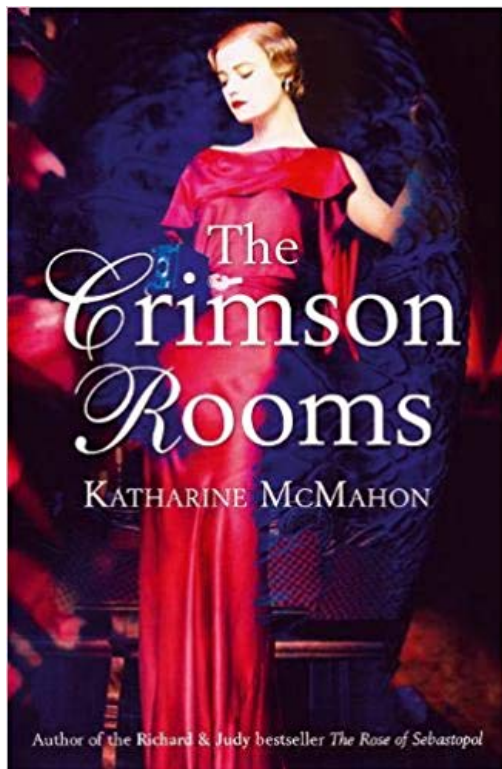


## The Crimson Rooms *by* Katharine McMahon



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## Reviews of the *The Crimson Rooms* *by* Katharine McMahon

Maucage

Though most of the action in "The Crimson Room" takes place in the mid twenties the real impetus comes from World War I. That war shaped the characters; warped them, saddened, bent or strengthened them. When her brother James is killed in the war Evelyn's family allows her to use the money set aside for James' education. She becomes one of the first female lawyers. Meredith, a young woman who'd met James while nursing near the front, appears on the family doorstep with a young boy who looks inexplicably like James. Evelyn, her mother, her grandmother, and her aunt are dismayed at meeting this unknown child but also charmed by his resemblance to their lost loved one. They let Meredith and her son move in with them. Evelyn has had few opportunities to find love because she's so bookish and isolated AND because she doesn't believe in her beauty. During one of Evelyn's first law cases, a child custody trial, a handsome fellow lawyer chases her down to talk and she's smitten though she soon finds out he's already engaged. It doesn't matter though. She's already lost her heart. Their paths cross again when Evelyn becomes involved with a murder trial and her not to be lover's upcoming father in law is the defendant's boss. There are some interesting twists and turns in "Crimson Room" and Evelyn is a delightful protagonist. On the dust jacket Mosse compares McMahon to Sarah Waters but I'd say she's more like Anne Perry, whom I love as well. Both Perry and McMahon are excellent at creating period settings and deft mysteries.

## Thundershaper

Katharine McMahon's novel, "The Crimson Rooms" is a splendid read, set in London in 1924, but harking back to the Great War and the insanity and intense heartbreak - both physical and emotional - that the war wrought on the survivors. Evelyn Gifford is a newly-minted lawyer - a rarity in England at the time - who has lost her much beloved younger brother James in France in 1917. The children of a lawyer, it was James - the son - and not Evelyn - the daughter - who was thought of as the lawyer-to-be. However, Evelyn trains for the law at Cambridge University's Girton College and returns to London to look for work. She lives with her widowed mother and grandmother and great aunt in a large house. It's a household brought low by the sadness of losing both James in battle and Evelyn's father from grief soon after his son's death.

Evelyn finds a job with a "progressive" law firm and is soon launched into two cases. One's a murder case and the other's a child-custody case. And into the saddened ladies-household arrives Meredith - a Canadian nurse - and her six year old son, who's James' illegitimate son by the nurse. In between the cases, a possible new love, and her newly-discovered nephew, Evelyn's life is in turmoil. Author McMahon makes the most of both her story and her characters. It's a wonderful read; totally original. I never knew where the story would lead, and ultimately, end. I hope this stand-alone novel will be the first in a series.

## Tcaruieb

The ending was disappointing. The characters paths ended abruptly, and with unanswered questions.

## Vetitic

This was on an online article as a book to be loved by those who watch Downton Abbey. The article missed the mark. I didn't find it all that interesting.

## Anazan

This book was captivating. I chose it because my maiden name is McMahon so it had to be good and it was. Although I haven't read any other books by Katherine McMahon, I am going to now. This historical fiction story has many levels. It is part mystery, part love story and takes place shortly after World War I. Very interesting and hard to put down. A great read!

## Qusserel

Stirling historical fiction from WW I period in England. Ties to our veterans experiences today strong women characters.

## Balladolbine

Post war England, with beginning of women's rights

Held your interest. Characters are real and development well done, good plot twist at the end. Nice for book clubs.

The Crimson Rooms is set in post World War I London, England in the year 1924. Evelyn Gifford is haunted by the death of her cherished brother James, who died in the Great War. Evelyn is stunned when a young woman named Meredith and her 6 year old son Edmund show up on the families doorstep. Meredith who is a nurse, claims that Edmund, conceived in a battlefield hospital, is the son of her brother James. The family take Meredith and Edmund in but they are still grief stricken from James death as well as the recent death of Evelyn's father.

Evelyn is 30 years old, unmarried and lives with her mother, grandmother and Aunt Prudence and supports her family. This is quite unusual as Evelyn is one of few female lawyers and is struggling in a field that is dominated by men and a society that is not accepting of female lawyers. Most women of this time do not attend college and have their own careers. They are to focus on finding a husband and starting a family.

Evelyn is soon swept up in two legal cases that effect her life in many ways. One case concerns a young mother whose children are taken away from her because she is poor and she cannot care for them. Evelyn learns about the plight of the poor in London and uncovers some unknown secrets about what happens to some of the children who are being taken care of by these charitable organizations. In another case, a man that is an acquaintance of her boss is charged with the murder of his wife but won't speak to anyone. Evelyn meets and falls for a lawyer that appears to show interest in her and the murder case she is working on.

Evelyn must deal with a shocking allegation that Meredith claims about her brother James. It shatters her perceptions of her brother and she uncovers the layers of deception within her own family. Meanwhile, Evelyn must continue to fight for recognition and respect in her role as a female lawyer while trying to help these two cases. Both cases end with drama and mystery with some unexpected twists at the end.

Ms. McMahon skillfully builds a story that is complex and layered with great detail. There is great depth to the story as McMahon builds strong characters and a complicated plot. At first, the story seems a bit mired in detail but I soon realized that the depth and detail was needed to weave the story that would unwind at the end. I enjoyed the historical aspects to the story which seemed to capture the spirit of this time period of London in the 1920's. There is murder mystery, courtroom dramas, social history and even a bit of love and romance mixed in. Highly recommended for those who enjoy historical fiction with a dash of mystery and romance worked in.

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