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Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing continuously for the duration of each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, short films, and screenplays.

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Caroline Harbin

The Way to Overcome Humanity's Shortcomings

In *The Way of the World*, William Congreve replicates a British society that obsesses over appearance. Like the audience in 1700, the characters, Lady Wishfort, Mirabell, and Mr. Fainall, want to appear superior and are, therefore, aware of the identity that they project onto society. Because of this obsession with appearance, the characters use subterfuge and deception to achieve what they want so they do not disrupt the image that they have created. Although each character projects what they want the world to see, they also simultaneously reveal their true identity through their actions, language, wit, or lack thereof. Congreve uses the characters and language as a tool to define human nature's desires and tendencies to critique society as well as offer a remedy, which calls for sincerity and honesty.

Before looking at the characters' obsession with appearance, Congreve constructs his view of human nature's desires. At the opening of Act 1, Mirabell and Fainall have a witty conversation about playing cards. Mirabell says, "I'll play on to entertain you," and Fainall retorts, "No, I'll give you your revenge another time when you are not so indifferent" (Congreve 2229). Although the conversation is seemingly light, the words foreshadow the later events in the play as well as help define the desires of human nature. Congreve shows how "play" can be, in the traditional sense, a game to entertain while also showing how "play" can have a more sinister intent, such as revenge. In Sigmund Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," he hypothesizes about this compulsion of play. He observes a boy who plays a game in which he throws a toy far from himself and then makes his mother return it. In this situation, the boy is "throwing away the object so that it was 'gone,'" which would "satisfy an impulse of the child's, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him" (Freud 432). When looking at the little toddler, the act of playing is a way to become master of the game, which correlates to problems he experiences outside of the game world. In comparison, Congreve hints that this act of playing is both a game of cards and a conscious realization of acting on stage. Here, a playwright becomes the medium to create circumstances where the character Congreve wants to win, Mirabell, can become master over the villain, Mr. Fainall. Therefore, he enacts society's desires for both entertainment as well as mastery, whether over

individuals or over the subconscious.

Within the play, Congreve's characters reflect this desire when Mirabell wants to control Millament's estate as well as her love. In order to achieve mastery, he devises a series of deceptions or games to get what he wants (Davis 519). In the same way, Fainall seeks revenge against Mirabell by devising a plot to have Millament's money and to win Mrs. Marwood's affection. The characters see deception as the only way to become masters of their situation, which mirrors Freud's study; however, Mirabell wins Millament's love and estate only when he is sincere. This suggests Congreve's desire for sincerity and truth. As a result, Congreve writes a play in which he portrays his ideas as ideal and advantageous so he can become master over society's reward system for deception. For both the characters as well as the author, the act of "play" becomes an action necessary for humans to relate to society and to become masters.

To become masters over each other during the game, the characters hide and deceive, highlighting humanity's tendency to lie and disguise one's true intent. *The Way of the World* is often purposefully confusing because so many characters are plotting against one another, while only a few are privy to the deceptions. Mirabell first fools Lady Wishfort into thinking he loves her, then tries to dupe her again by making Waitwell play the part of Sir Rowland. In the meantime, Millament is in love with Mirabell but disguises her feelings by entertaining Witwoud and Petulant. The lower class also practices deceit when Foible and Waitwell lie after Mirabell enlists their help to fool Lady Wishfort. Secrecy becomes significant in the lives of the characters and, therefore, human nature.

While their deception is on a figurative level, the characters also engage in disguise of the physical. The most obvious case is Lady Wishfort, who literally constructs a mask of make-up to hide her face because she looks "like an old peeled wall" (Congreve 2251). Mirabell is also aware of appearance when he specifically dresses Waitwell in the attire of the upper class (Congreve 2231). Because of the societal obsession with appearance, both characters see how society relies on the outward appearance to signify prosperity.

Congreve further critiques the culture's perspective and its effect on the characters through Mrs. Marwood's self-awareness. She projects a stern exterior, helping to plot with Fainall and ultimately turning her back on him in the end. Although she speaks harshly so her words seem to reflect her severe personality, she reveals another side of herself through the character's perception of her. When speaking of Mirabell to Ms. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood begins to blush, and Mrs. Fainall notices. Although Mrs. Marwood says she blushes because of her hate for him, Mrs. Fainall questions her by saying, "So do I; but I can hear him named. What reason do you have to hate him in particular?" (Congreve 2240). Because of Mrs. Marwood's emotional reaction, she reveals her true feelings: a woman who does love and is hurt. Fainall confirms the emotions when he says, "Come you both love him, [Mirabell]; and both have equally dissembled your aversions. . . I have seen

the warm confession reddening on your cheeks. . .” (Congreve 2241). The discrepancy between what the characters project and what is true shows how people try to hide their feelings, but ultimately they cannot hide their emotions. One critic reveals, “Mrs. Marwood’s speech abounds in absolutes: “never,” “every,” “always,” etc. The exaggerated implications. . . reveal the bias to which a mind is inclined when passion sways reason” (Hinnant 378). In the scenes with Mr. and Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood speaks in absolutes, in her hate for Mirabell, in order to hide her love for him from others and herself. She projects one appearance, but this close study of diction and emotional reaction reveals what she tries to hide from society.

While secrecy in the emotional and physical world defines one aspect of human nature, Congreve also implements language to signify a more psychological revelation about society. From Act 1 to Act 5, Congreve repeats the word “forgot” or some variant, which makes the audience focus on the importance and abundance of forgetting. Although Lady Wishfort repeats the word at large, most of the cast states the word, too. A couple of instances include when Mrs. Fainall says, “Dear Foible, don’t forget that,” and Lady Wishfort when she says, “I had forgot my nephew will be here before dinner” (Congreve 2252, 3). Witwoud also states, “I’ve almost forgot him,” as well as Ms. Marwood when she says, “Besides you forget, marriage is honorable” (2256, 2260). Lastly, Mirabell says, “Let me be pitied first, and afterwards forgotten” (2279). In one analysis of the repetition, a critic hypothesizes, “The failings and transgressions of most characters in *The Way of the World* are places within the framing diction which accentuates. . . the human weakness of ‘forgetfulness’ -- and also accentuates the value and even necessity of such ‘forgetting’” (Williams 214). In this case, Congreve demonstrates the tendency to forget, a human shortcoming, as a redeemable quality for people because it gives society the ability to forgive. Sir Willful says, “Come, come, forgive and forget, aunt,” which suggests forgetting is a choice, allowing society to forgive (Congreve 2279). Although overlooking grievance is important in forgiving, the action also reflects repression. In many of the instances in which the characters use the word “forget,” they are repressing the memory of Sir Willful, the drunken nephew who does not want to marry but rather travel. This choice is simply their subconscious desire to forget him because Sir Willful does not have a place within this London society that needs to keep up appearances. For Lady Wishfort, her nephew is an embarrassment because of his lack of self-control and failure to adhere to society’s structure, which is to get married and have a family. His appearance does not align with the image she wants to project; therefore, forgetting him is the best solution. Because choosing to forget is an act of repression, forgiveness can only be the product of repressing. Without repression, the family structure would not be able to function, as demonstrated in the final scene of *The Way of the World*. Lady Wishfort needed to forgive Mrs. Fainall, Millamant, and Mirabell, all of whom were part of her family by blood or future marriage.

Her forgiveness keeps the family structure intact because of her ability to forget, which becomes synonymous with the word “repress.”

After demonstrating the society’s use of repression, Congreve also shows the most important aspect of humanity: the ability to reproduce. Throughout the text, he uses birth imagery as well as the characters’ obsession with marriage, which is a social structure that allows for society to grow. As one critic notices, “The importance of the birth imagery is suggested by the fact that nearly all the characters employ it” (Williams 200). When talking about Sir Willful, Witwoud states, “No more breeding than a bum-bailey, that I grant you. ‘Tis a pity; the fellow has fire and life” (Congreve 2235). Lady Wishfort also uses such diction when she states, “I look like Mrs. Qualmsick, the curate’s wife, that’s always breeding. . .” (Congreve 2249). Finally, Fainall uses direct birth imagery when he says, “. . .and a cuckold by anticipation, a cuckold in embryo?” (Congreve 2259). In these instances, “breeding” is seen in a negative light because of someone’s ill-breeding, suggesting his or her lack of manners by society’s standards. In the last use, “embryo” suggests new life but places it in the context of a cuckold, a fool. By using this imagery in a negative slant, the audience views “breeding” as negative. Congreve uses this imagery because the characters are in fact breeding lies and hate against each other. However, birth can represent renewal, which is also found within the text. During the Proviso scene between Millament and Mirabell, Mirabell discusses her “breeding” in a positive slant by saying it is a blessing. The imagery now can be negative or positive depending on the actions of the characters, suggesting Congreve’s belief in humanity’s ability to choose to be good or bad.

Ultimately, Congreve invigorates the audience to “breed” goodwill by placing the importance on marriage. One critic explores the implications of marriage within the text by first realizing the discrepancy between “dynastic relationships and emotional relationships” (Holland 531). In the play, the characters are all interrelated, creating familial ties with every member. On another level, the characters are also related because of emotional ties. For instance, Witwoud is Lady Wishfort’s nephew but also likes Millament, Lady Wishfort’s niece and his cousin. The emotional and familial relationships constantly intersect, which creates a complicated family tree. However, the implications of dynastic and emotional relationships also create a disconnection in society. For instance, Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Fainall are married and, therefore, dynastically related, but they hate one other, which is the opposite of how they should feel. This difference between emotional and dynastic relationships causes a “discrepancy between appearance (the overt family relations) and ‘nature’ (the hidden emotional facts)” (Holland 529). By creating this discrepancy, Congreve shows how the characters seek to alleviate the tension first through deception and finally through truth. For instance, when Mirabell apologizes to Lady Wishfort and reveals his deceptions in Act 5, he can then marry Millament because he repairs the relationship through sincerity. The marriage fixes the incongruity between the appearance and the nature as

Norman Holland argues. Through sincerity and honesty, this new family structure offers a remedy to the subterfuge earlier in the text.

Although Congreve depicts marriage as a remedy, the marriage he depicts is an example of a compassionate marriage, a marriage for love. This idea becomes especially important for the resolution of the play because marriage is not a remedy if it is forced upon another. If the marriage had ended with Sir Willful and Millament, the play would not have been a resolution because the characters did not want to marry each other. In contrast, a close reading of the Proviso scene between Millament and Mirabell reveals their desires for each other and for marriage. However, this consensual relationship is counter to Millament's former actions because she asserts her independence throughout the play. For instance, in a reply to Witwoud's charms, she remarks, “. . . Mr. Witwoud, I never pin my hair up with prose” (Congreve 2245). In this statement, she reveals her quick wit, refusing to be outsmarted by a man, but her wit is part of her charm as well as her defense. One critic explains how Millament becomes “detached” from her emotions by pointing out how “[s]he easily dismisses her admirers by claiming to use their letters as curlers. She also toys with the notion of Power. . . in what seems like a denial of her emotions toward Mirabell” (Al-Ghalith 288). Until the Proviso scene when she states her desires, the audience sees her as a funny but insensitive woman. In fact, Millament is the opposite, but she uses her wit to cloak her emotions, hiding “her own vulnerability” (Al-Ghalith 288). While talking to Mrs. Fainall, she lets down her guard and reveals that she loves Mirabell “violently” (Congreve 2254). Her self-conscious act to hide the self not only further exemplifies the human tendency toward secrecy, but also demonstrates her belief that emotions make her vulnerable. With emotions, she might marry Mirabell without considering the safety of her financial status. However, without emotions, she can resist his attempts and remain independent. For Millament, marriage represents all that she has to lose, until she devises provisions that insure her safety as well as the fulfillment of her desire, which is to marry Mirabell. Ultimately, she marries for love but does not sacrifice her reason or independence. This balance shows the audience that compromise is possible and even encouraged for happiness. Congreve depicts marriage as a renewal because marriage for love and reason represents a tangible remedy for society's deceptions. This kind of marriage demonstrates Congreve's belief in sincerity by first reworking the base of society, which is the family unit.

Throughout the play, Congreve uses plot device, characters, and language to lead up to this sincerity, represented through this marriage. While this remedy encompasses marriage, the focus of his message is one of truth. He illustrates his message through the use of the phrase “the way of the world,” which Fainall repeats twice and Mirabell once. When Fainall uses the phrases, he refers to his wife's nefarious deeds and his relationship with Ms. Marwood. Both times women reveal the “way of the world,” which is to lie and deceive, which is ironic

because Fainall and Mirabell instigate the most lies. Finally, Mirabell states “Tis the way of the world,” after Fainall discovers the deed which entrusts all of the estate to Mirabell (Congreve 2279). While the first two times suggest the “way of the world” is negative, the third demonstrates the positive. This also suggests humanity’s ability to change because Mirabell does change by the end of the play.

This change emphasizes time’s ability to reveal both the good and bad sides of society. Time affects every character, whether by the revelation of the deed or simply by age. One critic calls time a “revealer of truth” (Williams 203-04). Although the characters try to manipulate time, they are all subject to it in the end. For instance, Mirabell wants Lady Wishfort to enter a contract with Waitwell as Sir Rowland immediately, while Fainall and Mrs. Marwood time the letter’s arrival to the house when Waitwell enters. Despite the characters’ best efforts to use time for their own advantage, they ultimately cannot stop the chain of events nor the time in which the events reveal themselves. Interestingly, time plays to the advantage of the good characters rather than Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, showing how Congreve favors sincerity. Through this action, he shows how time is a benevolent force that works for the betterment of society rather than the bad. Congreve, for a moment, relies on the forces outside of society to affect humanity, which does not suggest a divine being, but rather a general order of society that shows how the good will win in the end.

Despite humanity’s desire for mastery, deception, and secrecy, Congreve constructs a hopeful argument that people can change for the better through the microcosm of the play world. His message of sincerity also empowers society because its actions correlate to its rewards or consequences. The birth imagery, as well as the function of marriage, shows the importance of human nature to “breed” goodwill toward each other. Congreve constructs his play as a response to society, where his ideas exert mastery over the old way of disguise and deception. Instead, he shows that peoples’ appearances should reflect their true desires, which positively affects society. In the end, the characters rely on sincerity and honesty to get what they want, which he believes is the proper way for people to act in the world outside of his play.

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***Double Indemnity* and the Hollywood Production Code**

Because of its distinct narrative and stylistic technique, Billy Wilder's 1944 *Double Indemnity* is widely considered to be the preeminent example of the *film noir*. As Richard Schickel states in his *Double Indemnity: BFI Film Classics*, the film "not only withstands rigorous scrutiny, but actually improves . . . the more we know about the circumstances of its creation" (9). Reaching beyond the film's narrative and stylistic technique, these historical circumstances are often overlooked when examining its significance and impact on both the film industry and wartime American culture. Regulating this significance and impact was the Hollywood Production Code, which profoundly influenced the production of the film. Discussing this influence, Sheri Chinen Biesen states that *Double Indemnity* "was a pivotal film in the evolution of Production Code Administration (PCA) censorship . . . providing the necessary conditions for the dark style and paranoid thematics of film noir" (41). As will later be discussed, because of these *film noir* thematics and aesthetics, *Double Indemnity* is traditionally praised for faithfully portraying the social milieu of wartime American culture while also subverting Code censorship; however, in light of the film's moralistic ending and treatment of criminality, the accuracy of this portrayal must be reconsidered. Because of the gender roles and power structures the ending upholds through the film's adherence to the Code, *Double Indemnity* ultimately fails to portray the wartime zeitgeist for which it is so often recognized.

Although the setting of *Double Indemnity* occurs in 1938, the film equally responds to the political and social issues that defined American culture during World War II and that marked a period of fragmentation in which society questioned traditional gender roles and power structures. In "Movies and the Renegotiation of Genre," Nicholas Spencer states in his chapter on the American cinema of 1944 that while society shifted toward a postwar environment, "new forms of alliance and tension became apparent in numerous areas of American culture and society" (117). What Spencer describes here is possibly society's disenchantment with those political and social institutions that had previously created the illusion of a unified "culture of the whole" (119). Shifting focus away from society and towards the individual, it is out of this disenchantment that a deeper concern regarding human existence and meaning emerged. This cultural

shift towards the individual marks “an attraction to existentialism borne of a sense of meaninglessness” (Spencer 119). Because of the social fragmentation this wartime period generated, “individuals and groups are brought together by haphazard means” (Spencer 119). Ultimately, this contingency reveals how, in the midst of these existential questions, any order or structure of guidance remained absent. Yet because “American film noir is a product of the 1940s and its issues,” contemporary society may better understand wartime American culture through a film such as *Double Indemnity*, which grapples with this focus on the individual and his or her place in society (Spencer 132).

Beginning with the film’s treatment of gender roles, *Double Indemnity* receives high praise for the character Phyllis Dietrichson and her embodiment of the *femme fatale* or “dangerous woman.” Although the film casts Phyllis into an antagonistic role, what is important to note about the *femme fatale* is that she represents the newly found liberation for women during the war. Because of the threat that is presented by wartime American culture against traditional gender roles and masculine notions of power, both feminine liberation and danger are delicately intertwined. For example, because Mr. Dietrichson keeps her “on a leash so tight [she] can’t breathe,” it comes without surprise that Phyllis circumvents morality in order to emancipate herself from her male oppressor. As Schickel remarks about the women of this period, men struggled to “keep them down on the farm (or behind a suburban picket fence) after they had found work in the rough atmosphere of factories, known the joys of living alone and, for that matter, going to bars alone” (58). It is the inception of this freedom for women that exemplifies social fragmentation and tension between individuals, particularly men and women. While Phyllis Dietrichson refrains from bar-hopping or living alone, she indeed “had been a working woman and she was clearly capable of – putting it mildly – a high degree of self-sufficiency” (Schickel 58). This notion of self-sufficiency becomes apparent throughout the film as Phyllis reveals the agency that she wields over Walter Neff. When Phyllis initially mentions her husband’s life insurance policy, Walter resists involvement. But as the film progresses, he subjects himself to Phyllis and her desires for power and liberation, assuring her that “you’re gonna do it and I’m gonna help you.” In this moment, the film reveals how Phyllis has exerted power over Walter while also maintaining a degree of self-sufficiency.

Through the characters Mr. Dietrichson and Barton Keyes, *Double Indemnity* also confronts the traditional power structures of white masculinity and the opposition that they posed to the individual during this period. As Spencer argues, this opposition illustrates “the considerable extent to which the movie is anti-thetical to the idea of a culture of the whole” (134). At the beginning of the film, Walter informs his Dictaphone that he killed Mr. Dietrichson “for money and for a woman.” Although he achieves neither of these results, Walter suggests to the audience that, because of his wealth and signifiers of masculinity,

Mr. Dietrichson represents those traditional power structures. Yet through Mr. Dietrichson's murder, the film contends that within wartime American culture, it is the individual who threatens the continuity of traditional power structures. Because of the violence enacted against Mr. Dietrichson, Spencer argues that the "seemingly random and chaotic unfolding of events in *Double Indemnity* denies the possibility of larger commitments or systems of belief" (133-34). Despite those traditional power structures for which Mr. Dietrichson stands, the film embraces the individual rather than the illusion of social unification.

In the absence of Mr. Dietrichson is Barton Keyes, who works against the subversions of Walter and Phyllis to restore the traditional power structures that have been displaced through crime. While *Double Indemnity* confronts the role of the individual in a fragmented society, Spencer asserts that the "lack of social unity is exacerbated by the absence of authority" (135). Indeed, while Mr. Dietrichson's murder becomes an insurance investigation rather than a police case, the film bestows upon Keyes moral and judicial authority. Because of this portrayal, it is no mistake that Keyes, like Mr. Dietrichson himself, is an old, white male. According to Biesen, Keyes reaffirms the moral doctrine of the Production Code against which Walter and Phyllis work and is "an obvious attempt to pay obeisance to the PCA's compensating moral values clause" (47). As this film suggests in its confrontation with these traditional power structures, the individual does not necessarily threaten social unification so much as he or she threatens morality. This reaffirmation of traditional power structures evokes reconsideration of the film's portrayal of wartime American culture and the merit that its recognition garners. But before reexamining the ways in which the film reverts to traditional gender roles and power structures, the historical context of *Double Indemnity*'s production and the Production Code must be explored.

In 1930, a group of producers and Catholic leaders, guided by Martin Quigley and Daniel A. Lord, furnished the Hollywood Production Code, which was an arrangement to censor the content of films at the production stage of their development. Agreeing that the notion of government censorship was insufficient, Quigley and Lord "believed the only way to make morally and politically acceptable films was to exert influence during their production and thus – if films were made correctly – they would need no censorship" (Black 39). This approach to film censorship evidently created numerous problems regarding creative limitations and disagreements between producers and censors over what constituted films as being "morally acceptable." As Gregory D. Black states in his *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies*, the reason that producers "would adopt a code that, if interpreted literally, would eliminate important social, political, and economic themes from movies and turn the industry into a defender of the status quo remains a mystery" (42). Schickel hypothesizes that the "movie industry's acquiescence in censorship was a function of its lust for middle-class respectability" (20). It is this desire for respectability

that possibly explains the formation of the Production Code Administration in 1934, which, under the twenty-year leadership of Joseph Breen, granted exhibitory approval to films that met the requirements of the Code. In regards to these requirements, the PCA wanted Hollywood “to emphasize that the church, the government, and the family were the cornerstones of an orderly society; that success and happiness resulted from respecting and working within this system” (Black 39). However, because of the ways in which *Double Indemnity* seemingly embraces individuality over conformity, the production of the film faced numerous challenges in attaining PCA approval. As mentioned earlier, because of the various *film noir* thematics and aesthetics, the film was able to meet the strict requirements of the Code while also portraying the social milieu of wartime American culture.

Without the censorship of the PCA, it is fair to assume that *Double Indemnity* would never have become such a distinguished example of *film noir*. As Biesen states about the relationship between the film and the Code, “*Double Indemnity* was both influenced by the Production Code, and influenced how the Code was applied (or not applied) to later films” (42). Because the strict requirements of the Code “helped produce the dark visual and narrative qualities which would become identified as film noir,” the influence of the Code on *Double Indemnity* manifests itself through the film’s formal and narrative devices (Biesen 43). However, these devices were necessary because the James M. Cain novel from which the film was adapted was considered to be a “racy crime-and-passion tale” (Biesen 43). In 1935, when the novel was originally considered for production, the PCA rejected the proposition on the grounds that the content of Cain’s novel was inconceivable as a film adaptation. As Schickel mentions, “[W]hen the serial [of the novel] began to appear, the Breen office declared that under no circumstances would it be brought to the screen, and all talk stilled” (24). However, according to Biesen, between 1935 and when production on the film began in 1943, the leading factor that caused the PCA to reconsider the novel was that screenwriters “[Billy] Wilder and [Raymond] Chandler altered Cain’s story to accommodate Breen’s reservations” (44). Although it played a necessary role in the production of the film, this accommodation laid the foundation for *Double Indemnity*’s adherence to the Code and ultimate failure to portray with honesty the social milieu of wartime American culture.

In understanding the PCA’s acceptance of Wilder and Chandler’s screenplay, enough credit can never be given to *Double Indemnity*’s formal and narrative devices that embrace those *film noir* thematics and aesthetics. Praising his creativity, Schickel states that Wilder saw how “this baroque manner would be aesthetically redeeming for Cain’s disturbing matter, giving it richness, a resonance, even, if you will, a touch of class” that the novel lacked (20). If it was truly respectability that Hollywood sought when it initially adopted the Code, then Wilder discovered a way in which disturbing material could reach

the screen while maintaining this respectability. In writing the screenplay, Wilder and Chandler faced the challenge of reworking Cain's material so that content involving sex or violence was rendered acceptable to the PCA. What they discovered during this time was the capacity of innuendo and witty dialogue to convey the novel's mature content. Early in the film, Walter visits the Dietrichson home, where he first meets Phyllis and instantly becomes attracted to her. Although he is there merely to sell insurance, Walter uses this opportunity to intrigue Phyllis with his flirtatious charm. "There's a speed limit in this state, Mr. Neff. Forty-five miles an hour," warns Phyllis. "How fast was I going, officer?" asks Walter, to which Phyllis responds, "I'd say around ninety." As Biesen mentions, "Rarely had so little been directly stated in a film, yet so much implied" (46). Because this writing strategy proved so successful in circumventing the restrictions of the Code, it eventually emerged as one of the film's most outstanding characteristics. More importantly, however, was that Wilder and Chandler discovered that "the Code could be manipulated to their own satisfaction" (Biesen 47).

These nuances of dialogue extend beyond the screenplay and influence the formal technique of the film, which employs numerous instances of *film noir* aesthetics. Because the PCA had approved *Double Indemnity's* screenplay, Wilder was "thus free to be creative with lighting, photography, and sound to evoke a dark, seedy milieu rife with dark themes and malicious deeds" (Biesen 47-48). What the challenging production of this film ultimately reveals is the Code's "unexpected ability, not only to accommodate, but to cultivate, the 'lowtone and sordid flavor' of *Double Indemnity*" (Biesen 49). However, even this ability of the Code to cultivate a dour environment had its limitations. In the original screenplay, the film's concluding scene was a depiction of Walter's execution in a gas chamber, which was excluded from the final version. Although Wilder took the time to shoot the scene, the PCA found it to be unnecessarily gruesome and offered a warning against its inclusion. Schickel argues that this warning "clearly worked on Wilder as he shot the film, and his response to it, as well as to the promptings of his own sensibility, greatly improves the picture he finally placed in release" (56). While credit for *Double Indemnity's* distinct narrative and style must be given to the film's cast and crew, the Code itself must also be given recognition for its influence on the overall outcome of the film. However, it is because of this influence that *Double Indemnity* ultimately adheres to the requirements of the Code and distorts its portrayal of wartime American culture.

Although *Double Indemnity* grapples with some of the social and political issues of the wartime period, by punishing Phyllis and Walter for their subversive actions, the film's ending reverts to upholding traditional gender roles and power structures. While *Double Indemnity* appears to embrace the individual over these traditional roles and structures, by the end of the film, it expresses its sentiments for the individual through Keyes's words to Walter, "you're all washed up." This

is not even to mention that through Phyllis’s demonstration of feminine liberation, she is punished and killed. What must be ascertained from this ending is its failure to portray faithfully the social milieu of this culture. In his criticism on the film, Henri-Francoise Rey states that the “cinema is nothing less, in fact, than a mirror that distorts purposefully. And it distorts because of the powers that control it” (28). Because of the history that exists between the production of *Double Indemnity* and the requirements of the Code, it would be fair to consider the PCA as the film’s distorting, controlling power. Rey proceeds to argue that *Double Indemnity* assumes a propagandistic role “in order to address . . . the needs of the moment manifested by a public who now wants film noir and nothing but such ‘dark’ cinema” (28). As Rey suggests, the film employs *film noir* thematics and aesthetics to disguise itself as an instrument of traditional gender roles and power structures that aim at fulfilling the “needs” of the public. Through Walter’s line to Keyes, “I love you, too,” individuals are encouraged in the final moments of the film to resubmit themselves to those traditional institutions against which they have rebelled. This ending radically redefines *Double Indemnity*’s message, which ultimately embraces conformity and unification, as well as it reveals the distorted and dishonest portrayal of a wartime culture that was severely fragmented and individualistic.

Although *Double Indemnity*, in its response to the social and political issues of the period, fails to reconcile injustices involving traditional gender roles and power structures, responsibility for this failure must be placed on the PCA and its control on Hollywood rather than the film’s cast and crew. Discussing this responsibility, Rey states that Wilder and his colleagues were “not at fault, only, and very simply, the spirit that gives Hollywood life and the standing orders that regulate the cinema as an industry” (29). In an instance of poetic justice, Biesen assures us that “*Double Indemnity* functioned as one of the cinematic tugs in the unraveling of the PCA” (42). *Double Indemnity* is undoubtedly a crucial film in the history of American cinema and certainly deserves the recognition that it receives. However, because of the significant impact that the Code and wartime American culture had on the film, *Double Indemnity* must be examined within its historical context in order to ensure that it receives fair and just praise.

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David Rodriguez

An Account of Grief

Upon the death of Jacques Derrida, the world was prompted with the problem of mourning a man who spent a good bit of his mental effort and dense time to deny the possibility of true mourning. In *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida*, Sean Gaston reveals his intimate personal struggle in understanding how to recover his grief from Derrida's philosophical binds, in order to cope with the death of such a large figure in the academy. Gaston repeats, and surely echoes Derrida, when he poses a refrain in his book: "Start with the gaps" (3, 4, 7, 18, 120).

Because of these gaps—in the middle of our words and our thoughts, the person and the *un*person, in the perceived impossibility of *real*, substantial, genuine mourning of a *real* subjective someone who has ceased to be a one and is left an empty object on earth—we can actually find a comfort in the strange spectre we cannot see but can *feel*; Gaston says, "...the dead are either *always* with us (inside us, and present) or *never* with us (outside of us, and absent) *Either* in us *or* outside of us: two places, two monuments to the dead, to the dead *either* in us (the monument as subject) *or* outside of us (the monument as object), two columns" (15).

Adrienne Rich, even during her life, what I never knew was her *last life*, was for me a manifestation of this essential disillusion of the gaps. I have spent the past five weeks of my literary studies solely focused on this woman's work: Her poetry, her prose, her reaches into my sociology course—where she is stripped of her status as poet and remains philosopher: Rich the radical political, queen of queer, with a strong, clear voice, poignant and sharp, a living monument, a moving monument, shifting and bumping heads with *mankind*.

Now dead, still monument, still double monument; now Rich reaches far over my head in her death, right when I thought I had such control over her...Starting from the beginning: I woke up this morning late, ready. I was sitting on a bench with the paper, to see what happened during the night. I crossed the lefthand columns, summaries of the news: "*Iran's oil exports...*," "*France said it is in talks...*," "*Stocks dropped...*," "*Facebook is preparing...*," "*Yields on Portugal's bonds...*," and then back up the next column, "*Died: Adrienne Rich, 82, feminist poet.*" Stop. Start with the gaps.

The gap, for me, was here between what I wanted to see and what I saw. I

wanted poets to trust in their words. I wanted poets to see their art as an end in itself. I wanted, as William C Williams said, for there to be “no ideas but in things.” Confronted with Rich six weeks ago, I did not see the woman I now see: The woman battling for her ground, realizing that because of how people see her, because she is a her, her ideas could not just be in things, she wanted her ideas to incite change, influence, and she had been stripped even before her birth of this most basic right: for her art to be taken seriously enough to change not just individual lives, but the lives of half the population of the world.

I was outside, needed to locate some of her poetry at once after hearing she was now gone. The only piece I had with me, was a single poem, on copy paper—printed out for some reason or another a week or two before—bare and white, empty except for her words, “Dedications” (1991), which concludes with the lines:

I know you are reading this poem listening for something, torn
between bitterness and hope
turning back once again to the task you cannot refuse.
I know you are reading this poem because there is nothing else
left to read
there where you have landed, stripped as you are. (36-41)

I have the second to last “I know...” crossed out, and the lines “because there is nothing else / left to read” (39-49) blotted through so dark that you have to strain your eyes to imagine that *anything* is left to read. Here had been my struggle with Rich’s poetry.

I was horrified that anyone would be left with nothing else but *her words*. What about Sharon Olds? couldn’t her words be left too? couldn’t women who wrote poetry without political purpose but with such strong influence be left too?

I realize now, no.

I needed someone to share my immediate mourning with, but there was no one. I got up and walked to class, bumped into another Women’s 20th Century Poetry student, and accidentally broke the news to her; I didn’t want to share in Rich’s death, I wanted to share my grief. Telling of someone’s death only compounds grief, the pain repeats in the obscene gesture of bearing the news and multiplying the amount of grievors.

I kept thinking of those lines, “I know you are reading this poem because there is nothing else / left to read / there where you have landed, stripped as you are” (39-41). They had meant nothing to me before, they were a powerless insult to my Rilke’s and my Williams’s, but now, all of a sudden, I realized it was not in weakness as an artist that Rich said, in the forward of her collection, *Poems: Selected and New, 1950-1974*: “Poetry, words on paper, are necessary but not enough...”

(xv), but rather they are the words of someone stripped of the rights I operated under as a heterosexual male, the words of a strong woman, political words that supplemented her poetic words, of which both were locked in a world of a patriarchal system of signifiers and signifieds.

I knew that after class I would have to be prepared for a meeting with a beloved professor, and not just any professor, but indeed—in the unending chain of organized chaos—one who valued the poet more than anyone on campus, anyone in the state? anyone near or too far: A woman who has been changed by Rich, who has invested in Rich’s poetry and her politics, as a critic and as a woman, who has named her son after Adrienne, who has dedicated the time and emotional effort to teaching her, amongst others, to the few who had decided to take her course.

Deaths are never timely, but all the pure causes that brought about a prearranged meeting, a discussion of a paper of mine on Rich’s “Diving into the Wreck,” and an irregularly scheduled class to come on Friday seemed to have cushioned both my professor and me in a close pocket of support that is needed in a time like this.

The meeting proceeded to basically save me, and I was able to use my grief to finally admit out loud how I had used a narrow, indeed sexist, view of art to judge Rich on unfair grounds. With every attempt in the past two years I have made to disrobe myself of structural ties to an old gendered world, the threads still covered me...oh how deep these threads tie: I had been covered the whole time and had been blinded to the power of the gaps, the multiplicities of my own self being so full and so empty, of the goal of Rich’s poems to speak “of the thing itself and not the myth”...oh I had been blind to it the whole time. Rich worked to get to the bottom of things with as much effort as anyone else I mythologized, but she did it from the perspective of one mythologized, of a vision through my own eyes that objectified her into a “useless” thing, rather than the open, changing, not monument, now, I realize, not column, but Tiger and Activist and Diver and Radical and Astronomer and Teacher and Lesbian and Lover and all of this, I now realize, is what I need: A poet living for life through words, words ordered and inspired by life, then again pronounced as words, though life, through a life in words, a life in new words, words spoken from a new life, because all the books before this have described this, and they are useless...we find our mourning not in a subject’s death, but because the gaps continue to confound us, continue to blind us, we miss the wonderful dance of life, death, and the word.

And in her own words, from “VII” (1997):

What kind of beast would turn its life into words?
What atonement is this all about? (1-3)

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Review

Christopher Metress

Phillips, Gene D. *Out of the Shadows: Expanding the Canon of Classic Film Noir*. Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012. Xii. 307 pp. \$34.95 (cloth).

In his introduction to *Out of the Shadows: Expanding the Canon of Classic Film Noir*, Gene D. Phillips states his intent to bring a “new twist to the topic” of film noir criticism. Unlike critics such as Andrew Dickos, Foster Hirsch, and James Naremore, who stay close to the “official canon” of the genre, Phillips wants to “widen the discussion of film noir with some films hitherto not usually considered as noirs” (x); however, he also wishes to avoid “the trap of operating on the notion that once you start looking for noir you see it everywhere” (xi) (evident in such works as Wheeler Dixon’s *Film Noir and the Cinema of Paranoia*, which seeks to include biker movies and slasher movies in the noir canon). Phillips’s solution is to offer an in-depth examination of more than twenty noirs, most of which are familiar to students of the classic noir, but a few of which are “given short shrift” (xii) in other studies of the genre. Thus, in addition to such well-known classics as John Huston’s *The Maltese Falcon*, Otto Preminger’s *Laura*, and Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil*, Phillips turns our attention to such neglected works as George Cukor’s *A Double Life*, Don Siegel’s *The Killers*, and Fred Zinnemann’s *Act of Violence*. As Phillips confesses, his approach to the genre is not heavily theorized, and it is clear that he has little interest in contesting the standard definitions of the genre or offering detailed analyses of each film. Readers with a strong background in noir criticism looking for new interpretations of the classic films, or innovative and subtle readings of the neglected works, will be disappointed. However, for a general audience possessing a working knowledge of the genre’s classics, *Out of the Shadows* is an entertaining work of film history that should indeed widen the discussion and deepen our appreciation for noir’s lasting impact on American cinema.

Although Phillips wishes to add a “twist” to our understanding of the genre, he starts in that most expected of places: the origins of the genre in the hard-boiled fictions of Dashiell Hammett and the *Black Mask* school. Here, Phillips offers a standard reading of those literary origins, and when he turns to a couple of early noirs in his second chapter, he grounds those films (such as Boris Ingster’s *Stranger on the Third Floor*) in the tradition of French Naturalism and German Expressionism. Interestingly, however, Phillips resists the temptation to call Ingster’s 1940 film the first noir, granting that status to the subject of his third chapter, Huston’s *The Maltese Falcon* (and chiefly because Huston’s film had greater visibility, thereby making it “much more influential in initiating the film noir cycle” [24]). In the chapters that follow, Phillips proceeds by juxtaposition and gets to the heart of his study. Sometimes, his chapters will compare films by

a single director, such as Fritz Lang (*Ministry of Fear* and *Scarlet Street*), Alfred Hitchcock (*Spellbound* and *Strangers on a Train*), Otto Preminger (*Laura* and *Anatomy of a Murder*), and Orson Welles (*The Stranger* and *Touch of Evil*). In other chapters, Phillips will pair films with similar themes or content (Cukor's *A Double Life* and Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, Robert Siodmak's *The Killers* and Siegel's *The Killers*, and Zinnemann's *Act of Violence* and Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing*). Such juxtapositions are both helpful and limited. On the one hand, some pairings draw out insights that would otherwise go unnoticed had the films been discussed individually. For instance, Cukor's *A Double Life* benefits greatly from comparison with *Sunset Boulevard*, as does Siegel's 1964 remake of Siodmak's *The Killers*. However, the juxtapositions often work against the larger structure of Phillips's study. For instance, Phillips is an engaging film historian, and he seems very much interested in providing us with a history of classic film noir. Recall that he begins with the origins of the genre in the hard-boiled fictions of the 1920s, and he clearly situates Huston's version of *The Maltese Falcon* as the uncontested origin of the genre. Then, when he comes to Welles's *Touch of Evil*, the subject of his final chapter on the classic era, he quotes with approval Paul Schrader's assessment that "The film's closing sequence, with Quinlan dead and Tanya disappearing into the darkness of the night, does indeed feel like the end of an era" (220). Furthermore, he follows this chapter with two closing chapters on the "rise of the neo-noir" (223). Each of these moves gives the study a chronological progression that is often negated by the content of the individual chapters. Thus, while the book as a whole has an intriguing narrative arc (one of the most interesting things Phillips does is to reintroduce Hammett's influence at the end of his study when he takes up the rise of the neo-noir), many of the book's chapters do little to advance this narrative. This is not to say that these chapters are without value; rather, they seem isolated from the book's larger interest in producing a new way of thinking about the influence and legacy of classic film noir.

As an introduction to the genre, *Out of the Shadows* helps us to appreciate how classic film noir came into being. Phillips is particularly good at providing us with the back stories to each film, and we leave his discussions with a deeper understanding of how each film negotiated questions of casting, production, censorship, screenplay development, and the like. Although he breaks little new ground in his analyses of each film, Phillips has provided a great service to the genre. Warning us against a limited and conventional understanding of classic film noir's canon, Phillips calls our attention to films that are too often overlooked, and we would do well to heed his advice and give these films their due.

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Julie Steward

At Window

And finally it comes to this

dream of departure or departure
shadow of panes or a way out

which will look nothing like you
expected it to look.

Remember when the corner behind
his chair held little toys
and letters you wrote? Remember
how orchids grew under
the table, how an accidental key,
a pocket, an egg?

But also the limitless seduction of roads
and all of their
tall trees,
oh, all of them?

In dreams the veil is darker.
As it is now, it shrouds enough.

My noon-shy one, do you still hide
from mirrors? Slow motion always
a hidden trail,
light on your shoulder,
and blessing of orchids,
somewhere, always beginning
to bloom

Joséphine Sacabo's une femme habitée, (photograph 55)

But back to her back,
the arc smooth, generous,
everywhere falling shadows.
A frame of palpable black.

She is never the virgin riding
to stable, never the offering,
never the myrrh. She forgets
all of her lovers' last names.

She cannot distinguish
wishes from windows.

Sliver of silver—her back,
head in hands. No little songs.
Only the window's slicing beam.
Nativity haunting and endless.

Darkness holds her steady.
It holds her late and sure.

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Valerie Westmark

Beneath the Elm

When I watch the oxbow slip
starry echoes
into a light-limb lulling,
I want to climb
the attic chambers
of the alpine and hold
silence in
close chested.

I want to lay spread
in the rye grass, hushed
by the shallow call of the gorse,
the whispering dusk.
I want to become

the heart of the root-stock,
the voice of sky, the new.
I want to be part tulip
of beauty,
which wakes.

Light Hitting Aspen Leaves

I ask you why you live.
I don't know why
I do this: fear,
I suppose, fear
I'll end up somewhere.

You ask me what I want life to be
and I know I've been wondering, wandering.

To sit beside a tree and breathe I say.

Like Sand Exposed

Do you think of yourself as gigantic?
I mean, vast.

I only do, momentarily.
As last night we danced soft
circles in the black.

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Caroline Harbin

Cracked

The sidewalk's spidery
web of micro-cracks.
A tributary for ants – troublesome,
travels the hill
to my driveway. A crevice of dirt,
bits of glass, green leafy
plants. All I see is an egg
sizzling in the June.
We watched yellow
spread thin, hardened rubber.
That filmy inside of the shell,
little flaked pieces crackling,
like cool porcelain sweating.
We used our little hot fingers
smashed the white
filled the crevice of sidewalk
where we were till you moved.
I recognized
your picture from the local paper:
high school graduation, hot
like June that day.

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Bryan Johnson

Figures Whose Names End in the Letter “E”

The Abbé sits on your left, the German Prince on your right, etc.
Empress Catherine’s peripatetic bent owes something in life, doesn’t it
To Goethe sticking pretty close to period crib-notes by Winckelmann
Whispered in a Hall of Classical Antiquities or Museum of Natural History.
The Palatine Amphitheatre is new, commissioned
Early this morning while I was visiting the Shrine of the Three Magi
In Cologne. I thought the same could be said of the ancient cartoons
Yet my ordinary feeling, tempting the barbarian with a reed-cake
Tied to a stake. I brought my son to Moriah in that plague-fisted
Year of Pliny, both Younger and Elder, burning in the stackable firs.
I’m not sure what you do for fun in the cradle of civilization. Sometimes
You’ve been known to confuse the thumb-sized map of Western Civ.
For the rape-bed, as when it breaks, disaster in the making, all over Rome.

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Kelsey Boone

Tremors in a Lived Life

You know that beat trickles
bass vibrations in all your veins

mine tremor the same
melding our collective, apart

from prescriptions, systems order
isolation for the “other,” discreet

observers guarantee they can’t see
underneath the garments of government

tearing logic, conditioned cognition
suffocates when it remains under

achievers with authority will seize
that beat sequence, esteeming

awareness still unlearned that
there is more in humanity’s

undertones undiscovered; we are
bereft when left alone

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Stephanie Anne Smith

Northerly

Ballerina laces room
grand jeté. Rosin grace she threads
tempo to forest as a floor dove,
exceptional, mourns lightness.

“That girl lifts with feathers
painted white,” whispers
passel bar side. Warming callow
eyes undress beauty *adagio* poised
by French school or was it
Italian limbering performance.

A record plays. They *plié*, *developé* traces
of balance back flight until
her grand *retardare*

seams wooden bars and mirrors
with gales and shadows northerly.

A Glass of Aluminum

Thirsting youth. Titania, she reads,
once glided queenly on forest
icicles to silverplated music.
Inside her snow globe, nightly,
she dusts rim winter glass.
Her obedience opaque. Cold,
mechanical wind again wound.

She reads, nothing
can be amiss when simpleness
and beauty tender. Stale
white, she steals
to cupboard. Soundless
thirsting. She drinks like waking
in salt scathing ice. Don't slip
on rocks. She does,
freshly polished, tastes
metallic argument inside stormy welkin
descending. Her tongue whiplashes
foil shattering sterile glass.
Her liquid reads unfreezes.
Though she is stone and purple
reactive from majesty.

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