**Gilbert, Anthony (1899-1973)**

by Kevin Hart

Photograph from Stanley Kunitz and John Wakeman’s *World Authors, 1950-1970* (1975).

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Anthony Gilbert was the pseudonym of the British novelist Lucy Beatrice Malleson, who also published as Keith J. Kilmeny, Sylvia Denys Hooke, Anne Meredith, and Lucy Egerton. Born in Upper Norwood, a suburb south of London, Malleson attended St. Paul’s Girls’ School in Hammersmith until age fifteen. Shortly after World War I began, Malleson was forced to leave school when her scholarship was not renewed and her family could not afford tuition. During the war years, she worked as a typist for The Red Cross and for government offices, and worked in secretarial positions associated with the National Health Ministry, the British Medical Association, and the Coal Association. During this period, she published verses with *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, *Punch* and other literary weeklies, but it was as a mystery novelist under the Gilbert pseudonym that Malleson reached her widest audience.

Inducted into the Detective Club under its original president G. K. Chesteron, Malleson was most well-known as a crime and detective novelist whose fiction was suspenseful and contained strong characterization and ingenious plots. Her popularity began with her first pseudonymous novel by Anthony Gilbert. A locked-room mystery, *The Tragedy at Freyne* (1927) introduced detective Scott Egerton, who would feature in ten Gilbert novels.

The character that many consider Malleson’s most magnetic and original detective would not appear until *Murder by Experts* (1936). This was the Cockney, beer-drinking lawyer and charismatic street detective Arthur Crook. As his name suggests, Crook’s methods of detection are not always strictly lawful. More a man of the pub than a man of the bar, he defends his clients (whose innocence is a foregone conclusion) by taking the investigation into his own hands and identifying the actual culprit. Popular with readers, Crook appears often in Malleson’s Gilbert novels from 1936 on.

A prolific writer, Malleson produced nearly one hundred novels during her more than fifty-year career. She used the Gilbert pseudonym for more than half of these novels, believing that some readers were not ready to accept a female writer of crime fiction. Malleson’s second most common pseudonym was Anne Meredith, which she reserved for what she considered her better quality crime and straight fiction, including her autobiography *Three-A-Penny* (1940).

**Selected Works as “Anthony Gilbert” and “Anne Meredith”**

**As "Anthony Gilbert":**

*Tragedy at Freyne* (London: Collins, 1927; New York: Dial, 1927).

*Murder of Mrs. Davenport* (London: Collins, 1928; New York: Dial/Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1928).

*The Case Against Andrew Fane* (London: Collins, 1931; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931).

*The Man in Button Boots* (London: Collins, 1934; New York: Holt, 1935).

*Murder by Experts* (London: Collins, 1936; New York: Dial, 1937).

*Something Nasty in the Woodshed* (London: Collins, 1942); republished as *Mystery in the Woodshed* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1942).

*The Case of the Tea-Cosy's Aunt* (London: Collins, 1942); republished as *Death in the Blackout* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1943).

*The Mouse Who Wouldn't Play Ball* (London: Collins, 1943); republished as *Thirty Days to Live* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1944).

*He Came by Night* (London: Collins, 1944); republished as *Death at the Door* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1945).

*The Scarlet Button* (London: Collins, 1944; New York: Barnes, 1945); republished as *Murder is Cheap* (New York: Bantam, 1949).

*Don't Open the Door!* (London: Collins, 1945); republished as *Death Lifts the Latch* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1946).

*A Nice Cup of Tea* (London: Collins, 1950); republished as *The Wrong Body* (New York: Random House, 1951).

*Is She Dead Too?* (London: Collins, 1955); republished as *A Question of Murder* (New York: Random House, 1955).

*And Death Came Too* (London: Collins, 1956; New York: Random House, 1956).

*Passenger to Nowhere* (London: Collins, 1965; New York: Random House, 1966).

*Death Wears a Mask,* (London: Collins, 1970); republished as *Mr. Crook Lifts the Mask* (New York: Random House, 1970).

*Tenant for the Tomb* (London: Collins, 1971; New York: Random House, 1971).

*Murder's a Waiting Game* (London: Collins, 1972; New York: Random House, 1972).

*A Nice Little Killing* (London: Collins, 1974; New York: Random House, 1974).

**As "Anne Meredith":**

*Portrait of a Murderer* (London: Gollancz, 1933; New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1934).

*The Coward* (London: Gollancz, 1934).

*The Gambler* (London: Gollancz, 1937).

*Three-a-Penny* (London: Faber & Faber, 1940).

*The Beautiful Miss Burroughes* (London: Faber & Faber, 1945).

*The Sisters* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948; New York: Random House, 1949).

*The Innocent Bride* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954).

*A Man in the Family* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959).

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Meredith, Anne (Lucy Beatrice Malleson). *Three-A-Penny*. London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1940. Print.

Pronzini, Bill and Marcia Muller. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado’s Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York, NY: Arbor House, 1986. Pages 297-298. Print.