UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MISOGYNY AND MURDER: CRIME FICTION BY WOMEN FROM 1947-1959

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

BRITTNEY BROWN
Norman, Oklahoma
2022

MISOGYNY AND MURDER:
CRIME FICTION BY WOMEN FROM 1947-1959

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. James Zeigler, Chair

Dr. Ronald Schleifer

Dr. Daniela Garofalo

Dr. Rita Keresztesi

Dr. Julia Ehrhardt

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks are extended to my advisor Jim Zeigler, who read many drafts and gave lots of feedback, including hours of conversation, to help hone my argument. Additional thanks to my committee members, some of whom taught me in class before agreeing to go on this journey with me, and all of whom provided invaluable support.

My family has also supported me through the process of writing my "paper" even if they didn't always understand it. I couldn't have done it without the emotional and sometimes financial support from my parents, who taught me critical thinking and gave me the ability to pursue higher education. Macey inspired me to do this PhD in the first place by helping me figure out what I care most about in life and encouraging me to find a career doing that. Jeremy helped me to keep going through the bad times by sharing personal experiences and reading random things for me, and Brooke was also an inspiration by becoming the first Dr. Brown in the family. Emily, my constant grad school roommate, always asked me how I was doing and helped me with jokes and little notes. Chloe gave me a smile and a laugh when I was feeling down. A special shoutout to little Ellen for letting me hold her when I was feeling especially stressed near the end. I love all of you and I wouldn't be anywhere at all without each of you.

Many thanks are due to Kalyn Prince for reading all manner of documents for me, listening to me complain for hours, and always being ready to crack a joke. I literally couldn't have done this without our alliance, and your friendship remains the biggest positive outcome of this degree. May we always stumble upon the proverbial perfect bar in Key West at 3:00 PM on a Wednesday where Ernest Hemingway used to drink with the wildest live band, the cheapest strongest drink in a souvenir cup, and bras and dollars stapled to the walls.

Finally I want to acknowledge Paul Rakowski for coming back into my life near the end of this process. Thank you for being the emotional and mental support I desperately needed, for reminding me of all the things in life that are more important, and for celebrating every little milestone with me. You've made it possible for me to pursue a career I'm passionate about. I couldn't be happier and more excited to spend the rest of my life with you. I love you with all of my heart.

ABSTRACT

This project demonstrates that American women authors from 1947-1959 repurposed the crime genre to critique and engage with misogyny and sexism of the day. Hardboiled crime fiction, which was at its peak popularity in midcentury America, is almost synonymous with a tough, hyper-masculine detective who solves crime through violence, kissing beautiful and marginally consenting women along the way. The women authors in my project subverted this masculinist genre during the late 1940s and 1950s, when the postwar reconversion of the economy reinstated sexist social values. My project recuperates novels by women that were popular with critics and readers at publication, but are largely overlooked now because scholarly examinations of crime fiction of this period are confined to novels written by men. I argue that three female crime authors each use a formal feature—perspective, free indirect discourse, and character—to subvert the genre and question and critique misogyny and sexism. These novels cumulatively point to the harm caused by larger patriarchal society that is specific to the time but also touch on broader, timeless harm caused by patriarchy. In Chapter One, I study how Dorothy B. Hughes critiques misogyny specific to the postwar period by limiting the narrative perspective to Dix Steele, who functions much like a classic hardboiled detective except he is a serial killer. The end of the novel demonstrates retroactively that women characters have used their insight into systemic sexism and misogyny to capture Dix, yet this was behind the scenes the entire time, much like the women who perform unpaid or underpaid and underappreciated work under a patriarchal system. In Chapter Two, I examine how Evelyn Piper's domestic crime novels protest the pathologization of unmarried and overindulging mothers in the 1950s, specifically through the use of free indirect discourse. Piper uses narration to make the reader complicit in a misogynistic view of mothers before condemning that view. In Chapter Three, I study how character identification functions in Patricia Highsmith's first novel, *Strangers On A Train*. Highsmith dispenses with the heavy focus on plot and empirical logic that is so foundational to the crime genre and makes readers identify with a morally ambiguous character. This raises questions about queerness and morality in the heteronormativity-obsessed 1950s.

Each chapter includes study of a *film noir* adaptation of these novels. Chapter One demonstrates how Dorothy B. Hughes's serial killer, played by Humphrey Bogart in the film adaptation, becomes a sympathetic hero falsely accused of murder by the women around him. In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how Otto Preminger's adaptation of Evelyn Piper's work completely removes her critique of the pathologization of mothers by diminishing the mother character and focusing on the men around her. In Chapter Three, I examine Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation of *Strangers On A Train*, which follows a more conventional 1950s understanding of queerness than the novel and encourages the audience to identify with its solidly heterosexual and morally upstanding character. All of these films nullify the questions and critiques the women authors raise about sexism and misogyny by changing key plot and character elements to fit the stories into the masculinist *film noir* genre.

My conclusion jumps to the contemporary era, where crime fiction often features women detectives who work for pay but still function in the same way as their male counterparts by solving crimes alone. However, Tana French's bestselling series *Dublin Murder Squad* is not centered around a single detective. Rather, each of French's novels has a new protagonist who was a minor character from a previous novel and each new perspective shows flaws with the previous novel's perspective. I argue that this formal innovation challenges the genre's tradition of a masculinist lone intelligence, showing that women crime authors continue to innovate through formal features.

INTRODUCTION

"I find the public passion for justice quite boring and artificial, for neither life nor nature cares if justice is ever done or not. The public wants to see the law triumph, or at least the general public does, though at the same time the public likes brutality. The brutality must be on the right side, however. Sleuth-heroes can be brutal, sexually unscrupulous, kickers of women, and still be popular heroes, because they are chasing something worse than themselves, presumably."
-Patricia Highsmith, *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, 56

Crime fiction written by women in America from 1947-1959 provides a window into how women engaged in feminist critique just before the Second Wave feminist movement exploded in the 1960s. In late nineteenth to early twentieth century America, most of the women who held paying jobs outside the home were single, as married women were often expected to work in the home and were often not hired by many firms (Coontz 157). In this family wage system, wives kept their houses so their husbands could bring home money, a "self-reinforcing" and pervasive system in American society (MacLean 238). However, World War II changed the economy and the world of work, and women entered the job force in droves. Shortly thereafter, as soldiers came home from World War II, the G.I. Bill and public rhetoric encouraged women to leave the workforce and go back home. Women lost many economic and social opportunities the war had afforded them, yet both married and single women continued to enter the work force (MacLean 246), even as government and social entities preached that being a housewife was the most desirable position for a woman (Cohen 136). Simultaneously, women received pressure to contribute to society by participating in the consumer economy, which often meant they had to add to their household income (Weiner 89). While the economy and the ways families worked were changing, women's work was usually linked to their current or future roles in the heterosexual nuclear family. Even if women worked outside the home, their work still revolved around their families, as demonstrated in the 1955 United States Department of Labor conference titled "The Effective Use of Womanpower," which discussed how best to support and utilize women in the workforce. Conference speakers advocated for equal treatment of women at work, and Alice K. Leopold, Assistant to the Secretary of Labor for Women's Affairs, explained in her opening remarks that American families were changing because young married couples often both worked outside the home "to maintain a decent standard of living or to permit the husband to finish an education interrupted by military service" (2). Leopold's remarks in a forum ostensibly dedicated to equality demonstrate that although women had gained more of a presence in the workplace by 1955 than they had at the turn of the century, their lives still were expected to revolve around men and families.

The midcentury period in America was marked by a return to traditional family values, at least on the surface. As Elaine Tyler May argues in her book *Homeward Bound*, many Americans believed these values were the solution to postwar fears of Communism, atomic energy, changing gender roles, and the Depression. A powerful combination of political, social, and religious rhetoric also emphasized the importance of such values. In 1956, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover opened his speech to the National Council of Catholic Women by saying he was pleased to address "this outstanding group of 'career' women….I say 'career' women because I feel there are no careers so important as those of homemaker and mother" (1). Hoover tells the women that while church membership is on the rise, crime is too, costing everyone money and safety, and that Communism is also threatening America. These women can turn back the tide in their homes by following “the Golden Rule” and giving a child “the firm moral backing…that a good Christian home affords” (2). His address is notable for its intersection of Christianity, government, capitalism, and gender roles. He speaks with the assumption that these women hold the primary power in their homes to teach and shape their children alongside their husband, and that this is their entire career and life. Hoover acknowledges the “age of materialism” he and the audience live in, but rather than decry this as antithetical to Christian values, he uses it as evidence for why his audience should be particularly worried that crime costs every household $467 a year (1). So housewives had double motivation to raise their children right: their safety and their pocketbooks. Hoover’s opinion of the importance of a housewife’s job is balanced with the hint that she is still not as important as the men who work outside the home, since the word “career” was put in quotes in the printed transcript of his address in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, as if this was a necessary caveat for those who would read it. Printing the address for distribution among state and local law officers, alongside lists of America’s most wanted criminals and other helpful articles, demonstrates how important these ideas were. Even if the recipients of the printed address weren’t female or Catholic, Hoover deemed his message worth reading, and it is an example of the hegemonic assumptions and values encouraged by powerful entities like government and religion. The realities of higher marriage and birth rates, paired with social and political rhetoric that encouraged and reinforced it as the norm, created the stereotypical 1950s housewife.

The glamorization of and priority given to this type of woman elided increasing numbers of married women who did not have the privilege or desire to stay home, along with single women, women of color, and others who did not fit heteronormative standards of the day. This often, if not always, demonstrated the forms of classism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia that were rampant in midcentury America. Additionally, even for those who fit the mold of the suburban housewife, the blissful life represented in magazines or television was not always—perhaps not even often—the reality. Postwar, mothers faced social pressure to conform to standards of being a good mother specific to the time. In addition to moral responsibilities outlined by Hoover, mothers needed to excel at practical jobs. Advertisements for modern technologies for cooking and cleaning such as improved dishwashers and refrigerators told women these devices would make them better mothers by giving them more time to spend with their children (Clark 215). However, these technologies also increased the amount of tasks women felt they should complete, as *New York Times* Parent and Child Editor Dorothy Barclay argued in 1953. She claimed many women volunteered and became politically active during the war and wanted to continue, while parent education and mental health advocates encouraged families to spend more time together, and all this combined with advertising telling moms "to do more, buy more, go more places" (SM32). This pulled women in many different directions. Barclay argued if a mother feels "constantly overworked, harried, guilty over tasks undone, she can hardly expect her daughter to be anxious to climb on the same merry-go-round" (SM32). Her solution was for women to stop feeling this way—how is unclear—but if the "merry-go-round" didn't stop, the children of these housewives may not even want families of their own. This idea, of course, was just added emotional pressure on top of everything Barclay had already noted. The recipe for a “good mother” was incredibly complex and layered, made all the more so by the social climate of midcentury America.

All these pressures created a burden that was gendered. Midcentury America valorized heterosexual white mothers of a certain social class while other women did not quite measure up. The difficulties women experienced in midcentury America are defined as sexism because if women get married, have children, and stay at home, where their work is undervalued, this helps prop up the system of patriarchy where men are superior. These specific conditions prompted Betty Friedan to publish *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, where she describes women’s struggles as the “problem that has no name” (63). Friedan describes how, in the postwar period, “each suburban wife struggled…alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—'Is this all?’” (57). Friedan proposed that women seek fulfillment outside the home to solve this problem. While Friedan articulated problems related to midcentury sexism to the broader culture and played an important part in the Second Wave feminist movement, she also contributed to the devaluing of women in “traditional, gender-specific roles” like housewives and mothers (Plant 16). In 1969, Kate Millett articulated a more nuanced picture of the patriarchal nature of the traditional American family. Millett explained the family is the greatest enforcer of the patriarchy, and through it women are kept in subjugation by having to perform “the most routine or strenuous tasks” with no pay, even in otherwise progressive countries (39). Since this work is not rewarded monetarily, it is not valuable in a capitalist society. Therefore, according to feminist thinkers who experienced midcentury America, women struggled under the heterosexual family. However, these feminist thinkers did not come along until the 1960s.

If a woman stepped out of the specific boundaries set for her in midcentury America, misogyny could rear its head to put her back in her place. For example, if a woman did not spend her life teaching her children Christian capitalist values, government entities told her that society will fall apart because of her. Or, if a mother was stressed and unhappy, experts warned that she must fix herself or her family will be ruined, and her daughters may not even want to have children themselves, robbing her of grandchildren and making her responsible for ending procreation in general (Barclay SM32). While heterosexual white women faced the impossible, these pressures also assumed that heteronormativity was the standard, particularly heading into the Cold War period. There was little room for alternative lifestyles, and I argue that women interrogated this reality in a surprising venue—the hardboiled crime novel.

Definition of Sexism and Misogyny

Feminist critics throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have sought to define patriarchy and explain how it is upheld through sexism and misogyny. Misogyny is broadly understood as systemic hatred of women that is the backbone of everything from a dearth of complex female characters on television to physical violence against women in real life. However, in common parlance, “misogyny” has largely become conflated with the term “sexism.” For this project, I separate and define the two terms, locating them under the umbrella of “patriarchy,” with the help of several feminist thinkers. Millett was concerned was with what she called patriarchy, the socially constructed system of society where men have power over women. Millett argues classic gender roles and traits are assumed to be biological and wield power over everyone in the system of patriarchy, but such roles and traits are arbitrary (27, 32). On the heels of Millett’s radical book, Andrea Dworkin published *Women Hating* in 1974, followed by other books and essays into the 2010s, where she identifies society’s aggressive hatred of and posturing against women. She argues in part that sexism has created a system that promotes the subjugation of women, which she locates primarily in pornography and sex (*Intercourse* 154).

Therefore Millett establishes the definition of patriarchy as a broad system and Dworkin furthers theories on how it subjugates and harms women and introduces the term “sexism.” Contemporary philosopher Kate Manne provides clarification on the terms “sexism” and “misogyny.” Manne distinguishes between sexism and misogyny by proposing sexism is “the branch of patriarchal ideology that justifies and rationalizes a patriarchal social order, and misogyny as the system that polices and enforces its governing norms and expectations. So sexism is scientific; misogyny is moralistic” (20). There is not a precise one-to-one correlation between Dworkin’s sexism and Manne’s misogyny. Dworkin is more concerned with articulating how sexism affects women, while Manne focuses on the things men do that result in misogyny. Drawing upon these women’s work, I define sexism as the result of patriarchal society which prefers and values men over women, and misogyny as the way sexism is enforced[1]. Sexism is passive and subtle, while misogyny is overt and can even be violent. The novels in this project are examples of how women living in patriarchal society identified and critiqued misogyny and sexism during a period that lacked mainstream feminist voices.

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[1] The subjugation of women is not universal due to race, class, and gender identity. My definition of misogyny can be applied to women broadly, but there are different degrees of oppression, and it is important

The Hardboiled Crime Fiction Genre

Hardboiled crime novels emerge immediately after the "golden age" of detective fiction during the 1920s and '30s, when authors like Agatha Christie wrote cozy whodunits featuring nosy spinsters and quirky French detectives. Many of the golden age authors worked out of the United Kingdom with a few notable American exceptions, such as Ellery Queen and S.S. Van Dine. As these golden age novels began to fade in popularity in the 1930s, hardboiled American crime fiction began to rise with pulp magazines such as *Black Mask* that reached a large readership, mostly of working-class men. Mysteries in pulp magazines like *Black Mask* gave way to paperback and then hardback hardboiled crime fiction. They differ from other types of mystery novels in content, structure, and social topics addressed. Tzvetan Todorov's typology of detective fiction uses Russian formalist ideas of *fabula* and *syuzhet* to explain that there are two stories within detective fiction: "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" (44). These two stories help categorize detective fiction into three categories—the whodunit, the thriller, and the suspense novel—by locating when the crime and investigation occur in the pages of the

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to acknowledge those degrees. For example, when studying literature written by middle- to upper-class white women in the mid-twentieth century, ideas presented by Millett, Dworkin, and Manne are relevant, but these are all theories by white women. Women of color such as Hortense Spillers articulate ideas about gender and oppression that explain how patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny function for women who are not white. This project studies women authors who are white, writing about white people, but theirs is not the only or even the most important perspective in midcentury America. While I recuperate some novels that have been overlooked, further study of novels by women of color and people of other genders is needed to gain a more complete picture of how people critiqued misogyny in midcentury America.

book. Most of the novels in this project fall into the thriller or suspense category, in which the crime happens along with the investigation and action, as opposed to the golden-age-style whodunit. In the whodunit, the crime occurs offstage, and the detective is in no danger as he investigates because the crime has already happened. In a suspense novel, the investigation incurs danger and fresh crime, and the detective is always in danger. Readers are "interested not only by what has happened but also by what will happen next" (Todorov 50) and the main characters "constantly risk their lives" (51). Often, the crime itself is less important than the action, as in Raymond Chandler's classic hardboiled novel *The Big Sleep* (1939), which focuses on the adventures of the detective in such a convoluted plot that Chandler later confessed he didn't know who killed the chauffer in the novel (Smith 81). However, that kind of detail doesn't matter because crime is merely a plot device to deliver heart-pounding thrills to readers of suspense. A suspense's emphasis is not on the cerebral exploits of a character like Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, but on whether the protagonist—who may or may not be a detective—will survive. Similarly, crime and action are occurring simultaneously in a thriller, keeping the focus on whether the characters will survive rather than on the crime itself.

The genre continued to evolve into the 1950s but stayed close to its original form in content, theme, and structure. Male-authored hardboiled crime fiction stages concerns of liberalism, modernity, and masculinity for their readers, and David Schmid argues that these hardboiled novels offer "imaginative resolutions to some of the most perplexing and threatening problems of modernity in general and of manhood in particular" (111). In post-World War II society, which coincided with the rise of the paperback novel and the death of pulp magazines, many hardboiled crime novels “claimed to speak from the perspective of the losers and Mr. Nobodies of the world” (McCann 208). As Sean McCann argues in his book *Gumshoe America*, the political and social environment of midcentury America combined with the shifting literary marketplace[2] caused successful hard-boiled authors to have what McCann says were “grandiose literary visions [that] in turn mirrored the major political aspirations of the New Deal era” (36). Since, he argues, these authors knew these grandiose visions would likely fail, “hard-boiled crime fiction was uniquely positioned to bring out the contradictions and ironies that dogged the period’s reconstruction of liberalism” (36).

In Raymond Chandler’s 1950 essay “The Simple Art of Murder,” he claims that the hardboiled detective is “a man of honor” and “a relatively poor man…a common man” who can fight against corruption readers see every day and with whom readers can identify (18). This detective, who swings between individual agency and collective affiliation from author to author—and sometimes, from scene to scene within the same book—is the primary method the most popular hardboiled authors had for engaging with liberalism. Mickey Spillane’s detective Mike Hammer appears in an extremely lucrative series of novels—17 million paperbacks sold between 1947 and 1953—and Hammer “personifies the rejection of liberalism” (Whitfield 35, 36). The Hammer novel *One Lonely Night* (1951), which alone sold 3 million copies, featured Hammer trying to use sex to turn a woman from Communism as he fought a Communist psychopath—implying that only a crazy person would be a Communist. Political solutions like the New Deal were not enough to fight Communism; only "violent prophylaxis" (Whitfield 36) dispensed by a masculine hero could do the job.

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[2] The transition from pulp magazines to hardbacks, along with the subsequent emergence of paperback books, and its impact on hard-boiled crime fiction has been documented by McCann in *Gumshoe America*, as well as Erin Smith in *Hard-Boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines*. All the novels in this project were originally published in hardback by large publishing houses after the heyday of pulps, and none of the authors wrote for pulp magazines. While the literary marketplace impacted the genre as a whole, it is not specifically relevant to my project.

Mike Hammer stories are old-fashioned wish fulfillment, with heroes who are simultaneously selfish and selfless, representing an idea of escape from the increasingly impersonal world. These heroes represent the kind of masculinity that could deal with the alienation of modernity, represented most clearly by cities. Urban life, which expanded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with industrialization (Hirschman and Mogford 897), created the perfect environment for a crime novel. People in ever-expanding cities were confronted with the possibility that they could encounter strangers constantly, increasing the likelihood for crime (Schmid 97). A fictional detective who can read people and piece together their motives based on clues is a comforting solution to this reality, but in the world of hardboiled fiction, crime was not an aberration in a liberal society that could be corrected by an authority. It was pervasive, and even part of the systems of authority that were supposed to keep society safe, and a specifically masculine answer to the failures of liberalism and the scary aspects of modernity. Hardboiled heroes fought against systems that kept the little people down with varying success, traversing dark cities alone, working for the money in a nostalgic vision of work and manhood (Smith 98).

All of this is valuable but soundly male in perspective, and midcentury crime novels by women are concerned with different topics and issues. They reject or subvert the standard plot of a masculine detective righting the country's wrongs, casting the sexist and misogynistic aspects of that standard plot into relief. Crime novels by women refuse masculinist solutions and in fact highlight problems with masculinity. Scholars have primarily focused on male-authored hardboiled crime fiction or golden age detective fiction, which is where my project seeks to intervene in an effort to consider more fully how popular fiction engaged with postwar society—specifically, in the critique of misogyny present in midcentury America. Women authors of hardboiled fiction focus on, among other things: women's careers and unpaid work; blaming mothers for inflicting ills upon society by not raising their children right; and the position of queer people in American society. This project examines how popular literature prior to the resurgent feminism of the Second Wave provided stories, complaints, vocabulary, and inspiration for women who harbored ideas of liberty and equality during the postwar expansion of consumerism. These novels alternately engage with sexism and misogyny and cumulatively point to the harm caused by larger patriarchal society that is specific to the time but also touches on broader harm caused by patriarchy. For example, Dorothy B. Hughes's serial killer Dix Steele moves through Los Angeles to kill women who represent his perception of society's ills. This plot is reminiscent of Mike Hammer moving through New York City in a violent fight against the societal ill of Communism, but Dix's misogynistic behavior and his eventual capture—brought about by an intelligent woman named Sylvia—put a feminist spin on the classic hardboiled tropes. Sometimes crime novels by women function primarily as a critique, and sometimes they suggest a better way to live and move through the world. The adaptation of these novels into film always serves to emphasize both the feminist nature of these novels, which is elided in the film versions.

The Film Noir Genre

The changes made to plot and character when these novels are adapted into the film medium for an even wider audience further emphasize how important these women's perspectives are in the genre. The film version of *In A Lonely Place*, for example, changes Dix into a tragic hero who is wronged by the women around him. Hardboiled male detectives like Philip Marlowe or Mike Hammer, made famous by authors Raymond Chandler and Mickey Spillane, remain ubiquitous in the public imagination, particularly through the enduring popularity of the *film noir* genre, where famous actors like Humphrey Bogart and other leading men glamorized the tough-talking detectives. From *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) to *Touch of Evil* (1958), based on novels written by Dashiell Hammett and "Whit Masterson" respectively, films noir were relatively cheap and easy to produce with a high chance of box office success. The heyday of film noir coincided with World War II until roughly 1960. As French film critics Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton famously argued in their 1955 essay that popularized the term "film noir," these films both captured and caused further unease in American society, giving viewers "a shared feeling of anguish or insecurity" (13) because of the presence of crime, high-contrast visuals, and general moral ambivalence. Film noir is a difficult genre to define, with some ambiguity on whether it can be considered a genuine genre at all, as Elizabeth Cowie argues when she points out there is no "true" example of a film noir, but it is "nevertheless discerned across a series of films" (121). Many critics point to a set of characteristics that is fairly consistent across films noir and can help determine whether a film belongs in the genre: barely lit, black-and-white cityscapes; crime and punishment; a jaded and cynical hero; and the femme fatale. Many critics have argued that both films noir and crime novels engaged with this atmosphere.

The femme fatale is one of the most ubiquitous tropes to come out of this genre. In the 1946 essay that first coined the phrase "film noir," Nino Frank notes that many of these films end in "the cruelest way in the world with the heroines paying full price," calling the treatment of women in film noir "harsh and misogynistic" (17). Stemming from post-war anxieties about gender and sexuality, the femme fatale is "[f]rustrated and guilty, half man-eater, half man-eaten, blasé and cornered," (Borde and Chaumeton 9). She always holds power over the male hero, and therefore "only actual or symbolic destruction is an effective control" for her (Place 63). Women in these films promise either domestic bliss or illicit sexuality, but the hero never receives either promise in the end. These women are shallow characters and have little motivation outside of the men they are involved with. It is easy for the audience to see the femme fatale is fooling the hero, but the deceit never goes deeper than that, and she "remains a two-dimensional figure with no hidden sides; the deception is only up front" (Copjec 198). If female authors of hardboiled crime fiction use a masculinist genre to critique misogyny, these critiques are always lost in the film adaptations of their work because of film noir's treatment of gender. Big and small plot points are changed and characters are edited to fit the masculinist genre film noir genre. Both the novels and the films contain themes that related to the contemporary culture, but the themes and ideas in the two mediums are different, even if the basic storyline remains the same from the page to the screen.

Chapter Summaries

My project establishes and explores a taxonomy of misogyny and each chapter will examine how crime novels written by women engaged with different types of misogyny. In Chapter One, entitled "Murderous Men: *In A Lonely Place* (1947) by Dorothy B. Hughes", I explore sexist assumptions about women's inability to work outside the home as well as expectations for women to perform unpaid and unappreciated work. The novel critiques misogyny and sexism specific to the postwar period by limiting the narrative perspective to Dix Steele, a veteran turned serial killer. This narrative distracts the reader from the women who are figuring out the protagonist is a murderer under his nose because the narrative is filtered through his inaccurate thoughts and impressions about other characters and events. It also demonstrates how Dix blames his actions on the unfairness of life, cast into relief by his time as a soldier in World War II, when he felt unhindered by his social class. He needs the purchasing power and happy nuclear family he sees around him, but he does not want to work for it, and when he is angered by all this unfairness, he lashes out. However, the novel reveals his actions are not due to postwar culture or his veteran status, but to his extreme misogyny. Finally, the end of the novel demonstrates retrospectively that the women have used their insight into systemic sexism and misogyny to capture Dix, yet this was behind the scenes the entire time. In this way, the female characters resemble the women who perform unpaid or underpaid and underappreciated work under a patriarchal system. As a result, the novel creates a picture and critique of misogyny that is particular to the postwar period and instructive about how patriarchal sexism is a form of ignorance. The narrator, Dix Steele, does not realize that women have the intelligence to investigate him. The film adaptation of *In A Lonely Place*, starring Humphrey Bogart, turns Dix Steele into a screenwriter who is baselessly accused of being a serial killer by the suspicious women around him.

Chapter Two, "Hysterical Housewives: *The Innocent* (1949) and *Bunny Lake is Missing* (1957) by Evelyn Piper," explores the absurdity of momism, a common belief that American women had defective or neurotic personalities and therefore smothered their children with pathological love that damaged the masculinity of their sons. The female protagonists of both novels represent overindulging and unmarried mothers. Momism dictates that these types of mothers in particular were pathological. The novels use free indirect discourse to demonstrate the most extreme and absurd logic of momism. The narratives first make the reader complicit in a misogynistic view of mothers and then turn to condemn that view. In *The Innocent*, a mother trapped in her apartment with a sickly newborn must also tend to her childlike husband, who ultimately kills the baby and blames it on her. She agrees with his logic because momism dictates that she overindulges both child and husband, but the reader sees the absurdity of this logic laid out in the narrative. *Bunny Lake is Missing* follows an unmarried mother frantically searching for her child, who was kidnapped from day care. According to momism, this mother is pathological because she chose to have and raise a child alone, and the novel plays into these assumptions to discredit her and question the existence of her child altogether. However, when she is vindicated and the child is found, the reader must confront the misogyny behind the assumption that she is crazy. Read together, both novels create a picture of how crime fiction protested the pathologization of mothers in the 1950s by demonstrating the ludicrousness of momism. Additionally, the Otto Preminger adaptation of *Bunny Lake is Missing* relegates the mother character to a more helpless position, at the mercy of the men around her. Any references to momism are also removed as it focuses in on a new character, her brother, who is insane and the villain.

Chapter 3, “Quiet Queerness: *Strangers On A Train* (1950) written by Patricia Highsmith and *Strangers On A Train* (1951) directed by Alfred Hitchcock,” examines masculinity along with the fact that queer identity and orientation were commonly believed to be mental illness or even a Communist threat in the 1950s. Highsmith’s novel dispenses with the heavy focus on plot and empirical logic that is so foundational to the crime genre and instead focuses on characters, most of whom are immoral or amoral men. *Strangers* encourages the reader to identify with Guy, the solidly heterosexual and good character, in the beginning, only to then watch him lose his moral compass and commit murder. By the end, readers don’t sympathize with or even fully understand him, and there are enough questions surrounding his relationship with Bruno that his heterosexuality might be uncertain. The novel does not suggest solutions to the misogyny problem of the criminalization of queerness in midcentury America, but when read alongside Hitchcock’s film adaptation, the novel’s ambiguity becomes a rejection of the structures of heteronormativity. The film uses a more conventional 1950s understanding of queerness, making Guy good and solidly heterosexual and conventionally masculine all along. Guy resists a more overtly gay Bruno’s machinations until justice is served, and the viewer who identifies with Guy is rewarded with confirmation that they are good like Guy. As critics observe, it is difficult if not impossible to nail Highsmith down on the topic of midcentury queerness and misogyny, but a study of character in *Strangers On A Train* helps illuminate her engagement with the topic.

The conclusion, “Emotional Endings: *In the Woods* (2007) and *The Likeness* (2008) written by Tana French and *Dublin Murders* (2019) created by Sarah Phelps,” is a brief examination of an innovative female crime author in the contemporary era. The midcentury crime novels in this project feature women who solve crimes even if they aren’t paid detectives, and the crime genre has evolved from the hardboiled era. Professional female detectives are more common, often with feminist tendencies. Examples include Sue Grafton’s (1980-present) alphabet mysteries featuring hardboiled detective Kinsey Milhone; Sara Paretsky’s novels about private investigator V. I. Warshawski (1982-present); and Laurie R. King’s series featuring police detective Kate Martinelli (1993-present). However, these female detectives still exist within a genre that relies upon the loner detective and the sexist baggage that comes with that trope. This includes fighting for justice through cold rationality or violence along with the tendency to seek sex over meaningful relationships or to shun emotional entanglement altogether. But Tana French’s bestselling series *Dublin Murder Squad* is not centered around a single detective, as crime novels and series almost always are. Rather, each of French’s novels has a new protagonist who was a minor character that the reader met in a previous novel. In this way, the narratives retroactively expose the flaws and limitations of the protagonist’s perspective in the previous novel. For example, masculinist detective Rob narrates *In the Woods* (2007), where he ultimately fails to bring the criminal to justice and loses his job. His partner Cassie narrates *The Likeness* (2008), and she successfully solves her own case and controls the investigation until the end. She was a minor character in *In the Woods*, and this reveals just how pervasive and tragic his sexism was in the previous novel. Their differing successes and perspectives illustrate that the trope of the macho, loner detective is not enough to restore order in French's story world. Additionally, the television adaptation removes French's formal innovation that goes against the precedent of the solitary genius, resulting in a narrative that is merely another British crime procedural with a tragic ending rather than an original example of the genre.

Each novel I analyze relies upon an innovative use of a formal technique—narration, free indirect discourse, and character—to illuminate and critique misogyny problems. Crime fiction takes place in a simultaneously fantastic and realistic world of crime, horror, and murder. This heightened environment allows the novels in my project to engage with and teach their readers about specific misogyny and sexism problems in midcentury America. Sometimes, as when the reader is limited to the perspective of a misogynistic character, the reader is made complicit in the problem before exposing it for what it is. My project not only recuperates these novels and provides a window into how crime novels engaged with feminism just before the Second Wave; it also demonstrates how women can use and subvert literature to promote positive social change. Even in a period of time where feminist voices were less prominent, especially compared to the 1960s, women still spoke up and other women were able to listen, often in the most unlikely of places, like crime fiction.

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CHAPTER ONE

Murderous Men: *In A Lonely Place* (1947) written by Dorothy B. Hughes and *In A Lonely Place* (1950) directed by Nicholas Ray

"The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels, in which a screen star can be the finger man for a mob, and the nice man down the hall is a boss of the numbers racket….It is not a fragrant world, but it is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it."
-Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder*, 17

In this chapter, I examine Dorothy B. Hughes's 1947 novel *In A Lonely Place* along with its 1950 adaptation, directed by Nicholas Ray. Hughes was a prolific crime writer in midcentury America, whose novels were often adapted into famous films, yet she has been mostly forgotten today. Published in hardback by New York company Duell, Sloan and Pearce, *In A Lonely Place* received favorable reviews from major newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*. *In A Lonely Place* is part of the hardboiled genre, in which writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett wrote about grizzled, tough-guy detectives kissing marginally consenting, curvaceous dames as they solve crimes for the little people in their novels, short stories, and films.[3] Hughes follows this tradition, usually writing about men who move through cities racking up romantic conquests and body counts as they go, but she does not offer up a violent masculine hero as a solution for the wrongs of postwar society. Rather, Hughes subverts the genre by critiquing its masculinist energy. Her work enjoyed a recent resurgence because of its feminist content when the New York Review Books Classics reissued *In A Lonely Place* in 2017, explaining the novel is “an early indictment of a truly toxic masculinity and a twisty page-turner with a surprisingly feminist resolution” (“In A Lonely Place”). Additionally, the film version of *In A Lonely Place*—starring Humphrey Bogart as grizzled hardboiled hero Dix—remains a classic example of a film noir, but changes to the plot insert the typical gender politics of the film noir genre, removing Hughes’s feminist themes. The novel subverts the genre by using strategies of focalization in order to play with the reader’s expectations for hardboiled fiction.

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[3] In addition to the films based on his novels, Chandler wrote screenplays for his films based on other author's novels such as *Double Indemnity* (1944)—based on a 1943 novel of the same name by James M. Cain—and an early draft of Hitchcock's *Strangers On A Train* (1951), based on Patricia Highsmith's 1950 novel.

Crime novels often rely on focalization to hide crimes until the end as the reader follows along with the detective, learning what they learn, until the crime is solved. *In A Lonely Place* is written in the third person but all events are filtered through the protagonist Dix Steele, putting the reader in the perspective of a lonely war veteran and serial killer. *In A Lonely Place* relies on figural narration, where events are filtered through a third-person “reflector” character, a term invented by Henry James. Such characters are not directly communicating with the reader through first-person narrative, but the story is reflected off them like a mirror so the reader only knows and sees what those characters do. Dix will kill anybody to get what he wants, including his friend Mel, whose apartment and credit cards Dix takes over, but he mostly strangles women he does not know on the streets of Los Angeles. The reader has full access to his thoughts about these women, which are angry and denigrating, making it clear he is a misogynistic killer, although the reader never gets to witness him actually commit murder. The limits of his perspective create suspense as he reignites his friendship with Brub, a detective on the serial killer case, and Dix uses

Brub to keep tabs on the case while reveling in his ability to fool the police. However, the limits of his perspective also hide the fact that Brub's wife, Sylvia, as well as his new girlfriend Laurel, are onto him. The women's suspicions are not revealed until the final pages of the novel, and their motivation—and ability to recognize Dix as the killer—come from the very real danger they face because of their gender. In the end, these women use Dix's underestimation of them to catch him. Hughes's novel has received critical and popular attention for its nuanced picture of misogyny and men affected by World War II[4], but its narration and structure also demonstrate how women's experiences with misogyny enable them to capture the killer. They are not paid for their work, but without their work, Dix would never be caught.

As Dix moves through the nighttime streets of Los Angeles, a lonely veteran looking to live the American dream and killing people along the way, he is not dissimilar to heroes of hardboiled fiction who also move through dark streets—often Los Angeles—in pursuit of justice and an honest living. These heroes often rack up a body count that exceeds Dix's as they go, although these dead bodies belong to gangsters, pornographers, and others who seemingly deserve it. Chandler's heroes freely moves through Los Angeles, absorbing the injuries and emotions of the populace as dedicated individualists who solve crimes committed against the helpless, "so that eventually the city can be drawn together into a landscape unified by common feeling" (McCann, *Gumshoe America* 158).

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[4] See Megan Abbott's afterword to the NYRB Classics edition of the novel; Sarah Weinman, "On the World's Finest Female Noir Writer, Dorothy B. Hughes" in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*; Christopher Breu, "Radical Noir: Negativity, Misogyny, and the Critique of Privatization in Dorothy Hughes's *In a Lonely Place*" in *Modern Fiction Studies*; and David Schmid "Manhood, Modernity, and Crime Fiction" in *A Concise Companion to American Fiction 1900-1950*, edited by Peter Stoneley and Cindy Weinstein.

Similarly, Dix freely moves through Los Angeles, but he is committing crimes against the helpless as an individualist, as he believes "[t]here was a savage delight in being a lone wolf" (21). Dix is just like the classic hardboiled hero except he kills innocent victims instead of people who seemingly deserve it. *In A Lonely Place* uses the themes and ideas of the hardboiled, noir-leaning genre to create a complex and nuanced critique of crime fiction, postwar American society, and gender dynamics, ultimately subverting the masculinist genre to which it belongs.

Narrative Progress and Suspense

The non-character narrative focalized through Dix limits the reader's view of what happens in the plot. For example, Dix's sexist view of women makes him assume that Laurel and Sylvia have some kind of rivalry over him, even though neither has said anything to this effect, so their relationship is presented to the reader as contentious. This is evident when Sylvia is at Dix's apartment and Laurel shows up. Dix notices they are "eyeing each other in the faint patronizing manner of all women to women" (92). The interaction that follows would be a pleasant conversation between two people meeting if not for Dix's perspective peppered throughout the dialogue:

> Before her [Laurel] Sylvia was colorless and yet before Sylvia, Laurel was too richly colored. Between them was the gulf of a circumstance of birth and a pattern of living.
>
> He said, "Sylvia, this is Laurel." And to Laurel, "This is Sylvia. My friend, Brub Nicolai's, wife."

> They acknowledged the introduction in monotone, in the same manner of social courtesy, but it did not diminish the gulf. There was nothing could diminish the gulf….
>
> She [Laurel] was harder than Sylvia could ever be but she wasn't fine steel; she could be broken. She said to Sylvia and the smear of insolence was under the surface, "Where's your husband?" She let it rest until Sylvia was ready to answer and then she didn't wait for the answer. "I've wanted to meet him. I've heard so much about him."
>
> A dirty little liar. He'd not told her much or little of Brub. Brub's name hadn't been spoken between them.
>
> Sylvia said, "He'll be along. He had some business and I decided Dix would be more amusing than business." She gave him a woman smile. Not for him, for Laurel because she scorned Laurel. (93-4)

Throughout the novel, Dix sees Laurel as beautiful and sensual, while he deems Sylvia more subtly beautiful and classy. These judgments give the reader insight into his sexist assumptions about women as he reductively generalizes them; however, his sexism also hides the true nature of the women around him. He believes their desire for him makes them angry to find the other at the apartment with him and contributes to a rivalry compounded by their differences, of which he assumes each must be jealous. He thinks Laurel, less classy and more crass, is scornful, while Sylvia rises above her barbs, giving Laurel what he believes is a contemptuous smile to indicate Sylvia is on his side. His perspective gives their mundane interaction its contentious tone, and the reader has no other perspective, so Dix's bias colors this scene and each scene like it. Therefore the reader gets hints that Laurel and Sylvia might conspire and suspect Dix, but the focalization of the narrative deemphasizes these hints by emphasizing Dix's sexist perspective and misinterpretations. However, Dix's perspective is revealed to be flawed in the end, not least in regard to Laurel and Sylvia. The women are not rivals but partners, working together to expose Dix as a serial killer. The limits of his perspective become crucial in creating suspense because it keeps full knowledge of who will catch Dix from the reader until the end. Additionally, through Dix's thoughts and opinions, *In A Lonely Place* both comments on the problems with his misogynistic assumptions and the readers' complicity in these assumptions. This makes this novel stand apart from other hardboiled crime novels even as it contains many of the classic genre markers.

Genre Markers, Focalization, and Suspense

Crime novels are beloved by fans for their tightly plotted formulas, so you know what will likely happen in the structure—a crime is committed, a detective solves it—but you're still surprised by whodunit. It is crucial to understand the genre markers for crime fiction in order to see how they can successfully be subverted and how that contributes to *In A Lonely Place*'s engagement with gender and work. In his typology of detective fiction in *The Poetics of Prose* (1966), Tzvetan Todorov argues that "The whodunit par excellence is not the one which transgresses the rules of the genre, but the one which conforms to them" (43). The reader expects a crime novel to follow these rules or, as T.S. Eliot also argued in a 1927 review of mystery novels in *The New Criterion*, it is not a "good" crime novel (140) and the reader has been "tricked" (141). Todorov's typology explains how genre markers, or Eliot’s rules, create and fulfill expectations. Todorov explains that in a “whodunit” style mystery, there are two stories—the crime and investigation—and they do not directly interact, so that the crime will never hurt or put investigators in danger (44). For example, when I read a cozy mystery like Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, the dead body is relatively sanitary—stabbed but described with detached and clinical detail of the results of the violence. I know that Hercule Poirot has already met the murderer on the train, but I know that the murderer will not try to kill Poirot as he solves the case. I expect a moment at the end where Poirot gathers the suspects in one location and announces the solution, but I don’t know what that solution will be because it hinges on small clues alluded to throughout the text. Then, when I learn the solution, I feel I could have figured it out myself if I had just paid better attention to the clues. For Eliot, this feeling that the reader has a “sporting chance” to solve the mystery before the detective does is crucial to a “good” detective novel (141).

By contrast, in Todorov’s “suspense” novel, the two stories of crime and investigation are not so separate, and the reader is curious about the crime already committed but also how the detective will make it out alive (50). For example, when I read a hardboiled novel like *The Big Sleep*, Philip Marlowe discovers a gory dead body next to a traumatized naked woman, and I know that I will follow Marlowe as he’s in danger for most of the rest of the novel. I don’t care as much about identifying little clues to help solve the case because the crime is less important than Marlowe’s adventures, and clues are rarely present. In the suspense subgenre, I expect action, danger, and a big confrontation at the end, and the surprise comes from how Marlowe will escape death. As the century marched on, authors like Jim Thompson replaced the hardboiled detective with "self-destructive criminal protagonists" (McCann 199) in suspense novels like *The Killer Inside Me* (1952). This novel is focalized through serial killer Lou Ford, a villain much savvier at hiding in plain sight than Dix because Lou is a police officer. Ford's narration describes how he manages to fool everyone with a dopey, good-old-boy façade, while he simultaneously chafes at being perceived this way. In the end, everyone is onto him but no one can prove it, and he accepts his fate and tries to kill himself, sparking a violent battle when the police show up in which he is killed. Throughout the novel, Lou's savvy helps him maintain control, even up to the point when he dies. Drawing on the form and tropes of hardboiled fiction that came before, the novel suggests "the stories of crime and detection [like Raymond Chandler's novels] that served previously as allegories of civic and political conflict can now be understood only as problems of individual identity" (McCann 223), creating an even bleaker commentary on the social and political climate of the day than its predecessors[5].

In A Lonely Place lands somewhere in between these two subgenres and precedes Thompson's novel by six years. Since it's a hardboiled novel, the reader expects to follow Dix through Los Angeles while he evades danger and tries to accomplish his goals without getting caught. However, Hughes uses small details to hint at how the final confrontation will happen and misdirects the reader by filtering events through Dix, so the reader's perception of what happens is skewed by Dix's thoughts and feelings. It is a more tightly plotted novel than Chandler's meandering, episodic stories, but it has suspense and danger that are not present in Christie's cozy mysteries. On rereading the novel, little moments when Dix fails to notice everyone closing in on him become apparent, but these little moments are easy to miss without knowing the end because Dix is distracted by or paying more attention to other things, like his assumptions about Laurel and Sylvia's rivalry when they are actually working together to catch him. This structure is a commentary on the role of sexism and women, particularly in relation to their knowledge and work. Women's work is crucial but not rewarded monetarily and therefore not deemed valuable in a capitalist society.

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[5] McCann also makes the case that the changing literary marketplace and the emergence of paperbacks in midcentury America sparked a shift in the hardboiled genre. While Thompson and others like him enjoyed more commercial success than authors like Chandler, their very ubiquity caused them to lose the everyman credibility earlier pulp authors claimed. They could not claim, "as pulpsters once had, to speak for an autonomous publishing fraternity, nor to be the victims of an unfair cultural hierarchy, and the result was a vision of literary culture that differed sharply from that of their contemporaries" (McCann 211). That literary culture is pervasive throughout Thompson's work and other novels of the same genre in the late 1950s is explored in the chapter "Letdown Artists: Paperback Noir and the Procedural Republic" in McCann's *Gumshoe America*. *In A Lonely Place* was published in hardback just prior to the paperback revolution and subsequent genre shift.

Confining the focalization to Dix as a reflector figure makes it impossible to see that Sylvia, and later Laurel, are onto him. There are a few significant scenes where the women are suspicious of or conferring about him, but there is no room in Dix's assumptions for this to take place, which in turn distracts the reader from what is really happening. This reinforces Dix's internal gender hierarchy until it is suddenly revealed to be a self-delusion in the last chapter. One example of Dix not catching on occurs shortly after Laurel and Sylvia meet in his apartment, when Dix and Laurel are invited to join Sylvia and Brub at their club. As Dix walks in, he sees Betsy Banning, who bears a striking resemblance to his true love—and first murder victim—Brucie, and thinks Betsy is Brucie for a moment. This encounter causes him to obsess about his insecurities related to women that were first manifest in Brucie for the rest of the scene. This makes him overlook the moment when Laurel, Sylvia, and Brub compare notes on him for perhaps the first time and the plan to catch him is presumably set into motion. As Dix dances with Sylvia, he notices Brub and Laurel are talking seriously at the table, "as if they had waited a long time for this moment" (127). The conversation that follows illustrates how Dix's insecurities about women are the main focus, which distracts from the real danger:

> "You've known Laurel before!" he said quickly. He didn't mean it to sound suspicious but he spoke too quickly.
>
> Sylvia's answer was unperturbed. "We've met her. When she was married to Henry St. Andrews. I didn't realize it when you introduced me at your apartment. Not until she mentioned Gorgon. We met her at Gorgon's."
>
> "Who is Gorgon?"
>
> "He's a lawyer." She wasn't as easy now, she was making up words. "A friend of Henry St. Andrews. And Raoul Nicolai, Brub's oldest brother. We don't know them well, we don't travel in that crowd. Can't afford it."
>
> He remembered it now. Gorgon had had opinions on the case. Laurel had quoted Gorgon's opinions. And he remembered he'd seen the name, it must be the same name. Thomas Gorgonzola. Criminal lawyer. A name to conjure with in L.A. courts, a name that meant a feature to the newspapers. He smiled; not Sylvia, not anyone would know the meaning of that smile. Laurel's friend, the great criminal lawyer. (127)

The distraction is complete when they return to the table and Laurel asks who Brucie is. For the first time in the novel, Dix reveals that Brucie is dead, and the last lines of the chapter explain he “saw Sylvia and Brub move apart, in the same fashion that Laurel and Brub had earlier. He didn’t wonder at the repetition; only briefly did it occur to him that Brub must be in one of his confidential moods. And that Brub too must be tired tonight, otherwise he’d be cutting capers on the dance floor” (130). Dix’s earlier suspicion is replaced by his complete confidence that he has fooled everyone and his obsession with Laurel’s faithfulness.

If the reader knew the three were suspicious of Dix, this “confidential mood” would be ominous, but the significance of each event is skewed by Dix’s perspective. Because the events are reflected off him and to the reader, Laurel’s infidelity and Dix’s grief over Brucie seem worse than the real danger: Laurel conferring with Brub and Sylvia. The reader’s perception of Sylvia’s truthfulness is filtered through his judgments about how she’s feeling, which are presented as fact. Dix then decides she’s telling the truth about Gorgon when he remembers he fought with Laurel about her relationship with Gorgon earlier in the novel. Likely the reason Sylvia begins talking nervously about Gorgon is because she wants to distract Dix from looking at Laurel and Brub, but he misinterprets her nerves as a hint about Laurel’s unfaithfulness. Dix is jealous of Gorgon and alert to the fact that Gorgon is involved in the serial killer case, which makes him probe Sylvia for more details, distracting him from Laurel and Brub by shifting his focus to Gorgon and Laurel. Finally, the reader is distracted in this scene by the ongoing story of Brucie, which is revealed in pieces throughout the novel. Dix’s reaction when he says she's dead gives the reader another piece to the puzzle that is important in figuring out the extent of Dix's crimes, but this is one more piece that directs attention away from everyone working against him. The novel, then, delays the reveal of Sylvia catching Dix by strategically placing his thoughts next to seemingly accurate impressions of events. There is never a point when a separate implied author indicates Dix is lying to the reader behind his back[6]. He is an unreliable narrator on James Phelan's map of narrators in *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*. The implied author uses Dix to report to the reader what is happening along with his evaluations of it, but he often misreports because he misevaluates and misinterprets what's happening.

Dix's impressions of Sylvia are often wrong, but the way the impressions are presented makes it seem as if they are accurate. This not only makes the end a surprise, but it demonstrates Dix's misogyny. Sometimes Dix's impressions of Sylvia change entirely from one page to the next, depending on whether she fits the mold to which he mentally confines women. In the scene where Sylvia meets Laurel, he first admires Sylvia, as discussed earlier. But he soon senses "that Sylvia had been burrowing beneath his surface since the night he had come out of the fog into her existence. Irritation heated him. She had no business trying to find an under self in him; she should have taken him as he was," which is the nice young man he believes he presents to the world (93). However, he decides she is not suspicious; she just doesn't like him. That realization angers him, and he suddenly thinks “[h]e didn’t like her either with her damn prying mind. Her bitching, high-toned mind” (93). He tries to take revenge and make her uncomfortable by implying she and Brub weren’t good friends to him. On the next page, when Sylvia is visibly—and satisfyingly, to Dix—upset by mention of the strangler case, the text says it’s because she “didn’t dissemble well” (94). However, all of this is later revealed not to be because of her inability to control her emotions or treat Dix well, but because she suspects the truth. His impressions of the women in the novel are positive if they treat him the way he thinks he deserves to be treated, but things quickly spiral if they do not.

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[6] I am relying on Wayne Booth's definition of an implied author in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). This is a persona who is not a character but a version of the author, perceived and constructed by the reader. *In A Lonely Place* has such a strong reliance on Dix as the arbiter of events that any other implied author is virtually nonexistent, especially when compared to Booth's example of the strong voice of the implied author in Henry Fielding's work (72).

These events, filtered through Dix, are tainted by his idea of the type of woman Sylvia should be—deferential to him and frightened by the prospect of being killed by him, which he feels puts him in a position of power over her. When that power dynamic is threatened even slightly, he hates her and then tries to put her back in her place, both in his own mind and to her directly. Manne’s description of how misogyny functions is useful here. Because Sylvia lives in a patriarchy, she must appear to naturally conform to “relevant social roles” (Manne 47) in which men have power over her, and when she violates those roles, she provokes a hostile or aggressive reaction from men who expect her to remain in her place (Manne 49). As Dix moves from initial anger to the hostile reaction of putting her in her place, he muses that Sylvia has “an atavistic fear of reasonless death” (34) because of her gender, and this idea satisfies him and starts to make him feel better. In Dix’s mind, his power as a man over women is ancient and mythical, and he needs to reassert this power when it’s threatened. This explains why his impression of her not dissembling well contrasts with his observation about how perceptive she is one page earlier. He must put himself back in power by latching onto her reaction to the case. Millett notes that patriarchal society must rely on force and the threat of force to function, “both in emergencies and as an ever-present instrument of intimidation” (43), and Dix uses force of all kinds to maintain his position in such a society. His world is a strict hierarchy according to gender and power, even though he has to do mental gymnastics at times to make events fit his perception of the world. Yet all his work to keep things as he believes they should be distracts him (and the reader) from seeing Sylvia accurately, which is ultimately what foils him in the end.

Dix’s perception of the world does not hold up, and when Sylvia surprises Dix and the reader at the end by catching him, past events must be reevaluated. The foolishness of Dix’s underestimation and hatred of Sylvia is revealed, and the reader is made complicit in this foolishness. Dix cannot fathom a world where Sylvia is smart enough to catch him because of his assumptions about women plus his role as an enforcer of misogynistic norms. Then, when Dix is caught, it’s a surprise, but it’s not unreasonable due to clues hidden throughout the text and filtered through Dix. This puts the reader in Dix’s position of underestimating Sylvia, and all this works to critique the misogyny of this underestimation. He’s not just a murderer who targets women, but the text also emphasizes the way crimes are solved by women, whose intelligence he cannot perceive. The little, everyday assumptions and judgments he makes all work to create the problematic worldview that the novel critiques.

Veterans and Misogyny

Veterans were often subjects of hardboiled crime fiction and noir in part because they were so numerous—about one in nine people, and three in four working men age 21-38, were veterans of World War II (Bowker 23). As Dix tells Sylvia, he and everyone else fought in the war not out of patriotic duty, but because "it was the thing to do" (13). Returning veterans were the subject of real-life controversy because readjusting to civilian life was difficult, often exacerbated by what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder, and Americans worried this would have disastrous results. Scholar Dixon Wecter stated in 1944 that a "civilian can be licked into shape as a soldier by the manual of arms and a drillmaster; but no manual has ever been written for changing him back into a civilian" (5), neatly summarizing common concerns about veterans. These concerns were exacerbated by newspapers, which often broadcast lurid details of crimes committed by veterans. For example, two 1946 *New York Times* headlines announced in all caps: "3 Veterans Seized as Park Slayers: Two Identified by Girl Who Was Raped—All Admit Part in Crime" and "Admits Chicago Torture: Veteran Confesses Slashing, Burning of Expectant Mother." In his 1946 book on returning veterans, retired Chief of Army Orientation Benjamin Bowker claimed these headlines were sensationalized and over-emphasized to sell papers, even if the facts were true, and that they had the effect of making most Americans excessively fearful of veterans. There also was a contrasting minority of Americans that "saw all veterans through a haze of sweetness and light" (Bowker 28), but there was rarely a moderate view. *In A Lonely Place* draws on this controversy and public fears about veterans. If, as Brub claims, the murderer must be "insane" (48), and Dix believes that he passes as perfectly "sane" (48), he can commit his crimes undetected amidst the discourse about violent, insane veterans. Dix's violence is not solely motivated by his experiences in the war, and therefore he does not meet the profile of a criminally insane veteran. He killed Brucie, a Red Cross worker in England he met during the war, as revenge for her getting married to someone else. He killed Mel, an old friend, so that he could live in Mel's apartment and use his money. Most importantly, he kills random women because he identifies them as scapegoats for his biggest disappointments. Dix exhibits ordinary misogyny taken to its logical extreme, relying upon the controversy around the mentally ill veteran bogeyman to hide his crimes, which are not motivated by PTSD or mental illness related to the war.

However, Dix often blames social circumstances created by the war for his actions. In her afterword to the 2017 edition of the novel, Megan Abbott argues that Dix is angered not by the trauma of war, "but what men face upon their return: staid domesticity, the strictures of class, emasculation. And these threats are embodied wholly in women. Women, whose penetrating gazes are far mightier than his sword" (199). Yet Dix also desires domesticity and the affirmation that comes from being a member of a certain social class. He believes himself to be a victim of the circumstances that keep these things from him, and since the novel is from his perspective, it is easy to understand why he thinks this. The loneliness of the modern city and consumer culture have made Dix who he is, so by his logic, his actions are unavoidable. Roosevelt's New Deal combined with the reconversion after World War II urged people to buy more to make themselves happier and to help the economy—making spending a "civic responsibility" (Cohen 113). The nation prospered, and median income for families rose by 30 percent in purchasing power from

1945-50 (Nickles 584). Success began to be defined by purchases and consuming products in middle-class family life, but if a person didn't have access to these things, they fell behind. Dix wants to be able to buy things and get in on the boom around him but doesn't want to work for it. The war gave him a taste of that better life. He often waxes nostalgic about his time in the service:

> The war years were the first happy years he'd ever known. You didn't have to kowtow to the stinking rich, you were all equal in pay; and before long you were the rich guy. Because you didn't give a damn and you were the best God-damned pilot in the company with promotions coming fast. You wore swell tailored uniforms, high polish on your shoes. You didn't need a car, you had something better, sleek powerful planes. You were the Mister, you were what you'd always wanted to be, class. You could have any woman you wanted in Africa or India or England or Australia or the United States, or any place in the world. The world was yours.
>
> That life was so real that there wasn't any other life. Even when the war was over there was no realization of another life. Not until he stood again in the small, dark living room of his uncle's home. It came as shock, the return to Uncle Fergus; he hadn't really known it wasn't going to be always the way it had been in the war years. He had mistaken interlude for life span. (103-4)

Contrary to the typical narrative of shell shock and trauma that worried the nation, the war was a positive experience for Dix, and it made apparent the unfairness of his previous life. Dix was fettered by lack of money and social connections until he enlisted, and during the war, he felt everyone was more equal than they were in real life. Conversely, the army enabled him to work his way up in ways he felt he couldn't before. He became "the rich guy"—cementing the self-serving nature of his love of the service and exacerbating his sense of entitlement. The war was "real" life because of the opportunities it gave him to excel in the ways he believes he is entitled. He was barred from these privileges when he returned because of artificial strictures such as social class, so Dix found a way to regain the real life he believes he deserves by killing Mel and taking over his apartment and lines of credit. If the nation was beginning to prosper postwar, Dix just wants the purchasing power everyone else was pursuing around him. Much of his jealousy of the Nicolais is rooted in his exclusion from this prosperity. Brub and Sylvia own a comfortable home where they host friends and live in domestic bliss while Dix remains alone in an apartment that is not his. Essentially, he believes he is just a guy trying to right the wrongs he perceives have been perpetrated against him, even as his tantrums and self-pity communicate his misplaced entitlement to the reader.

His frustration as a veteran who deserves more than he gets is exacerbated by his failure to achieve the kind of masculinity for which he strives. In addition to the general, near-universal patriarchal society Kate Millett outlined in *Sexual Politics* in 1969, which relies on the heterosexual family to keep women in subjugation by forcing them to perform routine tasks in the home while men earn money outside the home, men were incentivized and encouraged to take economic power in the family right after World War II. Christopher Breu argues that Dix's characteristics represent "the garden-variety forms of misogyny that were integral part of conventional masculinity in the 1950s" (57). This conventional masculinity was fueled by a combination of factors including the many young men who returned from war and, as part of the reconversion of the economy, had access to programs that encouraged “a male-directed family economy” (Cohen 137). This created the stereotype of the white, middle-class 1950s housewife, which was later critiqued by second-wave feminists such as Betty Friedan. Additionally, the genre of American crime fiction in the postwar period combined a nostalgic idea of a solitary man working hard for his money, “based on production work and patriarchal family values” with “an emergent model based on the purchase and display of commodities,” fitting into changing American culture (Smith 153). This idea is encapsulated in Raymond Chandler’s description of the hardboiled detective, “The Simple Art of Murder,” where the detective lives by a specific code of honor. Along with working for the common man, the detective is “lonely,” prideful, and has a “disgust for sham” (18). In other words, the model of hardboiled masculinity presented by Chandler is a free individualist who doesn’t need anyone else’s help to thrive. The models of the individualist hardboiled detective and the successful, married veteran draw on seemingly positive American values like family, individualism, success, and honor, but they ultimately result in the subjugation of women in favor of men. However, values and conventions aren’t enough to maintain this hierarchy. It requires everyone to actively participate in enforcing its norms—emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Neither of these masculine models represents Dix, but he strives for a combination of both. At one point, when he’s worried Brub and Sylvia will catch on to his crimes if their friendship develops, he tries to convince himself he doesn’t need them with the type of pep talk he frequently engages in to boost his own confidence. He muses about how he is successful because has a good life with “a slick apartment, a solid car; income without working for it, not half enough, but he could get by. Freedom, plenty of freedom. Nobody telling him what to do, nobody snooping” (51). All he needs to complete his life, he reasons, is Laurel as his girlfriend, and this pep talk boosts him enough to approach her for the first time. The components of the good life that Dix believes he possesses are identified as commodities and romantic love along with independence and freedom from scrutiny, like the hardboiled hero. He needs Mel to provide for him materially and women to provide for him emotionally—and materially when Mel’s money runs out—because his pep talks aren’t always enough. According to his perspective, his crimes are not only fueled by his status as a veteran but by postwar society in general.

Dix’s biggest breakdown is triggered by Laurel ruining his plans for success, which rely on her willingness to make money and provide for him. When Laurel tells him she has a plan to work on Broadway, Dix assumes she will support him when she gets her job, even though she never indicates he’s included in her plan. Her plan thrills Dix because it would solve his problems by allowing her to financially support him while he goes to New York to persuade his uncle to give him more money. “He was burned up with the radiant promise of the future” (136) as he tells her they will be together forever. When Laurel stands him up at their next date, he goes immediately from jubilation about their love to thinking that he had “known what she was the first time he’d looked at her. Known he couldn’t trust her, known she was a bitchy dame, cruel as her eyes and her taloned nails. Cruel as her cat body and her sullen tongue” (148). He drives through Los Angeles, lonely and alone, growing more and more distraught, and ends up at the ocean, where he transitions fully into his out-of-control persona. This loss of control is described by the titular line. He was "[l]ost in a lonely place. And the red knots tightened in his brain" right before he sees a woman walking her dog—Betsy, the woman who resembles Brucie (152). Then "[h]e smiled. She didn't know that behind that smile lay his hatred of Laurel, hatred of Brub and Sylvia, of Mel Terriss, of old Fergus Steele, of everyone in the living world, of everyone but Brucie. And Brucie was dead" (153). The chapter ends and the next picks up the next morning, after the murder. In the moment before he kills Betsy, Dix's entitlement and sense of unfairness fuel his misogynistic blood lust—yet he still feels sorry for himself because his true love is dead, even though she might have died at his hands. Even this, however, is not Dix's fault; he has a certain kind of logic to his actions. Here, the reader is alerted that Dix's perception about what he deserves is incorrect and unreliable, foreshadowing the full reveal of his unreliable perspective in the end.

Dix's breakdown follows the logic of misogyny as described by Manne. He wants to be a certain type of man with a certain type of lifestyle. When a woman doesn't give him the support he needs to accomplish this, he lashes out. In this case, he does not have access to Laurel, but the woman on the beach is a substitute through which he can channel all his anger. Sometimes "one woman is made to pay for the supposed sins of others" (Manne 54). Dix punishes women because he sees himself as a victim. When women fail him, or when their relationship is anything less than perfect, he becomes distraught and full of self-pity. He eventually lashes out. His overly emotional reactions are the bridge between his happy and confident self who optimistically seeks what he wants and his murderous self. Dix displays recognizable characteristics of misogyny in these moments, specifically the expectations men have for women and the way they justify their often angry reactions when women don't meet those expectations. As Manne argues, a woman is expected to fulfill certain roles in a "social script an agent has adopted" (172), often without her knowledge. These roles might be a caring mother, an emotionally available wife, or a willing sexual partner, and the agents are most often men and children from a heterosexual relationship. When a woman doesn't fulfill those roles, patriarchal "enforcement mechanisms" (Manne 47) will put her back in her place. These mechanisms might be small, like Dix making subtle verbal jabs at Sylvia, or they might be larger, such as Dix killing Brucie because she married someone else. Manne argues these "coercive enforcement mechanisms vis-à-vis patriarchal norms and expectations, and the social roles they govern, are the functional essence of misogyny" (47). The novel plays with fears surrounding veterans and takes it to the extreme, adding class resentment and postwar economics to make Dix, an exaggerated example of misogyny that is specific to the postwar period.

The irony of the novel, of course, is that all the things Dix believes are to blame for his behavior are ultimately weak excuses. Women, modern life, money—while Dix lays out his struggles with each, his angst rings hollow as he continues to kill to solve his problems. Sylvia's "bell clear" voice exclaiming, "It worked!" (197) when she catches Dix and puts an end to his murdering spree is a relief. She destroys Dix's excuses when she makes it clear she suspected him all along, leaving no doubt about both the inaccuracy of the way Dix sees events unfold and about his reprehensible nature, specifically related to gender. The novel draws on aspects of postwar society and creates a portrait of misogyny particular to midcentury America in order to critique it. There is no one, easy explanation for Dix's behavior, but Sylvia catches him because she is familiar with the everyday misogyny of which Dix is an extreme example. This suggests that the larger patriarchal culture and misogyny are much deeper and older than something like violence perpetrated by veterans reintegrating into society after traumatic war experience, but simultaneously factors like this can cause misogyny to look different at different points in time. *In A Lonely Place* calls attention to these particular factors as well as the larger system, participating in feminist work on the cusp of the second-wave movement.

Women and Work

While *In A Lonely Place* contains a sweeping indictment of misogyny in the postwar American culture, it also contains a more specific indictment of how this culture affects women and work. According to Millett, one of the "most efficient" (39) ways the patriarchy functions is economic because women always work, but their work is undermined and demeaned. "Women's work"—whether it is as a housewife, a mother, an assistant, a nurse, a teacher, or the like—is labor-intensive but is either unpaid or underpaid, and "[i]n a money economy where autonomy and prestige depend upon currency, this is a fact of great importance" (Millett 40). This manifests in this novel because Brub earns money and the prestige that comes with his position and the satisfaction of providing for his family while women like Sylvia do the actual work of catching Dix but get none of the reward. When Sylvia is the bait in a trap for Dix at the end, she tells him, "From the beginning I knew there was something wrong with you. From the first night you walked into our living room and looked at me, I knew there was something wrong. Something terribly wrong" (196). But Sylvia's work until this point is outside of Dix's perspective, and thus outside of the reader's perspective, creating a narrative that itself demonstrates the unfairness of the patriarchal system.

The effects of the patriarchal system on work in this novel can also be seen in its specific social and cultural context. In 1947, men were going back to work in droves, and women were encouraged to go back to their homes and let returning soldiers have their jobs. However, this was not universal, and many women needed their own incomes to have the status and lifestyle Dix craves. Some government and social entities, such as Pennsylvania State Senator Francis J. Meyers in 1946, recognized this and advocated publicly for women who were unmarried or widowed who needed income and should not lose their jobs in favor of returning soldiers. Women entered the workforce in new numbers in midcentury America and got married and had children much younger than their mothers had, creating a 400 percent increase in working mothers from 1940 to 1960 (Coontz 161). Women did not work just for their families, however. Joanne Meyerowitz uses popular women's magazines to make the case that women's motivations to work also came from a desire to support the nation. In *Woman's Home Companion* polls on the most admired women in 1947 and 1949, readers chose women like Helen Keller, Elizabeth Kenny, Clare Boothe, and Eleanor Roosevelt for their courage, ability to overcome, and prioritization of the public good over self. Perhaps surprisingly, these polls indicate "a feminine version of selfless sacrifice seems to have won kudos, [but] individual striving and public service superseded devotion to home and family" (Meyerowitz 1464).

However, even if women were not only dedicated to their families, the system still encouraged them to dedicate their lives in service of something outside the self. Unlike Dix, who believes he deserves everything he wants just for being alive, a woman in the postwar period was not allowed to pursue a career or a life for herself. The overarching patriarchal society along with the particular challenges related to work and family of the postwar period are represented in a salient, albeit extreme, fashion with Sylvia's work in this novel. While violence and fear of violence against women is real, women who struggled to work and get recognition for it in the postwar period were not literally trying to catch a murderer. However, such heightened stakes make the critique within the novel stand out more clearly. If Sylvia's work saves lives and stops a murderer, it is all the more unfair that she does so as an unpaid, unofficial detective.

Sylvia, who does most of the behind-the-scenes sleuthing with a little help from Laurel, is not a classic hardboiled detective motivated by money. Nor is she an amateur detective who can work for free out of a place of financial security like Sherlock Holmes or Lord Peter Wimsey. Sylvia's job is presumably a housewife, as the only indication to her profession is when Dix observes that she is "mistress of the house and she was beautiful in her content" (11). It's possible she met Brub at Berkeley, but if she went to college, what she studied is unclear. Her only role in Dix's story is that of a housewife scared of the serial killer, which makes him even less likely to suspect her. However, her experiences as a woman living in the postwar period combined with her intelligence make her able to see what the police cannot. Only in the end, it is clear that Sylvia and Laurel have been working outside the frame of Dix's perspective. Dix's focus is on Brub, which makes the reader focus on Brub as well. Brub is not a threat. His motivation for being a policeman, while admirable, is not enough to help him catch Dix. Brub wants to “help make one little corner of the world a safer place” (85), but he doesn’t realize he’s speaking to a serial killer when he says this, making it clear that he is incapable of accomplishing his goals. However, Sylvia cleverly investigates and then draws a net around Dix while her husband and other officers struggle.

One of her sleuthing methods is gleaning information from her husband to help refine her own theories, but she is clever about how she does it, apparently hiding it not only from Dix but from Brub as well, at least at first. There are many moments throughout the novel that give clues to Sylvia’s sleuthing methods. For example, she posits theories on the case to Brub, who confirms or denies them, giving her more information for her own investigation. In one casual conversation with a group about the case, a woman presents a slightly ridiculous theory as to how she think Dix killed one woman, and Sylvia uses the opportunity to ask Brub if he thinks there was an accomplice. When she asks, she looks “quickly” (48) at him, as if gauging his response carefully so she can weigh whatever he says. It is unclear what she does after that, since Dix gets obsessed with himself for a moment, and the next time the narrative moves back to Sylvia, her “face was granite” (49), an expression Dix interprets as related to the ridiculous behavior of the other women, but which also hides her thoughts from him. Her theories appear to be initially sparked by her own intuition as a woman, as indicated in her telling Dix she knew something was wrong with him “[f]rom that first night, from the beginning” (196). However, Dix and the reader miss these moments due to distractions and assumptions about her as a woman.

The novel implies that Sylvia has lived with the threat of violence her whole life due to her gender, so she understands all too well the threat of a serial killer like Dix. She is familiar with misogyny, and the misogynistic nature of his personality and actions put her on alert from the moment they meet. Her positionality helps her accomplish her goals. Dix assumes that Sylvia's interest in the case stems from her fear of the killer, which is likely true on some level, but the fear Dix views as her weakness is actually an instinct that helps her catch him. Due to the misogyny that flourishes under patriarchal culture, violence against women is all too common. Manne notes that men often strangle women when they commit violence, a torturous and dominating, misogynistic act, and this is the way Dix likes to kill his victims. Notably, the chief detective tells Brub and Dix that strangling as the "easiest" and "safest" way for the killer to murder women (82) because there is no weapon needed. This is true from their angle, but strangling is also an intimate way to kill someone. It requires close physical proximity and direct contact with their body, and it is not quick. Every death happens offstage, so the reader never knows what Dix is thinking in those moments, yet he would have had to maintain sustained pressure on each victims' neck as she struggled and was in pain. His anger, which fuels every murder in the novel, is what keeps his hands on their necks. The motivation for such a method goes beyond ease or safety, but the police do not appear to be attuned to this, which is another example of the gendered nature of Dix's crimes and the instincts of those who try to solve them. The detective's comment suggests that he lacks the intuitive understanding of the misogyny behind such a crime even as he knows the killer targets women.

In a typical hardboiled novel, the reader might expect the criminal to give himself away by confessing or some other type of compulsion, like Lou in *The Killer Inside Me*, except Sylvia has been working behind the scenes. The ending of the novel subverts the typical narrative and reveals Dix's perspective is not just misogynistic, but also ignorant. In the end, Sylvia lures Dix into a trap by dressing as Laurel, and when he sees it is actually Sylvia, his confusion propels him to out-of-control violence while she calmly maintains control of the situation:

> "Where is she [Laurel]?" He caught her [Sylvia's] shoulders. His hands tightened over them. He held her eyes. "*Where is she*?"
>
> "She—" Her voice failed. And then swiftly she moved. She twisted, catching him off guard, breaking through. Leaving the coat [Laurel's coat she wore as a disguise] in his hands.
>
> He turned. She hadn't run away. She hadn't sense enough to run away. She was standing there, only a slight distance from him, there by the blue pool. Her breath was coming in little gusts. She spoke clearly, "She isn't coming back, Dix. She's safe. She's going to stay safe."…
>
> It didn't sound like his voice when he whispered, "I'm going to kill you." He leaped as he spoke. He didn't telegraph the movement and he was on her, his hands on her throat before she knew. It was his hands that failed him. Because they were shaking, because before he could strengthen them enough, she was screaming and screaming. By the time he'd throttled the scream, the men were running to close in on him. One from the patio entrance, one from the shadows beyond the steps, one

> from the shadows behind him. He didn't release his grip, not until he saw who it was running full towards him. Brub. And Brub's face was the face of a killer.
>
> It was Sylvia who saved Dix. Because she whirled and went into Brub's arms, clung to him, keeping him from killing. She wasn't hysterical. What she cried was bell clear. "It worked," she cried in her husky voice. "It worked!" (195, 197)

Everything Sylvia does in this scene is a shock because it goes against Dix's—and therefore the reader's—misunderstanding of her. When Dix first lays hands on her, Sylvia is able to easily escape by using her clever disguise, which gives her time to accuse him of every single murder he has committed. His reaction confirms her accusations, giving the police the proof they need to arrest him. Dix is utterly perplexed in this scene as he slowly realizes Sylvia has been onto him. As both he and the reader realize simultaneously that his perspective is not only sexist and misogynistic but dangerously ignorant. Sylvia's calm results in a successful arrest, ensuring Dix will be brought to justice, while the men around her dissolve into hysterics. Dix notes her lack of hysteria as if in surprise because in his perspective, her emotions should get in the way but his perspective has finally revealed to be unreliable here. The novel hides the truth about Sylvia to not only reveal the problems with Dix's misogyny but also to demonstrate how stupid his misogyny makes him.

In a way, Dix is not entirely wrong about Sylvia's "atavistic fear of reasonless death" (34), except the roots of this fear are not in ancient biology but in the patriarchal system that needs misogyny to uphold it. *In A Lonely Place* does not posit a world where women are somehow naturally able to identify threats due to their sex; rather, their lives and experiences enable them to notice things that men cannot, creating instincts that are not “atavistic” but which result from life lived as a woman. Sylvia uses what Dix sees as a disadvantage to solve her case. Her instincts about him led her to start asking questions, enabling her to uncover the murder of Mel. The police assume they are looking for someone who kills only women, and while it’s strongly hinted that Dix killed his friend Mel to get his apartment and money, every other victim is a woman whom he strangles, so Mel’s murder does not fit the pattern. In the end, Sylvia accuses Dix of murdering not just the women but also Mel, indicating that Dix’s lifestyle on Mel’s dime may have been a catalyst for her to solve the case. The full method behind her sleuthing is unclear, but it is all inspired by her knowledge from the beginning that something was wrong with Dix. Due to the nature of the novel’s focalization, it is difficult to understand how Sylvia works beyond little moments where she is asking questions or putting things together, but this difficulty itself reveals the problems with women and work. Sylvia is literally behind the scenes, out of focus for the reader and the men in the novel. When a woman who is not a detective or a suspect solves the case, and the protagonist is the villain foiled in the end, the novel’s feminist subversion of the hardboiled genre is complete.

***In A Lonely Place* Film**

In A Lonely Place is part of hardboiled fiction that was similar to famous films noir of the 20th century in plot and themes, and which were often made into films noir shortly after publication. Indeed, the film version of *In A Lonely Place* came out three years after the novel's publication. Directed by Nicholas Ray and starring Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame in widely acclaimed performances (Crowther, Variety Staff), the film is an excellent example of the noir genre. The themes and concerns of film noir certainly overlapped with the themes and concerns of pulp fiction, but noir has its own history of cultural engagement that diverges from the fiction it adapts. For example, noir took the alienation of modern life to the extreme, exacerbating that unease visually even if plots usually resolved satisfactorily (Dimendberg 10). It simultaneously drew upon and extended

Figure 1: Still from *In A Lonely Place* (01:32:47)

"growing disillusionment with certain traditional American values in the face of complex and often contradictory social, political, scientific, and economic development" (Schatz 113). Hardboiled crime fiction, by contrast, was usually more nostalgic in its focus on changing values. The term "noir" is sometimes used to describe crime fiction of this type[7] in order to distinguish it from other iterations of the genre such as the private eye novel[8].

In the novel *In A Lonely Place*, Dix is a villain, but the film turns him into a hero. In the film, Dix is a struggling screenwriter, and suspense grows as Laurel begins to suspect he killed Mildred Atkinson (Martha Stewart), a coat-check girl at a restaurant. The police plant this suspicion in her mind, and Dix's frequent, violent outbursts seem to confirm it. Laurel's suspicions finally drive her to try to escape their relationship, and when Dix shows up at her door and begins to strangle her when he discovers her suitcase, her suspicions are seemingly confirmed. The confirmation is shattered by the telephone ringing, and the police tell Laurel and Dix the real killer has been caught. Dix leaves, and the audience watches Laurel watch him go (figure 1), tears streaming down her cheeks as she quotes a line from the film he wrote: "I lived a few weeks while you loved me. Goodbye, Dix." Dix walks away through a courtyard doorway as the music swells and it fades to black. The end leaves no doubt that Laurel was in the wrong in its treatment of Dix as a tragic, heartbroken hero who she clearly regrets losing. This scene tells the audience that if she had trusted him, he would not have been driven to lash out in anger, and they would have been able to live happily ever after.

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[7] See John Irwin's *Unless the Threat of Death is Behind Them: Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* and Stanley Orr's *Darkly Perfect World: Colonial Adventure, Postmodernism, and American Noir.*

[8] See Abbott, *The Street Was Mine*, 10-11 for more on the private eye novel vs. the hardboiled novel.

Humphrey Bogart rose to stardom when he played hardboiled hero Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), an adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's 1930 novel, leading to a role as detective Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep* (1946), another noir classic. In these films, Bogart's moral values delineate him from the depravity of the criminals he is chasing, even if he himself is violent and often unkind. When confessing his love to femme fatale Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) at the end of *The Maltese Falcon*, he stares ahead, not meeting her eyes, as if tortured by his words, until he abruptly grabs her and tells her,"Don't be too sure I'm as crooked as I'm supposed to be. That sort of reputation might be good business. Bringing high-priced jobs and making it easier to deal with the enemy." When the police come in, his conflicted intensity suddenly switches to flippancy as he hands her over to the detectives. Only when he briefly meets her eyes does a look of regret flash over his face, indicating his love was real. This scene encapsulates the essence of hardboiled noir detectives and how Bogart played them. The detective is a guy with a reputation that isn't much different than the criminals he pursues, which makes him the perfect man to pursue such criminals, yet with a sensitive side and unyielding morals that keep him on the side of good. *The Maltese Falcon* was one of the earliest films noir, and Bogart became a prototype for the hero. As Dix, Bogart brings much of the same tough-guy energy to the screen as he does when playing detectives. The only difference is that it's unclear whether that sensitive, moral center remains, or if he's a killer at his core. His strokes of violence are apparent from the beginning, when Dix lashes out at two different people who offend him within the first five minutes of the film. Throughout, Dix comments ironically on the police's suspicions about his involvement with Mildred

Atkinson's murder, which occurred right after she left Dix's apartment late at night. For example, he shrugs off concerns from Mel (Art Smith)—who has become his agent in the film—and teases Mel by showing him the glass Mildred drank from the night before. This scene is intercut with a police officer reading aloud Dix's history of violence and assault, right after Brub tells the police chief Dix was a respected officer in the war. This dynamic creates suspense: is Dix a sarcastic but good guy with a hot temper, or is he a murderer?

Women's suspicions of Dix aren't taken seriously in the film, and for good reason. They're proven wrong. When Dix has dinner at Brub (Frank Lovejoy) and Sylvia's (Jeff Donnell), he claims he could solve Mildred's murder because he's written so many

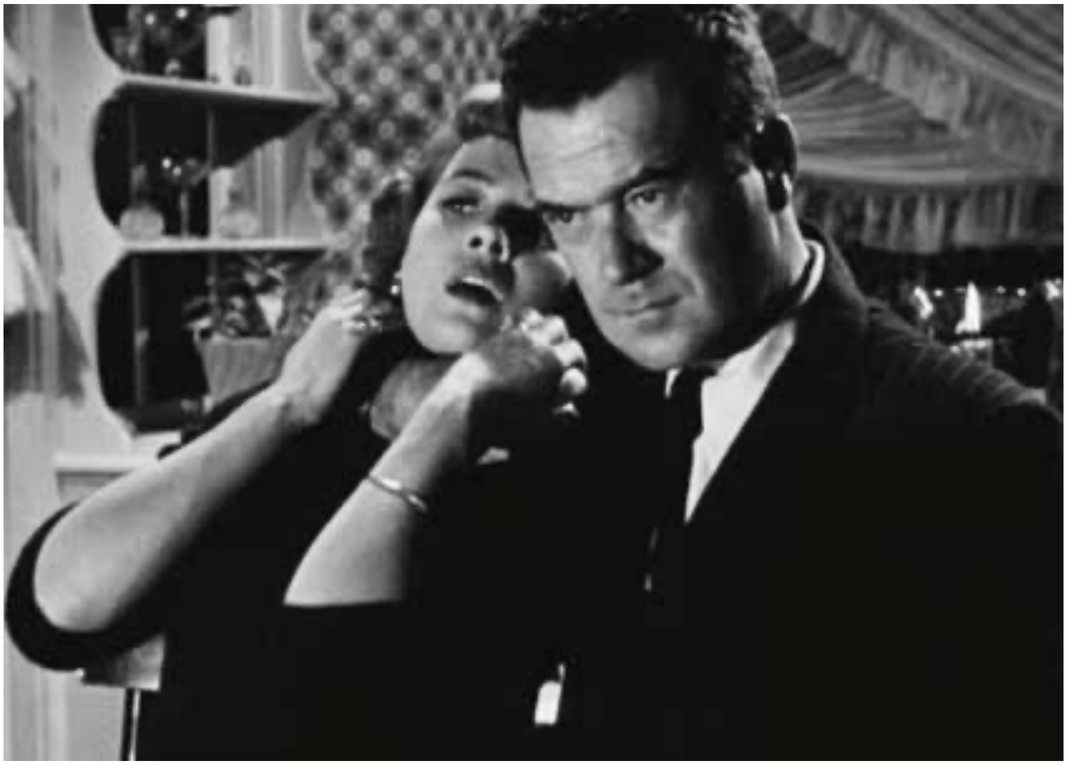

Figure 2: Still from *In A Lonely Place* (00:35:14)

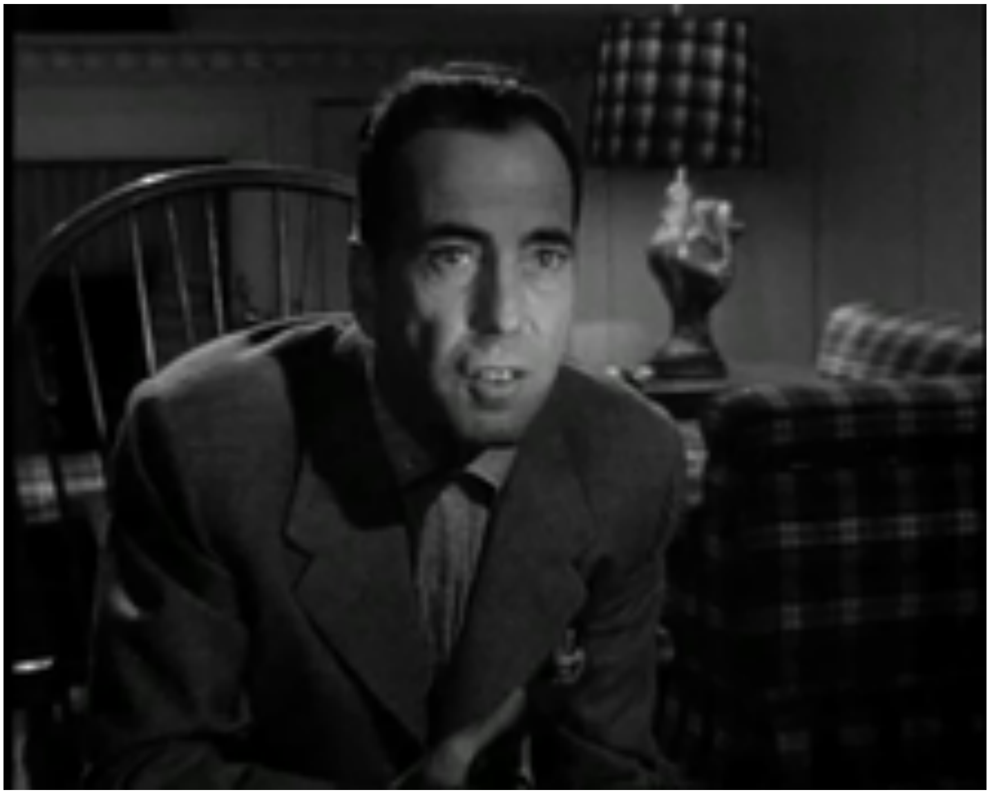

Figure 3: Still from *In A Lonely Place* (00:35:23)

"whodunits." Brub and Sylvia reenact how Dix envisions the murder occurred as he narrates, sitting in chairs and facing him as if they're in a car. Dix makes Brub put his arm around Sylvia's shoulders and squeeze her neck (figure 2) while narrating the scene that could be straight out of the novel: "You begin to squeeze. You're an ex-GI, you know judo. You know how to kill a person without using your hands…. Go ahead Brub, squeeze harder. You loved her and she deceived you. You hate her patronizing attitude."Dix's face is lit in a stark contrast of bright spots and shadows, emphasizing the gleam in his eyes and hinting at his potential for evil (figure 3). After he leaves, Sylvia tells Brub, "He's a sick man…there's something wrong with him." She begins to cite a psychology class she took in college, which angers Brub, who doesn't have a college degree, and she drops the topic.

Similarly, Laurel witnesses Dix almost kill a man in an altercation over a car accident, and after Dix proposes, Mel finds Laurel crying in her apartment. She tells him she's afraid of Dix and is going to leave. Mel reassures her by explaining that Dix has always been violent. "Well, it's as much a part of him as the color of his eyes, the shape of his head. He's Dix Steele. And if you want him, you've got to take it all. The bad with the good. I've taken it for twenty years, and I'd do it again." Laurel replies that he's made her "feel ashamed" for reacting in such a way, but that she's still leaving. Both women are incorrect in the end, and when their suspicions cause Dix to strangle Laurel, she accepts this as a natural consequence. Her tolerance for misogyny is a significant departure from Sylvia's suspicions that help her catch a serial killer in the novel.

Adapting a novel into a movie is a running theme through the film, creating an ironic commentary on changing crucial plot points. Dix is a suspect in Mildred's murder because he wants her to tell him the story of the book he reluctantly must turn into a script rather than read the book himself. "I won't work on something I don't like," he tells Mel and the movie's director, meaning the adaptation, but he clearly has no choice. As they remind him, he hasn't written a successful film in years. He works on the script with Laurel's help, and when it's finished, Mel protests that the producer won't like it because it's too different from the book. "The book is trash," Dix exclaims, before angrily lashing out and causing Mel to hit his head on the booth they're seated in. Films noir often differed from books they were based upon, and often in major ways. In fact, it is rarer to find a film noir that is utterly faithful to its novel than not. The commentary in *In A Lonely Place* fits with the film's often ironic tone, particularly in the way Bogart plays Dix, always sarcastically commenting on serious topics and never sincere until he is in love with Laurel. Originally, however, the film was meant to end with Dix acting much closer to his role in the novel. As scripted, the film would end with Dix successfully strangling Laurel, only to be arrested as he finished writing the script, her dead body in the room with him. Ray was unhappy with this ending, however, and improvised a new one with Bogart, Grahame, and Smith, where Dix doesn't complete the strangulation (figure 4). Ray later

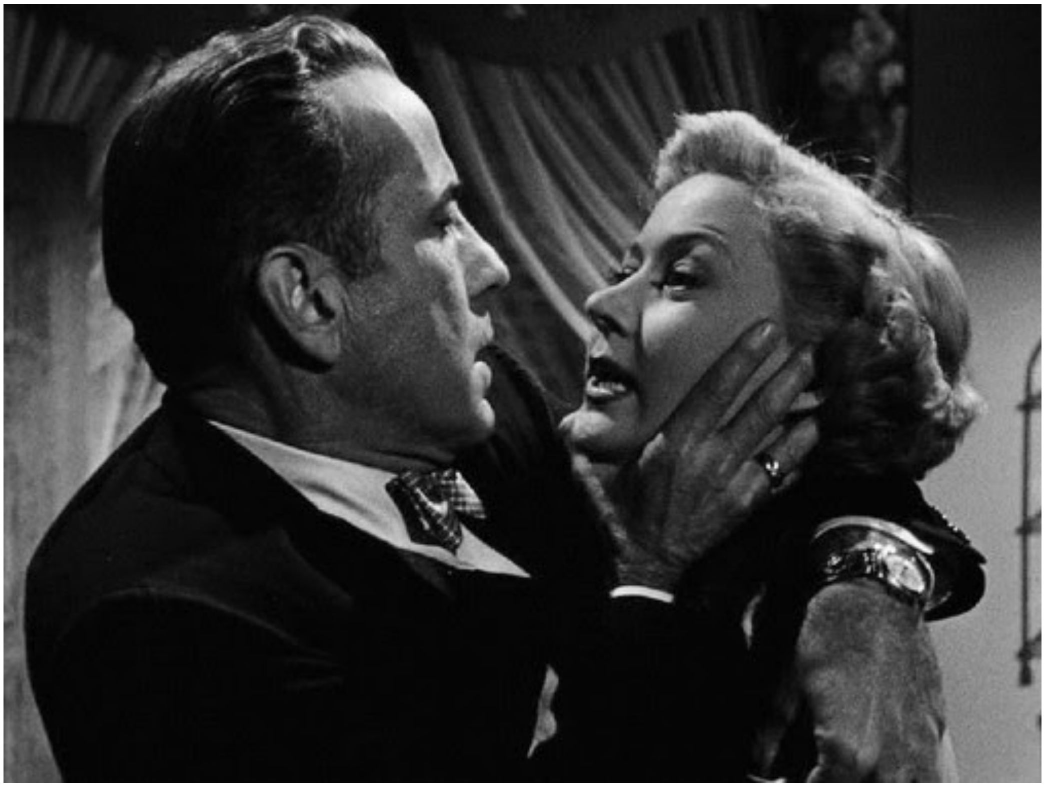

Figure 4: Still from *In A Lonely Place* (1:30:34)

explained he changed the end because "[r]omances don't have to end that way. Marriages don't have to end that way, they don't have to end in violence. Let the audience make up its own mind what's going to happen to Bogie when he goes outside the apartment" (qtd. in Eisenschitz 144). Ironically, of course, Laurel and Dix's relationship does end in violence, but it is violence Laurel apparently deserves according to the logic of misogyny. Of course, she also does not die, which seems to justify Ray's understanding of the scene. Biographers connect this choice to Ray's wishful thinking about his unhappy marriage to Grahame. Ray made Grahame sign an agreement to obey his direction without question as they worked together on the film because they fought so much, and they separated during the filming, which they tried to keep hidden from the studio (Eisenschitz 144). Personal explanations aside, the improvised end solidifies Dix as a tragic hero, up against the unfairness of life and all alone. Ray said the viewer of final scene might assume Dix is leaving Laurel to get drunk and drive around L.A. recklessly, or to get psychiatric help, "[a]nd that's the way it should be; either one of the two things could happen to him because now the pressure is off, but now there is an internal pressure. He has a problem about himself" (qtd. in Eisenschitz 146). Indeed, the ending fully shifts suspense to his internal turmoil rather than violence he might inflict on others. In fact, it suggests his violent outburst was justified. Much like a hardboiled hero brutally beating a criminal who threatens his honor, Dix reacted naturally to being falsely accused.

The film version of *In A Lonely Place* casts the novel's critique of misogyny into even sharper relief. Dix is an independent hero in a world of moral decay and corruption, wronged by a beautiful *femme fatale*-type character in a very stereotypical film noir. Women are suspicious and not trusting, inadvertently ruining their own lives and the lives of others. In the novel, Dix is a misogynistic veteran and serial killer, thwarted by two women's suspicions and investigation. Sylvia saves her life and the lives of countless others in the novel with Laurel's assistance, while Sylvia of the film is a footnote who speeds Laurel on to her doom. *In A Lonely Place* is an excellent example of the film noir genre and features brilliant performances and directing, but watching it alongside the novel from which it was adapted brings out the most sexist and misogynistic inclinations of the noir genre while demonstrating how the novel does the opposite.

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CHAPTER TWO
Hysterical Housewives: *The Innocent* (1949) and *Bunny Lake is Missing* (1957) written by Evelyn Piper and *Bunny Lake is Missing* (1965) directed by Otto Preminger

"Since Adam, men have blamed their weakness, mistakes and failures on women. Today, psychologists, sociologists, educators, military leaders and politicians, faced with a third world war, and a lot of other problems say, 'the mothers are to blame.' I suppose it all adds up to what Confucius once said: The superior blame themselves, the inferior put the blame on somebody else!"
- Elsie King Moreland, letter to the editor of *The Washington Post*, 31 Jan. 1951, p. 12.

A common ideological discourse in midcentury America dictated that women needed to be wives and mothers to reach their full feminine potential, but they could only do it on certain terms in order to succeed: married to a man, not working outside the home, and maintaining a certain middle class lifestyle. However, if they reached motherhood, it was impossible to avoid damaging their children due to common ideas about motherhood and psychology known as momism. This chapter will examine two works of suspense by Evelyn Piper, a pen name used by Merriam Modell, that address issues surrounding momism and motherhood during this time. Modell published several stories in the *New Yorker* from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, then two fairly unsuccessful novels in 1946 and 1948 under her own name followed by her first suspense novel, *The Innocent*, under her pen name in 1949. *The Innocent* received favorable reviews and was nominated for an Edgar Award for Best First Novel. Along with her British counterpart Celia Fremlin, Piper was the foremost female crime novelist who constructed her novels around the home and nuclear family during this period, creating tension and horror around and within family relationships in the home. She continued to enjoy success and a loyal fanbase in the suspense genre until she published her final novel in 1970. Two of her novels became major films in 1965: *Bunny Lake is Missing,* directed by Otto Preminger and starring Carol Lynley and Laurence Olivier; and *The Nanny*, produced by Hammer Films and starring Bette Davis. Here, I will analyze *The Innocent* and *Bunny Lake is Missing* (1957), novels in which women represent different kinds of supposedly pathological mothers, both overindulging and unmarried. Read together, both novels create a picture of how crime fiction protested the pathologization of mothers in the 1950s, specifically through the use of free indirect discourse.[9]

Free indirect discourse, or "the illusion by which third-person narrative comes to express, as though infiltrated by, or emanating from, the intimate subjectivity of fictional characters" (Keymer 82), emerged in popular use in novels with nineteenth-century authors such as Gustave Flaubert and Jane Austen. Free indirect discourse gives the reader access to characters' thoughts and feelings through a variety of methods, including but not limited to[10]: back-shifting tenses of verbs; lack of reporting clauses; "character-specific locutions" (Keymer 83); and suppression of or shift in punctuation. All of these strategies signal to the reader that they are reading a character's thoughts, and this is one method for third-person narration limited in perspective. This strategy works particularly well in crime novels, which need to limit the readers' knowledge to what only a few characters know in order to conceal the truth. It allows for suspense and insight into certain characters at strategic moments and weaves together a satisfying and slow reveal of the solution to the mystery at the end. Specifically, Piper's novels critique the misogyny problem of momism by using free indirect discourse to accomplish two things: take the pressures on midcentury mothers to the extreme and demonstrates how ridiculous and dangerous such pressures are; and make the reader complicit in a misogynistic view of mothers before condemning it, illuminating these treacherous patterns of thinking.

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[9] Critics disagree on the best way to refer to this formal feature. While all critics use the term "free indirect," they disagree on whether "discourse," "style," or "speech" is most accurate. For example, Roy Pascal prefers "speech" in order to keep the relation between direct and indirect speech clear (32); while Randall Stevenson believes the term "discourse" should be reserved for things spoken aloud, so he prefers "free indirect style" (32). Following Gérard Genette in *Narrative Discourse*, I use "discourse" because it's the most commonly used and wide-encompassing term.

[10] See Brian McHale, pp. 251-252, for a more complete list of these features.

As women were encouraged to aspire to motherhood and homemaking in the 1950s, the sources that pushed them into such roles also hindered their ability to find such a life fulfilling (Plant 16). Chief among these hindrances was the critique of momism, or the cult of motherhood in America, a term coined by Philip Wylie in his best-selling 1942 book *Generation of Vipers.* As he put it, "megaloid momworship has got completely out of hand. Our land, subjectively mapped, would have more silver cords and apron strings crisscrossing it than railroads and telephone wires" (185). For Wylie, this epidemic was responsible for everything wrong with American society, from the infantilization and emasculation of men to the dumbing-down of radio entertainment. Using borrowed and bastardized theories from psychoanalysis, Wylie claimed white mothers enslaved their sons with their love and over-protection, even comparing mothers to Hitler because he believed they controlled the economy and military by controlling their sons.[11] Experts were receptive to the idea of momism. Edward A. Strecker, president of the American Psychiatric Association from 1943-44, used Wylie's ideas in 1946 to argue that mothers "keeping children enwombed psychologically and not permitting them to grow up emotionally and socially" was society's "gravest menace" (219). Other psychoanalysts and behavioral scientists followed suit until it was commonly accepted that women who failed as mothers were to blame for an "epidemic of neurosis" and "emotional disorder" that raged through America (Lundberg and Farnham 23). Even feminist Simone de Beauvoir praised Wylie in 1947 for having "brilliantly described" (329) American moms and used his description as a springboard to explain why these women are not truly equal to men.

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[11] Psychoanalysis as a discourse was gaining popularity in America in the 1950s (Buhle 127), and Wylie credits Freud for a "sound" description of a child's perverted love for their mother (185). However, Melanie Klein's work, first published in 1937, made its way into popularity by the 1950s and has a more direct connection to momism. Klein was the first to use traditional psychoanalysis with children by observing them as they played, which formed the foundation for her important developmental psychology theories (Donaldson). For Klein, guilt and a desire to make reparations are a fundamental part of the mother-child relationship, and a mother who has too much guilt from her relationship with her own mother will over-indulge her children in an attempt to assuage her own guilt. This makes children "selfish" and unable to "develop true consideration for others" (Klein 319). While Klein developed these ideas to help her clients

Significantly, a mother's strategies for raising children were not the problem, but the overall "defective personalities" of American women were to blame, so they could not change their behavior to solve the problem (Buhle 152). A brief study of Evelyn Piper's career finds her first using momism and the patriarchal structure of the nuclear family to create suspense while signaling that this ideology may be ridiculous. Then, in later novels, the exaggerated and heightened environment of suspense novel provides a venue for Piper to protest the logic of momism. Readers could find within Piper's novels a counternarrative to the constant condemnation of their own role amidst the overwhelming amount of parenting advice from experts reinforced the messages of momism. This counternarrative is significant because, when contrasted with the abundance of material condemning mothers, criticisms of momism was only available in traces that the average

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identify the roots of their issues and break unhealthy cycles, subsequent theories of momism borrowed her ideas and shifted the blame onto mothers, as if a mother's pathological love is directly responsible for any negative outcome in a person's life.

woman would likely miss amidst the din of condemnation. However, mothers who encountered negative messages about themselves daily could find questioning of momism in Piper's novels, granting women access to a feminist discourse that went against all the voices who judged them. Additionally, these novels illustrate how female crime novelists reformulated the hardboiled genre to accomplish feminist ends.

***The Innocent* and Monstrous Men**

It's clear within the first few pages of *The Innocent* that things are amiss with Marjorie and Charles, a newly married couple with a sickly newborn baby. Prior to the events of the novel, Marjorie and Charles had an affair while he was married to Marjorie's friend Claire. Marjorie became pregnant and Claire died suddenly, allowing Marjorie to marry Charles. As the novel progresses, Marjorie discovers that Charles murdered Claire, possibly after he tried and failed to kill Marjorie. Marjorie is alone with her baby for most of the novel, and her investigation takes the form of inner thoughts and speculation, building hypothetical situations about what happened to Claire that turn out to be correct. Piper uses free indirect discourse throughout to give reader access to Marjorie's deductions while emphasizing her exaggeratedly dangerous position as a mother confined to her apartment, responsible for her weak baby, and vulnerable to her murderous husband. Near the end, she leaves baby Pete with Charles for a short time to enquire whether Charles really had tried to give her abortion drugs months prior, or if his syringe held insulin, which was his method of killing Claire. Dr. Newhouse reveals he gave Charles a syringe for Marjorie, proving that Charles didn't try to kill her, but upon her return to the apartment, she finds Charles wrapped Pete too tightly and placed him face down in his crib, which suffocated him. Marjorie's thoughts use the logic of momism to excuse and explain Charles's monstrous behavior, and when Pete dies, Marjorie blames herself for the circumstances that led to his death. Marjorie and Charles represent the most extreme version of momism in a sensational, extremely dramatic, and tragic novel. None of the characters can break free from the logic of momism, but the novel takes this logic to the extreme. Although it contains hints of the critique present in her later work, Piper stops short of a blatant critique of the logic of momism in her first novel.

As Wylie outrageously claimed, "the women of America raped the men" morally, robbing the men of their senses of ambition and right and wrong (188). Midcentury psychological explanations for male frustration and aggression in particular found their root in a boy's relationship with his mother. Strecker's work, for example, is entitled *Their Mothers' Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem*, and although he uses the gender-neutral term "children" throughout the book, it refers to sons, not daughters. Masculine aggression, racism, and prejudice became increasingly worrisome to progressive Americans after the racially motivated atrocities committed during World War II—and mother was the perfect person to blame (Feldstein 45). The women in Charles's life force him into a childlike state where he can't differentiate right and wrong or control his actions and provide the sheltered environment of the nuclear family that enables Charles to hide his monstrosity.

For all its hyperbole, critics and the public received *The Innocent* enthusiastically. Prominent mystery critic Anthony Boucher lambasted the genre in 1949, calling most suspense novels he'd read that year "flatly dull and incompetent material hardly worth publishing," yet he thought *The Innocent* an exception that was "really well written and plotted" (33). Another *New York Times* critic found the novel "melodramatic" but "logically developed" with "Freudian overtones" (Sherman 27). A Hollywood producer bought the rights with plans to adapt it into a film starring Jane Greer (Hopper A11), but the movie never materialized. *The Innocent* sets the stage for Piper's continued obsession with mothers, monstrous men, and psychology. She utilizes the same third-person narration style, filtered through specific characters' interpretation of events with a liberal use of free indirect discourse, in the rest of her novels to create suspense and comment on sexism and misogyny. *The Innocent* stands out for its representation of the horror of momism and its consequences, even if it stops short of a blatant critique, and is the foundation for understanding how Piper engaged with these topics throughout her career as the period's leading American domestic suspense author. Readers of *The Innocent* encounter a representation of momism that is so extreme, it draws attention to the absurdity of the logic.

In the first pages, a friend calls Marjorie a "mother type" (215), referring to her natural propensity to nurture others. Indeed, Marjorie enjoys parenting Charles throughout the novel. She watches what he eats because he has no self-control, cajoles and persuades him to go to work, constantly worries about his feelings. She also enjoys taking care of Pete, even though his care keeps her from a career she enjoyed. However, her natural instincts are her undoing. In the climactic scene, Charles claims Pete is dead because Marjorie is a bad wife. He didn't know how to put Pete to bed because Marjorie never taught him, and despite her grief, Marjorie agrees with him. Charles is more like a child than a father, and she "had always known that it is dangerous to leave a helpless infant with his jealous older brother. She had been a good intuitive mother until this once, when primitive fear for her own survival had jolted her out of motherliness and made her an animal in peril" (215). Of course, Charles physically is Pete's father, but functionally her child. Marjorie believes that Pete's death and her own are clearly the natural consequences of both her overindulgence of Charles and her selfishly leaving Pete when she feared for her own safety. She was too much of a mother, and then not enough, committing the sins of momism and neglect.

As Strecker argued, maturity leads to mental health and morality, but men cannot mature if moms refuse to "grant the boon of emotional emancipation during childhood" (219-20), and Charles's behavior confirms this argument. However, the extremity of his behavior and its immorality, as well as Marjorie's uncritical acceptance of it, signals it is flawed. He expects her to reassure him after he kills the baby, and even to agree that the baby interfered with their happiness anyway and they're better off without him. Shortly after her metaphor about him as her child, the novel switches out of her perspective and into Charles's as he thinks through why he must kill Marjorie:

> Margie had meant Mother as Aunt Alice had meant Mother, as Claire had meant Mother until she threatened him. Once Claire made those threats, she was no longer Claire because she was no longer Mother. A mother never made threats. Claire was his enemy because all the world except his mother had always been Charles' enemy. So he killed her. When Margie threatened Charles' security, she was no longer a mother, no longer Margie. Margie became an enemy who held his life in

> her hands. Such an enemy must be silenced. Marjorie was Charles' enemy now; he would have to kill her. (228-27)

Syntactical informalities like sentence fragments and repetition are classic elements of free indirect discourse (Keymer 83), and the novel uses these here to make Charles appear simple and childlike. This is in contrast to the free indirect discourse in Marjorie's perspective, which communicates a more complex, adult way of thinking. Therefore the reader understands that Charles is effectively a child—a dangerous one. If a woman does not fulfill his expectations for how she should treat him, he kills her. This fits with Marjorie's explanation to herself for why he committed murder, and for her part, she "could see now what she had done to Charles" (228) and sits passively as she waits for death. Luck saves her in the final pages when Dr. Newhouse drops in to check on them. *The Innocent*'s narrative demonstrates the logic behind Charles's behavior, but its extremity signals this logic is flawed. Regardless of how spoiled a man is, his incestuous thoughts about his wife as his mom and murdering his wife and child are clearly the behavior of a monster. When presented so blatantly and in such dire circumstances, his logic looks ridiculous, and by extension Marjorie's excuses for him become silly. Piper gives the reader access to the thoughts of the most ridiculous childlike man, who is incapable of caring about his own son, as an example of momism taken to its most hyperbolic extremes.

Marjorie's isolation, an exaggerated version of a mother trapped in her own home, also demonstrates how she cannot escape her own toxic love and its consequences. The majority of *The Innocent* takes place in one setting because Pete's weak immune system means he cannot leave the apartment, and Marjorie will trust no one else with his care. Therefore the narrative consists largely of free indirect discourse in the absence of other characters. The novel moves between Marjorie's thoughts and descriptions of actions or settings without using punctuation, italics, or other change in text. Short sentences, repetition, and character-specific locutions that are more complex than Charles's perspective delineate her ideas instead, as if the reader is listening in on her train of thought. This creates a sense of claustrophobia and imminent danger. By the time Marjorie realizes she might be in danger from her husband after she thinks through a conversation they once had, the well-established, repetitive nature of her thoughts builds to a terrifying urgency:

> All syringes look alike.
>
> All cats are gray in the dark.
>
> All women are gray in the dark; me or Claire, Claire or me, Charles didn't care.
>
> I haven't proved that, I've proved only that those two syringes were alike.
>
> *Claire had written: "I showed Edna how it worked without working it, because there are five cc. of insulin in that baby."*
>
> I have no reason to believe that the one Charles begged me to let him inject had insulin in it…. When Charles explained that I would be pretty sick for ten minutes or so, violent cramps, he said, and then it would all be over, he didn't mean *I* would be over, finished. (167)

No action takes place because she is sitting and staring down at her hands as she thinks, so the way her thoughts are presented create the growing urgency and sense of danger. The sentences and paragraphs shorten, losing reporting clauses, as she reaches the conclusion that the syringe might have contained a deadly amount of insulin and her thoughts grow more rapid-fire, as shown in the passage above. Repeating the word "all" at the beginning of three paragraphs in a row represents a train of increasingly panicked thought. The first sentence about gray cats looking the same in the dark comes from the frequent comparisons of women to curious cats and the dangers of being curious throughout the novel. This short sentence brings that metaphor back into the narrative while simultaneously building a link between Charles killing Claire and Charles killing Marjorie—an idea she has never considered before—while she tries to deny it. Free indirect discourse allows complex ideas to be communicated quickly, while increasing suspense and stakes and setting up for the final scenes, all while Marjorie is just staring at her hands.

Marjorie's obligations to her nuclear family trap her with a madman, and the reader gets firsthand access to her increasingly panicked realizations. Yet, as discussed earlier, her very nature as a mother type drew her to Charles and makes her dedicated to Pete's care. The reader is trapped in the apartment and in Marjorie's head, and even as the novel signals these circumstances are problematic, they also are unavoidable under the structures of the nuclear family and motherhood represented in the novel. Additionally, if everybody blames women for problems, then women are trapped in a horrific cycle of violence that they cannot change. That trap communicates the flaws of this ideology. When faced with undesirable circumstances, Marjorie swings from blaming herself to blaming Claire to blaming Charles's mother when, all along, women can't escape their fate. In an imaginary conversation with Marjorie's aunt, Marjorie thinks that she would explain that "[i]t was all Claire's fault" that Charles killed her because "Charles isn't responsible when someone he trusts turns on him" (177). It demonstrates the absurdity of blaming failed masculinity on mothers or "mother types" through its extreme circumstances and the unavoidability of those circumstances. However, since its exaggerated absurdity may be lost in the overall "melodrama" of the plot (Sherman 27), an obvious critique of momism might remain lost on the reader. Piper's later novel *Bunny Lake is Missing* takes these themes further with a heroic mother who overcomes monstrous villains and misogynistic societal structures despite her doubts about herself as a mother. These doubts find their roots in the patriarchal, even misogynistic, idea of momism.

***Bunny Lake is Missing* and Single Mothers**

Eight years after *The Innocent*, Piper published one of her most famous novels, *Bunny Lake is Missing*. It questions assumptions behind momism and the structure of the 1950s nuclear family while engaging with psychology, sex, and credibility deficits. While *Bunny Lake* is an overall more sophisticated and complex novel than *The Innocent*, analyzing the novels together demonstrates midcentury women who read them could catch a glimpse of American momism and standards for motherhood created a misogyny problem that kept women in their place. *Bunny Lake* follows Blanche Lake, a single mother of three-year-old Felicia—nicknamed Bunny—as Blanche discovers Bunny is missing from her first day at nursery school. When the police find no evidence Bunny was enrolled at the school or even living in Blanche's apartment, everyone around Blanche begins to question whether Bunny exists at all. Like Marjorie, Blanche became pregnant through an affair with a married man, but he stays with his wife and Blanche's motherhood is not legitimized by marriage, so this stigma follows her everywhere. The novel is narrated like *The Innocent*, in third person with liberal use of free indirect discourse to create suspense. Blanche's perspective is primary, but events are filtered through many additional perspectives, most notably Dr. Newhouse,[12] a psychiatrist who thinks he can save Blanche from her insanity by loving her, and Wilson, an author and friend of Blanche's who first expresses doubts about Bunny's existence. Her judgment and mental stability are already questionable because she is a single mother, and the novel's use of free indirect discourse causes the reader to question Blanche's sanity, even as Blanche herself grows more confident as the novel progresses. Despite Blanche's position as protagonist, it seems increasingly likely that she never actually had a daughter. If, as other characters suggest, Blanche is insane enough to imagine a child, the reader begins to doubt earlier evidence of her child's existence because Blanche could have easily imagined it. In the end, she shoots Wilson in the shoulder and almost kills Dr. Newhouse in a desperate attempt to get Bunny back. It is unclear whether she is a murderous madwoman or an understandably desperate mother until the police arrive with Bunny just in time and vindicate her. Bunny was kidnapped by disgruntled former teacher, Ada Ford. The nursery school director tells the police, "It's quite clear now…that Miss Lake doesn't require Dr. Newhouse's services" (171), and the doctor's diagnosis and all other doubts are swept away in an instant. The novel's use of free indirect discourse to create suspense and doubt take the themes of *The Innocent* further by making the reader complicit in the absurdity of momism and standards for motherhood before revealing the danger of this absurdity.

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[12] While Dr. Newhouse is also a character in *The Innocent*, they are two different characters. Edward Newhouse in *The Innocent* is a medical doctor with a reassuring but unattractive physical presence due to his stooped posture. Dennis Newhouse in *Bunny Lake* is a psychiatrist, well-dressed, and attractive.

Credibility and Gender

According to 1950s psychology, Blanche is caught in some kind of cycle of guilt and reparations with her own mother. Blanche is single with a child, and she might even suffer from mental illness or delusions brought on by the trauma of pathological mothering. While Wylie focused on momism's effects on boys and men, other experts applied the ideology of momism to girls and women. Pathological mother's love could possibly cause her daughter to become a deviant, unmarried mother herself one day. By 1959, experts estimated at least 200,000 babies were born out of wedlock yearly in the U.S. (Calderone 952), which is more than double the number just before World War II (Hanna 4). Psychologists, researchers, and those who worked with and on behalf of white unmarried mothers commonly attributed an unmarried mother's decision to have a baby—and experts believed it was a decision despite limited access to contraceptive options (Solinger 89)—to issues with her own parents. Leontine Young, the country's top expert on unmarried mothers postwar, performed a 1945 study of 100 unmarried mothers age 18-40 and found that all of them had difficult childhoods. She hypothesized that unmarried mothers who themselves had overly dominating mothers unconsciously had a baby out of wedlock both out of "revenge" and as a gift to their own mothers (298). This was "a symbol of her [the unmarried mother's] own desire to be again an infant cared for by the mother" (Young 298). An overbearing mother, therefore, could ruin the future for her daughter, her grandchild, and herself. These psychological explanations for unmarried mothers' behavior linked premarital sex to mental illness caused by a woman's own mother, and such explanations also meant a woman had not "achieved motherhood" without marrying, regardless of whether she had a baby[13] (Solinger 153). The mother of a later unmarried mother "dominated her daughter's life to an unhealthy degree, was usually possessive and often rejecting and sadistic" (Young 297); traits that Blanche remembers about her own mother. Her mother helped her and Bunny settle in New York City and lived with them briefly, taking care of Bunny until her nursery school began, but this help was paired with rejection of Blanche's choices and even Bunny herself. At one point, Blanche remembers she gave her mother a professional portrait of Bunny and her mother wept in shame, asking, "Do you imagine I'm going to stick it up on my mantel for everyone to see?" (31). Even as an adult, Blanche's mother plays the part of the pathological mother who doomed her daughter to single motherhood.

On top of the stigma of her position in society, the narrative communicates the burden of single motherhood and lays the foundation that Blanche might not be a trustworthy narrator by demonstrating her instability through the narrative. It also introduces the importance of psychology, which places the novel in dialogue with the discourse on neurotic single mothers. Blanche wants to avoid the mistakes her own mother made, so she has turned to experts for help. The novel uses punctuation in free indirect discourse such as parentheses and exclamation points to communicate Blanche's anxieties in the beginning. As she searches for Bunny in the empty school, Blanche worries Bunny is hiding and in a deep, infant-like sleep because she was traumatized by Blanche leaving her there:

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[13] Rickie Solinger explains in *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade* (2000) that white unmarried mothers were seen as unwell and deviant but worthy of help, while black unmarried mothers were not. For example, a 1959 study of unmarried mothers found that black mothers as a whole were more likely to keep their babies and were therefore judged as less mature as a whole, while white mothers could go either way on the maturity spectrum. The study's authors also argued that such choices were not related to race but social class, eliding race and racism on the surface while perpetuating racist ideas (Meyer et al 6). This is just one symptom of a long history of American racism, sexism, and misogyny that attempts to pathologize and de-legitimize the power and strength of black women and doubly oppresses them due to their gender and race. See Hortense Spillers' 1987 essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" for a critique of this system.

> She used to be able to do anything in Bunny's room when she was an infant and she wouldn't awaken. (Retrogression often occurred after a shock, the psychology book said. Worse retrogression than this, much worse. Grown children forgetting how to talk . . .) Well, if only Bunny was sleeping now it wouldn't matter so much that her mother made stupid choices. Blanche saw Bunny's sleeping face as she had seen it so often when she went in to make sure she hadn't thrown her covers off. She put her hand to her forehead and felt the grit on it. Her hands must be black with coal dust [from searching the basement]. She must not touch Bunny with the coal-heaver hands; only the softest, cleanest, most gentle hands should touch Bunny. "Oh, God," she prayed, "don't let any hands have touched Bunny!" (25-26)

Punctuation, sentence fragments, and proximal deictics indicate when the narrative moves between free indirect discourse and diegetic summary. Proximal deictics increase the sense of urgency; as Blanche thinks of what Bunny might be doing "now," it emphasizes that something potentially awful could be happening even as she thinks about it, and she is unable to fix it. The parentheses are mostly reserved for what Blanche knows she should do, but they do not always match up with what she has done. As a result, they become a kind of constant self-condemnation for failing as a mother, paired with worry about

Bunny’s fate to create many layers of anxiety. Her doubts are usually rooted in vaguely psychological parenting strategies and childcare theories. The novel engages in the psychoanalytic discourse so popular in midcentury America here by vaguely referencing things like “retrogression” and “psychology books,” establishing the importance of psychology for the rest of the story. It is clear Blanche knows the buzzwords around parenting theories and is trying to give her daughter the positive childhood her own mother did not give her, yet her thoughts conveys that these strategies create more worry than benefit.

Along with her inner doubts, side characters cast doubt on Blanche’s parenting skills in the beginning. The social stigma of working and single motherhood appears early in the novel when passersby condemn Blanche’s single status as she tries to reenter the nursery school after she finds no sign of her daughter at her apartment. The passersby voice and add to Blanche’s own fears about her shortcomings. As she faces the door with her back to the gathering crowd, the disembodied voices assume she is late to pick up her child, and one exclaims, “Couldn’t leave the television set! Call themselves mothers sending tiny little babies to school! All day long, too!” (22). Another mother, pushing a baby carriage, comments, “If anything’s happened [to Bunny] it’s a judgment, that’s what I say! That’s what they learn them in college—how to drop their kids and leave them for others to take care of” (22). Finally, Blanche gets angry, because “school is where children are safe” (22) and she stomps her foot, insisting she has to work and Bunny needs friends, to which the other mother replies, “Always excuses!” (22). In this scene, Blanche begins to realize that the progressive nursery school she relied on to fill in the gaps with Bunny has failed. If children are not safe in a school that does everything right, according to the latest childcare theories, then the passersby might be right: Blanche has failed as a mother. [14] The panic Blanche feels about her choices, particularly when Bunny goes missing, creates both suspense and a commentary on the difficulties of unwed motherhood. Blanche, who alternately internalizes and rebels against these difficulties, alerts the reader to the unfairness of the standards placed upon her.

All this points to Blanche's low position in society, which gives her a credibility deficit. According to Manne, if someone is "*interpreted* as a woman or nonwhite man [it] *predicts* and *explains* how they are viewed and treated, even though their social identity does not loom large in the consciousness of the listener—who may unwittingly come up with post-hoc rationalizations, or have no conscious reason at all, for finding their testimony suspect or their arguments unpersuasive" (187). Therefore, women and nonwhite men are automatically less credible when testifying or advocating for themselves, particularly in cases of sexual assault or domestic abuse. Credibility deficits discourage women and nonwhite men from speaking out against members of the dominant group and deny them justice when they do, and these deficits "serve the function of *buttressing dominant group members' current social position*, and protecting them from *downfall* in the existing social hierarchy" (Manne 194). They also reward women and nonwhite men who "*conform* to gendered norms and expectations, enforce the 'good' behavior of others, and engage in certain common forms of patriarchal virtue-signaling" (192). *Bunny Lake* uses this misogynistic logic to create suspense around Blanche's believability, and it also makes the reader complicit in the assumption that she is automatically less credible than the police and psychologist who question her as the narrative progressively destroys her credibility.

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[14] Dr. Benjamin Spock, whose popular and controversial methods were popular from the release of his book *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* in 1945, has a section on nursery schools which lay out the benefits of a good nursery school to a child. "It is particularly valuable for the only child, for the child without much chance to play with others" he says, a sentiment Blanche echoes (288).

It is never totally clear if Blanche imagined Bunny, meaning the reader gets to both observe her credibility deficit and participate in disbelieving her. The logic of how overbearing mothers affected girls suggests Blanche's own mother trapped her in a cycle of mental unwellness. Blanche is inclined to harm her child through pathological love and positioned outside traditional motherhood, or maybe she is so mentally unstable that she never had a child in the first place. Even though the reader believes Bunny is real in the beginning due to Blanche's perspective, Bunny herself remains outside the narrative because she is never physically present in the text until the final scene, and all Blanche's efforts to prove her daughter exists are thwarted. This creates increasing levels of doubt. Bunny's personal items are missing from the apartment, and Blanche left all her photo albums at her mother's house. Her mother is unreachable and cannot confirm anything. The nursery school has no record of Bunny, and Blanche claims Bunny colored all over her school acceptance letter so it was thrown away. The teacher who met Blanche and Bunny at the school on a Sunday to show them around turns out to not have been employed by the school, and Blanche has no proof such a meeting ever took place. Nor can Blanche's landlord confirm Bunny existed. Blanche hid Bunny because she could not sublet the apartment if she had a child. The police assure her that if she produces "one shred of proof that there is such a child" (81), they will do everything to find Bunny, but she cannot. All these events, piled on top of Blanche's constant doubts and the condemnation of other characters, create suspense and make the reader question whether they should believe the protagonist. However, if Bunny exists as Blanche claims, the reader can see how the other characters are treating Blanche horribly. By starting in Blanche's perspective, the novel lays a foundation that Bunny does exist which the reader cannot forget. For example, a letter from her friend about Bunny is printed in the text in the beginning, but the letter gets ruined after Blanche's credibility is questioned. Upon finding this out, Blanche bursts into tears and runs from the policeman and Dr. Newhouse before lean against the wall, waiting for an elevator. Dr. Newhouse reflects that "[h]e had a patient who did that. She would not use the couch or the chair; stood like that in the corner with her face pressed against the wall like a child who was being punished, and talked in that position" (86). In this scene, the reader read the letter along with Blanche in the beginning, so it is frustrating that the letter is now unavailable as proof. However, Dr. Newhouse finds Blanche's behavior similar to a mentally ill patient he had, casting doubt on her. Perhaps she imagined the letter, and the reader was experiencing her delusions along with her. Or, perhaps Dr. Newhouse is unfairly judging her grief as mental illness. In this way, the reader gets to experience the injustice of her treatment but also participate in questioning her credibility.

Violence and Credibility

Blanche's perspective is primary but other characters get several chapters and pages dedicated to their perspectives, which build upon the foundation of Blanche's potential instability and plant doubt about her while the novel is in their perspectives. Chief among these is Dennis Newhouse. He shows up about a quarter of the way through the novel when Louise sends him from their romantic dinner at Louise's apartment to help Blanche. Immediately, he enters the novel as an authority figure, coming in the capacity of a psychiatrist to unofficially evaluate and advise Blanche. Despite his constant unprofessional and even predatory behavior toward Blanche, his authority combined with his confidence and abilities establish him as a member of the dominant group who can make seemingly accurate judgments about her. Unlike Blanche, Dennis never worries about or justifies his choices. In his first scene, he observes her and thinks through his tense reaction to her attractive physical appearance. As he thinks, he presses "his thumb and third finger against the ethmoid bones in response to the sensation there which always accompanied tension" (48). The scientific name of facial bones cement his role as a rational and educated man and signal to the reader that they are in his perspective. He asks himself a series of questions about his tense reaction, answering them one by one, and methodically working his way to conclude that he's just annoyed about the changes to his scheduled relaxation time affecting his work the next day. He then reassures himself: "You could not let yourself be shifted by every wind—by every smile, he corrected, smiling. Nor could you help everybody….It was natural that he should feel this tension because his Monday evening with Louise was being loused up this way" (49). The long sentences are never interrupted by parentheses, and the character-specific, logical way he thinks communicate a calmer and more collected persona than Blanche.

However, like Dix in *In A Lonely Place*, Dennis's perspective hides but hints at the eventual truth. The narrative presents him as rational but contains clues that he is only fooling himself and the reader. When he convinces himself he's tense because his evening was ruined, it is clear—even though he doesn't admit it—that he's also attracted to Blanche. When she's distressed, he focuses on her "[l]ittle soft hands" (52) even as he outwardly acts with professional concern, and the thought of her smile brings an involuntary smile to his own face. He stereotypes her as a helpless woman straight out of an old-fashioned novel, weak and sickly and in need of male assistance. For example, as Blanche begins to recount her struggles of single motherhood when they first meet, she explains she hid with her friend Chloe when Bunny was a newborn because everyone judged her:

> "Having Chloe was very lucky for me." [Blanche said].
>
> Dennis looked at [Blanche's] clenched fists. Not as lucky as all that, maybe.
>
> "Chloe had a little house and when Bunny was six months old she made me go to secretarial school and then, when I was trained, Chloe found this nice woman to come in and take care of Bunny while she was away and I got a job, too, so I could start paying my way."
>
> The old expression "the woman pays" flashed through Dennis's mind, because she did, of course. Because this was payment. Friend or no, lucky or no, broad minded or not, this girl believed she was a wicked girl and that she *should* be stoned through the streets with a big red letter "A" on her bosom. (He could see the rapid rise and fall of her bosom, so agitated by just recounting this story.) (51)

The sexualized comparison to Hester Prynne further cements Dennis's attraction to Blanche, even as he denies it, and his impression of her fighting against old moral standards. He superimposes his own impressions of her here by associating paying with paying morally rather than paying financially in order to gain freedom, which Blanche actually refers to here. This also establishes his status as a kind of protector figure. If he loves her, and sees her outside society's acceptable moral limits, he can magnanimously step in. Any clues that Dennis's psychiatric expertise might not extend to himself do not damage his status as intellectually and morally superior to Blanche because the narrative indicates he cares about her. In his perspective, she appears irrational and crazy, loving a child that does not exist, while his love makes him protect her.

Ironically, even as Blanche seemingly grows more unhinged, she develops into a confident and strong character. The free indirect discourse communicates development in her character until her doubts disappear altogether. As she waits for Louise in the cold outside the nursery school, she reflects on her suspicions that Louise and Dennis know where Bunny is, and "now she [Blanche] was warm, hot, searing all through her. Her teeth had stopped chattering. (Her teeth gritted.) She could wait" (146). Here, the parenthetical aside emphasizes that she is physically embodying her emotions and determined to do something with her anger. The parentheses, first functioning as worry or response to invisible critics, now indicate that she is ready to take action and is certain her action is correct. Yet by now, her credibility has been eviscerated and it is unclear whether Bunny even exists, so this moment seems ominous, particularly because of Blanche's established propensity to violence within Dennis's perspective. Free indirect discourse both creates suspense and a commentary on the sanity of an unmarried mother. In the end, Blanche is vindicated, and the reader is made complicit with all the men who disbelieved her—men like Dennis, whose misogynistic villainy becomes clear by the final scene. The novel places the reader in the position of doubting its own protagonist, forcing the reader to participate in the misogyny of momism even if the reader themself might identify with Blanche on a personal level. However, this strategy potentially calls attention to the wrongness of this perspective, forcing the reader to see just how problematic it is.

Sexual Assault and Romance

While the novel makes the reader disbelieve Blanche, it also makes Dennis a villain, signaling his rational masculinity is ultimately not superior. In the afterword to the 2012 reprint of the novel, Maria DiBattista argues that Dennis's mind is "filled, as Freudian scriptures were filled, with Victorian notions of a woman's capacity to excite and to feel sexual guilt," and he does not realize Blanche is part of a new generation with the "declaration of independence, 'I am paying my own way'" (178). For DiBattista, this is an important facet of *Bunny Lake*'s feminist messaging. Indeed, Dennis's old-fashioned notions about women and his allegiance to psychoanalysis are wound together throughout the book. For example, as he looks wistfully at a handkerchief Blanche left behind in his apartment, he muses, "Wasn't there an Elizabethan poem about wanting to be her kerchief? 'I would I were the kerchief . . .' Or was it the poet wishing he were the rose at her breast? 'I wish I were the strait jacket . . .' Dennis said" (110). Here, he continues to see her through old-fashioned, romantic metaphors about women from literature, which he adapts into a little joke to himself about her insanity and his ability to help her. If Dennis were Blanche's straitjacket, he would be close to her and protect her, but he would also constrain her and keep her from doing what she wants. Indeed, Blanche's actions rarely fit into his framework for how she should behave, resulting in his joke about constraining her insanity. Moments like these hint Dennis might not see the world accurately and that his intentions are not as pure as they seem, even as the reader becomes aligned with his perspective on Blanche.

Near the end of the novel, however, it becomes clear that this perspective on Blanche is villainous when his obsession manifests in sexual assault. The chapter switches between Blanche and Dennis's perspectives as she threatens to shoot him if he stops her from looking for Bunny and he responds that he loves her. The narrative has been in Dennis's perspective for five paragraphs when he tries to explain why he and Wilson have been trying to control what Blanche is doing, which she sees as them sabotaging her search:

> "I went to the police station because I was afraid for you, what would happen. I intended to ask them to find you." (What is happening to me, he wondered, remembering the change of heart as he had walked toward the desk there, remembering, "Miss Lake, I love you.") "I didn't ask them to find you. I simply asked whether they had any news. They had none," he added hastily, feeling how the hope must have leaped in her. "They had another piece of evidence against the possibility that your child slipped out of school after you . . ."
>
> "I don't want to hear it!" Blanche said. (I want to hear, "Miss Lake, I love you.")
>
> "All right. I came here to persuade you to give the police your mother's address. And once they get your mother and she puts an end to the doubts in their

> minds . . .” He heard the snap of her pocketbook clasp. (It must be. Getting a handkerchief out, no doubt.).
>
> “Don’t cry, or do cry, but first give them the address.”
>
> She came out of the pillar and moved toward him. He put his arm around her and she did not mind it or, this time, the softness of his sweater.
>
> “My place is right here. The quickest thing to do will be to call from there.” She did not agree but she was silent, and that, he knew from his experience with his other patients, was permissive. “I’ll call the police and get them started and you rest a bit.” She did not say no. (131-132)

The next three pages remain in Dennis’s perspective as he leads her into his apartment, lays her on his bed, removes her shoes, and kisses her, all without her consent. Since the book always stays in one perspective for at least a few pages before switching, and since Dennis is one whose thoughts we are reading long before and after this, it is clear that the parentheses between dialogue describe his thoughts rather than hers. He hears her say she doesn’t want to hear more bad news about her child, yet he interprets it to mean that she is thinking about him, not Bunny. The placement of the parentheses right after Blanche speaks makes it seem as if she is more concerned with his declaration of love rather than her search for her daughter. He takes advantage of her distraught state due to these assumptions about what she wants, but from his perspective, his actions are perfectly logical. She doesn’t refuse, which he interprets as consent.

However, his assumptions are incorrect, which becomes clear in the second parenthetical aside. He assumes she’s getting a handkerchief out of her purse when the reader knows from earlier that she is gripping Wilson's gun in her purse and thinking about whether she should shoot him, not about how she loves him. Dennis's willful misinterpretation becomes even more obvious after he leaves and the narrative switches to her perspective. She accidentally falls asleep in exhaustion, and when she wakes and remembers Dennis kissing her, she almost kills herself with the gun, comparing herself to "the hypnotized guinea pig in the biology lab, when the teacher had stroked its soft belly and it lay tranced on its back with its legs in the air" (144-145). She regrets this encounter primarily because it distracted her from her search, and the image of her as a helpless animal communicates her weakness to authority figures like Dennis, who decide her sanity, capability, and desires, and have the power to control her. This moment signals to the astute reader that Dennis's obsession is not love, but desire for control over a woman he believes insane. Significantly, it is possible to understand these scenes differently, since the free indirect discourse alternates so rapidly with diegetic summary and dialogue. Pascal notes that this type of "contamination" is very significant in how readers interpret all types of novels (57). When free indirect discourse "alternates in short snatches with narratorial account and direct speech," the "subjective implications" of the free indirect discourse color the way the reader interprets the otherwise relatively neutral parts of the narrative, which is precisely what happens here (Pascal 57). Here, Dennis's perspective bleeds into the narrative and make him appear to be acting logically until Blanche's thoughts are revealed. This illustrates the murkiness of sexual assault and even makes the reader participate in his logic, at least for a few pages. This is one more way the novel uses free indirect discourse to make the reader potentially complicit in misogyny before condemning it.

Therefore this novel subverts the genre by turning the trope of romance amidst the dangerous adventures of a crime novel on its head. Often women fall in love with heroes who treat them in ways that can be generously described as questionable, and this romance can be a driving force for the plot. For example, hardboiled protagonists often indulge in one-night stands or even briefer encounters with women they barely know, such as Mike Hammer in *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952), who immediately kisses almost every woman he meets despite his long-term relationship with his secretary. Women are usually happy to comply or, if they are averse at first, they can inexplicably turn to true love. Other times, as Sean McCann argues in his analysis of Chandler's short story "Try the Girl," a woman might be abused for a greater good. One key scene in the story is a "barely concealed rape fantasy" that conveys "a tacit image of mystic communication and high idealism" (McCann 156). Both the detective and the woman he assaults suffer violence and are therefore united. This is a key component of what McCann argues is Chandler's commitment to populism, as his male hard-boiled detectives "absorb the injuries and attitudes of a host of minor characters" across Los Angeles to unite everyone in "common feeling," often violence and suffering (158), all elements that were influential on the hardboiled genre as a whole. *Bunny Lake is Missing* offers a counter-narrative to the "masculine popular energy" popularized by Chandler (McCann 157). After an unwanted sexual encounter, Blanche feels helpless and violated, not part of a greater good or higher love story, and she channels the feelings to action. Ultimately, she does not kill herself, instead realizing “she had been the guinea pig, but that didn’t mean she had to die a guinea pig” (145). This is when she takes matters into her own hands, setting out with the gun to confront Louise.

Motherhood and Stereotypes

For all the feminist messaging in *Bunny Lake*, the final third of the novel relies upon sexist stereotypes of mothers to create the villain and violates genre conventions to include her in the narrative. Bunny’s kidnapper, former nursery school teacher Ada Ford, is not even named until page 138, in the final third of the book. Dennis advised Louise to fire Ada before the events of the novel because he diagnosed Ada with “menopausal psychosis” since, as Louise explains, Ada couldn’t accept being childless when she reached menopause (158). The first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*, published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952, mentions menopause, but does not connect psychosis to menopause or any other stage in a woman’s sexual development. Therefore Dennis’s diagnosis has no basis in medical standards of the day, even though his diagnosis seems plausible when he explains it and is confirmed in the world of the novel when Ada’s behavior matches his diagnosis. While Blanche has a gun trained on her in the end. Louise explains why she thinks—correctly, it turns out—that Ada executed a complex plan to kidnap Bunny and raise her as her own. Ada used her old key to gain access to the school and get Bunny enrolled after hours, then enlisted Blanche’s mother to get Bunny’s things. After Blanche dropped Bunny off at the school, Ada walked out with Bunny, dressed in an old teacher smock. Louise explains Ada believes she is predestined to be a mother, and the kidnapping fulfills this destiny (160).

This explanation takes up almost four pages, like a short story within the novel, in order to provide enough detail for the explanation to make sense. When Dennis suddenly remembers Ada and mentions her to the police, they capture her and recover Bunny. A childless spinster takes the blame. Structurally, this late introduction of the villain does not fit the genre. In a typical suspense novel, according to Todorov, "[t]he reader is interested not only by what has happened but also by what will happen next" (50), meaning the reader wants to figure out the mystery but also see if the characters will survive to solve it. However, Blanche never solves the mystery and Bunny is recovered completely offstage. And as T.S. Eliot argues, in "the ideal detective story we should feel that we have a sporting chance to solve the mystery ourselves" so when a suspect like Ada is introduced suddenly at the end—and, in fact, never appears physically in the text—it introduces "an irrational element…which offends us [the readers]" (141). Indeed, Otto Preminger reworked Piper's plot for his 1965 film adaptation because he found Ada "very weak and uninteresting" and was not satisfied with her role as a villain (qtd. in Sarris 81).

Despite this, the novel works because it relies upon sexist stereotypes already in readers' minds even as its structure violates genre conventions. If the goals and motivations of all women in the world of *Bunny Lake* have to do with child-rearing, then Ada is completely adrift, surrounded by children at work and unable to have her own. The novel is not shy in its condemnation of her status as a childless spinster. Her psychotic motivation, and the subsequent overly elaborate plan to kidnap Bunny, is only plausible if the readers can readily agree that all women want to be mothers above all else, and if their desire is unfulfilled, they might go crazy. A woman who fits this stereotype cannot ever fulfill her role in the heteronormative nuclear family, so she is at the fringes of society. These assumptions make an effective logical bridge between the mystery and the solution that is otherwise missing from the novel. Therefore, even while *Bunny Lake* participates in the feminist conversation about motherhood, it locates its feminism in young, white, beautiful characters and relies upon sexist stereotypes about others to make the plot work. This strategy is so effective that DiBattista's afterword praises the novel's feminist message and ignores the novel's treatment of Ada altogether. Readers of the 1950s were also satisfied with the novel. The *Chicago Tribune* called the novel "[r]ealistic and grueling" (Drake B7) and *The Washington Post* said it contained "a wealth of superior plot and characterization" (Staff Reviewers E7). The novel became one of Piper's best-known works and is first among a list of novels in her obituary ("Woman Hit" B7). Despite Preminger's reservations about Ada, he still liked the story enough to purchase the rights. The type of reader whose own reality matched Blanche's might find a reassuring critique of momism, but the type of reader who saw her reality reflected in Ada's found only sexist condemnation. Either way, the novel succeeds logically as a mystery despite its flaws by relying on sexist assumptions about certain women even as it problematizes similarly problematic assumptions about other women.

While *Bunny Lake* participates in the psychological discourse on momism in the 1950s, the novel is not so enthusiastic about the efficacy of psychology and psychoanalysis, at least when it comes to young, beautiful, white women. When Blanche is vindicated in the end, all the questions about Blanche's sanity are revealed to be antiquated and sexist, and her violent reactions to these questions are proven justified because she was trying to save her daughter. She also quiets her doubts about her parenting and takes matters into her own hands in ways she never has before. However, her problems are not over. Wilson still assumes she wants Dennis in the end, Dennis is struggling with his attraction to her even after she almost shot him, and she did not actually play much of a role in finding Bunny. Louise figures out Bunny was kidnapped by Ada, but Blanche doesn't believe her, and the police find Bunny through Blanche's mother, who leads them to Ada and Bunny. Blanche's triumphs are largely personal and have not changed anything about the patriarchal system that has caused her such grief. This novel highlights the standards of the traditional family and the way misogynistic authority figures can weaponize psychological diagnoses or sexual encounters for those women who do not stay in line. This, wrapped in negative ideas about single mothers and mothers in general, create a patriarchal system that traps Blanche. When she attempts to step out of others' assumptions about her, she is questioned and even sexually assaulted, revealing the misogyny trying to keep her in her place in patriarchal society. As a single mother in the 1950s, Blanche has violated society's expectations of her, but she refuses to "pay," as Dennis and society at large thinks she should (51). Despite the fact that Blanche is unrepentantly not creating a traditional family herself or by giving up her baby for adoption, she has a happy ending, and the novel chronicles the damage these standards can do. *Bunny Lake is Missing* and *The Innocent* question the epistemology of motherhood in midcentury America; specifically, who gets to be a good mother and what good mothering means. In these heightened narratives, momism is absurd and psychology is inadequate.

Piper went on to question momism more explicitly in her later novels, such as *The Nanny* (1964), and her early novels lay the groundwork for her critique.

***Bunny Lake is Missing* (1965) Film**

Otto Preminger purchased the film rights from Piper for $75,000 in 1958 (Hirsch 400), which would be more than half a million dollars in 2022. He worked with several different screenwriters until he came up with a rewrite that satisfied him. In the film, Blanche becomes Ann (Carol Lynley), an unmarried mother who has just moved to London from America with her brother, Stephen (Keir Dullea), a new character who does not appear in the novel. Newhouse (Laurence Olivier) becomes an older detective, sympathetic of Ann yet skeptical of Bunny's existence in the face of no evidence proving she is real. Ada becomes the quirky elderly spinster and potential lesbian who runs the nursery school with Louise—the film hints that they share an apartment upstairs in the nursery school, a portrait of a scantily clad woman hung over the bed—and writes down

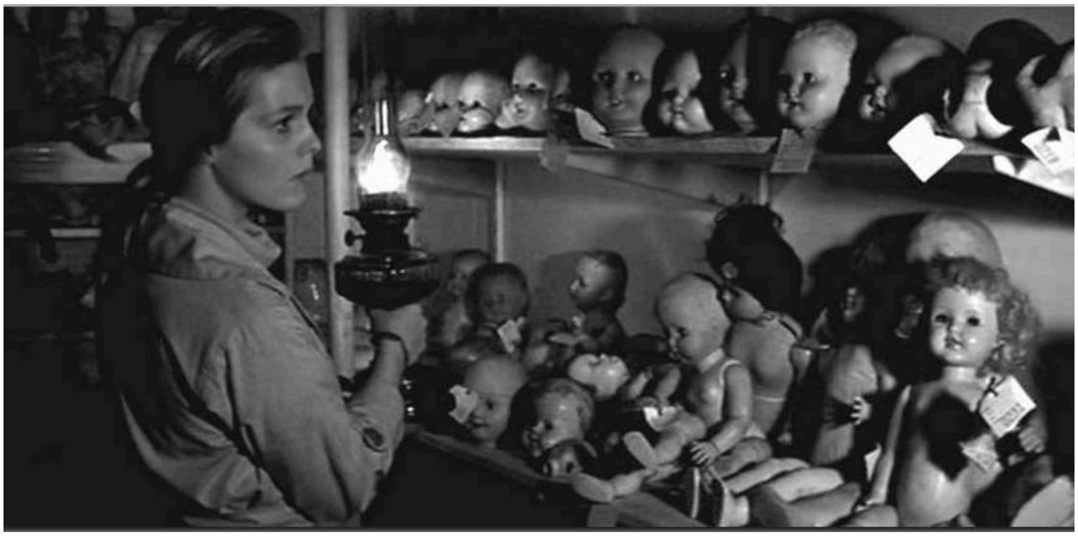

Figure 5: Still from *Bunny Lake is Missing* (01:07:46)

the children's dreams for a book. The audience learns Bunny is real in the beginning of the third act, when Ann picks up Bunny's doll in a creepy nighttime scene at the doll hospital (figure 5), but Stephen knocks her out and burns the doll, then checks her into the hospital, claiming she is insane. Ann escapes from the hospital and finds Stephen burying Bunny's possessions and about to strangle and bury the girl herself, who is sedated and hidden in his car trunk. Ann plays with Stephen to distract him in the surreal climactic scene because Stephen possesses the personality of a jealous child alongside his adult personality. Ann desperately attempts to escape with Bunny when he is distracted but to no avail until Newhouse arrives as Stephen is pushing Ann on the swing. The theme of insanity remains, but significantly, it is transferred to Stephen and Ann is cast in the role of a victim of her older brother's incestuous insanity, trying to break free and live her own life with her daughter.

Figure 6: Still from *Bunny Lake is Missing* (00:58:00)

The film was panned in the U.S. and saw disappointing ticket sales. *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther claimed that "nothing—outside of a new script—could save this phoney [sic] film" (16) and Carol Lynley speculated people didn't want to see it because a kidnapped child is a difficult subject, or because most other films were in color by 1965, but she ultimately claimed, "I also felt the critics reviewed Otto the Terrible more than the movie….I was heartsick" (qtd. in Hirsch 407). Preminger indeed had a certain reputation at this time, especially in America, after pushing the limits of censorship with some of his films. Long after the release of the film, Keir Dullea remembered Preminger's "sadistic streak" and propensity to humiliate actors (qtd. in Hirsch 403). Dullea lamented that his personal tension and insecurity made his performance lack dimension, and he wished he had been able to make Stephen "more normal-seeming at the beginning, before he turns" (qtd. in Hirsch 404). However, even if Dullea's wide-eyed, slightly unhinged stare at every other character had been dialed down, the film would still lack subtlety (figure 6). In his first lengthy appearance onscreen, Stephen aggressively confronts a

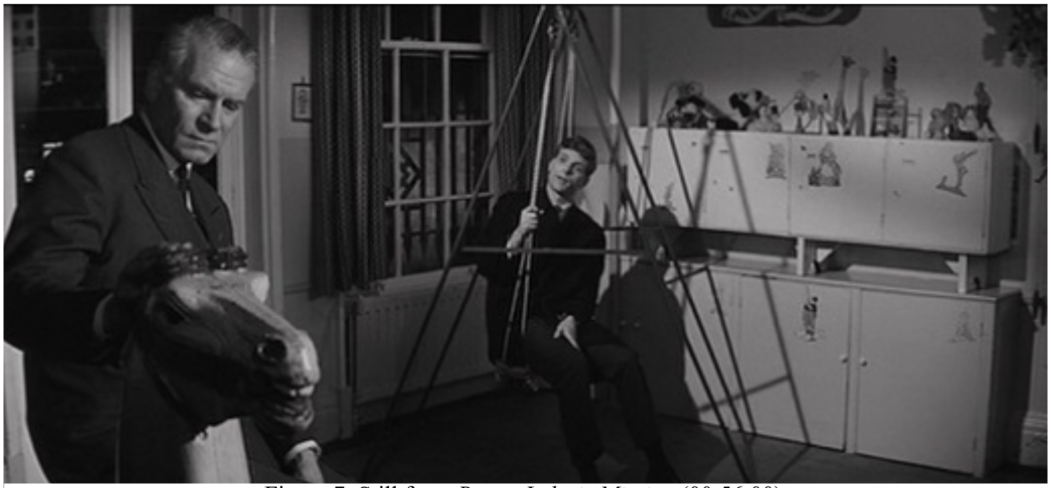

Figure 7: Still from *Bunny Lake is Missing* (00:56:00)

nursery school teacher about their lack of care for Bunny. He tells the teacher, “If you would worry less about yourself, Miss Smollett, and more about this child you seem to have misplaced, we might begin to get somewhere,” while a cuckoo clock sounds over his shoulder and he glances at it as he speaks, in case the sound and motion of the bird coming out of its door weren’t enough to catch the viewer’s attention. Later, when Newhouse interviews Stephen about his family, the cuckoo clock loudly says “cuckoo” again. This time, Stephen swings on a playground swing that is inexplicably indoors and talks about his dead father and “peculiar” mother (figure 7). Again, the clock paired with Stephen’s actions not-so-subtly foreshadow his psychosis and the climactic ending.

Preminger wanted to make it very clear that Stephen is insane, and the film lends itself easily to a psychoanalytic reading. In a 1966 essay in *Moviegoer*, Richard McGuinness gives the film the full psychoanalytic treatment, concluding that Stephen “sees the womb and incestuous unity as positive and the outside world and society—the non-womb—as death. Bunny is disunity and, therefore, Dullea equates her with death in the outside world: he must help her achieve her proper death-state. Lynley [Ann], however, having natural mother ties to Bunny, sees her daughter as life, and graduating into the outside world, is pulled away from Dullea” (60). Esther Sonnet finds the shift from Ada to Stephen as the insane character removes “the social critique that underpins Blanche’s journey” and “the substitution of a brother for menopausal hysteric channels the film into a claustrophobic figuration of individual psychosis, childhood regression, repressed desire, and the taboo of incest” (78). Indeed, the film adaptation removes any critique of patriarchy, misogyny, or sexism with these changes. Like the novel, the film suggests Ann imagined Bunny as a suspense device, but no psychologists are available to analyze her, and when Newhouse separates her from Stephen to talk, it becomes clear instantly that Stephen is the crazy one. When it comes to him, the film comfortably provides a psychological explanation that goes far beyond Ada's throwaway "menopausal psychosis" diagnosis. Again, the young and beautiful white woman (figure 5) is vindicated, and the crazy person becomes a conventionally attractive white man rather than a spinster. Ada's character in the film is certainly eccentric, but she shrewdly suspects Stephen and turns Newhouse's suspicion toward Stephen.

At first, transferring culpability away from a spinster might seem to undo the sexist messaging that threatens the novel's feminist agenda. And in fact, there are no female suspects in the novel; Stephen and Ann's landlord, Wilson (Noël Coward) are the only likely culprits aside from Stephen's general suspicions of the nursery school at large. Coward's exaggeratedly creepy performance and his character's propensity to come in to Ann's apartment uninvited and make suggestive comments make him a red herring for the first part of the film. However, the power dynamic between Ann and Stephen as a result of their incestuous relationship elides any significant consideration of Ann's struggle to overcome her stigma as a single mother. Preminger claimed "an important part of the film" is its "certain social theme here: if you do not conform to the rules of society [like Ann, an unmarried mother], the law does not protect you" (qtd. in Pratley 152), yet the film does not communicate this as the novel does. Stephen claims Newhouse does not believe Bunny exists. Yet when confronted with this, he still continues his search, and of course, Stephen constantly tries to remove suspicion from himself throughout the film. In fact, when

Newhouse questions Ann about her childhood "imaginary friend" named Bunny in a pub, he approaches her gently, with little apparent suspicion. Stephen's violent reaction when he finds them alone together inspires Newhouse to pursue a lead that ultimately identifies Stephen as the culprit.

The film maintains its suspense about Bunny's existence by letting Stephen speak for Ann, effectively putting her in the role of a mother so distraught and reliant on her brother and the police that she has little motivation to search for her daughter herself. In one scene, Ann sobs that she'd rather Bunny be dead than molested, and Stephen comforts her by patronizingly saying Bunny must be safe with another family. The camera pushes in to a close-up of the two of them, both in profile, with both of Stephen's hands tenderly holding Ann's face. His face on the right is lit evenly from the front, with no shadows, while a harsh, undiffused light hits her face from the side, casting dark shadows over the half of her face closest to the camera (figure 8). The light emphasizes the tears hanging in her eyelashes while the shadows obscure her eyes. Such harsh lighting on a woman in

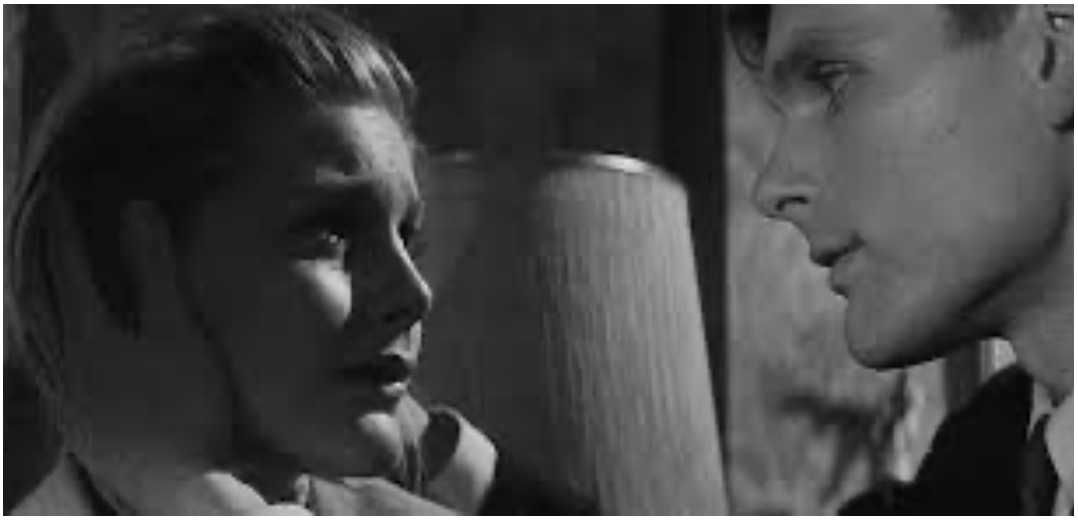

Figure 8: Still from *Bunny Lake is Missing* (00: 43:07)

close-up is a classic visual motif of film noir, usually a femme fatale, creating "a hard, statuesque surface beauty that seems more seductive but less attainable, at once alluring and impenetrable" (Place and Peterson 66). However, Preminger flips the motif. Stephen is the villain and Ann is loving and innocent, the opposite of a femme fatale. The lighting and the close-up in this scene give the viewer a moment in Ann's perspective by forcing the viewer to get almost as close to Stephen as she is and see him in gentle, even light while he talks calmly and reassuringly. The shadows on Ann's face emphasize her confusion and anguish, obscuring her cheekbones and eyes, the features that such lighting would highlight if it were emphasizing "statuesque beauty." It casts Stephen as her calm savior who she has no reason not to trust, creating sympathy and emphasizing her helplessness.

Ann, then, is cast in the role of victim and a mother whose emotions keep her from searching for Bunny. Even in the end, her desperate efforts to save her daughter only buy time until Newhouse can save her. Viewers who were fans of the book would have encountered a different message about motherhood when they watched Preminger's film. The film does not engage with momism or the ideas behind it. Ann becomes a passive victim with only a few passing references to her single mother status, and the suspense ultimately centers around her insane brother. While the film's treatment of Ada is more sympathetic, the film loses the novel's feminist messaging altogether in its adaptation. If Elsie King Moreland saw the film, she would have found respite from "all this talk about momism, Mom's boys, sob-moms, over-possessiveness and sentimentalism" (12) about which she complained to *The Washington Post* in 1951, but only because it is entirely absent.

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CHAPTER THREE

Quiet Queerness: *Strangers On A Train* (1950) written by Patricia Highsmith and *Strangers On A Train* (1951) directed by Alfred Hitchcock

"Psychiatric physicians generally agree that indulgence in sexually perverted practices indicates a personality which has failed to reach sexual maturity. The authorities agree that most sex deviates respond to psychiatric treatment and can be cured if they have a genuine desire to be cured. However, many overt homosexuals have no real desire to abandon their way of life and in such cases cures are difficult, if not impossible….sex perverts, like all other persons who by their overt acts violate moral codes and laws and the accepted standards of conduct, must be treated as transgressors and dealt with accordingly."
-United States Senate, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 3.

This chapter turns to Patricia Highsmith, whose first novel, *Strangers On A Train*, was published in 1950; her last, *Small g: a Summer Idyll*, was published a month after her death in 1995. Many of her novels have been adapted into films, starting with Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers On A Train* in 1951 and the most recently, Adrian Lyne's *Deep Water* in 2022. All of her novels and many of her short stories are concerned with crime, and most of them contain questions of whether the characters will survive, putting them roughly in Todorov's suspense category. However, when Highsmith's novels are filtered through Todorov's typology or compared to other crime novels by similar authors, hers are clearly different in many of the basics. In classic detective fiction, a crime shatters the peaceful world and the detective must recreate order by solving the crime and make the world safe again. Empirical evidence exists; the right person just needs to find it and put it together. This gives the reader the impression that crime novels may take place in an overly dramatic and dangerous world but, nevertheless, the novels follow the rules of logic in the real world. T.S. Eliot's definition of a successful mystery includes the caveat that readers must "feel that we have a sporting chance to solve the mystery ourselves" (141), which means that crime novels usually rely upon understandable logic that helps detectives find murderers, solve crimes, and identify criminals' motives. Then in the end, readers can trace a pattern through the events of the novel to understand how the detective caught the criminal. The genre, therefore, is traditionally heavy on plot and action with spare prose and simple dialogue in order to emphasize this logic, and whether readers are trying to pick up on clues with Sherlock Holmes or watching Dix Steele inadvertently give away the truth about Brucie in front of Sylvia, the end is always comfortingly satisfying.

However, a Highsmith novel dispenses with that kind of empirical logic and heavy focus on plot. As one critic says, Highsmith "remorselessly delves into abnormal states of mind and is more concerned with [character] motivation than with the formulaic plotting that normally characterizes the genre" (Moritz 302). As a result, her novels are not primarily concerned with the investigation or the crime but are about the imaginary people, mostly men, she creates through language. Unlike other crime novels that are action-driven, Highsmith's novels revolve around character, and it is character that pushes the plot forward and creates suspense. Her characters are not motivated by any kind of justice or desire to do good, and are often so ambivalent or confused about their own motivations that the reader cannot sort things out either. A reader will not leave a Highsmith novel feeling comforted that a detective can solve a crime because there is little to no empirical evidence available to detectives, and if justice is served, it is through some other means. As an author who is shelved in the crime genre, Highsmith resists the explanations and exposures of that genre that follows a plot to justice.

Therefore this chapter studies Highsmith by studying her characters. The topic of character has enjoyed a recent resurgence in literary studies with books such as *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies* (2019) by Toril Moi, Rita Felski, and Amanda Anderson. This book is particularly helpful when looking at Highsmith, specifically Felski's chapter titled "Identifying with Characters." Moi, Felski, and Anderson state in their introduction that characters are, among other things, "objects of identification" (4) so that critics can "recognize our responses to characters not only as situated within ideological and sociohistorical contexts but also as importantly moral and affective in ways that much of the historical work in the field has left unexplored" (7). The twentieth century saw a turn away from considering characters as people and toward, as L.C. Knights argues in his 1933 essay, "an abstraction from the total response in the mind of the reader…brought into being by written or spoken words" (18). Other structuralist scholars, including Vladimir Propp and Roland Barthes, went on to argue that characters are just effects or functions of narrative.[15] Such an approach limits discussions of how readers engage with characters. Indeed, because of this refusal to consider characters as people, Felski says identifying with characters seems "slightly shameful—something that other people do (the naive, the unschooled, the sentimental)" (77). Felski writes in defense of identification and argues that it is crucial to understand when talking about character. When readers identify with characters, it can be "ironic as well as sentimental, ethical as well as emotional….may confound a sense of self rather than confirm it" (77). Felski is interested in a wide-ranging approach to character that is reader-focused without ignoring aesthetics or the formal ways narratives are conveyed. This enables critics to have it both ways: characters can be thought of "as being like persons without scanting or shortchanging their aesthetic qualities" while not being strictly realistic because readers are drawn to "qualities of vividness and distinctiveness" that may be present in characters that are aliens, elves, animals, talking toys, and anything else fantastical (78). Unavoidably, readers identify with characters as people rather than signs on a page and extrapolate meaning from them as such, yet readers are always easily able to differentiate fact from fiction. This is where Felski finds formalist theories of character most unsatisfactory, for as she argues, characters often live outside the works to which they are constrained: in the minds of audiences and in different forms of adaptation and fan fiction. Characters "are portmanteau creatures, assembled out of disparate materials drawn from fiction and life" and "in identifying with characters, we connect through them to other persons and things" (90). Readers need not like a character or feel they are just like them to identify; instead readers need "affinity that is based on some sense of similarity" that "does not exclude complexity" (79). Felski offers a schema to help explain how readers identify with characters. She outlines four formal methods texts use that make readers identify with characters—alignment, allegiance, recognition, and empathy—to support her thesis. Felski's essay offers an excellent approach for studying Highsmith, an author whose novels touch on political topics like queerness in midcentury America but resist taking a stance. By examining how readers identify with her characters, we can begin to make sense of the effect and import of Highsmith's novels. Specifically, I study how character identification functions in her first novel, *Strangers On A Train* and its Hitchcock adaptation. By making readers identify with a morally ambiguous character, the novel raises questions about queerness and morality, particularly when read along the film adaptation, which inserts 1950s morals into the story.

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[15] See Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), and Barthes, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of the Narrative* (1966).

Literature Review

Critics are divided on almost everything about Highsmith, from how to study her to what she stands for, particularly when using the lens of queer studies, where critics remain divided on Highsmith's potential to advance or impede a liberatory queer politics. Highsmith, a gay woman, almost always includes queer themes or characters in her novels, but there is no critical consensus on the meaning of these themes and characters. Judith Halberstam cited Highsmith as one of the authors who should be studied when thinking about queer negativity in the 2005 PMLA panel on "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory." Victoria Hesford studies formal features in Highsmith's work, arguing the work contains an "underlying meaninglessness" best "captured by the tern 'perversion'" which "offers us access to a different affective history of queerness in the United States" (103). Hesford argues it is impossible to identify Highsmith's characters like Tom Ripley as queer because they're so non-normative and resist any kind of psychological explanation (103). However, the question of psychology in Highsmith continues to fascinate many critics. Despite Highsmith's own assertion that "[i]nsight is not something found in psychology books" (*Plotting and Writing* 138), critics often use psychological terms with her work to try to make sense of character motivation or even Highsmith's own motivations. Chris Straayer calls Tom Ripley a "psychopath" (127). Fiona Peters identifies the problem with the protagonist of *Deep Water* (1957) Vic Van Allen as a Lacanian lack

(28), while Slavoj Žižek also uses the Lacanian idea of the sinthome in his analysis of Highsmith's writing (13). In short, despite Highsmith's recent resurgence in popularity, consensus on the most basic of things in her novels remains elusive.

Michael Trask sums up the debate in his analysis of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), the most frequently studied Highsmith novel: "In arguing that Highsmith ought to be a better gay person than she at first appears (the queer-subversive view), or that she ought to be held accountable for her failure to do so (the Cold War-repressive view), critics may feel assured about the integrity of their own motives. But they are also assured of getting Highsmith's wrong" (610). In other words, critics who place Highsmith on one side or another of the debate on whether she subverts or conforms to midcentury views on queerness tend to ignore the context Highsmith is working within, and therefore miss the nuances in her work. Trask is interested in Method acting and midcentury sociology, which connects to Ripley's and Highsmith's obsession with performance and authenticity, and these interests help him model his method of "revisiting a set of period concerns" (587) in order to explore the novel in its complexities and nuance. Postwar sociologists identified the compulsory, endless performance of self in order to control the impressions of others, using this as a heuristic to understand how 1950s culture inhibited autonomy, while their contemporaries in Method acting "conceived of performance as capable of achieving an authenticity that mere self-identity could not produce" (Trask 587). Trask finds Highsmith can keenly parse her contemporaries' fixation on performance—on both sides—in *Tom Ripley*, which current critics usually miss because of the contemporary tendency to map authenticity onto resistance and conformity onto conformism (587). Using this framework, Trask completes a nuanced and historical reading of the novel.

In the spirit of Trask's refusal to focus on which side of queer studies to locate Highsmith and following Felski's work on character, I aim to study the characters in *Strangers On A Train* (1950), Highsmith's first published novel and one of her most famous, without trying to psychologize them or "figure them out." Readers leave *Strangers* feeling uneasy about morality, sexuality, and justice, all because the novel causes them to identify with a character who just happens to fall into a chance to commit a crime and then does, an anomaly in a genre so dedicated to logic and understanding. Readers identify with a character who seems normative in the beginning, but by the end, they don't sympathize with or even fully understand him. As a result, the novel also resists an easy reading of the characters as queer or straight, which is especially significant in the Cold War moment that conflated heterosexuality with normativity and categorized them as "good." The novel does not suggest solutions to the misogyny problem of the criminalization of queerness in midcentury America, but when read alongside the film adaptation, the novel's ambiguity becomes a rejection of the structures of heteronormativity. The film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock and released in 1951, changes Highsmith's novel to follow a more conventional 1950s understanding of queerness. Its characters are easy to understand, and the audience identifies with Guy—the heterosexual, good one—more than gay, bad Bruno. As critics observe, it is difficult if not impossible to box Highsmith into a position on the topic of midcentury queerness and misogyny, but a study of character in *Strangers On A Train* helps illuminate her engagement with the topic.

***Strangers On A Train* (1950) the Novel**

Strangers On A Train contains motifs to which Highsmith returned over and over throughout her career, specifically male friendship with a homoerotic subtext and the idea of "pure murder," unmotivated by personal grudges and successfully carried out (60). It follows an architect and nice everyman appropriately named Guy Haines, who's trapped in a marriage to unfaithful Miriam while he is in love with another woman, Anne. Guy meets Charles Anthony Bruno on a train and Bruno proposes they help each other by killing the person who is making the other's life miserable. Bruno asks Guy to kill his father, whom he hates, while offering to kill Miriam himself. Guy refuses at first, but Bruno follows through. Bruno stalks Guy. Guy slowly descends into madness and finally kills Bruno's father, demonstrating the line between what the men represent is fuzzy or even nonexistent. As Guy is consumed with guilt and Bruno continues to stalk him even as Bruno's father's private detective begins to investigate them, the novel's homoerotic undertones grow stronger. Bruno dies when he falls overboard during a boating party with Guy and Anne, and Guy is consumed with hopelessness as he swims desperately for Bruno, wondering, "Where was his friend, his brother," while "swift, unbearable loneliness pressed him closer, threatening to swallow his own life" (263). Guy's despondency spurs him into writing a confession, and the novel ends with him turning himself in to the detective, almost against his own better judgment. He reflects that he always knew he would have to face the detective, and when Guys starts to speak to the detective, he "said something entirely different from what he had intended. 'Take me'" (282). What he intended remains ultimately unclear. Despite all the action of murdering and then evading detection, the novel is primarily concerned with the characters of Bruno and Guy. It establishes early that Guy represents sanity, normality, and heterosexuality, and then sets these things up against their opposites in the character of Bruno. This duality crumbles.

As Highsmith's literary star rose after the publication of *Strangers*, she sent W.H. Auden a copy of the novel in 1952, to which he replied with "a not entirely favorable critique" (Schenkar 573). This seems to be an unfortunate blip, however, as reception for *Strangers* was largely favorable, with famed crime novel reviewer Anthony Boucher counting Highsmith among debut authors who "showed not only promise but high achievement" (BR30) based on *Strangers*. Reviewer Drake Drexel also included the novel as one of the best mysteries of 1950 in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Hitchcock's subsequent adaptation made her famous for some years until *The Talented Mr. Ripley* began to eclipse *Strangers* after it was published in 1955. Marijane Meaker, Highsmith's longtime lover and a famous lesbian pulp author, writes in her memoir that while Highsmith was famous within their lesbian subculture for *The Price of Salt*, she was also widely known by her real name to the rest of the world for writing *Strangers* (1). Highsmith, then, was solidly located within the American crime genre during the hardboiled era from her first publication in 1951. From the 1940s to the early 1950s, the hardboiled genre featured novels about detectives who fight for the populace in a "popular myth well-suited to the regime of postwar liberalism" (McCann 35) like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. But the genre turned in the 1950s suspense novels built "around self-destructive criminal protagonists" like Jim Thompson's Lou Ford (McCann 199). Highsmith began publishing during this turn in the genre, and as a result, readers would bring their expectations for crime novels to her work. This makes the novel’s resistance of logic and motivation all the more confusing.

Character Identification in Strangers

The novel uses all four of Felski’s formal methods of identification with Guy. Alignment, or “the formal means by which texts shape a reader’s or viewer’s access to character: the part played by the work rather than its audience” (Felski 93), is similar to focalization. Like every other novel in this project, *Strangers* is written in the third person but gives the reader access to its protagonists’ thoughts and feelings, and while the novel switches between Guy and Bruno’s perspectives, it gives priority to Guy, encouraging the reader to identify with him primarily by aligning with his point of view. The novel begins and ends in Guy’s perspective, and in the beginning, it shows him to be an average guy with problems that he wants to overcome in order to pursue the American dream. But above all, his original position as an initially moral person, disgusted by the idea of crime, encourages the reader to align with him above Bruno. Guy might be cuckolded by his almost-ex-wife Miriam and ashamed, but he is a good guy. This is an important distinction in a genre that is typically so concerned with good and bad. During their first conversation, Bruno asks Guy if he has wanted to kill Miriam for the way she’s treated him, and Guy insists he never has. Then, Bruno begins to talk about murdering his father, which angers Guy:

> Guy looked at him in disgust. Bruno seemed to be growing indefinite at the edges, as if by some process of deliquescence. He seemed only a voice and a spirit now,

> the spirit of evil. All he despised, Guy thought, Bruno represented. All the things he would not want to be, Bruno was, or would become.
>
> “Want me to dope out a perfect murder of your wife for you? You might want to use it sometime.” Bruno squirmed with self-consciousness under Guy’s scrutiny.
>
> Guy stood up. “I want to take a walk.”
>
> Bruno slammed his palms together. “Hey! Cheeses, what an idea! We murder for each other, see? I kill your wife and you kill my father! We meet on the train, see, and nobody knows we know each other! Perfect alibis! Catch?”
>
> The wall before his eyes pulsed rhythmically, as if it were about to spring apart. *Murder*. The word sickened him, terrified him. He wanted to break away from Bruno, get out of the room, but a nightmarish heaviness held him. He tried to steady himself by straightening out the wall, by understanding what Bruno was saying, because he could feel there was logic in it somewhere, like a problem or a puzzle to be solved.
>
> Bruno’s tobacco-stained hands jumped and trembled on his knees. “Airtight alibis!” he shrieked. “It’s the idea of my life! Don’t you get it? I could do it sometime when you’re out of town and you could do it when I was out of town.”
>
> Guy understood. No one could ever, possibly, find out. (33-34).

It is crucial that this scene emphasizes Guy’s perspective so that the reader both aligns and forms an allegiance with him in the beginning. Significantly, Guy’s simultaneous resistance and susceptibility to the idea of murder comes from the lack of rationale in Bruno’s propositions. When Bruno mentions murder, the world around Guy becomes fuzzy, as if reality itself is splitting, and Guy frantically tries to figure out the logic of the situation he's in. Moral excellence does not always describe the characters in suspense novels of the 1950s, but these novels always have characters who are better than others, and fans of suspense would know to identify Guy as the moral, normal one based on the opening chapters. Bruno's presence destabilizes the very world around Guy, and Bruno's excessive physicality—clapping his hands, twitching, shrieking—complete a characterization that alienates the readers and pushes them toward both alignment and allegiance with Guy. Felski defines allegiance as how "ethical or political values—that is, acts of evaluating—draw audiences closer to some figures rather than others" (95), which is precisely how these opening chapters function. Allegiance to one character does not necessarily mean that character is perfectly moral, and a reader's allegiance can "be partial, qualified, or ambivalent" (Felski 96). The narrative locates Guy as the most normative of the characters to encourage the reader to identify with Guy from the start.

When the narrative prioritizes Guy's perspective in the beginning, the reader observes Bruno through Guy's eyes, which encourages the reader to empathize with Guy, or to share his "feelings and respond…with concern to these feelings" (Felski 105). As Ien Ang explains in her analysis of how people watch the television show *Dallas*, a character's "personality" is evident "only in relation to other characters in the narrative," arguing that the audience's "identification with a character only becomes possible within the framework of the whole structure of the narrative" (29). When Bruno plops into the train seat next to Guy, acting suspiciously drunk, the novel builds both characters while solidifying the reader's identification with Guy. Uri Margolin describes how semiotic procedures create character in his 1989 essay on "Structuralist Approaches to Character in Narrative." His list includes static and dynamic elements along with textual patterns like grouping and parallelism. He defines static elements as "name, appearance, manners, customs, and habits; his [sic] natural, man-made, and sociocultural milieu" and dynamic elements as "verbal, mental, and physical acts of a narrative agent" (13). The static and dynamic elements that make up Bruno set him up as a character in direct opposition to Guy. Bruno's tie "of green silk, hand-painted with offensively orange-colored palm trees" (11) is a flamboyantly tacky choice in contrast to Guy's casually stylish choices, which the novel has already described in the opening pages. Bruno immediately sprawls out and falls asleep, giving Guy a good look at Bruno's most prominent feature, a "big pimple or boil on the forehead [which] might have been a topmost point that had erupted" on his strangely "interesting" face (11). Bruno's life is not going in a positive direction. Indeed, it is going nowhere at all, but the description of the pimple, seen from Guy's perspective, indicates that something deep within him is festering. The reader gets an immediate clue as to what that might be when Bruno wakes up and keeps drinking. According to David K. Johnson, "alcoholism and loquaciousness were traits closely associated with same-sex desire" (8) in the 1950s, and all three were dangerous to the Cold War effort. Bruno fits this stereotype almost exactly, always drinking and often talking too much, especially when drunk. Bruno's sexuality remains ultimately ambiguous as the novel continues, but in this first scene, the hints serve to solidify him as an outsider. As Bruno gets drunker and drunker, he explains he recently fought with his father, whom he hates, while Guy finds himself increasingly amused by and drawn to Bruno. Bruno "kept looking at himself this way and that in the mirror, in an agony of self-torture. ‘It couldn’t be a pimple,’ he said nasally. ‘It’s a boil. It’s everything I hate boiling up in me. It’s a plague of Job’” (21). Bruno’s “nasally” voice as he anxiously examines his imperfections in the mirror, along with his dramatic proclamations—literally comparing it to a biblical plague unjustly visited on righteous Job—creates an outrageous and humorous portrait of the stereotypically loquacious and drunk gay man.

While the reader might find ways to identify with Bruno, they are encouraged to identify with Guy primarily. Guy is located on the side of normative, positive behavior, and the reader can then locate themself on that positive side with him. In other words, the reader can recognize themself in Guy. Felski describes “recognition” as “[g]limpsing aspects of oneself in fictional beings” which “involves a volatile mix of the familiar and the different” (101). This aspect of identification with a character is harder to nail down, but if a reader of the suspense genre expects morality, it stands to reason that they view themself as on the side of morality or, at least, normativity, which is connected to a certain set of values about right and wrong. It is clear that Guy is connected to these kinds of values while Bruno is not, enabling the reader to identify with Guy foremost. This does not mean that suspense readers are unable to identify with immoral characters; indeed, Bruno’s characterization offers many points for identification and Guy later loses his moral center. More broadly, it’s possible and even common for readers to identify with immoral or bad characters, even within the crime genre, and Felski creates her criteria for identification precisely to avoid such simplistic ideas about what makes readers identify. However, *Strangers* uses the genre’s reliance on morality to initially get the audience on Guy’s side, only to later reveal that his normality and morality are baseless. Indeed, his actions and the plot resolve in an ultimately unsatisfying way when justice is served, but not in the way the reader might hope. This identification reflects poorly on the reader's morality, giving them an opportunity to "glimpse aspects of ourselves in a character, but in a way that causes us to revise our sense of who we are" (Felski 81). When a reader glimpses themself in Guy and then sees how his morality falls apart, it raises questions about the nature of morality itself.

Ambiguous Queerness and Logic

Strangers is not a typical crime novel, and while it contains suspenseful plot elements—will the detective catch Bruno, will Guy commit murder, will Guy's girlfriend Anne find out the truth—these plot elements are less important than the characters. Suspense and, ultimately, discomfort come from identifying with characters who get an opportunity to commit the perfect murder, leaving behind no evidence of intent. Guy finally commits murder for no real reason. Bruno has already upheld his end of the bargain, and while Bruno stalks and bothers Guy and threatens to tell everyone about their agreement, this does not seem to be the reason Guy ultimately decides to do it. Murder and Bruno slowly consume Guy's thoughts until he shirks his work and his dates with Anne to spend all his time drinking and obsessing. The turning point comes when Guy wakes after a night of drinking and finds Bruno in his room, smoking a cigarette and watching him in bed:

> Guy awakened to Bruno's presence in the dark, though he heard nothing. After the first small start at the suddenness, he felt no surprise at all. As he had imagined, in

> nights before this, he was quite happy that Bruno had come. *Really* Bruno? Yes. Guy saw the end of his cigarette now, over by the bureau. "Bruno?"
>
> "Hi," Bruno said softly. "I got in on a pass key. You're ready now, aren't you?" Bruno sounded calm and tired.
>
> Guy raised himself to one elbow. Of course Bruno was there. The orangey end of his cigarette was there. "Yes," Guy said, and felt the yes absorbed by the darkness, not like the other nights when the yes had been silent, not even going out from him. It undid the knot in his head so suddenly that it hurt him. It was what he had been waiting to say, what the silence in the room had been waiting to hear. And the beasts beyond the walls.
>
> Bruno sat down on the side of the bed and gripped both his arms above the elbows. "Guy, I'll never see you again."
>
> "No." Bruno smelled abominably of cigarettes and sweet brilliantine, of the sourness of drink, but Guy did not draw back from him. (144-45).

Nothing has happened to make him come to this decision, or even to make him agreeable to Bruno's presence. In fact, Bruno has been stalking Guy for weeks, and in this scene Guy is suddenly happy to see him in contrast to his negative reactions every time he saw Bruno previously. Unreality and a sense of destiny run as undercurrents through the scene. Guy, it seems, had wanted to say yes when alone in bed during previous nights, and Bruno's presence draws out that inevitable affirmative. Additionally, this scene is one of the most homoerotic in the novels: Guy's awareness of Bruno's physicality; his happiness at seeing him in his bedroom; and even the release of Guy saying yes all give their interaction a sexual quality. This scene is where the quality of a reader's identification shifts into something more complex than recognizing good aspects of themselves in the good character they've been encouraged to align with. Felski says identification is based in similarity but not "sameness" (82), which enables her to argue for identification with fantastical or evil characters. Readers may not see themselves in Guy or his motivations fully here, but they already identify with him they can continue to do so even as he devolves into a murderer from this point on.

As he continues on his path to murder, Guy continues to feel everything is inevitable due to his grandiose thoughts and musings that the reader gets to witness and not on any circumstances based in plot. But even Guy's inner thoughts contradict themselves. Right before he kills Bruno's father, he tells himself "*No, don't think! You do it for Anne, remember? For Anne and for yourself! It is like killing in war*" (152-153), which motivates him to pull the trigger. Yet the next day, he tells himself that "he had not wanted to do it….It had not been his will. It had been Bruno's will, working through him" (158) as if he were a puppet, without thoughts of his own, as he pulled the trigger. Eventually, Guy concludes that "the law of conscience" is more important than society or God's laws, and if Guy doesn't feel guilty, then no one can condemn him (178). Guy decides that he has never been better or more evil than Bruno. By this point, Guy's dynamic elements are so convoluted that it is impossible to pick up a thread of logic, and indeed, Gerard the detective and Anne have reasons to suspect both men but can find no proof. Gerard claims that Guy "is tortured with guilt" (247) in opposition to Bruno's utter lack of morality, but that is not quite true. Guy wrestles with ideas of good and evil, only to conclude that there is no such thing, even as he sometimes feels guilty and sometimes doesn't. Additionally, solid empirical evidence is unavailable to Gerard or Anne because it is the perfect murder due to the random nature of their meeting and committing the crimes, exactly as Bruno wanted. As Gerard lays out his idea that Guy and Bruno met on a train and decided to kill for each other to the district attorney, the idea sounds wild and incredible, and the only evidence Gerard has is the fact that Bruno took a trip to Texas where Miriam died. Gerard needs a confession in order to have a chance at proving his case, and no one believes he will get it. He tells the district attorney in frustration, "You can't see it. Because you didn't know and don't know Charles' personality" (245). In other words, the only way the crime makes sense is through a familiarity with character rather than facts of the plot. After identifying with Guy, the reader witnesses him participate in a crime that no detective or intrepid amateur investigator could solve because only the criminals understand the logic. The reader also does not get confirmation that Guy is good or bad at heart because he does not always feel guilty, yet he cannot totally let things go. His motivations and rationale lack any kind of moral logic.

The novel refuses the reader any satisfaction in justice even in the end, which is the most crucial to a crime novel. Traditionally, the end is when the criminal is revealed and brought to justice. In the final chapter, Guy goes to confess to Miriam's boyfriend Owen. When Owen seems not to care, Guy tries to shock him by insisting he murdered for "no reason" (275) other than Bruno driving him to it. However, as Guy thinks to himself, the real reason is merely "that measure of perversity within him sufficient to do it" (275). Guy tells Owen that the law deals with humans, who are strange and unreliable. Unlike the work of an architect, which deals with straightforward buildings and diagrams, Guy says that "[l]ogic doesn't always work out, so far as people go" (279). Gerard arrives, having overheard the confession first over an off-the-hook phone and then outside the door:

> Gerard was on his side, so far as any man could be, because Gerard knew Bruno. Guy knew it now, as if he had known it the whole time, yet it had never even occurred to him before. He knew, too, that he had to face Gerard. That was part of it all, and always had been. It was inevitable and ordained, like the turning of the earth, and there was no sophistry by which he could free himself from it.
>
> "Eh?" Gerard said.
>
> Guy tried to speak, and said something entirely different from what he had intended. "Take me." (282).

Guy has proved his own point that humans lack logic as he turns himself in and the novel ends. Guy confesses to Owen because he feels he owes him something. But Guy was not about to be caught. His obsession with Bruno and Bruno's death drives him to it because "he knew now that Bruno had borne half his guilt" (264) despite his prior and subsequent insistence that he does not feel guilty and does not need the system of the law to bring him to justice. This ending is unsatisfying on a number of levels. While good triumphs and a murderer is brought to justice, it is not because Gerard found proof or figured things out; in fact, he just got lucky. Guy's own motivations for confessing are so convoluted and confusing that the reader never gets to find out what Guy intended to say at the very end because he blurts out something that was apparently against his own will. If suspense novels give the reader satisfaction at the end by seeing the criminal get caught or get their just desserts, *Strangers* robs this moment of any gratification due to its ambiguity.

As Felski and her co-authors state, studying characters as objects of identification within their texts and within the historical realities in which these texts exists allow critics to study reader responses in ways that formalist or historical work alone cannot allow for (7). The way Highsmith encourages identification first before making Guy so strange is not only a unique method of characterization in the crime genre, but it also encompasses the tensions of how readers identify: not only through seeing themselves in a character, but through other complex ways contained in the text. Highsmith's characters engage with the misogyny problem of queerness and its criminalization in midcentury America, which in turn encourages readers who identify with the characters to identify and engage with this problem. Identifying with a character so confusing as Guy is unsettling and brings up questions about the nature of good and evil. Felski notes that we might "glimpse aspects of ourselves in a character, but in a way that causes us to revise our sense of who we are" and that we "can be sustained, but also disconcerted, by a felt kinship with a fictional figure" (81). As Bruno says, "Any kind of person can murder" if they find themself in the right circumstances (29), and his statement is later proven. *Strangers* may ultimately remain ambiguous in its treatment of queerness, but its characterization certainly encourages readers to wrestle with queerness. The novel resists any kind of neat reading about guilt, justice, queerness, and good and evil. However, when Alfred Hitchcock changed a few key elements, he inserts 1950s politics on queerness into the narrative and makes its morals much less ambiguous. A viewer of Hitchcock's *Strangers* who identifies with Guy will leave feeling confident they are in the right if they match the morality the film promotes, but that same person will feel much differently if they read Highsmith's *Strangers* and identify with Guy who is both a murderer and potentially outside the realm of heteronormativity.

***Strangers On A Train* (1951) the Film**

Alfred Hitchcock wanted to put his own spin on *Strangers On A Train* after he bought the rights to it for $7,500—about $82,000 in today's money—keeping his name out of negotiations to ensure a low price, which annoyed Highsmith when she learned his identity after she signed the contract (Spoto 342). A treatment he ordered for the film emphasized the novel's homoerotic subtext, and Bruno (Robert Walker) became a villain that suited Hitchcock's style, more dapper and charming and less of a coarse alcoholic. Hitchcock hired Raymond Chandler to write the screenplay but experienced prolonged disagreements with him. Eventually, Hitchcock gave Chandler's script to Czenzi Ormonde, who worked with his producer Barbara Keon and his wife Alma Reville to make the script into what Hitchcock wanted (Spoto 324). While Hitchcock fired Chandler and used very little of his script, Chandler's name held enough cultural cachet that it was valuable in promotion, and the opening credits list him first as screenwriter with Ormonde second and no mention of the other women. However, Ormonde, Keon, and Reville created many of the film's most famous moments, including the scene at the end where Bruno and Guy (Farley Granger) fight on a carousel in a masterful use of special effects. The film adds overt homoerotic elements, primarily through the casting of Robert Walker, who is much

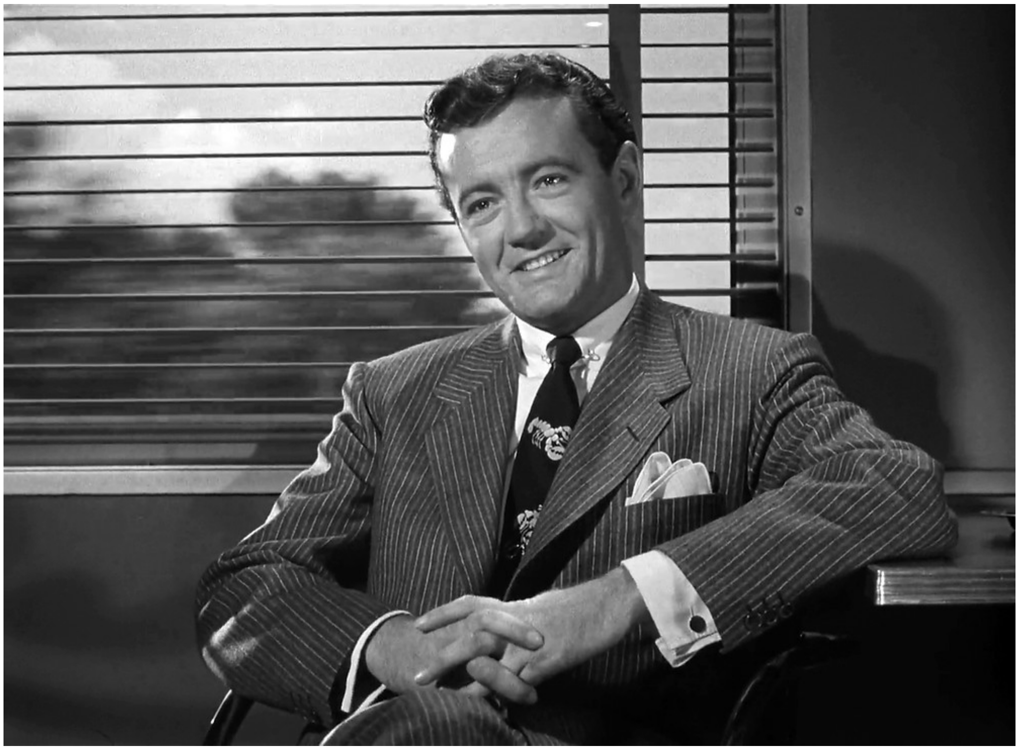

Figure 9: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (00:02:43)

older than Farley Granger and who aggressively pursues and flirts with Guy. The film's Bruno dresses and acts like a dandy rather than a sloppy alcoholic (figure 9). The basic plot remains the same until after Miriam's murder, when Guy confesses his bargain with Bruno to Anne (Ruth Roman), who helps him make the decision not to kill Bruno's father. Anne and Guy deduce that Bruno will attempt to plant Guy's cigarette lighter at the carnival where Miriam was murdered, leading to the famous carousel fight. The carousel crashes and Bruno dies, exonerating Guy and freeing him to live happily ever after with Anne.

Homoeroticism, Alienation, and Identification

Viewers would have found the film in tune with sexual politics of the 1950s, while the novel is much more ambiguous. Johnson writes about three types of people who were believed to potentially leak secrets during the Cold War: alcoholics, people who talk too much, and “perverts,” but “only the pervert was always a security risk” because it was the easiest to prove (8). One homosexual encounter made someone a “pervert,” while alcoholism and talking too much existed on a spectrum (Johnson 8). In 1950, a six-month investigation of government workers yielded a report that claimed these “sex perverts” must be removed from jobs due to their “lack of emotional stability…and the weakness of their moral fiber, [which] makes them susceptible to the blandishments of foreign espionage agents” and Communist and Nazi blackmailers (“Federal Vigilance”). Heteronormativity was so privileged during the Cold War that entertainment, social science, and government entities worked to convince the public that “moral weakness was associated with sexual degeneracy, which allegedly led to communism” (May 99). The best way to fight the Cold War at home, according to popular rhetoric at the time, was to live a traditional lifestyle and raise children who were good, moral Americans. Thus homosexuality and loyalty to America, and the nuclear family were linked, which often motivated LGBTQ people to stay firmly in the closet. Highsmith herself was never enamored with the idea of closeting and, according to one of her longtime lovers, didn’t mind “holding girls’ hands on the street, in the supermarket, in restaurants” in New York pre-gay liberation (Meaker 58) but refused to talk about her sexuality in interviews, which Trask sees as a resistance of “prurience” (608) rather than closeting herself. Hitchcock, however, happily embraced the idea of a closeted Bruno and made him the villain in accordance with the values of Hitchcock’s adopted home country.

The suggestions of homoeroticism in the novel become blatant in the film, but the attraction is largely one-sided. After Bruno murders Miriam, he waits behind a gate across the street from Guy's apartment at night to give him her glasses and tell him she is dead. This scene emphasizes the difference between the two men through visuals, as Guy joins Bruno in the shadows and Bruno steps closer, saying, "There's nothing for us to worry about. No one saw me." As he speaks, his eyes linger on Guy's lips, adding a homoerotic current to the conversation that further separates Bruno from Guy. When Guy realizes what Bruno is telling him, he steps around the gate to the other, lighter side and they continue their conversation through the bars. Bruno insists they are both complicit, repeating "criss-cross," a phrase from their initial conversation he uses throughout the film to describe their intersecting lives. Bruno's high-pitched, singsong voice is a contrast to Guy's deep and clipped words of denial as a police car forces Guy back behind the gate, where Guy exclaims, "You've got me acting like a criminal, you crazy fool," quickly running back out (figure 10). While Guy twice crosses behind the shadowed gate to stand close to Bruno—once because Bruno lured him and once because of the police—Guy always goes back to the other, lighter side, symbolizing his inner strength of character. He may be forced into Bruno's dark world of insanity due to circumstances he can't control, but Guy always chooses to go back to the light, resisting the "criss-cross" of their lives. The stark difference between them is accomplished through shadows and light, a key visual for the film noir genre. In Hitchcock's film, it is relatively easy for Guy to stay away from Bruno, and the film sets Bruno on an unavoidable path to doom while Guy stays on the path to success. The film places Guy and Bruno firmly in binary categories in the film—straight

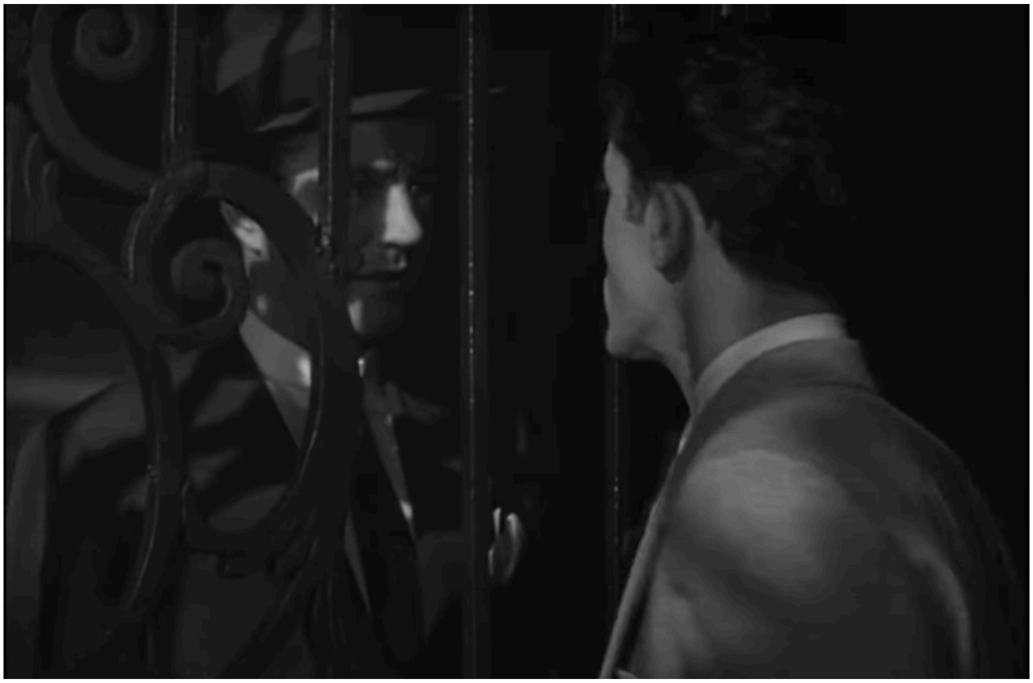

Figure 10: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (00:31:42)

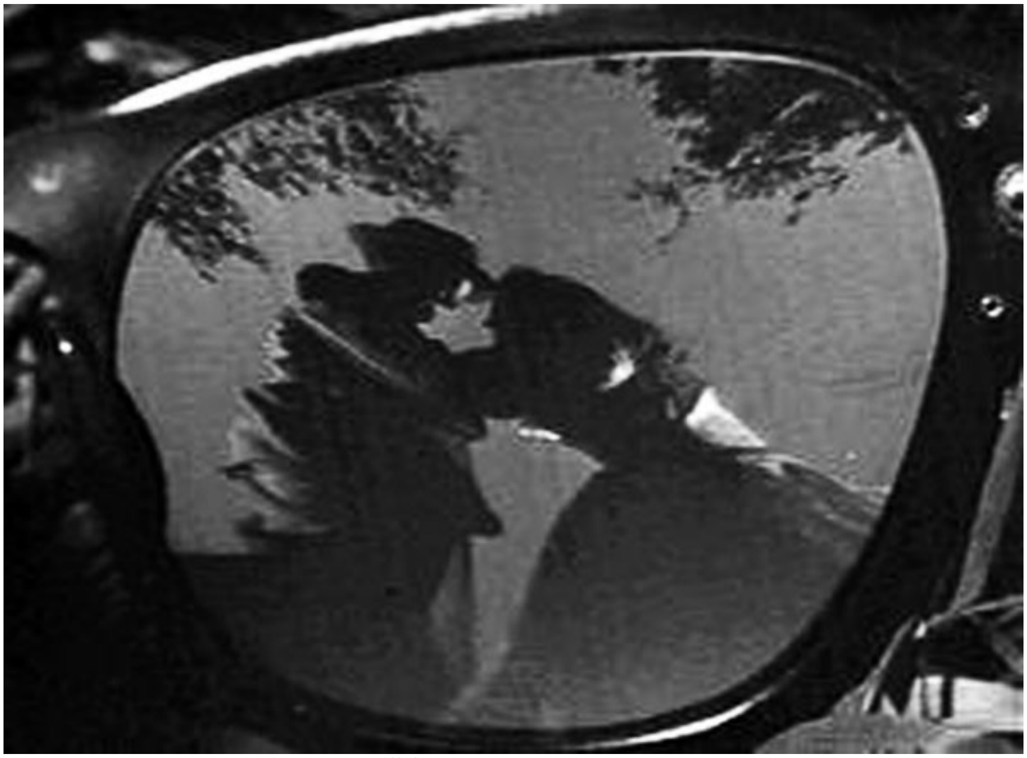

Figure 11: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (00:26:00)

and gay, successful and unsuccessful, and ultimately, good and evil—and then firmly pushes the viewer into identification with Guy over Bruno.

The film uses visuals to separate the viewer from Bruno, locating his madness and actions far outside the average experience, and encouraging the audience to identify with Guy. When Bruno strangles Miriam, Hitchcock invites the viewer to watch the violent crime but the viewer is one step removed even as they watch. Miriam's glasses fall to the grass and the camera cuts to a close-up of one lens, where Bruno choking Miriam is reflected and distorted by the thick glass (figure 11). Calliope music plays incessantly in the background to emphasize the surreal quality of the scene, and as Bruno slowly lowers a silent Miriam to the ground with his hands around her neck, she disappears from view in the lens, leaving his figure towering over her. In this scene, the viewer literally cannot see the crime as it "actually" happened, with the figures filtered once through Miriam's glasses and twice through the lens of the camera. Hitchcock often shoots action through reflections and his style, when imposed on this story, creates a separation so viewers are doubly removed from the crime, leaving no doubt that Bruno has done something outside the norm. In the 1950s, films noir grew progressively more concerned with aesthetics over social engagement than they had been in previous years, and critics argue "mood overwhelms plot…emphasis is shifted from the *what* to the how, [so] form becomes inseparable from content" (Schatz 115). The aesthetics create a surreal effect, almost as if Bruno and Miriam occupy a fantasy world far removed from those watching the film.

The film discourages the viewer from identifying with Bruno because the visuals prevent alignment; his values are presented far outside the norm, precluding allegiance; and if a viewer recognizes themself in Bruno, that recognition would not be positive.

However, as Felski discusses, actors in films often become synonymous with or even overcome the characters they play, adding layers to characterization and viewer identification that are absent in novels. Therefore if the film tries to distance the viewer from Bruno, Robert Walker overcomes this to make Bruno sympathetic and even, possibly, to encourage identification. As Erwin Panofsky famously says, "The character in a film…lives and dies with the actor" (118), and indeed Walker makes Bruno who he is in the film version. The *Los Angeles Times* praised Walker's "fascinating performance" despite his "difficult role" as Bruno (Schallert 8), and a *Chicago Daily Tribune* reviewer noted that Walker "dominates" the film, gushing that his "gripping performance as Bruno…presents many facets of the unbalanced mind with great clarity" (Tinee B6). She finishes by telling readers that if they "like a thriller which offers an intelligent presentation of insanity and homicide, here's a cracker-jack" (Tinee B6). Yet even in their enthusiasm for Bruno, reviewers find him located far outside the normative experience and, by extension, far outside their own experience. Walker's untimely death at age 32 two short months after *Strangers* was released has no doubt contributed to his performance's iconic status. Even if Walker's performance is compelling, by turns comedic and tragic, Bruno is still overtly coded as evil to the very end.

Meanwhile, Guy is almost always presented sympathetically and on the side of good. The film changes the scene where Bruno visits Guy in the night and Guy instead finds Bruno in bed. Guy tells Bruno to get out of town, ostensibly so he can kill his father, and enters the dark bedroom with a gun in order to warn Bruno's father. Bruno flips on the bedside lamp to reveal himself lying in the bed, fully clothed in an immaculate tuxedo.

Guy returns the gun and house key, telling Bruno he is sick and needs help. “I don’t like being double-crossed,” Bruno says as he grabs the gun and points it at Guy. The men stand in profile, facing one another, while the lamp illuminates their faces and throws the gun into a stark silhouette. Bruno holds it low, and when the angle changes to face Bruno on the bed, he lets the gun fall suggestively between his legs and stay there for a moment before he stands and follows Guy out of the room. The gun in this scene is doubly menacing due to the provocative nature of Bruno lying in the bed. Bruno could kill Guy or he could have sex with him, yet Guy resists both. As Guy walks down the staircase to leave, he is in focus at while Bruno is blurred behind him at the top, holding the gun (figure 12). A light rakes Bruno from one side, obscuring most of his face and the gun and casting his shadow menacingly along the opposite wall, framing Guy on the left

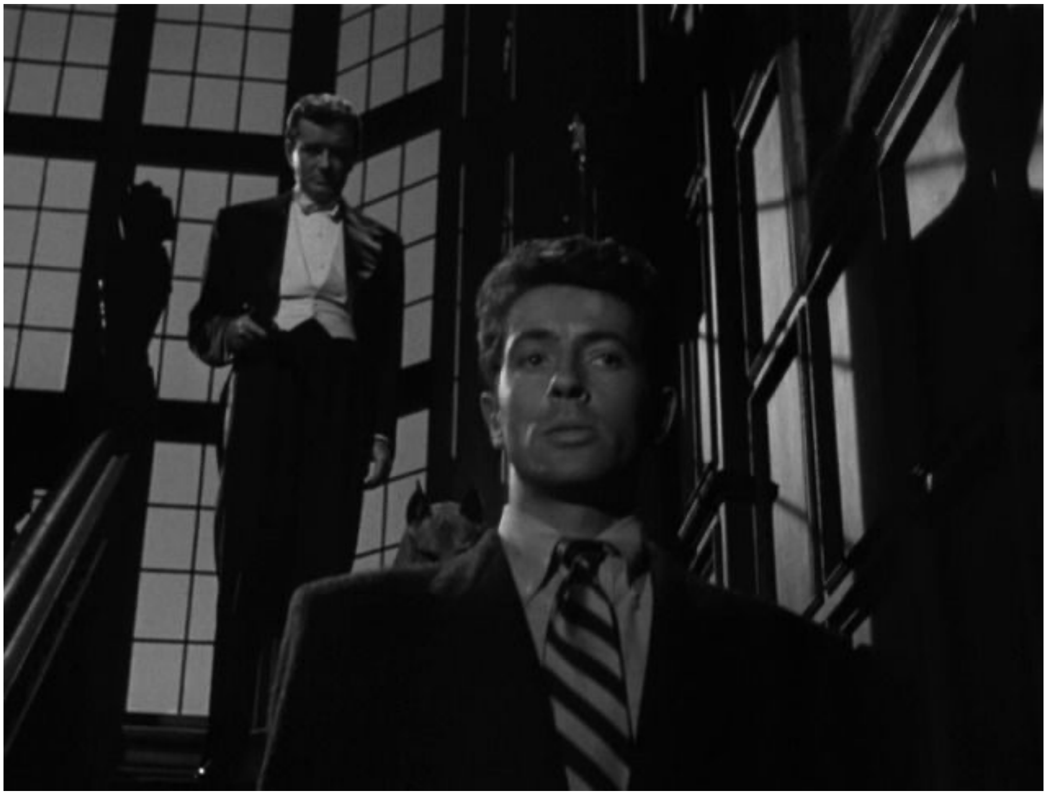

Figure 12: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (01:10:02)

and right with figures of Bruno. Guy is lit evenly the entire time, enabling the audience to see his eyes and the nervous set of his jaw as he bravely does not look back. He has chosen the side of good and is now in league with his fiancée, and despite being hemmed in on all sides by darkness as represented by a well-dressed man holding a phallic gun, Guy will triumph. Granger's performance, while good, is no match for Walker's charisma, but he remains the main point of identification for the audience. While viewers are by turns drawn in and repulsed by Bruno, Guy remains steady until the end, and the viewer who identifies with him is rewarded with affirmation of his—and, by extension, their—good character. The film creates a strong binary between the two characters, normalizing Guy and queering Bruno, with implications about the morality of each. This is in contrast to the novel, where the lines between the men are much blurrier.

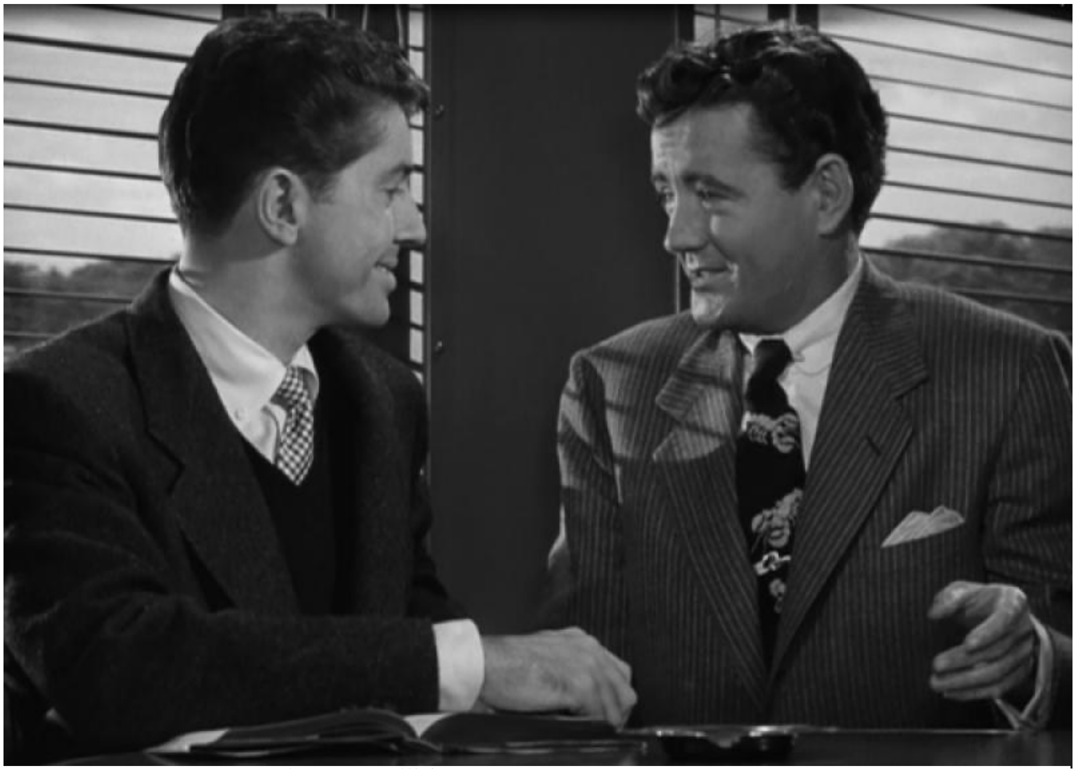

Figure 13: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (00:02:50)

The film is much closer to a typical suspense story than the novel. It clearly delineates between morality and evil, invites the viewer to identify with the side of good, and lets justice triumph. It also contains empirical evidence that can help detectives solve the case, introducing the crucial elements of logic that are absent from the novel. Guy's lighter becomes crucial to the story when Bruno decides to plant it out of revenge for being double-crossed, and at the very end, as Bruno lays dying in the wreckage of the carousel, Guy begs him to tell the police chief that Bruno has his lighter. Bruno denies it, saying the lighter is where Guy left it when Guy killed Miriam. But when Bruno dies, his hand falls open, revealing the lighter and proving Guy's innocence. The police now have real evidence that can help them piece together what happened, and justice is served. The film ends with Guy and Anne, happy and holding hands on a train, in no further danger and able to pursue a life together. This final scene echoes the first. In the beginning, Guy and Bruno

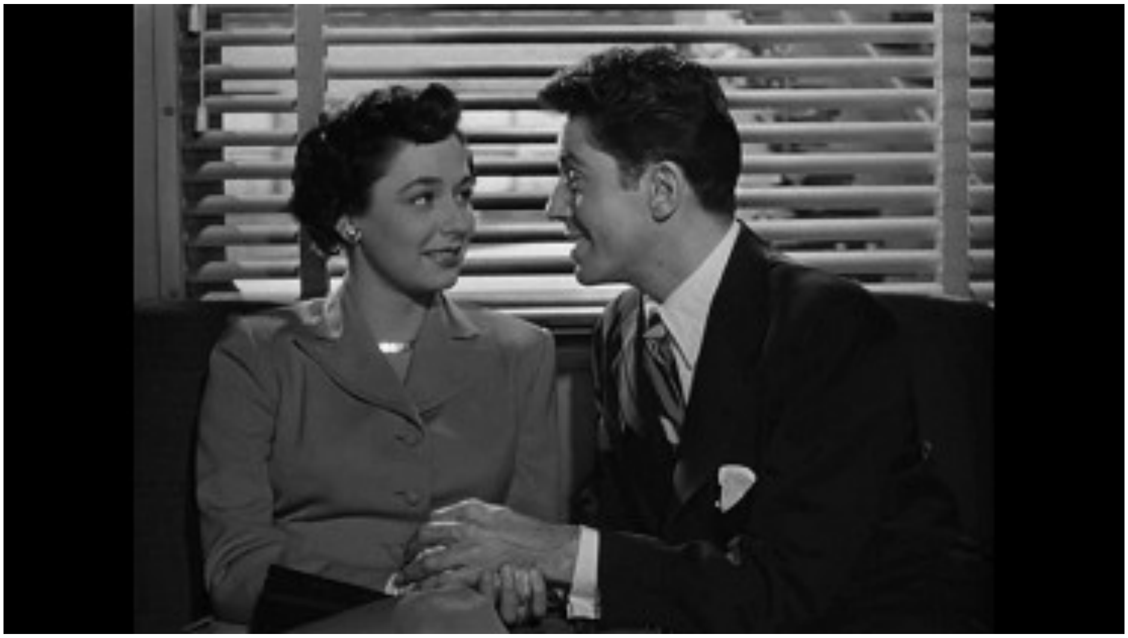

Figure 14: Still from *Strangers On A Train* (00:01:40)

accidentally brush their feet together when sitting across from each other on the train, making Bruno recognize Guy from his tennis career and ask, “I beg your pardon, aren’t you Guy Haines?” (figure 13). Guy, alone and susceptible, answers in the affirmative, starting a conversation in front of Venetian blinds, a classic film noir motif, that leads to the murder. In the final scene, Guy and Anne are talking and holding hands in front of the same blinds (figure 14) when a man reading a sports magazine across from them recognizes Guy and asks, “I beg your pardon, but aren’t you Guy Haines?” Guy opens his mouth to answer, then his face falls and he looks at Anne, whose smirk signals to him that they need to leave without answering. The moment is played for comedy, with lighthearted violin music in the background, as the couple walk away and the stranger shrugs and goes back to his magazine. The end affirms that Guy might have fallen in with evil momentarily, but he is back on the correct path with his female love by the end. Normality and especially heteronormativity, as represented by Guy, win in the end. The film guides the viewer to side with Guy and then rewards them for doing so with a satisfying conclusion that reinforces the traditional values of the day.

***Strangers On A Train*'s Misogyny Problem**

Due to its ambiguity, Highsmith’s version of *Strangers* resists a tidy reading surrounding queerness and misogyny like it resists genre conventions. While Bruno is coded as gay, he does not always act as such, and even seeks a female sex worker in his excitement after he kills Miriam (84). Bruno and Guy share a homoerotic moment in the bedroom, yet right before Bruno leaves, Guy feels “familiarity” toward Bruno and “something more, something brotherly” (146) rather than something sexual. Queerness is suggested enough that Hitchcock picked up on and expanded it in his adaptation, yet the queerness is not definitive. Indeed, if Guy meets Bruno, becomes obsessed with him, and commits murder, the novel might imply that proximity to, or flirting with, queerness can make a person mad or even murderous. In other words, the novel could be interpreted as containing anti-queer themes. The novel certainly suggests that heterosexuality is not black and white, yet this is as close as it comes to making any kind of statement about queerness. However, when contrasted with the film, the novel's lack of clarity becomes a kind of illumination and rejection of structures that make up the world around its readers. Highsmith plays with the rules of the crime genre as well as the rules of normativity while Hitchcock relies heavily on and reinforces those rules.

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CONCLUSION

Emotional Endings: *In the Woods* (2007) and *The Likeness* (2008) written by Tana French and *Dublin Murders* (2019) created by Sarah Phelps

"I used to believe, bless my naive little heart, that I had something to offer the robbed dead. Not revenge—there's no revenge in the world that could return the tiniest fraction of what they've lost—and not justice, whatever that means, but the one thing left to give them: the truth. I was good at it. I had one, at least, of the things that make a great detective: the instinct for truth, the inner magnet whose pull tells you beyond any doubt what's dross, what's alloy and what's the pure, uncut metal. I dug out the nuggets without caring when they cut my fingers and brought them in my cupped hands to lay on graves, until I found out…how slippery they were, how easily they crumbled, how deep they sliced and, in the end, how very little they were worth."
-Tana French, *The Likeness,* 78-79.

This conclusion jumps to the contemporary era, where crime fiction by women frequently tops the bestseller lists. The midcentury novels examined in this project feature women who solve crimes unofficially, either as volunteer detectives or out of necessity when the police won't help them. Now, fictional women detectives work for pay, from Sue Grafton's alphabet mysteries featuring hardboiled detective Kinsey Milhone (1980-present) to Laurie R. King's series featuring police detective Kate Martinelli (1993-present) to Åsa Larsson's Swedish detective Rebecka Martinsson (2003-2011). While their gender might come up sometimes, it largely does not get in the way of their work. However, these contemporary female detectives still exist within a genre that relies upon the loner detective and the sexist baggage that comes with that trope. This includes fighting for justice through cold rationality or violence along with the tendency to seek sex over meaningful relationships or to shun emotional entanglement altogether. From the beginning of the genre, crime novels have almost always been focused on a single intelligence such as Sherlock Holmes, Philip Marlowe, or Sam Spade. Todorov's

"Typology of Detective Fiction" always uses a singular, male detective in its examples, and Raymond Chandler's "Simple Art of Murder" calls the ideal detective "a lonely man" (18). Regardless of the gender of contemporary detectives, they solve crimes through their own intelligence, sometimes with a partner or sidekick to provide a foil for their brilliance. Female detectives in contemporary novels function in the same way as their male counterparts, even if the novels they appear in sometimes contain feminist themes.

However, Tana French's bestselling series *Dublin Murder Squad* (2007-present) is not centered around a single detective. Rather, each of French's novels has a new protagonist who was a minor character from a previous novel. In this way, the narratives retroactively expose the flaws and limitations of the protagonist's perspective in the previous novel. French's novels come about fifty years after female-authored hardboiled crime novels of midcentury America and she is an example of how women continue to innovate in the crime genre. Her first novel, *In the Woods* (2007), is narrated by detective Rob Ryan, whose loner masculinist tendencies cause him to fail in bringing a criminal to justice. The second novel, *The Likeness* (2008) is narrated by Cassie Maddox, who was Rob's partner in the first novel. She is more emotional and prone to entanglement with others than Rob, but she ultimately remains in control of her investigation. Justice unfolds the way she wants, in contrast to Rob's utter failure, and throughout *The Likeness* Cassie remembers events from *In the Woods* differently than the way Rob narrated them. Their differing perspectives make it clear across multiple novels that a single, lonely detective is not enough to restore order to a broken world in French's novels. Each new perspective shows flaws with the previous novel's perspective, a formal innovation that challenges the genre's tradition of a masculinist lone intelligence. However, just like in midcentury America, the screen adaptation of French's novels removes the clashing perspectives and becomes just another British crime procedural.

***Dublin Murder Squad* Novels**

French has received acclaim for her *Dublin Murder Squad* series since *In the Woods* was published in 2007. Laura Miller's 2016 *New Yorker* profile calls French's novels "consuming" and compares French to crime authors like Raymond Chandler because of her unique style and ability to win literary acclaim. Her novels stand out among all the contemporary female-authored crime novels for achieving both widespread and critical popularity, still rare for a crime author. Many of these positive reviews focus on the unusual features of French's novels. A *New York Times* critic notes that *The Likeness* (2008) "resists genre conventions defiantly" due to its rambling plot, explaining the novel is "more interested in character revelations than in 'Aha!' moments about the plot" (Maslin E9). Another, in an otherwise favorable review of *In the Woods*, thinks French "overburdens the traditional police-procedural form with the weight of romance, psychological suspense, social history and mythic legends" but praises her "complex characters" (Stasio G21).

In the Woods starts with three children playing in the woods of Knocknaree, but only Adam comes out, his shoes soaked in blood and no memory of what happened, and the others are never found. Adam later goes by his middle name Rob to disassociate himself from his past and becomes a detective on Dublin's Murder squad, where he must investigate the murder of twelve-year-old Katy at an archaeological site in the woods of

Knocknaree with his partner, Cassie Maddox. Rob hides his conflict of interest due to his past and slowly loses his grip on the case and his life. Both are ruined by the end. Rob narrates *In the Woods* and his educated, interior musings mix with direct address, as if he is telling the reader the story after the fact, editing himself to present a certain image while simultaneously confessing how he failed to catch Katy's older sister, Rosalind, as the instigator of the murder. The reader sees Rosalind through Rob's perspective and is therefore duped along with him by her young and innocent act. Meanwhile Cassie's unique knowledge of psychopaths, honed through a bad relationship with one, enables her to recognize Rosalind. When Cassie tells Rob about her past experience with a psychopath, he responds by wanting to protect her: "I was desperate to do something, fix this somehow, and running a background check on this guy, trying to find something to arrest him for, was the only thing I could think of to do" (342). His macho perspective causes him to miss what she is hinting about Rosalind. He calls his failure to understand "where the real danger lay" his "single biggest mistake of all" (342). This statement hints to the reader that there is something more to what Cassie is saying, but his concern makes her well-being the biggest focus of the passage. This redirects the reader's focus to things that do not matter, making it impossible to solve the case before Rob does.

Rob is a hero reminiscent of masculinist detectives in earlier iterations of the crime genre. He charms the reader by directly addressing them with a mix of humor and self-deprecation, reassuring them of his skills while insisting they can't trust him. The first chapter begins with Rob meditating on his status as a detective:

> What I warn you to remember is that I am a detective. Our relationship with truth is fundamental but cracked, refracting confusingly like fragmented glass. It is the core of our careers, the endgame of every move we make, and we pursue it with strategies painstakingly constructed of lies and concealment and every variation on deception. The truth is the most desirable woman in the world and we are the most jealous lovers, reflexively denying anyone else the slightest glimpse of her. We betray her routinely, spending hours and days stupor-deep in lies, and then turn back to her holding out the lover's ultimate Möbius strip: *But I only did it because I love you so much*.
>
> I have a pretty knack for imagery, especially the cheap, facile kind. Don't let me fool you into seeing us as a bunch of parfit gentil knights galloping off in doublets after Lady Truth on her white palfrey. What we do is crude, crass and nasty. A girl gives her boyfriend an alibi for the evening when we suspect him of robbing a north-side Centra and stabbing the clerk. I flirt with her at first, telling her I can see why he would want to stay home when he's got her; she is peroxided and greasy, with the flat, stunted features of generations of malnutrition, and privately I am thinking that if I were her boyfriend I would be relieved to trade her even for a hairy cellmate named Razor. Then I tell her we've found marked bills from the till in his classy white tracksuit bottoms, and he's claiming that she went out that evening and gave them to him when she got back. (5-6)

Rob addresses the reader directly in the first sentence, introducing tensions between him and the reader that "become an important part of the textual dynamics" which make him an unreliable narrator (Phelan 13). By creating this rapport with the reader, Rob is able to foreshadow the end, building a narrative bridge from his misinterpretation of facts to the eventual reveal of the truth. Meanwhile, the reader makes interpretive judgments about Rob which are rooted in markers of the crime genre and which fool the reader until the truth about Rob is revealed. When Rob metaphorically makes truth a woman whom he protects and betrays, and then admits he knows that his treatment of women is "crude, crass and nasty," he becomes a kind of updated version of a hardboiled detective like Mike Hammer. Rob may treat women badly, in the spirit of male detectives past, but he is self-aware. He knows his behavior is bad, yet it must be done for the greater good. The reader therefore can understand Rob as a capable detective, flawed but always pursuing justice over anything else. This interpretation, however, is proved to have been misleading in the end when Rob's sexist flaws cause him to fail. However, Rob signals to the reader that they should see this coming, because the opening section of chapter one ends with Rob saying, "What I am telling you, before you begin my story, is this—two things: I crave truth. And I lie" (6).

Rob eventually blames himself and the reader for missing the truth about Rosalind. Late in the novel, Rob realizes how he has been duped by Rosalind and the narrative communicates how this is the final blow to his relationship with Cassie, and then directly addresses the reader after a paragraph break:

> We stood under the fluorescent lights and looked at one another, across the bare tables and the litter of boxes. *My turn to make dinner….* For a moment I almost

> said it, and I felt the same thought cross both Sam's and Cassie's minds, stupid and impossible and no less piercing for any of that.
>
> "Well," Cassie said quietly, on a long breath. She glanced around the empty room, wiping her hands on the sides of her jeans. "Well, I guess that's it, then."
>
> I am intensely aware, by the way, that this story does not show me in a particularly flattering light. I am aware that, within an impressively short time of meeting me, Rosalind had me coming to heel like a well-trained dog: running up and down stairs to bring her coffee, nodding along while she bitched about my partner, imagining like some starstruck teenager that she was a kindred soul. But before you decide to despise me too thoroughly, consider this: she fooled you, too. You had as good a chance as I did. I told you everything I saw, as I saw it at the time. And if that was in itself deceptive, remember, I told you that, too: I warned you, right from the beginning, that I lie. (564-565)

Midcentury crime authors favored third person narration while most contemporary novels favor first person, which can direct the reader on how to feel about characters and events more overtly than third person. First person can "arouse the reader's sympathy or antipathy for certain characters" and can "develop a normative framework for the story world and the reader's reception of it" in ways that third person cannot (Fludernik 27). The above passage switches between telling the reader what happened to interior thoughts in that moment to addressing the reader directly through punctuation, as in the italic "*My turn to make dinner,*" which references the detectives' former habit of eating together every night before the case tore them apart. The paragraph break indicates a switch from narration of events to directly addressing to the reader. In these few sentences, the reader observes events the way Rob directs them to and feels his piercing sorrow for and nostalgia about his ruined relationships through narration. Moments like these reference the structure of mystery novels themselves, drawing on reader expectations and using those expectations against the reader. As T.S. Eliot stated in 1927, an "ideal" mystery novel clues should contain clues built into the text for the reader to solve the mystery alongside the detective. *In the Woods* draws on this idea, which is rarely if ever directly referenced in crime novels, and uses it to accuse the reader of failing, just like Robs failed. Cassie suspecting the killer because of her unique perspective is similar to Sylvia in *In A Lonely Place*, but *In the Woods* takes a bleaker route, and Cassie's suspicions amount to nothing because the male detective does not listen. Rob's perspective as a self-designated protector of women causes him and the reader to miss the truth. *In the Woods* ends unsatisfyingly. The man who killed Katy goes to jail but Rosalind, the mastermind, goes free. Rob believes Rosalind is 18 years old based on what she told him, meaning she can be interviewed without her parents present, but after Cassie obtains a confession, they discover Rosalind is 17, making her confession inadmissible in court. The novel never reveals what happened to Rob and his childhood friends, and he is eventually found out and fired, his life and close friendship with Cassie ruined.

Cassie takes over narration in French's second novel, *The Likeness*, when a murdered woman looks exactly like Cassie and carries the ID of Cassie's former undercover identity, Lexie. The police lie to Lexie's four roommates and say she survived so Cassie can go undercover as Lexie. Cassie falls in love with the roommates and with her role as Lexie, even as she discovers they all covered up Lexie's murder. In the end, Cassie shoots Daniel, the mastermind behind the coverup and the owner of the house, when her life is threatened. The narration from Cassie's perspective is more fanciful than Rob's and never addresses the reader directly. The contrast in perspectives in French's novels always reveals that at least some of the narrator's perspective on the character in the previous novel was incorrect. In *In the Woods*, Rob sees Cassie as beautiful and "boyish" (15), an exceedingly tough woman who jokes in the face of danger, but *The Likeness* reveals that Cassie hid her fragility from Rob, using her toughness as a shield. *The Likeness* revises much of the events from the first novel through Cassie's perspective. For example, in *In the Woods*, Rob stays out all night in the woods of Knocknaree as he starts to lose his grip, and he calls Cassie in the middle of the night to come pick him up. They drive back on her Vespa and Rob focuses on how "Cassie's rib cage was slight and solid between my hands, shifting as she changed gears or leaned into a turn" (*In the Woods* 396). When they get to her apartment, they sleep together, starting the chain of events that leads to the destruction of their friendship. Rob views the sex as an act of bravery, telling the reader that "I have always been a coward, but I lied: not always, there was that night, there was that one time" (*In the Woods* 400). In his perspective, this scene is mostly about him: his attraction to Cassie, his perception of his own behavior, and his emotional instability. It also plays with his self-designation as a liar and the implications of that on the reader. By contrast, Cassie recalls this night in *The Likeness*, but while Rob was thinking about her body as she drove, she was focused on "home and warmth and whether I had anything in the fridge" (*The*

Likeness 367). She does not see their night together as an act of bravery but as an act of naivete which she learned from, reflecting that "[w]e did something good; I thought that meant no damage could come of it. It's occurred to me since that I may be a lot dumber than I look. If I learned one thing in Murder, it's that innocence isn't enough" (*The Likeness* 444). In Cassie's perspective, this night was a well-intentioned mistake that made her stronger and able to solve the case in *The Likeness*. This contrast demonstrates not only Rob's flaws against Cassie's' strength, but it also cements the fact that Rob was never capable of being the brave, strong man he presented himself as, and he didn't even fool Cassie. She always knew "he would disintegrate, just smash into a million pieces" but did not realize sleeping with him would "draw the flak my way" (444). In all of French's novels, the revisionist history of a previous novel presented by the new protagonist provides a new, and often negative, insight into former events and characters. As a result, the reader can never trust the intelligence of one detective.

The novels only rarely touch on gender, mostly through the sexist comments side characters make to Cassie. For example, Cassie's boss complains about how hard Lexie's murder will be to solve and asks Cassie if she has "a crap-case magnet in your bra" (*The Likeness* 66). But the use of perspective and narration communicate that Cassie's intuition along with her dedication to her job demolishes sexist beliefs about her ability to be a good detective. She attributes her intuition and undercover skills to her gender, sarcastically telling her boss when questioned about her relationship with the suspects, "Me woman, Frank. Woman multitask. I can do my job and have a laugh or two, all at the same time" (*The Likeness* 206). *The Likeness* establishes Cassie as a more logical and capable detective than Rob, without delusions of which criminals can take advantage. Despite all the emotional hurdles Cassie faces, she succeeds in solving the case when Rob fails even if justice is not straightforward and she pays an emotional price, as in all *Dublin Murder Squad* novels. She discovers that the most emotionally unstable roommate, Justin, killed Lexie, but Daniel takes the blame for it because wants to protect his insular self-chosen family. In the final confrontation, after confessing to the crime he didn't commit, Daniel gives Cassie "a tiny private nod" that reminds her of working with Rob, "eyes catching across a door that wouldn't open, an interview-room table, and that almost invisible nod passing between us: *Go*" (431). After that nod, he pulls his gun out and she shoots him with hers. Cassie lets Daniel's confession stand, letting Justin go free and closing the case. She later muses that "I'll never know why I didn't do it [put the blame on Justin]. Mercy, maybe; one drop of it, too little and too late. Or—this is the one Frank would have picked—too much emotional involvement…. Or maybe, and I like to hope it was this one, because the truth is more intricate and less attainable than I used to understand, a bright illusive place reached by twisting back roads as often as by straight avenues, and this was the closest I could come" (446). Like *In the Woods*, the right person doesn't get justice because of the detective, but unlike Rob, Cassie chooses to convict the wrong person. Rather than making mistakes which ruin the case, she makes choices because of her own revelations about the nature of truth. Cassie's emotional involvement with others is a perceived as a liability by her boss, but it enables her to both solve the case and retain agency over how it ends. Her approach is much different than Rob's masculinist ways and is ultimately more successful, even if that success is still a little tainted.

French does not center the story world of the Dublin Murder Squad around one detective, refusing the genre marker of a single detective with enough intelligence to reliably solve the case. However, like the films noir which changed key elements when adapting midcentury crime novels, French's narratives change when adapted for the screen. The television adaptations throw the novels' formal innovation into relief against the show's more standard treatment of its characters and plots, losing much of its nuance as a result.

The *Dublin Murders* (2019) Television Show

The twenty-first century saw the advent of what many critics call the "Golden Age" of television, which includes many crime shows, specifically British ones (Davis 12). Jason Mittell argues that television mixes genres, lacks an author or auteur, and operates generally "across the cultural realms of media industries, audiences, policy, critics, and historical contexts" so it necessitates a different type of analysis than film or literature (*Genre and Television* xii). While methods from film analysis are certainly relevant to television—vocabulary for describing how shots are constructed, for example—the intended audience and distribution method necessitates different assumptions about audience and how they experience a television show as opposed to a film. The *Dublin Murders* (2019) series was commissioned by the BBC and aired weekly in England and America in fall 2019 on the Starz cable network and Irish audiences through the Raidió Teilifís Éireann network. Later, it was released worldwide through the Starz streaming platform via subscription and other platforms, like Amazon Prime, on a pay-by-episode basis.[16]

Each new episode begins exactly where the previous left off, which is what Mittell dubs "narrative complexity" ("Narrative Complexity" 32). This is a "redefinition of episodic forms under the influence of serial narration—not necessarily a complete merger of episodic and serial forms but a shifting balance. Rejecting the need for plot closure within every episode that typifies conventional episodic form, narrative complexity foregrounds ongoing stories across a range of genres" ("Narrative Complexity" 32). Streaming in particular is ideal for ongoing stories, as audiences are encouraged to binge the show by just waiting a few seconds for the next episode to start after one episode ends, enabling shows to function essentially as one long film. *Dublin Murders* comes in a long tradition of high-quality British crime shows that often gain popularity due to streaming platforms, such as *Sherlock* (2010-2017), one of the BBC's most popular shows ever, which spawned millions of viewers worldwide as well as a thriving fan fiction and Internet fan community (McClellan). Such shows are focused on one detective as are their source material. Other examples of popular streaming British crime shows focused on one solitary genius include *Broadchurch* (2013-2017) and *Wallander* (2008-2016), both of which are also adaptions of books by Erin Kelly and Henning Mankell respectively.

All these conditions impact the adaptation and its messaging. *Dublin Murders* adapts both *In the Woods* and *The Likeness* for the screen by changing a few key plot details to link the narratives together. The first two episodes of *Dublin Murders* focus solely on the plot of *In the Woods*; the third and fourth episodes introduce elements of *The Likeness*; Cassie goes undercover in the fifth, with *The Likeness* wrapped up by the seventh episode while switching between her story and *In the Woods*; and the final, eighth episode finishes *In the Woods*. The larger plot elements remain intact, with a few notable additions and changes aside from the chronological shifts of the stories that make the cases occur simultaneously rather than after one another. By collapsing the two narrative, the show becomes a much more straightforward procedural without the unique elements that make French's novels stand out in the genre. The first episode starts with the final scene chronologically before jumping back in time to the beginning of the case. Rob and Cassie sit across from each other in the basement of the Murder headquarters after failing to bring Rosalind to justice and he asks, "What if the killed are the lucky ones?" The scene is intercut with scenes of Katy, still alive and performing at a ballet recital, and Rob as a child, while his voiceover continues, "The brightest, the most golden, most alive, they're chosen. And the rest of us aren't lucky at all….The ones who get left, they're just too slow. Too stupid, too muddy, too dull. The gods don't want them." Cassie replies, "We won't see each other again" and leaves. This scene is disorienting because it films them only in tights closeups (figures 15 and 16) with no establishing shot until the end of the scene, two and a half minutes into the episode. In the final wide shot, Cassie shuts the door to the evidence area, which looks like a cage, abandoning Rob at the table, alone. The same scene comes again at the end of episode eight, with a few lines and shots added in to change its meaning. When Rob asks Cassie, "It's true, don't you think? We're rejects." Cassie

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[16] See Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1975), for more on how timing, flow, and combination of broadcast television reveals the "meanings and values of a specific culture" (118). Additionally, Mike Van Esler provides insight into how streaming alternately responds to and dictates a demand for increasingly niche content.

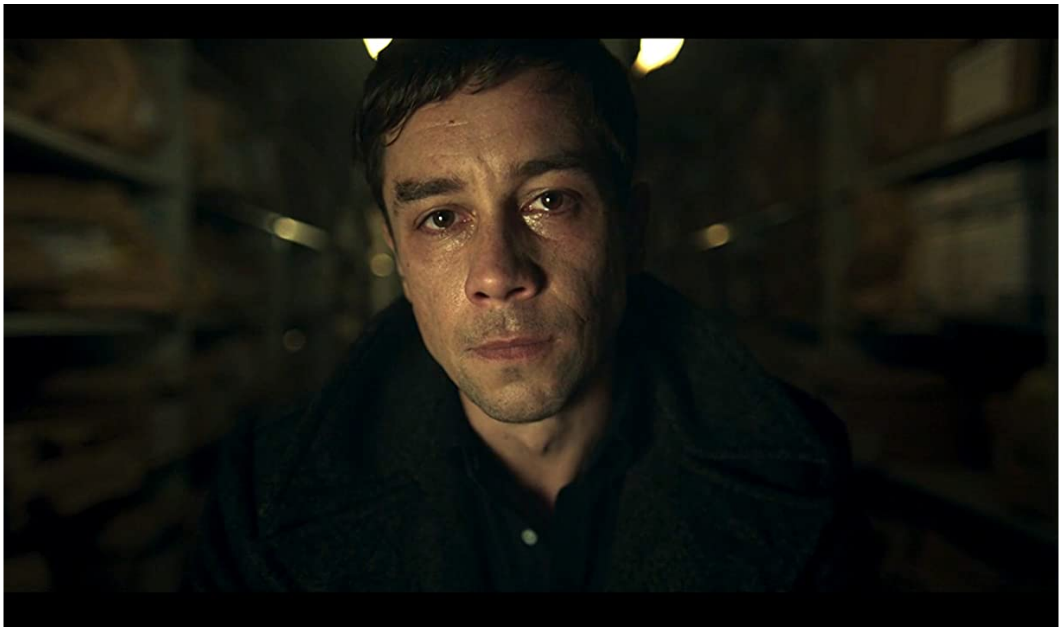

Figure 15: Still from *Dublin Murders*, episode 8 (00:44:26)

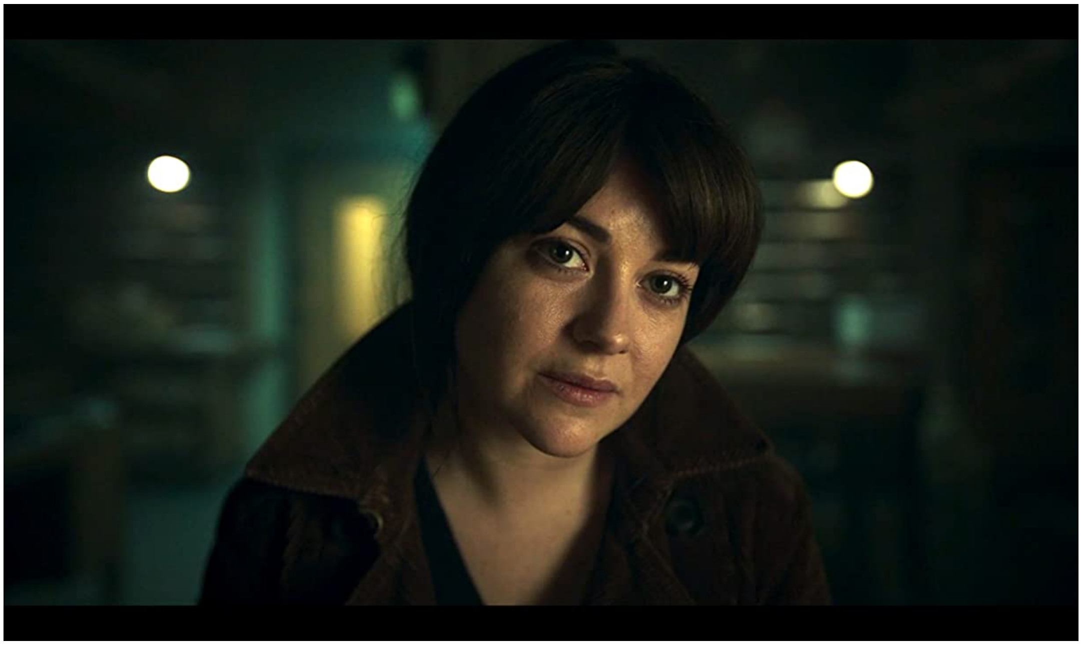

Figure 16: Still from *Dublin Murders*, episode 8 (00:44:54)

replies, “No. She [Rosalind] was just twisting the knife one last time.” Rob says Rosalind won't go to prison but to a psychiatric hospital, and he fucked up. Cassie says, "We fucked up. We both did. You and me." Her final line is modified from the beginning when she says, "I have to go see [their boss] O'Kelly now. We won't see each other again…I'll miss you. Very much." This implies that she is not abandoning him, but their mutual mistakes have driven a wedge between them. She tells him, "Be careful with yourself, Rob," before leaving. As she closes the cage, the camera rack focuses back to a closeup of Rob's profile as he stares into space, implying he was not abandoned but is a prisoner of his own thoughts. This scene, repeated at the beginning and end, links the two characters and establishes them both as protagonists, collapsing the novels into one narrative.

The two cases unfold against the backdrop of their relationship, and while Rob's more masculinist tendencies remain, the show cannot use Cassie's perspective to retroactively explore this, and so it makes it him a tragic hero. The show implies that supernatural forces took Peter and Jamie in 1985. In the show, Jonathan Devlin tells Rob that on the night of their disappearance, he and his friends found Rob alone in the woods and heard a sound of laughing with a huge gust of wind, and the motorway construction unearths an ancient amulet that Rob is told depicts a monster known as "the baby stealer." This item is present in the novel, too, but is only described as depicting "a man, no more than a stick-figure, with the wide, pronged antlers of a stag" (591) with no significance ascribed to it. Flashbacks in the beginning of the series visually mythologize Rob's

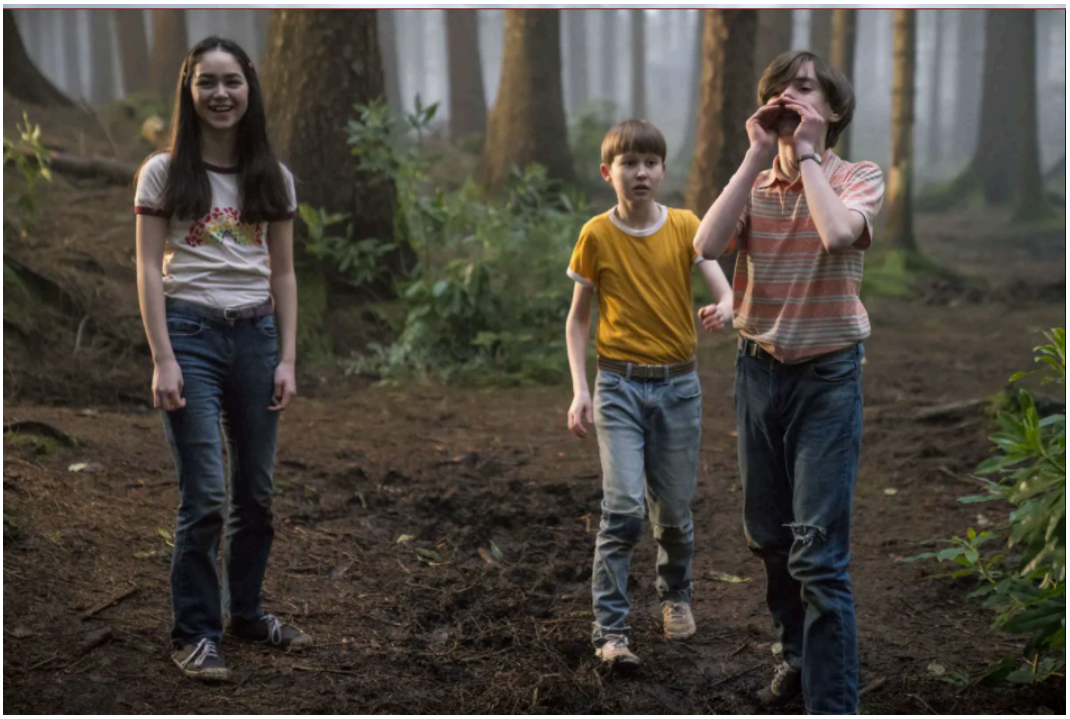

Figure 17: Still from *Dublin Murders* episode 7 (00:55:10)

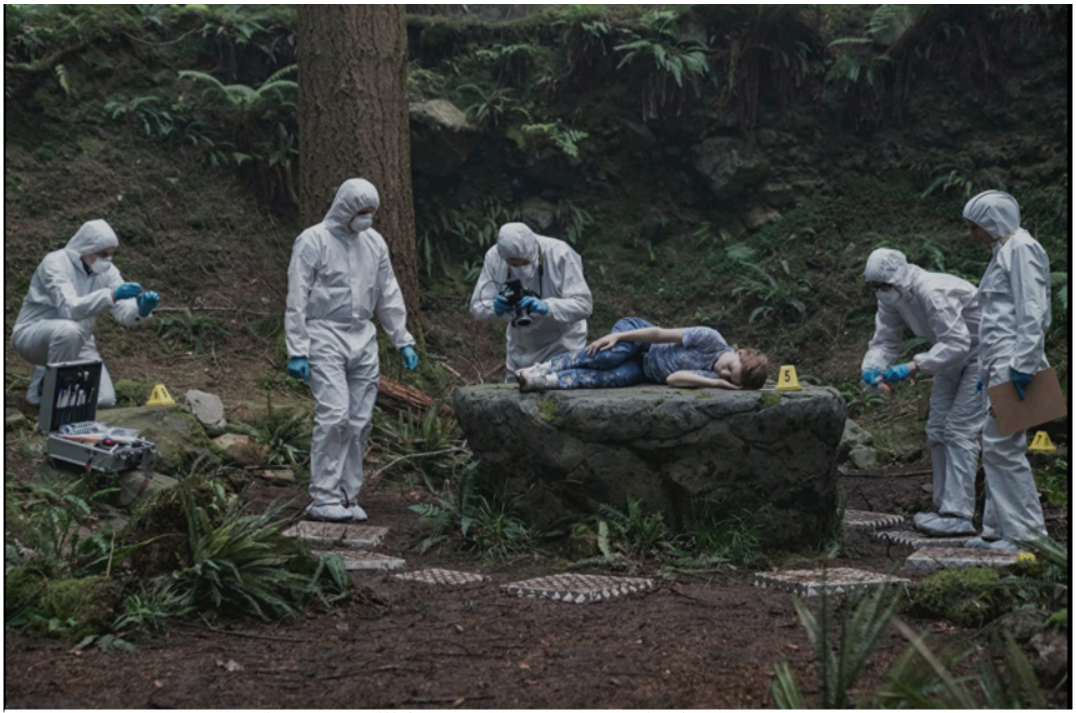

Figure 18: Still from *Dublin Murders*, episode 1 (00:16:40)

childhood and contrast with the present day. As a child, Rob's world is bright and colorful as he plays in the woods while wearing a yellow shirt, beams of light leaking through the trees and illuminating the green foliage around them (figure 17). In the present, the same woods are rendered in a palette of gray and bluish-green with no beams of light, as if the sky is always overcast (figure 18). Rob's nostalgia appears to affect the audience's experience of these flashbacks, because his mother eventually tells him his friends were mean to him as a child and his rosy memories are incorrect. The final flashback, which Jonathan Devlin narrates to Rob in the present day, lacks colors aside from blues and blacks and shows Rob as a child in dark, tight, fragmented closeups, disorienting the audience (figure 19). This flashback, along with the amulet at the end, offer the supernatural solution to the children's disappearances that the novel lacks. Eerie laughter and strong wind rush through the woods in the flashback, and Devlin tells Rob that he and his friends "raised a darkness" by raping a girl in the woods as teenagers—implying that

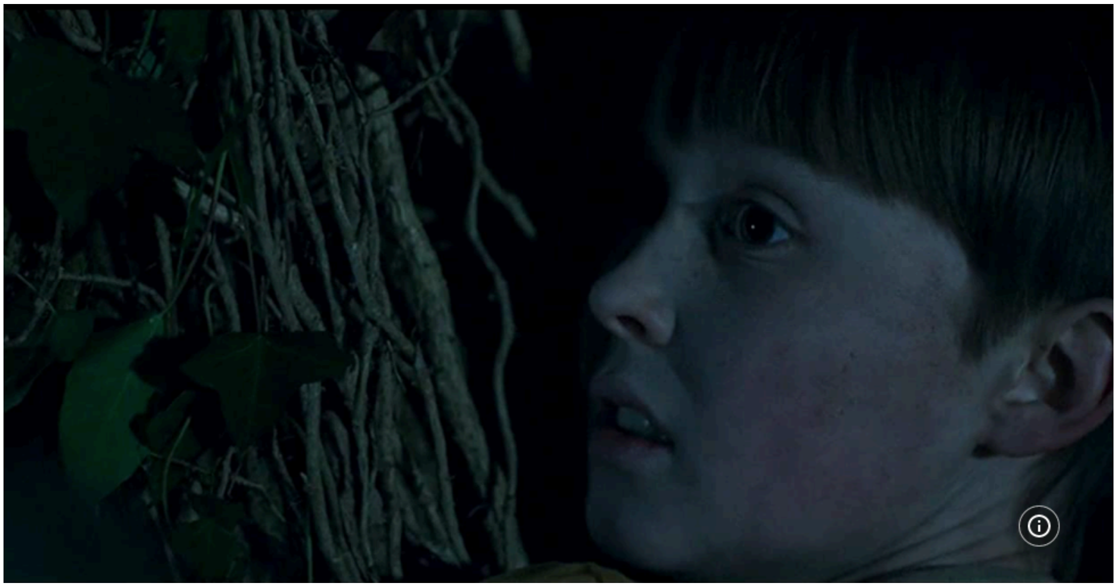

Figure 19: Still from *Dublin Murders*, episode 8 (00:51:21)

darkness took Rob's friends and, later, caused Rosalind to kill Katy. Rob's irrational actions and mistakes are attributed to his trauma caused by some kind of supernatural force raised by rapists as a child, rather than mistakes caused by machismo as in the novel.

Visually, the show implies that Rob's nostalgia gets in the way of him remembering what happened, and only when he solves the mystery of himself can the truth be known. The novel is much more nuanced, attributing his behavior to both trauma and his own inaccurate view of events. In the show, Rob is a tragic male hero who pushes Cassie away due to his emotional and mental instability, and as the audience experiences the devolution of color within his childhood flashbacks along with the slow reveal of truth, they are encouraged to feel sorry for him when Cassie leaves at the end. By removing the formal innovation of the novels, the show removes the chance for the show to subvert the genre trope of the lone, masculinist detective. Reviews of the show were largely negative because of the changes in the adaptation, pointing out that the narrative makes it just like any other crime show. *The Hollywood Reporter* suggested that one of the only things that differentiate the show from American procedurals is "a different accent" (Goodman). Miller argues that the show could have succeeded in becoming "a pleasingly mopey whodunit along the lines of *Shetland* or *Broadchurch*" if the source material hadn't been so difficult to adapt ("*Dublin Murders* Makes a Murky Mess"). In other words, the show becomes just another British detective show among many without the differing perspectives. French's formal innovation result in something unique in the genre, while the show is merely a procedural with a tragic ending.

Feminism in Crime Novels

The contemporary era requires different innovations in literary form in order for the crime genre to be subverted for feminist purpose. Since the mid-twentieth century, feminism's Second and Third Waves, along with many other societal shifts, have afforded new opportunities and challenges. Women writers continue to address this within the crime genre. One common way is to replace the single male detective with a female one who can speak to feminist causes. A notable example is Laurie R. King's detective Kate Martinelli, particularly in her first appearance in the 1993 Edgar-award winning novel *A Grave Talent*. Kate often makes mistakes, one in particular that causes her wife Lee to be shot and paralyzed, yet her dedication to her job, her intelligence, and her unique abilities as a woman enable her to solve her cases. Kate is a detective as good as any man, but she is an overtly feminist character. For example, after Lee is shot, Kate's partner Al tells her she has gained "a certain amount of renown" professionally for forcing the police department to give her leave to care for Lee and for making "noises that the departmental insurance policy should be made to include what might be termed unofficial spouses" before same-sex marriage was legalized (356). Kate is always a feminist or even postfeminist[17] hero in novels that use typical crime genre markers with some progressive politics thrown in. However, she functions as any male detective does: often alone, making deductions by herself that solve the case. Her job and her loner tendencies always cause conflict in her relationship with Lee, and her attempts to overcome this are met with mixed results in each novel. Kate’s character remains a loner, however, because otherwise she would not be a successful detective. By contrast, Tana French’s novels reject the power of a single intelligence by innovating within the genre by her use of multiple perspectives across a series. This enables French’s novels to comment not only on gender politics but also on the crime genre and its trope of the lone detective. In the contemporary era, women crime authors like French continue to innovate within the genre like their literary foremothers.

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[17] Postfeminism is notably difficult to define, so I borrow Gill's definition of features that can be found across postfeminist discourse: "the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice, and empowerment….These themes coexist with, and are structured by, stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to 'race' and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability as well as gender" (149).

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