

Introduction to Crime Fiction

Prof. Andrew Goldstone

(andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

TA: Anthony Tello (anthony.tello@rutgers.edu)

March 6, 2025. *The Big Sleep* (the film).

working you over pretty good

- ▶ midterm exam in class next Thursday
- ▶ short answer (some choice)
 - ▶ terms/concepts
 - ▶ identification/analysis of passages
 - ▶ author/character names and dates, but not many
- ▶ review slides and your own notes

review

- ▶ the “brown man”
- ▶ deaths and killers: one “mistake” after another
 - ▶ moral of the story is: don’t let epileptics play with guns
- ▶ criminals are punished, except for:
 - ▶ Eddie
 - ▶ Carmen
 - ▶ Vivian
 - ▶ General Sternwood
 - ▶ Agnes
 - ▶ Marlowe
- ▶ Marlowe’s “integrity” indistinguishable from “nastiness”
 - ▶ and brotherhood becomes indistinguishable from fealty to the elite

discussion: medium

- ▶ Using *The Big Sleep* as an example, brainstorm: how does film handle the detective story genre differently from print?
 - ▶ (bookmark adaptation differences that are specific to this film)

discussion: medium

- ▶ Using *The Big Sleep* as an example, brainstorm: how does film handle the detective story genre differently from print?
 - ▶ (bookmark adaptation differences that are specific to this film)

21:00–23:16

- ▶ film normally doesn't represent what characters think explicitly
- ▶ the camera perspective isn't normally character-bound
 - ▶ "optical POV" is special
 - ▶ restriction/alignment creates a spectrum of focalization possibilities
 - ▶ but *Big Sleep* is pretty much EN[CF(Marlowe)]
- ▶ we see what Marlowe sees, but his understanding of the case is opaque until he explains
- ▶ density of the photographed scene changes the status of clues and details
- ▶ personality of the star overlays character
 - ▶ compare: Chandler's intense stylization

case closed...

1:01:40-1:04:10

bookstores are nice

16:15-18:55

hardscrewballboiled

Sophisticated sex-talk became the link for the movie, and the incidents and talk were so entertaining that audiences didn't care about the solution of the murder plot...._The Big Sleep_ made us aware how little we often *had* cared about the ridiculously complicated plots of detective thrillers.

Pauline Kael, "A Sense of Disproportion," *New Republic*, January 14, 1967, [EBSCO](#): 39.

It was the first time I made a picture and just decided I wasn't going to explain things. I was just going to try and make good scenes.

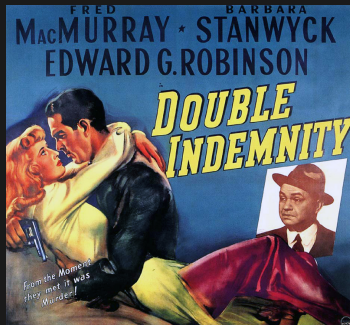
Howard Hawks (interviewed by Joseph McBride), *Hawks on Hawks* (1982; rpt. Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 130, [JSTOR](#)

Carmen gets her moment

1:17:10–

he's a looker

1:51:30



Posters for *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Laura* (1944). Sources: Kinorium (left, center); Wikimedia Commons (right).

who is the auteur?

- 1896 Howard Hawks b. Indiana
 - 1897 William Faulkner b. Miss.
 - 1899 Humphrey Bogart b. NYC
 - 1915 Leigh Brackett b. LA
 - 1924 Betty Perske (Lauren Bacall) b. NYC
 - 1934 Production Code Administration created
 - 1939 Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (New York: Knopf)
 - 1941 *The Maltese Falcon*, dir. John Huston, starring Bogart (Warner)
 - 1944 Leigh Brackett, *No Good from a Corpse* (New York: Coward-McCann)
 Double Indemnity, dir. Billy Wilder, written by Wilder and Chandler
 To Have and Have Not, dir. Howard Hawks, starring Bogart and Bacall
 (Warner)
 - 1945 *The Big Sleep* completed; Bacall panned in *Confidential Agent*; new Bogart and
 Bacall scenes added
 Bogart/Bacall affair then marriage (HB's fourth)
 - 1946 *The Big Sleep* released domestically
 Nino Frank identifies *Maltese Falcon*, *Laura*, etc. as "films 'noirs'" in *L'écran
français*
 - 1980 *The Empire Strikes Back*, screenplay by Brackett and Lawrence Kasdan
-

when it changed

The Production Code would not allow a murderer to go unpunished, so adjustments were called for. The Faulkner-Brackett script has Carmen killed accidentally, but with Marlowe's complicity. This did not satisfy the Breen Office, which enforced the Production Code, because heroes are not supposed to be killing unsuspecting women, by whatever means. Jules Furthman [brought in to rewrite the script near the end of production] "eventually wrote an ending with Eddie Mars as the murderer—according to Hawks, that solution was actually suggested by the Breen Office.

Peter Lev, "The Big Sleep: Production History and Authorship," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 7, [Project MUSE](#). Cf. *Hawks on Hawks* 130–31.

next: let's get weird

- ▶ Borges, “Death and the Compass” (print out!)
 - ▶ original Spanish text is on Canvas too if you want