

Last Tango in a Happy Valley
Television as Mediated Lived Experience

by

Elisabeth Fry

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved July 2017 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Jennifer Sandlin, Chair
Gray Cavender
Lisa Anderson

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2017

ABSTRACT

This project explores television as the mediation of lived experience through a semiotic phenomenological lens. To do so, this thesis explores representations of gendered violence in self-identified feminist, Sally Wainwright's two shows: *Last Tango in Halifax* (2012) and *Happy Valley* (2014). By employing a phenomenological framework to Sally Wainwright's own relationships and experiences, I will seek to examine the semiotic codes embedded in the interactions between women in *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. This will also provide a foundation for discussion on how and why the characters in her shows appear in ways that submit to and subvert the dominant 21st century understanding of 'feminine' on television.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As is so often the case, it is when I cannot find the words that I am expected to write them. I cannot find enough words in my brain or in my heart to express the gratitude I feel for so many. And yet, I only have a page in which to try my best. First, endless thanks to Dr. Sandlin, whose kindness and support over the last two years is literally the reason I have written on this topic. I am so grateful that you sat at my table for lunch at graduate orientation. To Dr. Anderson, your guidance and intelligence have shaped me into the scholar that I am today, and for that I must thank you. Dr. Cavender, you were my haven for a topic that I was so afraid nobody would understand or think was worthwhile. Thank you for all the attention and care you gave to my work, but, more importantly, for continuously reminding me that what I was doing was also fun.

I must also thank the community that has risen around me at ASU. To Heather, Michelle, Nancy, Cassy, Shahan, Rebecca and Sarah. I cannot express how much your counsel, your laughter and your frequent coffee runs have meant to me. I continue to treasure every bond I have made with you all.

To the community that has strengthened me beyond the confines of the academy. To Laurie, Brad, Stephen, Raylah, Juju, Cincy, Tami and Allie. You have kept me going, you have been my home away from home, you have put a roof over my head and happiness in my heart, and I could not be more thankful that you are all in my life.

And of course, to my beautiful wife, Anna. Your love and care have been the beacon to call me home. You are my partner in life and love, and your support from the day I decided to send my application out to ASU has been my inspiration in academics and in life. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
1 MUMS AND MUSES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF SALLY WAINWRIGHT	20
Theoretical Framework	20
Methods	24
Description	25
Reduction	28
Interpretation	30
2 I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M TELLING YOU THIS, CAROLINE: INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND THE RAMIFICATIONS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE	32
Introduction	32
<i>Happy Valley</i> : Season 1, Episode 5	35
<i>Last Tango in Halifax</i> : Season 2, Episode 5	37
Composition: Expressing Encouragement	40
Performativity & Intersubjectivity	45
Conclusion	47
3 IT'S A GRUELING, GRIPPING HAPPY VALLEY: THE DISCOURSE OF GENDERED VIOLENCE AND MEDIA AS A MEDIUM OF MEDIATION	48
<i>Happy Valley</i> : Season 1, Episode 4	50

CHAPTER	Page
Discussions of Violence in <i>Last Tango in Halifax</i>	52
The Interaction of Class and Gendered Violence	54
Mediating Medias and the Discursive Multiverse	58
Disrupting & Appeasing: The Give and Take of a Feminist in TV	60
4 CONCLUSION	63
REFERENCES	66

INTRODUCTION

My first experience with Sally Wainwright's work was through tumblr. It was two weeks before midterms during my senior year in college, so naturally, I was searching for a new show to binge. The gif that appeared on my dashboard showed two women, sitting in an office, discussing the status of their relationship. It was clear from this exchange that the two women were romantically intertwined. As a woman still coming to terms with my own homosexuality, I was immediately intrigued. After a couple of internet searches, I came to discover that the show was Sally Wainwright's *Last Tango in Halifax*, a word-of-mouth hit which first aired on the BBC in 2012. I watched the first season - there were only six, one hour episodes - five times in one month. I was hooked, and I couldn't get enough. And thus, my intense and intangible relationship with Sally Wainwright was born.

Love at first write: Sally Wainwright, *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*

Hailing from West Yorkshire, UK, Wainwright was encouraged from an early age to cultivate her proclivity for writing dialogue, leading to her nearly 30-year career writing for television. After graduating from University, she secured a position as a member of the writing team on the popular British soap opera, *Coronation Street*. After writing for this popular show early in her career, Wainwright began to craft series of her own, and is currently the writer, producer and sometimes director of *Happy Valley*. Critics and fans alike often note Wainwright's ability to write strong female characters, and accuse her of writing 'weak men' (Frost, 2014). Throughout her career, she has been asked to comment on her decision to place women in the spotlight in her shows, and has admitted to changing her own mind. Wainwright has been open about her position as a

post-feminist during her time at University. After landing her first writing job, she became a feminist, and makes it clear that it was working in the television industry that inspired this political shift. It is for this reason that it is important to examine Wainwright's lived experience of being a female television writer and the modes through which her experience occurs.

Known for her portrayal of 'strong female characters,' Wainwright is outspoken on her position as a feminist, and the conscious ways she brings that to her writing:

"Women do have very strong relationships with each other and you don't often see that dramatised on telly [sic]...So little of it I think is aimed at me, as a viewer. I think I write what I write because it's what I want to watch, and I don't see much of it." (Frost, 2014).

Wainwright places her portrayal of female characters at the center of her creative work. She actively and constantly interrogates the ways in which gender and genre relate to one another, particularly within the confines of a crime drama, a landscape that has been shaped and defined by various masculinities (Brown, 2014). It is for this reason that it is important to interrogate the ways in which gender plays a major role in the on-screen action and the 'off-screen' reactions. For the purposes of this analysis, that focus will be on instances of gendered violence that appear in *Happy Valley* (2014) and *Last Tango in Halifax* (2012).

Last Tango in Halifax takes place in northern England, primarily between the towns of Halifax and Harrogate. Revolving around a two octogenarians, Alan and Celia, rekindling their teenage love for one another after almost seventy years, the drama focuses on the social, cultural and logistical smashing of their two very different and very tumultuous worlds. Caroline, Celia's daughter is a 45-year-old well-to-do mother of two.

She is a doctor of philosophy in chemistry and is the head teacher of a very prestigious private school. Caroline is also going through a divorce and exploring her long-stifled homosexuality – of which Celia does not approve. Gillian is Alan’s daughter. She is a much more rough-around-the-edges, sexually liberated kind of woman, who doesn’t mince her words, lives and works on the sheep farm she had always dreamed of having and is the mother to a 16-year-old boy, Raff. Unlike Caroline, Gillian did not have the opportunity to finish her education, after having to drop out in order to get an abortion at 15. She is also a widow, and has an on-again-off-again romantic relationship with her late husband’s brother, Robbie. For the purposes of the following analysis, the focus will be on the two daughters - Caroline and Gillian - as well as on Alan and Celia, peripherally.

Happy Valley first aired on BBC1 for six weeks in 2014 from April 29 through June 3 average UK viewership for this initial airing was approximately 8.2 million (BARB, 2014). After the slow but steady success of *Last Tango in Halifax*, Wainwright was eager to work once again with Sarah Lancashire, and so she wrote the role of Catherine Cawood specifically for her based on *Last Tango*’s “rushes” – the daily, uncut clips of scenes sent to writers and producers during the filming process (The Adam Buxton Podcast, 2016). Thus, *Happy Valley* is, in some ways an extension of the work that Wainwright began to do in *Last Tango*.

The show follows the abduction and rescue of Ann Gallagher through the perspective of Det. Sergeant Catherine Cawood, a police officer in Hebden Bridge, a small town in Yorkshire, northern England. Though in a vastly different context – that is to say, through the lens of a crime drama airing after the watershed, a time marker used in England to denote the permissible airing of what is deemed to be ‘mature’ content (BBC,

2014) – the show itself tackles many similar themes to that of *Last Tango in Halifax*, including class, gender, violence, sexuality and the narrative use of relationships between women.

While the material connections between these two shows are fairly apparent, it is also critical to recognize their thematic relationships. *Happy Valley* is, in many ways an extension of the work that Wainwright began to do in *Last Tango in Halifax*. Though it takes place in a vastly different context, the show itself tackles many similar themes to that of *Last Tango*, including class, gender, violence, sexuality and the narrative use of relationships between women.

Even more striking are the ways that these relationships are established and built in the long-term. The layers of trust, sadness, anger, humor, and happiness are given priority throughout both of these series. I am interested in these women's stories and their relationships because none of them are one dimensional, and neither am I. If creative performance is a facsimile of lived experience, then I can create a much stronger bond with relationships that I have the ability to recognize myself within.

It is for this reason that I will be examining the nature of gendered violence in both of these shows, together and separately. Gendered violence, in this case, is understood as violence happening between a man and a woman, wherein, given the visual and narrative codes in the storylines, the genders of the individuals in question play an immanent role in the audiences' perception of this violence. Both *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* take on the issue of gendered violence as a narrative tool. But, more interestingly – and more relevantly, quite frankly – both shows tackle the long-term ramifications of gendered violence through conversations and relationships between

female characters. From there, everything else came into place and the portrayal of gendered violence in these two shows became the lens through which I would focus my analysis of the relationships between women.

While each was written by Wainwright, and thus share much in common, they are also two very different shows. *Last Tango in Halifax* is much more hegemonically ‘feminine’ in that it takes the structure of a soap opera, and whose drama revolves around relationships and secrets. Whereas *Happy Valley* takes the form of a crime drama – it is more visually graphic and explicit in its displays of gendered violence. So, too, have these respective public personas been developed. After all, *Last Tango in Halifax* has had two Christmas specials – a sign that the show is considered fairly ‘tame’ and family friendly; while *Happy Valley* airs after the watershed – a time boundary used for television programs in England to denote the permissible airing of what is seen as more ‘mature’ content.

In *Adult Education, Popular Culture, and Women’s Identity Development: Self-Directed Learning with ‘The Avengers’* (2007), Robin Wright examines popular culture as a form of self-directed learning on ‘women learner-viewers’ identity development through *The Avengers*. She posits that television, as a medium, is a form of public pedagogy and can facilitate the development of various identities - in this case, a feminist identity (4). By analyzing Cathy Gale from the BBC’s 1960s show, *The Avengers*, Wright’s research focuses on the ways in which women “interpret[ed] and accomidat[ed] the feminist example of Cathy Gale.” (5) After conducting interviews with several fans of Cathy Gale who watched the show as it aired, Wright determined that these women did

indeed incorporate the feminist ideals present in the representation of Cathy Gale and applied it to their own lives as a result of the show.

The work that I am doing in this thesis is, in part, an extension of the work done by Wright in this dissertation. The understanding that television is a site of identity formation and public pedagogy - particularly, in this case, for women - is both the foundation and springboard for my analysis of Sally Wainwright's work, her intentional positionality as a feminist, and her public reflexivity on the representation of women in her shows – particularly in instances of violence. My analysis will set out to understand how these qualities, along with uses of dialogue, narrative and temporally elongated character development, are important criteria for counter-hegemonic representations of women critical to more feminist identity formation.

Semiotic Phenomenology

A small, but growing, amount of phenomenological work is done on film analysis – and even less so on television specifically, so the first major hurdle came in framing the phenomenon of Sally Wainwright's relationship to her show, her portrayal of female relationships, and the theoretical relationship both have to the viewer in phenomenological terms.

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (1985), Bert States discusses the ways in which semiotics and phenomenology are complementary perspectives on the world and art (8). One of the primary concepts in this work is that a human being does not see their own life in full, but rather in segments. Theatre - and so too, film - replicates this experience of segmented viewing. I will use this source to discuss the marriage between phenomenology and semiotics. States argues

that the audience must semiologize in order to bring meaning to experience (20). Using these methods as “binoculars of viewing,” this book articulates the fact that phenomenology is not a semiotic mediation, but the two generate a dialogue between sensation and experience (6).

Stanton Garner, in *Bodied Spaces*, explores the nature of drama and realism in contemporary theatre. He uses the idea of mimetic identification through suturing to explore the ways in which the dramatic performance, as field, unites the actor (as core) and audience (as core) at the horizon of the actualization of the text itself (3). By incorporating semiotics into this examination, Garner also discusses the weight that these dramatic representations carry and are given meaning through a process of complex intersubjectivity (15, 7).

I will take these concepts set out for the dramatic theatre performance, and extend them to the dramatic on-screen performance through what he calls the “aggro-effect” (181). That is the idea that in order to involve the audience emotionally, you must disturb them emotionally. This discomfort is a bodily intervention in a passive viewing process and disrupts the flow of the viewer to “outrage, reflection or political will” (181). Wainwright does this, visually in *Happy Valley* and verbally in *Last Tango in Halifax*, with the gendered violence in these shows, particularly in the ways that she navigates the public discourse around the “gratuitous” violence in the case of *Happy Valley*. The audience becomes involved emotionally, and as a result creates opinions about the violence displayed in the show. This, for better or worse, facilitates a conversation. Whether in the public realm (such as in news media or on Twitter) or privately in individual homes, those seeing these explicit images can be moved emotionally in

support or opposition to the gendered violence on display – as will be discussed further in the third chapter.

Garner also discusses the ways in which female dramatic writers have sought to subvert the “traditional imaging of women as disembodied objects” (187). He posits that such writers have done this by reincorporating the embodied female subject (EFS) as the center of her own experiential field. With this, the EFS is now in full contact with her environment (190). This will be the framework from which I will understand Sally Wainwright’s positioning of female characters as the “centers of their own field” and the ways in which her embodied female subjects subvert this ‘traditional imaging of women’ on television.

In *The Address of the Eye*, Vivian Sobchak describes cinema’s power to signify as a modality of communication. She equates the act of viewing cinema as a lived-body experience in which embodied consciousness is realized in the world as “visual and visible” (7). Thus, the mutual presupposition that this lived-body experience of viewing rests on both its intersubjective nature and the function of semiotic phenomenology - taking signification and significance as immanent and as a given with existence. It is the role of the viewer to interpret and signify the film as experience (9). This forms the basis for structural intersubjectivity when “both spectator and film are uniquely embodied as well as mutually enworlded” (260).

To that end, Sashi Kumar traces the intellectual history of those theorizing around new media as it emerges (2011). Most critically, he discusses ‘flatism’ (33), the idea that in the age of new media, depth of meaning has given way to ‘flat’ consumption. Speed, futurism, and data compression all play important roles in this flattening of the digital

landscape. Kumar argues that means, to the consumer, is that all meaning has moved away into representation (35). Reality has become processed, abstracted and represented in part - and this has become the new sign system of digital life. From here, he posits that digital capitalism influences consumers on a broader level. The “hegemon[ic] operative here is...pervasive rather than coercive” (37). For Kumar, this increase in the power of ratings, marketers, distributors and merchandisers moves both new media and its content in an increasingly hegemonic direction - whereas historically creative work has been a site of disruption (39).

This analysis serves a critical purpose within my theoretical framework. First, it is to illustrate the importance of semiotics as an aspect to both the phenomenological aspect of my analysis as well as to later discussions of discursive regimes in mainstream media. Television is a wholly representative sign system; it is critical to complete the principles of semiotics to this analysis. Kumar highlights this by noting that “everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation” (35). Here, the importance of the relationship between the lived experience and its representation in the digital age is cemented. I will also use this piece to discuss some of the ways in which Sally Wainwright must adhere to certain hegemonic norms on television to disrupt others. For example, Gillian’s history of domestic abuse and her ultimate retaliation in *Last Tango in Halifax* follows the traditional revenge fantasy storyline. This trajectory is followed so as to then create opportunities for Gillian and Caroline to share in conversations wherein the two women express mutual support, trust and encouragement.

Wainwright also intentionally places female characters at the center of her storytelling in dangerous situations, directly opposing men. Such is the case in *Happy*

Valley, wherein Catherine takes on the role of the ‘male hero,’ thus disrupting that trope, and calling on the audience to come to terms with the woman rescuing woman scenario. This type of gendered violence, especially in a domestic abuse or a criminal kidnapping situation, is culturally normative - with the female fulfilling the traditional role of a victim. This kind of gendered violence, especially in a domestic abuse or criminal kidnapping situation, is culturally normative - with the female in the traditional role of the victim. In both cases, Wainwright subverts these tropes in small ways, however, she must navigate the spaces between hegemonic compliance and subversion.

In concert with this understanding, semiology provides a theoretical foundation critical to analyzing the cultural influences that affect the interpretive relationship of viewing within a particular social setting. States discusses the ways in which semiotics and phenomenology are complementary perspectives on the world and art. One of the primary concepts in this work is that a human being does not see their own life in full, but rather in segments. Theatre – and so too, film – replicates this experience of segmented viewing. To frame my analysis within the idea of this segmented nature of viewing, the importance of the marriage between phenomenology and semiotics cannot be overstated. Television is a wholly representative sign system, and an audience must semiologize in order to bring meaning to experience. Using these binoculars of viewing, we can understand that phenomenology is not a semiotic mediation, but that instead, the two generate a dialogue between sensation and experience. Finally, literature from within the field of cultural studies makes up another part of my foundation.

Female Crime Drama and Lived Experience: The Tennison Legacy

While *Last Tango in Halifax* features a decidedly more pastoral setting, Wainwright's *Happy Valley* follows in the footsteps of a well trodden path in British television: a crime drama series with a female lead. For that reason, as well as for the focus on gendered violence in both shows throughout this analysis, it is important to recognize what I am calling the Tennison legacy. That is, the collection of literature surrounding *Prime Suspect* as a show, and DCI Jane Tennison as a groundbreaking female character in the genre of crime drama.

In *Structure of Anxiety*, Brundson discusses British crime dramas and the ways in which their material has been driven by anxieties in the lived experience of contemporary Britain. Focusing on three shows - *Inspector Morse*, *Prime Suspect* and *Between the Lines* - she examines the shifting public discourses of the 1980's and 90's that influenced the narratives on the shows. The theme most pertinent to this project is that of the Equal Opportunities discourse, and particularly, the discussion of *Prime Suspect*'s treatment of this issue. In this section, Brundson states that "this programme [sic] explicitly addresses the question of who can police," and continues to expand on that idea by showing the ways in which *Prime Suspect* also questions *how* one can police (233). In this way the narrative progresses as a result of women successfully navigating the "traditionally masculinist" field of policing through their relationships and interactions with one another, generating a counter-culturally supportive network.

I will utilize this piece particularly when discussing the relationships between women portrayed in *Happy Valley* - both between Catherine and those in the police force, and between Catherine and Ann in later episodes. *Prime Suspect* is an important cultural touchstone for any analysis dealing with female-centered police dramas. Therefore it is

important how the narratives and tropes set up in that program carry through to portrayals of female police officers in *Happy Valley*. Additionally, Brundson in this piece makes a case for the influence of external anxieties on the fictional narratives in television crime drama, as a result, the evidence in this paper will also be incorporated into the phenomenological analysis of the ways in which television is a critical reflection of the lived experience.

In, 'It's a Beast Thing,' Braithwaite argues that the new representation of masculinities in crisis, expresses a kind of cultural anxiety about the role of the patriarchy in social institutions. Her argument posits that 'chick dick' crime shows do not fully reorient the viewer towards a more equal and 'feminist' understanding of gender roles in society, but instead utilize the gendered bodies as neo-expressions of underlying hegemonic tensions (418). By repackaging gendered violence into only a thinly veiled sexual innuendo, masculinity is repackaged and reasserted through the use of physical force against a female bodied 'agent of the state (420).'

I will use this source only briefly, but in order to highlight how Sally Wainwright in both *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley* both does and does not employ the kind of expressive 'masculinity in crisis' as Braithwaite asserts is often the case. Though there is both explicit and implicit sexual connotation in such instances of violence (seen and unseen), the male body never re-asserts power over a woman - physical or otherwise - allowing the narrative to remain centered around and to follow the women entirely. Neither the hegemony of male dominance or the anxiety of masculinity-in-crisis ever regains control of the narrative.

Throughout my analysis, there will be continuing reference to various pieces of literature regarding the Tennison legacy. Some will have been discussed above, and other will be mentioned as needed in the chapters to come. Arising around the same time as much of the early Tennison literature, so too did discussions emerge on the ‘feminization’ of British television.

More women \neq ‘feminist’, but...: Incorporating a feminist methodology

A combination of new hiring practices, more stereotypically ‘soap opera’-like storylines making their way into the evening, and popular discourse fed into the idea that British television was becoming an increasingly feminine medium. In “The Feminization of British Television” (2012) Vicky Ball examines the discursive formation around this so-called feminization of British television, and the roles in which the “feminine” figure of the 21st century has been reified and re-traditionalized as a result (248). The creation of this discursive regime came about from a variety of sources; including the “increased visibility of the female experience in prime-time female ensemble drama,” a shift in programming and a move into an interest in emotional ‘life politics,’ and the domestic setting of the television itself - residing within the home (249). All of these factors have led to an increase in academic publications citing the medium of television to be a more feminine medium (250). These assertions have been made in the post-feminist context of the ‘victory’ of women’s representation on television, that is, an increase of female roles on television. However, this lauding of female presence has lacked the reflexivity to examine the ways in which the roles of the women on these shows is simply a re-traditionalization of the ‘acceptable feminine woman’ in the 21st television landscape. This is also reflected in the ‘feminization’ of employment cultures in television. While

there is an increase in the amount of women hired within the industry, there remains an extremely low number of women over the age of thirty-five [52%] as opposed to their male counterparts [75%]. Again, this reiterates the ways in which roles of men and women with the industry itself are reshaped and understood within the new discursive formation of ‘acceptable feminization’ (253). While the ‘feminization’ of British television has been discursively constructed as a narrative of ‘progress,’ it continues to rely on “universal, essentialist conceptions of gender which naturalize and reinforce the relationship between women and ‘the feminine’” (252).

In this piece, Ball calls for reflexivity on the roles of women beyond the understanding that “more women is better representation” and forces the examination of the ways in which women’s roles continue to be used to essentialize and naturalize gender roles. As a result of this call to reflexivity, one could then argue that more women or a woman at the helm of production does not mean that a work is inherently feminist. Likewise, it would be reductive and universalizing to automatically say that Sally Wainwright’s leadership of *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley* makes the show automatically feminist. Quite the opposite, making a claim like that would indicate a problematic argumentation that anything - including a television program - is *inherently* female or *inherently* feminist.

This was one of the first problems that I encountered, methodologically speaking, at the outset of this project, and Ball’s worked helped me to logic my way around this problem. By taking the cue from Ball’s (2012) call to reflexively in questioning whether more really is better, I was compelled to more deeply question Wainwright’s relationship to feminism through her work. I first came to understand Wainwright’s work as unique

simply because of the number of women in major roles in both *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* - a phenomenon so noticeable, in fact, that it dominates the discourse of these Wainwright products in popular media (Mountford, 2014).

While, certainly, the presence of women and their diverse representation is important, Kumar (2011) further articulates why the reflexive examination called for by Ball is important. In moving beyond the narrative of “more women is better representation” feminist scholars must continue to examine the ways in which the roles of women on television continue to be used to essentialize and naturalize gender roles. I will use this piece in particular to discuss the fact that more women or a woman at the helm of production does not mean that a work is inherently feminist. From this point, I will go on, utilizing a phenomenological framework of Sally Wainwright’s own life and experience to examine the semiotic codes embedded in the interactions between women in *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. This will also provide a foundation for me to discuss how characters act in ways that are both hegemonically dominant and subversive to the 21st century understanding of ‘feminine’ on television.

This framework seeks to address the major, driving question of my research. That is, how does Sally Wainwright write the experience of gendered violence into the relationships between women to generate a more feminist consciousness? In order to address this question, I will approach each chapter in three distinct, but related ways, designed to build on themselves from one to the next. To better understand the concepts and connections behind each chapter, a brief overview is to follow.

The first chapter centers around Sally Wainwright and takes the form of a traditional phenomenological analysis consisting of its three major components:

description, reduction and interpretation. Using two long form interviews each an hour in length and given two years apart, I captured descriptions in her own words of the experience of being a female writer for television. I took this data, and through the process of analytical reduction, further understood the relationships she described with women in her own life, as they affected her professional career – including her mother, her mentors and the women on whom she has based certain characters. From this reduction, I identified emerging themes of mutual trust, emphasis of lived experience as well as support and opposition. These themes act as the scaffolding for my interpretation of Sally Wainwright’s lived experience as a female writer on television. These themes also emerge in the relationships between women throughout her shows – which is important to note when interpreting creative production as the mediation between the lived experience of the creator and that of the viewer. Sally Wainwright’s conscious connection between her own life, and the work that she produces for television means that she is creating phenomenological opportunities for her female viewers to intersubjectively connect to within the narrative itself. By mobilizing these themes of lived experience from her own life into that of her work, she is creatively mediating a feminist consciousness. It is also with these themes in mind, that we move into the second chapter.

The second chapter begins using gendered violence as the analytical lens of this mediation of lived experience. In this chapter, I look at two scenes, from *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*, respectively. I examined the ways that traditional orientations to the heteronormative male gaze are shifted and diminished in two scenes featuring exclusively women, discussing the ramifications and long-term consequences of

gendered violence they've experienced, both subjectively and intersubjectively.

Wainwright enmeshes the ramifications of gendered violence experienced by women into the long-term trajectories and narratives of intersecting female characters. In the case of *Happy Valley*, those characters are Catherine Cawood and Ann Gallagher. In *Last Tango in Halifax*, the women in question are Gillian Greenwood and Caroline Elliot. For the purposes of later analysis, a rich description is undertaken of both scenes, including script excerpts. It was important to provide an understanding of Wainwright's use of language and narrative in both scenes, particularly when read in concert with the themes of her experiences discussed in the first chapter. To that end, a discussion of the phenomenological ramifications of these scenes and an analysis of the relationship between intersubjectivity and performativity, as explored by Judith Butler adds complexity to the relationships expressed between the women themselves, and between the characters and viewers of each respective show.

Shared experience is not a universalization of a united experience. The nuances between the shared experiences of Catherine, Ann, Gillian and Caroline demand a more complex understanding of gendered violence and the experience of women within this broader category. Prescriptive theories of gendered difference only articulate the ways in which a social reality 'ought to be' based on existing judgements of value from a heterosexual, patriarchal framework. The meeting places of mutual understanding as displayed by these four women in these two scenes instead provides a kind of meta-meeting place for the viewer to share in their intersubjective experiences.

By extending acts of gendered violence into their long-term ramifications through scenes displaying female intersubjectivity in dialogue, image and narrative, Sally

Wainwright seeks to disrupt the normative non-violent, agency-less, and - in extreme cases - dead female victim of gendered violence that pervades dramatic fiction.

Wainwright asserts the reality of this violence without glorifying or normalizing its presence in the narrative. The female relationships and intersubjective exchanges in these scenes re-orient both the narrative and the viewer away from ‘masculinity in crisis’ as Braithwaite describes, to a more progressive moral fiction, wherein the storytelling about women experiencing gendered violence is driven by those same women, on their terms.

From a comparative analysis of these scenes, the following chapter examines the portrayal of gendered violence in *Happy Valley* and the visually invisible presence of gendered violence in *Last Tango in Halifax*, comparing the ways that these differing representations effect the ‘middle man’ of the mediation of lived experience – news media. If these shows can act as the meeting place of the lived experience of both Sally Wainwright and viewers of these shows, the discursive distillation by popular internet media seeks to interrupt and further mediate that relationship by attempting to reintegrate these portrayals into dominant, hegemonic notions of ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ displays of gendered violence.

As with the previous chapter, rich descriptions ‘set the scene’ – so to speak – for the analysis to follow. Only a single scene from *Happy Valley* is highlighted. It is a fight scene between Catherine Cawood and Tommy Lee Royce that drew the media’s ire and a flurry of news articles. The description of scenes from *Last Tango in Halifax*, however, is a comparative hodge-podge of scenes, all of which are dialogue based. They are discussions of the domestic abuse suffered by Gillian and the suspicious death of her husband. Unlike *Happy Valley*, whose bursts of gendered violence occur in localized,

intense sequences, the presence of such violence in *Last Tango* is drawn out and stretched over multi-season arcs sustained by brief discussions leading up to a big reveal. Though violence - of any nature, but particularly Gillian's history of domestic abuse - is only discussed, it is a strong vein that ultimately defines and drives one of the primary characters in the show.

Although, the main focus of the analysis in this chapter is not semiotics, an understanding of the visual references and cultural codes employed in the scenes described in this chapter informs and deepens the later discussion on the implementation of certain discursive formations. For that reason, a semiotic analysis is undertaken in order to understand the deployment of class as a visual code. The discursive argument in this chapter rests on the co-constituted presence of both class and gender. Without explicitly discussing these markers of class as they appear, it would be impossible to develop a deep understanding of the profound differences in the representation of gendered violence. Class and gender must be considered together as does their impact on the scenes from a narrative perspective. It is the difference between depiction and discussion that is the line drawn in the sand between these two shows. Whereas *Last Tango in Halifax* is lauded as 'quietly subversive,' *Happy Valley* is branded as 'outrageous' and 'shocking.'

CHAPTER 1

MUMS AND MUSES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF SALLY

WAINWRIGHT

In understanding the site of cultural production as a mediation of lived experience between creator and viewer, it is important to explore the lived experiences of Sally Wainwright, writer and creator of *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*. The following chapter will take the form of a more traditional phenomenological analysis of Sally Wainwright herself. This will be to better understand the ways in which influences from her own lived experience influences the shows she writes – particularly, in this case, with regards to her relationships between women. Seeing a better mimetic relationship between women is important to Wainwright, as excerpts from her interviews will show. She thinks that this is important, and that is why it is there in her shows. It is precisely for that reason that it *is* important.

Theoretical Framework

Limited phenomenological work has been done on the lived experience captured for television. Viviane Sobchak (1992) has written extensively on the translations of the lived experience onto film, and its function as a “system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression.” (p. 200). She does this by exploring the noetic/noematic relationship between the cycle of perception (production) - expression (mediation) - perception (reception). Taking this framework as the first-level phenomenological relationship expressed on film, it is also important to examine the intersubjective sub-basement that creates the foundation for the picture Sobchak paints. To that end, this thesis will use Sobchak’s work as a springboard as well as influences

from Judith Butler and her understanding of phenomenology as a dialectical practice. This is critical to the analysis of Sally Wainwright's experience as a writer because, as will be made clear, she is in constant dialogue with experiences and individuals from her own life through the written work on her shows.

In *The Address of the Eye*, Sobchak (1997) describes cinema's power to signify as a modality of communication. She equates the act of viewing cinema as a lived-body experience in which embodied consciousness is realized in the world as "visual and visible" (7). Thus, she posits at the mutual presupposition that this lived-body experience of viewing rests on both its intersubjective nature and the function of semiotic phenomenology - taking signification and significance as immanent and as a given with existence. It is the role of the viewer to interpret and signify the film as experience (9). This forms the basis for structural intersubjectivity when "both spectator and film are uniquely embodied as well as mutually enworlded" (260).

Sobchak's understanding of the structures of cinema in a phenomenological context will inform the foundation of the way in which I will analyze cinema, as a structure. This cinematic apparatus will be the basis upon which I overlay the experience of the television writer, and the television viewer as they meet at the center of the dramatic action - through instrument mediated perception and instrument mediated intentional acts (IMIA) (171, 191). Through the interaction with the camera and the screen, the drama bridges the spatial and temporal separation of filmmaker and spectator creating a dialectical engagement through visual dialogue (191). This structure of IMIA is a first and second order viewing modality similar in design to Barthes' first and second order of semiological meaning in the formation of myths. The mirrored structures of both

modalities makes cinema (and specifically, television) a prime site for the formation and perpetuation of myths designed to be experienced phenomenologically.

Jacqueline Martinez (2011) in *Communicative Sexualities* lays out a clear blueprint for the method of doing an effective phenomenological analysis from collected descriptions. Though the subject matter is different, this is one source from which I will pull much of my method, particularly when analyzing the descriptions given by Sally Wainwright in interviews across a range of mediums, including long form interview podcasts, newspaper articles and short video interviews. Martinez's work will allow for exploration through the method of phenomenological description, reduction and interpretation, and also offers an adaptable model for later analysis in subsequent sections.

In order to examine Wainwright's experience as a female television writer, it was important to collect descriptions in her own words. It is for that reason that two long-form podcast interviews with her are the two sources of all six capta in this paper. Both podcasts are free on all major podcast streaming services and available to be downloaded. While *Desert Island Discs* was recorded in 2014 and covers much of Wainwright's childhood and early career, *The Adam Buxton Podcast* was recorded in June of 2016 and covers much more recent events in Wainwright's life and career, including the second season of *Happy Valley* as well as current events like Brexit. The podcasts included long periods of Wainwright describing experiences and discussing issues. It is from these that six capta have been compiled, and ordered by the most relevant themes expressed therein.

By following this model, it is the aim of this paper to begin to explore the ways in which the embodied experience of the television writer influences the work they produce.

In 'The Culture Behind Closed Doors,' Felicia Henderson (2011) seeks to use her own experience as a veteran television writer - of both comedy and drama - and her position as a scholar to paint a picture of the writers' room for a television program. Using auto-ethnography, Henderson first asserts a new term for understanding the relational strategies at play in this creative space. "Situational authorship" is, as she describes it, the process of consensus and negotiation within the group that leads to 'unified' decision making (146). This process is mediated by many things, both within the show itself, but also within the socio-interpersonal relationships and identities of those around the writers' table. In particular, Henderson explores the process of othering that occurs for writers based on their gender and race (147). This process of "othering" is a way of separating out 'what is acceptable' from 'what doesn't belong.' She argues that the writers' room has been a neglected area of study in favor of textual analysis, production culture or audience studies, however, when interrogating a scripted show, examining the place from which knowledge is produced within the logics of the script-as-world builder is critical (149). Part of the process of this 'situational authorship' is homogenizing the atmosphere in which these narratives are produced. One such way that this occurs is through humor. By clearly including and excluding certain groups by forcing them to self-determine 'acceptability,' means that not only is the room culturally homogenized on the orders of race, gender, class and sexuality, but the creations of that room itself are also performatively homogenized in kind (151). In not being reflexive, the show's content becomes reflective.

This piece, in particular, speaks to Sally Wainwright's early life as a television writer, and the ways that her experiences in these writers' rooms has caused a personal,

political and professional shift in her career. Whereas initially, she behaved with what could be interpreted as silent complicity - not speaking in the writers' room on *Coronation Street*, identifying as a post-feminist - she shifted her alignment away from the homogenized acceptability of 'situational authorship' into differently focused and differently produced television programs. She began to question her own position and the ways that women were represented on television. In moving from silence to self-reflexivity, Wainwright began to see the critical connections between the production process and the material being produced. The following analysis is a phenomenological interpretation of these shifts and of Wainwright's influential lived experiences.

Methods

Because phenomenology acts as both theory and method, there is verbiage that will be used in this chapter more innate to phenomenology, but occasionally challenging to parse. For that reason, this section will briefly cover some of the more common phenomenological terms that the reader will see used, not only throughout this chapter, but throughout the rest of this thesis. The first means of inquiry in phenomenology is in terms of the relationship between noesis and noema. In simple terms, noema is the object of experience and the noesis is the related apprehension of that experience, which can emerge in the form of various themes. A single noema can consist of several noeses. The noetic/noematic relationship can also be understood as the "question asked in reverse. That is to say, the noema emerges in research in the form of rich description, whereas the noesis emerges as a result of this description. The two are mutually constitutive, never independently contingent. Though these words themselves may not crop up explicitly, it

is important to understand these two phenomena as the core of every phenomenological question.

It's important to understand this methodological foundation from which phenomenological method emerges before a discussion of methods could be undertaken. In order to complete the analysis for this chapter, I took two, hour-long interviews of Sally Wainwright done two years apart. These interviews discuss her influences as a writer, her early life, her early television career, and brief discussions of her most recent projects (including *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*). These interview excerpts (or, capta) provided the descriptions used in this analysis. From these descriptions, I discovered themes around which each set of quotations is based around. After this, the themes were reduced into the form of analysis. This analysis then grows into interpretation. The process of reduction and interpretation are closely related, and intertwined. The reduction makes interpretation possible, but it also serves as a focus for the lens of the interpretation. Description – in phenomenological analysis is like the root of a tree, and each process of reduction and interpretation are like the branches and leaves from which emerges from this root. It is with this in mind, that we move into the phenomenological analysis of Sally Wainwright.

Description

Trusting Relationship. Throughout her interviews, Wainwright expresses various manifestations of a trusting relationship, such as:

So my mum gave me a crash course on who everybody was, and she took me through all the current storylines, and she helped me construct my story for my trial script.

Her mother tends to often play into these expressions of trust:

I do often listen to my mum. She's kind of the person I write for, still.

This trust, however, is not only critical in the relationship Wainwright has with her mother, but with those she works with as well. This comment references the female beat cop who advised and informed the writing of the character Catherine Cawood on *Happy Valley*:

And they put me in touch with Lisa Farrow and she turned out to be somebody that I went to school with and I didn't even know it was her because she'd got a new surname. So, Lisa informed that character a huge amount.

Professionally speaking, this trust can also come in the form of a mentor. For example, this description of a relationship with another female writer:

I was lucky. I met Kay Miller quite early on in my career. At the time, she was doing *Band of Gold* and it was an enormous, BAFTA winning hit. And she really took me under her wing, and helped me a lot. She said - when I got on Coronation Street, she said, don't be there for more than five years. She said, stay more than five years, you'll never leave, and you've got to get out after five years. Which is exactly what I did.

Real Life. Additionally, translating lived experience to the television screen, is important an important lens through which Wainwright moves through the world. This not gives her the means to express herself, it is the way by which she deems the stories to tell:

The idea [for Last Tango] was inspired entirely by [my mother's] experience, yeah. I mean, obviously, I made a lot up. As the show- as you have to when you've got to fill six hours of storyline.

She also incorporates this attitude more generally, highlighting the complexities of the human experience:

I think human beings, essentially, are funny. And I think however dark things get we tend to respond to things with humor and warmth. And I think if you can reflect that in drama, it's somewhere towards reflecting real life. I think you've got to trust your instinct. And I think I'm just lucky that my instincts are right.

This attention to lived experience also emerges when faced with the reality of what she is charged to bring to life on the screen:

Diane Taylor is a detective inspector with the Manchester Police, and when you talk to someone like that and you realize that murder isn't entertainment. It's horrible. And it's real, and it's disgusting. And I don't know how detectives work. I couldn't do what they do.

Encouragement. Wainwright also expresses experiences of support, encouragement and opposition to her career as a television writer:

My mother always encouraged me with my writing. I think it was when we had a really good laugh together [that she knew I had a knack for writing] when I was about eleven. And, she said, in fact, she saw something in me that evening. In the way I made her laugh.

She continues:

But you know, my father encouraged me to go to University, which I'm not sure I would have done without his influence on me. He really pushed me towards going to University. And I wasn't hugely confident about doing that, but he pushed me to do that, and I'm so glad he did.

With regards to encountering opposition - she expresses the ways in which her acute awareness of this opposition affected the ways in which she operated on the writing team:

Um, the producers did. But I think a lot of the ... men, who'd been there a long time were probably suspicious - they didn't want anybody touching their show. The certainly didn't think that someone like me could in any way contradict them. They were very protective of it. They were great writers, great storytellers. And it was a wonderful experience, again, I didn't speak. I didn't speak for the first three years of writing Coronation Street. In the meeting, I was just so in awe of everyone, but I learned a hell of a lot. I learned a hell of a lot about storytelling. [Male producers and editors] didn't have a sneaking regard...probably no. A couple of them, I think, you were never going to make happy.

All of these descriptions have, in various ways, elucidated the ways in which Sally Wainwright's lived experience informs her subjectivity as a female writer on television. In the next section, I will conduct a reduction of the themes that emerged from an analysis of the capta.

Reduction

The first collection of capta expresses a clear theme of trust. It begins with her mother at the beginning of her career, helping her secure her first writing job. Wainwright utilized their relationship built on trust to depend on her mother for help. It was through this council that she managed to secure her first writing position. This theme of mutual trust is one that continues through two more descriptions of relationships built with other women at the intersection of personal and professional. Wainwright listens to Kay Miller's council, and follows her advice - which leads to a boon in her career. Whereas with Lisa Farrow, the relationship was built on more mutual trust and an exchange of

information. Farrow trusted Wainwright to open up about life as a police officer and Wainwright trusted her candor enough to incorporate pieces of her into *Happy Valley*.

The relationships built on trust, directly relate to Sally Wainwright's recognition of the importance of incorporating lived experience into the shows she writes. Again, her relationship with her mother has heavily influenced her career. Her experience in finding love again inspired Wainwright to write one of her biggest shows to date *Last Tango in Halifax*. She sees this connection between lived experience and the performed lived experience in almost every aspect of life. To that end, she describes the ways she attempts to capture the complexities of both humor and drama, sometimes simultaneously. This dedication to 'realness' in experience does also come at a price. She expresses the horror of violence and murder. Though she does not experience these things directly, she is given glimpses into the lifestyles of those that must encounter this reality on a regular basis. Through these experiences, she can realize the limitations of representational experiences on screen.

Finally, the support and opposition Wainwright encounters both personally and professionally not only helps to solidify her confidence in her ability, but also make her acutely aware of her differences within a team of male writers. Both experiences have been extremely formative, given the ways in which Wainwright positions herself within the television industry - she works exclusively with RED Production company, founded and run by a woman, and whose creative team is nearly 60% female. She also makes it a point to focus her shows around female characters, and is clear in her political affiliation as a feminist. All of these have been informed by the ways in which she has been made

aware of her differences as a woman among men. Additionally, she has been encouraged and supported by those with whom she has built a trusting relationship.

Interpretation

Themes of trust, recognizing the role of the lived experience, as well as external support and opposition contribute to Sally Wainwright's embodiment as a female television writer in a perpetually male dominated field. With support, she was encouraged to allow her habitus to flow and orient herself toward this career goal. By experiencing intersubjective trust through her relationship with her mother and other critical women, Wainwright has also been able to build a foundational network of individuals through and with which she can translate lived experience. These intersubjective relationships have also greatly influenced the work that she has chosen to do, and the people she has chosen to represent in her shows.

Intersubjectivity, in this context, occurs between two individuals as the simultaneous experience of self and the shared experience of united experience. In phenomenological terms, the process of intersubjectivity is one that is occurring constantly between two cores (individuals) whose horizons – or the full extent of their experienced subjectivities (their experiences, identity formations and knowledges) – meet, and are experienced both individually and collectively. Subjectivity is intersubjectivity and vice versa.

Along with Wainwright's experience of this intersubjective flow, however, there have also been interruptions to that flow. At times, her experience as a female writer in a room full of male writers has made her acutely aware of her difference in embodiment

and experience. This interruption, for Wainwright, often manifests in the form of silence, and by not speaking out, she allows herself to exist alongside, as the Other, acutely aware of her differences. This is perhaps the most profound influence on Wainwright's conscious political positioning as a feminist. In this interruption and awareness of otherness, she also becomes aware that the lived experience with which her intersubjectivity is so inextricably linked - that is, in trusting relationships with other women - is not represented as lived experience by women on television.

The important question to take away from this chapter, and into the rest of this analysis is the question of where, when and why these themes emerge in each of Wainwright's very different programs? Throughout the next two chapters the relationships expressed between the women as well as the violence that is both portrayed and discussed will give rise to the themes explored in the previous chapter. Particularly, trusting relationships and encouragement are seen portrayed in the intersubjective support given by the women in the scenes examined in the second chapter; while the portrayal of real life interacts with the discursive formations created by internet media in reaction to both *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*.

CHAPTER 2

I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M TELLING YOU THIS, CAROLINE:

INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND THE RAMIFICATIONS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

Introduction

Before seeing *Happy Valley* for the first time in 2014, I could not recall a crime drama centered around a female victim in which that woman had not already been killed, or was killed by the end of the show. Alas, even while watching *Happy Valley*, I fully expected to have a tragic scene of near-escape-death or a quick cut-away after a heavy-handed hint towards Ann Gallagher's imminent demise. It wasn't until about halfway through the fifth episode of the first season - in which Ann is sitting at the hospital bed of her rescuer, Det. Sergeant Catherine Cawood after being reunited with her family and released from custody - that I slowly came to realize that Ann wasn't going to die in this series at all. I was simultaneously shocked and excited. I had never seen a crime drama wherein the victim and her rescuer could develop any kind of relationship - much less where two women could sit and talk to one another about the shared trauma of gendered violence and the ramifications of Ann's abduction and rape long after the events themselves.

In "Endless Interrogation," Susan Sydney-Smith examines the way in which abjection, in the Kristevan sense, causes a disruption, when a female body is placed in what is traditionally the role of a male (195). By tracing the legacy of the police procedural, and placing *Prime Suspect* within the historical context of this genre as divergent from the heretofore 'typical' role of the female detective. She examines the ways in which the use of the body - particularly the female body - is used to interrogate

the patriarchal structure of the police force itself. DCI Jane Tennison ‘uncovers’ aspects of the investigation, not only through rare physical markers [a blood condition] but also using ‘traditionally feminine’ epistemologies [noticing of the shoe size, and the “Nunails” connection] (196). This kind of bodily reading of this abject female form displaces the male detective from his historically central role in the police serial drama (200).

I will use this piece to examine the ways in which the bodies are used - particularly in *Happy Valley*, but to a lesser extent in *Last Tango in Halifax* - to disrupt and displace the re-traditionalized hegemonic narrative of the ‘acceptably feminine’ woman in police drama. In a phenomenological sense, I will explore the ways that traditional orientations to the heteronormative male gaze are shifted and diminished in two scenes feature women discussing the ramifications and long-term consequences of gendered violence, both subjectively and intersubjectively. Wainwright enmeshes the ramifications of gendered violence experienced by women into the long-term trajectories and narratives of intersecting female characters. In the case of *Happy Valley*, those characters are Catherine Cawood and Ann Gallagher; in *Last Tango in Halifax*, those characters are Gillian Greenwood and Caroline Dawson. Using the literature previously discussed in this chapter, as well as compositional theory from Cavender and Jurik (2007) and feminist phenomenological theory from Butler (1988), I will examine the abject survivors of violence and abuse in both of Wainwright’s narratives serve and explore her use of language and scene composition to further disrupt the normative non-violent female investigator and the normative non-violent, dead female victim.

The first two sections of this chapter will be a description of the scenes used for analysis and include the script excerpts from each respective episode. This will provide

the reader with an understanding of both language and narrative, as it is expressed by the characters in the show as well as the ways that female relationships and intersubjective support is deployed by Wainwright to disrupt the traditionally male gaze of gendered violence. The third section will comprise of a compositional analysis - based on Cavender and Jurik's (2007) notion of 'progressive moral fiction' - and will discuss the ways that the use of camera and positioning orients the viewer within the scene itself. Given that television is an audio/visual medium, this section includes an image of each scene to better demonstrate that which is being described and analyzed. Finally, a discussion of the phenomenological ramifications of these scenes and an analysis of the relationship between intersubjectivity and performativity, as explored by Judith Butler (1988) will add complexity to the relationships expressed between the women themselves, and between the characters and viewers of each respective show. Each section of this chapter is written to build a foundation for and lead into the next, and in the conclusion, each of these pieces will be woven together to set the stage for the final chapter.

It is important to note that, while these two scenes are the focus of analysis in this section, they are not isolated examples of the deeply explored relationships between women in either *Happy Valley* or *Last Tango in Halifax*. To the contrary, there are numerous female relationships from which a bounty of varied relationships are found. Both Catherine Cawood and Caroline Elliot alone have significant relationships with other women beyond those discussed in this chapter. Catherine has a deep and complex relationship with her sister throughout *Happy Valley* and Caroline's relationship to her mother is one that is constantly evolving and growing.

I have chosen these two scenes to focus on in particular because they parallel one another, thematically. Pulling from the themes identified in the first chapter, each of these scenes depict elements real life and real relationships of trust between women through their vulnerability and the extent of their disclosure, as well as encouragement and lack of stigma when discussing sensitive or difficult topics for one or both women in the scene. These acts of encouragement come in the form of eye contact, physical contact, verbal cues and camera angles, implying that these women have left a safe space for the other to speak. It is with this in mind, that we begin with the scene from *Happy Valley*.

Happy Valley: Season 1, Episode 5

The scene opens in a private hospital room. It is mid-day and sun is pouring through the windows. Catherine Cawood - a police officer - is severely injured after physically combatting Tommy Lee Royce, who abducted and raped Ann Gallagher. We find Ann sitting with Catherine who is in the hospital bed and hooked up to various beeping machines, with lesions across her face and in her eyes, bruises, and an apparent limited mobility. This scene itself is a conversation between Catherine and Ann.

The audience happens upon this scene in media res, during which Ann is assuring Catherine that she will not become addicted to the drugs that Royce gave her to subdue and disorient her throughout her ordeal. Ann is stalwart and self-assured in her conviction to overcome this aspect of her abduction - her addiction is something over which she feels she can take control, and so she does. In reassuring Catherine, Ann is also working to show that the physical recoveries of both women will not be in vain.

From this, Ann quietly transitions into the core purpose of her visit to Catherine in hospital. She quietly tells Catherine that she wanted to ask her to do something:

ANN:
I don't want my mother to know. She- I want her to die not knowing.

CATHERINE:
Not knowing...?
(CATHERINE realizes.)
He raped you.

ANN nods. She fights the tears that well up.

ANN:
I don't want her to know. Ever. Ever. Ever. And I can't tell my dad that. I wanted to, last night, but I couldn't. I tried, but I don't want him picturing -- I don't want to *see* him picturing --
(she dries up)
but he'll need to know. Eventually. When it goes to court and it will go to court. I *will see those people in court*. My mother
(she hates saying it)
I think they think it's unlikely she'll live that long. They said it could be eight months before it gets to court, and if she never needs to know that's--that's how I'd like it. But my dad... He will need to know. Before. And --

CATHERINE realizes --

CATHERINE:
You want me to tell him?
(ANN nods)
Okay.

ANN:
Really?

CATHERINE:
Yeah.
(ANN becomes tearful. Tears of gratitude.)
When I get out of here. Can you wait that long?

ANN nods.

ANN:
They took swabs, the police doctor did. Before they let me see mum and dad, they got everything they needed. And they will get him.

CATHERINE:
Yeah, I hope so (2014).

Though the exchange itself is brief, the relationship explored in this scene is one of mutual trust and understanding. In this way, the scene that it will be analyzed alongside from *Last Tango in Halifax* share many similarities.

Last Tango in Halifax: Season 2, Episode 5

Like the scene in *Happy Valley*, the scene in question from *Last Tango in Halifax* appears in the fifth episode of the season arc - in this case, the second season. This scene takes place at night, inside Gillian's farmhouse. Gillian and Caroline have been out together for the better part of the day looking at wedding venues for the upcoming nuptials of their parents. This venue search has resulted in the consumption of a vast quantity of champagne, and the two arrive back to the farmhouse extremely intoxicated.

Exhausted, but lacking the sober sense to actually go to bed, the two women flop onto the couch and continue to talk over a tea and brandy nightcap. The events of this drunken fireside chat are intercut with scenes of Alan and Celia - their parents - having a conversation about Celia's sister while preparing for bed. The two scenes remain innocuous enough - Gillian and Caroline meander their way into talking about their respective relationship failures of late - until Gillian begins to divulge the true reasons why she and Robbie - her dead husband's brother - could never enter into a serious relationship.

This brings the women onto more serious matters, including the nature of Gillian's first marriage, and the circumstances surrounding her husband's death. This is the first time in two seasons that viewers are given any kind of glimpse into Gillian's previous marriage, and the only time a full account of Eddie's death has been given:

GILLIAN
I should have stuck with him - Robbie. But Eddie...he was just one of those
men who was...
(increasingly shaken)
Oh god- When I was with him, nothing else mattered. Nothing.
(tearing up)
You could've dropped a helium bomb on Halifax and I wouldn't have noticed.
CAROLINE

(drunkenly)

It's hydrogen.

GILLIAN acknowledges CAROLINE'S correction and laughs.

GILLIAN

I shouldn't have done that to Robbie. But I couldn't help it. I couldn't.

CAROLINE

But you got over that, surely, before you and Robbie, when you... started going out with each other.

GILLIAN

Hmm, yeah, we did.

(looks at Caroline and breathes deeply)

Wow! But...

GILLIAN moves on the couch so that she is no longer looking directly at CAROLINE for the following exchange.

CAROLINE

It's not gonna last with that Cheryl, is it? He'll soon get to the end of her, he's obviously only bothering with her because -

GILLIAN

(cutting off Caroline and leaning forward)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever, I know that. I know that.

(realizing that her reaction was extreme)

Sorry. Sorry. Although Raff reckons she's moving in with him.

GILLIAN becomes increasingly agitated, is leaning forward on her legs and no longer making eye contact or even turned towards CAROLINE anymore. GILLIAN is rubbing her face, and is clearly about to cry.

CAROLINE

(increasingly confused)

Am I missing the point?

GILLIAN

No.

(exhales like she's been holding her breath)

No, no.

(rocking gently where she sits)

I...

(takes a deep breath)

don't think, ever

(she commits to admitting this out loud)

me and Robbie could ever be a good idea.

(crying through the next line)

Even though, you know, all things being equal, we could have been...

CAROLINE

Why?

GILLIAN

We could have been... really nice together.

(breathes sharply)

CAROLINE

Well, why do you think you can't be?

GILLIAN is crying quietly, but persistently at this point. GILLIAN'S breathing is jagged and the rocking increases in intensity.

GILLIAN

I did the shittiest thing to him.

CAROLINE leans forward from her position on the couch. CAROLINE moves forward to sit right next to GILLIAN, and places a hand on GILLIAN'S back.

GILLIAN (cont.)

I never told anyone this.

CAROLINE sighs, not out of exasperation, but in giving GILLIAN space to say her peace.

GILLIAN (cont.)

(stammering)

I'm, um... very drunk.

CAROLINE

So am I.

GILLIAN

Are you?

CAROLINE

Yeah.

GILLIAN

Really?

CAROLINE

Yeah.

GILLIAN

As drunk as me?

CAROLINE

I don't know, I'm pretty drunk. Don't tell me something you're gonna regret.

GILLIAN

I want to tell you.

(inhales sharply)

CAROLINE

(nervously)

Okay.

GILLIAN

(pause)

I... I murdered him. Eddie. The only proper family Robbie ever had and...

(sobbing)

GILLIAN buries her head in her hands for a couple of seconds until her sob subsides, then continues, looking ahead into the fire.

GILLIAN (cont.)

I murdered him.

CAROLINE is rendered speechless and follows GILLIAN'S gaze. GILLIAN tilts her head slightly more towards CAROLINE as she continues to speak. CAROLINE has moved slightly further away from GILLIAN on the couch that they share, but is still angled towards GILLIAN. Neither woman meets the eyes of the other.

GILLIAN

(cautiously)

He knocked me about...All the time. He knocked three of my back teeth out.

He were careful not to do it at the front, where people can see.

(struggling)

Once, he pinned me down and put a cigarette out on me neck.

GILLIAN moves her hair, as if in a trance. CAROLINE, looking visibly shaken, moves her eyes over to GILLIAN'S neck and continues to look at her. GILLIAN, still struggling, has not looked at CAROLINE. GILLIAN'S head is turned away from CAROLINE'S gaze, but as it is, GILLIAN'S look is vacant, as if she cannot see the table in front of her.

GILLIAN (cont.)

(crying)

I've shed blood in every room in this house.

(looking down at her lap)

There were other humiliations.

(as if to make light, glancing in CAROLINE'S direction for the first time)

I won't bore you with them. So...

(takes a drink)

CAROLINE

(at a whisper)

I...

GILLIAN sighs and wipes her eyes.

GILLIAN

Well the police had me in for... day, hours, over several days.

(sniffles)

And me dad. I told him the same tale I told them, that I'd found him, with his head in the log-splitter. He had an inkling there was more to it than that, me dad did.

GILLIAN makes eye contact with CAROLINE, briefly.

GILLIAN (cont.)

So I told him I'd put him out of his misery after a botched suicide effort.

(sniffles)

He bought that. I think...

(struggling)

I think he bought that. And then he made me ring the police.

CAROLINE

Why are you telling me this?

GILLIAN

I don't know.

(thinking, deeply)

Because, that's why it could never work, me and Robbie. Oh, even he... after coroner's report, had to accept...

(inhales deeply and starts crying)

But I did it.

CAROLINE closes her eyes and looks anguished.

GILLIAN (cont.)

His brother, the only proper family he's ever had. And I... did it. So that's why. That's why. But other than that...

(GILLIAN and CAROLINE make significant eye contact for the first time as

GILLIAN continues)

I don't know why I've told you, Caroline (2014).

As in *Happy Valley*, a great deal of trust is expressed in this scene both verbally and visually. It is for this reason that a brief compositional analysis must also be conducted to better understand the phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity displayed in both of these scenes, and how the representation of these female relationships contribute to a feminist understanding of Sally Wainwright's work.

Composition: Expressing Encouragement

I will be using *Scene Composition and Justice for Women* (2007) as the foundation for my analysis of the discussions of gendered violence between victim/survivor and female confidant. In this article, Cavender and Jurik articulate why the female-centered crime drama is an 'interesting analytic site' because it features a

female lead in a traditionally male dominated field (278). They further this point by asserting that, “The film images proffer a socially complex understanding of crime and justice, with respect to socially marginalized women victims, and posit a woman protagonist at the center of that understanding (279).” The narratives of both Tennison and those she interacts with gives a voice to “socially marginalized victims and survivors (280)” which seeks to complicated the existing portrayal of crime and justice as portrayed in mainstream media.

Using Mulvey’s (1975) argument of scene composition and gaze, Cavender and Jurik describe the relationship between the camera and character’s gaze, the ways that it produces pleasure - either narcissistic or voyeuristic, and the ways that these camera positions prioritize the male gaze towards the female bodies in the scene. This hierarchical orientation of patriarchal privilege is so ingrained in the filmmaking process that it does not even require conscious intent (281). Throughout their analysis, the authors interrogate how Tennison might be disruptive not only to the narrative of the traditional police crime drama but to the male gaze in the process of filming itself. Thus, this work is critical to creating a better understanding of ‘Progressive Moral Fiction’ within the context of *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*, as well as the ways that conscious efforts and unconscious (or subconscious) choices on the part of Sally Wainwright generates a model of this kind of storytelling.

By placing marginalized female bodies at the center of the narrative and disrupting the male gaze, Wainwright moves her drama away from narcissistic and voyeuristic pleasure towards a more socially complex understanding of gendered violence by placing female leads at the center of these narratives. In each of these scenes,

the discussions of violence and violation is happening between two women, as equals. Each of these scenes themselves are further complicated by the fact that, in each case, Catherine and Gillian acted as violent agents themselves, further complicating this notion of passive female victim. In each case, the violence that is discussed is not shown in the show - further removing a voyeuristic gaze from the act of violence itself. Instead, Wainwright uses these discussions to demonstrate mutual support, respect, understanding and trust. The conversations revolve around the repercussions of the violence, and its impact on the lives of all it affected. By offering this complicated understanding of gendered violence as a series of acts that ripple out over time, Wainwright further separates the visceral experience of viewing violence and reorients the viewer into the long-term, consequence driven, relational experience of these characters and their narratives.

Not only do the scenes seek to reorient these narratives through the actions and choices of the characters, but likewise the viewer is oriented by the view of the camera itself. In both scenes, the women are sitting together, on the same level (images included below). The women approach and interact with each other as equals - visually removing

indications of hierarchy.



In *Last Tango in Halifax* (above), Wainwright, though narratively working to drive to the same effect, does so in a more complex way than that of its counterpart in *Happy Valley*. Caroline (right) and Gillian (left) are not on socially neutral ground; the two are in Gillian's farmhouse. However, in different ways these women are narratively equal: they are the same age, they are both intoxicated (in this scene), and they are connected as step-sister by the marriage of their parents. Like *Happy Valley*, the camera work indicates this equality by remaining at eye level, alternating gaze from the perspective of Caroline and Gillian, in turn.

However, unlike the scene in *Happy Valley*, Caroline and Gillian do not sustain any kind of physical or visual connection to one another. In fact, it is completely the opposite, Gillian avoids eye contact while sharing with Caroline, and Caroline seeks to increase the physical space between the two of them throughout the scene. Finally, in the end, the women share a moment of sustained eye contact - which the viewer sees from

Caroline's perspective - indicating that, finally, the women, though not coming from a place of shared experience, now exist in a space of shared understanding. An understanding that, for Gillian, has never happened up to this point. The scene is left on this sustained visual contact and leaves the viewer to question the ramifications of this level of honesty between the two women. This is punctuated by Gillian herself declaring, "I don't know why I've told you Caroline." It is almost as though this is Wainwright's own interrogative dare to the audience to remain bound by this moment, and seek to understand why Gillian might have been motivated to divulge her violent past to Caroline.



In the image from *Happy Valley* (above), the women are in what can be understood - for the purposes of this scene as a 'culturally neutral' setting. They are in a hospital room, having both emerged from a shared traumatic experience. There is a common ground of shared experience between these women, visually cemented by their

physical connection (through their hands), which continues throughout the scene. So too, does the camera work place these women on a visually equal footing: never leaving eye contact and alternating between each perspective view. This shared experience is compounded by the fact that Catherine's daughter (not pictured) was also raped by Tommy Lee Royce, Ann's (left) abductor and rapist. This knowledge - though unknown by Ann at this time - further cements the intersubjective knowledge of shared experience for the viewer. It is important to recognize the phenomenological work that the camera does here, as it's implications penetrate into the subsequent section of this chapter.

Performativity & intersubjectivity: Adding a phenomenological layer

Similar to the work done by Ball (2012), Butler moves away from a reductive understanding that women automatically means feminist. Instead, Butler pushes for a nuanced examination of the ways in which we understand gender relationally and performatively. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Judith Butler discusses the ways in which gender performativity is ongoing and intersubjective using a phenomenological framework. She uses the phenomenological model to articulate performativity and illustrate the ways in which gender is mutually constructed through an intersubjective understanding of embodiment.

Phenomenology of film, through Vivian Sobchak (1992) and feminist phenomenology, as understood in this piece by Butler (1988), work together to articulate the ways in which an understanding of the roles of women in *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* is not only a dialectical between show and viewer, but also a narrative expression of female intersubjectivity between the individuals in the shows themselves. This process of viewing and being viewed, of understanding and knowing is a dialectical

relationship, and one that is not mutually exclusive to the individual subject. Butler asserts that, while it is politically important to continue to represent women, it is also critical to avoid reification of the “very collectivity the theory is supposed to emancipate” (281). That is to say, shared experience is not a universalization of a united experience. The nuances between the shared experiences of Catherine, Ann, Gillian and Caroline demand a more complex understanding of gendered violence and the experience of women within this broader category. Prescriptive theories of gendered difference only articulate the ways in which a social reality ‘ought to be’ based on existing judgements of value from a heterosexual, patriarchal framework.

In that way, if intersubjectivity is also subjectivity, and each mutually feed into one another (in a phenomenological sense), then the meeting places of mutual understanding as displayed by these four women in these two scenes also provides a kind of meta-meeting place for the viewer to share in this intersubjective experience. If, according to Sobchak (1992), the filmed experience is lived experience occurring in multiple directions - as discussed in the first chapter - then these scenes act as a mediation of the lived experience between the creators and the viewers. The act of viewing these scenes is, in that way, a shared experience. The viewer becomes linked to the intersubjective relationship as expressed through dialogue and narrative, rather than as a voyeur of hierarchical male gaze when viewing acts of gendered violence against women.

For these women in these scenes, trusting relationships are established and built given their vulnerability and willingness to disclose information to one another, both of whom are doing so for the first time. This kind of revelation and mutual sharing of an

experience not only established existing trusting relationship, but facilitates the deepening of these women's' relationships even further.

Likewise, encouragement is shown both physically and visually in both of these scenes. Cues like eye contact, physical touch and camera work signifying active listening (such as maintaining a tight close-up on Gillian's face even through pervasive silence while she works out what to say next) signify that the women interacting together in each scene are encouraging the other to speak freely. There is a removal of stigma in this kind of encouragement, wherein the women who had these experiences are given the space and ability to discuss it, in their own time and on their own terms.

Conclusion

By extending acts of gendered violence into their long-term ramifications through scenes displaying female intersubjectivity in dialogue, image and narrative, Sally Wainwright seeks to disrupt the normative non-violent, agency-less, and - in extreme cases - dead female victim of gendered violence. Wainwright asserts the reality of this violence without glorifying or normalizing its presence in the narrative. The four women from these examples who are encountered with the long-term consequences of gendered violence are shown in acts of caring, mutual trust, and without stigma perpetuated by the male gaze. The female relationships and intersubjective exchanges in these scenes re-orient both the narrative and the viewer away from 'masculinity in crisis' as Braithwaite (2011) describes (420), to a progressive moral fiction (Cavender & Jurik, 2007) wherein the storytelling about women experiencing gendered violence is driven by those same women.

CHAPTER 3

IT'S A GRUELING, GRIPPING HAPPY VALLEY: THE DISCOURSE OF GENDERED VIOLENCE AND MEDIA AS A MEDIUM OF MEDIATION

On the 21st of May in 2014, the *Daily Mail* asked “Did the BBC’s brutal Happy Valley go too far?” (Glennie, 2014). This headline referred to a sequence in the fourth episode of the first season of *Happy Valley*, BBC1’s latest word of mouth hit by producer, writer and director Sally Wainwright. Three days later, *The Guardian* returned fire with an interview from Sally Wainwright, stating “I don’t have to apologise [sic] for show’s violence” (Brown, 2014). Though social media sites, like Twitter, were cited as the source of this tension, examining actual tweets in the 24 hour period around the airing of the episode would suggest that this was not the case. Instead, this paper will argue that this instance of gendered violence was rejected by media institutions because it was a disruption of the traditional male action-hero myth. By centering a female body in the role of the rescuer, this instance of gendered violence became unrecognizable to a portion of the viewing audience, and it was this small group that gave media outlets like the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* fuel-to-feud, and to perpetuate this notion that *Happy Valley* portrayed gratuitous violence against women.

In order to more fully examine this attitude towards gendered violence, this chapter will examine the portrayal of gendered violence in *Happy Valley* and the invisible presence of gendered violence in *Last Tango in Halifax*, and compare the ways that these differing representations effect the mediation of lived experience using news media. This section will explore how gendered violence on television is rendered ‘acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable,’ and to what extent these discursive formations around

gender, violence and class say about what media institutions interpret to be “too violent” or “excessive.”

In this section, a brief description of notable instances of gendered violence in both *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* will set the stage for analysis. By offering a thick description of these instances, it is my aim to orient the reader away from the intersubjective examination of female relationships as discussed in the previous section, and to take a broader focus on the discursive regimes built up around gendered violence in each of these shows. It is also important to note, however, that despite the flurry of news activity from *Happy Valley*, these articles did not begin to appear until after the airing of the fourth episode of the first season – despite the fact that this was not the first instance of explicit violence on the show. The fight scene highlighted in this chapter does not come out of nowhere, in terms of the violence depicted on the show, however, this was the first time that public media had given it any attention, as will be discussed later.

Discourse - particularly discourse as mediated by internet news media outlets - is crucial in understanding the narrative and attitude developed around each of these shows, and the very different tones that *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* are given within popular media. If these shows are the meeting ground of the lived experience of both Sally Wainwright and viewers of these shows, the discursive distillation by popular internet media seeks to interrupt that meeting ground and mediate it through attempting to reintegrate it into dominant hegemonic notions of ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ displays of gendered violence. Finally, the final thoughts in this section will begin to complicate this media mediation by calling into question the continued discursive power of these institutions given the increased connectivity between creators and viewers as

well as audience interconnectivity through social media. Within the landscape of Web 2.0, it will become crucial to integrate virtual intersubjectivity into conversations around the encoding and decoding of multimedia entertainment.

Happy Valley: Season 1, Episode 4

Season one focuses heavy on plot expository and character exploration. The show itself centers on the life of a police sergeant, Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire), in the northern town of Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. The first season follows Cawood as she is trying to come to terms with the rape and suicide of her daughter, Becky, eight years prior. Now divorced, she lives with her sister, Clare (Siobhan Finneran) - a recovering alcoholic and heroin addict - and together the two women raise Becky's eight-year-old son, Ryan. Matters become complicated for Catherine when Tommy Lee Royce (James Norton), the man who raped her daughter and influenced her suicide, is released from prison after serving time for drug charges. She becomes focused on finding Royce and keeping him away from the son he never knew he had. Meanwhile, Royce has become involved in the kidnapping of Ann Gallagher, and the situation has gone from bad to worse as all parties involved in the plot try to keep their hostage a secret.

It is at this point that we come to episode four, and the first of the critical scenes for this project's analysis. The final scene in the episode takes place in the basement of Royce's mother's flat, where Catherine discovers Ann - padlocked into the basement and tied to a chair in the center of the dark room. Catherine rushes to her aid and while removing the duct tape securing her mouth, assures her that, "[She is] out of here." and that "It's over." Despite the hurried nature of the exchange, the pacing is slowed by periodic cuts to Royce slowly walking into this scene through winding back alleys.

Abruptly, in the middle of her solo rescue attempt, Royce returns. Altered to his presence by Ann's scream, Catherine immediately launches into a physical fight with Royce.

Before he can react, Catherine reaches up and strikes Royce across the face. He reels back, and she launches at him. He quickly forces her to over rotate her turning towards him, and pins her firmly against the wall of the basement, directly under a barred window. Once pinned by the shoulders, Royce aggressively spits into her face. Trying to retreat, but with nowhere to go, Catherine squirms from side to side, eyes closed, struggling against the force of Royce's bodyweight. As this is taking place, Ann can be seen moving to break the duct tape restraining both her hands and her feet. Catherine soon gets hold of her nightstick, strikes Royce in the arm and moves to twist his genitals with her free hand. She takes this opportunity to knee him to the ground and breaks free from the wall.

As Ann continues to struggle with her restraints, Catherine strikes Royce repeatedly in the lower torso and legs with her nightstick. On his back, he kicks the stick away and jumps up to grab Catherine by the head and land repeated blows against the nearest wall. Seeing now that Catherine is in a dire situation, Ann redoubles her efforts to get free as she looks around her - focusing on a free weight of indeterminate size. Catherine, now on the floor of the basement and nearly unconscious, is bleeding from both her face and at least one of her hands. As Royce continues to rain blows down on her her promises that "[She's] going to be eating food through a straw for the rest of [her] life." As Ann struggles to be free, Royce continues to stomp on Catherine's abdomen. Royce is now gloating and talking to Catherine as he kicks her. He assures her that "[she's] gonna need someone to wipe her ass for [her]" and asks her if she likes being

kicked. As Royce's violence begins to ascend to a climax, Ann has managed to rip herself away from her ties, grabs the free weight and brings it crashing across the back of Royce's head.

With the threat now momentarily incapacitated, Ann turns to Catherine, who has already removed her pepper spray from her belt, and as Royce rears back to face the two women, she sprays him square in the face. Catherine yells to Ann to get out as Royce retreats into the corner of the basement, blinded. Ann refuses to leave the basement without Catherine, and so, pulling each other up the stairs, the two women drag one another through the front door and into the middle of the street. Hobbled to the police car, and dragging a nearly unconscious Catherine, Ann is finally secured inside the locked car, and Catherine collapses against the side, calling for an ambulance over the radio at her shoulder. Ann is screaming for Catherine, and the action closes with an aerial shot of Catherine, arms extended, laying in the street next to the car as Ann pleads with Catherine, repeatedly shrieking, "Don't do that!"

Discussions of Violence in *Last Tango in Halifax*

Depictions of violence in *Last Tango in Halifax* differ greatly from that of *Happy Valley*. Though gendered violence is not explicitly shown, it is an ever-present specter, particularly throughout Gillian's storyline. Actress Nicola Walker, who plays Gillian in *Last Tango*, discussed the ways in which gendered violence influenced her portrayal of Gillian from the inception of the character. She commented:

"I got interested in this thing that seems to drive her: it may not be the top note but I think there's this awful shame in Gillian. For this seemingly independent, confident, sexually driven woman, sex doesn't mean

anything. She was punishing herself. And I found that very interesting”

(Rees, 2014).

This sense of shame and guilt stems from the death of Gillian’s husband, the circumstances around which become increasingly mysterious and sinister, in equal parts. After a long, expository heavy lead up, it is revealed to the audience that Gillian murdered her husband, Eddie, in the barn of their farm with a log splitter after enduring years of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

The slow burn of this arc takes place of two full seasons (twelve combined hours of television), and primarily through hurried conversations and intercut monologues. The idea of domestic violence as a motive for murder is first broached by Robbie, Gillian’s brother-in-law, to her son. He seeks to incriminate her in Eddie’s death - which was officially ruled to be a suicide - 10 years previous. Again, the audience hears a different retelling of Gillian’s involvement from Gillian herself while seeking to comfort Raf in that same episode: it was a suicide that took place while Eddie was intoxicated (Episode 1, 2012). From this point until the fifth episode of the second season, Gillian stick to the official story; it was a suicide by a troubled man.

After this initial introduction to Gillian’s troubled past, speculation about the events that took place in that barn occur on a number of occasions between Alan, Gillian’s father, and Celia, Alan’s fiancé. These conversations slowly bring more to light regarding exactly how much information Alan had about that day, and the extent to which Gillian was involved in her husband’s death. Initially, Alan confesses that Gillian did nothing to help Eddie after finding him still alive in the barn (Episode 3, 2012). Later, Alan confides in Celia his long-held secret that Gillian, instead of simply neglecting to

offer assistance to her husband, finished Eddie off when realizing he was beyond medical care (Episode 7, 2013). In the end, Alan reveals to Celia his suspicion that what Gillian initially told him of the suspicious circumstances of Eddie's death were completely fabricated, and that he believes that Gillian actually murdered him (Episode 9, 2013). While each of these conversations happens over a long period of time, and within other story arcs, there is an unrelenting nature to the way that Eddie's death continues to haunt Alan and Gillian and the ways that this colors their relationship during the events of the show.

Despite the fact that the focus of the gendered violence in *Last Tango* surrounds Gillian, it is not until the fifth episode of the second season that the audience hears a full accounting of the events that transpired from her (Episode 11, 2013). After spending the day together searching for wedding venues for their newlywed-soon-to-be-wed-again parents, Caroline and Gillian collapse in a drunken heap in the living room of Gillian's rural farmhouse. The two women discuss their flailing relationships and some of their more deep seeded regrets. In the final moments of the episode, Gillian slowly and somewhat reluctantly recounts past domestic abuse to her step-sister, before confessing to Eddie's murder; finally revealing the truth and confirming Alan's long held suspicion. It is the most explicit discussion of domestic abuse and gendered violence the show undertakes.

The interaction of class and gendered violence

Unlike *Happy Valley*, whose bursts of gendered violence occur in localized, intense sequences, violence in *Last Tango* is drawn out, stretch over multi-season arcs sustained by brief discussions leading up to a big reveal. Though violence - of any nature,

but particularly Gillian's history of domestic abuse - is only discussed, it is a strong vein that ultimately defines and drives one of the primary characters in the show. And while gendered violence looks very different in both *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley*, there are crucial similarities in its portrayal - particularly when it comes to both shows relegating these instances of gendered violence to lower and under classes of British socio-economic structures. These signifiers of class come into play when viewers interpret these narratives in light of their own lived experiences.

While the primary focus of this analysis is not semiotics, though understanding the visual references and cultural codes employed in each scene will inform the later discussion on the implementation of certain discursive formations. As I am making an argument for the differences in reaction based on both gender and class, I will be using semiotics to make those chains of signification in each scene more explicit. Semiotics is also crucial to understanding the formation of myth, an idea which I employ in later analysis. Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* (1972) discusses the ways in which myth is a first-level chain of signification that in and of itself becomes a signifier. This signifier then takes on its own respective signs. These chains of signification are important in order to understand the ways in which in which myths are adapted into common cultural codes (Rose, 2016). In television, various myths are often the referents in narrative tropes.

There are numerous makers of class represented in both *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. It is important to understand, in a British context, that class has a complex chain of signification. From accent or vocabulary to the location, style and appearance of one's home, each code sets up interlocking significance that would be

easily readable and recognizable to the British television viewer. Without explicitly discussing these markers of class as they appear, it would be impossible to develop a deep understanding of the profound differences in the representation of gendered violence. Class and gender must be considered together as does their impact on the scenes from a narrative perspective.

In *Happy Valley*, class is used as a visual code of difference throughout the scene in question off the bat between Catherine, in a pristine police officer's uniform, and Royce's mother, Lynn Dewhurst. Pulling open the door she reveals a dark hallway, covered in peeling wallpaper. The two women, when standing face to face are also the personification of class difference. Dewhurst is wearing mis-matched lounge wear, haphazardly assembled so that the viewer can see part of her similarly mismatched bra underneath. There is a hint of a small tattoo on her chest, and her hair has not been washed. These are all indications that this exchange, happening in midday, is not interrupting any work being done on the part of Royce's mother. Immediately, we are to recognize Dewhurst's character based on her mode of speech (slurred and mumbled), her appearance, and the appearance of her home. Dewhurst has been hit by her son, and plays it off as a common occurrence. Catherine is not shocked by this admission, cementing the assumption that while domestic violence in lower class homes is not a given, it is also not a surprise. Similarly, we also see a traditional interpretation of gender roles in violent acts: woman as victim, man as abuser. These subtle cues all work to reify hegemonic gendered and classed assumptions. Without an exchange of words, the audience already arrives to this scene and subsequent fight with an expectation of the "role" each individual plays.

Similarly, *Last Tango in Halifax*, relegates gendered violence and domestic abuse to individuals within a lower socio-economic class. While not destitute by any means, Gillian must work two jobs to pay the bills, describes her farmhouse as a “dump” to fresh eyes (Episode 2, 2012), and did not complete her education. Coupled with this, she is constantly put in stark contrast to her step-sister, Caroline who is a wealthy, Oxford educated doctor of philosophy as well as an extremely successful head teacher of a private school. This difference is marked even down to their respective relationships. Though Caroline is in the middle of a divorce at the outset of the first season, her husband - a wealthy writer and university instructor - is portrayed as more buffoon than brutalizer. Whereas, Gillian’s marriage, as discussed previously, was marred by physical, verbal, sexual and emotional abuse, culminating in murder.

The signifiers of Gillian and Caroline’s class differences range from subtle to overt. These signifiers appear in their varying modes of speech - Gillian with a much thicker, rural Northern English accent to Caroline’s crisp and polished Oxford accent; as well as in their dress - Caroline wears a range of exceptionally clean business casual and fashionable but comfortable leisure outfits and Gillian almost exclusively wears some kind of working outfit - either suitable to her farm or to her part time job at a grocery store. Again, it is through these subtle but constant signifiers of class difference that viewers are able to attach certain, class oriented expectations to each of these women.

It is unclear - and beyond the scope of this analysis, as to the extent of the influence that these class divisions had on viewers, however, as Charlotte Brundson discusses in “Structure of Anxiety: recent British television crime fiction” (1998), public anxieties can both drive and be driven by discursive regimes. It could be that Sally

Wainwright sees gendered violence and domestic abuse as a particular problem for members of the lower class in Britain; it could also be that she utilized these tropes in order to establish a legible narrative foothold for the ‘average’ British viewer. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that such elisions of class, gender, and violence in these shows has subsequently been mediated through public discourse, particularly across internet platforms.

Mediating Medias and the Discursive Multiverse

As mentioned in the introduction, *Happy Valley*'s representation of violence in the first season was not widely discussed until the airing of the fourth episode. In the following days, both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* wrote articles focusing on the violence in this episode in particular. *The Daily Mail* questioned the violence in the show, citing Vivienne Pattison, a representative of MediawatchUK, who claimed that violence on television could “stunt your emotional growth” (Glennie, 2014). Mediawatch UK is a watchdog organization who “campaigns for socially responsible media and against content that is potentially harmful” (MediawatchUK, 2016). This was by far the most outspoken organization on the violence in this episode. However, other organizations did report receiving complaints. Ofcom, the regulatory organization for communication outlets across the UK, received only four complaints for “violence and dangerous behaviour[sp].” (Ofcom, 2016) By comparison, the BBC itself claimed to receive 15 complaints against 45 audience members who contacted the corporation to express their enjoyment of the show. In light of the perceived volume of complaints, however, the BBC released an official statement pertaining to the episode: “It was broadcast in a post-

watershed slot and was clearly signposted with an on-air announcement before the episode started.” (BBC, 2014)

Wainwright has continued to battle the stigma of this controversy. In an interview given in 2016, Wainwright said:

I was misquoted as saying the violence was uplifting. But I did think it was uplifting that Catherine goes into the cellar to rescue Ann. And then Catherine gets beaten up! And then Ann who is the victim, in inverted commas, well she is the victim. But she refuses to be the victim and she helped Catherine get out and that’s what I thought was hopefully uplifting. That it was two women helping each other to escape. That it was devictimizing them. That’s not a word. I suppose it’s lazy journalism. (*The Adam Buckley Podcast*, 2016)

This negative attention forced Wainwright to assume the role of instructor. She tries to reassert her preferred reading at every opportunity, and attempts to mitigate the discursive mediation that takes place in the process of news reporting.

Conversely, there has been no ‘scandal,’ or ‘outrage,’ or even questioning of the portrayal of violence in *Last Tango in Halifax*, because it already fits into the public discourse regarding gendered violence on television. Nor have media institutions turned on Gillian in the way that many articles did on Catherine in *Happy Valley*. At best, Gillian is described as ‘feisty’ and at worst, ‘aggressive’ (Rees, 2014; Woods, 2017). Coverage of gendered violence on *Last Tango* at all is limited - only making an appearance in vague references during interviews and in one or two sentences of an episode recap. The violence, in this context, is more ‘acceptable,’ and thus less ‘shocking’ because it is made to be invisible. It is revealed and dealt with through expository - a much more traditionally “feminine” means of reveal (Ball, 2012). Nicola

Walker, when opening up about her portrayal of Gillian in an interview after the airing of the first two seasons referenced this character's darkness (Woods, 2017):

In the first [season] viewers didn't know about Gillian's hinterland, but I did...People would come up to me and say things like 'she's a game girl' and I would feel pure anguish for Gillian. Only I knew about the darkness of her violent first marriage and how it coloured her attitude to sex. It was heartbreaking but at that stage I didn't know if the audience would ever find out so I had to play her on level that hinted at her past without revealing too much.

Like Wainwright, Walker wants to make clear the fact that though this was not a “top note” as she calls it (Rees, 2014). Her understanding of Gillian's lived experience greatly affected the way that Walker played the character, but also affected Walker's reactions to viewers when seeing references to Gillian as a ‘game girl’ - a slang term used for a very sexually active woman. As a result, Walker too became an instructor of sorts in asserting that this violent past was at the forefront of Gillian's choices in the present; once again seeking to highlight the importance of the ever-present, but invisible violence. Rather than the audience being made to feel uncomfortable (as with *Happy Valley*), it was actually the other way around.

Disrupting and appeasing: the give and take of a feminist in television

The reaction to and subsequent discourse surrounding each instance of gendered violence implicates the ways in which violence on television becomes ‘acceptable.’ The fight between Catherine and Royce is a clear disruption of the male hero myth. This is a device often used in film and on television, wherein the male hero ‘goes rogue’ - often alone - to rescue another character (often a woman or a child) who finds themselves in

peril. It is a neoliberal, individualist model of whatever-it-takes-heroism, and when this ‘hero’ is male, the act is lauded (Jeffords, 1994).

Catherine’s actions follow this same trajectory. She is alone, she is acting on instinct, she refuses to wait for backup, and her rescue attempt relies on on extremely physical means. All of this would be par for the course, and possibly even praised - had Catherine been a man. By placing a female-gendered body in the center of traditional ‘hero’ activity, Sally Wainwright effectively disrupted the myth at it’s core. When this myth was disrupted, the hegemonic system through which it operates was threatened as well.

It was at this point that influential institutions began to become uncomfortable. Unable to process the unrecognizable code of the maverick and physical female hero, media outlets instead began to condemn such a representation of what they interpreted as ‘gratuitous violence against women.’ Drawing authority from a comparatively meager amount of ‘audience reactions’ (when compared to the total viewing figures), a false controversy created a space within the public sphere for the disruption to be chastised and punished, and thus allowing this scene to become ‘understandable’ though not ‘acceptable.’

On the other side of the coin, is Gillian in *Last Tango in Halifax*. Possibly the best review of this show was when it was called “quietly subversive” by Fiona Mountford in *The Independent* (2014) for its majority female cast - none of whom are under 40, queer storyline (two openly lesbian characters) and Gillian’s liberal attitude towards sex (Mountford, 2014). That brief, but accurate, phrase sets in contrast the discursive regimes around each of these Wainwright tours de force. *Last Tango in Halifax* is the nice, calm,

“rollicking good family story” with two people in their 70s at the center (Mountford, 2014). It has developed the reputation that this is the kind of show you can watch with your daughter and your mother, and no one will be shocked or horrified. The ‘quiet subversion’ of the show is acceptable because it is just that - quiet; and as a result, typifies Ball’s critique of the feminization of television.

Looking at these two scenes in contrast to one another allows for a better understanding of the ways in which media institutions generate discursive formations of ‘acceptable’ gendered violence on television. Despite the work that Sally Wainwright may be attempting to do in disrupting these myths, the ways in which her efforts are interpreted and reinterpreted for public consumption by outside sources of power can profoundly alter the encoding and decoding process (Hall, 2006). The tertiary mediation of these shows between creator and viewer in the form of articles like those in *The Independent*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, and *The Telegraph* work as an institutional feedback to reinforce hegemonic narratives on products that seek to challenge or defy, like the depictions of gendered violence in *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. Whether or not the assertion of these narrative assertions by media institutions continue to dominate entertainment discourse, particularly in the process of meaning making, remains to be seen. As relationships between media conglomerates, producers, creators, viewers and fans become less unidirectional and even more decentralized such means of hegemonic dissemination will continue to lose ground.

CONCLUSION

‘I write what I write because it is what I want to watch’

Sally Wainwright’s depiction of gendered violence and the relationships between women in those circumstances emerges from a core of her own relational experiences with others throughout her life. By examining, in her own words, the fundamental themes that shaped her as a writer, it becomes clear that not only does Wainwright write what she knows – in terms of trusting relationship between women, both on a personal and professional level – but her writing also reflects the real-life experiences of those she talks to and works with. She depicts the ‘real’ relationships between women because she does not see them on television. As a feminist, and as a writer invested in making engaging shows, Wainwright seeks to represent women in a way that is authentic, because she knows that this authentic representation matters. Through both dialogue and composition, Wainwright crafts relationships based on her own understanding of the real relationships between women in her own life. Reiterating her assertion made it in the introduction, “Women do have very strong relationships with each other and you don’t often see that dramatised on telly” (Frost, 2014), it is clear that Wainwright believes this kind of representation is critical to her own consciousness as a feminist writer.

As Wright (2007) explored in her dissertation, television can play a critical role in the formation of a feminist consciousness for women learner-viewers. This interaction between identity and pedagogy through the medium of television can only be strengthened when a feminist consciousness is creating empowering content and generates this content from a conviction of authentic representation of the relationships between women, and the critical importance these relationships have to women’s lives.

A New Era for the Mediation of Lived Experience

With sites like Twitter becoming a common ground for discussion and interaction surrounding television programming, there is a new means for media outlets to source ‘audience reactions’ to place within a particular discursive regime. Further examination of these Twitter reactions on a larger scale can help to better explore the ways that the relationship between creator and audience, and gain further understanding of the ways in which the lived experiences of both creators and viewers that inform these relationships can be shaped across mediums.

It is no longer a one, or even two-way conversation. It is mediation, instruction, conversation and understanding coming together on both individual and discursive levels. We need to analyze and think about individual’s relationships to the media that they consume and participate in differently. It is a multi-directional, multi-level, multiverse of interaction. So, twitter is important. Media is important. The writer is important. The production is important. And the show itself is a mediation of all of those things. It is a meeting place and the fertile soil on which intention, interpretation and impact is sown. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed “poses the question of orientation,” and uses phenomenology to explain the ways in which we understand object orientation as it pertains to sexual orientation and race (1). She explores the notion of the “line” of orientation, both physically and metaphorically, tracing both whiteness and straightness as easily accessible orientations because they are “within the reach” of this white heterosexual line of orientation (126). She ultimately proposes a disorientation from this line by queering phenomenology and its relationship to objects. In failed orientations queer phenomenology brings objects “to life in loss of place” (165). In disorienting such

lines, Ahmed seeks to extend the theoretical viability of phenomenology to those constantly queering the straight line of orientation.

This theoretical work extends my discussion of the queering of and intersection with the white heterosexual line of orientation on *LTIH* and *HV*. The ways in which those objects extend the lines of orientation, and the places in which that reach falls short is critical in understanding the reaction to this show by the media, and the reflexivity Sally Wainwright brings to many of her interviews. This reflexivity is critical to both the orientation of the show and to the orientation of others to the show - the point at which object extends to and reaches another object.

The implications of theorizing television as the mediation of lived experience through the use of semiotic phenomenology extends beyond that of Sally Wainwright's work. Indeed, in this era of hyper connectivity, super fandom, social media multi-directional multi-media entertainment structures - like streaming services, pop culture conventions, fan-generated content, one on one interactions between creators and viewers on a large and public scale - we need more complex ways to articulate and account for the effect that these extra-media lived experiences have on the entertainment programs that are the mediation of this ever-growing web. From here, it is important to further understand such phenomena – not because it is universal and replicable and reproducible as data and hard numbers, but for the exact opposite reason. Television and its mediation of lived experience is a phenomenological, intersubjective, instance of an experience.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. *Queer Phenomenology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Ball, Vicky. "The 'feminization' of British television and the re-traditionalization of gender." *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012): 248-264.
- BARB. (2016). *Weekly Viewing Data*. Retrieved from <http://www.barb.co.uk/viewing-data/> [Retrieved on 1 November 2016].
- Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Braithewaite, A. "'It's a Beast Thing': Victimization, violence, and popular masculine crises." *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 4 (2011): 417 - 432.
- Brown, M. (2014, May 4). Happy Valley writer: I don't have to apologise for show's violence. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/may/25/happy-valley-bbc-violence-sally-wainwright>
- Brunsdon, C. "Structure of anxiety: recent British television crime fiction." *Screen* 39, no. 3 (1998): 223-243.
- Buckly, A. (2016 June 21) EP 26: SALLY WAINWRIGHT. *The Adam Buckley Podcast*. Podcast retrieved from <https://www.acast.com/adambuxton/ep.26-sallywainwright>
- Butler, J. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519 - 531.
- Buxton, A. *EP. 26 - SALLY WAINWRIGHT*. Podcast audio. The Adam Buxton Podcast. MP3, 1:07:03. Accessed November 1, 2016. <https://www.acast.com/adambuxton/ep.26-sallywainwright>.
- Cavender, G. & N. Jurik. "Scene Composition and Justice for Women: An Analysis of the Portrayal of Detective Tennison in the British Television Program Prime Suspect." *Feminist Criminology* 2, no. 4 (2007): 277-303.
- Frost, V. "Sally Wainwright: 'I like writing women, they're heroic'." *The Guardian* (London, UK), Jun. 6, 2014.
- Garner, Jr., S. *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Glennie, A. (2014, May 21). Did the BBC's brutal Happy Valley go too far? Viewers shocked by blood-soaked climax to violent TV drama. *The Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2635491/A-gruesome-murder->

country-road-savage-beating-basement-bathed-blood-Did-BBCs-brutal-Happy-Valley-far.html

- Hall, S. (2006). Encoding/Decoding. *Media and Cultural Studies*, 163 - 174.
- Henderson, F. "The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers' Room." *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 2 (2011): 145-152.
- Kanata, T. "'I don't see color - we're all just human beings': Phenomenology of student's online discourses on race, ethnicity and prejudice." PhD diss. Arizona State University, Tempe, 2003. ProQuest Information and Learning Company (3094971).
- Kumar, S. Hegemony in Contemporary Culture and Media and the Need for a Counter Initiative. *Economic and Political Weekly* (2011) 16, no. 51: 31-39.
- Jeffords, S. (1994). *Hard bodies: Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan era*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.
- Martinez, J. *Communicative Sexualities: A Communicology of Sexual Experience*. New York: Lexington Books, 2011.
- Mountford, F. (2014, April 4). Nicola Walker interview: 'There's more pressure in feeling rated', *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/nicola-walker-interview-there-s-more-pressure-in-feeling-rated-9238554.html>
- Ofcom. (2016). *The Broadcast and on-demand bulletin*. Retrieved from <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins> [Retrieved on 1 November 2016].
- Rees, J. (2014, April 04). Nicola Walker: 'I've got a feisty face', *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/10735392/Nicola-Walker-Ive-got-a-feisty-face.html>
- Rose, G. (2016). Discourse analysis I, In *Visual Methodologies* (4th ed.), 186-219.
- Rose, G. (2016). Semiology: Laying bare the prejudices. In *Visual Methodologies* (4th ed.), 106-146.
- Sobchak, V. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- States, B. *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1985.

Sydney-Smith, S. "Endless interrogation: *Prime Suspect* deconstructing realism through the female body." *Feminist Media Studies* 7, no. 2 (2007): 189 - 202.

Valentine, G. (2014, August 20). It's a grueling, gripping 'Happy Valley', *The AV Club*. Retrieved from <http://www.avclub.com/review/its-grueling-gripping-happy-valley-208313>

Wainwright, S. *Desert Island Discs*. (2014). By Kristy Young. BBC Radio 4.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2014). Episode One [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2014). Episode Two [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2014). Episode Five [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2012). Episode Three [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2012). Episode Four [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2012). Episode Five [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Last Tango in Halifax*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2014 May 20). Episode Four [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Happy Valley*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Wainwright, S. (Writer & Director). (2014 May 27). Episode Five [Television series episode]. In N. Schindler (Producer), *Happy Valley*. Manchester, United Kingdom: RED Production Company.

Woods, J.(2017, February 6). Unforgotten's Nicola Walker: 'My face either makes me look as though I'm deep in thought, or about to fight you', *The Telegraph*.

Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/unforgottens-nicola-walker-face-either-makes-look-though-deep/>

Wright, R. "Adult Education, Popular Culture, and Women's Identity Development: Self-Directed Learning with 'The Avengers.'" Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2007.