

COURTSHIP AND THE QUEEN

The Golden Age of detective fiction spans the two decades between the first and second world wars. Among the members of Britain's Detection Club were many whose names you may know: G. K. Chesterton, creator of Father Brown; Nicholas Blake; Josephine Tey; Julian Symons; Margery Allingham; Agatha Christie; and, of course, Dorothy L. Sayers. Symons, Christie, and Sayers, "the queen of the Golden Age," were presidents of this exclusive club and the queen is the focus of this course.

Sayers created two memorable characters, Harriet Vane and Lord Peter Wimsey, who appear together or separately in 15 novels and short stories. Lord Peter first meets Harriet Vane when she is on trial for murdering her lover in *Strong Poison*. They meet again when Harriet finds a body in *Have His Carcase* and again when Harriet seeks Lord Peter's help in *Gaudy Night*. They finally marry years later in *Busman's Honeymoon*. The characters are smart, witty, and engaging. The plots are complex and satisfying; there is often humor, intellectual and verbal sparring, and a vivid created world.

However, as Helen MacDonald notes in her recent essay collection, *Vesper Flights*, "Our attitudes toward nature are shaped by history and class and power." This is true not only of attitudes toward nature, for Lord Peter and Harriet live in a socially stratified, class-based world. The novels reflect that world, its biases and limitations, as well as the challenges of the times in which they are set. That world will also be our focus.

In this six-week course we will read and discuss *Have His Carcase* and *Gaudy Night*. If you can read *Strong Poison* before the course begins, it will deepen your insight into Harriet and Lord Peter. And if not, the two we read together can each stand alone.

All of Sayers' novels are widely available: the queen awaits.

LEADER: Lynne Cullinane

FORMAT: Virtual

MAXIMUM: 15

THURSDAYS 10:00 a.m. to noon 6 sessions starting September 29th through November 3rd