

**MEDIATING THE CLASSES IN NOIR FICTION: HIERARCHIES IN
AMERICAN NOIR, DETECTIVE, AND CRIME TEXTS**

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English

by

Christopher Michael Fanning

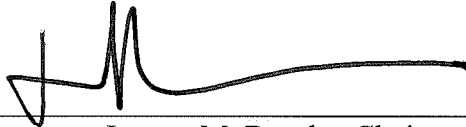
Spring 2011

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

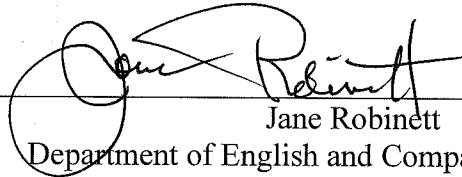
The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Christopher Michael Fanning:

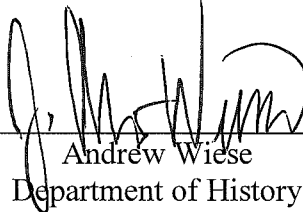
Mediating the Classes in Noir Fiction: Hierarchies in American Noir, Detective,
and Crime Texts



Joanna M. Brooks, Chair
Department of English and Comparative Literature



Jane Robinett
Department of English and Comparative Literature



Andrew Wiese
Department of History

05.09.2011

Approval Date

Copyright © 2011

by

Christopher Michael Fanning

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Mediating the Classes in Noir Fiction: Hierarchies in American
Noir, Detective, and Crime Texts

by

Christopher Michael Fanning

Master of Arts in English

San Diego State University, 2011

This thesis poses a new reading of Noir, crime fiction, and the role of the detective in American interwar literature (1929-1953) suggesting that many of these texts at their core deal with class inequalities. The role of the detective is to mediate the classes, keeping the fragile membrane that is the American dream intact. Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, *The Long Goodbye*, and other texts demonstrate Philip Marlowe's compassion for the compromised and disdain for the lazy and criminal. Chandler's works attempt to neatly bifurcate criminals and citizens though noting the potential for complication. In *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity*, James M. Cain vilifies the racist, careless, and selfish attitudes of the usurpers of middle-class property owners seeking to replace him as head of household. Cain's work justifies the American value of diligence and hard work. Chester Himes illustrates crime as a complication of race in *If He Hollers Let Him Go* suggesting race is instilled in African American men by birth. These circumstances are consequential to an Anglocentric social hierarchy. Crime is often vilified in Noir texts, but also is portrayed as a challenge to the wealthier class.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 MEDIATING THE CLASSES IN NOIR FICTION: CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA IN NOIR.....	1
2 DETECTIVE OR CLASS INTERMEDIARY: RAYMOND CHANDLER’S ALTRUISTIC HERO	22
Corruption of the Public Services	34
The Binary of Citizens and Criminals	36
Conclusion	39
3 CAIN: GOOD GUYS, BAD GUYS, AND THE SUBVERSIVE NATURE OF HUMANITY.....	41
Cain’s Los Angeles as a Model for Circular Hierarchies	43
Sex and the Hierarchy in Cain	45
Cora’s Thinly Veiled Racism in Postman.....	51
Conclusion: Good Guys and Bad Guys	57
4 HIMES AND THE COMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND CLASS IN AMERICAN CRIME.....	58
Himes’s Protest Novel—A Voice of the Other.....	60
The Mystery is in Defining the Enemy.....	67
Deeply Entrenched Hierarchies	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78

CHAPTER 1

MEDIATING THE CLASSES IN NOIR FICTION: CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA IN NOIR

Since the advent of public law enforcement in the 19th century, crime has come to the forefront of public attention. The fascination of law breaking and enforcement emerged in literature as early as Voltaire and Poe leading to the genre of Noir and crime fiction of the twentieth century. The popularity enjoyed by these texts presents many questions as to the nature of this fixation and the sociological implications of a readership preoccupied with narratives of death, greed, and class warfare. Novels in the Noir genre, including detective novels such as Raymond Chandler's and crime novels written by James M. Cain and Chester Himes, present crime as a result of selfish and lazy class envy, though in each respective author's illustration, the context of each scenario exhibits the circumstances of the crime, with socioeconomic, racial, and gender inequities that contribute to the causes or the catalysts for crime. Thus, crime in fiction does not exist in a vacuum, but the authors present these narratives with varying degrees of attention to this social framework.

Certainly, crime is not endemic strictly to Western culture, but can be found in African, Asian, and Latin American communities, but the great extent that its prevalence is found in literature suggests a cultural obsession with crime. This phenomenon stems perhaps from an inherited sense of classical democracy. Writers in the humanities have argued for justice as early as Plato's *Republic* and later the writers of the age of enlightenment such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, to name a few. Part of this philosophical lineage can be traced to the crime novel made popular in the latter half of the nineteenth-century and to a

larger extent the period surrounding the world wars. These fictional texts perform important cultural work in exposing the motives, the processes, and the result of injustice where criminals seek material accumulation, class amelioration or both. Though scholars do not completely agree on what defines a text as Noir, most agree that crime novels that center on a greed, envy, or general subversion of the cultural expectation of society exhibit darker characteristics and focus on the negative image of humanity and his wiles. The moralizing of most of these texts aligns them with the religious didacticism of the medieval period where monastic literature served as the main mode of writing. But unlike medieval literature, Noir plots establish a seditious person who is intent on acquiring some object of desire, eliminating a challenger, or seeking vengeance of an earlier injustice which, as the formula goes, almost always results in the criminal's incarceration or death. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* ironically portrays pilgrims to a holy shrine as amoral sinners content in seeking the pleasure of the flesh, but the justice of punishing sins is left to God. In detective and crime texts, the reader gains catharsis from witnessing the deviant lifestyle and closes the book with a perhaps subconscious understanding that criminal behavior lies on the margins of society.

In nearly all crime fiction and detective texts, the antagonist is vilified as a deviant or miscreant who threatens the stability of society. These narratives proselytize to its audience with messages of bringing justice to criminals in a sort of moral didacticism or an attempt to justify society's principles. There are far too many works of this nature to provide an exhaustive list, but some of the most compelling are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901), Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) and *The Thin Man* (1934), Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe novels, James Cain's *The Postman Always*

Rings Twice (1934) and *Double Indemnity* (1943). Later works tend to establish the villain as a figure driven to his ends through privileging the needs of the self over society or “the greater good” as the cliché goes. These texts blur the proverbial lines between hero and villain providing depth and context, often of socioeconomic and racial basis. Walter Mosley’s *Black Betty* (1994) and Chester Himes’ *If He Hollars Let Him Go* (2002) characterize the criminalization of black sexuality through marginalizing the sex acts of African Americans, especially black men. Various other texts create detectives of a different sort. Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) follows the peregrinations of Oedipa Maas who searches for an ultimately empty truth and *Inherent Vice* offers Doc Sportello, a marijuana-smoking hippie who, like Mosley’s Easy Rawlins, uses his connections to lead him toward the truth. These and other texts borrow from the literary history of the detective, himself a figure of the philosopher king and his role as a shaper and preserver of society.

The influence and rebuttal to these Noir, detective, and crime fiction texts of Depression-era and World War II narratives complicate the idea of justice. Many other novels of the early- to mid- twentieth century serve as proximate Noir texts as they expose crime and its impact on society. John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) perhaps serves as a counternarrative to the idea of detection. The Joad family, criminal in their very existence, become a model for the humanizing of the socially marginalized and desperate. Nathaneal West’s *The Day of the Locust* (1939) also weaves this deviance into his narrative as a frenzy devolves dangerously into a riot at a movie premiere. Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* also delves into the curious world of the marginalized as Oedipa Maas ventures to the underbelly of San Narcisso to discover, and fail in the end, to determine the significance of a peculiar horn-like symbol. Steinbeck, West, and Pynchon help extend the concepts presented

in Noir and arguably should be categorized among the works of Chandler, Hammett, and Cain if not as a close parallel genre. The popularity and impact the Noir genre is evident in the shared notions of justice preservation and conversely the impossibility of retaining that stability.

As a genre of study, criticism of Noir, detectives, and crime fiction often center on the character of the detective, the lusty femme fatales that try to destroy them, and the villain behind the crime (when it is not the femme fatale herself). Particularly the scholarship of Chandler concentrates so closely on Philip Marlowe as a character that few critics say much about the societal context in which he is placed. There is a cavernous gap in the criticism between Marlowe as an individual and Marlowe as a member of a society that has deep divisions. What does Marlowe help to elucidate about the societal ills that plague western culture? How do other detectives, cops, criminals, and victims contribute to our understanding of crime as represented by literature? The Noir novels and films provide cultural work that exposes the inevitability of crime as a result of human desperation, greed, and amoral desire.

Critics have compared Marlowe to both the cowboy and the knight figure but he and other detectives also serve as a class intermediary between the wealthy and powerful, the exploited commoner, and the law enforcement branch that all too often deviates from its sworn impartiality to justice, service, and protection. The victim is most often the exploited whose weakness—skeleton in the closet or profligate family member or associate—draws an opportunist seeking for class improvement without the detriment of hard work, a decidedly American value. Without the detective, the exploited and the opportunist rely on public law

enforcement which seems to quickly serve and protect the exploited when he is wealthy. But when the exploited is not, the detective serves as justice for hire.

Furthermore, scholarship of Cain, Himes, and Mosley expound on the deviant behavior of the criminals and their representative evils. For Frank Chambers and Walter Neff in Cain's works, the desire to couple with another man's wife leads the man into grave criminality. Bob Jones in Himes' novel finds himself incapable of escaping the animalized sexual image formed for his race, and Mosley's Easy Rawlins is drawn into the case of a missing woman with whom he was infatuated in his youth. Within the field of criticism however, there is a general lack of discussion of Chambers, Neff, Jones, and Rawlins as a feature of their class and their relative struggles for socioeconomic improvement. Interestingly, their desire for deviance is sexual in nature primarily, monetarily second, and in a tertiary form, their rebellion serves as a denial of their prescribed identities.

The response to Noir and detective narratives drew lukewarm critical reviews and struggled to earn consideration for inclusion in the literary canon. Critics of literature deemed the genre morally depraved. Stephen Pendo (1976) completed his treatise, *Raymond Chandler on Screen: His Novels into Film*, on adaptations of Chandler into film. Evaluating both the textual and visual medium, Pendo considers the sociological implications involved with crime-centered texts, especially *The Big Sleep* (1939). He finds that many reviews found it too focused on depravity and violence which, he argues, may have influenced the development of Marlowe's character: "In *The Big Sleep*, as well as in Chandler's short stories, the hero metes out as much violence as he receives. But in the five novels following *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe never shoots anyone; indeed, only once fires a gun" (Pendo 41). Pendo ponders the disparate amount of violence perpetuated by the film medium in contrast

to the relatively peaceful text version (199-200). Pendo recommends for further study the depiction of the police in the film and textual versions of Chandler's work. In fact, most of the genre suggests an obscenity of the vilest kind. Thus, a text of this sort can be overlooked as vacuous and perhaps reduced to sensationalism. However the social condemnation of exploitation found in both criminals and authority figures can be lost in dismissing the genre. But little has been written on the Noir genre's social criticism of law enforcement, justice, and the complications therein.

Much of the early criticism surrounding Noir texts aimed at defending the genre and arguing for its purification. Disagreement about the purpose and aesthetics of crime fiction originally came from within the genre. Raymond Chandler's famous essay, "The Simple Art of Murder" (1944), originally ran in *The Atlantic Monthly*, distinguishes the pulps from the art. Characteristic of criticism of the era, Chandler argues that the hard-boiled detective novels must be realistic rather than the far-fetched and exotic cases often employed by writers of the genre. He expresses a frustration at the overwhelmingly large number of pulp-quality novels and writers, that comprise the majority of detective fiction. He offers the kinds of laughable titles: "*The Triple Petunia Murder Case or Inspector Pinchbottle to the Rescue*" that amateur detective writers tend to produce (*Simple Art of Murder* 3). Chandler's seminal criticism of the hard-boiled genre begs for logic, realism, and perhaps a bit of sociological relevance. Murder, he claims, happens out of passion as ordinary as any occurrence and the exceptional cases are not only improbable but often impossible. But as Chandler notes, much of the detective story descends from the English formula and this romanticism could suggest that such exaggerated circumstances imply the bizarre nature of British detection elicits such extreme circumstances of crime.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901) exemplifies this sort of unusual case: the murderer lives next door to the victim's estate, with nefarious plans to succeed the heir who has recently learned of the fortune bequeathed to him by his dead uncle. The killer is actually a member of the Baskerville family. He had traveled to Colombia, married, returned to England to found a school, and finally enact his dastardly plan. The murders are exacted not by weapon, but by fear. In this case, Jack Stapleton, a naturalist, uses a starved dog, smeared with phosphorous to embody the fearful mythical hound. Of course, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson discover the logical explanation, but the unusual nature of the case detracts from the experience the average reader has had with crime as much as it exemplifies Sherlock Holmes' exceptional detection. Holmes has as much perspicacity as Dupin in Poe's three detective stories. Chandler excuses the improbability explaining that "Every detective story writer makes mistakes, and none will ever know as much as he should. Conan Doyle made mistakes which completely invalidated some of his stories, but he was a pioneer, and Sherlock Holmes after all is mostly an attitude and a few dozen lines of unforgettable dialogue" (*Simple Art of Murder* 5). Despite his respect for Doyle, Chandler rejects this type of Victorian representation of crime as it lacks a more realistic, brutal, and democratic view.

Much of the writing about detective fiction originated from the authors themselves since the genre likely lacked serious respect of literary critics until later. In the 1960's, popular culture emerged as a topic of scholarship and Noir novels and films earned the critical attention they had been denied. But secondary criticism of the mid-twentieth century takes a cursory focus on the significance of the criminal, detective, and the law enforcement official. Borrowing from the sort of categorization popular in Structuralist criticism, Philip

Durham in *Down these Mean Streets a Man Must Go* (1963) argues that Chandler's private eye, Philip Marlowe fits the archetype of both cowboy "on the frontier in the 1830's" (80) and the knight due to his chivalrous honor for innocent women (82-3). Durham describes Marlowe as an honorable hero in a world of wicked men and conniving women.

Detective fiction can also be described as a cornerstone of literature as all narratives reveal information through the divulging of the plot. John Cawelti argues that the formulaic genres of Westerns and Detective Fiction contain violence and sexuality in effort to evoke an excitement akin to the arousal one receives through pornography (14-15). He also suggests that these elements provide escapism for a readership seeking a sensational lifestyle, if only briefly (17).

In essence, he argues that the lack of knowledge and certainty in modernist and post-modernist texts suggest that detection has become a foundational aspect of literature. Thus, the reader is the detective, seeking answers and truths from often-unreliable sources. Additionally however, Cawelti finds that many of these texts, namely by Borges, Robbe-Grillet, and Nabokov "are really antidetective stories, which drastically undercut the formulaic expectations associated with the genre" (137). In sum, Cawelti argues that the problem in detective fiction lies in the critical denunciation of the genre as "low art" due to its reliance on a formula for the plot (299). Cawelti believes that, though his studies are admittedly limited, form can permit equal skill as a writer and worth as an art form. Cawelti's prediction that "Dashiell Hammett, Ross Macdonald, Georges Simenon, and possibly Raymond Chandler" may ascend "among the major artists of our age" (299). Cawelti rightly challenges canonical snobbishness though his doubt in Chandler's certain placement among the greatest artists neglects the depth of the writer's social commentary.

A surge of criticism emerged in the nineteen-eighties with scholars such as Stephen Knight, Jerry Speir, Paul Skenazy, Hillary Waugh, Thomas Chastain, Robert Baker, Michael Nietzel, Peter Wolfe, William Marling, and Sinda Gregory offering a revised version of the characteristics of the detective and his place in society. Many arguments of this era extend Durham's knight-archetype concept to Philip Marlowe and his other characteristics.

The detective should not be merely attributed to its predecessors the knight and cowboy, though all three serve intermediary purposes. Stephen Knight's book, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980) traces the history of crime fiction in British and American literature noting the earliest crime novels were confessional narratives where incarcerated characters, usually locked in mental asylums, recount their transgressions in hopes of redeeming their Christian soul. Knight builds upon the knight-figure criticism and heroism noting that much of the heredity of the crime novel rests in the true crime memoirs of *The Newgate Calendar*, a confessional by the inmates of the famous prison, and the *Memoirs* (1828-29) of Eugene Francois Vidocq, a criminal turned policeman. Knight also characterizes Marlowe as a saintly figure whose detachment from the world at large is a result of his sharp rejection of the vacuity of society. He argues that "human contact for Marlowe is a sterile process where his arid preconceptions about others are constantly reinforced, and Chandler's shaping of dialogue, action and description allows no other knowledge of people to intervene" (Knight 147). Knight distinguishes Chandler's work from the rest of the genre in its depiction of the idealized form of the detective and the desperate client as a complication of the binary established by his antecedent writers. Marlowe's clients are often seemingly guilty, but desperately innocent seeking his help to elucidate the truth.

While these comparisons to archetype help place the detective figure in its social role, other critics redirect the critical discussion toward the preservation of morality. Jerry Speir poses that the private investigator is anachronistic with the twentieth-century as he upholds a romantic idealism characteristic of Arthurian romances. Speir notes that “characters fall roughly into two basic types—those who, though perhaps deluded, act on *what they perceive* to be honorable intentions and those who act out of selfishness, greed, hatred, and expediency” (135). The later novels present more ambiguity in these character binaries, though the earlier texts clearly bifurcate into the two groups.

The role the detective plays in crime investigation complicates the role of the police in that police protocol carries with it the bureaucratic limitations such as the chain of command and jurisdiction. In her essay “The Human Rather than Superhuman Sleuth,” Hillary Waugh reflects on the development of the detective genre from Poe and Conan Doyle to the modern *Dragnet* series. Waugh sees the benefit to the shamus’s independence particularly in the “rules and regulations” that limit the police and not the detective (35). Detectives became, she argues, “no longer dilettantes, they were professionals who had to earn a living” (Waugh 34). She explains how prior works in the genre have developed her own writing of fiction within the form. The rise in popularity of the detective parallels the popularity of other Noir texts that do not present a detective, such as Cain’s and Himes’s. Waugh and other scholars believe the need for a detective in crime fiction suggests a distrust of a public law enforcement branch. The detective seems to have the ability to serve the majority where the police are handicapped by the power of the wealthy. But this role requires an immunity to the compulsion for material wealth.

Detectives often exude honor though many do not. Peter Wolfe characterizes Marlowe as a man of deeply idealistic mores and finds him to be a man of selfless heroism. In *Something More than Night* (1985), Wolfe sees Marlowe as a man of principle rather than business. Marlowe chooses to respect men and women of integrity and character rather than those of insidious and deviant desire. Thus, Wolfe finds detective fiction to be a game of good and evil as one wishes to triumph over the other. The contrast between the binaries is pronounced by the exaggerated qualities of the villains, for example Arthur Gwynn Geiger who is a pornographer and bisexual in *The Big Sleep*, as opposed to the victimized General Sternwood. Mosley's Easy Rawlins offers a similarly compassionate figure in his efforts to free Betty from her captors, providing a figure of liberation for African American victims.

On the contrary, Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* seeks monetary gain at every opportunity. In fact, his purpose in the case lies in his own self-interest to obtain part of the falcon's value. Whereas Marlowe and Rawlins serve as harbingers of justice and truth, Spade uses his might and intellect to best the gangsters who possess the falcon. Thus, detectives seem to exhibit two distinct roles: the crusader and the businessman. Though Marlowe can be both, he aims not for riches, but for the abstraction of justice.

The honor exudes by Chandler's detective contrasts starkly with his villains and the criminals in Cain's fiction. William Marling's criticism echoes many of the other readings of Marlowe as a knightly figure and he finds Marlowe's chivalry as an extension of his exceptional character. Marling suggests in his book *Raymond Chandler* (1986) that Chandler posits Marlowe as professionally respectable; he does not associate with outlaws, does not marry because he cannot provide a husbandly role, and he upholds the law despite the

inequities present. Marlowe avoids loose women and defends or protects innocent ones as does his “historic antecedent” the knight (*Raymond Chandler* 82). In Marling’s view, Marlowe helps characterize all that a good man should be. Marling also notes that working-class readers often comprise the majority of the detective fiction readership. As such, Marlowe’s approval of some people such as General Sternwood relate more to their shared independence from corporate and governmental groups of power and corruption. Marling chronicles Chandler’s own experience in an inefficient and corrupt oil company and their mismanagement of funds, principles, and morals. But the knight serves no king. The loyalty he abides by serves to establish his independence.

The knight can be traced to the professional honor of the private eye. Robert Baker and Michael Nietzel, in their cowritten text *Private Eyes: One Hundred and One Knights* (1985), suggest his integrity trumps his base physiological needs. Marlowe’s profession, “prowling the streets of Los Angeles” (Baker and Nietzel 48), juxtaposed with his “both romantic and chivalrous” treatment of women (49) suggests that the detective avoids “sexual entanglements” out of professional integrity, careful attention to consequences, and narrative pragmatism. If Marlowe had allowed himself to become involved with a woman, he would be exposing himself to the vulnerabilities of married life, which is contradictory to the private investigator lifestyle. Baker and Nietzel agree with Jerry Speir that Marlowe is “a hero out of time” more closely resembling knightly quests rather than private investigations (51). Baker and Nietzel contribute to the body of scholarship that evaluates Marlowe’s character and his unusual habits though, like their predecessors, they do not consider the position of the detective’s social and economic status.

Though much of the criticism on detective fiction, especially on Philip Marlowe, focuses on characteristics and traits, a few scholars have argued that the role of the detective, his attitude, and the consequences of his work complicate the free-market structure particularly in Los Angeles. Sinda Gregory argues in *Private Investigations: The Novels of Dashiell Hammett* (1985) that Hammett saw “life as a mystery” and this metaphor explains why “we search for motives that will define human behavior and seek retribution on those who defy the structures set up to maintain the illusion of order; we want above all, systems of justice that reassure us that there are measures for human conduct” (178). Hammett’s “fiction was taking him in one direction—toward a vision that the world and people are essentially beyond understanding, beyond control—while his politics were taking him in another” (Gregory 179-80). As a Marxist, he could not resolve the disparities in his fiction and his social convictions. Paradoxically, Hammett’s more materialistic detective, Sam Spade opposes the altruistic nature of Marlowe. Gregory’s assertion, that Chandler despised the rural working class, misses the mark. Chandler derides the selfish, the dishonest swindler or the femme fatale in part because the lack of integrity undermines the free-market capitalist optimism that Los Angeles offered in the early twentieth century.

Similarly, the tension of early twentieth century America, induces the hard-boiled qualities of Noir. Ralph Willett focuses his book *The Naked City: Urban Crime Fiction in the USA* (1996) on the issues urban issues of crime, order, and unrest. Willett finds that the American city is chaotic and dangerous; it is a hotbed of civil unrest from early detective fiction until the most contemporary texts available at the time of publishing. Language, he argues is as tense as the atmosphere and thus serves as a litmus test for the state of civil affairs. The urban American city is savage as a jungle, where images do not necessarily

construct meaning. He notes instances where innocent-seeming women, cops, and the client themselves become the perpetrators of theft and murder. Further, he finds that “division of the city territorially into social and ethnic villages, linked economically but not culturally, inhibits urban recovery” (Willet 132). These geographical divisions fuel racial and socio-economic tensions that often amount to crime. The detective is a *flaneur* in the city roaming about in a crime-fantasy narrative according to Willett. This tension draws parallels to the constant war that Thomas Hobbes described in *Leviathan* provoking the problem of just who is the powerful ruler in Los Angeles?

The absence of an omnipresent authority elicits chaos in fictional Los Angeles where rich men, mostly Anglo, strive for more powerful positions in government, industry, and community groups. The detective often works for this archetype though the majority of the narratives expose a manipulation of class as a means of garnering wealth or power. This assertion highlights the darker side of mankind or Noir. Christopher Breu’s *Hard-Boiled Masculinities* (2005) classifies Noir as negation, the dark shadow of nothingness; it is a reaction to desperate rejection. Breu chronicles the history of the genre from its early gothic roots, to its industrial protest, and finally as a political mouthpiece for the proletariat. Breu loudly charges that Noir deserves to be discussed in the “larger historical context” of social and political theory (26). In this book, Breu parallels the masculinities of the detectives in Noir to both psychoanalysis and the genre of fantasy as the hard-boiled identity constitutes an idealized form of manhood.

Like Breu, LeRoy Lad Panek wonders what the popularity of crime in literature suggests about American society. Panek undertakes the explanation of this genesis in *The Origins of the American Detective Story* (2006). He explains that the detective genre

continues the trope, made popular by Arthur Conan Doyle in the Sherlock Holmes stories, that policemen lacked the intelligence of the detective and humbled, they visit Holmes to beg for his help in solving the case. In reality, American cops “were as corrupt as many of the city’s [New York’s] criminals” (Panek 43). Later, crime and detective novels span the coasts of America and other countries. The expansion of detective fiction, Noir, mystery, and the crime-novel into a focus on marginalized groups has elucidated a commonality that these texts seem to bear: in nearly every locale, race, creed, and socio-economic group, crime emerges out of some inequality. The criminals, whether depicted as sinister and selfish or vindictive or sympathetic, all seek accomplishment of a desire. For some this desire is wealth while for others it is recompense. Noir most clearly explicates the phenomena that plagues western culture in which the capitalist model of competition leads to corruption of large groups—corporate and governmental where the independent entrepreneur, the detective, alone serves the injured citizen.

Geography further complicates the issue of Noir criticism. Los Angeles seems to provide the setting for the vast majority of Noir texts, with the illustration depicting rampant corruption and crime. Willett asserts that the hard-boiled narratives of Chandler, Cain, Mosley, and Himes contain several references to the vegetation and geography of the region, the violence of nature’s wrath, and the overgrowth of corporate influence in Los Angeles (22-30). Thus, “the city is associated with loss, displacement, denial and the myth of the melting pot as an homogeneous unity of hyphenated American citizens” (Willett 33).

Clark Davis, in his book, *Company Men: White Collar Life and Corporate Culture in Los Angeles 1892-1941* (2000), argues that the rise of the corporation diminished the individual’s autonomy and increased the requisite allegiance to the corporation. This is

represented in Cain's *Double Indemnity* where Walter is hounded by Mr. Keyes, who senses Walter's thievery and murder of his client, Mr. Nirdlinger. Walter signifies the corporate upper-middle management for whom the corporation serves as a master. Frederick Whiting defines Cain's Los Angeles as a feudal society replete with coats-of-arms and manors described as castles. In essence, then, Los Angeles mirrors a fiefdom where Anglo elite serves as a master for men like Walter and Frank in Cain's fiction. Chandler's and Himes' fiction also depicts this struggle for hierarchical position. Such a social order derives from the expansive and competitive nature of the early boom days of the pre-Great War days.

The historical foundations of Los Angeles and its cultural and industrial orientation provide compelling evidence that in L.A. the disparate social classes and the resulting limits on access to power indicate that in a western construct, democracy is infringed upon by capitalism and deep class divisions. But this is not specific to LA; most European and American cities have tiers of power from the wealthy nobles to the powerless peasants. However the city of angels does have its historical roots in circumstances that mechanized the existence of crime. For example, critics such as Mike Davis believe that the settlement of Los Angeles by the American government established the disparate and desperate distribution of power and wealth in the burgeoning town during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In *City of Quartz* (1992), Davis outlines the history of Los Angeles as a Spanish settlement for missionaries and ranchers and eventually a Mecca for capitalist opportunity. The 'booster period' as he terms it, was a period in which eastern American and European nobility sought greater control over commerce and legislation, twin sisters of infrastructure in western society. Most of the "one hundred thousand fortune- and health-seekers" arrived on the promise of employment, wide-open real estate, and good weather (Davis 24-25).

Unsurprisingly, Anglo Americans made up the basis for local government and native Indians, Spanish settlers, and all present prior to the arrival of the boosters would become subordinate class.

Yet the droves continued to arrive in search of opportunity and only continued during the depression. This only exacerbated the class divide. Davis quotes Lewis Corey on this vast discrepancy from his work *Crisis of the Middle Class* (1935):

...the Jeffersonian Dream was moribund: 'That middle-class ideal is gone beyond recall. The United States today is a nation of employees and of propertyless dependents.' As jobless accountants and ruined stockbrokers stood in the same breadlines as truckdrivers and steelworkers, much of the babbity of the 1920s was left with little to eat except for obsolete class pride. Corey warned that the downwardly mobile stratus, 'at war with itself', was approaching a radical crossroads, and would turn either toward socialism or fascism. (36-37)

The economic suffering and despair created, according to Davis helped create the "great anti-myth usually known as *noir*" with "James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*" (Davis 37). The Noir genre speaks as a voice of the culture where economic desperation elicits an exaggerated Darwinian selfishness to feed oneself and family. Though the detective and crime novel existed prior to the market crash in 1929, the fascination with crime detection and justice by both authors and readers. In fact, the number of published works greatly increased demonstrating the widespread interest in law, crime, and establishing and maintaining order in society.

The inherent chaos of Los Angeles, with its competing downtown and west end elites jockeying for power, creates a society where people see their fellow man as competitor or one that presents an opportunity for gain. Each individual is seeking ascendance presumably to the highest station. Nearly all the villains in Chandler's works and Cain's protagonists in *Postman* and *Double Indemnity*, seek wealth or power through illicit means. Chester Himes's

novel *If He Hollars Let Him Go* complicates this dialectic of power through illustrating the intersection of race in World War II era Los Angeles. Stephen Milliken describes this text as biting satire but it also provides a subaltern historical text that exposes the predetermined criminality of a black man especially crimes of a sexual nature toward a white woman. Bob rejects a Booker T. Washingtonian complacency for class ascension.

Aside from deep class division, social and racial hierarchies, and vague power structures, Los Angeles seems to represent a Hollywood superficiality to its core. Theodor Adorno and famously accused Los Angeles of having no natural culture but borrowed European architectural and aesthetic style. This criticism may not simply be European elitism; it may expose the very chaotic symbol of laissez faire capitalism. Ralph Willett notes that L.A. seems to be a city without a center and that L.A. is “a type of anti-city” (18). Los Angeles in effect is a city without an axis, no central locus of vivacity, no soul. Thus, L.A. law enforcement resembles the panopticon without an observation tower. This works completely counter to the western model of social order and thus produces chaos and disorder. In effect, the inmates run the asylum.

The detective figure in Noir texts performs a role that both criticizes the unmitigated surge for wealth and power by corporations and citizens and supposes the need for an intermediary in the relationship between the classes. Philip Marlowe contributes to this class dynamic by defying the constraints of the wealthy as they try to buy his loyalty and the police who have already been bought. To be perfectly fair, many of Chandler’s cops are not necessarily corrupt, but they all demonstrate a general fear of losing their own authority. The common man becomes a subject to the wealthy and powerful. In American Democracy, those of aristocratic station serve as masters since their wealth get sheriffs and councilmen elected.

As a result, law enforcement and public offices do not work for the working class; only the private detective does.

Chandler's Los Angeles seems to exhibit an underworld marketplace of sex, gambling, and stolen goods. And while the city demonstrates a Darwinian environment where men and women act in a selfish manner, in many ways, LA is the synecdochal microcosm for a competitive western culture that values independent achievement above communal success. In later detective works, namely Walter Moseley's, the detective serves an ethnic group of people for whom the law enforcement offices largely ignores. Marlowe takes jobs in order to cover his overhead, but his cases where he is intrigued by a person of lower station in an extraordinary disposition contain the bulk of the narration. *The Big Sleep* presents the Sternwood daughters as aloof, careless, and ignorant of the consequences of their actions. The pornography ring that Carmen Sternwood becomes engaged in reflects the desperate and deviant means that men such as Arthur Geiger would employ in order to achieve economic independence. *The Long Goodbye* (1953) presents Terry Lennox, a poor sap whose marriage to the wealthy tart creates problems for him. Sylvia uses him as a spousal space-holder, a relationship of ownership and subjectivity. Conversely, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940) is set on the proletarian side of town where Moose Malloy, a thug with a big heart, wishes to recover his lost love Velma.

Los Angeles then becomes, at least to some extent, Adorno's crystal ball of capitalism's future. Chandler exposes the Southern California metropolis as a model for American capitalism. Eddie Mars, Arthur Geiger, Rusty Regan, and the Sternwood sisters lust for the power of the ruling class and their masterhood of city services. Thus, and perhaps unwittingly, Chandler paints the United States as a paradoxical democracy. Only old money

Americans and nouveau riche, who are often mobsters and bootleggers, find law enforcement serves their best interests. The majority of the populace finds themselves in a relationship of opposition to the police and the authorities. Any doubt regarding this fact should be negated by the officers in Eddie Mars' lobby monitoring only house liquor, proving that Chandler's view of Los Angeles cops is that they work for those with money despite the legality of its origin. Additionally, those who are not criminals can retain a clean wrap sheet if they have connections. When Vivian first visits Marlowe's office, he waves off her admission that Owen Taylor (Carmen's former lover) has a criminal record: "He didn't know the right people. That's all a police record means in this rotten crime-ridden country" (*Big Sleep* 57). Marlowe's negative view of the police indicates that the idea of justice in America and especially Los Angeles has become perverted by money.

As a detective, and an honest one at that, Marlowe rejects the power hierarchy as it is described in *The Big Sleep*. As a businessman, it is quite ironic that Marlowe often rejects offers for financial wealth, although when he does some sort of interest in the case predicated on the money. Unlike Sam Spade in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, Philip Marlowe conducts business with financial reckless abandon in regards to his personal expenses. He accepts money at times as a retainer but often does not deposit the money into his bank account. This characteristic presents him as the mediator of the classes: he works primarily on self-interest and at that he is compelled by a person in need and often that is a person disadvantaged by someone of higher station, a lack of moral scruples, or both. His role in his cases most often sides with the person of lower economic or social status perhaps especially when that person does not exhibit the wherewithal to take full advantage of others in the nature of competitiveness.

Like Chandler, James M. Cain portrays the greater Los Angeles area as a battleground of individuals seeking personal gain at the expense of others. His most notable narratives, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* depict men who target more successful men in their attempt to obtain a higher station in life. This succession in Cain's works is symbolized by the wife. Both Frank in *Postman* and Walter in *Double Indemnity* are initially drawn to the woman of the household wishing to replace her husband. Many critics

The implicit perpetual struggle for justice pervades each of these texts. Marlowe's version of justice is not that of the ruling class, but rather a different variety. In the classical sense, the idea of truth becomes a binary. The truth elucidates who is the criminal and who is the victim. Chandler's novels help distinguish a nether-region of doubt in the field of detection. The victim is not always innocent and sometimes guilty to an extent. The traditional definition of truth and justice proves problematic since, as previously noted, the justice system truly only works for those in high station. While it would be difficult to determine that detective novels such as Chandler's are Marxist in nature, Marlowe serves a Marxist principle in helping equate the definition of justice in a more democratic sense. The frustration demonstrated by Los Angeles police officers indicates a change in the power structure where the aristocratic begin to lose their death grip on supreme authority in society.

CHAPTER 2

DETECTIVE OR CLASS INTERMEDIARY: RAYMOND CHANDLER'S ALTRUISTIC HERO

Raymond Chandler in *The Simple Art of Murder* writes: "Murder, which is a frustration of the individual and hence a frustration of the race, may have, and in fact has, a good deal of sociological implication" (2). Chandler's hesitation to assert with certainty the relevance of murder and its cultural omnipresence perhaps may be attributed to the common trepidation of writers during the era associated with communism when many writer suffer from McCarthy's blacklisting as did Dalton Trumbo, Arthur Miller, and the rest of the Hollywood nine. Jerry Speir links Chandler's fiction to his social criticism noting that "he perceived the detective/mystery novel as a product of 'the tensions in which we live'" (135). The tensions Speir refers to are many. The period of Chandler's most celebrated fiction (1936–1955) was one of global war, national economic destitution, and Cold War paranoia of suspected foreign spies, communists, and traitors of all types. Paul Skenazy explains that in the abundance of violence and crime in Chandler's literature, "one feels the discordances, the doubleness, in everything he wrote: in the mixtures of illusion and despair, hope and defeat" which causes the reader to experience the melancholic struggles of the world (qtd. in Gardiner and Walker 2).

Violence, deceit, and dissembling permeate the detective genre in general and Chandler's corpus of work as well as the Noir movement of art. Understandably, the authors and readers in this era expect this representation of the world, but the role that hostility plays in Chandler's fiction suggests that the conflict between economic, racial, and sexual divisions

present a perpetual challenge to the hierarchy of power inherent in Western civilization. Chandler and the Noir literary movement demonstrate American class discord throughout the various strata in the United States.

Los Angeles serves particularly well to exemplify this dialectic as philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue in their famous chapter “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). Mike Davis rejects Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s belief that Los Angeles serves as a “crystal ball of capitalism’s future” denouncing their criticism as European elitism (*City of Quartz* 48). Davis notes that Adorno and Horkheimer observe only single-family homes and not the ghettos or wartime factories that exemplify the commerce of Los Angeles (49). Far from praising capitalism Davis uses this elitism as a means of explaining the deep-seated belief that Southern California has no cultural foundation, a prejudice that can be traced to the east coast invasion during the late nineteenth-century. The Frankfurt critics and Davis agree however that the greatly disparate conditions of the classes expose the deep economic division of Los Angeles.

Since the burgeoning city advertised an Utopia of free-market economics and an abundance of shipping and manufacturing jobs, the appeal of Los Angeles drew many from the Midwest and the industrial East. Unlike Europe, they argue, American culture, namely that controlled by Anglo American tradition, contains little substance. The class dynamic of America suggests a bourgeois-led economy where the owners of the means of production become lords and the commoners devolve into serfs, a regression of social development.

Chandler’s body of fiction tangentially echoes Adorno and Horkheimer’s argument in that both find Los Angeles to embody the perpetually widening divide between the lomp

proletariat, the petit-bourgeois, bourgeois, and aristocratic classes, which exacerbates racial, religious, and socio-economic and socio-cultural tension encouraging marginalized groups to subvert the values of the hegemony. Though Chandler truly cannot be defined as a socialist or communist, he, too, noticed the disparate circumstances and consequences of economic class and the power inherited with money. Chandler bifurcates the wealthy class into victims and villains. Private eye Philip Marlowe sympathizes with General Sternwood of *The Big Sleep* but despises Harlan Potter of *The Long Goodbye*. Criminals too, fit nicely into these two categories as demonstrated by Marlowe's resistance to condemning Terry Lennox in the latter and Rusty Regan in the former, but Arthur Geiger of *The Big Sleep*, Jules Amthor of *Farewell, My Lovely* and Mendy Menendez of *The Long Goodbye* lack integrity and manipulate people and institutions toward their will.

Chandler's fiction is mostly Los Angeles and its surrounding area in which the plots involve criminal behavior from murder to missing persons and property. He narrates his texts from the voice of the hard-boiled detective Philip Marlowe, a marginal figure in society. Marlowe serves as a synecdoche for the ethical, small-time businessman who dedicates himself to social service, an integral part of American capitalism and its functionality. Marlowe must make a living, but on several occasions he refuses payment in order to uphold his integrity as a businessman and protector of people. Unlike mobsters and tycoons, who are nearly the same in Chandler's depiction, Marlowe encounters none of the same passion for material wealth that Sam Spade does in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. Many critics find that his idealistic method of business suggests that he serves as a modern knight in that he upholds the highest expectations for human interaction and yet lacks efficacy in practice. And while this description is fitting, his role can be better described as intermediary

and liaison in the incessant conflict between public law enforcement, the city's leadership, and the bourgeois and aristocratic classes in league against the proletarian and petty-bourgeois people of whom the former take advantage.

Marlowe's clientele represents all classes, from the wealthy and shamed General Sternwood of *The Big Sleep* to the haunted World War II veteran and apparent victim of spousal abuse, Terry Lennox, in *The Long Goodbye*. Marlowe becomes personally affected by these figures; he immediately senses their victimhood and works to defend their honor. This is typical of Chandler's novels in which the victim's wealth, reputation, or commerce is in jeopardy from some unscrupulous challenger. Putting his own personal safety at risk, forgoing a family, and rejecting wealth in a more lucrative industry, Marlowe instead works to right the wrongs inflicted upon fundamentally innocent victims. Thus, Chandler's detective serves as an anomaly in a culture based on individual concern for economic proliferation. Though he cannot be called a Marxian figure since he receives no public funding or support, his role in the narratives seems to suggest that American capitalism, in the western tradition, requires altruistic and independent entrepreneurs in order to establish justice and ethics. The problem, however, is Marlowe never fully succeeds. He solves most of the crimes in the novel, but does not eliminate the threat of the mob, of murderers, of thieves. Rather, he protects his clients in the immediate case leaving the potential for a future repeat.

Chandler reveals the paradox of American democracy and capitalism through Marlowe's interactions with unscrupulous people and their victims. In a country where all men are supposedly equal, men and women suffer the exploitation of their circumstances through blackmail, theft, manipulation, and murder, exposing the paradox inherent to

American society where those who attain their wealth fairly and honestly are threatened by those who achieve it in a Machiavellian fashion. This threatens the idealism of America where hard-working men and women can achieve the comfort of a steady living and home ownership. However, inherent to America are the discordances between the working and the elite. The Marlowe novels serve as both Noir crime fiction and tales of morality in which the good triumph and justice is served, at least partially.

Los Angeles, throughout Chandler's work, exemplifies the Western model of society, and seems to encourage immorality in achieving wealth and power. Frequently unfettered and unscrupulous men of industry and crime inflict control over their lessers. The City of Angels' very foundation was built upon theft from Mexico, and from its incorporation until the Noir period, the social elements of L.A. are those of lawless frontier in government and industry. Los Angeles espouses a Machiavellian philosophy of personal advancement. As throngs of Americans from other states flocked to Southern California, the promise of successful employment suggested to them that ambitious ends can justify unscrupulous means. Chandler's first novel, written in the middle of the Great Depression, loudly questions the morality of a city that offers a fantasyland where failure only destroys the meek. *The Big Sleep* proposes that victimization can come to people of all stations as the wealthy oil tycoon General Sternwood suffers the embarrassment and shame of his daughters' lasciviousness, drug use, and degenerate characters. Marlowe works for him not for a substantial financial reward, but because Sternwood is a man of independence and ethics, much like Marlowe himself. Chandler critic William Marling believes this may be meant to connect with working-class readers who are involved in a workplace master/slave dialectic of their own. He observes that Marlowe's "insubordination, blended Marlowe's irony, becomes an

attractive quality for a mass readership that works in offices and on assembly lines, and rebels against the faceless nature of life” (Marling, *Raymond Chandler* 81-2). The detective genre no doubt appeals largely to a proletarian and petit bourgeois readership and Marlowe’s persona helps shape the attitudes of American male readers who might struggle to find their own sense of autonomy within the confining structure of American commercialism.

Masculinity can be compromised when a man is reliant on another for his livelihood, but as Marlowe shows this compromise can be resisted.

Independent men like Sternwood and Marlowe idealize the hard-boiled masculine fantasy as Christopher Breu has argued. But independence serves more than a man’s sense of self-actualization; it removes ownership and permits a true sense of agency. Perhaps this freedom is exactly what Marling sees as the genesis for Marlowe’s and Sternwood’s mutual understanding. Perhaps, the hard-boiled identity emerges as a claim for independence and self-lordship. The chivalrous knight figure that critics argue indicates that Marlowe’s image as a knight may, in fact, be overstated. Marlowe does seek to rectify the wrongs inflicted upon others, but he does not serve any king, nor does he willfully submit to authority figures. Marlowe’s autonomy frames him as a mediator between victim and perpetrator. In *The Big Sleep*, it seems everyone targets General Sternwood for money, whether it be his own daughters as Carmen Sternwood and her sister Vivian who live leisurely, unmarried lives with his support or pornographer and ether peddler Arthur Geiger who blackmails the General threatening his good reputation with the scandal of his daughter’s nude photos.

Marling also notes that General Sternwood “says he too is insubordinate” and the reader would recognize that both men represent “the independent, the entrepreneurs” (*Raymond Chandler* 82). As entrepreneurs, they are independent in their industries.

However, the two men are irreconcilably different in one respect: the General has made himself vulnerable due to his wealth and Marlowe is, as Las Vegas mobster Mendy Menendez characterizes him in *The Long Goodbye*, a “cheapie” (76). For the General, his wealth makes him a target for attack. Though his lack of wealth is not a failure in Marlowe’s view, the mobsters see it as a shortcoming. Mobsters in Chandler’s novel see wealth as a symbol of autonomy and masculinity, but the good wealthy men see money as setting a mark on them. This is perhaps the fundamental difference between the respectable men and the degenerate in Chandler’s fiction.

Despite his respect for the General, Marlowe finds his daughters to be deplorably vapid and whorish. It seems certainly that his purpose in taking the case that he wishes to minimize the shame that Sternwood endures. When he begins the investigation, Marlowe finds Carmen Sternwood nude, doped, and posing for Arthur Geiger’s pornographic photography. Geiger’s death in this scene, we later learn, comes at the hand of Carmen’s sister Vivian in an attempt to reclaim her wayward sister and recover at least partially, her honor. Marlowe carefully collects the naked girl, dresses her not out of chivalry as Marling describes it, but out of service to the General. To Marlowe, he admits, “She was always just a dope” (*Big Sleep* 36). The sisters and the General fit into to very different categories; the girls adopt the Machiavellianism that characterizes the mobster Eddie Mars and other criminals, whereas the father maintains his dignity despite the fact that the social context in which he lives entices people to disregard what is moral in the quest for wealth and power.

The divergence between the General and his daughters is emphasized by his admiration for Rusty Regan, who married Vivian before disappearing. Later, of course, Marlowe learns that Carmen killed him out of rage and embarrassment at being sexually

rejected (*Big Sleep* 227). Rusty, then helps redeem the honor of the Sternwood family whose progeny have lost respectability in the drive to achieve their desires. Of course, the argument could be made that the Sternwood girls, sexually marginalized, might have grasped at whatever power was available to them as women, and unsurprisingly, given the historical period, that is the power of sex. Vivian's missing husband Rusty Regan can be said to have done the same thing as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, but his subversion represents in Chandler's view a more honorable deviance since it seeks independence. In essence, deviance and crime can be attributed to the inborn limitations of a person, usually gender, race, or class in origin. A noted critic of American corporations, Chandler exemplifies the privilege of wealth and heritage through those who wield their economic and political power like a sword and have obtained this power through no individual accomplishment. For a working class readership, this resonates with their sense that many corporate businessmen, rather than hard work and persistence, succeed from the nepotism that seems to characterize the American way.

Additionally, the altruistic and redeemable characters demonstrate empathy for others where amoral deviant characters seem primarily motivated by selfish tendencies. Marlowe "admires the General both for caring more about people than money and for going beyond the blood tie in search of love" according to Peter Wolfe (127). Sternwood was supposed to revel in his daughter's marriage to the young rebel, which seems contradictory to his ideals. However, Sternwood, like Marlowe, bucks the system that constructs the rigid hierarchy that delineates their social station. In this Hemingway-esque mode, Chandler asserts what defines a man. Wolfe rightly characterizes Marlowe as a man of immaterial passions but he does not reconcile Marlowe's desire to right the wrongs of the world, to equalize the dispersal of

justice, and to prevent the privileged class from taking advantage of the masses. On the other hand, in *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe's sympathy for Terry Lennox, whose exploitation at the hands of his blue-blood wife Sylvia, suggests the detective notices Terry's vulnerability and possibly even subjectivity to his wife. This marriage inverts the symbolic order where the woman enjoys a privilege of power and freedom in that Sylvia assuages her lust with several lovers. Her murder signifies the sexual battle for dominance, not unlike that of the commercial and political manifestations. Eileen Wade, the wife of Roger Wade, a pulp novelist loosely based on the author himself, beats Sylvia to death with a statuette to vindicate the affair Sylvia and her husband had had. Her suicide completes the cycle of violence and vilifies her actions as those of an immoral woman.

The earlier novel, *Farewell, My Lovely*, exhibits Marlowe's curiosity in ex-convict Moose Malloy's quest to find his sweetheart he lost when he was incarcerated. The huge, sentimental thug suggests myriad paradoxes but perhaps, above all, Marlowe empathizes with the giant because he may find Moose too simple to commit murder. Thus, similarly thuggish Marlowe most often displays an adversarial role to lawbreakers. Further complicating the case is Marlowe's compassion for Moose's missing person case. Velma, Chandler reveals, is actually the wealthy wife of Mr. Lewing Lockridge Grayle. Marlowe's intuition here, is often a problem for critics of the novel as he correctly predicted the identity of the murderer early in the plot, but aside from logical fluidity, Marlowe's mistrust of Velma suggests he distrusts any person who ascends to wealth through the facility of another person. The murderer in the novel is not the ex-convict, but his former lover, and Velma's suicide, like Eileen Wade's, at the end punctuates her guilt. Thus, this text contributes to Chandler's confused ideologies of class. Velma's Machiavellian desperation to achieve class ascension

drives her to the point that she loses empathy for others, which may serve as the best definition of a criminal act in Chandler's view.

Thus the wealthy are not always the victimizers as demonstrated by General Sternwood in *The Big Sleep* and Mr. Grayle in *Farewell*, but the unlikable Harlan Potter in *The Long Goodbye* complicates Chandler's sympathies for the wealthy. Sternwood and Grayle are tycoons of industry who cut their teeth in business and their shrewdness extends to their essential character whereas Harlan Potter, the millionaire newspaper publisher, embodies the sort of wealthy bully to be despised. These divisions between the rich suggest that Chandler allows for redeemable characters of all classes; the problem, it seems, is power and not money, or perhaps the threat of one's individual power to limit another's autonomy. Money becomes a tool of power and though they often are concomitant, one can be benevolent regardless of their station.

Carmen Sternwood (*The Big Sleep*), Velma Valento (*Farewell, My Lovely*), and Sylvia Potter (*The Long Goodbye*) are women for whom the objective is power that carries the influence of financial and sexual masterhood. These women characters are impulsive, careless, and hungry for subversion of the symbolic order, though Chandler clearly paints them as villainous—purely femme fatales—in the mold of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan. They tempt men with their attractive bodies, aiming to manipulate their intimacy into a forfeiture of power, which can come through marriage and the sharing of property and wealth, blackmail through an illicit affair, or simple thievery. Contrasted with Anne Riordan (*Farewell, My Lovely*) and Linda Loring (*The Long Goodbye*), there are distinct binaries for women: the insatiable tramp and the kindhearted simple woman who is satisfied with her disposition in society. Unlike deviant men in Chandler's work, whose aims vary with their

sympathies and intentions, women are either villainous or submissive. Perhaps this typifies more the era than the author's attitude, but either way, the gender consequences are omnipresent.

Perhaps Chandler is executing what he thinks Noir texts should do as he argues in *The Simple Art of Murder* that the massive amount of literature focusing on the detective often had illogical and unreal plots. But in his essay, Chandler praises Dashiell Hammett and judges that he "gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse" (*The Simple Art of Murder* 14). The "good deal of sociological implications" related to murder implies a fundamental connection between crime and motive and by extension, subversion and desire (*The Simple Art of Murder* 2). The crimes committed in Chandler's fiction surround a circumstance where persons of limited agency, due to their socio-economic station or their race or gender, are also limited in their access to the kind of freedom associated with the bourgeois class. Unlike many detective stories of Chandler's era that focused on the "whodunit" rather than "whytheydoneit," Chandler invokes the vilest in humanity, yet illustrates the criminal mind as selfishly desirous and desperate rather than insane, evil, and monstrous.

To exemplify this dynamic, Velma Velento transforms into Mrs. Grayle when she marries the wealthy owner of a radio station. Velma's past, and in particular, her framing her lover Moose Malloy for murder, suggests that she desperately seeks to achieve higher status for herself. Later, she is the perpetrator in the death of the effete Lindsay Marriott allegedly because he knew her former identity and blackmailed her. Velma's ascension into the bourgeois class carries its inherent vulnerability with it, stemming from the natural position of envy the working-class bears for those of the bourgeois class. Lindsay Marriott, a jewel

thief and gigolo, serves as a subversive figure since he wishes to ameliorate his position at the expense of the bourgeoisie. This class dynamic exemplifies the social hierarchy of America. Disparity creates desire for equalization and though the means upon which Marriott attempts to gain wealth are at the expense of the Grayles, the desire to subvert their position of privilege exposes the weakness of her accumulation of wealth.

After Velma frames Moose for a murder, she moves to Baltimore where she meets and seduces Mr. Lewin Lockridge Grayle. Mrs. Grayle admits that her newfound wealth has allowed her a privileged lifestyle but it has not perfected her disposition completely: “You think it’s going to [help] when you haven’t always had money. As a matter of fact it just makes new problems...And you forget how hard the old problems were” (*Farewell My Lovely* 278). Moments later, she “sho[ots] [Moose] five times in the stomach” when he points out her culpability in incriminating him (*Farewell My Lovely* 282). This elucidates Chandler’s cycle of class ascension: the person who “started in the gutter” (*Farewell My Lovely* 281) and finds his or her way into wealth, usually through marriage, collusion in organized crime, or manipulation of other people, finally concludes having their clandestine actions and exploitations of people exposed. Chandler dooms this cycle to ruin in part to solidify the idea that corrupt morals do not, in fact, result in wealth, thus reassuring both the blue- and white-collar readers that their honest livelihoods are not in vain. In a sense, what alienates Chandler from his Noir peers is that in his America, his characters can achieve their own versions of the American dream so long as they do not disturb the rigid class distinctions inherited through birth. Perhaps Chandler’s childhood in England is to blame for his pessimism, but the sort of crime he is obsessed with demonstrates a distrust of the promises offered by America.

CORRUPTION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES

Mobsters, thieves, and ambitious women are not the only figures who resort to dishonest means to improve their socio-economic station. Many of the elected officials and law enforcement officers violate their oaths of public service and delve into self-interested accumulation of wealth and power. Though not all of the crooked cops are driven by gain, in many instances, Chandler's dirty cops either assert masculine power in the vein of militaristic brutality or to protect the barons of Los Angeles and Bay City. The problem seems to originate in the nature of the social hierarchy that establishes the successive ranks of bourgeois barons of industry, elected officials such as the mayor, police chief, sheriff, or district attorney, and finally, the rank and file law enforcement agents. This social order creates a problem for the public employee who must choose to either serve the bourgeoisie by protecting them before the working class from theft and attacks on character and thus accepting their influence on public policy and law enforcement or challenge their position in an adversarial role. The latter obviously exposes politicians and police to vulnerability as the owners of the means of production can manipulate policies within the department by bribing higher-rank elected officials, such as the city counsel, presumably temporary peers of the bourgeoisie.

Some critics argue that Chandler's characters only seem to be manipulations of stereotyped figures. Though it seems fair to resist the urge to categorize his characters, there are many instances of patterns of behavior, especially in the *Femme Fatale* figure. Carmen Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*, Velma Valento/Mrs. Grayle in *Farewell, My Lovely*, and Eileen Wade in *The Long Goodbye*, all exemplify murderous women whose rage—most often stemming from sexual rejection or exploitation or discovery of their dissembling—develops into desperate attempts at murder.

Police officers also bear the burden of exemplifying the unholy matrimony of dishonesty and ambition. The “bad cop” figures in Chandler’s fiction embody a uniformity of attributes and actions. They frequently lack intelligence and dexterity in their profession, resort to violent beatings of the more skillful private eye, and attempt to coerce Marlowe into divulging presumed information, though said information is not always known. Stephen Knight argues:

The one case in the novel [*Farewell, My Lovely*] where a character does appear to speak for himself outside a stereotype is Galbraith, the half-bad policeman who explains his situation to Marlowe. But here is what appears to be an exposition of a character’s real tensions steadily turns into a thinly veiled sermon by the author on corruption, one that increasingly moves away from any social, interactive view of urban problems and develops into praise of Moral Rearmament:—a programme that typifies the personalized, holier-than-thou reaction to the world embodied in Marlowe himself and his own uninterested, uninvolved attitude to others. (146)

Knight does not refute the presence of stereotypes that persist in Chandler’s body of work, but perhaps Galbraith exemplifies police officers who are irreconcilably entrenched in the social struggles of the wealthy and their perpetual defense against their challengers.

According to Knight, this scene functions as the author’s platform for social commentary, but on the other hand, Galbraith also may help clarify and complicate the image of the dirty cop in Chandler’s fiction.

Certainly, the author makes bold statements about the limitations of altruism to coexist with socio-economic ambition. However stereotypical these figures of law-enforcement may be, the consistency with which Chandler demonstrates their ineptitude and lack of integrity only serves to underscore the semi-altruism of Marlowe. As a private eye, Marlowe emboldens the idea that within the marketplace of Los Angeles, where seemingly everyone seeks gainful improvement of their wealth and power, the detective figure acts as a mediator. In this role, the detective ventures into the underworld of the mob and criminals

taking to the mean streets where police find resistance. Thus, the detective serves a concurrent function as both law-enforcer and the subversive role as lawbreaker. In protecting Terry Lennox, Marlowe risks his license though in the end, Terry is innocent. Perhaps this helps justify Marlowe's deviance from strictly abiding by the law. Thus, Marlowe serves as the only figure that transgresses Chandler's otherwise strict binary of law-abiding citizens and law-breaking criminals.

Throughout Chandler's fiction lies the problem of defining justice. Marlowe's intuition leads him to trust his instinct and violate professional rules in order to vindicate those he knows to be innocent. In *The High Window*, he decides not to involve the police when he suspects Leslie Murdock, Merle Davis, and Elizabeth Bright Murdock have violated laws. However, their crimes entail killing Mrs. Murdock's first husband, who sexually violated Merle Davis, then his secretary, and also Louis Vannier, a blackmailer who spent his days sleeping with other men's wives, and his associate Elisha Morningstar, the unscrupulous dentist who forged the rare coin Marlowe is hired to find. All three deaths require no justice since those murdered met their demise through their own greedy machinations. Though their deaths were not self-inflicted, they invited their own harm through their criminal intent. Because of incidents like this, Chandler's definition of justice becomes a convoluted and subjective idea of a person attempting to gain at another's expense. One who takes justice in his own hands can be exonerated in this circumstance.

THE BINARY OF CITIZENS AND CRIMINALS

In Chandler's Los Angeles, the social and political binaries extend to nearly all professions, identities, races, and classes. Wealthy barons of business, public officials and law enforcement—all figures of power—can either uphold social order and their own

professional integrity or they can seek fulfillment of their own desire for power. To illustrate the latter, Potter attempts to persuade Marlowe to abandon Terry's case, perhaps because he aims to protect his reputation from the damage of the public knowing his daughter's sexual escapades. Harlan Potter uses his influence to have the police impede Marlowe's quest for the truth in his daughter's murder. Marlowe, and presumably Chandler, hates him for this abuse of power. One of the dirty cops engaged in helping Potter retain his reputation is Captain Gregorius, who refuses to accept that Marlowe's knowledge of the law and his rights expose the illegality of the cop's unmitigated brutality.

Jerry Speir also finds this dynamic in Chandler's fiction, though he associates the morality of Marlowe to be an extension of his chivalric purposes. Speir claims that Chandler's

...dualistic approach to other characters tends to divide them into victims and victimizers. His idealistic sensibilities draw him spontaneously and sympathetically to the down-trodden, to characters like Merle Davis and Terry Lennox. He has open and ready contempt, on the other hand, for the societal powers responsible plights—the Elizabeth Murdocks, the Harlan Potters, the corrupt Bay City Police. But even as Marlowe is quick to defend whomever he perceives as helpless, so is he—more often than not—disappointed in the results of his own well-intentioned heroics. The world, and other people, simply refuse to conform to his high principles. (109)

Speir uses this to justify Marlowe as a modern Knight who lives and exists beyond the realm of the real world. However, Speir assumes that Marlowe aims to change human behavior when, in fact, he may merely be seeking the truth and exposing human greed and unscrupulousness. Still, the self-serving wealthy phonies may demonstrate a violation of the egalitarian principals endemic to the American constitution. The wealthy can be as criminal as the destitute. In fact, Chandler seems

to argue that if Marlowe is a knight and a misfit in the modern world, the same can be said for the Constitution since in fact, all men are not equal in America.

No doubt Marlowe is the exception: he rejects material wealth, a wife and family, and he risks his own personal safety to expose the villains. Rather than viewing Marlowe as a knight, it is more accurate to view Marlowe as a model for the private businessman who relies on his own integrity and honor in his work. He better serves on a larger scale as a figure of a class—the entrepreneur, the independent businessman. While the large corporate tycoons seem above the plebian world, the independent businessman relies on both the working class and the elite, as Marlowe does, for cases. But he has the autonomy to refuse the work if he finds it incongruent with his values and philosophies.

Considering the myriad criminals in Chandler's fiction, Marlowe may also exemplify the importance of the true middle-class. He is self-employed and consequently, is generally free from subservience to a master. The police often brutalize him, but he finds humor in the beating, perhaps because he sees the action as the cops clinging to any semblance of power, a vestige of the feudal system as law enforcement represents an arm of the royal or ducal power. *The Long Goodbye* illustrates this point when Harlan Potter, the newspaper publisher, threatens to have Marlowe pestered at his request. Marlowe seems to comply though he persists at helping Terry avoid culpability for killing his philandering wife. In his assertion of power, Potter posits himself as a sort of duke or earl where his influence into public affairs extends into his familial relations. His daughter's whorish behavior, strikingly similar to Carmen Sternwood's, challenges the dominion of his patriarchy. In this way, Chandler suggests that the core of the Western hierarchical structure, shaky and frail, is not static but replete with threats to the power structure of Anglo American patriarchy.

CONCLUSION

In *Farewell, My Lovely*, the Bay City police seem most interested in defending Jules Amthor's shady psychic consulting racket. In *The Long Goodbye*, the admirable Linda Loring suffers her husband until they divorce whereas her sister knows little of marital fidelity. Carmen Sternwood in *The Big Sleep* seeks autonomy through ether-huffing and pornography, a claim staked on her freedom over her body albeit self-destructive and immature.

Simply, in Chandler's world, there are good people who work to earn their wealth and maintain honesty and there are those that wish to obtain their wealth and power at the expense of or exploitation of others. At the nucleus of each character is the drive for autonomy from some form of authority. Call it the American spirit or class warfare, but in the Western model of society, vertical hierarchies permeate the social fabric and through Chandler's fiction, he elucidates the seemingly unavoidable conflict resulting from the dialectic among them.

Marlowe becomes the liaison between victim and victimizer who allows for the injured party to attain some degree of vindication. Since Marlowe does not work for a large detective corporation, as did Hammett with Pinkerton, he possesses the autonomy to choose his clients. General Sternwood and Terry Lennox provide polar examples of men in positions of power, the former, and ineptitude, the latter, yet he determines their characters to be sound and defensible. Conveniently, Marlowe is always right but his determinations are based upon lofty morals and worldly dejection as Speir notes, Marlowe aims to right the wrongs as some sort of superhero or knight. Marlowe's idealism represents his position as class liaison. He upholds high moral standards for the underground criminal world in part because he cannot become part of it. In a sense, the readership of detective fiction can assuage their sense of

trepidation at the unequal and unjust American corporate world through trust in the independent entrepreneur.

CHAPTER 3

CAIN: GOOD GUYS, BAD GUYS, AND THE SUBVERSIVE NATURE OF HUMANITY

James M. Cain wrote several short novels that earned him Hollywood fame. His novellas *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), *Double Indemnity* (1936), and *Mildred Pierce* (1941) present a sort of emotional morality that resonates with its Depression-era American audience, all of which were adapted into cinema. Perhaps what may have appealed to depression-era audiences is that Cain endows his characters with a sense of villainy and reckless moral abandon. The consequences they face reinforce American society's promise of justice and order.

In *Postman*, Frank Chambers makes no effort to resist the temptation of coupling with his employer's darkly beautiful wife, falling easily into lust and covetousness. He pursues Cora Papadakis (née Smith), drawn to her beauty and fragility in spite of her husband, Nick Papadakis, a Greco American. Ironically, the bourgeois position of power Nick has over Frank holds no real advantage as Frank enjoys carnal knowledge of his boss's wife with no fear of repercussion should they be discovered. As a southern Mediterranean, Nick lacks the same efficacy as an Anglo American despite his ownership of property and a business. Frank has no property and therefore sits lower on the economic hierarchy, but on the racial hierarchy, Frank offers Cora the kind of marriage of which she can be proud. Frank has the youth and attractiveness, but he has itchy feet, the inability to settle down and accumulate wealth as prescribed by the American ideal. Frank does not lack skill since he is mechanically inclined, but he finds little interest in planting his roots to a property and

spouse. His talents however benefit him little since he cannot remain in one place long enough to achieve a steady living.

This quality creates quite an ironic element to the narrative since Cora finds herself torn between two men, of greatly different stations of an economic and racial nature. She cannot win: either she remains married to Nick, tainting her Anglo American purity, or she leaves him for the destitute but attractive vagabond Frank. This dilemma presents the nature of the crime upon which the novella is centered. Frank and Cora's plot to murder Nick illustrates crime as an attempt to appropriate property and wealth but Cain demonstrates that, to the reader's relief, that crimes of envy and indolence yield no real benefit: the perpetrators are exposed and punished.

Similarly in *Double Indemnity* another man finds ruin through his covetousness for a wedded woman who is sad and complacent with her husband. Walter Huff, an insurance salesman and representative, makes a business call to a client—Mr. Nirdlinger—and instead encounters his wife. Like Cora, Phyllis was “born in Iowa” (Cain 116) and she has a great dissatisfaction with her husband. Walter notices a unique quality to Phyllis as Frederick Whiting describes her “desire for greater erotic and economic agency—a yearning to escape the routinization of a loveless and instrumental marriage” (195). Walter and Phyllis quickly fall into an affair and realize an attempt to remove the husband obstacle. Though Phyllis, Walter, and cuckolded and murdered Mr. Nirdlinger are Anglo, the race of Nino Satchetti, who dates Mr. Nirdlinger's daughter Lola introduces an interesting dynamic. He serves as the novel's darker other yet he is not the criminal. In this case, it is the Anglo, white-collar professional who commits a crime. The reversal of the light and dark motif exhibits a compelling example of Cain's presentation of crime. Neither race or class can predict a

motive for crime, but man's impulsiveness and poor judgment serves as a more uniform quality for the origin for committing crime.

Both *Postman* and *Double Indemnity* contain the light and dark motifs indicative of the Noir genre. Nino Sachetti and Nick Papadakis, both southern Mediterraneans, present the darkened "other" that threatens the Anglo American privilege. As Christopher Breu argues, Noir literature draws heavily from the bifurcation of light and dark elements, on the shadows and darkness of society. The two works center around white male characters, but *Postman* exemplifies a vagabond Anglo man relying on his race to supplant his Mediterranean employer contrasted with *Double Indemnity* where a professional Anglo man desires the wife of a client. In both novellas, the direct action of the white male figure challenges the possessions or accomplishments of the shadow person or other. However, this idea is complicated in that the other in *Double Indemnity* serves as a threat to expose the crime rather than victim. Cain seems to acknowledge the Anglo paranoia of the early twentieth century in Los Angeles that their position of privilege is jeopardized by an influx of immigrants from areas such as southern Mediterranean Europe as well as many other ethnic groups. These characters present an other that is considered European, but by the Anglo-dominated Los Angeles power structure, they are othered just the same as any Moor.

CAIN'S LOS ANGELES AS A MODEL FOR CIRCULAR HIERARCHIES

Cain creates a microcosm exemplary of the hierarchical power struggles present in western culture. Interestingly, Cain uses geography as a spatial representation of Eurocentric and paternalistic systems of power through his settings of the home and of the locus of power. Critics Robert Beuka, Catherine Jurka, and Mike Davis suggest that white flight phenomenon stems from the idea of creating a suburban utopia, homogenous in race, class,

and perhaps even religion. Exposing this dynamic, the middle-class's ownership of property and wealth in Cain's work is threatened metonymically through the sexuality of the wife in each respective novel. In *Postman*, Frank serves as Nick's ethnic better, but his economic lesser. He challenges Nick's station through his virility where Nick's age, physique, and heritage limit his power in American culture. Nick, however, lacks Nick's immigrant work-ethic, which situates him beneath the Mediterranean. Both men fall short of the ultimate figure of power: the attractive and industrious Anglo American. Both men naturally are at risk of perpetrating or falling victim to crime since neither enjoy station at the pinnacle of the inherited Anglo hierarchy of western culture prevalent in America. On the other hand, *Double Indemnity* introduces Walter Huff, the middle-class "company man" who desires not so much the economic wealth of his lover's husband, but he wishes to attain her status as his wife to provide that metonymy of power and wealth. Phyllis, it turns out, also abuses love as a means of achieving an ascendance of station, as the novella reveals, she killed her husband's wife in order to marry him.

The Postman Always Rings Twice best spatially represents the rigid hierarchy through its setting. The roadhouse that Nick Papadakis owns lies in Glendale, also the setting for the titular character's primary residence and restaurant in *Mildred Pierce*. Glendale exemplifies a suburban outlier, marginalized from the powerful, but decentered metropolis Los Angeles. Nick's Greek heritage and his residency suggest a parallelism where his heredity is nearly noble, though short of Anglo and western Europeans, and Glendale is near, but paradoxically far from Los Angeles where oligopolies of power exist. With the two-headed leviathan of downtown and the west side groups, Los Angeles exhibits the sort of battleground characteristic of a feudal society. Cain's novels, set on the margins of the city of Los

Angeles, seem to redefine the suburbs differently than is often expected; the small, outlying communities do not display a Utopist milieu but rather a space threatened by outliers who are often lower-stationed or ambitious persons who seek to replace the lord and attain the status as head of household. Most frightening to an American readership that has absorbed a culturization of honoring diligence and hard work is that these criminals threaten the proud manor of the wealthy Anglo house by targeting its weakness: the faithless wife. The moralizing in Cain's novels is thinly veiled by the rarity and exceptional nature of the crimes. Still, the narratives present illustrate the means utilized to achieve class amelioration when the industrious American ideal is rejected. An underlying guilt pervades the middle class where men who have achieved some version of the American dream seem to invite challengers who wish to obtain their accomplishments be they property or even wife.

SEX AND THE HIERARCHY IN CAIN

Unsurprisingly, women bear the freight of exemplifying the pitfalls of immorality and unmitigated self-interest. In *Postman*, Cora harbors malice toward her husband due to his race and she risks her comfortable living in colluding with Frank to murder the man. She desperately abandons her fidelity to Nick in favor of Frank's racial potential. Despite his lackluster career goals, Frank can offer the personhood she desires not through his property, but solely through his semiological value as an Anglo man. Cain's subsequent novel *Double Indemnity* offers a less racialized version of the same parable as Phyllis—the quintessential femme fatale—is revealed as the true murderer and Walter serves as merely a puppet for her wiles. Through both novels, it is clear that Cain presents these women as the Jezebel-figure, the woman of ruination, in order to exemplify the immorality of female subversion of the symbolic order. Perhaps, however, if we read these narratives as exceptional tales rather than

epitomic examples, Cain's message seems to carry a more cautionary than denunciatory moral of challenging patriarchal control. Rarely does the criminal succeed in ousting the assiduous Anglo male.

It is surely impossible to read Cain in this fashion absent of the class implications in his novels. Unlike many who uphold the Anglocentric social hierarchy, Cain suggests that the Anglo upper-middle class demonstrate the predominance of crime due to their unsatisfied desire of station ambition. In *Double Indemnity*, Frederick Whiting finds that "The mass-produced castle tapestry and coat-of-arms provide ironic commentary on the attempt to evade the homogenizing effects of capital via nostalgia for a feudal economy and a model of individual identity predicated upon archaic conceptions of bloodlines and birth" (194). The Nirdlinger household does resemble that of a medieval fortress, and Mr. Nirdlinger can be said to embody lordship since his executive position in his company is one of great stature in management. Walter Huff, the true 'company man' prior to his crime, recognizes in Nirdlinger a man, perhaps like himself, too busy to haggle over his personal affairs. He lets his wife handle mundane tasks such as managing insurance policies.

Walter also seems intent on dethroning the lord and supplanting himself in his place, but all the while he is unaware that Mrs. Nirdlinger manipulates Walter's actions through her physical attractiveness and her guile. It is a sort of manipulation of the regicide narrative in the line of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The symbolism of royalty dominates the action of Cain's novel as Walter more deeply entrenches himself in his crime. The plot to kill Phyllis's husband reflects Walter's natural subversive inclination toward improving his own status. He sees acceding Mr. Nirdlinger as accomplishing not mere cuckoldry but regicide, obtaining the property, wealth, and perhaps most symbolic, wife of the powerful man. However, unlike

Shakespearean tragedies, crime fiction resembles a less regal form of subversion—that of the middle-class challenging the upper-middle class rather than the feudal intraclass aristocratic struggle for dominance.

Thus the class dynamic shifts in America due in large part to the struggle of the individual to improve his class station through careful and proximate succession of the man above him on the hierarchy. Cain's texts help classify crime as a means of achieving the betterment of employment and wealth, a sort of precursor to the narratives of the Noir detective novels. Cain very clearly exemplifies the criminal mind as one who justifies the means by the ends. This sort of Machiavellianism suggests that in America, the land of opportunity presents a conundrum: the ends or the opportunity elicits desperate attempts or the means, which often involve criminal behavior in order to achieve the goal. The abandonment of respect for civility suggests that America at its very core resembles the corporate structure of the business world, itself an extension of the feudal model of social hierarchies. Just as the apprentice wishes to succeed the master, the middle class challenges the bourgeois class. In the case of *Double Indemnity*, Walter Huff, a petit-bourgeois insurance agent and salesman is reliant upon families like the Nirdlingers to realize his success. Mr. Nirdlinger leaves town to attend his class reunion at Leland Stanford University, even in that era a class indicator of privilege.

Phyllis, the *femme fatale* in *Indemnity* exhibits much of the same self-purposed intentions as she marks Walter as her next victim. Her ambitions extend, as the novel reveals through Lola, her step-daughter, to much earlier when Phyllis arranged for the original Mrs. Nirdlinger to conveniently die of complications due to pneumonia while masking Phyllis's own deliberate negligence as a nurse. Lola's revelation—that her step-mother and her

father's killer are one and the same—suggests that Walter's collusion with Phyllis in murdering her husband only disguises the facility with which she manipulates Walter through her sexuality. David Madden calls Phyllis “a psychotic in love with death” and he suggests that she uses Walter's desire for her as a disguise for her will to have her husband murdered (*Cain's Craft* 74). He goes on to argue that, for Cain, sex “is not always sordid” in his fiction (Madden, *Cain's Craft* 75). He explains: “But generally, the sex (or love) has something abnormal about it. While the murdered body of Nick is still warm, Frank and Cora make love near his carcass. She begs him to rip her open” (Madden, *Cain's Craft* 75).

In other words, the women in Cain's fiction have a sordid sexuality when their missive for their own class amelioration involves utilizing their femininity—and perhaps equally exploiting male sexual weakness—to exact the elimination of the obstacle husband in favor of a new, if temporary, male figure. Frank Chambers and Walter Huff both represent an economic lesser but an aesthetic better. The separate hierarchies in Cain's fiction display the exaggerated anguish caused by disparate stations on the economic and the physical hierarchies respectively. If either of the women in Cain's fiction had been married or courted by a wealthy *and* handsome man, the narrative would be fit a harlequin romance rather than Noir plot. Nevertheless, the separate rankings of humankind suggest that Cain acknowledges the problems inherent to the Anglocentric model of social strata. As an individual's appearance is made into a commodity, he or she is subject to competition for a significant other in order to solidify their aesthetic station. On the other hand, an aesthetically pleasing lover whose disparate position on the economic ladder betrays the parallel that seems to follow. The beautiful must attain wealth. Thus is the paradox: one cannot be had without the other. In America, idealism has often trumped practicality and the societal urge for one to

constantly improve upon station reflects the ideal of the American dream. Beauty leads to wealth as a successful man attains a woman whose beauty serves as a visual representation of his financial and material accomplishments. But the vulnerability created by the position of privilege draws threats from beneath.

David Madden also notes how Cain's works seem to contribute to the "persistent theme of the American Dream" (*James M. Cain* 92). Madden notes that Cain toys with the idea that "anything is possible, given determination, perseverance, and audacity" in America. Through "the behavior of Cain's heroes" and "several of his women" the realization of hard work often yields success (*James M. Cain* 93). Madden describes Cain's microcosm thusly: "the American mystique of talent is conveyed in Cain; his characters often have several talents, ready to respond to opportunity. They achieve power and profit just as often through sheer talent as through violence" (*James M. Cain* 95). Cain may not simply classify his characters as criminal and innocent, but Walter and Frank share impulsiveness and desire. What makes them criminal is their lack of respect for the industriousness of their economic betters. Because crime never develops between the wealthiest of people in Noir, crime can serve a synecdoche for the drive of the lower men to achieve the successes of the greater men. The American dream becomes an opportunity for theft for the lazy rather than a reward for the diligent.

As a challenger, Frank seems to present many deficiencies in view of Nick's success: he works hard but he has no professional integrity or career goals, he dislikes the idea of settling down in a single space for an indefinite length of time, and he is not fully committed to loving Cora. Frank tries to justify the latter as he had vacationed in Tijuana with a girl he met at the train station when Cora leaves to attend her mother's funeral. Frank tells Cora that

the girl “meant nothing” and that he was just “running away” (Cain 100). This wanderlust and lack of monogamy explains Frank’s lowly position in the working world. He fails accept that his work ethic limits his ability to venture far and wide in fulfillment of his desires. His weakness is his lack of persistence, causing an abbreviation of his longevity in a position of employment or residence, which is a clear limiter for success in America.

Unlike Mr. Nirdlinger in *Indemnity*, Frank attempts to purloin the household of a property-owning man of inferior racial makeup through socially constructed Anglo privilege. The contrast between Nick Papadakis and Mr. Nirdlinger elucidate the diverging murders of Cain’s earliest texts. Nick’s accomplishments in business and real estate trump his Greek heritage and Cora, ashamed of her marriage wants a man who can racially redeem her. Nick makes an honest living and is quite happy with his livelihood. On the other hand, Mr. Nirdlinger is curiously absent from the scenes of the novel except the sales pitch and his murder. It seems that Mr. Nirdlinger is present merely to offer a corpse. Perhaps this absence serves to extend Mr. Nirdlinger as a figure and not merely a character. He could be any executive in any industry and Walter may have targeted him then as well. In any case, Mr. Nirdlinger’s anonymity can be noted in the very fact that his first name is never mentioned; he is simply Mr. Nirdlinger. The exclusive use of the surname also suggests a clan war, indicative of the struggles of Anglo families for control of politics in the English House of Lords.

Walter and Frank both present subversion of the social order, rejecting their station in the hierarchy and adopt immoral means of accomplishing that amelioration. They hastily craft plans to murder their betters and quickly find themselves on the wrong side of the law. Madden describes the dynamic of the two characters thus:

The behavior of the Cain hero may be summed up as 'impulsive,' and as often lacking in conscience. The woman is less impulsive; in fact, she often plans the adventure. The hero impulsively responds to both girl and plan in the same instant of heedless commitment. (*James M. Cain* 96)

This impetuosity indicates a consistency in Cain's model of the criminal: they desire their own success, but they fail to properly plan and fall victim to a much more able-witted man. The surreptitious District Attorney Sackett bests Frank while Walter succumbs to the suspicions of Mr. Keyes, an investigator with the insurance company. In either case, the criminal is no mental match for his intellectual betters. Cain's treatment of the subversive figure in these two works suggests a sort of pandering to the psyche of the reader. Much like Chandler's Marlowe, crime and criminals succumb to the smarter moral man. The conclusions of the novels suggest that law and order prevail because criminals are simply not as intelligent as those on the right side of the law. The reductive means in which Cain presents the subversive figure justifies the authoritative role of government and law-enforcement, which consoles the fears and guilt of a white-collar readership as well as reminding the working classes that opportunism and Machiavellianism do not replace the diligence of the true American work ethic. This maxim serves to exemplify the American propaganda that persistence and effort can augment any person's station. In addition, it seems fair to say that it is simply a form of conservative preservation of the status quo in maintenance of the class struggle.

CORA'S THINLY VEILED RACISM IN POSTMAN

Charles Scruggs argues that *Film Noir* is American in its very nature according to New Historicist criticism and scholarship. He expands Paula Rabinowitz's statement that "there is a glaring lack of scholarship" on the presence of "race relations" (Scruggs 683; Rabinowitz 260). Scruggs suggests that an undeniable connection exists between African

American literature and Film Noir of the post-World War II era. He finds that the prevalent themes of “light and dark imagery” in the texts of Ralph Ellison, Toni Cade Bambara, and Richard Wright closely parallel the filmic stylings of Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, and Alfred Hitchcock among others (Scruggs 683). Without doubt, the presence of crime in both African American fiction and in the fiction and film adaptations of the Noir literature of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and James M. Cain, suggest that artists of all backgrounds recognize the prevalence of crime and the underlying causes therein. The absence of criticism is not for lack of material however. Cain’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* serve as exemplary texts for expounding the racial consequences in Los Angeles.

If Cain taps into the idea of the American dream in his novels, he also borrows from the racial context of America and its Anglocentric dynamic. Many critics have noted the present othering of southern Mediterranean figures such as Nick the Greek in *Postman* and Nino Satchetti in *Double Indemnity*. The former suffers much more greatly than the latter, though Nino’s romantic involvement with Lola draws some presumptions about the discomfort the post-war readership may experience due to his marginalized heritage. In both cases, Cain manipulates the Anglicized orientation of American society through the exploitation of his othered characters’ ethnicities. Racism only constitutes the primary circumstance for the maintenance of the Anglo privileging in Los Angeles; the naïveté of the émigrés in Cain’s fiction illustrates an ambiguous view of the non-British bred. An unsuspecting optimism pervades the attitudes of these Mediterranean figures, which demonstrates the problem of the United States in Cain’s view. There exists a bifurcated persona within the society of America—non-Anglo persons are offered acceptance into the country if only as a member of the marginal ethnicities though the semblance of acceptance

is conveyed through limited access to the power structure of Los Angeles. Like antebellum notions of racially-inherited duty of subservience, non-Anglo persons seem relegated to dispositions of service to the dominant group.

The main problem for the Greek cuckold is not that his wife finds him unattractive and unsatisfying, but that he fails to recognize her unhappiness. He seems oblivious to the fact that Cora is unsatisfied managing the Twin Oaks Tavern's "roadside sandwich joint" (Cain 3). The haste with which she melts for Frank suggests that she has been humiliated by her life with him. Upon meeting Frank, Cora did not exchange glances with him and she vacated the lunchroom as if she "hadn't even been there" (Cain 5). However, her frigidity toward Frank vanishes when her husband leaves for Los Angeles and Frank violently kisses her (Cain 10). She does not protest which indicates that she had expected this opportunity and her discourteousness to him only masks her desire for him.

Wendy Brown's theory of female sexuality suggests that women use their sexuality as a Marxist uses his labor. To apply this theory to Cain's fiction, the problem becomes racialized when wealth is paired with image in the context of Southern California. If sex is a marketplace, then the personhoods that command a higher value are those demonstrative of the power structure and given the history of Los Angeles, Anglo American privilege dominates the market and non-Anglo backgrounds, devalued and limited, by their very existence uphold the hierarchic structure extended from Great Britain to the United States, best exemplified by the social context of Los Angeles.

Whether or not Cain aims to use women characters to support not only the Anglocentric sociology of the West, but also the patriarchal symbolic order remains to be understood. Cora wishes to improve upon her proximal racial purity yet retain the wealth and

property attained by her husband which implies the paradoxical relationship between wealth and heritage especially when they are incongruent. But does Cain denounce female ambition? The difficulty in ascertaining his thematic content lies in the nebulous circumstances of race in the United States and especially in Los Angeles. The chicken-or-egg debate of Anglocentrism and patriarchy lies in the seemingly married coexistence of the two. However, Anglo women characters in Cain remain culpable for their involvement in the murders since they abandon moral action for a more Machiavellian methodology. The ease with which Cora manipulates Frank suggests that he falls victim to her physical attractiveness. Frank's culpability also lies in his taking for granted Nick's lesser-status as a darkened other. Therefore, Frank and Cora's affair suggests the sexual power of femininity has the ability to drive a man of Frank's weakness to commit the worst of crimes.

William Marling explains how women face a more laborious process in declaring autonomy in depression-era America. He expounds this circumstance noting that "if women were to assume economic power and freedom, they would have to pay a price for it. They might, in the figuration Cain proposed, acquire economic power, but they must cede to men the right to serialize desire, its discourse, and its relation to the new economy" (Marling, *Raymond Chandler* 150). Marling finds the problem women face to be a circumstance of gender limits. With little to no ability to declare independence, ambitious women must resort to their core persuasion: sex. Subverting patriarchy means manipulating race relations and exploiting her own sexuality for the means of persuasion. Marling connects these texts to Cain's inspiration for his earliest two novels from the case of Ruth Snyder "Tiger Woman" and her beau "Judd Gray" (*Raymond Chandler* 156). Cain's fictionalizing of this case

supposes the psychological basis for the killing and in such extrapolation he identifies the lack of efficacy women in the era face.

Initially, Frank is astonished at Cora's suggestion for removing her husband permitting their marriage. Robert Dingley suggests that "Frank's horror at Cora's plans for Twin Oaks is largely generated by a recognition that it will threaten his own picaresque freedom of action, that it will entangle him in the trammels of bourgeois respectability" (69). It may be that Frank values his vagabond lifestyle above all else, but his complicity seems attributive to his impulsiveness rather than any nomadic inclinations. Dingley argues that Frank's wanderlust and lack of professional ambition "suggest[s] an undecided quality in Cain's attitude to the pursuit of wealth which is neither especially surprising nor uncharacteristic of early twentieth-century American writing" (69). This assessment provokes curiosity of Cain's intentions in fictionalizing the Tiger Lady case, but perhaps these narratives suggest the problem of the capitalist dynamic when married to the Anglo American privilege inherited. For example, Frank seeks to assuage his physiological needs for food and sex and Cora serves that purpose through her role as cook and lover. Thus she obtains his allegiance through the most base of bodily needs. He tries to lead her away from home while Nick is away in Los Angeles, an unsuccessful attempt to gain her as wife since he cannot provide her financial needs. Cora then bears the burden of instigating the murder through her own racialized sense of self. Early in the novel, Cora accuses Frank of deeming her "Mex" (Cain 5). He denies this and coddles her fragile ego noting her racial superiority. Frank's denigrating description of Mexican women who "all got big hips and bum legs and breasts up under their chin and yellow skin and hair that looks like it had bacon fat on it" reinforces the Anglo ideal of beauty and purity (Cain 5). This unflattering portrait contrasts

with his celebration of her Anglo features: “You’re small, and got nice white skin, and your hair is soft and curly, even if it is black. Only thing you’ve got that’s Mex is your teeth. They all got white teeth, you’ve got to hand that to them” (Cain 4-5). He appeals to her own pride and sense of beauty so that he may obtain her favor. Frank not only serves as her racial match, but he assuages her fears that her appearance, geographic location with its approximation to Mexico, and marriage to a darkly-complected man erases her Anglo privilege. Thus, Marling notes,

Cain’s novel ultimately endorses not only a restricted sexual and economic agenda but also a racial one. ‘Nick the Greek’ is a seme for blacks, for Mexicans, for Italians, or eastern Europeans, for all immigrants. For Frank, Nick is ‘economic man’ and also ‘sap.’ Frank sizes him up as the source of a free meal, which Nick provides after harder ‘Americans’ throw Frank off the hay truck. Nick’s generosity proves he is a sap, because he doesn’t see Frank for what Frank admits to being. Nick believes in an immigrant version of the American dream, represented by his neon sign of Greek and American hands shaking and the scrapbook showing his naturalization papers. (*Raymond Chandler* 172)

Nick evinces the conundrum of the American dream for non-Anglo persons. He can obtain wealth and property but he will never achieve Anglicization. Frank, worthless in every other aspect, presents a visual representation of Cora’s worth that Nick cannot. Nick’s naivete may actually be a reflection of an old-world attitude of community where one belongs to a larger collective but in the Anglo American model, one is solitary in a battle royal much like that depicted in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952). Analogously, this seems to argue that America is at its very core, violent and contentious—a Hobbesian constant fight against neighbors for accomplishment. According to the literature that dominated popular culture in the World Wars era, this is precisely what society reflects. Of course, it could be argued that this violence preceded the twentieth century, but the hostility emerges prominently at the forefront of the American subconscious.

CONCLUSION: GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS

Cain's narratives seem to offer neat binaries for citizens and criminals, masters and slaves, and simply good guys and bad guys. This simplified arrangement of the American dynamic expresses the exclusionary ideology concomitant with many Americans of this period. Whether or not this is a consequence of the nationalist pride and propaganda omnipresent remains unclear. But in contrast to the detective works of Raymond Chandler, crime seems to be easily defined as those who are naturally subversive and absent from these narratives are the explicit recognition of the inherent privileges of Anglo American and limitations of those who are othered. Simply, Cain establishes the world in a system of finite binaries despite the racial implications within his texts.

Interestingly, however, the criminal acts in African American fiction usually do not simplify criminals and citizens into neat binaries; they most often suggest systemic factors that exacerbate racial tensions that provoke lawbreaking as a reaction to racism, allegations of rape, and spatial boundaries that prohibit entrance. The underlying causes for crime help explain the subversive desire of criminals to defy the sociological expectations to abide by the law. Chester Himes, Ralph Ellison, and Richard Wright—and perhaps James Baldwin in his novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain*—characterize the struggle for self-efficacy as an act of subversion itself, subversion of the very structure of America.

CHAPTER 4

HIMES AND THE COMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND CLASS IN AMERICAN CRIME

Much of the Noir movement in literature echoes the fear and worry surrounding a perceived unraveling of the social fabric and stability of America permeating the interwar period and Post-WWII America. The detective novels and the crime Noir novels by Cain and his peers are no doubt reflective of the concern over the preservation of a tranquil society and a dichotomy of individuals into two classes: honest, hardworking Americans and vile deviants who wish to gain at the expense of the former. Of course, humanity is not so simple as to divide it neatly into binary distinctions and a variety of circumstances contribute to the complication of such categorization. One of the many factors that lie outside of class and gender is race and the socially-constructed consequences that develop when a person of color rejects his subjectivity to the Anglo-dominated hierarchical structure of American society.

Much of African American fiction from this time period illustrates the complicated position of a black person in America, even in the liberated North. Chester Himes's first novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), set during World War Two in Los Angeles, extends Richard Wright's view of the inherent racism in Chicago in *Native Son* and James Baldwin's Harlem in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. Himes—like Cain—depicts the urges to commit crime and the impetus that propels a person toward breaking the law but, contrary to Cain, Himes characterizes the world from a racialized black perspective in which his protagonist, Bob Jones, a newly promoted leaderman at the Atlas Shipyard, sees himself as a target for all Anglos who collude to maintain the racially-organized hierarchy of power with he and his

race subjugated beneath whites. Himes's Bob Jones rejects the limitations of his class ascension to a Booker T Washingtonian level of black bourgeoisie noting the absurdity of his limitation based strictly upon his ethnicity though he finds himself on either end of a gun for most of this conflict.

Perhaps Himes's novel also helps elucidate the paradox under racist laws where simply being black becomes a crime when an individual rejects his role as servant and subject to the entire Anglo race. Bob Jones ultimately commits two major crimes: attempted murder of Johnny Stoddart who attacks Bob to "cool the nigger" (Himes 33) and attempted rape of Madge Perkins, an aging seductress who first displays fear and then attraction to him. For Bob, all actions he commits are an act of crime because he cannot subject himself to the rigid color category defined for him and thus he is driven deeper into crime as a means of independence. According to Christopher Breu, the most appropriate definition of the Noir genre lies in its negation of the hegemonic expectations for individuals (26). By extension, Bob represents this negation inherently through his race; as a black man, he directly opposes and threatens the Eurocentric hierarchy. He defines Noir as the opposite of hegemonic society's preferred behaviors and lifestyle, but for Bob, his transcendence into the middle-class is a denial of white supremacy. The problem with this description however, is the inherent tragedy in such a subversive mindset and though Bob is spared the gas chamber, he essentially loses his life metaphorically since the agency behind his behavior is enlisted to the government along with the rest of him when he is forced with prison or the army. Of course he chooses the latter—and life with it—but he loses his freedom in either case.

HIMES'S PROTEST NOVEL—A VOICE OF THE OTHER

These unfortunate consequences lead many to determine that Himes's first novel serves as a protest novel, though it simultaneously functions as a work of Noir fiction and crime fiction. Labels aside, Himes's novel defines the racial conundrums that exist in World War II era Los Angeles. Robert Beuka's scholarship in *SuburbiaNation* (2004) exposes the area of Los Angeles as an example of a city geographically segregated by new suburbs formed and perpetuated by the dream of achieving an ideal space, which frequently includes racial, class, and religious biases. According to this theory, figures like Bob cannot be included in the geographical space of whites. Additionally, there is no space for him as a black man who seeks inclusion in the coveted status of the middle class; he must accept his limited position as token member of 'management' without the authority that his white peers would enjoy. Promoted in an attempt to improve black morale at the shipyard, Bob is asked to lead a team of welders without the ability to exert his authority over whites. Due to these racist limits on black achievement, his ascension into the petit bourgeois class serves only as a farce since he cannot truly accomplish the tasks asked of him.

Himes, a peer and friend of Richard Wright and to a lesser extent, James Baldwin, writes with intentions of social criticism. Like Wright and Baldwin, his narrative exposes the frailties of a system that is simultaneously capitalist, democratic, and racist. Gilbert Muller writes that despite Bob Jones's intelligence and two-year stint at Ohio State University, he "ironically...has been trapped by American culture as powerfully as the uneducated Bigger Thomas was in *Native Son*" (27). Himes clarifies Wright's point that a black man is by birth guilty of lascivious intentions toward white women according to the Anglo view. Socio-economic class, education, and skill cannot ameliorate that position and black men are condemned as rapists unless they behave in a sense that is acquiescent to the servile role

prescribed to them through slavery and extended by the corporate model America adopted in the early twentieth century.

Early in the novel, Bob realizes that he needs another tacker on a job his crew had been assigned. At first Hank, the white tacker leaderman, tries to brush off Bob's request but at Bob's persistence lies about the unavailability of the women tackers in his crew though they did not appear busy to Bob as he saw them "lounging over at the port rail...gabbing" (Himes 24-5). Here, Hank seems to present a foil for Bob. Both men are transplants, Bob from Ohio and Hank from Georgia, but unlike Hank, Bob lacks the potency to dictate terms on the jobsite. This limitation of authority also represents a limitation of masculinity or in a sense a lack of ability to challenge his peers for dominance. Though both men have similar positions on the job and comparable situations as non-native Californians, Hank retains his race as an edge to Bob, though Southern whites are often less-respected than Midwesterners.

If the narrative's main affect on readers is the illustration of a limitation on rights, privileges, and opportunities, then *If He Hollers Let Him Go* seems to fit the protest novel definition. Additional layers of the novel as a Noir text and crime fiction help expand the role of crime fiction where it performs important cultural work that provides its own historical perspective offering supplemental voices and through its very existence contributes to the dialectic of history in accordance with Walter Benjamin's groundbreaking theories of historiography. Most Noir texts, especially those written by Anglo American authors, tend to simplify criminals into villains who lack morals, work ethic, and respect for those who stay within the acceptable boundaries of citizenship. In the case of Himes's novel, Bob Jones lacks the true opportunity to achieve the middle-class American dream since his promotion, a scam, lacks any true element of authority except for the increased pay. This seems to suggest

that the Anglo American tradition privileges economics as the ultimate goal rather than the semblances of respect and freedom propagated in foundational American documents the Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

For Bob Jones, his sexuality is ineluctably criminal as it poses a threat to the stability of society. Christopher Breu argues that the interracial element to Bob and Madge's flirtation is the basis of the crime. He explains that "in Himes's fiction this relationship [between a black man and a white woman]—whether consensual or nonconsensual—is conceived as violent. The explicit subject of Himes's fiction is thus the fantasy of violent, racialized sexual and political transgression" (Breu 144). Bob seemingly taunts Madge to prove that she would couple with a black man. His alleged crime comes when he accidentally stumbles into a room on a ship where Madge is sleeping on the job. Fate seems to condemn Bob as several men come knocking at the door catching him vulnerably alone with the white woman. This scene, like *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, illustrates a motif of presumed black criminality and sexual deviance. Criminality then is automatic, inherited along with race. Stephen Milliken argues that "the essence of the role of the dominant male...is to throw down challenges to every other male" in order to establish his "superlative excellence by the sheer dynamism of his presence but ironically, in its substance the role is primarily ritualistic, and it is viable only when it is accepted and applauded by society" and his efforts to bed Madge violate his socially-constructed role as black man (Milliken 95). Black men are then expected to understand and accept this diminishment as a natural consequence of their race.

Bob's subsequent arrest and beatings by the police exemplify the criminality of his existence. Othered by the Eurocentric hierarchy of Los Angeles, particularly in the harbor area and suburbs south of Los Angeles where Madge rents a room, Bob realizes his inability

to elude criminal charges since any accusation by a seditious white person will land him in jail or dead. He is guilty until proven innocent, an impossible task when the hearsay evidence suffices as beyond a shadow of a doubt. As such, he becomes both the criminal and the victim. Unlike most crime fiction narratives, including those of Chandler and Cain, Himes illustrates the problem of binary definitions of criminal and citizen since they are blurred when races intersect. The seditious person in this case is the accuser. Perhaps this is the clearest demonstration of the undergirding of Noir: the exploited victim suffers due to their social disposition, made vulnerable by a socially-constructed circumstance of class, race, or identity.

Noir, as a contemporary genre with existentialism, bears a striking resemblance to works by Samuel Beckett and Jean-Paul Sartre where absurdity abounds, except the verity of the representation to real life in Noir only seems to ridiculous to be true. Breu notes this absurdity in Noir's unknowable element to the narration: who committed the crime. But in Bob Jones's case, he cannot enjoy uncertainty as this is a privilege of race. He knows he is innocent though the mystery is rather how the establishment of racialized justice can occur. The world's absurd limitation of racial equality, Breu charges, "is organized around negating or subordinating his very existence" (153). Milliken rightly characterizes *If He Hollers Let Him Go* as a satirical work noting that "the traits that Himes satirizes are never exclusively those blacks...but it is the mannerisms themselves, the hollow, pretentious core of bourgeois American civilization" (91). In this sense, Noir speaks for the otherness of society, the darker side of humanity, not in the sense of skin color, but in the darkness that racial hierarchies extract from the subconscious of man. Himes' text turns crime on its head; the criminal is not a criminal at all, but a rebel subverting the social order.

Violent criminal acts Bob commits are incidental since his intentions are to subvert the Anglocentric hierarchy through his own class ascension. Breu notes that Bob's Buick Roadmaster becomes a "symbol for class ascendancy and a claim staked in the name of racial parity" (157). The American car, though not a luxury model, is one with size and power and as he weaves carelessly through traffic, he seems to proclaim his freedom to reject subjectivity to law and society. Even his relationship with Alice Harrison, the light-skinned daughter of a prominent black doctor becomes a racially-motivated move. Breu finds that for Bob, dating her "is explicitly linked to Bob's ambitions to become part of the middle class: when the two imagine their future together, Bob thinks of saving up his money in order to go to law school, a move that would ensure his entry into the black bourgeoisie" (163).

Bob's desire for class ascension further ridicules the presumptions made about black criminality. This desire for achievement of station exposes the ludicrous supposition of African American inherent deviance. Bob wants the American dream though he finds the dream far from reality with the actual experiences he encounters with rejection, mockery, and humiliation. Breu connects Bob's move into the bourgeoisie to his rejection of Anglo dominance noting that even his position as leaderman at the shipyard is unique. Achieving skilled-labor status, especially an intellectual sort, affords "a form of masculinity that carries with it privileges such as property ownership and the ability to dictate the work of others, Bob is implicitly challenging the conflation of whiteness and manhood" which are concomitant in Anglocentric America (Breu 163).

Bob realizes however that even the amelioration of class and wealth come with boundaries. The only means of achievement he can reach lie within the scope of a Booker T. Washington level of acquiescence to Anglo domination. The revelation of this circumstance

causes Bob to utilize violence and crime as a means of subversion, the only power he realizes that cannot be forfeited by the Anglo hierarchy. Thus, Noir is crime in the sense that the foundations of criminality are based on an inequality or a predisposition for crime. Himes illustrates this inevitability of crime committed by African American men. If society expects the crime to be committed and ensures that the mere appearance of the crime is likely, then a black man has little he can do to avoid this judgment. This is symbolic of the American dream for African Americans in that the opportunity offered is only imaginary but the temptation can be fatal. *If He Hollers Let Him Go* serves as a parallel to the later text *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka (also known as LeRoi Jones) where the white temptress ensnares the young black man by appearing seemingly interested only to claim rape. Though very different from its Anglo Noir counterparts, Himes' novel ensures that the genre hear the black perspective.

Without doubt, Himes's work is both crime fiction and protest novel at the same time, fusing the social criticism of the latter with the tension and pursuit of and maintenance of order of the former. Interestingly, James Lundquist calls *If He Hollers...* a war novel, in which it is a race war that is being fought. Except that in Bob's case the war is absurd and "the enemy will not fight fairly and Bob can never quite find a battle line to get behind" (43). Bob's world seems bent on classifying him as Negro with its glass-ceilinged boundaries firmly in place. "Besides," Lundquist continues, "as a soldier in the racial war, Bob has been brainwashed by the opposition" especially since he can never seem to pull the trigger and kill Johnny Stoddart who had showcased his racial might in a lunchtime craps scuffle where again Bob felt that his white colleagues were taking advantage of their privilege (43). Bob

seems to find comfort in the fact that he can scare Johnny Stoddart into believing Bob could kill him.

Bob's troubles may be also in part because of his own anger as he refuses to reduce himself to the lowly position required by white America. This view however neglects the basic rights and privileges afforded to white characters and not to blacks, which obscures the idea that Bob's anger is an inherent trait and not accumulated through his social mistreatment. Thus, crime is complicated when race is taken into account in that the rejection of laws, morals, ethics, and the general boundaries of citizenship may not be a simple adoption of crime for benefit but as rebellion, subversion, and deviance for the purpose of independence. Certainly lying outside society's mores results in pain, dejection, incarceration, and often death, but for one who sees the world and the bulk of the population as an enemy, this can seem like the only feasible solution. At the root of the novel's conflict is the Washington/Dubois dialectic, though Himes seems to suggest that neither have fully considered the plight of the black man, especially considering the hyperpatriotism, social paranoia, and ultraconservative sentiment of the population. Himes's novel finds Washington's philosophy too acquiescent and Dubois's a frightening invitation to violence and accepting of life-threatening consequences.

Himes's work challenges not only the frailties of race-based priorities, it also serves as a countercontext to Noir works by white authors. Chandler and Cain both demonstrate the genesis of desire in criminals but Himes distinguishes Bob Jones as neither criminal nor citizen. He is drawn into acts of violence as society expects him to. Thus, this novel presents a truly noir narrative in Christopher Breu's definition as "a response to the advent of

corporate capitalism” (26). The structure of the corporation prevents Bob from achieving the promise of advancement but relegates him into a token position of authority.

This novel suggests desire to commit crime cannot be reduced to the seven deadly sins and thus presents the Noir and crime fiction as far removed from the religious didacticism and moralizing of the detective genre. But the reduction of crime into neat categories of criminal and victim, citizen and deviant, or most basically, good guys and bad guys, seems to be a reflection of the hyperpatriotism of the World Wars and the later McCarthy-era division of identities into American or Communist. In essence, the genre supports Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of New Historicism and Cultural Studies in that society urges its members to gravitate toward the common ground in the center and deviants drift to the margins. In Chandler’s and Cain’s narratives, the deviant person choosing to reject society’s mores also tends to lack desire for acceptance into the culture. The only two categories for criminal behavior is those who choose to commit crime for gain and those for whom crime is rebellion against inequality.

THE MYSTERY IS IN DEFINING THE ENEMY

Throughout the interwar period in America, the social milieu carried an air of paranoia and judgment, which established a distrust of non-Anglo persons. This caused a disparate experience in America, an unjust occurrence. Noir tends to portray these crimes as inherent to social class though race influences ones class. Greenblatt’s theory explains the phenomenon of distrust and racial and class biases, especially given the particular historical contexts including rabid xenophobia and the McCarthyist Communist witch hunts driving individuals to eschew ideas and values that are not hegemonic. William Marling agrees with this principle and argues in his book *The American Roman Noir: Hammett, Chandler, Cain*

(1994) that the detective and Noir genres characterize the villain as outsiders threatening the freedoms and free-market capitalism that urged Americans to prosperity. These figures tend to be foreigners, effeminate men, and corrupt Easterners. Marling explains how the general social unrest during the Depression may lie in “eastern bogeymen who had caused [the social ills] to head west—the corrupt politician and his counterpart, the gangster” (*The American Roman Noir* 70). The assumption that the Depression was imported remains to be proven, though certainly the blame authors place fall squarely on the shoulders of those in power, unfamiliar new persons to the west coast, and non-Anglo Saxon Protestants.

With the health, or lack thereof, of the nation’s economy, Noir authors and their readership would have had looked for economic enemies to assign blame for threats to American wealth and security. In many Noir texts, this figure is the mobster who obtains his wealth through illicit means. Marling illustrates this point: “The gangster as economic villain also had a local angle: it put the source of evil outside California and made the villain a migrant” (*The American Roman Noir* 70). Since mobsters are seen as an import to California, usually believed to be New York and Chicago phenomena, the near-Utopic cities of Southern California assign blame for crime and discontent to wicked interlopers and thus insulating the infant burghs from unrest. Such criticism is placed on newcomers with disregard to its cause; the tempting opportunities advertised encouraging an influx of the same Easterners and migrants brought droves to California at the turn of the century and up to the Great Depression.

In effect, blaming the marginalized further tightens the hegemony, encouraging the readership of Noir to justify the ostracization of outsiders as a means of preserving the fragile hierarchy in which Anglo men may ascend to the heights of the power chain, but only

through extreme loyalty to their corporate masters and a diligence of effort toward success in business. The role of detectives in these narratives serves as a sort of class intermediary for victims of the working class suffer from the mobsters and unscrupulous challengers that wish to take advantage of their wealth and often their vulnerability or inability to ward off their wiles. Terry Lennox in *The Long Goodbye* best exemplifies this hapless victim. Philip Marlowe protects these victims upholding the integrity of the American ideal of hard work and responsibility from the threat of thieves, manipulators, and corrupt professionals. However, Marlowe often serves the honest such as General Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*, whose wayward daughter threatens his good name with her drug use and her body used in an underground pornography publishing operation. Class has little effect on Marlowe's respect but rather he is compelled to assist those in need of protection from such devious criminals.

Of course both these novels' ironic twists in which the murderer's identity is revealed as the femme fatales: Sternwood's wayward daughter and Roger Wade's psychotic wife. These two novels present crime as a consequence of immorality, a justification of integrity and work-ethic. In both cases, the crimes committed were not for money or material but for love or some vague facsimile of it. Both femme fatales use sex as a commodity in that their marriages are meant to identify them in the proper social class.

Unlike Chandler, Cain's victims seek economic improvement and property ownership through their succession of the head of the household. Frank Chambers in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* diminishes his employer due to his Greek heritage and falls into his wife's urges for him to save her from miscegenation. As a result, the murder he commits is completely transparent and her devotion empty upon their arrest. The murdered man in *Double Indemnity*, Mr. Nirdlinger, represents a usurping of the Anglo household as Walter

Neff attempts to supercede him at home. When he learns of the wife's past, he realizes that he has been fooled into complicity, seduced to his destruction. Both of these women serve as an extension of Circe, enslaving the man into poor judgment and serving the siren. Both texts contribute to the idea that women equate to property and symbolize the wealth and status of the man. Ironically, the women truly hold the power as they manipulate the men into performing dastardly deeds.

Both Chandler and Cain contribute a similar message to their readership: temptation may lure a man into miscreant behavior, but the result is never favorable. These texts perform important cultural work in the pursuit of shaping the largely working-class audience into having pride in their hard work and their honest accomplishments. In other words, these texts serve as cautionary tales to warn readers of the dangers of laziness and underhanded seeking of wealth. This perhaps branches from the corporate culture emerging from Southern California during the interwar period. As Clark Davis lucidly describes, men at the time served the corporation first as an identifier, a means of self-defining. Success in Los Angeles depends on the complete loyalty and dedication to one's employer and through dedicated service one can ascend above class station. The complete reliance on the lordship of the corporate master mimics a feudal society. Along with Cain's motifs of feudalism, the Nirdlinger coat-of-arms and the majestic manor of the aristocrat, the challenging of one's economic better demonstrates a muted sense of class warfare, though Cain portrays this contest in a manner that vilifies the middle class man. In both Chandler and Cain, opportunities offered in Los Angeles seem to entice the fortune seeker into easier and immoral means of class amelioration though the clear message assures the blue collar readership that these unsatisfied workers risk all and lose all. The clear binaries created by

these narratives neatly divide people into citizen and criminal, victim or potential victim and selfish villain.

The problem emerges from this all too neat binary is that the classifications occlude the consequences of race given the socially-constructed hierarchy positioning Anglo Americans at the top, African Americans at the bottom, and Catholics, Mediterraneans, Balkans, Latinos, and various other groups in the middle. Novels such as Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* demonstrate the automatic criminality associated with black men especially in regard to sexual crime toward white women. Bob Jones has very little opportunity to truly ascend his social class though his economic station has slightly improved with his promotion to leaderman at the shipyard. Unfortunately, his role is merely a token of placation in effort to appease black workers' anger over their disparate pay, working conditions, and respect from other employees. Though he benefits from his apparent complicity with the white management, Bob is no Uncle Tom. He tempts any white man to fight with insolent words, cynicism, and sarcasm.

Bob's criminality is predetermined by his angry disposition, his resistance of racist limitations on his behavior, and his curiosity of his ability to woo Madge, a white woman bent on ensnaring him. Bob pushes the envelope by deliberately encountering Madge on the job, engaging in profane arguments with his colleagues, and demanding equal treatment from transplanted southerners who see him no differently than they saw African Americans in the South. Ironically, Bob's demise is brought upon by misfortune. Caught in what appears to be a red-handed rape attempt, he is found in a cabin with Madge who he coincidentally met as she slept on the job. At that moment, Bob is guilty with virtually no chance of being proven innocent. Thus, Bob's only real option is to face a judge who allows him redemption through

serving in the army overseas, arguably as fatal as capital punishment. Himes' novel suggests that defining crime for blacks is an arduous task since their very existence is criminal unless they accept subjugation to Anglo masters.

This complication of American law enforcement represents the paradox of the very idea of the country's core values of equality, freedom, and inalienable human rights. The limited rights and freedoms available to Bob Jones exemplify a more visible disparity where race prevents a person from full inclusion in the opportunities of Los Angeles due to the Eurocentric, namely Anglo-dominated power structure of the burgeoning city. With Anglos transplanting in Los Angeles, their hierarchy too becomes imported. Cain and Chandler describe inequalities in their texts, but only on an implicit level. Himes illustrates the inescapable diminishment of station by blacks. Even Alice Harrison, Bob's light-complexioned girlfriend, struggles to escape this subjugation. She must associate only with whites in order to escape these racial boundaries.

DEEPLY ENTRENCHED HIERARCHIES

At the root of this racial conflict lies the rigid vertical hierarchy inherent to Western Civilization, incorporated through an adoption of the British class structure into American business culture. The mystery is not very difficult to find associations between modern and historical parallels. Empires such as Rome and the feudal states of the middle- and high-middle ages bear a strong resemblance to America in the twentieth century, in particular Los Angeles. The comparison connotes a genealogy America can trace to the roots of nearly all empires in that its aristocratic class and ruling class appropriates a disproportionate amount of wealth and power in a sort of triangular structure of class where the top classes make up a small portion of the population as a whole but enjoy a great deal of privilege. Of course, this

privilege follows strict racial preference afforded to men of Anglo American heritage. This hierarchy seems impenetrable despite hard working blue collar and immigrant people seeking class ascension. Crime becomes a product of a rigid hierarchical structure closely linked with British imperial rule established in its various colonies, for example India, Hong Kong, and South Africa. As a circumstance of racial and class restrictions, crime then can often be attributed to a want for equality of rights, parity of wealth, and perhaps deliverance from a doomed existence as a fief or serf. Modernity's version of feudal lords seems to point to corporations and Noir texts characterize the response to this redistricting of duchies exposes the difficulty in maintaining social order in this manner.

Chandler's microcosm depicts the social order in an idealistic manner in which the responsible wealthy aristocrats are pillars of society who are often the target of con artists and conniving women. There are wealthy figures who obtain their wealth through illicit means or use their position of power to influence law enforcement or government officials to their will. Cain's illustration of the world depicts the wealthy as under constant attack from challengers such as Frank Chambers, a vagabond, and Walter Neff, a middle-management account representative, each who attempt to supplant a property-owner and claim his wife. Frank's crime occurs in Pasadena, several miles outside Los Angeles—the locus of power. Here, land is cheaper and available to non-Anglos like Nick Papadakis who owns a lunchroom and fill up station outside his home. This space is seen as opportune to replace the ethnically-inferior man with a racially superior man. Walter aims to replace an Anglo of high class, breeding, and wealth to ascend to the heights of Los Angeles.

The social hierarchy as presented in the fictional narratives of Los Angeles demonstrates geographic strata where regions surrounding downtown place its inhabitants in

their respective station. Suburbs are formed in effort to achieve a sense of accomplishment both for race and class, Catherine Jurca argues. The result of this creates an emptiness of culture except for the empty department store furnished homes and manicured yards. Robert Beauka also notes that the suburbs represent a mirror image of what popular culture depicts in film, television, and literature. Unsurprisingly, the suburbs are representative of these images and tropes offered through American culture. As Theodor Adorno accused, Americana has little historical or traditional basis for its art, architecture, and literature. Cain, Chandler, and Himes depict the conflicts each of the geographic subcities surrounding Los Angeles represent as a battle for achievement of wealth, power, and class identity.

The struggle to improve social station is a common thread among these authors particularly in the battleground regions on the outskirts of downtown, namely Pasadena and Glendale. Cain's *Postman* takes place in Glendale, known for its farmers, ranchers, and other middle-class business owners like Nick Papadakis, a Greek immigrant who owns and operates a filling station and lunchroom. Nick is a happy-go-lucky man very content with his position but Frank wanders into his midst ready to usurp Nick's position and wealth through murder. Chandler's texts often take Marlowe to Pasadena and its surrounding area, including *The High Window* and *The Lady in the Lake*. In these texts, the clientele is unrefined and immoral in their treatment of others such as Mrs. Murdock, whose demeanor is one of self-importance and condescension to Marlowe. Situated about a half-hour drive from downtown Los Angeles these suburbs serve as a front line for class struggles as Nick is murdered for covetousness and Mrs. Murdock clings to the class power she obtains from marriage to a wealthy businessman. Thus, the outskirts north and east of Los Angeles reflect a desirable substitution of the elite downtown, Hollywood, and Beverly Hills locales.

In *The Big Sleep*, General Sternwood's mansion is likely located in the Hollywood Hills area or in the lavish west end areas of Bel Air or Beverly Hills. Millionaire Harlan Potter of *The Long Goodbye* has a similar residence in the powerful regions of Los Angeles. Though the latter does not enjoy the same respect from Marlowe, both men sit atop a hierarchy represented by their wealth, profession, and residence. All three conditions contribute to one's social station. Marlowe serves Sternwood as his client but defies Potter's wishes to abandon a murder case that implicates his daughter. In this way, Chandler creates a binary for wealthy men: honorable gentlemen who are victimized and dishonorable men wishing to influence the community toward their specific desires. By extension, residents of a city fit into neat binaries: victims and criminals. Hard working figures victimized by greedy individuals suffer from the wiles of those who are driven by their selfish needs. Blue collar and white collar figures seem to fit neatly into these categories of character, though this depiction occludes the effects of race.

Himes portrays these same struggles for class improvement as a complicated system of racial preference. Bob Jones rejects the placation offered to him through a black bourgeois lifestyle, capped by a glass ceiling. He dreams of becoming a lawyer, though even he recognizes that he will perpetually serve as a black lawyer, defending black youths for whom criminal behavior is also predetermined by socially-constructed ideas of the African American race. Unlike Chandler and Cain, Himes complicates the labels of citizen and criminal since blacks are born into a society where they are expected to commit crime and often determined to have had criminal intentions prior to committing any illegal act. Bob Jones' very existence is a subversion of his setting. He desires admittance into white restaurants, communities, universities, and professions in pursuit of the opportunities

promised by the legends of prosperity in Los Angeles and the initial foundational documents of the United States of America. Bob defines a conundrum in America: Eurocentrism prevents equally capable men from full citizenship, though the oppression was technically illegal.

The diverging power groups, each jockeying for political and economic power in the burgeoning metropolis in the interwar and post-war period translates into a faux democracy. It is better described as an oligarchy of wealthy Anglo Americans using a lure of well-paying jobs to support their industries. Southern California serves as a haven for Anglo transplants and Mediterranean and Latino persons offer service and a healthy workforce for the rising corporate culture, bearing a striking resemblance to European feudalism. Predictably, Western culture seems to import with its other facets, its social structure though when race and ethnicity intersects, the division of power and wealth tends to distinguish station with racial identity. Los Angeles' infighting compares to the English War of the Roses, the Catholics against the Huguenots in France, and many other European tidal shifts. This instability translates into a perpetual paradigm shift and perhaps invites crime as authority is challenged similar to aristocratic families ascending into more powerful strata in the social order. In effect, crime may be a result of the promise of class ascension in much the same way as the ruling class has shifted with monarchs. The American Dream of a comfortable middle-class existence encourages a complacency that is neither satisfactory, nor congruent for blue-collar workers.

If Noir and detective fiction has its roots in a working class readership, then it is possible that these narratives that vilify lazy criminals and anoint the honorable workman help reinforce the ideals of the American Dream, namely property ownership in a community

in which one can comfortably live among his economic, racial, and social equals. The implicit racism, itself an extension of Eurocentric and Anglo-dominated social order, upholds a strict rigidity of class and station. Irreconcilably divergent from the nation's ideologies of freedom, equality, and opportunity, the social hierarchy is preserved by the Nirdlingers, Potters, and Sternwoods of Los Angeles in effort to preserve their position of privilege. Though not strictly speaking a form of propaganda, the Noir texts seem to embody an assurance that diligence and loyalty makes one a respectable citizen. Chaos and lawlessness are prevented through the rigidity of the hierarchy since powerful men must take on the burden of governance, a duty inherited with class.

The cultural work performed by Noir texts seems to shape American society through its proletarian message. Though some works, such as those exemplified by Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, challenge the encouraged middle-class complacency that aristocratic rulers desire, many of the detective and crime fiction literary works suggest that the American Dream serves well enough as an object of desire, no more. Whether these texts are a manipulation of its readership or a mere representative voice of Western culture, is difficult to ascertain. However, the implicit messages of honesty, diligence, and loyalty are certainly key aspects for maintenance of a power structure that benefits the elite who sit atop such a hierarchy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED

- Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print.
- Baker, Robert A., and Michael T. Nietzel. *Private Eyes: One Hundred and One Knights*. Bowling Green, OH: BGSUP, 1985. Print.
- Breu, Christopher. *Hard Boiled Masculinities*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005. Print.
- Cain, James M. *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity, Mildred Pierce, and Selected Stories*. New York: Knopf, 2003. Print.
- Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. Ed. John G. Cawelti. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976. Print.
- Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. 1939. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.
- . "The Simple Art of Murder." *The Simple Art of Murder*. 1950. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.
- . *Farewell, My Lovely*. 1940. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.
- . *The Long Goodbye*. 1953. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.
- Davis, Clark. *Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles 1892-1941*. Baltimore: JHU P, 2000. Print.
- Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz*. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.
- Dingley, Robert. "Eating America: The Consuming Passion of James M. Cain." *Journal of Popular Culture* 33.3 (1999): 63-77. Print.
- Durham, Philip. *Down These Mean Streets a Man Must Go*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1963. Print.
- Gardiner, Dorothy, and Katherine Sorley Walker. *Raymond Chandler Speaking*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Print.
- Gregory, Sinda. *Private Investigations: The Novels of Dashiell Hammett*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois P, 1985. Print.

- Himes, Chester. *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2002. Print.
- Knight, Stephen. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1980. Print.
- Lundquist, James. *Chester Himes*. New York: Ungar, 1976. Print.
- Madden, David. *James M. Cain*. New York: Twayne, 1970. Print.
- Madden, David. *Cain's Craft*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985. Print.
- Marling, William. *Raymond Chandler*. Boston: Twayne, 1986. Print.
- Marling, William. *The American Roman Noir: Hammett, Chandler, Cain*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1994. Print.
- Milliken, Stephen. *Chester Himes: A Critical Appraisal*. U of Missouri P, Columbia, 1976. Print.
- Muller, Gilbert H. *Chester Himes*. Boston: Twayne, 1989. Print.
- Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The Origins of the American Detective Story*. London: McFarland, 2006. Print.
- Pendo, Stephen. *Raymond Chandler on Screen: His Novels into Film*. Metuchin, NJ: Scarecrow, 1976. Print.
- Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Rats Behind the Wainscoting: Politics, Convention, and Chandler's The Big Sleep." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22.2 (1980): 224-45. Print.
- Scruggs, Charles. "'The Power of Blackness': Film Noir and its Critics." *American Literary History* 16.4 (2004): 675-687. Print.
- Speir, Jerry. *Raymond Chandler*. New York: Ungar, 1981. Print.
- Waugh, Hillary. "The Human Rather than Superhuman Sleuth." *The Murder Mystique: Crime Writers on Their Art*. Ed. Lucy Freeman. New York: Ungar, 1982. 33-45. Print.
- Whiting, Frederick. "Playing Against Type: Statistical Personhood, Depth Narrative, and the Business of Genre in James M. Cain's Double Indemnity." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 36.2 (2006): 190-227. Print.
- Willett, Ralph. *The Naked City: Urban Crime Fiction in the USA*. Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1996. Print.

Wolfe, Peter. *Something More than Night: The Case of Raymond Chandler*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. Print.

WORKS CONSULTED

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. New York: Random House Inc, 1981. Print.

Baraka, Amiri. *Dutchman*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967. Print.

Beuka, Robert. *SuburbiaNation: Reading Suburban Landscape in Twentieth-Century American Fiction and Film*. New York: MacMillan, 2004. Print.

Boris, Eileen. "Arm and Arm: Racialized Bodies and Colored Lines." *Journal of American Studies* 35.1 (2001): 1-20. Print.

Breu, Christopher. "Freudian Knot or Gordian Knot?: The Contradictions of Racialized Masculinity in Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go*." *Callaloo* 26.3 (2003): 766-795. Print.

---. "Radical Noir: Negativity, Misogyny, and the Critique of Privatization in Dorothy Hughes's *In a Lonely Place*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 55.2 (2009): 199-215. Print.

Brown, Stephanie. "Anybody's Protest Novel: Chester Himes and the Prison of Authenticity." *Invisible Suburbs: Recovering Protest Fiction in the 1950s United States*. Ed. Josh Lukin. Jackson, MS: U of Mississippi P, 2008. Print.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1995. Print.

Cassuto, Leonard. *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality: The Secret History of American Crime Stories*. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. Print.

Chandler, Raymond. *Playback*. 1958. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

---. *The High Window*. 1942. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

---. *The Lady in the Lake*. 1943. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

---. *The Little Sister*. 1949. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

Chastain, Thomas. "The Case for the Private Eye." *The Murder Mystique: Crime Writers on Their Art*. Ed. Lucy Freeman. New York: Ungar, 1982. 27-32. Print.

Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2005. Print.

Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919 – 1939*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.

- Crooks, Robert. "From the Far Side of the Urban Frontier: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes and Walter Mosley." *Crisscrossing Borders in Literature of the American West*. Eds. Reginald Dyck and Cheli Ruetter. New York: MacMillan, 2009. Print.
- Davis, Clark, and David Iglar, eds. *The Human Tradition in California*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly, 2002. Print.
- Diawara, Manthia. "Noir by Noirs: Towards a New Realism in Black Cinema." *African American Review* 27.4 (1993): 525-537. Print.
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. New York: The Modern Library, 2002. Print.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House. Print.
- English, Daylanne K. "The Modern and Postmodern: Walter Moseley, Barbara Neeley, and the Politics of Contemporary African American Detective Fiction." *American Literary History* 18.4 (2006): 772-796. Print.
- Fine, David, ed. *Los Angeles in Fiction: A Collection of Essays (From Walter Moseley to James M. Cain)*. Albuquerque, NM: U of New Mexico P, 1995. Print.
- Ford, Elisabeth V. "Miscounts, Loopholes, and Flashbacks: Strategic Evasion in Walter Moseley's Detective Fiction." *Callaloo* 28.4 (2005): 1074-90. Print.
- Hammet, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. New York: Vintage books, 1989. Print.
- Hammet, Dashiell. *The Thin Man*. New York: Vintage books, 1992. Print.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996. Print.
- Horsley, Katherine and Lee Horsley. "Mères Fatales: Maternal Guilt in the Noir Crime Novel." *Modern Fiction Studies* 45.2(1999): 369-402. Print.
- Ikard, David. "Love Jones: A Black Male Feminist Critique of Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*." *American Academy of Religion* 36.2 (2002): 299-310. Print.
- Itagaki, Lynn M. "Transgressing Race and Community in Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*." *American Academy of Religion* 37.1 (2003): 65-80. Print.
- Jurca, Catherine. *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.
- Landrum, Larry. *American Mystery and Detective Novels: A Reference Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999. Print.
- Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960. Print.

- Lid, R.W. "Philip Marlowe Speaking." *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*. Ed. J.K. Van Dover. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995. 43-64. Print.
- Margolies, Edward. *Which Way Did He Go?: The Private Eye in Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Chester Himes, and Ross MacDonal*d. New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1982. Print.
- Moffatt, Riley. *Population History of Western U.S. Cities & Towns, 1850-1990*. Lanham: Scarecrow, 1996. Print.
- Moseley, Walter. *Black Betty*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. Print.
- Phillips, Gene D. *Creatures of Darkness: Raymond Chandler, Detective Fiction, and Film Noir*. Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky P, 2000. Print.
- Plato. *The Republic*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2007. Print.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Pychon, Thomas. *Inherent Vice*. London: Jonathan Cape: 2009. Print.
- Pychon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. New York: Perennial Fiction Library, 1966. Print.
- Rabinowitz, Paula. "Domestic Labor: Film Noir, Proletarian Literature, and Black Women's Fiction." *MFS* 47.1 (2001): 229-254. Print.
- Ramos, Manuel. "The Postman and the Mex: From Hard-Boiled to *Huevos Rancheros* in Detective Fiction." *Hopscotch* 2.4 (2001): 160-167. Print.
- Richter, David H. "Background Action and Ideology: Grey Men and Dope Doctors in Raymond Chandler." *Narrative* 2.1 (1994): 29-40. Print.
- Schleitwiler, Vincent J. "Into a Burning House: Representing Segregation's Death." *AAR* 42.1 (2008): 149-162. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. New York: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2003. Print.
- Singh, Nikhil Pal. "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy." *American Quarterly* 50.3 (1998): 471-522. Print.
- Skenazy, Paul. *The New Wild West: The Urban Mysteries of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler*. Boise, ID: Boise State UP, 1982. Print.
- Smith, Erin. *Hard-Boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000. Print.

- Smith, Johanna M. "Raymond Chandler and the Business of Literature." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31 (1989): 592–610. Print.
- Smith, Mason. "Chess, Chandler, and the Characterization of Philip Marlowe." *Kentucky Philological Review* Mar. 1997: 68-73. Print.
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.
- Streeby, Shelley. *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002. Print.
- Vidocq, Eugene Francois. *Memoirs. 1828-1829*. Trans. Edwin Gile. Oakland: AK Press, 2003. Print.
- Webb, Jack. *Dragnet*. Narr. John Stephenson, George Fenneman, and Jack Webb. NBC, 1967-1970. Television.
- West, Nathanael. *Miss Lonelyhearts & The Day of the Locust*. New York: New Directions Paperback, 2009. Print.
- Wilkinson, George Theodore. *The Newgate Calendar*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1999. Print.
- Woodman, Tom. "King's Gambit: Playing Chess and Playing Detective in Raymond Chandler's Work." *Armchair Detective* 30.1 (1997): 30-33. Print.
- Yarborough, Richard. "The Quest for the American Dream in Three African American Novels: *If He Hollers Let Him Go, The Street, and Invisible Man*." *MELUS* 8.4 (1981): 33-59. Print.