

Bracketting Noir: Narrative and Masculinity in *The Long Goodbye*

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ABSTRACT

This paper will look at the subversion of tropes within *The Long Goodbye* (Robert Altman, 1973). Leigh Brackett, a veteran of the Hollywood studio system of the 1940s and 1950s, wrote the screenplay and previously had co-written Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep* (1944). Brackett adopted a different approach when working with Altman, maintaining his working practices of over-lapping dialogue and abandonment of traditional three-act structure. Brackett uses this opportunity of the less-restrictive production practices of the American New Wave of the 1970s to explore, and deconstruct, the myth of the detective. Throughout the narrative, Brackett populates the film with eccentric characters as Marlowe weaves his way through a labyrinthine plot and in many cases extreme representations of masculinity, evident in the scene where a gangster assaults his girlfriend with a coke bottle. Finally, Brackett presents Marlowe, played by Elliot Gould, as an out-of-time hero that needs updating.

KEYWORDS

Screenwriting, Gender, Film Noir, Masculinity, Narrative, New Hollywood

Introduction

What's a man's story? Conflict. Explosions. Killing. Guns. Special effects. A strong, heroic, nonemotional man doing physical action. Dinosaurs. Monsters. And, men might add, "They make lots of money." That's the stereotype and there's some truth to it (Seger 2003, 111).

Linda Seger's statement above demonstrates the macho saturation of mainstream cinema. It is a male-dominated industry producing male-orientated films. However, looking over the history of cinema production we can see the key players are often women, 'In the early years of filmmaking, women screenwriters outnumbered men ten to one, with the not surprising result of some classic films, roles, performances by and about women - many of whom wrote for, produced, requested and directed each other' (McCreadie 2006, xii). Female talents have and continue to create 'masculine-centred' narratives that appeal to a large male audience. The role of masculinity is refracted through the male heroes who respond to the environment in which they are placed in and are, thus, a construct:

Masculinity, like femininity, is a product of culture, not of nature: it is constructed and performed. There remains an assumption, even in contemporary society, that gender differences are innate and reflect an underlying dichotomy between men and women based on sexual difference (Gates 2006, 28).

As cultural shifts occur, it becomes more and more important to constantly evaluate masculinity. One of the most fascinating examinations of screen masculinity is Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973). The film was released during a period of revitalisation of American cinema; known as a 'Hollywood renaissance'. Dubbed 'New Hollywood', the late-sixties, early-seventies saw an unprecedented number of filmmakers taking over the studio systems. Filmmakers were given substantial control over their projects, producing mostly character-driven dramas such as *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967) *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) and *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973):

For a time, as the sixties gave way to the seventies, it seemed that the revolution had indeed come, that a cadre of technically sophisticated filmmakers, frequently welcomed with open arms by a new generation of studio executives who were ready to try almost anything to reverse the decline in box office receipts, had set about the business of creating a New Hollywood (Bernardoni 1991, 2).

The movement was influenced heavily by the French New Wave, which had filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut experimenting with classical Hollywood styles:

Influenced, in part, by Asian and European art cinema of the 1950s and the 1960s – with its looser narrative structure and emphasis of character ambiguity – seventies film-makers, working within the classical Hollywood model, tested that model's flexibility by adapting the radical techniques of more truly subversive film-makers to Hollywood's classical form (Berliner 2010, 6).

Moving away from the classical studio style of filmmaking, and incorporating some of the European experimental practices such as jump-cuts, non-linear narratives and developing the characterisation of anti-heroes, provided audiences a refreshing and complex viewing, 'The narrative structures of classical Hollywood films are often characterized by tightly organized and carefully honed plots, in which most if not all events are clearly explained to the viewer' (King 2002, 180). With a prominence of character over plot, filmmakers were able to delve into their character's psychology, as well as subvert and re-evaluate the classical studio style of filmmaking.

Altman has been identified as one of the key filmmakers of New Hollywood and *The Long Goodbye* stands as one of his strongest and most subversive works, 'Altman was seen as a worthwhile investment, although his output in the 1970s, during which he worked with a number of studios, was resolutely prickly and uncommercial' (King 2002, 94). Screenwriter Leigh Brackett wrote the script of *The Long Goodbye* and was a veteran of the classical Hollywood studio system. Brackett, along with writers William Faulkner and Jules Furthman, wrote Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946), a milestone in the development of film noir. *The Big Sleep* was noted for its rapid-fire dialogue, sexual chemistry between the leads Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, and its convoluted plot. Based on the novel by Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* featured the character of detective Philip Marlowe, an archetypical private investigator associated with film noir.

This essay will, firstly, explore film noir tropes with an examination of *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye* to illustrate Brackett's desire to subvert her work. Secondly, there will be some discussion on the way Brackett weaves together a complex plot in line with Altman's work practices. And finally, there will be an analysis of the use of masculinity through the various male characters that populate the film, from Marlowe to gangster Marty Augustine. It will be argued that Brackett, in collaboration with Altman, subverted the masculine tropes of the private detective by utilising Marlowe's previous iconic status and placing him within a period of cultural change. Brackett was able to twist the world of Chandler into an examination of masculinity and its relevance within cultural shifts. This will be placed into the context of New Hollywood cinema.

Noir Narrative

The narrative complexities of many film noirs, stemming from their literary sources, at first appear to abandon typical screenplay structure associated with studio systems. *The Long Goodbye* stripped many of the plots within the novel, yet still maintained a complex structure that today has been replicated in many neo-noirs, 'For Brackett, a major challenge in tackling *The Long Goodbye* script was that American culture had changed so much since 1946 that it was impossible to approach the project as she had done in the 1940s' (Luhr 2012, 158). The shift in cultural tastes in America during the 1960s and early 1970s were replicated in New Hollywood, as stated above, the emerging character-driven cinema was reflecting the turmoil of the times:

[...] film noir [...]is generally understood [...] as being largely about the acute sense of disempowerment men felt returning home from World War II to find that during the war women had left the domestic sphere and entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers (Grant 2011, 6).

While there was an increase in noir filmmaking in the post-war period, it has never ceased to be an inspiration for many contemporary filmmakers and writers. Noir cinema challenged the models of the classical Hollywood system that despite extensive censorship was able to convey and insinuate the dark side of the American dream. Noir was making somewhat of a revival in films such as *Harper* (Jack Smight, 1966) and *Marlowe* (Paul Bogart, 1969), which bled into the New Wave that was occurring in America. Incorporating this mould within the American New Wave spoke to new audiences who wanted more from their characters that reflected their time:

The style and substance of the American New Wave films can be linked just as legitimately to industrial changes and economic pressures (bulging youth demographics, fierce competition from television, the erosion of the Production Code, etc.) as it can be to the politics of the time (Dwyer 2015, 56).

It is these shifts within American cinema of the 1970s that enabled Brackett to experiment with the noir elements. In collaboration with Altman, the screenplay was able to address issues of the time as well as invoke, and critique, the cinema of the past.

A noir narrative could be best understood as a narrative of layers, weaving together several plots, sub-plots and digressions, 'Film noir is a fabric woven out of many threads. Its various styles, themes, motifs, and forms make it a complex and contested cultural phenomenon' (Sanders 2007, 91). Because of the complex nature of their 'plots' noir films are a stark contrast to conventional, three-act structure, which concerns itself with cause-effect plot devices. The three-act structure can best be understood, simply as a beginning, middle and end, with an introduction to the central character, a key plot point to thrust the remainder of the action (act two) and a build up to a climax and resolution in act three:

Writing what has become the three-act, plot-driven Hollywood script in its most crass form leads to what I call the microwave script. That is, the attempt to make a meal instantly by simply throwing elements together according to a set piece, setting the timer, and zapping it all for a brief time (Horton 1999, 4).

Applying the three-act structure to both *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye* reveals the complexity of the noir narrative. Whilst there is the set-up, the thrust of the action and a conclusion, there are many problems with regard to the development of the 'story', 'Structure is like gravity: It is the glue that holds the story in place; it is the base, the foundation, the spine, the skeleton of the story. And it is this relationship between the parts and the whole that holds the screenplay together. It's what makes it what it is' (Field 2005, 21). Conventional story structure within this context follows what Kristin Thompson deemed to be the key aspect of a Hollywood narrative, 'The most basic principle of the Hollywood cinema is that a narrative should consist of a chain of causes and effects that is easy for the spectator to follow. This clarity of comprehension is basic to all our other responses to films, particularly emotional ones [...]' (1999, 10). If noir narratives are complex and convoluted in their nature and eschew many of the given traditions of conventional Hollywood narrative – easy-to-follow plot; happy ending; straight-romantic lead – then Brackett was able to break away from this formula through her work on *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*. The influence of filmmakers Howard Hawks and Robert Altman working in collaboration with Brackett managed to support and aid her writing as she explored new terrain with regard to masculinity.

Adapting the Chandler source novel, which had a complicated and over-layered plot, would not be an easy task to fit within the Hollywood narrative template as stated above. However, despite over-lapping subplots, various characters appearing then disappearing without explanation, characters killed off-screen, the script was able to develop and maintain an air of mystery as well as audience interest. Building on these layers and plots as the protagonist weaves his way to achieve his goal in itself becomes the primary purpose of the narrative rather than achieving the key plot points in each act (cause and effect). The unfolding of the narrative and the various red-herrings, partial clues and information involve the audience to piece together the mystery:

As the viewer watches the film, she or he picks up cues, recalls information, anticipates what will follow, and generally participates in the creation of the film's form. The film shapes particular expectations by summoning up curiosity, suspense, and surprise. The ending has the task of satisfying or cheating the expectations prompted by the film as a whole. The ending may also activate memory by cueing the spectator to review earlier events, possibly considering them in a new light (Bordwell & Thompson 2008, 75).

As Bordwell and Thompson state, the audience anticipates what will occur next as the mystery unfolds. A very basic summary of the 'plot' of *The Big Sleep* would be private detective Philip Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) is tasked with uncovering a blackmail scam involving the Sternwood family. While very minimalist in its description, this (very short) synopsis covers the first plot point of the narrative where we are introduced to Marlowe, his personality and his latest employer. What follows becomes convoluted, as more and more characters appear to interrupt the task at hand, providing new developments, contradicting information and swallowing Marlowe up into a swamp of no direction. However, despite all the confusion, noir is able to keep the viewer hooked through its visual style, its ability to examine the underbelly of society and delve into the world of corrupt characters:

[...] the film noir seems fundamentally *about* violations: vice, corruption, unrestrained desire, and, most fundamental of all, abrogation of the American dream's most basic promises – of hope, prosperity, and safety from persecution. Taken as a whole, the *noir* films are noteworthy neither for their subtlety nor their muting of our cultural problems; to the contrary, they deploy the darkest imagery to sketch starkly disconcerting assessment of the human and social condition (Telotte 1989, 2).

Despite the censorship restrictions in place in the 1940s, Brackett and her co-writers were able to subtly incorporate the sexual desire between Marlowe and Vivian Rutledge (Lauren Bacall) through the use of dialogue. The infamous scene in which Vivian confronts Marlowe in his office and then calls the police is a perfect substitute for foreplay. Hawks uses the space of the office and the character's closeness and glances to insinuate their mutual attraction. Of course, this is developing the chemistry established between Bacall and Bogart from Hawks' *To Have and Have Not* (1944). Hawks himself was able to establish a breakaway from his previous directorial style and instead opted to utilise unusual setups, the scene described above is a perfect example:

Perhaps Hawks worked well in so many different areas because his "style" – a succession of neutral camera set-ups, flat lighting, conventional continuity cutting – is so unobtrusive. In its determined flatfootedness, *The Big Sleep* is almost an anti-noir, a display of impersonal Hollywood craftsmanship. Hawks is sure of his effects, he is skilful in handling his actors (he wisely places Bogart and Bacall at the center of the film), but *The Big Sleep* has no genuine feeling for the genre's possibilities (Hirsch 1981, 115).

With a certain ‘distance’ from Hawks with regard to a visual style, he still utilises shadows, long-takes and while Hirsch accuses the director of having no feeling for the genre *The Big Sleep* established key tropes that filmmakers would use again and again within film noir, including Altman.

Brackett around Altman

Whilst Brackett’s development of the script was fitting into the new freedom afforded to filmmakers during New Hollywood, Altman’s directing style and techniques were a perfect match for her subversiveness. One of the primary facets of an Altman film is the over-lapping dialogue, which creates a confusing yet realistic soundscape:

Altman takes from Welles (and Howard Hawks) the notion of overlapping dialogue, people talking at the same time without waiting for a response. The effect is an aural space that parallels the decentralization of the visual space. By refusing to allow the comfort of pauses in the dialogue any more than he allows the comfort of simple visual orientation, Altman creates a demanding and busy visual and aural field (Kolker 2000, 338).

Creating this aural field aided Altman’s continuously moving camera, developing an even more disoriented cinematic experience. Altman utilises these layers to work concurrently with Brackett’s dense screenplay. However, the areas Brackett wanted to subvert with regard to both the masculine characters and the structure of film noir would provide Altman with a template to challenge the audience and perhaps even reinvented certain genres, ‘Altman’s *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) and *The Long Goodbye* (1973) displayed rough-edged performances, dense soundtracks, and a disrespectful approach to genre’ (Bordwell & Thompson 2008, 465). This, in addition to Brackett’s lack of exposition in the screenplay, allows Altman to further challenge the audience to ‘keep up’ with the narrative and take nothing for granted, ‘What Altman creates is not the conventional structure of a whole that is analysed into its parts, but a simultaneity of the whole *and* its parts, a simultaneity the viewer must always attend to’ (Kolker 2000, 338). Though film noir narratives are complex, Altman and Brackett take it further through the aural and visual techniques the filmmaker employs and confound expectations and any familiarity with traditional noir:

[...]Altman’s film is a neo-noir opus, although one far less often mentioned as such. The nocturnal entanglements with gangsterism and debauchery, the meandering filament of the narrative, Marlowe’s constant muttering filling in for voiceover, the sense in which the past is constantly revived to taunt the present – all these are noir themes, strictly speaking (Pomerance 2015, 245).

The absence of so many traditional elements – voiceover, love interest and rapid but clear dialogue – opens up more possibilities to challenge the dominant Hollywood system, marking *The Long Goodbye* as one of the most subversive films to come out of this period as well as one of the key productions that developed the notion of neo-noir for future generations of filmmakers.

The Big Sleep and The Long Goodbye: Establishing the Narrative

If we take the first ten minutes of both *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye* they have both similarities and contrasting screenplay parameters. We are introduced to Marlowe upfront in both films yet where *The Big Sleep* is concerned about thrusting the protagonist into the action as soon as possible, *The Long Goodbye* takes its time in establishing the dramatic narrative, ‘Act I, the beginning, is a unit of dramatic action that is approximately twenty or thirty pages long and is held together with the dramatic context known as the *Set-Up*’ (Field 2005, 22). If we take Field’s analysis of the first Act, *The Big Sleep* at first adheres to this structure. Marlowe arrives at the home of General Sternwood where the Butler invites him in. There he meets Sternwood’s youngest daughter Carmen (Martha Vickers) who teases Marlowe. Hawks establishes upfront the sexual magnetism of Marlowe by having Carmen sheepishly bite her thumb and then fall into his arms. Marlowe is promptly introduced to the General, who is confined to a wheelchair. At this point, the

action is established – the blackmailing scam – in which Marlowe has been tasked to investigate. With the *Set-Up* established within these moments, *The Long Goodbye* takes a different approach. Brackett and Altman take their time to reveal that this Marlowe is a different breed from Bogart's version. Elliot Gould makes Marlowe more ragged and un-heroic, with his crumpled old-fashioned suit and lazy lifestyle. Instead of having Marlowe pursue an investigation in the opening scenes, he instead finds himself tasked with trying to feed his belligerent cat. Simultaneously, we are presented with Terry Lennox (Jim Bouton) who is speeding away from his home to an as-of-yet unknown location. Meanwhile, Marlowe leaves his apartment, has a quick interaction with his young, hippie female neighbours and proceeds to hunt for cat food. Unable to find his regular brand, he is forced to buy another and attempts to fool his cat by swapping the labels on the can. However, it still does not work and the cat shuns him. Lennox's parallel narrative reaches closure when he arrives at Marlowe's apartment to explain the dilemma he is in. Marlowe agrees to help which then becomes the *Set-Up* for the remainder of the narrative, opening the convoluted plots, sub-plots and characters akin to *The Big Sleep*. Ultimately, with the narrative layers beginning to form from this point in both films, the remaining similarity lies with the establishment of the primary antagonist in both films, as Carmen and Terry are finally revealed to be the villains of the piece. That is not to say the path to this revelation is clear. On the contrary, it becomes redundant in a noir narrative to expect a clear resolution.

The subversion of the set up in the opening scenes presents Brackett's first instance of critiquing her own work. While *The Big Sleep* fits within the parameters of a classical narrative in the beginning, *The Long Goodbye* quickly establishes a breakaway from this formula, '*The Long Goodbye* eschews much about the classical Hollywood style; it also presents classical Hollywood as outdated and irrelevant, as well as a central clue to Marlowe's character' (Luhr 2012, 161). Working within New Hollywood, then, provided Brackett the freedom to experiment and revisit her previous efforts to refine and analyse the cultural shifts since 1946.

A Different Kind of Hero

Brackett was able to explore the nature of the masculine detective and with Gould taking over from Bogart in an iconic role, emphasised the writer's interpretation of a man who is now out-dated. Bogart, known for his gruffness and hard-edged masculinity in films such as *The Petrified Forest* (Archie Mayo, 1936) and as hard-edged detective Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), began to bring in a bit more sensitivity to his roles, such as the romantic hero in *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) and *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks, 1944). *The Big Sleep* cements this shift with his partnership with Bacall: '*The Big Sleep* presented a series of fascinating film personalities who delivered gusto entertainment value. This began with tough but fair and sensitive Philip Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart)' (Hare 2012: 86). The determined Sam Spade of *The Maltese Falcon* was aggressive in his pursuit of the title-object as well as a need for revenge. Whereas Marlowe, in *The Big Sleep*, takes information as it comes, weaving through the many developments. The sensitive aspects of his character come from his interactions with Vivian who is his equal. Within film noir there is the presence of a *femme fatale*, which is one of the signature tropes, 'The *femme fatale* is an irresistible dramatic and dangerously attractive woman. She is "la Femme" who directs men toward danger, perils, catastrophes, and disaster' (De Lafayette 2011, 13). The classic *femme fatales* in film noir, from Mary Astor in *The Maltese Falcon* and Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity* to neo-noir interpretations in *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974) personified by Faye Dunaway, provide the primary weakness for the male protagonist. Bacall in *The Big Sleep* becomes the object of desire for Marlowe yet she is not his weakness. Instead, as stated above, she is his equal and becomes involved in the investigation, aiding Marlowe as he tries to uncover the truth. This makes a contrast with the classic *femme fatale* personified by Vivian's younger sister, Carmen, who is seductive and dangerous and ultimately the villain of the piece. This dynamic brings added dimensions to Marlowe, as he is slightly weaker around Carmen and stronger with Vivian:

A frequent element of noir suspense films is the direct clash of evil between a good and often at least somewhat naïve woman and that of a more experienced, hardened female. This clash is often plausibly aided by having the good woman younger than that of the wily, experienced femme fatale (Hare 2003, 43).

We can see here that the writers are subverting these conventions through the characterisation of the female leads: the experienced female – Vivian – then is part of the stronger side of Marlowe’s character and Brackett is able to utilise the dynamic to full effect to reinforce Marlowe’s masculinity. They are a fitting match and make for some of the film’s best sequences as they verbally spar with one another.

The development of the private detective from hard-boiled novels to cinema was a redevelopment of the masculine heroes of other genres, for instance the classical Cowboy archetype, a heterosexual male, with a quiet exterior and the person who just got the job done. The noir hero developed this archetype and as they delved into various mysteries, they explore the dark underbelly of society, which often leads to violence:

The classical detective, as envisioned by the golden age writers, never flourished on the big screen in the same way that he/she did in literature because stories with labyrinthine plots and an emphasis on ratiocination and observation rather than action or characterization were not easily translatable into film; nevertheless, the 1930s were the heyday of the classical detective in film before the arrive of the American private eye (Gates 2012, 63).

The development of detective stories and cinema in the 1930s started the trend of the male private investigator that continues to this day with films such as *Inherent Vice* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2014), though this would be in the vein of Altman’s impression of noir. *The Big Sleep* would develop the notion of the fast-talking, quick-witted detective as represented with the first meeting of General Sternwood, ‘How do you like your brandy, sir?’ in which Marlowe replies, ‘In a glass’.

The appeal of Marlowe, apart from his sharp wit, within *The Big Sleep* stems from his ability to plunge himself into the unknown without too much thought and be able to recover from any situation. The source novel was, obviously, from Marlowe’s point-of-view and his perspective on the events that unfold a subjective experience:

Detective Philip Marlowe as a scrupulous man of detail and circumstance is very well aware of where he is proceeding. Part of the narrative hook’s appeal in these first three paragraphs of *The Big Sleep* is the descriptive manner in which Detective Marlowe introduces the world to another style of life far removed from what he...is accustomed (Hare 2012, 86).

Because of this, Marlowe’s characterisation is best reflected when confronted by various hoods, femme fatales and gangsters that confront him throughout the narrative. Stemming from literature and adapting the material for a screenplay leaves Brackett and her co-writers many challenges when it comes to creating a suitable protagonist that maintains at least the essence of the character from the novel as well as creating a convincing screen presence.

Whilst Bogart’s interpretation of Marlowe is one of the most iconic characters of classical Hollywood, Gould’s approach was significantly different, in line with New Hollywood’s complex characters, ‘The underlying concept is intriguing: Elliot Gould is intentionally miscast as Philip Marlowe, and the setting is updated to contemporary, dope-crazed Los Angeles, where the private eye becomes a ridiculous anachronism. (Naremore 2007, 203). Altman’s decision to use Gould, known for his comedic turn in Altman’s first box-office success *M*A*S*H*, utilises this casting against type to establish the break away

from traditional noir and fully integrate Brackett's vision of the character. As Brackett developed the screenplay for *The Long Goodbye*, her writing began to change with regard to the portrayal of Marlowe:

In constructing her screenplay, she eliminated the novel's World War II context and a substantial number of plot threads to largely focus on the Roger Wade story. She also changed the novel's quiet, sad climax and invented the abrupt, violent ending of Marlowe killing Terry. All centered on her version of Marlowe. Agreeing with Altman, she saw him as a loser (Luhr 2012, 159).

With Marlowe being slightly less 'masculine' in the classical, Bogart-sense, Brackett is able to explore masculinity through other characters. This move away from traditional noir heroes, such as the corrupt Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944) and Jeff Bailey in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), offers the writer a chance to explore and analyse the complexities of these characters, 'The typical film noir protagonist, so often in the grip of desperate emotional needs and sexual desire (as typified by encounters with the femme fatale), must act against a backdrop of human duplicity and the threat of imminent death' (Sanders 2007, 92). The absence of a romantic interest, although there is interest from several female characters in *The Long Goodbye* especially Marlowe's young neighbours, demonstrates how oblivious Marlowe is to his current surroundings. He is unable to compute this attraction and as he is pulled further into the narrative stemming from helping Lennox at the start of the film, there is no development of a traditional romantic relationship.

The focus of the narrative after Lennox's departure at the start of the film falls on Wade. The bear-like drunk writer appears to be the frontrunner for a classic masculine character - animal in nature and quick-tempered - and creates an unnerving presence within the film. Convinced of his wife, Eileen (Nina van Pallandt), being unfaithful he unloads torrid amounts of verbal and physical abuse only to sober up and beg for forgiveness, 'Dominant masculinity then transfers its problems and anxieties onto others to disavow them and maintain its own centrality' (Gates 2006, 30). Wade is certainly dominant and while this element appears to be somewhat melodramatic, Brackett is able to question what masculinity means within the cultural shift. This weakness within the 'classical' masculine character is exemplified further by having Wade primarily interact with Marlowe whom he seems amused by. Being older than Marlowe, who is already established as a non-heroic figure, Wade is the 'old-fashioned' male, with Hayden being the perfect casting as a reference to his masculine characters found in *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954) and *The Killing* (Stanley Kubrick, 1956). Hayden's passivity in *Johnny Guitar* projected a faux masculine image, as he was secondary to Joan Crawford's Vienna. Hayden plays Johnny with a forced tough guy persona, which covers his frail, nervous personality. In *The Long Goodbye*, his appearance, bulking, bearded, shabby, gives him an animalistic quality. This screen presence allows the perfect contrast to Marlowe who despite being crafted as a 'loser' pales in comparison to the gruffness and animalistic nature of Wade. Marlowe, in effect, is the moral compass of the story. However, Brackett is able to separate *The Long Goodbye's* Marlowe from his predecessors by having him kill Lennox in the conclusion:

Although Altman modified Brackett's draft script in various ways, he endorsed for her ending of the picture, whereby Marlowe eliminates Terry without any remorse. Altman even asserted he would not have directed the picture if it had a different ending... (Phillips 2000, 138).

This act finally makes the transition of Marlowe from the novels to the cinema complete with Brackett converting him into an anti-hero, 'With the final scene providing the apex of Altman's and Gould's provocative mash-up of anti-noir and neo-noir, Gould's Marlowe is simultaneously a Jewish clown in Bogie-face...and also an authentic hard-boiled hero (like Bogie)' (Kaye 2011, 132). The presence of an anti-hero have always been part of Hollywood cinema and in particular film noir - again, Walter Neff is one such example - however, they became more apparent in New Hollywood within films such as *Bonnie and Clyde*

(Arthur Penn, 1967) and *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976). Whilst the titular characters in *Bonnie and Clyde* and Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* were killers and psychopaths, Marlowe was less extreme throughout *The Long Goodbye* until the climax, killing Lennox in cold blood. Brackett's development of a classic figure such as Marlowe to fit within this mould further demonstrates her adaptability, subversiveness and ability to reform masculine characters.

Brackett also uses the gangster Marty Augustine to both subvert traditional noir and explore extreme masculinity. A Jewish gangster who at first appears to be flamboyant and even entertaining turns violent when he smashes a coke bottle on his girlfriend's face. While Wade represents a fading figure of masculinity, particularly when confronted by his prissy psychiatrist Dr. Verringer (Henry Gibson) who puts him in his place by slapping him in front of his friends and family, Augustine is a paradox. The figurehead gangster is another trope of film noir and acts as an interruption and another plot layer to stall the protagonist while they investigate, or becomes a new lead to explore. In *The Long Goodbye*, Augustine is a phantom from Lennox's past who wants money back and tasks Marlowe with acquiring it. The polemical nature of Augustine's character whether oddly amusing or curiously terrifying moves away from *The Big Sleep*-style gangster who is fast-talking, clearly depicted as dangerous (always wielding a gun in Marlowe's direction) and someone who is merely an inconvenience. For example, the scene where Marlowe is confronted by hood Harry Jones (Elisha Cook, Jr.), a nervy and somewhat unpredictable character that has Marlowe trapped. Marlowe manages to talk his way out of the situation and gains more information about his case. However, Brackett wants to subvert this type of character in *The Long Goodbye*. Augustine breaks from tradition by appearing non-threatening yet can snap at any moment. When Marlowe runs out of time finding the money, Augustine tries to make him strip and instead forces his gang to take off their clothes. While Bogart's Marlowe could talk his way out of a situation, Gould is left humiliated and helpless, which further reduces the masculine presence associated with the character. Further to this, Gould's almost laconic performance substantiates Brackett and Altman's aim to refashion the traditional nature of noir, 'Gould is too flaccid to play out the hero that he is taken to be, too unnervingly contradictory about the central vitality of the appearance and performance' (Pomerance 2015, 246). The hero, then, is adrift, as lost as the audience. The narrative becomes a playground for Brackett and Altman as they push Marlowe to his limits.

Fade Out

The Long Goodbye not only played on the conventions of classic noir as well as traditional screenplay structure but also explored the nature of the old-fashioned masculine hero. What Brackett was able to do was play on some of the techniques she helped to establish in *The Big Sleep*, whether it be the use of rapid-fire dialogue, simmering sexual subtext and the tough but sensitive detective. We can see that Gould's Marlowe is then an inversion of this: sensitive but ultimately tough, demonstrated through his act of violence at the conclusion. In collaboration with Altman and the New Hollywood freedom available to them, their partnership was a perfect fit. Altman's developing filming techniques began to form, in a paradoxical fashion, coherently. The challenges they both set out for the audience whether it is the complex nature of the plot, even though it was considerably reduced from the source novel, and the drifting visual and aural fields created by Altman invite the viewer to be an active participant. The unwillingness on their part to feed the audience easy answers or slow-down the narrative makes the film work on several levels. The screenplay is able to deviate from the norms of traditional practice as Brackett was within the parameters of the risk-taking New Hollywood.

Questioning masculinity, particularly in film noir, which has a tradition of troubled, weak and often duped male characters, provides Brackett with the platform to take apart the dominant ideologies and perspectives of male figures. Altman, in his part, was able to fully elaborate on this with his casting choices. Having Gould as Marlowe instantly develops another interpretation of that character. Hayden is able to play off his

tough-guy persona of classical Hollywood and the most extreme cases of masculinity are in the hands of Augustine and Lennox whose violent crime sets the narrative in motion. Augustine surrounds himself with a posse of hoods who follow his lead. There is even an unbilled appearance from Arnold Schwarzenegger whose physical appearance dwarfs Marlowe and humiliates him even further. Brackett further breaks this down by having no romantic interest and having Marlowe be constantly perplexed with his young female, yoga-practicing hippies and is quite content running errands for them on a regular basis. While Bogart's interpretation of Marlowe demonstrated a man capable of talking himself out of most situations and willing to collaborate with a female equivalent, Gould's Marlowe is lost in time, unable to comprehend the environment he is in. Altman and Brackett make use of the Hollywood setting to further demonstrate this aloofness within his character, as he even seems oblivious to the environment. The opening and concluding scenes perfectly encapsulate the stark contrast of the interpretation of the male character. *The Big Sleep* brings the viewer into the first plot layer, the instigator of the remaining action and we understand the nature of the character. *The Long Goodbye* on the other hand has an almost organic progression, revealing more of the character of this Marlowe through his attempts to feed his cat. *The Big Sleep* concludes with Marlowe and Vivien together, having a final heated exchange, cementing their desire for one another – a perfect encapsulation of the classic Hollywood ending. Brackett would challenge this by having Marlowe kill his former best friend and chief antagonist in cold blood in *The Long Goodbye*. Brackett not only transforms Marlowe into a cinematic anti-hero within the New Hollywood vein but also finally reveals the true, destructive nature of masculinity as it erupts from the a masculine character who was pushed too far.

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