

ИСТОРИЯ НА КНИГАТА  
BOOK HISTORYTHE GOLDEN AGE QUEENS OF CRIME FICTION IN THE REALMS  
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**Abstract:** *This publication constitutes an attempt, through the utilisation of empirical means, comparative analysis, and historical comparison, to ascertain the reasons why some of the most renowned and influential authors, perceived as the Queens of Crime fiction during the Golden Age of the genre, have not been granted their rightful place in Bulgarian publishing industry and have remained unknown or little known to the reading public. With the exception of Agatha Christie, authors such as Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L. Sayers, regardless of their contribution to the development of the crime genre, remain neglected and underappreciated by Bulgarian book publishing.*

**Keywords:** *Queens of Crime; Golden age; crime novel; Bulgaria; book publishing*

**Introduction**

The presence of women authors of mystery and crime novels is not an uncommon occurrence in the sphere of world literature and publishing. They occupy a significant part of the literary space in this genre, and in some cases, it could be argued that they dominate contemporary bestseller lists. It is evident that a number of these ladies have exerted a profound influence on successive generations of writers, whilst concurrently establishing the foundations for novel approaches and trends within the development of the crime genre. Conversely, within the Bulgarian context, the presence of women authors specialising in crime fiction is minimal. It is highly probable that this scarcity of female crime writers in Bulgarian publishing is attributable to the prevailing societal attitudes towards women and the pervasive patriarchal dynamics that penetrate both the familial and societal contexts. “Society’s expectations of her appear to limit her horizons for fulfilment, mainly to the realm of emotions (love for her partner, children, home), with the result that her creative expressions are mainly directed towards confessional short poetic forms“ (Trendafilov 2010).

During the Golden Age of the genre, when renowned writers such as Agatha Christie, Margaret Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers and Ngaio Marsh emerged on

the scene, Bulgarian publishers primarily focused on translating works by authors like Edgar Wallace and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Additionally, they published sensational tabloid stories with attention-grabbing titles, centering on renowned detectives and their exploits. During this period, even the few Bulgarian authors of mysteries and crime stories were men who, in most cases, used pseudonyms that had no connection to Bulgarian names. What is more, even their protagonists were predominantly given Anglo-Saxon names, and the events in which they participated transpired in various countries around the world (Aretov 2007).

### **Methodology**

The study employs a multifaceted and comprehensive research methodology, incorporating a variety of approaches. The framework employs a range of empirical methods, comparative analysis and historical comparison, each of which contributes to a detailed and substantial examination of the subject matter.

The empirical component of the study is grounded in collected and examined data from established bibliographic sources. The data are then subjected to bibliometric analysis, enabling identification of trends within the output. These analyses organise, classify publications and provide quantitative insights into frequency and development.

A comparative analytical approach allows for juxtaposition of datasets, time periods and categories. A historical comparison examines key phenomena in a broader temporal context, contributing to understanding continuity and change.

The empirical material is synthesised from the National Library “St. st. Cyril and Methodius” and the National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS) online catalogues. These repositories provide reliable access to bibliographic records. Through integrating these approaches, the study aims to achieve objective and comprehensive analysis grounded in theory.

### **Results**

In relation to the period designated as the Golden Age in the development of crime literature, scholars and researchers have divergent definitions of the time period in question. According to Stephen Knight “it is usually taken as the period between the two World Wars, though some start it earlier, with the publication of E. C. Bentley’s “Trent’s Last Case” in 1913, 2 and the first critic to use the term dated it from 1918 to 1930, followed by ‘the Moderns’ 3; major texts in ‘golden age’ style were also produced after 1940, both by new writers and by figures from the earlier period.” (Knight 2003, 77). It is argued by other researchers of crime literature that, within the United Kingdom, this period “has a convenient point of origin in the publication of Agatha Christie’s first novel, “The Mysterious Affair at Styles”, in 1920, and the reign of the ‘Queen of Crime’ continued until long after the Golden Age is normally considered to have ended, in the wake of the Second World War.” (Scaggs 2005, 26).

Regardless of the precise temporal context, four women attained such distinction within the genre that they came to be collectively designated as the “Queens of Crime”: Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Ngaio Marsh. These authors established themselves as leading figures in a mass cultural publishing phenomenon that secured a global readership. It is evident that both Christie and Marsh were honoured during their lifetimes with the publication of one million copies of their works within a single year, in recognition of their extraordinary popularity. Nevertheless, it has been posited by some that Allingham achieved a higher sales figure than Christie during her lifetime. Conversely, it is less significant to consider the number of books sold by an individual in a given year or over the course of their lifetime. Instead, the focus should be directed towards the substance and quality of their literary contributions. The principal achievement of the Queens of Crime lay in their adaptation of the short detective tale into the extended form of the crime novel, while simultaneously codifying and reconfiguring its narrative conventions to address the cultural anxieties of their historical moment. Their literary output was notably prolific: Christie authored 66 crime novels, three collaborative detective novels, and 154 short stories; Marsh produced 32 novels; Allingham wrote 17 novels and 20 short stories; and Sayers composed 11 novels and 21 short stories (Drayton 2024).

Despite their indisputable contribution to the development of the genre, as well as their international popularity and recognition, the Queens, with the exception of Agatha Christie, remain underappreciated by Bulgarian publishers from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till present. This phenomenon can be attributed to the distinct characteristics of Bulgarian book publishing, which has undergone numerous developmental stages. In order to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the prevailing attitudes and emergent trends within this industry, it would be advantageous to undertake a historical examination of its developmental stages.

The initial phase under scrutiny is that of the Bulgarian Renaissance, which is defined as the period from the conclusion of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the emancipation of Bulgaria from Ottoman domination. It is during this era that the foundations for the nascent Bulgarian culture and literature were established, accompanied by the development of its distinctive characteristics and literary genres. This stage is characterised by literature that is predominantly “religious and instructive,” while concurrently undergoing a “process of dissemination of translated and Bulgarianized fiction.” (Benbasat 2014, 212).

The second stage is from the Liberation to 1944/1948. (The conditionality of the period is determined by which event is defined as its end: In 1944, Bulgaria underwent political changes and joined the socialist bloc. However, a significant proportion of book publishing continued to adhere to the traditions of the preceding period. Similarly, in 1948, general nationalisation was proclaimed, resulting in the gradual nationalisation and state control of all printing houses, bookstores,

and book production.) In this phase, alongside the dissemination of translated literature which had been initiated in the preceding period, the development and prominence of contemporary Bulgarian literature was evident. In the context of the crime genre, it is notable that during the initial post-Liberation decades, the predominant focus was on the publication of translated works, which entered the Bulgarian market with a delay of approximately ten years or more. For instance, one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most renowned works, "The Hound of the Baskevilles", was initially published in "The Strand Magazine" in the UK from August 1901 till April 1902<sup>1</sup>, whereas in Bulgaria it was not published until 1919.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, following the First World War, the emergence of Bulgarian authors of crime fiction was notable, predominantly writing under foreign-sounding pseudonyms and utilising sensational titles (some of which coincided with or resembled already published translated titles). This practice enabled straightforward profit generation for publishers, with rapid sales within the market.

The third stage of the book publishing history under scrutiny in this study is from 1944/1948 to 1989. This period, as the literature suggests, was one of socialism, during which the book publishing industry was highly ideologized and censored. In the early years, crime fiction was rejected on the grounds that it was decadent, reactionary and incompatible with the high moral values and foundations of socialist society. The belief was that "crimes and their perpetrators are fundamentally impossible in socialist society" (Aretov 2007, 208). It was not until the second half of the 1950s that attempts were made to revive the genre, with the early 1960s marking a period of significant development in the realm of Bulgarian crime fiction, particularly in the subgenre of the spy novel. With regard to translated titles, "priority was given to Soviet literature, followed by other authors from the socialist camp, and finally to Western authors" (Benbasat 2014, 326).

The fourth stage, which commenced in 1989 and continues until the present day, saw the advent of democratic changes in Bulgaria. This period can be characterised by the privatisation of part of the book publishing industry. Conversely, the state censorship that had been in place during the preceding period was abolished, thus granting individuals the liberty to select authors and literary works at their discretion. It is characteristic of the initial phase of this period that "books of a variegated and licentious nature, in juxtaposition with those of the most sober and superior calibre, became an emblem of the revitalising urban existence. [...] Crime novels alongside Bibles, palmistry alongside horoscopes, pornography, retro, tear-jerking adventures." (Benbasat 2014, 362, 364).

In light of the divergent phases of development witnessed in the realm of Bulgarian book publishing, it comes as no surprise that, in spite of their global acclaim and popularity, bibliographic references in the online catalogues of the National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius and the National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS), reveal that, with the exception of Agatha Christie, the other Queens of Crime fiction remain relatively obscure or virtually unknown to Bulgarian readers.

### **Ngaio Marsh**

Dame Edith Ngaio Marsh (1895–1982), a New Zealand-born writer, produced a wide range of literary and cultural works, including essays, theatrical productions, critical reviews, songs, and short fiction. However, her most enduring reputation is primarily based on the 32 detective novels she published between 1934 and 1982. In 1928, Marsh temporarily relocated to England, where she is known to have composed her first detective novel, “A Man Lay Dead”. The manuscript was then submitted to Agatha Christie’s literary agent, Edmund Cork of the Hughes Massie agency, who successfully secured its publication in 1934 with Geoffrey Bles. Marsh’s work within the genre of detective fiction is predominantly characterized by adherence to the established classical traditions of the form. The settings of her narratives are frequently set in English villages and country-houses. Furthermore, the socio-political perspectives portrayed in the works are predominantly conservative. Notwithstanding the author’s commitment to established norms and conventions, her work demonstrates a notable degree of originality, particularly manifested in its sophisticated and nuanced handling of psychological realism and the evolution of characters. The recurring detective figure of Roderick Alleyn of Scotland Yard, present throughout Marsh’s works, is emblematic of conventional attributes of aristocratic authority and rational scepticism towards human behaviour, whilst simultaneously being distinguished by a marked absence of eccentricity.<sup>3</sup>

The bibliographic reference indicates that a single record for Ngaio Marsh is extant: “Talent for Crime: First Meeting with Inspector Roderick Alleyn” (“Talent za Prestaplenie. Parva Sreshta s Inspektor Roderik Alen”), published by Era Publishing House in 2021, translated by Yulia Cherneva. A subsequent investigation of the Era Publishing House website revealed that in 2022, another book by the same author was published, which is not listed in the online catalogues of the National Library or NALIS, yet is available for purchase in certain online bookstores. The book’s title is “Death in a Tuxedo: A Second Encounter with Inspector Roderick Alleyn” (“Smart v Smoking. Vtora Sreshta s Inspektor Roderik Alen”), and it was translated once more by Yulia Cherneva.<sup>4</sup> Despite the assertion in the 2021 publication’s title that this constitutes “a first encounter with Inspector Roderick Alleyn,” a thorough examination of Marsh’s literary works discloses that the original title of the first book is “Artists in Crime”, which was published in 1938, and is the sixth book in the “Roderick Alleyn” series. This assertion may be further substantiated by the observation that the second book published in Bulgaria, is originally entitled “Death in a White Tie” and also published in 1938, is the seventh book in the original series.<sup>5</sup> This practice is not a recent innovation within the Bulgarian publishing industry. Frequently, a series is either not published in its original sequence or only certain titles within the series are selected for publication. There are no specific criteria for selecting

books from a series; most likely, the choice is determined by the publisher's preferences and assumptions about which books will be more interesting and profitable than the others.

### **Margery Allingham**

Margery Allingham (1904–1966) occupies a significant position in the canon of British crime fiction and is widely regarded as one of the genre's most distinguished and influential writers. The impact of her work has been profound, with subsequent generations of authors including J.K. Rowling acknowledging its influence. As Agatha Christie states: "Margery Allingham stands out like a shining light. And she has another quality, not usually associated with crime stories, elegance."<sup>6</sup>

Allingham was born in Ealing, London, in 1904 into a family with a longstanding literary tradition. Her early exposure to literary culture, particularly through the encouragement of her father, fostered her development as a writer, and by the age of thirteen she had achieved her first publication in her aunt's magazine, *Mother and Home*. Her initial engagement with the genre of detective fiction occurred with "The White Cottage Mystery" (1928), which was first published as a serial in the *Daily Express* in 1927. The novel represents a confident debut, demonstrating narrative control, structural ingenuity, and an unusually bold resolution. However, Allingham is best known for her creation of the serial detective Albert Campion, a hybrid figure combining elements of the amateur sleuth and the adventurer, who appears in nineteen novels and approximately forty short stories published between 1929 and 1968. In addition to the Campion series, her work includes ten standalone novels, three thrillers written under the pseudonym Maxwell March, and nine collections of short fiction. Allingham's Albert Campion, a character that would become pivotal to her literary identity and a defining feature of her contribution to crime fiction, was first introduced in "The Crime at Black Dudley" (1929). Albert Campion is presented as a morally ambiguous figure who initially adheres to the conventions of the eccentric detective prevalent in 1920s literature. His ostensibly superficial appearance and insincere demeanour can lead others to underestimate his significance; nevertheless, in times of crisis, he has repeatedly exhibited unanticipated competence, adaptability, and reliability. As the series progresses, Campion evolves into a character of mounting seriousness and authority.

During her lifetime, her works achieved exceptional commercial success, at times surpassing those of Christie. While the author's reputation is chiefly associated with her detective novels from the Golden Age featuring Campion, her literary production encompasses a wide range of genres, including thrillers, adventure narratives, romance, and comedy. Allingham's fiction, which spans six decades marked by profound political and social upheaval in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflects both the stylistic conventions of the detective genre and the broader historical transformations of her era. In her opinion, the mystery story is comparable

to a four-sided box: “a Killing, a Mystery, an Enquiry and a Conclusion with an Element of Satisfaction in it.”<sup>7</sup>

A bibliographic search reveals that the online catalogues of the National Library contain two collections of stories translated into Bulgarian in which Allingham’s name appears. The first of these is entitled “A Very Dangerous Crime. Contemporary World Crime Stories”, published in 1994 as a literary supplement to the weekly digest „Zhena“ (Woman), is a notable example of this genre. The second collection, “More Christmas Mysteries”, was published in 2020 by Era Publishing House, translated by Yulia Cherneva, and a reprint of this edition was planned for 2021. It is interesting to note that the catalogue lists a further ten entries for works by Allingham, but these are all original English editions, with the first three books registered in 1975.

The results of the bibliographic search conducted in the NALIS catalogue demonstrate that the sole collection of short stories published by Era Publishing House in 2020 is listed therein. Further research has revealed that in 2019, the same publishing house published another collection of short stories, which includes a story by Allingham – “Mysteries at Christmas”. However, the book does not appear in either of the two online catalogues mentioned above, yet is available for purchase in certain online bookstores.

### **Dorothy L. Sayers**

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957) was an English writer of detective fiction and is often regarded as one of the most significant and widely read authors of the British Golden Age. She was born in Oxford, where her father, the Reverend Henry Sayers, served as headmaster of the Christ Church Cathedral Choir School. Initial education was provided by governesses until the age of fifteen, after which she attended the Godolphin School in Salisbury before winning a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford. Although Sayers is best known for her detective novels, her earliest and most enduring literary passion was poetry, a genre in which she continued to write throughout her life. Her literary activities extended beyond fiction to include playwriting, translation, and literary criticism. Influenced by writers such as Willkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle, Sayers sought to restore detective fiction to a level of literary seriousness that she believed had declined since their era. The critical principles under discussion are articulated in her introduction to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* (1928–34; later published as *The Omnibus of Crime*), an anthology that was influential and authoritative in its time and which is considered definitive within the genre.

With the exception of a small number of short stories, Sayers’s detective fiction frequently draws on her personal experience. The artist favoured settings familiar to her own life, including a Scottish fishing community, an advertising agency, and the academic environment of Oxford University. The characters inhabited by the author are the products of her intellectual interests; the same authors are read by her, familiar poets are quoted, and the music she herself admired

is engaged with. Consequently, her novels provide a vivid portrayal of the social, economic, and cultural conditions of her period.

Critics have occasionally argued that Sayers's methods of murder are overly elaborate and that some would be implausible in practice. Others have suggested that her novels are excessively detailed or overly literary in style. Nevertheless, during her lifetime she was the recipient of widespread critical acclaim, and her works were translated into numerous European languages.

The first novel in Dorothy L. Sayers's detective series, "Whose Body?", introduced the amateur sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey. He remains one of the most enduringly recognisable aristocratic detectives in crime fiction and went on to feature in ten further novels and twenty-one short stories. Wimsey approaches detection with a distinctly amateur ethos and, in the earlier works, bears some resemblance to P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster. Compared with many Golden Age detectives, he is a more rounded and emotionally accessible character, marked by vulnerability and notable for developing and maturing over the course of the series. Wimsey is portrayed as highly cultured and intellectually accomplished: he is knowledgeable about art, an avid collector of books with broad literary tastes, and a gourmet possessing an extensive understanding of wine. His skills extend to campanology, espionage, cryptography, cricket, and various forms of self-defence. These abilities frequently contribute to the resolution of his investigations, as do his wealth, generosity, and personal charm. In many respects, Wimsey represents an idealised vision of the English gentleman, comparable to Sherlock Holmes. However, this idealisation is qualified by his flaws; while he is neither racist by the standards of his time nor overtly snobbish, his arrogance can provoke resentment, and his occasional rudeness may be socially uncomfortable.<sup>7</sup>

A bibliographic search of the online catalogue of the National Library revealed that translations of Dorothy L. Sayers' literary works first appeared in Bulgaria in 1984. The Plovdiv publishing house Hristo G. Danov published the collection of short stories "Lord Peter Inspects the Corpse" (original title "Lord Peter Views the Body", 1928), with a print run that was quite high by contemporary standards — 66,600 copies. In 1997, the Sofia-based publishing house Abagar published the novel "Five Red Herrings" (original "The Five Red Herrings", 1931), translated by Irina Dimitrova. This book is the sixth in the series about Sayer's gentleman detective Lord Peter Wimsey. In 2020, the publishing house Pergament Press released literary translations, of the works entitled "Whose Body Is It?" (original title "Whose Body?", 1923) and "A Cloud of Witnesses" (original title "Clouds of Witness", 1926), which were rendered into English by Mariana Hristova. A bibliographic search in NALIS revealed that there are thirteen entries, and all of them for the two of "Lord Peter Inspects the Body" (1989) and "Five Red Herrings" (1997). It is notable that neither of the two catalogues under review included the 2025 Pergament Press publication "Mysterious Death. The Mysteries of Lord Peter No 3." (original title "Unnatural Death",

1927). In contradistinction to other series, this one exhibits more or less a uniform translation. The reference also demonstrated that three years prior to the initial translation of the series (1981), James Barbizon's book "Dorothy L. Sayers: A Biography" by Scribner's, New York, was listed in the catalogue. This book is accompanied by a foreword written by Anthony Fleming.

### **Agatha Christie<sup>8</sup>**

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie (née Miller) was born in 1890 in Torquay, England. She is widely regarded as the most commercially successful author of crime fiction in the world, with sales of her books exceeding one billion copies in English and approximately the same number in foreign language translations. The subject's literary output is exceptionally voluminous, and includes 66 crime novels, 14 short story collections, and the longest-running play in history, "The Mousetrap" (1952), along with numerous other stage and radio plays. It is evident that her stories have been adapted on multiple occasions for both film and television.

Christie's formative years, characterised by an unconventional upbringing, exerted a profound influence on the evolution of her imagination. Her inaugural published work was a poem that appeared in a London newspaper. Christie herself used to claim that the poem was written when she was only 11 years old, while she was suffering from the influenza virus. However, a new discovery reveals that the poem – "Steam vs Electricity" and signed by AMC Miller, where the first three letters stand for "Agatha Mary Clarissa" – was printed in the "Middlesex County Journal and Ealing and Acton Gazette" on Saturday 8 1905 when she was actually fourteen (Bernthal 2025). Notwithstanding this early creative experience, it was not until fifteen years later that she made her debut in the crime genre. During the First World War, the writer commenced the composition of detective stories, initially as a form of experimentation, prompted by a wager with her sister Madge. Writing also served as a means of overcoming the monotony of her daily work in a hospital clinic.

The path to literary acclaim was arduous and laden with challenges. The completion of her first novel was followed by a period of considerable effort, culminating in its publication subsequent to a series of rejections. However, it was not until 1920 that the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot was introduced to the reading public for the first time with the publication of "The Mysterious Affair at Styles". The character was not based on a real person, but was inspired by Belgian refugees who had settled in England during the war, including in the author's hometown. According to Christie, the establishment of a detective character was predicated on the selection of a suitable model, which in this case was a former police officer from Belgium. This individual was deemed to possess the necessary qualities to embody the character of Poirot. This first novel was not translated into Bulgarian until 1991, when it was translated by Vasil Antonov and published by Multitrack Publishing House.

Following the end of World War I, Agatha Christie pursued her prolific literary career, engaging with a diverse array of genres, including but not limited to the crime genre. By 1938, she had already published nearly 30 novels when her book was first published in Bulgarian. The novel in question was “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” (1926), which, according to bibliographic sources, remains her only work published in Bulgaria before the nationalisation of the country. The translation was printed in issues 7–10 of the “Selected Works” library by the Knipegraf printing house, and was translated by M. Rankova.

However, after 1944 it took another twenty and so years Agatha Christie’s work to be translated into Bulgarian. Again, the publishers relied on “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” under a different title *Alibi*. As Mihaela P. Harper claims this change may have been prompted by some ideological marketing strategies, “targeting an audience that was supposed to have acquired a much more delicate sensibility regarding murder and crime during the years of socialism.” (Harper 2017). Following a thorough bibliographic investigation, it was discovered that the National Library’s online catalogue contains 294 entries of works by Agatha Christie. It is noteworthy that a number of the more widely held titles have undergone periodic reprinting. For instance, the book “Murder on the Orient Express” has been published in six different editions by various publishers between 1991 and 2017. Similarly, “Death on the Nile” has also been published in six editions. Furthermore, “Ten Little Niggers” (renamed “And Then There Were None”) has been published ten times between 1967 and 2023. Other titles being published throughout the years are: “Five Little Pigs”; “Poirot’s Early Cases”; “The ABC Murder”; “Hercule Poirot’s Christmas”; “Murder is Announced”; “Lord Edgeware Dies”; “Why Didn’t They Ask Evans”; and many more.

As demonstrated above, an analysis of the Bulgarian book market reveals the relatively late arrival of the Queens of Crime, despite their prominence in the rest of Europe and their contribution to the development of the crime genre. By way of comparison, following the conducting of bibliographic searches in the online catalogues of the German and French national libraries, it was ascertained that the initial translation of works by A. Christie, M. Allingham, D. L. Sayers and N. Marsh appeared shortly after their initial publication. The reason for choosing to compare specifically the publishing industries in Germany and France is that, during the Golden Age, both countries played significant role both in publishing original and translated crime fiction, as well as in establishing key traditions of the genre (Pezzotti, 2022).

According to the online catalogue of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek<sup>9</sup>, the first translation of a work by Agatha Christie was published in 1927 – “Mord auf dem Golfplatz” (“The Murder on the Links”, 1923), translated by Irene Kafka, published by Georg Müller Verlag, Munich. The same year was published another A. Christie’s novel – “Die Memoiren des Ministers” (“The Secret of Chimneys”, 1925), translated by Elise von Kraatz and published by Moewig & Höffner, Dresden. In 1928, “Roger Ackroyd und Sein Mörder” (“The Murder of

Roger Ackroyd", 1926) was published by Drei Masken Verlag, Dresden, with a translation by Irene Kafka, while the Bulgarian translation was not published until 1938. As stated in the aforementioned catalogue, the initial publication of a translation of Dorothy L. Sayers' works in German was in 1936: "[...] eines natürlichen Todes" ("Unnatural Death", 1927), published by Tal Verlag, Wien and Leipzig, with a translation by August Flesch von Bringen. Margery Allingham's "Flowers for the judge" (1936) was first published in German in 1937 under the title "Blumen für den Richter" by Tal Verlag, Wien and Leipzig, with a translation by Marie Rieger. In 1947, the first German translation of Ngaio Marsh's "Surfeit of Lampreys or Death of a Peer" (1941) was published under the title "Familie Lamprey" by Antäus-Verlag, Lübeck.

On the other hand, a survey of the online catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France<sup>10</sup> reveals that the inaugural Agatha Christie novel to be translated into French was "Le meurtre de Roger Ackroyd" ("The Murder of Roger Ackroyd") by Libr. Des Champs-Élysées, Paris in 1927 and was translated by Miriam Dou-Desportes. It is worthy to note that "Le sept cadrans" ("The Seven Dials Mystery"), another novel by A. Christie, was initially published in French in 1929, coinciding with its debut in the UK during that same year. The aforementioned survey, revealed that the first translation in French of a novel by Margery Allingham appeared in 1932 – "La Maison des morts étranges" ("Police at the Funeral", 1931), published as an editions of "Nouvelle Revue critique", Paris, with a translation by P. Saurel; the first translation in French of a novel by Dorothy L. Sayers appeared in 1934 – "Lord Peter, detective" ("Strong poison", 1930), published as an edition of "Nouvelle Revue critique", Paris, with a translation by Perrine Vernay; Ngaio Marsh's "Died in the Wool" (1945) was first published in French during that same year under the title "Morte dans la laine" by Presses de la Cité, Paris, as part of the collection "Cosmopolis" and was translated by Jeanne Fournier-Pargoire.

### Conclusion

The reasons why the Queens of Crime, who were popular even during their lifetime, contributed to the development of crime fiction and influenced a number of later authors, have been neglected in Bulgarian publishing for years, remain unclear. A superficial analysis might suggest that the apparent lack of interest exhibited by Bulgarian publishers of crime fiction, particularly during the post-Liberation era, could be attributed to the influence of gender discrimination and entrenched patriarchal stereotypes concerning women's creative aptitude within the genre. However, the plausibility of such a hypothesis is questionable, given the absence of numerous prominent male authors from the publishing lists of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One potential explanation for this underestimation can be found in the limited knowledge of English-language crime literature possessed by Bulgarian pub-

lishers during the various periods of the development in the field of book publishing. However, this explanation cannot be accepted as entirely convincing, as the authors analysed enjoy considerable popularity outside their national literary contexts. An exemplary illustration of this phenomenon is the translation of Agatha Christie's novel *The Seventh Dials Mystery*, published in 1929, into French in the same year under the title *Le Sept Cadrans*.

A further significant factor is to be found in the economic logic of the book publishing market, which is oriented towards quick returns and a preference for lighter, mass-market and easily marketable reading material. This practice gives rise to an oversaturation of the market, which is already significantly limited in terms of territory, further complicating readers' choices, especially in the absence of a targeted advertising strategy for higher-value works. Consequently, even exemplary works within the crime genre may remain unacknowledged.

In addition to these factors, it is imperative to consider the historical context of the creation of the works in question. These were produced shortly before, during, or immediately after World War II. Furthermore, the time lag in their arrival on the Bulgarian market must be taken into account. In consideration of the particular characteristics that characterised the Bulgarian book publishing industry during the specified period, it is challenging to accept the hypothesis that the absence of a significant proportion of quality crime literature from the Bulgarian book market was primarily attributable to the lack or difficulties in acquiring copyrights.

Irrespective of the particular reasons and circumstances, it is evident that the Bulgarian reading public is deprived of the opportunity to become acquainted with a number of emblematic and artistically significant works in the field of crime fiction, which have exerted a profound influence on the development of the genre over the years.

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Biography. In: *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*. [online], [accessed 19.04.2026]. Available at: <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Biography>.

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