

**Providence and Intertextuality:
LeFanu, M. R. James, and Dorothy Sayers' *The Nine Tailors***

Helen Conrad-O'Briain

Sayers' interest in Sheridan LeFanu, Wilkie Collins, and, to a lesser extent, M. R. James is well known.(1) The gothic quality of her *The Nine Tailors* is often assumed if not clearly acknowledged.(2) Its relationship with works like *Wylder's Hand*, *The Moonstone* or M.R. James' 'ghost stories' should not, however, be construed as simply literary *homage*.(3) A careful reading of *The Nine Tailors* (1934), perhaps the best of her novels of detection, suggests Sayers purposefully deployed her mastery of their material to re-align the genre in which she worked to suit it to the 'old theme' of her sub-title, divine providence, resulting in the first of her confessional works. *The Nine Tailors* is not undifferentiated Gothic, it is ecclesiastical Gothic.

'Tolling bells, hidden manuscripts, [and] ancestral curses'(4)

There has always been a connection between the detection of crime and supernatural powers. Sayers made the connection herself in her introduction to the Gollancz collection *Great Short Stories, of Detection, Mystery and Horror*: Blood cries to heaven; unearthly powers awake. The restless dead will importune friend and stranger.(5) *The Nine Tailors*, albeit suggestive rather than lurid in its treatment, belongs to this tradition, but with an important difference. The detection is left to human agency; the crime, if it can be called such, is providential. *The Nine Tailors*, contains a substantial number of 'Gothic' commonplaces. It is a legitimate descendant of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and even more so of Clara Reeves' naturalized and to some extent rationalized gothic tale, *The Old English Baron* (1778; first published anonymously as *The Champion of Virtue*, 1777), both of which are in essence murder mysteries.(6) All murder must border on the *outré*, but in *The Nine Tailors* Dorothy Sayers grafted the narrative of crime and detection back onto its Gothic roots. It begins with benighted travelers. It is set in an ancient church, overshadowed by the memory, if not the actual presence, of a long-dead abbot whose identification with his great bell is suggested as popular local belief.(7) There is theft of treasure, a wronged noble family, a dispossessed heiress, a mutilated body, a desecrated grave, a cipher, a noble and dis-interested hero, a deliciously evil villain (who is, in the best tradition, something of a lothario) killed by mysterious and providential means – and finally a cataclysm. However, because these *recherché* features have been integrated so thoroughly into Sayer's present-day tale (here at least Edmund Wilson had something of the right of it)(8) she must remind her reader of the horror tricked out in the commonplaces of the present, by reference to other horrors and to the Gothic narratives of her literary forbearers.(9) But if she is closer to Reeves in the transposition of the foreign to the local and the impossible to the plausible, *The Nine Tailors* nevertheless returns to Walpole's (and Reeve's) supernatural/providential punishment of the criminal.

Almost none of Sayers' novels are exclusively murder mysteries. She acknowledged this herself.(10) With the exception of *Five Red Herrings* (1931) the murder puzzle is not at the heart of her narratives. From her first novel, *Whose Body?*(1923), her stories most often accommodate a generic detective plot, but one directed by a particular ethical/social problem (in *The Nine Tailors*, a theological one), exemplified in the narrative and its characters. The murder is set in motion by this leading problem,

shared or exacerbated by society at large. This warping informs the larger social and circumstantial setting of sub-plots, clearly affecting characters' attitudes and actions.(11)

We should then accept Sayers' word that she attempted more than a detective story in *The Nine Tailors*. Whether we take her assertion she aimed at a 'comedy' of manners or 'poetic romance' literally is another matter.(12) The novel is not a comedy in the modern meaning although it is arguably a *commedia* in the medieval. It is, however, 'romantic' in the sense of participating in the characteristics and commonplaces of 'romantic' or Gothic narrative. In *The Nine Tailors* there are at least three strands:

1. The mystery of the murder itself – a cleverer puzzle than is often acknowledged, turning on the inability of nearly all involved (13) to rid themselves of presuppositions and assumptions.
2. A complex inter-textual conversation between two closely related categories of gothic fiction involving three of its most successful craftsmen –M. R. James, Wilkie Collins, and Sheridan Le Fanu, to whom she literally calls attention in Deacon's cipher. (14)
3. A consideration of divine providence ambiguously referenced during the narrative but given an orthodox presentation by Mr. Venables at its end in the manner of the moralizations of the *Gesta Romanorum* or the exempla of the medieval sermon tradition.(15)

It is always difficult to be certain if shared material, particularly when well digested in its adaptation, is mediated by the cumulative effect of many texts or reflects conscious recollection of a specific work. On balance, in *The Nine Tailors* the accumulation of such reminiscences or echoes, some minor embellishments, some part of the structure of the narrative, joined with her own critical writings, suggests the writer's larger purpose uses such inter-textuality to direct the reader's understanding of the narrative's purpose by reminding them of other cognate narratives. This recollection, leaving aside the flattering intellectual pleasure of recognition, enlarges the meaning of the present text, directs the reader's reaction to events, and prepares them to accept a particular reading at the dénouement. But Sayers relationship with these texts is complicated and, at times, almost ironic, she embraces the Gothic only to spurn it in the best reforming spirit as in Mrs. Ashton's narrative of the Thoday children's fright (16) or in the cautious agnosticism of Jack Godfrey. (17)

The sheer weight of the shared material and its transposition in Sayers is worth considering. I would not suggest the following lists are exhaustive:

Collins: *The Moonstone* (18)

Plot revolves around theft of cursed diamond
Theft committed unwittingly by 'hero'

Nine Tailors

Plot revolves around theft of emerald necklace spoken of as cursed (19)
'Murder' committed unwittingly by 'hero' and innocent associates

Le Fanu: *Wylder's Hand*

A major character (Mark Wylder) is assumed alive when actually dead.
The sighting of another man confuses the issue
The discovery of the body sets in motion the dénouement
A proposed marriage precipitates

Nine Tailors

A major character (Deacon) is assumed dead when actually alive.
The sighting of another man confuses the issue
The discovery of the body sets in motion the 'mystery plot'.
A marriage provides the cir-

the murder	circumstances of the first crime
Wylder's hand reveals him	Deacon's lack of hands conceals him

The shared motifs can be called commonplaces. There is narrative inversion: the assumption of Wylder's living is to *Wylder's Hand* what the assumption of Deacon's death is to *Nine Tailors*. The effect which the discovery of the bodies has on each narrative is also inverted. The identification of Wilder's body solves the mystery; the identity of Deacon's body is the mystery.(20) Arguably, only Sayers' interpolation of material from the novel would draw attention to any connection between the two:

Le Fanu: *The House by the Churchyard* *Nine Tailors*

The vicarage is a pivotal site	The vicarage is a pivotal site
The River Liffey plays an important role	The River Wale and the fen drains play a pivotal role
The discovery of a mutilated skull sets the narrative in motion	The discovery of a mutilated body sets the mystery in motion
A deathbed confession solves the murder	A sickbed confession solves the murder
A wronged 'noble' family	A wronged 'noble' family
Wronged family restored to position and prosperity in the next generation	Wronged family restored to position and prosperity in the next generation
A young family left fatherless	A young family left fatherless
A question of bigamy	A question of bigamy

At least three of M. R. James' stories are relevant to *The Nine Tailors*: 'An Episode of Cathedral History', 'The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral', and 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas'. But if the reader approaches James' stories without the direction of his collection titles – beginning with *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* – s/he will find more murderers than ghosts. 'Martin's Close', 'The Ash-Tree', 'The Haunted Doll's House', 'A School Story', 'The Story of a Disappearance and an Appearance', 'Casting the Runes', 'Lost Hearts', 'Two Doctors' and 'The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral' are all in a sense murder mysteries with the inbuilt assumption that 'murder will out'. The antiquarianism of *Nine Tailors* owes more to James than to Le Fanu. In *The House by the Churchyard*, Le Fanu hovers between historical fiction and the gothic mystery, but does not use antiquarian pursuits to enter or propel the narrative. James' use of antiquarian conceits is essential, but fluid. His stories often rely on the past to set up present problems. Others stories are set entirely in the past except for a frame story that discovers the narrative by means of historical/antiquarian research. *The Nine Tailors* shares the typical Jamesian use of 'practical scholarship' to understand and solve present problems: the past must be known and understood to properly deal with the problems of the present. In Sayers' novel, Wimsey needs to understand the placement of the old galleries and the date of their removal just as much as the Chapter of Southminster, in James' 'An Episode of Cathedral History', needed to know (but did not) the history of their own cathedral's furnishings. Batty Thomas, both bell and abbot, are as important to Sayers' narrative as Canon de Mauléon and his scrapbook are to James'(21).

Sayers had made a decision not to frame her Wimsey stories – an option open to her if she had desired to follow Conan Doyle or James. That she did not suggests that the time lag exploited by both was counterproductive to her, far more socially involved, stories. Today's readers may revel as much in the

period atmosphere as in the plot or characters, but that period atmosphere was once up to the minute social realism, albeit with a often gently satiric colouring. Sayers judged her audience's tastes and her own message to require the immediate not the distanced:

<u>James: <i>Collected Stories</i></u>	<u><i>Nine Tailors</i></u>
narrative focused on church object which should not be removed	narrative focused on church object which should be removed is
Commanding presence in Church: Lady Sadlier	Commanding presence in Church: Abbot Thomas
power focused in church fittings	power focused in church fittings
Biblical cipher	Biblical cipher
Importance of well name Gaudy and history	Importance of well name Gaudy and history

While Sayers draws attention to Le Fanu's *Wylder's Hand*, and more generally to its author, through Deacon's cipher, she acknowledges her debt to James with more subtlety. Wimsey is introduced to the reader as a serious collector of incunabula as early as the opening pages of *Whose Body?*. It is perfectly reasonable, then, that the scholarly Venables will recognize him only in connection with his *Notes on the Collection of Incunabula* (12) and only later, in a moment of mild humour, as an infamous dilettante detective (91) and offer to show Wimsey his own books, particularly his own incunabula *Gospel of Nicodemus*. M. R. James' editions of the apocryphal gospels are still the scholarly standard. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* is of course particularly appropriate to *Nine Tailors*: its narrative heart is the harrowing of hell and the dead literally rising from their graves in an expansion of Acts 2.24 and Mathew 27:52. The Gaudy family tombs, 'They lived here up to Queen Elizabeth's time, but they've all died out now' (57), represent a pointed reference to James' Gawdys in 'The Mezzotint'.(22) Abbot Thomas himself may recall the German Abbot Thomas of 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas', (23) although Sayers gives the concealment of treasure and the making of a cipher to another character. Sayers shares James' preoccupation with ecclesiastical restoration (24): 'The east window is Theodore's bête noire. That dreadful crude glass – about 1840, I think it is. Quite the worst period, Theodore says.'(43) In 'An Episode of Cathedral History' James wrote: 'It was in 1840 that the wave of Gothic revival smote the Cathedral of Southminster.'(25) This story by James contains, like *The Nine Tailors*, a lovingly described a nighttime visit to the church with remarks on the effect:

<u><i>Nine Tailors</i> James: 'An Episode of Cathedral History'</u>	
The tiny ray of the the lantern picked out here the poppy-head on a pew, here the angle of a stone pillar, here the gleam of of brass from a mural tablet. (28-9)	light wavering along the length of the church, and up the steps into the choir until it was intercepted by some screen or other furniture, which only allowed the reflection to be seen on the piers and the roof. (26)

James has nothing of the slightly comic interlude of the 'powerful ecclesiastical odour, compounded of ancient wood, varnish, dry rot, hassocks, hymn books, paraffin lamps, flowers and candles all gently baking in the warmth of slow-combustion stoves' (28). His humorous interlude in answer to Mr. Lake's

question ‘Did you ever find anybody here locked in by accident?’(27) has its own place and narrative relevance in a tale of what was let out by ill-judged deliberation. And while James’ description moves along the length of the church and upwards, Sayers line of sight is relatively restricted in height, reserving the magnificent cherubim and seraphim of Fen Church St. Paul for a set piece of their own.(28)

What is the point of this emulation, if not intellectual homage? Entering the orbit of these works hands Sayers a number of subtle but suggestive tools. She has crossed over into a genre that presupposes the supernatural, generally an a-confessional supernatural. The gothic quality of Collins and more particularly, Le Fanu, calls up, within and around a crime, a sense of foreboding, not merely of the inevitability of discovery and punishment, but the miasmatic weight of some cosmic order seeking to right itself. While this silent presence is not identified in these texts as the Christian God (quite the opposite in *The Moonstone*), it nevertheless places the actions of the characters within a larger setting, calling up, at the very least, the atavistic fear of ill fortune and at times an almost palpable nemesis. Even M.R. James, who is closest to Sayers in formal belief, always left some distance between vengeance and providence – as Sayers does until the final page of *The Nine Tailors*.

This intertextuality is not merely homage to these authors. Charles Williams’ reaction to the novel must have been what Sayers half hoped, half feared of her audience.(29) It almost subliminally directs the reader’s reaction to events and prepares them to accept Mr. Venables Christian reading of the dénouement:

‘There have always,’ he said, ‘been legends about Batty Thomas. She has slain two men in times past, and Hezechiah will tell you that the bells are said to be jealous in the presence of evil. Perhaps God speaks through those mouths of inarticulate metal. He is a righteous judge, strong and patient, and is provoked ever day.’ (350)

The pattern of reminiscences and borrowings in the context of her shifting or re-positioning of this murder mystery away from the intellectual puzzle and towards the novel of manners suggest that the ‘manners’ she wishes to dramatize are her countrymen’s complex relationship not merely with the established Church, or even Christianity, but ultimately with God. The novel is punctuated by biblical references and ethical/spiritual concerns occasioned not only by the setting, but also by the circumstances. Wimsey speaks more truly than he knows when he remarks to Mr. Venables early in the novel: ‘being in and about this church brings eternity too close.’ (32)

This positioning begins in an almost querulous register in the Forward:

From time to time complaints are made about the ringing of church bells. It seems strange that a generation which tolerates the uproar of the internal combustion engine and the wailing of the jazz band should be sensitive to the one loud noise that is made to the Glory of God.(4)(30)

The Nine Tailors is not the first of her mysteries to include extended references to Christianity, particularly Anglican Christianity. In *Unnatural Death* as well as *Strong Poison* we are treated to the spiritual delicacies of Miss Clemson, references in which gentle humor is restrained by respect. And in the former novel too, Sayers introduces a brief, but arresting commentary on Wimsey’s ethical and spiritual life, placed (unusually for her) in the interior voice from the vicar with whom Wimsey has discussed the morality of euthanasia.(31) In *The Nine Tailors*, however, religious scruples are not an interlude, mildly comic or otherwise. The setting and the intertwining of events with the high days of the Church year, from the ‘devil’s bargain’ (312) and Deacon’s death during the days of peace to the resurrection of his body in Eastertide to the apocalyptic flood on the feast of St. John (traditional author of

both the Gospel and the Book of Revelations), form an inescapable Christian setting and commentary on actions and motives.

The real thread of this crypto-spiritual tale, from Mr. Venables' 'Isn't it wonderful?' [...] 'Is it not really providential? That just at this moment we should be sent a guest who is actually a ringer and accustomed to ringing Kent Treble Bob?' (20) to its ending, with his *mistice* or *moralisatio* (32), is the working out and recognition of God's providence. Until the moment Wimsey is revealed as a ringer, the vocabulary of coincidence and happenstance has been 'fortunate, unfortunate, fortunately, unfortunately' (15, 16, 19, 20). After that, fortune recedes from Sayers' vocabulary. The providential arrival of another ringer signs Deacon's death warrant. There is in retrospect, a dark irony about Mr. Venables' insistence: 'I cannot get over the amazing coincidence of your arrival. It shows the wonderful way in which Heaven provides even for our pleasures, if they be innocent.' (21) Mr. Venables introduces Wimsey to the other ringers as 'providentially sent to us' (23), and to his congregation, adapting Milton's *Comus*, (33) as 'sent "by what men call chance"' (38). The ringing of the peal and, with it, Deacon's life are in the balance until Jack Godfrey, who 'no doubt [...] wants to get home to his supper' and '[...] has the key of the bell-chamber' (31)(34), rings Batty Thomas himself, making what can hardly be described as an informed decision to be 'unaccountably deaf' (32) which effectively signs Deacon's death warrant.

Sayers, in effect, has created an Augustinian if not Augustinian-inspired exemplum of providence working through free human wills:

Moreover, even if there is in God's mind a definite pattern of causation, it does not follow that nothing is left to the free choice of our will. For in fact, our wills also are included in the pattern of causation certainly known to God and embraced in his foreknowledge. For the wills of men are among the causes of the deeds of men, and so he who foresaw the causes of all things cannot have been ignorant of our wills among those causes, since he foresaw that these wills are the causes of our deeds. In his [God's] will lies the supreme power, that strengthens the good wills of created spirits, judges the evil wills, and subjects them all to his divine order. (*De civitate Dei* V. ix)(35)

The reader is reminded, at Deacon's graveside, 'God moves in mysterious ways' as Sayers leads her characters in conversation and thought around the hymn's title (115, 120). She even alludes to the complexities and confusions of the concept of providence with a touch light enough to put neither theologian nor atheist off their reading:

'We mustn't question the ways of Providence,' said the Rector.

'Providence?' said the old woman. 'Don't yew talk to me about Providence. I've had enough o' Providence. First he took my husband, and then he took my 'taters, but there's One above as'll teach him to mend his manners, if he don't look out.'

The Rector was too much distressed to challenge this remarkable piece of Theology.

'We can but trust in God, Mrs. Giddings,' he said, and pulled up the starting-handle with a jerk. (81-2)

It is within an Augustinian setting Mr. Venables will console and counsel Wimsey:

[...] it does not do for us to take too much thought for the morrow. It is better to follow the truth and leave the result in the hand of God. He can foresee where we cannot, because He knows all the facts. (271)

As the novel draws to a close through the final cataclysm of the flood which will both reveal the manner of Deacon's death and claim the tragic soul of Will Thoday, a character worthy of Hardy, Mr. Venables will speak in conformity to his principles and recall to the reader what is played out on the page:

We have taken our precautions. Two Sundays ago I warned the congregation what might happen [...] Yes, yes. The first thing to do is to ring the alarm. They know what that means, thank God! They learnt it during the War. I never thought I should thank God for the War, but He moves in a mysterious way. (334-5)

Within the changes of this world, as Hezekiah tells Wimsey, 'Yew ain't no call to be afeard o' the bells if so be as yew follows righteousness.' But the bells 'know well who's a-haulin' of 'un. Wunnerful understandin' they is. They can't abide a wicked man. They lays in wait to overthrow 'un.' (272). Within this theology and narrative men make their own fate, as providence slowly brings all things back into harmony. Deacon, a ringer, their servant, never ceases to think in terms of the Fen Church bells, and his choice of Fen Church St. Paul for the hiding place of his theft and shame places him in their power at his end:

He left Hezekiah and went into the church, stepping softly as though he feared to rouse up something from its sleep. Abbot Thomas was quiet in his tomb; the cherubims, open-eyed and open-mouthed, were absorbed in their everlasting contemplation; far over him he felt the patient watchfulness of the bells. (272-3)

Men and angels and all this great creation wait on the revelation of God's justice.

1. Dorothy L. Sayers, 'Introduction' in *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror* (Gollancz: London, 1928), repr. in *The Art of the Mystery Story*, ed. by Howard Haycraft (Carroll and Graf: New York, 1983), pp 71-109, at 86-92; see also 'There's a book of very gruesome grues in the library, called *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* by James – very nice and nasty.' Letter to her parents, January 26, 1913. In *The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers 1899-1936: The Making of a Detective Novelist*, chosen and edited Barbara Reynolds pref. P. D. James (Stodder and Stoughton: London 1996), pp 70-1.
2. All references are to Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Nine Tailors: Changes Rung on an Old Theme in Two Sort Touches and Two Full Peals* (Gollancz London, 1934).
3. Sayers, besides a quotation from Edgar Allan Poe's 'Berenice' at the beginning of 'The Fifth Part: The Dodging' in *The Nine Tailors*, p.310, uses in it an extended reference (317-8) to Jean Sermenet, 'The Rosamonde', *The Strand Magazine*, vol 8 (1894), 450-4. *I would like to acknowledge the help of Ms. Jasmine Simone of the Dorothy L. Sayers' Society in locating the full reference for this work.
4. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum, *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art* (Toronto: Associated UP, 1982), p.21.
5. See R. C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of the Dead* (Junction Books: London, 1982)
6. Reeves writes in her introduction to *The Old English Baron* 'to unite the various merits and graces of the ancient Romance and modern Novel. To attain this end, there is required a sufficient degree of the marvelous, to excite the attention; enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic, to engage the heart in its behalf.': Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, Clara Reeves, *The Old English Baron* (Nonsuch Publishing: Stroud and Dublin, 2007), 115.
7. *The Nine Tailors*, p. 74: 'I'm not taking you up to Batty Thomas, Miss Hilary. She's an unlucky bell. What I mean, she's bell that has her fancies and I wouldn't like to risk it [...] she's queer-tempered. They do say that old Batty down below, what had her put up here, was a queer sort of man and his bell's took after him.'
8. '[O]ne of the dullest books I have ever encountered in any field': 'Who cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?', *The New Yorker*, January 20, 1945 repr. *The Art of the Mystery Story*, pp 390-7, at 392.
9. See Dorothy L. Sayers, 'Introduction' *The Omnibus of Crime* (Gollancz: London, 1928), repr. *The Art of the Mystery Story*, pp 71-109, at 72-6.
10. See Sayers' essay on her novel *Gaudy Night in Titles to Fame*, ed. Denys K. Roberts (Nelson: London, 1937), repr. *The Art of the Mystery Story*, pp208-221.
11. *Strong Poison* for example introduces an earlier 'shameless woman' in Cremona Garden whose fortune is the catalyst of the murder. *Whose Body?* chillingly twists together the vague, off-hand anti-Semeticism of her contemporary society with the arrogance of the scientific *übermensch*
12. 'Gaudy Night' in *Titles to Fame*, ed. Denys K. Roberts (T. Nelson and Sons: London, 1937), repr in *The Art of the Mystery Story*, pp 208-221 at 210. Her insistence, 'Peter [...] remained untouched by its spiritual conflicts', is only understandable if she equated 'touched' with *conversio*.
13. Mrs. Venables, the centre of practical wisdom in the narrative, correctly identifies the character of the dead man's wife from her handiwork after ironically insisting 'I'm afraid I'm not a Sherlock Holmes.' In doing so, she draws attention to the greater importance of the underclothes than the outer garments to his identity, and adds 'But you don't know he was the man you met. He may be somebody quite different.' *The Nine Tailors*, p. 167.
14. 'I should say that it was written by a person of no inconsiderable literary ability, who had studied the works of Sheridan Lefanu' [...] 'Lefanu, did you say? That's not a bad shot, Bunter. It reminds me a little of that amazing passage in *Wylder's Hand* about Uncle Lorne's dream.' *The Nine Tailors*, pp 212-3.
15. Willard Huntington Wright had described the *Gesta Romanorum* as 'long a mine of suggestions for the modern writer of crime-mystery fiction.' 'Introduction', *The Great Detective Stories* (Scribner's: New York, 1927) repr. *The Art of the Mystery Story*, pp 33-70, at 43.

16. Polly Ashton soothes the Thoday girls' fears with an argument based firmly on the reformers with a touch of the age of reason and an appeal to the children's own familiarity with Lady Thorpe: *Wylder's Hand*: 'Polly being a good girl, she tells 'em there's no call to be frightened, the dead being in the arms of our Saviour and not having the power to come out o' their graves nor to do no harm to nobody. [...] So Polly told Rosie it couldn't have been Lady Thorpe's spirit for that was at rest, and if it had been, Lady Thorpe wouldn't do harm to a living soul; and she said Rosie must a-seen Harry Gotobed's lantern.' *Nine Tailors*, p.162-3. On the reformed orthodoxy of Polly's approach see Peter Marshall, 'Transformations of the ghost story in post-Reformation England' in *The Ghost Story from the Middle ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Anne Stevens (Four Courts: Dublin, 2010), pp16-33.
17. *The Nine Tailors*, pp 74-5.
18. Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, ed. Sandra Kemp (Penguin: London, 1998)
19. 'Beastly things,' said Hilary. 'They've killed grandfather, and practically killed Dad, and they've killed Deacon and they'll kill somebody else before long.': *The Nine Tailors*, p. 301.
20. It is worth Deacon's hands are cut off because a scar on one (let alone his fingerprints) would insure his identification. *The Nine Tailors*, p. 316, 318
21. 'Canon Alberic's Scapbook' in *Casting the Runes*, pp 1-13.
22. 'Well, this man that was left was what you find pretty often in that country – the last remains of a very old family. I believe they were lords of the manor at one time. [...] But this fellow could show a row of tombs in the church there that belonged to his ancestors [...] and this man Gawdy (that was the name, to be sure – Gawdy; I thought I should get it - Gawdy)', James, 'The Mezzotint', *Casting the Runes*, p. 25; Cox's note suggests the name was 'probably borrowed from a Norfolk family whose papers were the subject of a historical Manuscripts Commission Report in 1885 which MRJ would almost certainly have known.' *Casting the Runes*, p. 305
23. James, 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas', *Casting the Runes*, pp 78-96. It might be worth mentioning that the decoration of the Abbot's tomb would be unusual for the period, 'Carved panels decorated the sides of the tomb, and showed various scenes in the life of the abbey; one of them depicted the casting of a bell ...' (*The Nine Tailors*, p. 59) might be compared to that on Count Magnus' tomb in James' 'Count Magnus': 'round the edge were several bands of similar ornament representing various scenes. One was a battle, with canon belching out smoke, and walled towns, and troops of pikemen.', 'Count Magnus', *Casting the Runes*, p.52.
24. On the theme of architectural restoration in James see H Conrad O'Briain, "'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it': Laudian Ecclesia and Victorian culture wars in the ghost stories of M. R. James' in *The Ghost Story*, ed Conrad O'Briain and Stevens, pp47-60.
25. James, 'An Episode of Cathedral History', *Casting the Runes*, pp. 210-27 at 213.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
27. *Ibid*
28. 'The wide nave and shadowy aisles, the lofty span of the chancel arch – crossed, though not obscured, by the delicate fan-tracery [...] Then his gaze, returning to the to the nave, followed the strong yet slender shafting that sprang fountain-like from floor to foliated column-head, spraying into the light, wide arches that carried the clerestory. And there mounting to the steep pitch of the roof, his eyes were held entranced with wonder and delight. Incredibly aloof, flinging back the light in a dusky shimmer of bright hair and gilded outspread wings, soared the ranked angels, cherubim and seraphim, choir over choir, from corbel and hammer-beam floating face to face uplifted. "My God!" muttered Wimsey, not without reverence.' The close reader may also note the reminiscence of Worby and Lake in Mr. Godfrey with his 'old fashioned lantern' leading the way to the church in *The Nine Tailors* (28). James, in his own touch of intertextuality has Lake remark, 'Anyone might think we were Jasper and Durdles over again, mightn't they?' said Lake as they crossed the close- for he had ascertained that the Verger had read *Edwin Drood*. ('An Episode of Cathedral History' in *Casting the Runes*, p.211)

29. 'The ending is stupendous.' *Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers* p. 340, note 1; see also op cit.pp. 400-1.
30. Suggestively, like any *good insular manuscript of the golden age of the English church the forward uses Diminuendo*.
31. *Dorothy, L. Sayers, Unnatural Death* (Ernest Benn Limited: London, 1927), p.227.
32. The terms come from the *Narrationes* of Odo de Cerinton and the *Gesta Romanorum*, respectively, and refer to the spiritual or ethical interpretations provided at the end of a fable or tale. For an easily accessible selection of texts see Charles H. Beeson, ed., *A Primer of Medieval Latin: an Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (Catholic University Press: Washington, ND), pp 42-5, 55-70.
33. Line 588 John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (PUBLISHER'S NAME New York, 1957), p.103.
34. The continuing reference to keys lost and found, used and not used in *The Nine Tailors* is worthy of a study in itself. The misplacement of the keys means not only Deacon dies, but that the body is not found on New Year's day see *The Nine Tailors*, pp 58-9.
35. St. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* 7vols, with trans. by William M. Green (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1978) Vol. 2, pp 175, 177.