



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

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Volume 15  
Number 3

Article 4

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Spring 3-15-1989

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### Recommended Citation

Patterson, Nancy-Lou (1989) "A Comedy of Masks: Lord Peter as Harlequin in *Murder Must Advertise*," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 15: No. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol15/iss3/4>

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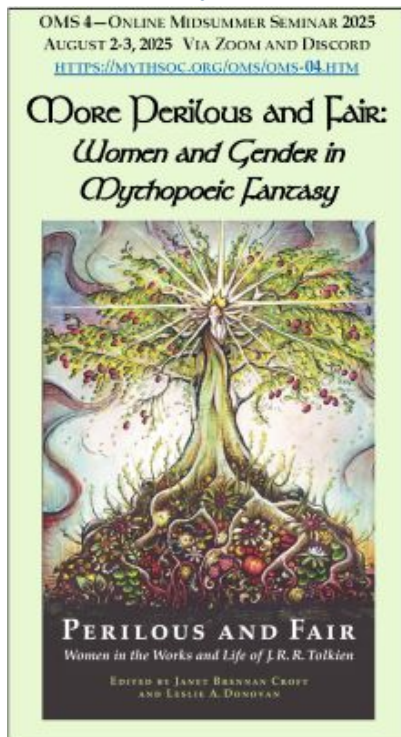
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## A Comedy of Masks: Lord Peter as Harlequin in *Murder Must Advertise*

### Abstract

Examines the symbolism of the Harlequin character in *Murder Must Advertise*, from its roots in the *commedia del' arte* to contemporary parallels. Discusses the symbolic functions of the Harlequin in the novel.

### Additional Keywords

Harlequin (Fictitious character)—Symbolism; Sayers, Dorothy L.—Characters—Peter Wimsey; Sayers, Dorothy L. *Murder Must Advertise*

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# A Comedy of Masks

## Lord Peter as Harlequin in *Murder Must Advertise*

Nancy-Lou Patterson

The masque of oddity he wore  
 Endears the hidden beauties more.  
 When thrown aside, the shade was clear'd,  
 The real countenance appear'd  
 Where human kindness, candour fair,  
 And truth, the native features were.  
 How few like him could change with ease  
 From shape to shape and all should please!

"On the Death of John Rich, Esq." (1761)

In three chapters of *Murder Must Advertise*, Lord Peter, already in the disguise as Death Bredon, an employee of Pym's advertising firm, dons the mask and costume of Harlequin in order to interview Dian de Momerie, whom he suspects of being involved with drug-trafficking, and perhaps of murder. In "Remarkable Acrobatics of a Harlequin," he has been invited to a ball by Pamela Dean, whose brother, Victor Dean, has been murdered. Wimsey/Bredon appears "in the harlequin black and white which had been conspicuous as he stepped into his car."<sup>1</sup>

The gathering is far from innocent; we read of the naked *danseuse*, the amorous drunken couples,<sup>2</sup> (ibid., p.75) and the "sinister little cubicles" each "furnished with a couch and a mirror." (ibid.) The harlequin distinguishes himself in this frantic company by climbing a statue set in a pool. "Up and up went the slim chequered figure, dripping and glittering." (ibid.) Dian, "in a moonlight frock of oyster satin," with "fair hair standing out like a pale aureole round her vivid face," (ibid., p.76) calls to him, "Come on Harlequin, dive!" and "The slim body shot down through the spray, struck the surface with scarcely a splash and slid through the water like a fish." Dian is delighted

"Oh, you're marvellous, you're marvellous!" She clung to him, the water soaking into her dragged satin.  
 "Take me home, Harlequin - I adore you!"  
 The harlequin bent his masked face and kissed him.  
 (ibid.)

They make their departure together, as he cries, "Let's run away, and let them catch us if they can." (ibid., p. 77)

The reader is left to wonder what happened next until well into the following chapter, when Lord Peter remarks to his brother-in-law Charles Parker, Chief-Inspector of Scotland Yard, "She's a bad lot, that girl," and explains:

I went incog. A comedy of masks. And you needn't worry about my morals. The young woman became incapably

drunk on the way home, so I . . . tucked her up on a divan in the sitting-room to astonish her maid in the morning" (ibid., p.85)

"Unsentimental Masquerade of a Harlequin" describes Lord Peter's second appearance as Harlequin. It begins with Dian behind the wheel of a friend's saloon which is overtaken by "the glare of the enormous twin lights" (ibid., p.152) of another automobile. In a moment "She saw the black mask and skull-cap and the flash of black and silver." (ibid.) The pursuit leads them into "a stretch of woodland" and shuts off all its lights. To Dian, "the darkness was Egyptian."<sup>3</sup> Far away she hears "a very high, thin fluting." The piping is explained by Lord Peter after its disembodied sound has led Dian into the dark woods:

"The terror induced by forest and darkness," said a mocking voice from somewhere over her head, "was called by the ancients, Panic fear, or the fear of the great god Pan. It is interesting to observe that modern progress has not altogether succeeded in banishing it from ill-disciplined minds."

Dian gazed upwards. Her eyes were growing accustomed to the night, and in the branches of the tree above her head she caught the pale gleam of silver.<sup>3</sup>

In this position, Lord Peter questions the mesmerized Dian at length. She describes her affair with Victor Dean, and the boredom which led her to drop him. Harlequin refuses to descend from his tree; he calls Dian "Circe" and chides her, "You made him drink and it upset his little tummy. You made him play high, and he couldn't afford it. And you made him take drugs and he didn't like it." (ibid., p.157) Dian, in affirmation of the title Circe, replies, "He was a little beast, Harlequin, really he was." (ibid.) The conversation continues until Lord Peter has learned that Tod Miligan is the drug-peddler who controls Dian.

Sister Mary Durkin remarks of this passage, "the mental picture of Lord Peter in the treetops and Dian huddled on the grass makes the scene grotesquely unreal."<sup>4</sup> There is indeed a certain sadistic element in this scene, and its darkness is not dispersed by dawn; Harlequin descends in the early daylight, which shows Dian "only a long implacable chin and the thin curl of a smiling mouth,"<sup>5</sup> and bestows upon her "kisses like deliberate insults." Suddenly, her mood changes. "The hanged man," she cries: "There's a hanged man in your thoughts. Why are you thinking of hanging?"<sup>6</sup> With this prescient outcry, she falls asleep. When he returns her to her door, "He kisses her gently this time and pushes her into the house." Janet

Hitchman too is offended by these scenes; she writes, "Wimsey, who must be all of 43, . . . lures a fast woman with a penny whistle and she, poor soul, suffers a terrifying moment of E.S.P., or, as might be said today 'a bad trip'."

Lord Peter meets Dian de Momerie again in his Harlequin disguise.

At the note of the penny whistle she would come out and drive with him, hour after hour, in the great black Daimler, till night turned into daybreak. He sometimes wondered whether she believed in him at all; she treated him as though he were some hateful but fascinating figure in a hashish-vision.

He tells her frankly, "I am here because Victor Dean died," and muses, in a passage that probably reveals Miss Sayers's intention in these symbol-laden passages:

She was the guardian of the shadow-frontier; through her, Victor Dean, surely the most prosaic denizen of the garish city of daylight, had stepped into the place of bright furies and black abysses, whose ministers are drink and drugs and its monarch death. (*Ibid.*, p. 189)

In her search for entertainment, Dian persuades Milligan to gate-crash a party. Coincidentally, they choose the house of Lady Helen, Duchess of Denver and sister-in-law of Lord Peter, who is there as himself. "The shadow of a tall pillar-rose fell across his face and chequered his white shirt-front with dancing black; and as he went he whistled softly." (*Ibid.*, p.196) Dian recognizes the whistled air and knows him immediately as her Harlequin, but he pretends to be surprised; she has, he says, mistaken him for his "unfortunate cousin Bredon," a drug-smuggler, whom Dian and Milligan are to meet again.

In "Hopeful Conspiracy of Two Black Sheep," the couple watch as "The gentleman in the harlequin costume removed his mask with quiet deliberation and laid it on the table," (*Ibid.*, p. 237) and takes him to be Lord Peter's imaginary cousin. When asked if he has a "Christian name" by Dian, he replies, "I have. It's spelt Death. Pronounce it any way you like." And he produces from his cloak a "dainty bag of oiled silk," calling it "Such stuff as dreams are made on." The bag contains a packet of dope obtained by the police when it was mis-delivered. The Harlequin and Milligan agree to set up a business partnership, and "Major Milligan dreamed that night that Death Bredon, in his harlequin dress, was hanging him for murder of Lord Peter Wimsey."<sup>10</sup>

Lord Peter's costume makes a final appearance: Parker reports to him that

Dian de Momerie was found this morning with her throat cut in a wood near Maidenhead. Beside the body was a penny whistle and a few yards away there was a black mask caught on a bramble bush. . . (*Ibid.*, p. 322)

It is an obvious attempt to implicate the imaginary Bredon: "I done it," said Wimsey, . . . 'and so, in a sense, I have, Charles. If that girl had never seen me, she'd be alive today." (*Ibid.*) In a continuation of this mood, when the entire dope ring is gathered in by the police, Lord Peter declines to celebrate.

In their detailed commentary on *Murder Must Advertise*, "The Agents of Evil and Justice in the Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers," R.D. Stock and Barbara Stock state that "Sayers represents their spiritual degeneration by their physical decay: she dilates on the blighted complexions of both

Major Milligan and Dian de Momerie, setting them against Lord Peter's nearly super-human prowess – his acrobatics as harlequin."<sup>11</sup> By the principle of opposition implied in the Stocks' title, Lord Peter is the agent of Justice. "Disguise is employed to a point up the theme of deception," (*Ibid.*, p. 20) the Stocks continue, and therefore, "The levity and high-jinks are acceptable, for we know throughout the novel. . . that Peter's humanity is fully engaged in the personal tragedy which he has exposed and to which he has perforce contributed." (*Ibid.*, p. 21)

The aptness of the Harlequin's "mask" for Lord Peter's complex role in *Murder Must Advertise* becomes clearer with an understanding of the *Commedia dell' Arte* and the history of the Harlequin figure. This traditional form of improvisatory comedy using stock characters, for which the English synonym, used by Lord Peter was "the Comedy of Mask,"<sup>12</sup> began in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The improvisation surrounded and filled out a loosely organized plot with a series of *lazzi* or sequences of comic business of ancient pedigree: "the devil in the Mysteries chased sinners off to Hell-mouth with blows as resounding as those inflicted by Arlecchino on his master's rivals." (Smith, p. 4)

The major characters of the *Commedia dell' Arte* are Pantaloon, Harlequin, Scaramouche, and Columbine, the maid-servant of the Inamorata, who like her mistress and other female characters, was not masked. Also called Arlecchino, she was the object of amorous intentions, sometimes indecently expressed, by Harlequin.<sup>14</sup> Harlequin was one of the two *zanni*, Harlequin and Brighella, (*Ibid.*, p. 10) both men-servants. These two roles contributed to the development of the modern clown. Each of the characters is called a "mask," a term which refers to the complete costume.

The character of Harlequin probably derives from "spectre-devils" and "clown-devils of the early Middle Ages." (Oreglia, p. 56) A French play of 1275 mentions a "King of the devils named Harlequin," and there is a comic devil in Dante's *Inferno* named Alechino, which Miss Sayers translates "Hellkin."<sup>15</sup> Probably from Harlequin's French name, "Hellequin." (Oreglia, p. 58) Harlequin "has the . . . arduous task of maintaining the even rhythm of the comedy as a whole," and like Peter, he engages in activities which



"sometimes involve. . .the most daring and perilous acrobatics." (*Ibid.*, p. 3-4) In the sixteenth century his costume was "overlaid with irregular coloured patches" which came to be made up of "regular diamond-shaped lozenges of many colours." (*Ibid.*, p. 57) and his mask showed a fierce dark face with a carbuncle on the forehead, a wrinkled brow, an aquiline nose, and heavy eyebrows. (*Madden*, p. 111) In his belt, he bore a leather purse and wooden sword, (*Oreglia*, p. 58) which developed into the "bat" and

finally into the "slapstick," a device of wood with two thin slats which produced a resounding whack when a blow was delivered with it.

Even after the *Commedia dell' Arte* migrated to England in the eighteenth century, becoming part of the English Pantomime tradition, Harlequin retained his colorful costume and black half-mask. The "custom arose of interspersing short mimed scenes and dances by characters of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, led by Harlequin, between the plays, or the acts of plays, in London theatres."<sup>16</sup> This "Harlequinade" became a major feature until Harlequin's centrality was superceded in the early nineteenth century, as the "Clown" began to dominate. By then, Harlequin's character had become firmly fixed in the British imagination.

There are interesting prefigurations or parallels for Miss Sayer's use of the Harlequin figure in two short stories, one of them by G.K. Chesterton. Barbara Reynolds points out that "If we read these incidents" – Lord Peter's escapades as Harlequin – without having Chesterton's "The Flying Stars" in mind, we miss an important point. It is all part of a literary game."<sup>17</sup> In "The Flying Stars," published in 1911, a young woman is to be given a gift of diamonds at a Christmas party, and an impromptu Harlequinade is planned. "I can be harlequin, that only wants long legs and jumbling about,"<sup>18</sup> says a Mr. Blount. As part of the action, he beats one of the actors – who is dressed as a policeman – in a traditional *lazzi*, and at the end of the performance,

danced slowly backwards out of the door into the garden, which was full of moonlight and stillness. The vamped dress of silver paper and paste, which had seemed too glaring in the footlights, looked more and more magical and silvery as it danced away under a brilliant moon. (*Ibid.*)

In the excitement, the diamonds have been stolen, but Father Brown has guessed where they have gone.

He goes into the garden, where among the trees, "a strange figure is climbing, who looks not so much romantic as impossible. He sparkled from head to heel, as if clad in ten million moons." It is the arch-criminal, Flambeau. The clubbed policeman, Father Brown tells him, who in pursuit of his duty "could be kicked, clubbed, stunned and drugged by the dancing harlequin" (*Ibid.*, p. 90) because such violent actions are expected in a harlequinade. This action was demeaning, a downward step for Flambeau. The "silver bird" in the tree reverts, and drops "three flashing diamonds" onto the turf beside the priest. (*Ibid.*, p. 91)

Among the parallels between this story and that of Sayers are the images of Harlequin in a tree, and his glittering garb. In his essay on "The Philosophical Tree" (1954), C.G. Jung discusses a woman patient's painting of a figure "swathed in multicoloured wrappings" perched in

a tree, which suggested to her "the harlequin motif" Jung interpreted this figure as representing "a panic fear that [the patient] . . . is slipping helplessly into some kind of madness."<sup>19</sup> The painting (*Ibid.*, Figure 20) shows an image remarkably similar to that of Flambeau perched in a tree in "The Flying Stars," and to that of Lord Peter similarly placed in *Murder Must Advertise*, with the exception that the Harlequin motif is expressed by multicolored patches of diamond shape rather by glitter.

As we have seen, the multicolored garb is a long-associated element of Harlequin's "mask": his glittering aspect originated with the costume of James Byrne, who performed as Covent Garden in 1805 "entirely covered over with three hundred pieces of cloth sewn with 50,000 spangles. . . . The black vizard was replaced by an eye-mask. The Bergamask yokel was now a very fine gentleman indeed, as he flashed about the stage, a glittering quicksilver figure that caught every eye."<sup>20</sup> One writer called him "the knight of the spangles."<sup>21</sup>

In *Murder Must Advertise*, Miss Sayers associates the motif of glitter with a fish-like appearance. There is a distinctly sexual element in her description of Lord Peter as Harlequin, "dripping and glittering like a fantastic water-creature."<sup>(Sayers, 1933, p. 75)</sup> who, when he dives, "slid through the water like a fish,"<sup>(Ibid., p. 76)</sup> The fish in traditional European symbolism suggested "every conceivable form of devouring concupiscentia,"<sup>22</sup> according to Jung. These fish and pool images are reinforced by Lord Peter in his guise as Cousin Bredon, when he falsely explains to Milligan his presence at Pym's:

"I received information . . . that Dean was up to something fishy about Pym's. So, since most fish have gold in their mouths like St. Peter's, I thought it wouldn't do any harm to try to a cast or two over that particular pool."<sup>23</sup>

The reference is to *Matthew 17:27*, in which Jesus directs Peter to cast a hook into the sea, "and when thou hast opened [the fish's]. . . mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money," which is to be used to pay the tribute required by the state. This oddly negative image is appropriate to the feigned intentions of Cousin Bredon.

Jung points out in "The Ambivalence of the Fish Symbol" that the sign of Pisces shows *two* fish, "Suggestive of the Christ/Antichrist antithesis." (*Jung, 1959, p. 115*) Perhaps this dichotomy is implied in Lord Peter's "harlequin black and white." There is a binary structure in *Murder Must Advertise* with its paired and linked dichotomies of advertising world *versus* drug world and "city of daylight"/city of night. Miss Sayers wrote that "The idea of symbolically opposing two cardboard worlds — that of the advertiser and the drug-taker — was all right, and it was suitable that Peter, who stands for reality, should never appear in either except disguised."<sup>24</sup> In Miss Sayers's Piscine structure,



Lord Peter's Harlequin is a judgmental fish who will gobble Miss de Momerie up.

A second short story with a Harlequin motif is Agatha Christie's "The Affair at the Victory Ball," written between 1923 and 1926.<sup>25</sup> In her autobiography, Mrs. Christie remarks of the Harlequin that "he was a friend of lovers, and connected with death."<sup>26</sup> This is the way Lord Peter portrays Harlequin, and this is what Dian de Momerie

senses. The elements of a ball, a Harlequin, and Lord (Lord Cronshaw), a woman of questionable morals (Coco Courtenay), and cocaine, are united in this story, which well pre-dates Mrs. Christie's stories of Mr. Harley Quin, as well as the publication of *Murder Must Advertise*. Hercule Poirot solves the mystery by examining the costumes of a set of porcelain figures, from which the actual ball costumes have been copied. The solution turns on the possibilities of disguise provided by the various "masks" of the Harlequinade, and the truth is revealed when "There in the limelight stood glittering Harlequin!"<sup>27</sup>

The spangles which glitter on Harlequin's costume are a token, in all of these works, of falsity. This theme is echoed in Major Milligan's contemptuous phrase used on Lord Peter as Harlequin to Dian: "this theatrical gentleman in tights." (Sayers, 1933, p. 324) and Poirot says to the people watching his reconstructed parade of the masks, "Your eyes have lied to you," because the Harlequin "must have been an impersonation." (Christie, 1979, p. 18) The double meaning of this phrase – since all living Harlequins are ordinary human actors impersonating the Harlequin mask – is related to the plot but also to the symbolism. Even when Harlequin seems to reveal his identity to Major Milligan and Dian, he is impersonating Cousin Bredon, whom he has accused of frequently impersonating him.

There are also precursors for Lord Peter's Harlequinade in two of Miss Sayers's own short stories, one of which pre-dates *Murder Must Advertise*. In both, Lord Peter assumes a disguise. In "The Adventurous Exploit of the Cave of Ali Baba," (1928) he is disguised first as the servant Rogers and second as one of a criminal gang whose members only appear to be one another covered in black velvet masks. The events of the story take place at a false ball which is really a meeting of criminals. The *Commedia dell'Arte* is alluded to in this story in a remark of Lord Peter's as he is threatened with torture: "I shall not guess any the better for being stimulated with hot iron, like Pantaloon."<sup>28</sup> One of the last motifs to survive in the harlequinade was "the red-hot poker to be applied to Pantaloon's backside." (Niklaus, p. 172)

Comic business which turns out to be genuinely violent has already been described from "The Flying Stars"; it also appears in *Murder Must Advertise*. When an arrest of Lord Peter in his persona of Cousin Bredon is staged for the benefit of the press, "Wimsey tapped the sergeant lightly but efficiently under the chin and sent him staggering, tripped Parker as neatly as he jumped from the running-board, and made for the gate like a hare." (Sayers, 1933, p. 324) This is truly Harlequinesque *lazzi*. The sequence concludes with a comic exchange on the theme of truth *versus* falsity:

"Rather prettily done, I flatter myself," said Wimsey.

"Ar!" said Lumley, caressing his jaw. "You didn't need to have hit quite so hard, my lord."

"Verisimilitude," said Wimsey, "verisimilitude. You looked lovely as you went over." (Ibid., p. 325)

This is slapstick, which David Madden calls "the comedy of force."<sup>29</sup> A blow in the jaw is only funny in a comedy.

In the second story, "The Incredible Elopement of Lord Peter Wimsey," (1933) Lord Peter travels to rescue an ill-used woman in the Pyrennes, posing as a magician. His performance in this role resembles that of charlatans thought to have contributed to the development of the Doctor mask in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Wimsey quotes Homer and Euripides, metamorphoses pigeons and a crystal tree from a metal pot, and prescribes "enchanted wafers" which in fact cause the wife to be healed. The feigned performance conceals genuine medicine. Winifred Smith states that

The central figure in every group of charlatans, the quack doctor, half astrologer, half magician ... traded on the superstitions of his audience in his long-winded nonsensical speeches about the more than natural powers of his drugs. (Smith, pp. 35-36)

The motif of magical transformation in Lord Peter's performance is associated with Harlequin, whose bat possessed "magic powers,"<sup>30</sup> in its nineteenth century form, "working such marvels as converting a beehive into a statue, or a coach into a wheelbarrow." (Ibid., p. 39)

These tricks and devices from the most antique to those contemporary with today, share in the symbolism of sham, feigning, artifice, and mummery. Playing Arlecchina to Lord Peter's Arlecchino is Dian de Momerie. Her surname, "de Momerie" means "mummery," while her Christian name, Dian, which refers to the moon goddess, Diana, is used here in her negative form suggestive of fickleness and mutability, of night and the eclipse of consciousness. The virginity of the goddess Diana, who corresponds to the profoundly archaic Artemis of the Greeks, symbolizes her state of being independent of external control, rather than of being sexually intact. Certainly, Dian de Momerie is not a virgin, but neither is she independent. She is a slave to dope and to the men who can provide it to her; Major Milligan is able to order her out of the room when he and Cousin Bredon wish to speak privately.

Miss Sayers was inclined to use the moon as a symbol of illusion or falsity; she made Lord Peter's Uncle Delgarde write:

In his last year at Oxford, Peter fell in love with a child of seventeen ... He treated that girl as if she was made of gossamer ... they made an exquisite pair – all white and gold – a prince and princess of moonlight, people said. Moonshine would have been nearer the mark.<sup>31</sup>

After Peter has gone to war, gallantly releasing Barbara from their engagement in case he should return mutilated, he comes back "to find the girl married – to a hardbitten rake of a Major Somebody." (Ibid.) Dian too is the companion of a rakish Major. Are Lord Peter's bitter kisses intended in memory of his lost moonlight princess? May we inter-

pret his relative inhumanity to Dian as a sort of psychic blind spot, a patch of emotional scar tissue?

Miss Sayers, who actually had observed and to a degree participated in the bohemian life of her period, wanted to say that it was a mummy, a world of falsity, artifice, and inhumanity. She is compassionate in her judgement of the creative artists living on the edge of this world, but savage in judging those who control or feed upon it. Dian seems a pitiful figure, her fragile beauty already fading, her commanding stature and leadership abilities wasted, her wits, of which she has perhaps once had more than an ordinary supply, dulled, distorted, and diffused. That she responds so intuitively to Lord Peter in his Harlequin's guise suggests not only his skills but her natural sensitivity. Her boredom is not only weakness but an appropriate response to her empty and meaningless life.

Her "hair standing out like a pale aureole" and her "moonlight frock of oyster satin" reinforce the image of her name. As the moon is the symbol of night, so all Lord Peter's meetings with Dian are nocturnal. The moon also symbolizes mutability, because its appearance is continually changing. In her second appearance Dian's decline has already begun, as she stumbles among the briars of the woodland, and the brambles tear at her clothing. Dian does not see herself in negative terms, however. When Lord Peter chides her for being out for all she can get in her relationship with the murder victim, she retorts: "I'm terribly generous. I gave him everything he wanted. I'm like that when I'm fond of anybody." (Sayers, 1933, p. 157) In the same conversation, she tries to warn Harlequin against Milligan: "You'd better keep clear of him." (Ibid., p. 159) One of Lord Peter's three kisses at the end of this interview is given for her "disinterested effort to save [him]." (Ibid., p. 160) When he takes her home, she tells him, weeping, "I'm afraid of you. You aren't thinking about me at all." (Ibid., p. 161) This entirely accurate accusation reminds us that Dian herself is a victim.

Could Wimsey have saved her, had his attentions been meant rather than feigned? Would she have found him a worthy partner, one who could have given her a chance for renewal, the promise of the full moon? The writer cannot tell us. She has evoked this vivid image of squandered wealth, increasing helplessness, and waxing decadence, only to let her be crushed underfoot like a beautiful doomed moth. Dian has used her men and they her; Lord Peter is but the last man to approach her for his own needs rather than hers.

The exact meaning of Harlequin cannot be expressed entirely in words, but the visual elements of his mask can reveal something of that meaning. Harlequin originally embodied an old stereotype of a low city dweller, "glutinous, stupid, and lazy." (Beaumont, p. 46) But the developed figure is neither stupid nor lazy. The earliest picture of Harlequin, circa 1600, shows him in a cap with a rabbit's

scut attached. The scut, a short upraised tail, is shown by a fleeing rabbit or hare to its pursuer. Mentions of rabbits and hares occur in *Murder Must Advertise* when Cousin Bredon is said to be less rabbitily-looking than Lord Peter, and when Wimsey fakes his arrest by running "like a hare." The "racy, native humour" of Harlequin's character diminished in the nineteenth century, as he became the "artificial creature, recognizable by his costume alone," as seen in the illustration of the period. (Ibid., p. 62)

Despite the attenuation of the Harlequin figure in her own time, Miss Sayers incorporates his antique elements by referring to Pan. Thelma Niklaus expatiates upon Harlequin's mask, with its vivid impression of "sensuality and cunning, of diabolism and bestiality," (Niklaus, p. 33) and remarks upon "the assumption of masks at religious festivals, as when men covered their faces with vine leaves to honour the great god Pan." (Ibid., p. 36) In her impassioned book, *Harlequin Phoenix*, she describes her first encounter with an early Arlecchino mask: "this feral ancestor of the shining Harlequin for ever associated in my mind with the little black mask, the spangles, and the white frill." This is Lord Peter's Harlequin to the last detail.

A being who is at once "feral" and "shining" may be identified as Tricker, whom Jung describes as "God, man, and animal at once. He is both subhuman and super-

### ✿ Mythlore Art Portfolio ✿

Over the years *Mythlore* has published a large amount of highly praised fantasy artwork. Few people are inclined to cut up their issues of *Mythlore* in order to frame these pieces for their walls. Therefore, *Mythlore* has begun a series of portfolios reproducing various pieces on quality paper suitable for framing. A limited number of portfolios are now being offered containing copies signed and numbered by the artists.

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(Williams) by Sarah Beach (from *Mythlore* 39)

#### "Trothlight at Cerin Amroth"

(Tolkien) by Paula DiSante (from *Mythlore* 45)

#### "The Mistress of the Silver Moon"

(MacDonald) by Nancy-Lou Patterson

(from *Mythlore* 21)

#### "Till We Have Faces"

(Lewis) by Patrick Wynne (from *Mythlore* 39)

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human, a bestial and divine being.<sup>324</sup> Karl Kerényi calls him "an enemy of boundaries,"<sup>325</sup> and Alan Garner calls him "the shadow that shapes the light."<sup>326</sup> Trickster's character is the fullest embodiment of human ambivalence. Lord Peter continually crosses boundaries in *Murder Must Advertise*, managing at least three separate identities beyond his own. When he disguises himself, he dives downward into deep waters; he becomes a man-servant, a novice advertising copy-writer, a false copy-writer in a world based on falsehood. Harlequin represents an inferior and unconscious element in the human personality, which perverts and betrays the consciousness he appears to serve. Lord Peter's own character thus reveals odd, even sinister depths as Miss Sayers portrays him in his Harlequin role.

The plunging descent of Harlequin, glittering as he falls, suggests the saying of Jesus, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18) Satan is the name, which in Hebrew means "adversary," given to the agent of God who acts as tempter. In some terrible way, Lord Peter's Harlequin is the Tempter, even the Satan, who with brutal kisses and contemptuous banter lures Dian to reveal herself and die. Indeed, at one point she call him "You devil!" (Sayers, 1933, p. 160) The Harlequin figure here meets fully Jung's dictum that a true symbol will be ambivalent., Lord Peter by his falsity reveals the truth, and by his tricks triggers the punishment demanded by justice. There may be an implacable justice active here; there is very little mercy.

#### Endnotes

- Dorothy L. Sayers, *Murder Must Advertise* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1975 [1933]), p. 74.
- This simile may derive in part from Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899) with its echo of the lament of the Israelites against Moses in Exodus 16:31: "Why brought ye us from bondage, / Our loved Egyptian night?"
- Sayers (1933), p. 154.
- Mary Brian Durkin, OP, *Dorothy L. Sayers* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), p. 66.
- Sayers (1933), p. 160.
- Ibid.*, p. 163. Miss Sayers's use of the term "the hanged man" may merely refer to a man executed by the hangman, but it may refer to the Tarot card of that title, made famous by T.S. Eliot in "The Waste Land" (1920); that sinister card is a symbol of upheaval and change in occult meaning, and of betrayal in its Renaissance origins.
- Janet Hitchman, *Such a Strange Lady* (London: New English Library, 1975), pp. 105-106.
- Sayers (1933), p. 188.
- Ibid.*, p. 241. Lord Peter is quoting the line spoken by Prospero in *The Tempest* (Act IV, Scene I) "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with sleep." The passage is an example of the Petrine penchant for literary allusion and a witty simile for drugs, but may also be a reference to Prospero's meditation on the insubstantial pageant of life. In the same scene of the *The Tempest*, Ariel laments Prospero's "glittering apparel."
- Sayers (1933), p. 246.
- R.D. Stock and Barbara Stock, "The Agents of Evil and Justice in the Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers," *As Her Whimsy Took Her*, Margaret P. Hannay, editor (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1979), p. 19.
- Winifred Smith, *The Commedia Dell' Arte* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1964 [1912]), p. 3.
- Giacomo Oraglia, *The Commedia dell' Arte* (London: Methuen, 1968 [1961]), p. 1.
- David Madden, *Harlequin's Stick - Charlie's Cane* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1975), p. 9.
- The Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Cantica I Hell*, translated by Dorothy L. Sayers (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949), Canto XXI, line 118, "Stand forward! I haeklespur and I helikin there!" and Canto XXII, line 112, "Here Helikin got completely out of hand."
- George Speight, "The Pantomime Tradition," *The Illustrated Lond News* (Christmas Number, 1975), p. 9.
- Barbara Reynolds, "G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers," *The Chester Review* (May 1984), Vol. X, No. 2, p. 151.
- G.K. Chesterton, "The Flying Stars," *The Innocence of Father Brown* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950 [1911]), p. 83.
- C.G. Jung, "The Philosophical Tree," *Alchemical Studies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 261.
- Thelma Niklaus, *Harlequin Phoenix* (London: The Bodley Head, 1956), p. 158.
- Cyril W. Beaumont, *The History of Harlequin* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1967 [1926]), p. 111.
- C.G. Jung, *Aion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 112.
- Sayers (1933), p. 240. St. Peter is Lord Peter's patron saint, and a fellow fisherman.
- Dorothy L. Sayers, "Gaudy Night," *Title to Fame*, Denys Kilham Roberts, editor (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1937), p. 77.
- Nancy Blue Wynne, *An Agatha Christie Chronology* (New York: Ace Books, 1976), p. 187. The story was first published in *The Under Dog* (1952) and most recently in *Poirot's Early Cases* (1974).
- Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1978 [1977]), p. 447.
- Agatha Christie, "The Affair at the Victory Ball," *Poirot's Early Cases* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1979 [1974]), p. 9.
- Dorothy L. Sayers, *Lord Peter Views the Body* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970 [1928]), p. 308.
- Dorothy L. Sayers, *Hangman's Holiday* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971 [1933]), p. 72-73.
- David Mayer III, *Harlequin in His Element: The English Pantomime, 1806-1836* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 5.
- Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1977 [1928]), p. 8.
- C.G. Jung, "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," Paul Radin, *The Trickster* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 203.
- Karl Kerényi, "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology," Radin (1972), p. 188.
- Alan Garner, *The Guizer* (London: Fontana Lions, 1975), p. 1.

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