

Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)

"To detective-story addicts. . . I say, Please do not write me any more letters telling me that I have not read the right books. And to [those who] have thanked me for helping them to liberate themselves from a habit which they recognized as wasteful of time and degrading to the intelligence but into which they had been bullied by convention and the portentously invoked examples of [great writers]. . . I say: Friends, we represent a minority, but Literature is on our side. With so many fine books to be read, so much to be studied or known, there is no need to bore ourselves with this rubbish. And with the paper shortage pressing on all publication and many first-rate writers forced out of print, we shall do well to discourage the squandering of this paper which might be put to better use."

- Edmund Wilson, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" [1945]

"For me, as for many others, the reading of detective stories is an addiction like tobacco or alcohol. The symptoms of this are: first, the intensity of the craving - if I have any work to do, I must be careful not to get hold of a detective story for, once I begin one, I cannot work or sleep till I have finished it. Secondly, its specificity. The story must conform to certain formulas. I find it very difficult, for example, to read one that is not set in rural England. And thirdly, its immediacy. I will forget the story as soon as I have finished it, and have no wish to read it again. If, as sometimes happens, I start reading one and find after a few pages that I have read it before, I cannot go on."

- W. H. Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage" [1954]

"To PUNKIE, who likes an orthodox detective story, murder, inquest, and suspicion falling on every one in turn!"

- Agatha Christie, dedication to
The Murder of Roger Ackroyd