them. The third essay on Chandler is very different: James O. Tate offers a close reading of Chandler's last short story, "The Pencil." Despite the disparaging remarks of critics, Tate demonstrates that this story is as representative of Chandler's fiction as his stronger efforts and that, beneath the surface, the story is about writing, about Chandler's playing with language and the drama of composition, rather than about the mystery plot that is conventionally solved.

We have already suggested that hard-boiled detective fiction has strong connections to film, but nowhere is that connection better illustrated than in the novels of Elmore Leonard, who, as George Grella demonstrates, employs the art of cinema *in* his novels. Many of his novels are about films and filmmaking and use that medium's techniques and language to develop the narrative. Through his use of film, Grella suggests, Leonard may well belong with avant-garde artists who have extended their art in new directions.

In the novels of Chester Himes, the hard-boiled detective appears in the persons of Coffin Ed and Grave Digger, who have been the subject of considerable critical discussion involving race and Himes's portrayals of the African-American detectives. Gary Storhoff examines the critical views of Himes's fiction and, after a careful analysis, concludes that Himes defies literary conventions, structuring his work in patterns of violated expectations so that ultimately the reader is led to see the consequences of racism in America.

Diana Ben-Merre traces the Jewish detective in fiction, focusing on Harry Kemelman's Rabbi Small series and Faye Kellerman's contemporary Peter Decker novels. The essay indicates the differences between the goals of Kemelman and Kellerman, as reflected in the kinds of characters developed by each author, and demonstrates how both writers help to demystify, through Jewish-American mysteries, the Jewish character.

The final essay in this section examines the female hard-boiled detectives created by two of the most popular women writers of the genre: Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky. Their detectives, respectively Kinsey Millhone and V. I. Warshawski, are the subjects of Timothy Shuker-Haines and Martha M. Umphrey's essay, which illustrates the differences between the male and female hard-boiled detectives and demonstrates that gender is central to both the construction of the detective and the development of the narrative. In this last essay, we can see the degree to which modernist criticism, particularly that involving gender and ideology, has recast our approach to the genre. As Ms. Umphrey remarks in her note at the end of the essay, the effect of feminist criticism of the genre may be to dissolve the very form of the detective narrative —as has this essay—into non-resolution.

1

Anne Riordan: Raymond Chandler's Forgotten Heroine

David W. Madden

Since his death in 1959, Raymond Chandler has been elevated to detective fiction's pantheon of writers; and many scholars have even ventured to argue that Chandler's is an important voice in twentieth-century fiction, without qualifying this achievement by noting that he worked in a popular idiom. While there has been considerable discussion about many features of his writing (its style, plotting, historical verisimilitude, and the like), one area—Marlowe's and, by extension the arguments invariably seem to run, Chandler's attitudes towards women—has provoked some heated responses.

All manner of evidence has been paraded to reveal the detective-cum-author's deepest feelings, but almost always lost in the shuffle is any detailed consideration of particular female portraits. Certainly the villainesses—alluring, sexually provocative, and always deadly—have been given their due, but rarely have the other women (not necessarily the "good girls" but the less exaggerated female types) been adequately considered. One of, if not *the* most important of these is Anne Riordan, a twenty-eight-year-old woman who appears in Chandler's second novel, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940). In this paper I intend to discuss this portrait and briefly compare it to the treatment the character receives in the two most prominent film versions of the novel—*Murder My Sweet* (1944) and *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975)[1]—to demonstrate that the "problems" Marlowe/Chandler supposedly has with women do not apply to this character. In fact, Hollywood, not Chandler, has the greater problem with the novel's women, and nowhere is this more evident than in the depictions of Anne Riordan in these two films.

It is now a tired cliché to say that Chandler wrote in a hard-boiled style and that this manner seriously colored all his human portraits. Of course it did; but Chandler, as many critics have argued, was a serious and extremely adroit writer who sought to use but not to be hamstrung by the conventions of the genre he worked within. As Chandler wrote in one letter:

the most durable thing in writing is style, and style is the most valuable investment a writer can make with his time. . . . He can't do it by trying, because the kind of style I am thinking about is a projection of personality and you have to have a personality before you can project it. ("Letter to Mrs. Robert J. Hogan, March 7, 1947," 75)

He sought a way in which to explore the complexities of human emotion and to do so in a language (albeit exaggerated) that would be immediately recognizable to a wide audience. Naturally, with such a language there come certain attitudes, which many have been quick to ascribe to Marlowe/Chandler's personality.[2]

Two of these attitudes involve misogyny and homophobia, and a pair of critics in particular have argued that Marlowe is a woman-hating homosexual. The first of these salvos was fired by Gershon Legman in *Love & Death: A Study in Censorship*, in which he asserts that Chandler's "women are all strictly flaming bitches, killers, or corpses"; he goes on to announce that "[t]he true explanation of Marlowe's temperamental disinterest in women is not 'honor,' but his interest in men. . . . Marlowe is clearly homosexual—a butterfly, as the Chinese say, dreaming that he is a man" (Legman 69-70). The first of these charges is simply preposterous, and even a cursory look at Anne Riordan, Mavis Weld in *The Little Sister*, or Linda Loring in *The Long Goodbye* should dispel this notion. The second charge, overstated like the first, may have some merit and has been framed far more carefully by another critic.[3]

In his essay "Marlowe, Men, and Women," Michael Mason develops more fully the implications of Legman's theory. Mason clearly demonstrates that Chandler often places women in the role of chief culprit and murderer and therefore concludes that the novels' "moral scheme is in truth pathologically harsh on women, and pathologically lenient towards men" (95). But victim of the same hyperbole as Legman, Mason also claims, "There is scarcely a dislikable man to be found" (95); Marlowe, he argues, is especially susceptible to "male charm" and given to provoking beatings as a masochistic "alternative to the heterosexual bond" (91).

The charge that there are scarcely any dislikable men in the novels is patently ridiculous, though perhaps Mason finds a special charm in malignant types such as Lash Canino (*The Big Sleep*), Jules Amthor and Dr. Sonderborg (*Farewell, My Lovely*), Eddie Prue (*The High Window*), Detective Moses Maglashan and Orrin Quest (*The Little Sister*), and Big Willie Magoon (*The Long Goodbye*). Furthermore, Laird Brunette, the gambling-boat operator who owns the political machinery of Bay City, is anything but one of Chandler's "engaging and kindly" villains. Under Brunette's polite, urbane exterior, there is a cold vein of iron, and Chandler's description of him is a carefully modulated study in ambiguity:

He was neither young nor old, neither fat nor thin. Spending a lot of time on or near the ocean had given him a good healthy complexion. His hair was nut-brown and waved naturally and waved still more at sea. His forehead was narrow and brainy and his eyes held a delicate menace. They were yellowish in color. He had nice hands, not babied to the point of insipidity, but well-kept. His dinner clothes were midnight blue, I judged,

because they looked so black. (*Farewell, My Lovely* 224)

Indeed, Brunette is a physically attractive character; however, the color imagery in the passage offers a distinct contrast to surface appearance. Brown, yellow, and black are all colors associated with dissolution and decay; and like the "velvety tough guys" he surrounds himself with, Brunette is as tough and corrupt as they come.

For the purposes of this discussion, however, the most crucial consideration is Mason's charge that "[w]arm, erotic feeling and loving contact with a woman are irreconcilable for Marlowe" (92); the relationship with Anne Riordan appears to be a perfect case in point. Jerry Speir describes her as "one of Chandler's strongest, most independent, most likeable female characters" but leaves his assessment there (113). A closer look at her individual features reveals why she is such a distinct female portrait in Chandler's canon.

Physically she is quite attractive, though when describing her Marlowe repeatedly notices small defects—too wide a mouth, too narrow a forehead, too long an upper lip—yet he insists throughout, "It was a nice face, a face you get to like" (73). This noting of exceedingly minor imperfections emerges more as protection against attraction than any clear sign of ethical defect. In fact, Marlowe returns repeatedly to particular features of her face—her full auburn hair, teeth, shadowed and "gold-flecked eyes" (224), "neat chin" (156), and "smile [that can be] cozy and acid at the same time" (157). As Speir rightly concludes, Marlowe is definitely attracted to Riordan.

At one point though, when discussing the case with homicide Lieutenant Randall (one of Chandler's few fair cops), Marlowe declares, in response to Randall's insistence that Riordan likes him, "'I like smooth shiny girls, hardboiled and loaded with sin'" (166). Actually this is little more than macho posturing, especially when compared with his earlier remark about Anne, "You could get to like that face a lot. Glamoured up blondes were a dime a dozen, but that was a face that would wear. I smiled at it" (81).

Similarly, Marlowe finds her bungalow especially appealing with its high bookcases, comfortable chairs, warm fireplace, and with "nothing womanish ... except a full length mirror with a clear sweep of the floor in front of it" (156). Rather than misogynistic, his remark reflects something essential he finds in Riordan's nature—her straightforward, unpretentious demeanor. Marlowe is, in fact, so attracted to the place, he admits, "'A fellow could settle down here. . . . Move right in. Everything set for him'" (157).

However, the attraction goes far deeper than physical appearance or amenities, for Anne Riordan has abilities and comes from a background similar to Marlowe's and operates as a mirror image of him throughout. She is, first and foremost, a cop's daughter, her father the former honest police chief of Bay City who lost his job when Brunette's henchmen took control. Similarly, Marlowe is a former investigator for the district attorney's office who lost his job "for talking back" (106).

Like a cop, Riordan is effective in sniffing out clues, often before Marlowe can even get his bearings. She, for instance, worms information about the necklace out of the tough Randall, learns the Grayle family's connection with jade from a jeweler and a society editor, and arranges a meeting with Helen Grayle. She also secures an early photo of Mrs. Grayle, and throughout the novel she assembles clues and steers Marlowe in fruitful directions. Both he and Randall frequently comment on her exceptional deductive capacities. She also possesses personality traits that are similar to Marlowe's. Professionally she is independent, like him, working as a freelance writer for newspapers; and her general restlessness and curiosity force her to take chances other women of her era would not. Like Marlowe she enjoys driving at night and becomes involved in matters that are really none of her business. When viewing the gruesomely disfigured body of a dead Lindsey Marriott, she is stoical, and Marlowe admires "her nerve" (62).

She is fully capable of trading barbed verbal ripostes with Marlowe, something tough men, but not always women, use to counter his wisecracking. Just as he does, she asks impertinent questions, and she has his ability to look beyond facades to a hidden essence. She frequently knows what he is thinking and recognizes his hard-boiled patter as a defense against vulnerability and full personal disclosure. For all their toughness, each also has a strong sentimental streak. Marlowe continues his investigation of Marriott's death because he feels he failed as a bodyguard, and Riordan removes the reefers from the dead man's body because it would be "kind of mean for the poor man to be found dead with marihuana cigarettes in his pocket" (82).

In yet another important respect Riordan matches Marlowe. In every novel the detective reveals, in spite of his mean profession and tough banter, a cultured sensitivity, especially a love of literature that frequently spills out in the many references or allusions. This novel, in particular, is dotted with all manner of literary references, with Marlowe frequently alluding to Shakespeare's *King Richard III* (for a time a working title of the novel was *The Second Murderer*, a reference to one of the play's minor characters who "had certain dregs of conscience, but still wanted the money" [238]), Hemingway, detective fictions, and nursery rhymes. Riordan is also given to similar literary references, telling a battered Marlowe he looks "like Hamlet's father" (155) and teasing him about his "charming light smile and a phony English accent like Philo Vance" (242).

In all these ways Riordan emerges as Marlowe's equal, not only in the reader's but also in the detective's eyes; and when compared with the ruthless, conniving villainy of Helen Grayle or the shabby manipulativeness of Jessie Florian, Riordan is anything but another of Chandler's stock female characters. In discussing the novelist's characterizations, Dennis Porter contends that "Chandler sets himself the literary task of finding new combinations of words to express models of ugliness, corruption, squalor, evil, and eroticism. The goal is not so much mimesis as astonishment" (65). For the most part Porter is correct; however, Riordan stands as a notable exception to this extraordinary rule.

The question then arises, as Mason implicity asks, why Marlowe continually flees from Riordan's obvious advances. The answer, it seems to me, has far less to do with misogyny or homosexuality than with a view of the world and of women that Marlowe holds. Jerry Speir again helps clarify the situation when writing:

> Marlowe's attitude toward women reflects the same conflict between his idealism and his experience which colors all his actions. A part of him longs for the perfect goddess; his experience persistently shatters that dream. When he thinks he has found a person close to his ideal in Anne Riordan, his impulse is to enshrine her. (113-14)

As Chandler repeatedly explained in letters and as the concluding paragraphs of "The Simple Art of Murder" lyrically insist, his version of the detective is a complexly paradoxical figure:

> He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor—by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world. . . . If there were enough like him, the world would be a very safe place to live in, without becoming too dull to be worth living in. ("The Simple Art of Murder," 20-21)

As nearly all critics have noted, Marlowe is a modern knight errant, an exceptionally principled man who must make his way through a dangerous, sordid world.

Like a knight he does indeed idealize women, and in this novel Anne Riordan is placed on a pedestal. But Marlowe is also painfully aware of women like Morgan le Fay and consequently remains on his guard around any woman. To read through Chandler's canon is to find a character, who, at the close of each adventure, becomes increasingly more defeated and world-weary, and each book ends on a note of resignation and defeat despite the relative success of the case.

Marlowe indeed wants to protect Riordan, to shield her first from a police interrogation and later from the gangsters who may discover that she has aided him. He also wants to preserve his hopelessly and certainly unfairly idealized view of her. To accomplish either of these goals, he feels he must remain at a distance, never allowing himself to get too emotionally involved, which has led some critics to view his gallantry as a sign of an imaginative shortcoming on Chandler's part. Dennis Porter speaks for many: "Anne Riordan, an attractive young woman who is also 'nice,' apparently posed a problem for Chandler that he was unable to solve satisfactorily within the terms of the hard-boiled formula and its myths" (187).

Porter, like so many others, once more confuses the author with his creation. The "problem" here (and there is a problem) is not Chandler's but Marlowe's, a problem Chandler has *deliberately* created for his character and of which he is fully aware. In an illuminating letter, Chandler explains, "Marlowe is not a

real person. He is a creature of fantasy. He is in a false position because I put him there" ("Letter to Mrs. Robert J. Hogan, March 7, 1947," 232). Marlowe is well aware that his idealism is anachronistic, but he clings to it in spite of the brutality of his world. In the novel's final chapter after learning that Helen Grayle has escaped to Baltimore and committed suicide, he tells Randall that she probably acted out of love and a desire to protect her enfeebled husband. Paraphrasing a line from *Othello*, he explains:

> But what she did and the way she did it kept her from coming back here for trial. Think that over. And who would that trial hurt most? Who would be least able to bear it? And win, lose or draw, who would pay the biggest price for the show? An old man who loved not wisely, but too well. (249)

When Randall dismisses this as "just sentimental," Marlowe counters, "'Sure. It sounded like that when I said it. Probably all a mistake anyway'" (249). Yet in the next breath he asks the befuddled Randall if the pink bug he found in the office on his last visit has returned.

Marlowe identifies strongly with this small insect, which has scaled eighteen floors "just to make a friend. Me. *My* luck piece" (184). For Marlowe the bug becomes a symbol of dogged determination and commitment. It faces a seemingly impossible task and succeeds, just as Marlowe faces the brutal impossibilities of his world and retains his determination.

By developing too intimate a relationship with Riordan, Marlowe feels he not only would expose her more directly to the world's harshness but would soon be forced to see her descend from the pedestal. Marlowe is caught between extremes of idealism and reality, and his *failure* is his inability to imagine anything, in this case a woman, as falling somewhere in between these extremes. Marlowe is aware of his self-created predicament, but self-knowledge finally offers no solution to his dilemma.

Such complexities of character and response to the world are markedly absent in the two film versions of the novel, different as they are from one another. In the first of these, *Murder, My Sweet*, Anne Riordan appears as Ann Grayle (altered spelling given her in the film), daughter of Lewin Lockridge Grayle and stepdaughter of Helen. Once again she emerges from the shadows, finding an unconscious Marlowe, but she is startled into running away once he awakens. She appears the next day at his office, dressed in a prim suit and pillbox hat, *pretending* to be a newspaper reporter (the woman has no discernible occupation in the film), prying for information about a lost necklace.

What issues from this meeting and is emphasized in nearly every other encounter with the detective is her complete devotion at all costs to her father, whom she seeks to protect. Lost in the film is the notion of a strong, independent woman with no living relatives; instead, she has been replaced by Daddy's "girl," who tries repeatedly to discourage Marlowe's interest in either Helen or, more important, the case.

When he arrives at her home after his punishing stay at Dr. Sonderborg's, directed accidentally by the address she earlier gave him, Ann is extremely annoyed by the intrusion and insists he leave; throughout the film she oscillates between attraction to and repulsion for the detective. She accuses Marlowe of being unscrupulous, expresses her hatred of Helen, and worries about the repercussions for her father. Nevertheless, he persuades her to visit her father's home, where they learn that Marriott has been living at Grayle's beach home. Once again she is angered by Marlowe's persistence and accuses him of being "vicious" in his disregard for her father.

At the beach house they kiss and embrace; she again berates Marlowe when he suggests, ironically, that she is trying to deflect his attention with affection. Unlike her fictional counterpart, this woman is easily insulted and emotionally brittle, and her sense of ethics is not nearly as developed as Anne Riordan's. For instance, after Mr. Grayle shoots an armed Helen before she can kill Marlowe, Ann tries to prevent Marlowe from calling the police by arguing, "She was evil, all evil. What difference could it possibly make who killed her?"

The film's conclusion, however, offers some of the most marked differences between the two characters. Here Marlowe, eyes blinded by gunpowder, gives a confession and learns that Ann has corroborated his story. As he is led out to a taxi by one detective, he chatters on about the woman's charms and regrets his rough handling of her. Quietly she follows him down in the elevator and enters his cab. As they drive away, he smells her perfume, and they kiss as the camera fades out. In the novel it is Anne who demands, "'I'd like to be kissed, damn you!'" (246), but here a playful Marlowe ironically requests a smooch.

The *Farewell, My Lovely* film of 1975, starring a haggard Robert Mitchum, skillfully evokes the spirit of 1940s Los Angeles with neon-drenched streets and numerous details of dress and setting. Marlowe's interests here are divided between two new and entirely separate characters who have *replaced* Anne Riordan. The first of these is Georgie, a middle-aged newsboy who has a running bet with Marlowe about Joe DiMaggio's famous hitting streak. Georgie is an ex-fighter who shadowboxes and wrestles with Marlowe at the end of each of their encounters.

Georgie allows Marlowe to recuperate at his home after being drugged by Francis Amthor, L.A.'s most famous madman, and in a spirit of male solicitude Georgie provides the sports page and a new pistol. Marlowe later uses Georgie's place to arrange a telephone call between Moose Malloy and Velma. Georgie's final scene comes at the boat docks, where, severely bruised and battered, he informs Marlowe that "I didn't tell 'em anything, Mr. Marlowe."

While the two men obviously enjoy each other's company, there is a distinct pecking order. Marlowe always addresses the boxer by a diminutive form of his first name; however, Georgie never varies from using the curiously formal "*Mr.* Marlowe." Clearly the relationship is marked by a spirit of male camaraderie and a rough version of affection, but absent is the interplay between equals. The two never trade insults, and while Georgie aids Marlowe, he is no match for the

detective's professional abilities.

A second character who fills the role of sentimental attraction in the film is the nameless child of Tommy Ray, a once successful bandleader now down on his luck for marrying a black woman. Marlowe is immediately taken with the child's insouciance and his desire to become a baseball player. When Tommy Ray mysteriously vanishes, Marlowe visits the family apartment to check on the boy. Later, when he attempts to convince Nulty (here playing the role of the novel's Randall) to allow him to board Brunette's ship, Marlowe moans, "That kid of Tommy Ray's is gonna haunt me for the rest of my life for letting them kill his old man. He will, you know." Finally, in the film's last scene, Marlowe wanders over to the child's apartment, idly tossing a baseball in the air, intending to give him the $2,000 the detective has earned on the case.

Each of these film depictions alters the character of Anne Riordan in important ways that demonstrate prevailing attitudes about filmmaking and the spirit of their times. With *Murder, My Sweet* the alteration of Riordan into a model of daughterly love and rectitude not only reveals the historical period and its view of young women but also demonstrates the conventions of many female depictions in the film noir genre. Often these women are of unmistakable character and fall into two rigid categories—good and bad (the latter often referred to as "black widows" for their deadly treachery). Ann Grayle is clearly the good one, and Helen Grayle is just as clearly the bad one.[4]

On the other hand, *Farewell, My Lovely*, in eliminating the female character altogether, gives way to the "buddy" motif evident in many films of that era. Movies such as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Sting*, *Deliverance*, and a host of others suggest implicitly and sometimes explicitly that the male bond is primary and in many cases preferable to any profound involvement with a woman as an equal. Indeed, men have dalliances with women, as Mitchum's Marlowe does with Charlotte Rampling's Helen Grayle, but in the end these women are always viewed as disappointing or deceitful and men are left to return to their buddies or go it alone.[5]

It is ironic, then, that Chandler in 1940, in the popular genre of the detective story, created a woman who appears much more like contemporary women than those in either of these films. Chandler felt this was his best novel; and indeed, in this work he explores human relationships and sexual stereotypes with far more intricacy than even his most sympathetic readers may assume. *Farewell, My Lovely*, as much as any of his other books, lives up to the task he set for himself:

> To accept a mediocre form and make something like literature out of it is in itself rather an accomplishment. . . . Any man who can write a page of living prose adds something to our life. . . . If you believe in an ideal, you don't own it—it owns you, and you certainly don't want to freeze it at your own level for mercenary reasons. ("Letter to Mrs. Robert J. Hogan, March 7, 1947," 94-95)

NOTES

1. The first cinematic adaptation of the novel was *The Falcon Takes Over* (1942), which I exclude from consideration because only the novel's plot, not its central character, has been preserved.

2. Russell Davies in "Omnes Me Impune Lacessunt" in Miriam Gross, ed., *The World of Raymond Chandler*, makes such an association by arguing that "every page of the Marlowe mysteries bears witness . . . to the struggle between soul-baring and reticence in Raymond Chandler's mind" (32).

3. Chandler was, however, aware of Legman's opinion and wrote in a letter, "Mr. Legman seems to me to belong to that rather numerous class of American neurotics which cannot conceive of a close friendship between a couple of men as other than homosexual."

4. The formula for film noir is discussed in Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward's *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style*, in which they describe *Murder, My Sweet* as an "archetypal" noir production.

5. Peter Wolfe in *Something More Than Night: The Case of Raymond Chandler* views her omission as a result of Marlowe's self-protection from emotional involvement. Al Clark in *Raymond Chandler in Hollywood*, however, quotes screenwriter Zelag Goodman as saying that because of Mitchum's age Riordan was written out of the script (57).

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