



Artists in Crime: Inspector Roderick Alleyn #6

Ngaio Marsh

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It was a bizarre pose for beautiful model Sonia Gluck--and her last. For in the draperies of her couch lay a fatal dagger, and behind her murder lies all the intrigue and acid-etched temperament of an artist's colony. Called in to investigate, Scotland Yard's Inspector Roderick Alleyn finds his own passions unexpectedly stirred by the fiery painter Agatha Troy--brilliant artist and suspected murderess. First published in 1938.

Artists in Crime: Inspector Roderick Alleyn #6 Details

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Author : Ngaio Marsh

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Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

Detective Inspector Roderick Allen Series Book #6 - **4.5 stars**

I normally have to read a series in order because it goes completely against my nature to skip around. After reading book one though, I was on the fence on whether or not to continue the series because, even though I enjoyed the mystery itself, the dialogue and British narrative was quite choppy and all over the place so I had a hard time following a long in certain parts.

I owe *Themis-Athena's Garden of Books* a huge thank you for recommending that I skip ahead to book 6, *Artists in Crime*. I followed Themis's advice and I'm really glad I did because I enjoyed this story immensely. The writing is so much more polished in this book. The British narrative is more refined and easier to follow, the plot was well-developed and the mystery was complex enough that I didn't guess the murderer until it was pretty much handed to me on a silver platter. Overall you can just tell that the author's skill has evolved since her debut.

There are a whopping 32 books in this series so I can't say if I will go back and read books 2-5 anytime I soon but I definitely plan to continue reading the series from book 7.

Pamela says

The death of an artists' model brings Alleyn into contact with a community of artists who all seem to have something to hide. The artists are attending classes at the home of renowned artist Agatha Troy, whom Alleyn had previously met on his return journey from New Zealand. Alleyn has to put his growing feelings for Troy to one side in order to uncover a murderer.

This novel is my favourite so far from this series. Marsh has achieved a good balance of characters, an interesting setting, some sparkling dialogue and a clever plot. The book also benefits from pushing the ebullient reporter Bathgate more into the background and introducing Alleyn's mother whose exchanges with Fox are a highlight.

Adrian says

Like a number of other people I enjoyed this considerably more than number 5 in the series. The story was more interesting, it had DCI. Alleyn's full support team including Bathgate, it introduced more of his background including his esteemed mother, Lady Alleyn and last but certainly not least we were introduced in no uncertain terms to "Troy".

A great novel, well written and worked out with numerous red herrings masking a devious killer that I didn't get until virtually the denouement.

Thoroughly enjoyed and my faith is now restored in this challenge !!

Carol ?? says

I have a love hate relationship with Ngaio Marsh. I find her writing is often a mixture of snobbery (it's not her characters – Marsh herself comes across as believing the aristocracy should have special privileges. Mixed up in a murder mystery – faugh, how common) & there is often a touch of 'cultural cringe' (believing NZ culture is inferior to other cultures, usually the UK or the States)

This particular book also tested my desire to read uncensored work!

Page 17 Miss Katti Bostock, the well-known painter of....Negro musicians

Acceptable for the times.

Page 23 Alleyn writing to his mother “No darling I didn't not lose my heart in the Antipodes. Would you have been delighted to welcome a strapping black Fijian lady?”

Hmmm...

Page 29 & this is in the narrative. ...Troy's Australian protege, was a short & extremely swarthy youth, who looked like a dago in an American talking picture.

Wow.

But yes, I do still want to read uncensored or you wonder what else has been changed. For example, also on page 29 is digesion. Digestion? & I spotted some other typos as well. My copy is 1962 – I wonder how far back they go?

& this is the start of the Alleyn/Troy romance which I found painful to read – in all the Marsh books I read not just this one. Marsh never married & I think she just wasn't comfortable writing about love - & it shows.

& maybe British police had a lot more latitude but;

(view spoiler)

So why do I still read Marsh, even if my teeth are sometimes grinding in frustration?

Marsh can write descriptive passages beautifully.

Her narrative, when it's not being stalled by Alleyn or his upper class suspects objecting to the beastly business of murder, moves quite briskly.

I like Alleyn's Mum!

& Marsh isn't so nastily contemptuous of female servants as some of the Golden Age writers are.

& this book is a slice of life from the 1930s & Marsh's own background as an artist & in theatre means she knew these worlds.

So, not a whole hearted recommendation, but not a complete waste of time either.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog [here](#) in March 1998.

Like *Vintage Murder*, this seems to me to be one of the very best of Ngaio Marsh's detective novels. By the time this book came out, the characters in her series (Alleyn, Fox, Bathgate and so on) were well-established, old friends. In *Artists in Crime*, another important series character is introduced, the painter Agatha Troy.

As so often happens in Ngaio Marsh's stories, one of the series characters interacts with one of the new characters before the murder happens. This follows on directly from the previous novel in the series, *Vintage Murder*, as the interaction takes place on the ship on which Alleyn returns from New Zealand to England. One of his fellow travellers is the artist Agatha Troy.

On her return to England, Troy is running a school for several pupils. It is at this school that the murder takes place; of the model they are using. She is a particularly infuriating person, and manages to severely annoy just about everyone. She defaces one of Troy's best portraits, is such a difficult sitter for another portrait that it has to be abandoned, is blackmailing at least one of the pupils, is pregnant by another; basically, no one is really going to miss her.

The way in which she is murdered is typical of Marsh; a trap is laid which leads to the actual murder being committed by someone who didn't necessarily set the trap (similar plots where the actual killer may not be the murderer include *Enter a Murderer*, for example).

The book includes one of the most unpleasant murdered bodies in the whole of classic detective fiction, but otherwise is an impeccable example of the art at its very best.

Betty says

Alleyn is returning from his New Zealand trip when he meets Agatha Troy on board the ship. Sparks fly between them and feel each do not like each. Troy hosts a group of artists at her home. After a discussion of a method of murder with the group. The murder happens in front of all the artists. This book

has numerous twists and turns keeping the reader alert. I read a Large Print edition from my library

Cphe says

An author I haven't read before but have always meant to read. Would best describe this as a vintage mystery with a hint of romance. Felt the mystery component was strongly delivered and I had no inkling who the culprit would be until all was revealed at the end. This novel introduces Roderick Alleyn's love interest the fiery painter Agatha Troy.

The dialogue between Alleyn and his mother however did tend to grate on this reader. The use of "little mum" etc just didn't ring true with how Alleyn was portrayed. Also had a few issue with the dialogue of the Australian painter, it just didn't gel.

I'm basing my rating solely on the mystery component, and the atmosphere and manners of a bygone era.

Ruth says

Well she's done it again! Not for the first time, I have read the whole of a Ngaio Marsh book convinced that I've been very clever and spotted 'whodunit' only to discover I'm completely wrong. I thought I'd picked up subtle clues that others may have missed only to find I'd been led up the garden path. I love it!

This book also introduces Agatha Troy. I enjoyed seeing the developing relationship between her and Alleyn as their two very different worlds collide.

Laura says

It started as a student exercise, the knife under the drape, the model's pose chalked in place. But before Agatha Troy, artist and instructor, returns to the class, the pose has been re-enacted in earnest: the model is dead, fixed for ever in one of the most dramatic poses Troy has ever seen.

Roderick Alley series:

- 3* A Man Lay Dead (Roderick Alleyn, #1)
- 3* Artists in Crime (Roderick Alleyn, #6)
- 4* Death in a White Tie (Roderick Alleyn, #7)
- 3* Death of a Peer (Roderick Alleyn, #10)
- 3* Death and the Dancing Footman (Roderick Alleyn, #11)
- 3* Night at the Vulcan (Roderick Alleyn, #16)
- 3* When in Rome (Roderick Alleyn, #26)
- TR Enter a Murderer (Roderick Alleyn, #2)
- TR The Nursing Home Murder (Roderick Alleyn, #3)
- TR Death in Ecstasy (Roderick Alleyn, #4)
- TR Vintage Murder (Roderick Alleyn, #5)
- TR Overture to Death (Roderick Alleyn, #8)
- TR Death at the Bar (Roderick Alleyn, #9)

TR Colour Scheme (Roderick Alleyn, #12)
TR Died in the Wool (Roderick Alleyn, #13)
TR Final Curtain (Roderick Alleyn, #14)
TR A Wreath for Rivera (Roderick Alleyn, #15)
TR Spinsters in Jeopardy (Roderick Alleyn, #17)
TR Scales of Justice (Roderick Alleyn, #18)
TR Death of a Fool (Roderick Alleyn, #19)
TR Singing in the Shrouds (Roderick Alleyn, #20)
TR False Scent (Roderick Alleyn, #21)
TR Hand in Glove (Roderick Alleyn, #22)
TR Dead Water (Roderick Alleyn, #23)
TR Killer Dolphin (Roderick Alleyn, #24)
TR Clutch of Constables (Roderick Alleyn, #25)
TR Tied Up In Tinsel (Roderick Alleyn, #27)
TR Black As He's Painted (Roderick Alleyn, #28)
TR Last Ditch (Roderick Alleyn, #29)
TR A Grave Mistake (Roderick Alleyn, #30)
TR Photo Finish (Roderick Alleyn, #31)
TR Light Thickens (Roderick Alleyn, #32)

Susan says

After struggling a little with Ngaio Marsh's previous mystery, "Vintage Murder," I was pleased to discover that I enjoyed the sixth in the series, "Artists in Crime," a great deal more. In "Vintage Murder," Roderick Alleyn was travelling and, in this book in the series, we see him returning to the UK. On board ship he meets, and falls for, artist, Agatha Troy. Miss Troy turns out to live at Tatler's End House, close to Lady Alleyn, in Bucks.

Alleyn goes to visit his mother, while Agatha Troy has a group of students visiting. Along with her friend, Katti Bostock, there are a range of other visitors, including artists model, Sonia Gluck. When Sonia is found dead, Alleyn has to unravel the motives among a group of people who all have reasons to dislike the victim-including Agatha Troy.

I enjoyed this mystery and thought there was a good range of suspects and motives. I enjoyed meeting up with Nigel Bathgate and Fox again – I think I missed them in the previous book. Both Lady Alleyn and Agatha Troy seemed a little reminiscent of the Wimsey books to me. However, although Ngaio Marsh is considered one of the four 'Queens of Crime,' she does not seem, to me, to be quite as good as either Sayers, or Christie. Saying that, I look forward to reading on in the series.

Andrea says

Excellent narrator for this.

Of the classic detective series romances, I think this is my favourite. Whimsey/Vane is better known, and I love Amanda in Champion/Fitton more, but I simply enjoy Agatha Troy and Roderick Alleyn most of all.

In all three of these romances, the woman is an independent, with a reputation, friends, and a career of her own. I love Troy's shift from gruff shyness (with most people) to complete authority (with people asking her artistic opinion), and I like how Alleyn both experiences a meeting of minds with her, and yet at the same time slightly misunderstands her (putting her a little on a pedestal of sensibility until she corrects him in a later novel).

The deaths in this story are particularly horrid.

Cyndi says

A really good murder mystery. Inspector Alleyn meets an artist and falls in love. Meanwhile a model is murdered in front of a group of artist but it takes Inspector Alleyn of Scotland Yard to find the killer.

P. S. The brilliant Benedict Cumberbatch read it on youtube. Yay!!

Lobstergirl says

Even though I was repulsed by the Sylvester Stallone-like figure on the cover, I pulled this out of the book dumpster for a quick read. It started out promisingly, with Inspector Roderick Alleyn leaning over the deck rail on a Fiji to England cruise, but once we disembarked in England stasis took over. A nude model for an art class held at a wealthy artist and teacher's estate is knifed to death, and everyone in the class becomes a suspect. Interminable discussions of the details of the knifing and of every student's relationship to every other student are held. Because it is 1938, there is a lot of slut-shaming. Just because, Inspector Alleyn feels sexy tingles up and down his pins (I'm trying to channel the Daily Mail here) whenever he is around art teacher Agatha Troy. It was all so tedious that by the time the killer/killers were revealed, I no longer cared who might have done it. I no longer cared whether it was a human, or a really intelligent gerbil.

There was one sentence that impressed me:

Miss Lee's hair was parted down the centre and dragged back from her forehead with such passionate determination that the corners of her eyes had attempted to follow it. Her face, if left to itself, would have been round and eager, but the austerities of the Slade school had superimposed upon it a careful expression of detachment.

Because it's 1938, one art student "looked like a dago". Another fellow is in "Hong Kong taking pictures of the Chinks." And Lady Alleyn, Roderick's mother, is reading the letters of D.H. Lawrence, finding some of the letters "really rather tedious. All these negroid deities growling in his interior! One feels sorry for his wife, but she seems to have had the right touch with him. Have you got your drink?"

The cast of characters is listed at the front of the book. Example: "Valmai Seacliff, a student with sex-appeal." One is identified as "a student with a beard." Marsh writes about the beard as if no person in the

solar system had ever worn one before. The beard is remarked on repeatedly, and described as if it is not a natural outgrowth of hair, but a meerkat that happens to be permanently clinging to a man's face. At the model's inquest, the coroner is startled only once "and that was when Cedric Malmsley gave evidence. The coroner eyed Malmsley's beard as if he thought it must be detachable, abruptly changed his own glasses, and never removed his outraged gaze from the witness throughout his evidence."

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

A reasonably good tale spoiled by the poor reading of one Terry Wilton. His inflexions were odd, his attempt at different accents and mannerisms fell flat. Half the time Alleyn was using Fox's voice, or the cardboard "ozzie" accent assigned to another character. The reading felt rushed, as if Wilton couldn't wait to be through. I must read this in print and get more out of it.

I felt that Alleyn did rather lead the suspects in questioning them. Instead of saying, "What did you do Saturday?" and seeing if the person's story agrees with the others, he says, "Now on Saturday you did thus and so, is that correct?" I must say I did tape the murderer near the beginning, and the second murder felt rather Murder, She Wrote. Unfortunately the romance between Alleyn and Troy (who calls the woman he loves by her surname in 1938?) felt rather like a pale copy of Wimsey and Harriet Vane...which was written before this. Too much tell-not-show at the end, but that's a common failing of mystery authors of the time. At least it wasn't the dreaded Library Scene: "I know you're all wondering why I've called you here today..."

Why did a NZ author create such a cardboard Australian character? Why bother? He has nothing to do with the action, and all he had to say for himself was "Goodoh, Miss Troy." I was amused by the perception of aspirin as a sleeping drug; I've run into this in people's diaries of the period as well. Bayer Aspirin, however, contained a small amount of caffeine in those days, so how it could relax you or make you "sleep like the dead" I cannot imagine--particularly those who took one with their coffee! (Mind, English coffee of the time was not what it is now.)

Therefore three stars. Perhaps if I read it, and the narrator's voice isn't there to annoy, I can edit this review.

Roman Clodia says

Marsh isn't living up to her 'Queen of Crime' reputation for me but this book, the sixth in her series, is the best so far. After falling for a range of unsuitable women, Alleyn is finally in love with Troy - oh, and turns out he's a titled aristocrat with the obligatory charming, scatty mother... that was kept under wraps in the first five books.

Marsh tends to follow the same structure in all her stories with a spectacularly unrealistic method of murder. There's more investigating than is customary here, and Fox is emerging as my favourite character.

Definitely more dated than Christie.
