims. To make him understand the pain Margery Allingham makes his end painful.

He forced up every fighting nerve that was with him. His frenzied scream startled the wild birds, and echoed, a cry of death, into the silent rooms of the Manor itself, acres distant across the saltings, and died away slowly in the stillness of the early morning. The waves retreated once

more, and this time returned frothing, laughing, smothering over his mouth.  

If Simister is handed over to the police his execution would not have been as painful as the one he is made to experience now.

Allingham's next novel *Look to the Lady* (1931) is about a group of wealthy people who are greedy and want to possess things that couldn't be bought or owned. Such valuable articles are kept in the Museum or become individual collections and heirlooms. These people like the Simister gang employ clever criminals to steal such things and keep them in their private collections and boast about them to others. The police cannot investigate them because they are very important persons. So they have been managing to get such rare collections and tempt wealthy persons to indulge in similar activities.

The little circle of wealth collectors had grown. Just after the War the membership numbered about twenty, men of all races and colours, and the organisation which had been so successful for a small number got a bit swamped. It was at this point that one of the members, an organising genius, a man whose name is famous over three continents, by the way, took the thing in hand and set down four or five main maxims: pulled the thing together, and put it on a business basis, in fact. So that the society, or whatever

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you like to call it - it has no name that I know of - is now practically omnipotent in its own sphere. 25

says Campion about this powerful organisation.

This crime Cartel's present target is the Gyrth Chalice that belongs to the Gyrth family. It is a rare and precious object. The king's Chamberlaine visits every ten years to look at the chalice. If the chalice is lost the Gyrth family has to forfeit its entire possessions to the Crown. The chalice which is considered sacred is photographed with Aunt Diana, a member of the family. A crowd of most revolting people, a semi-artistic new religious group who go about indulging in strange exercises has turned her into a sort of High priestess. Campion is requested to guard the chalice. In the meantime Aunt Diana dies; the cause of death is attributed to the sorcery of Mrs. Mumsey. Campion finds out that Mrs. Mumsey walks in the middle of the night only to frighten and get people out of the way in order to enable her son to poach. Aunt Diana in one of her night walks encounters such a terrifying sight that she dies of shock. From Mrs. Mumsey, Campion learns that Mrs. Dick has wanted her to frighten Aunt Diana so that she may not intrude but be in bed for a day or two.

The chalice is said to be stolen and when Campion recovers it, it is learnt that he has got only the imitation and not the original. Campion suspects Mrs. Dick to be one of the gang of robbers. Unfortunately Mrs. Dick fails in her attempt to steal the chalice and dies. The chalice is safe after her death since it is already in safe custody.

So the crime here is not to murder but an attempt to steal the Chalice. Though the attempt of the organisers has failed, they continue to be a source of danger to society. This wealthy group of collectors is as bad or worse than the Simister gang. The theft leads to many unpleasant incidents. First, Gyrth himself is about to be kidnapped. Next Aunt Diana who is to be frightened unfortunately dies as her weak heart succumbs to shock. Thirdly, Campion himself is locked up in a stable with a very wild horse. Mrs. Dick, who is the agent for the most influential syndicate in the world cannot be easily prevented from her mission.

It is surprising that the work is carried out by the unit though its members remain unknown to each other. The importance of these people can easily be understood by the fact that "neither Scotland Yard, the Central Officer, nor the Surete will admit a fact that is continually cropping up under their noses ... if the thing was exposed there'd be a scandal
which would upset at least a couple of thrones and jeopardize the government of four or five powers". 26 This organization, which can never be punished due to its power and wealth, is dangerous to society. They cannot be caught easily as they don't directly involve themselves in any crime. The rules of this acquisitive society of friends are few, but they are strict. A chief agent is chosen to whom unlimited money is supplied for the job; and the work or the main agent ends after obtaining the treasure. If the chief agent dies in the execution of the orders or if they kill him to save their secrecy during his attempt another person is booked for the mission. On the other hand if he is caught, the gang shows no interest to save him but employs someone else for their task.

The daring nature of this group is better understood in Mrs. Dick's attempt to steal the chalice by climbing down the wall from the roof. "She lay against the side of the Tower like a fly on a wall, her steel hands gripping the rope which supported her as she picked her way down with easy precision ... in the day time the height was sickening". 27

The archetypal cleansing here is not to punish a criminal but to prevent a crime. Incidentally providence steps into

27 Ibid., p. 411.
administer capital punishment to the thief. The Gryth family is secure with the chalice safe in their custody.

The "priest" Campion could have even done away with Mrs. Dick when he had the chance of cutting the rope, and letting her fall down from the roof to die. Once and forever the problem would be solved. Mr. Campion's conscience tells him that "he could find plenty of moral justification in his own mind for this execution .... there were passages in Mrs. Dick's past that no English jury would have excused in spite of their notorious leniency towards women".28 But he is saved from this act of execution by Providence as Mrs. Dick's paws into the room where the chalice is kept. "Her lips drawn back over her teeth, her eyes wide and expressionless with fear, while a thin trickle of saliva escaped at one corner of her mouth".29 Her limp fingers loosen the grip and she falls down dead.

Death of a Ghost (1934) is about artists. John Lafcadio's death wish though peculiar, is to prove that posterity will not forget him. He packs twelve of his paintings, numbering them, to be sent to Salmon with full particulars. Receiving

29 Ibid., pp.571-572
it five years after his death Salmon should unpack them and frame them one at a time. On a Sunday, the eleventh year after his death he wants the first picture to be displayed to the public. This should continue for twelve years. Salmon will do the selling. The time when this story begins it is the eighth picture that is to be exhibited. Salmon is dead and Max takes over the business from his executors. The painter Tanqueray who is Lafcadio's rival lives only eighteen months after Lafcadio, Mr. and Mrs. Potter who live in the garden also have their own show of engravings in the corner of the studio though it is resented by Max.

Thomas Dacre, a man of great ability, is engaged to Linda the grand-daughter of Lafcadio just before his departure to Italy. But he comes back from Italy with his latest model and wife Rosa Rosa, which infuriates Linda. She is also angry with him because he "gave up oils to go in for tempera". She even confesses to Campion that she feels like murdering him and wishes 'he was dead'.

Just as Bella (Mrs. Lafcadio) is commenting on the successful progress of the party the lights go off leaving the room in entire darkness. When the lights come back it is found that Dacre has been murdered with a pair of scissors.

Campion and the Inspector first suspect Linda. Campion realises Linda is innocent though the Inspector continues to suspect her. As every one concerned wishes to prove her innocence suddenly Max tells them that he is going to confess the truth. He is asked to demonstrate how he committed the murder but he fails to convince the police. Further he has a perfect alibi.

A little over three weeks after the murder Linda comes to Campion with Dacre's fellow-tenant, Matt. She tells him that all the belongings and paintings of Dacre are missing; and the box containing his drawings disappears without anybody's knowledge. The contents of his studio in Florence is bought by someone within twenty four hours after his death. The drawing that Campion had bought recently from Max is also missing. He finds only an empty mount. He realises since it has been left in a cloak room for a week, any one could have meddled with it.

Mrs. Potter dies under mysterious circumstances and Campion suspects Max. Mrs. Laflaçö requests Campion to find out the murderer to prevent such murders in future. Campion finds out that nicotine in the whisky killed Mrs. Potter. In investigation, Campion is able to find out that Mrs. Potter has been working for Max for the past two years and gets a supply of whisky from Max who sends it packed up in wood blocks. The boy delivers the blocks to Mrs. Potter and she will never allow
others to touch it. She has not been paid much by Max and she seems not to have been unhappy. The boy on that particular day, the day of her death — visited her twice — to hand over the block for the first time and again to give the correct one as he has delivered the wrong block during his first visit. Max learns that the blocks were not received by Mrs. Potter, when the boy returns after his first visit. Campion is certain that Max would have murdered Mrs. Potter. He also suspects Max of murdering Dacre.

Max requests Mrs. Lafcadio's permission to take the paintings of the dead artist abroad. She refuses and also orders him to send back the remaining four cases of her husband within a week.

Linda enlightens Campion with certain facts. She tells him that the seventh picture was not John's as Dacre had done it for him. Still it looks exactly like Lafcadio's work. So it is difficult to prove the identity of the artist. She further tells him that John painted only eight of the twelve and the remaining pictures are fakes. He hated his rival Tanqueray and in order to spite him he included these pictures. He calculated that young Tanqueray might live for eighteen more years and so his (John's) paintings which are to be exhibited every year, one at a time would ensure that he is
not forgotten. Unfortunately Tanqueray did not live to see even the release of the first picture.

Linda's account about Dacre is enlightening. Dacre before going to Rome "took an extraordinary holiday - completely disappeared for ten months. No one heard from him; no one saw him. At that time he was trying to be a portrait - painter, very much in the Lafcadio manner. When he came back he gave up oils suddenly and went to Rome to study tempera".\(^\text{31}\) It is noticeable that Mrs. Potter was also away during this period cuio hunting for Max. Linda convinces him that the last portrait is genuine. She further comments, "it was clever of Max, wasn't it, mixing the dud in with the others? There was a certain amount of criticism of last year's effort and so this year outcomes the genuine thing again".\(^\text{32}\) She wants Campion to save her grandmother Bella as Max "looked insane" when he left the place that afternoon.

Campion understands that Max has murdered Mrs. Potter but has not left any evidence. "He did not arrive at this conclusion by decent process of quiet, logical deduction, not yet by the blinding flash of glorious intuition but by the shoddy, untidy process half way between the two by which one usually gets to


\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp.194-195.
know things". When Campion confronts Max, Max attempts to kill him but is arrested on the charge of attempted murder. Once the arrest is made the rest is easily done. Max confesses everything. The inspector tells Campion "He confesses to everything: your murder, too, incidentally, and also instigating the assassination of Girolamo Riario, a prince of Romagna - but that was in the fifteenth century". That is the condition of Max now. People like Max can reach only this stage when they fail. "As long as all goes smoothly they get away with it, but as soon as they come up against something they can't sweep aside, a police-station cell for instance, they go over the edge and there you are", ...  

The crime here is murder. Two murders have been committed within three months. "One impulsively in an insane fit of hatred, and one in cold blood after considerable preparation. Also he had got clean away with both the crimes", says the Inspector. 

Considering the murder Campion feels that

The chief deterrent to private killing, was probably the ingrained superstitious fear of the responsibility of ending a human life,

34 Ibid., p.246.
36 Ibid., pp.224-225.
but in a man of Max's inordinate conceit
this objection could no doubt be swept
away by being decided a necessity. 37

Dacre is murdered because he told Max that he was going
to paint another set of four pictures using oil for the same
price and in the same cottage. Campion believed that in the
murder of Dacre "the impulsive stab in the dark had come off
with fantastic ease, and in the consequent enquiries not even
suspicion had ever really touched the killer". 38

The second murder is ingeniously carried out without any
flaw. Max eliminates Mrs. Potter because she has guessed the
truth that Max has employed Dacre to paint and include his
paintings among John Lafeadio's exhibits.

There would have been a third murder but for the vigilant
plainclothesmen following Campion. They not only save him but
also arrest Max on the charge of attempted murder. But for the
third attempt that failed the murderer would never have been
arrested.

The murderer Max like any other criminal wants his orders
to be obeyed. When Dacre ignores their agreement and announces

38 Ibid., p.225.
that he is going to paint four more pictures, he murders him and thereby skillfully prevents the exposure of his foul play. The murderer is very clever. He makes ample use of the darkness to fulfill his task. "Fustian slipped off as soon as the lights went out and left the woman talking and came back again without her twigging". Inspector Oats believes Campion's explanation and is convinced when he tells him that the lady to whom Max was talking is deaf. Having removed the contraption she wears, she does not notice his absence. So there is no solid evidence in the first murder that is committed. They couldn't have prevented the murder of Mrs. Potts even if they had suspected it. Max is as dangerous as the Simister gang and Mrs. Dick.

Campion as the archetypal priest realises the danger caused to society by Max. If he is going to get rid of everyone who gets into his way then there will be no end to crime in society. So the criminal must be booked and punished to render social justice. So Campion directly confronts and fights with evil. Evil reigns supreme because Campion fails when he accepts Max's offer of a drink and gets drunk in spite of his genuine intentions to corner Max. But ultimately the Good triumphs and the plainclothes men not only save Campion but also society from a dangerous criminal like Max.

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The punishment is as cruel as the punishment in *Mystery Mile* since it is Providence that has helped to effect the criminal's arrest. A very clever criminal who has left no trace of the murders that he has committed is completely 'off' his wits and in pretty bad shape. He says he is Lorenzo de Medici. His fate is such that he will never recover. He'll get worse and worse and finally curl up and die. While referring to Fustan, the Inspector says "yesterday he was a genius, and today he's a lunatic".  

However cruel he might have been Campion says "He was my dearest enemy, but I wouldn't have wished that for him". Once the cleansing is done by Campion the priest figure normalcy returns. Campion asks Mrs. Lafcadio "well, is everything all right now"?  

She nodded and sighed.  

"Yes, my dear, she said, Yes and thank you".  

To provide a grand finale, a happy wedding is celebrated. Linda marries Matt.  

*In form Death of a Ghost* is a detective story, with zits not always found in detective stories. Several of the people

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41 Ibid., p.247.  
42 Ibid., pp.251-252.
are interesting in themselves, apart from any murder mystery, and so life like that one almost doubts the customary fly-leaf note that they are products of the writer's imagination. Most striking of all is the 'ghost' of the title. Lafcadio, flamboyant painter, died in 1912, but the story in 1930 depends on his impish legacy...
Albert Campion comes in from previous stories as detective, but his rather annoying affectation of idiocy has dropped off. Incidentally we learn a good deal about the backstairs of the artistic world.43

This novel proves the maturing of Margery Allingham as an artist. "One of the most individual of her books, part whodunit, part investigation into the murderer's mind and personality, it appears to be constructed with almost mathematical precision.44

Jessica Mann calls this Allingham's "first remarkable novel". She goes on to say that "she intended Death of a Ghost to have more attractive characters... It was planned as a story in which the unpremeditated murder is contrasted with the one which was carefully planned".45

In her next novel The Case of the Late Pig (1937) Margery Allingham ventures into first person narrative, Campion being the narrator.

45 Jessica Mann, Deadlier than the Male, (Great Britain: David and Charles Ltd., 1951), p.197.
Pig Peter's death is announced in the papers. He was Campion's classmate and on receiving a note he attends the funeral. There are only four people present including Campion and Lugg. He realises Whipper, his junior has come there receiving a similar note. Apart from them an old uncle of Pig Peter is also present. This happens in January and in June Campion is informed of a murder by Janet, Leo's daughter. When he goes to the funeral he is shocked to see Peter's body. He is told it is Oswald Harris, the brother of Peter who inherited his brother's property after his death. He has cheated the landlady and got this place and all efforts by the landlady to get back the land proved unsuccessful. He is killed as a result of one of the urns on the parapet wall falling on him.

Campion comes to know of the Nursing home at Thethering, run by Brain Kingston. Leo tells him that Kingston is a good doctor and a good man. He also tells him that at the time of Harris tragedy Kingston was playing poker with them. Kingston tells Campion that he wrote a will for Peter who died leaving everything to Harris. He also admits that Harris reminded him of Peter.

Miss Effie seeks Campion's help. She expresses her doubt regarding Peter's death. She is engaged to Peter who dies in a nursing home leaving everything to his brother Harris. She
has received information about the striking resemblance between Peter and Harris. When she tries to find out the truth she learns that Harris is dead. At Campion's request the police exhume Peter's grave which is empty. Campion meets Harris's uncle who tries to blackmail him for some information about Peter. He fails in his attempt as Campion never yields. The uncle who has been missing for sometime is later on cruelly murdered. Kingston tells Campion that he suspects Whippet to be the murderer and asks Campion to accompany him to Whippet's house to discover the truth. In the meantime Lugg is missing and his whereabouts are not traceable. Accompanying Kingston, Campion finds Lugg's body on a table and feels that Kingston might replace Peter's body with that of Lugg. Sensing danger from Kingston he takes the initiative to fight with him but he becomes unconscious only to be saved by Whippet. Kingston is arrested. The mystery is unravelled. Kingston and Pig had entered into a deal. Peter insures for twenty thousand pounds and dies. Kingston has given a death certificate. They plan the whole thing together. Pig Peter invented a wicked brother who would inherit all the money after his death. So when Peter's death is announced the insurance company is duped to sanction the payment to Harris who never exists. Kingston impelled by greed manipulates the entire scheme to swindle the insurance company.
by deftly utilising the services of the reputable honest solicitor as his tool. When Peter gets the money he refuses to pay Kingston his share of the bounty as per their agreement. In addition to this Peter when drunk loses control over his tongue which might land them in danger if their evil scheming becomes public. Peter is murdered. The uncle who suspects some foul play is in turn murdered to silence him. Thus one murder leads to another. Two murders and two attempted murders (that of Campion and Lugg) are the crimes endangering society. The murder of Peter is committed by Kingston because the latter is enraged by Pig's dishonesty and unworthiness. The 'ingenious business came to him in a flash, and he acted on impulse moved by fury, gingered by fear'. He gets Peter drunk, administers a tiny dose of chloral and sends him out to sit on the lawn. He follows him and sees him settled down. His original plan has been to let him die as a chronic case of dope addiction but forsakes it as it is risky. So he takes some cubes of ice, reaches the top floor, removes the urn out of its socket and balances it on its peg half over the ledge blocking its position with two pieces of ice and goes downstairs. When the ice melts the urn falls down on Pig who is seated right under it. Pig is killed. Thus Kingston dexterously masterminds a murder but makes it appear like an accident.

Uncle Hayho never knows that Kingston has murdered Pig. He has only felt something fishy when he attended the first funeral. When the uncle blackmails Kingston, he takes him to an empty villa and murders him. Kingston takes the body to the cornfield and leaves it there as a scare crow.

Campion's words "About half a mile away, in the midst of a field waist high in green corn, there was a dilapidated scarecrow, a grotesque, unnatural creature set up to terrify the not-quite-so-clever rooks. But about this particular effigy there was a difference. Far from being frightened, the rooks were swarming upon it" 47 only prove the wickedness of Kingston.

The murderer is ruthless once he commits the first murder. With a fierce desire to destroy every enemy he seizes Lugg and Campion but fails to kill them.

This criminal is positively dangerous to society as he can continue to commit murders without leaving any trace. Like Max in Death of a Ghost nothing is proved. Like him he is arrested on charge of attempted murder. But though his solicitor tries to get him acquitted on grounds of insanity he fails. Leo who is all praise for Kingston realises his wicked nature when Peter's grave is exhumed. The effects of the day of exhumation is terrible. "Bricks!" he said explosively, "yellow

bricks wrapped up in a blanket and nailed down in a coffin ....

"Pon my soul, Campion, the fellow was an impious blackguard as well as a murderer". 48

Campion the "priest" is dragged into the mire to render justice as Whippet has nothing to prove Kingston's guilt except a sort of uneasy suspicion. He, as in the earlier novel tries to directly encounter his enemy alone to avenge so many murders. The 'pharmakos' here of course is identified quite early, though to justify his ritual expulsion from society is difficult, for want of proof. But it is his attempted murders and the evidence in these two cases that have helped to effect the final arrest. Thanks are due to Mr. Campion who is instrumental in removing all these obstacles and thus paves the way for wedding bells to ring merrily. To conclude a happy atmosphere prevails over the entire village.

The Tiger in Smoke (1952) is again a sort of a thriller. It is all suspense and chase. But the criminal's identity is revealed much earlier. Meg Algimbrodée, a war widow, is engaged to Geoffrey Lovett. Ever since her engagement she receives through post a series of photographs taken in city streets. The image seen in these photographs could either be

her late husband Major Martin Elginbroode or a man typically like him that he could be called his double. The last picture she receives bore a printed message at the back which states: "Bath train, three forty five, November eight" and nothing else. Campion and Inspector Luke take Meg to the station and wait for the man's arrival. Luke is watching the main entrance while Campion is looking at the underground and they suddenly hear Meg's shrill voice calling out to Martin. On chasing him they find it is somebody else who closely resembles Martin. When the attached moustache falls down it reveals an entirely different person. It is found out he is Walter Morrison commonly known as 'Duds'. Geoffrey follows him to learn his identity and sees him attacked by someone but before he could proceed further he is carried away by a gang to a house. The body of Morrison is found with a jacket that belongs to Martin. Avril, Meg's father takes the jacket with him. On enquiry it is found out that it has been given away as charity by Mrs. Cash from where Morrison borrowed it to play the part of Martin.

Havoc, a notorious criminal escapes from prison stabbing his doctor fatally and murdering three innocent people. All the three victims have clear expert wounds.

Geoffrey learns that Havoc is referred to as Gaffer. He was cased with Duds. There was a raid in an old house in which Duds, Havoc and Martin were involved. The public are made to
believe that the search is for a spy though in reality it was indeed treasure hunt - Golden treasure hunt. The house belonged to the Major but they never found any treasure there. Geoffrey was also shown a souvenir, a fine genuine work of art.

Havoc ransacks Martin's solicitor's office for some papers and when he doesn't find them he goes to the new house that Geoffrey is building for Meg. He is quite certain that these papers, if found might give him some clue to the treasure. There he has a narrow escape from the police. It is known that Martin has bequeathed in his will the contents of his grandmother's house to Meg. It is quite surprising that he does not bother about the house but only the contents. The gang leaving Geoffrey there escapes when Campion comes there with the police. Campion finds Geoffrey in a very bad condition and treats him. As he recovers he shows Campion a letter from Martin addressed to him giving the clues to find the treasure. Geoffrey, Meg, Campion and Amenda decide to set out on a quest for the treasure.

Havoc is found to be the son of Mrs. Cash who is allowed by Margaret Avril to live in the cottage next door. She has borrowed a trivial amount from Mrs. Cash who compels Margaret to lie that her son John Cash is dead who in reality is very much alive. Margaret before her death confesses to her husband
that she has not seen the body of John Cash and adds that Mrs. Cash has compelled her to lie that she has seen his dead body. Avril says that her confession has been made in a confused manner and it is not very clear.

Avril meets Havoc in the Church and tells him that this is his last chance to repent. But Havoc says he is always lucky. Avril says he will not get the treasure as Geoffrey and the others have gone in search of it. Havoc only wants to know the place of the treasure and he gets it from Avril. Stabbing Avril he rushes out. Fortunately his skill fails him and Avril still survives.

Geoffrey and others discover the treasure hidden in the statue. As it is a delicate art-piece of ivory embedded they require an expert to take it out from the statue. Leaving Meg there the rest go to the village to fetch an expert. In the meantime Havoc comes there. Meg who is slowly rubbing the plaster of the shallow disc finds the treasure. Being unable to take it out she requests Havoc to help her. Havoc is disappointed with the treasure since it is only an art-piece, a virgin and child in ivory which is a fourteenth century work carved out of a single ivory tusk. It is believed that honest women wept when they first saw it and so did Meg. Except for this miracle, the treasure, Havoc feels is not worth so
many murders. He wants to smash the doll to pieces but is prevented from doing so by the timely arrival of the others. Havoc disappears from the scene and escapes by hiding inside the bush. He edged a step backwards, missed his footing and rolled over into a ditch which is completely hidden by the lengthy growth of grass. The ditch wound round towards the cliffedge where coast line appeared to be deeply indented. It proved to be a dangerous fall for Havoc who would have reached the abyssmal depths below. "It seemed to him that he had no decision to make ... he let his feet slide gently forward. The body was never found".49

The crime here is a series of murders because of the treasure. Three innocent people were murdered; and an attempt is made on Avril; all these murders are committed because of the criminal's greed. The ivory statue is mistaken for a golden treasure. The criminal is a spoilt child from his childhood. "In the words of Inspector Duke "he doesn't sound to be my idea of a lovable kid. He and two other boys stole a laundry van, ran over a postman, maimed him for life, and pinched his bag leaving him in the road. Then they smashed up the vehicle whilst fighting over the mail. One young brute was killed outright, the second was seriously hurt, and Havoc was arrested trying to run away".50

50 Ibid., p.217.
As a man he is worse. Again it is Luke who says, he "has killed a doctor who was trying to help him, a snivelling caretaker old enough to be his father, an invalid woman in her bed, and a boy I'd give my right hand to have here with me on the job." 51

He is ruthless. He feels that his luck always works. He tells Arvil "I am one of the lucky ones. I've got the gift. I knew it when I was a kid but I didn't grasp it" .... This last time, when I was alone so long, I got it right. I watch for every opportunity and I never do the soft thing. That's why I succeed". 52 He is beyond redemption. Avril failing in his attempt to save him finally says, "I cannot help you", ... "our gods are within us. We choose our own compulsions. Our souls are our own". 53

Avril of course is saved as Havoc's skill fails him when he stabs him.

Why a man of Havoc's skill should suddenly miss his mark by inches, so that the collarbone took most of the blow, or why having surely known he had missed, he had not struck again, completely defeated him. 54

52 Ibid., p.240.
53 Ibid., p.243.
54 Ibid., p.244.
His second failure is his attempt to smash the doll — the treasure — Meg laughs at Havoc who reminds her of her childhood friend John Cash. She least realises that Havoc is John Cash.

No one underestimates him. Analysing Oats’ opinion Campion feels "The fellow was that rarity, a genuinely wicked man" ... "The brute was a bad one". 55

He is very cruel. Human life has no value for him and any poor beast who gets into his way has no right to exist.

Such a murderer is an eternal threat to society. If he goes on murdering people for a trifle he should be put out of the way. “He’s got no right to life. There’s no place for him under the sun”. 56 He should be hanged. Unfortunately he escapes judicial punishment but Providence sends him right down into the pool beneath, which does not give any scope even to retrieve his body.

Luke, Campion and Oats find out more about Havoc but they can’t arrest him or punish him. Campion doesn’t have a direct encounter with his enemy as in the earlier novels, Mystery Mile and Look to the Lady. But he is able to save Meg and bring


56 Ibid., p. 221.
happiness to her. The criminal is punished and order, peace and happiness are restored once again.

The archetypal pattern here just stops with the identity and chase of the criminal. The criminal a very dangerous person is not judicially punished. God decides his fate and punishes him severely. His quest for treasure becomes an inverted adventure which confers only disappointment on him. It is a bitter experience which later leads him to his sudden unexpected fall.

The Tiger in Smoke is considered to be the best work of Margery Allingham. To sum up, "This is a different genre. It is all suspense, all chase, in the John Buchan tradition. But it is good, very good. From the first wonderful sentence, "It may be only blackmail", "to the final clipped paragraph, the story never lags ... The forces of right, if a bit naive at times, do triumph over incredible - no, credible - dangers. And everything, if larger than life, is at least parallel to it. What is more, the criminal meets a fate he has deserved, and there is no false or sentimental deploring that fate". 57

In The Beckoning Lady (1955) Campion and his wife are invited to a party given by the Cassards. William Makepeace

Paraday, their friend dies suddenly. Campion meets Miss Pinkerton, known as Pinky, Francis Genappe's secretary who helps Minnie Cassards. Pinky is in charge of the Pontisbright Park estate of Genappe's which is altered to look attractive for sale. She now assists Mr. Smith her boss who is handling the transformation of the estate. She is also allowed to help Minnie by her boss whenever she finds time. There is also a talk that Minnie's house 'The Beckoning Lady' is being sold but Minnie is not in favour of the sale. There is something 'fishy' about her behaviour. Perhaps she is being victimised by a blackmailer.

Uncle William in his Will has given most of his money to Minnie - made it over to her four and a half years ago. He wanted to live till November in which case Minnie needn't bother about the death tax if five years are over after his death. The doctor who checked him up said he would live for a couple of years more. But unfortunately he dies suddenly taking dormital instead of pluminal; along with alcohol which is fatal. Campion feels it is murder.

A dead body is found in a ditch beside the bypath near 'The Beckoning Lady'. The man has been killed with a blunt instrument. The inspector opines that the skull is weak so the murder might have been committed by a lady. Every scrap
of paper is taken away from the dead body but his money and other possessions are untouched.

Sidney Sinion Smith, Pinkey's temporary boss has been telling Minnie that her house is old and expensive to run, so it is better to sell it. But Minnie refuses to do so in spite of her financial difficulties. Smith invites himself to Minnie's party and requests her to allow her friends also to be brought in.

More information is gleaned about the dead man. He is one Doom Ohman, until recently a tax collector. He has had a bad reputation wherever he has worked.

Mr. Doom pretends to help Minnie in matters of filing her tax forms. He suggests she is safe if she divorces her husband and thus can avoid paying so much tax. Minnie has been paying him a small amount everytime when he helps her with her taxes.

Mr. Smith has secretly engaged Pinky to find out why Minnie will not sell the house. The Beckoning Lady is vital to his plan to turn the Pontisbright Park Estate into the race course which he proposes to sell once it is established. Minnie will not sell it because there is no need. William's gift has saved her from financial difficulties and if only William
has lived until November there would not be any problem. Miss Pinkerton knows all about it. She works on both sides; she finds it difficult as Minnie is changing her mind quite often about selling her house. She has an easy solution. "That afternoon when Miss Pinkerton pottered about William's room and must have seen him lying there looking useless, uncurable and an abominable old nuisance who was holding everything up. At the same time she saw a very simple method of getting rid of him".\(^{58}\) says Campion as he explains her motive for murder. He even says that "she deceived herself into thinking that she was being merciful".\(^{59}\) She hastens William's end by replacing lormital with pluminal and William taking it along with alcohol dies. She thinks Doom sees her from outside the windows. As she hurries out she is chased by Doom who tries to misbehave. She hits him with the first object that comes to her hand. Unfortunately, it is a ploughshare and Doom's skull being weak he dies immediately. She may not have connected him with seeing her guilty action. In which case he would have talked about the pills and she would have hurried back to restore the position before any harm is done. When his behaviour towards her is irascible she attacks him in self-defence but does not know that her blow has killed him. When she crosses


\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 217.
the meadows a week later she sees the disgusting sight and she can't sleep, so she commits suicide.

The crime here is murder. One is intentional; her guilt is proved by tracing the chemist in Hadleigh who supplied her with dormital regularly on a London doctor's prescription. The part she has played in the sale of 'The Beckoning Lady' is proved by the documents she had marked "correspondence: proposed purchase Beckoning Lady". Underneath in much fresher ink was the single unequivocal word "Finished", followed by a date, "June 15th". The second murder is proved by a carbon copy of the letter of confession by Pinkey.

The criminal is a cunning woman. She has killed uncle William. The criminal is not easily identified as in the other earlier novels of Allingham. Campion, Luke and South act a triumvirate to bring the criminal to justice. Though no arrest can be made of the criminal the torture of the sight of the murdered body drives Pinky to suicide. A murderer has no right to live in a society of innocent people and she has to be punished. In the words of South

Down in the country there's one thing we never lose sight of. The guilty has got to be punished but the remainder of us has got to live together for the rest of our lives".  

61 Ibid., p.239.
It is ironical that she took dormital in alcohol when she wanted to die - the very method adopted by her in murdering Williams. Of the two victims one is good, the other wicked. Though the criminal escapes punishment for killing her victims she is punished when she unintentionally murders the wicked.

The China Governess (1963) deals with finding out the parentage of a boy Timothy adopted into the family of Kinnit by Eustace Kinnit. He is brought up to believe falsely that he belongs to the Kinnit family. He supposes that he may be the son of Eustace or his brother who died in the war, or some close relative of the Kinnit family. He has everything in life and he is successful. He falls in love with a girl - an heiress. A big doubt arises as to who he is. The aunt and the adopted father employ a secret agent, a detective Joe Stalkey to find out his parentage. As a warning to the detective not to proceed further with his investigation a flat in the Turk street is destroyed where the boy is supposed to have come from; also extends two messages written on the mirror, 'let the Dead Past Bury Its Dead' and "Go Home, Dick".

Timothy finds himself in trouble since the Police think he is the one who wrecked the flat. Cornish, the counsellor wants Monday the detective to go deeper into the matter. It is learnt from Toberman a household member that the boy has been left in the custody of Mrs. Broome by his mother who had gone
to get the necessary papers but she did not return. When a
census has to be taken Bustace just gives him the name Timothy
Kinnit after his brother who has been killed in the Spanish
war. Later the child was adopted and it was convincingly
presented to the Court that all the relevant papers were lost
during the wars and the adoption went through.

Timothy meets Counsellor Cornish to know what Turk Street
was twenty years ago. He is shocked to find the resemblance
between Mr. Cornish and himself. Julia, his love, also notices
and later on tells Cornish, of a certain hereditary common
action she finds in both. The counsellor has been guilty of
his secret first marriage but he never knew that his first wife
gave birth to a baby when she died of a bomb blast during war
time. Later a child was brought to him from a convent. The Nuns
said that it was his child. Since he has remarried and feels
the child will be a problem he leaves the child in the convent
by paying an annuity to one Agnes who has brought the child to
the convent.

Geraldine, a distant relative of the Kinnits comes to
stay with them. She has come with her sickly child and a
governess Miss Saxon. There is another wreckage similar to
that of the Turk street and Timothy is suspected. He finds
Miss Saxon eavesdropping. To catch her in the action he
pushes the door open. Mrs. Saxon falls and dies of a heart attack.
This is interpreted as murder holding Timothy responsible. Toberman knows some of a mishap in the Vander Graff family which he lets the others know in a drunken state. Miss Thyrza the governess of the Kinnit family is mistaken for murdering the music master who committed suicide though she was not being arrested and punished. Later on she was proved to be not guilty. It was Miss Haide one of the family members who murdered the music master when her advances towards him were ignored. From that time onwards a governess in the family is dreaded.

Toberman's blabbering leads to an attempt on his life. It is found that Geraldine who is next to Kinnit Kin tries to kill him and puts the blame on Timothy. She has been pretending to be very rich while in reality it is not so. She murders Miss Saxon when she tried to expose the fact that she is not rich. In fact Miss Saxon is the nurse who is introduced to the Kinnit family as the governess. Since Toberman knows about the Vander Graff family she tries to murder him in the same manner she has murdered Miss Saxon. Unfortunately he escapes and she is charged with attempted murder. The Turk Street mystery is solved as the culprit Barry is traced. It is also found that Barry is not Mr. Cornish's son as it is presented. It is Timothy who is Mr. Cornish's Son and Timothy is satisfied now since he knows his parentage and he can be married without any difficulty.
Though the mystery here is just the parentage of Timothy we have murder and attempted murders of the Kinnit family members by Geraldine. The murder is committed because of her guilt and to prevent the exposure of certain facts. But the main event is the solution to Timothy's parentage. Since she is the next close relative she plans to inherit the money by making Timothy appear guilty of the murders she has committed. She is dangerous. "Mrs. Telpner was responsible for a fearful accident whilst acting as a governess and she came over here, deceiving her relatives and bringing an assistant whom she said, quite unnecessarily, was a governess. To the Kinnits it has become an evil word which is always accompanied by trouble".\(^62\) She is evil and she takes evil wherever she goes. Such an evil is to be destroyed. The Kinnits are punished for hushing up Miss Thyrza. "She is out of the grave she wins after all"\(^63\) and the Kinnit family murder is exposed. Murder can never permanently be concealed. It will be out one day though it takes time and requires agents to bring it out. Campion, Luke and Munday together work for the justice.

Not all the novels of Margery Allingham deal with murder. She has a variety of mysterious crimes to be solved; the theft

\(^63\) Ibid., p.252.
of wonderful collections, the question of parentage, the
exposure of certain facts lead to murder and so on. Most of
her novels have the combination of a thriller and detective
fiction. She has too many characters and too many incidents
in her novels; some of them deal with physical encounters and
detailed descriptions. Even the punishment to the criminals
is elaborately described as in Mystery Mile and The Tiger in
Smoke for example. Her detective Campion doesn't appear in
all her works. She has included another charming character
Inspector Luke even in the novels where Campion appears.
Whoever isthe priest-detective her novels are strongly under-
pinned by the faith that the wicked have ultimately no
refuge and punishment is inevitable.