

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction  
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October 28, 2019. Hammett (2).

## review: transforming the genre

- ▶ whodunit? or who cares?
- ▶ from cognition to action
- ▶ conserved elements: sidekicks, clues, disguises...
- ▶ style: how it's done
- ▶ “he adjusted himself to beams falling”

## discussion

What is Sam Spade like inside? Find evidence.

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His face while he smoked was, except for the occasional slight and aimless movement of his lower lip, so still and reflective that it seemed stupid, but when Cairo presently moaned and fluttered his eyelids Spade's face became bland, and he put the beginning of a friendly smile into his eyes and mouth. (48; qtd. by EG)

routines

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“You aren’t,” he asked as he sat down, “exactly the sort of person you pretend to be, are you?” ...

“That’s what I mean,” he said. You told me that this afternoon in the same words, same tone. It’s a speech you’ve practiced.” (55)

## routines

“You aren’t,” he asked as he sat down, “exactly the sort of person you pretend to be, are you?” ...

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“Now what can I do for you, Mr. Cairo?” The amiable negligence of his tone, his motion in the chair, were precisely as they had been when he had addressed the same question to Brigid O’Shaughnessy on the previous day. (43)

Post Street was empty when Spade issued into it. He walked east a block, crossed the street, walked west two blocks on the other side, recrossed it, and returned to his building without having seen anyone except two mechanics working on a car in a garage....

“He’s still there,” Spade said. (85)

## discussion: right and wrong

- ▶ What are the obstacles to identifying right and wrong in the novel?

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“Mrs. Spade didn’t raise any children dippy enough to make guesses in front of a district attorney, an assistant district attorney, and a stenographer.” (145)

“When a man’s partner is killed he’s supposed to do something about it. It doesn’t make any difference what you thought of him.... Then it happens we were in the detective business. Well, when one of your organization gets killed it’s bad for business to let the killer get away. It’s bad all around—bad for that one organization, bad for every detective everywhere.” (213–14; qtd. by [Jbod](#))

there's me

[Gutman:] “You could say, then, that the question is which one of them [Cairo or Brigid] you’ll represent?”

“You could put it that way.”

“It will be one or the other?”

“I didn’t say that.”

The fat man’s eyes glistened. His voice sank to a throaty whisper. “Who else is there?”

Spade pointed his cigar at his own chest. “There’s me,” he said. (106)

## romance

“You didn’t—care at all? You didn’t—don’t—I-love me?”

“I think I do,” Spade said. “What of it?” The muscles holding his smile in place stood out like wales. “I’m not Thursby. I’m not Jacobi. I won’t play the sap for you.” (212)

“I won’t play the sap for you.”

She put her mouth to his, slowly, her arms around him, and came into his arms. (215)

## romance?

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“Another thing,” Spade repeated, glaring up at the boy: “Keep that gungel away from me while you’re making up your mind.” (110)

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Cairo moved over and whispered in the boy’s [Wilmer’s] ear. The boy, keeping his cold hazel eyes on Gutman’s face, sat down on the sofa again. The Levantine sat down beside him. (194)

romance??

“You’re a damned good man, sister.” (160)

next

- ▶ Hammett, continued: the bird
- ▶ Chandler and Hammett essays on Sakai