

Chapter 6

It *Can* Happen Here:

Noir Style and the Politics of Antifascism in *Crossfire*

Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire* (1947) merits closer attention, however. It's been too rapidly pigeonholed among films dealing with American racial problems. . . . Dmytryk has attended the school of film noir, and this is felt in every sequence. Here, the influence is indisputable: without *Murder, My Sweet*, *Crossfire* wouldn't have had this style.

—Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton,
A Panorama of American Film Noir

Though numerous critics have since struggled with how best to categorize *Crossfire*—is it film noir? Is it a social problem film?—here, in one of the originating texts on film noir, French critics Borde and Chaumeton, argue for *Crossfire's* inclusion in the noir canon. For them, *Crossfire* stands out for its narrative and visual style—clearly linked to *Murder, My Sweet*, the original Scott-Paxton-Dmytryk noir—which for them sets *Crossfire* definitely apart from a "stodgy" social problem film like *The Best Years of Our Lives* (though *Gentleman's Agreement* is probably the more appropriate comparison).¹

Borde and Chaumeton's auteurist privileging of the noir visual style and the role of Dmytryk as director in *Crossfire*, however, masks the critical contributions—creative and political—of writer-producer Adrian Scott. It was Scott who chose the hard-boiled, politically inflected literary material, and Scott, along with writing partner John Paxton, who was responsible for the film's "rapid-fire brutal narrative" and its "edgy, terse dialogue." Even more important, I think, these critics' privileging of noir style over social content underestimates the ways in which film noir was itself rooted in resistance—resistance to the Production Code and to the limitations of the studio system; resistance to a Hollywood style and mode of production that embraced "entertainment" over "art"; resistance to the glossy Hollywood vision that skated over the violence inherent in capitalist America, the discontent and instability that simmered below the prosperous, complacent, self-congratulatory surface of the American Way of Life.

In the noir films produced by Adrian Scott, this resistance is fundamentally rooted in the politics of the Popular Front.² Indeed, I would argue that the historical significance of *Crossfire* and the other films by this creative trio lies in the melding of noir style and antifascist politics. As a writer-producer, Scott took three stabs at the noir oeuvre, and with each film the political agenda embedded in the investigative narrative became more defined, focused, and hard-hitting. In *Murder, My Sweet* the search for a jade necklace opens the door to an exploration

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of the collision of the criminal underworld and a corrupt upper class; in *Cornered*, a soldier's search for revenge opens the door to exploration of the persistence of fascism in the postwar world. Though both films suggest that the investigative narrative and the visual style of noir held great potential for dramatizing the politics of antifascism, Scott was also aware of the limitations of these devices, and was stung by comments such as these, which were part of the *Hollywood Reporter's* review of *Cornered*:

If a post-war warning is the purpose of this picture, a very round-about way is chosen to give it importance. The pursuit is by a man seeking revenge for the woman he loved. It is therefore incidental that he brings to justice a Nazi band. His antagonists could just as well have been jewel thieves or coffee planters. It wouldn't have changed the chase.³

With *Crossfire*, Scott was determined to make a film in which the political message was not incidental and would not be lost in either the narrative conventions of the investigative thriller or the visual style of noir. In focusing on the investigation of a *politically* motivated murder, *Crossfire* negotiates the realism of noir and the idealism of the Popular Front and suggests that, in the hands of a leftist like Adrian Scott, noir was indeed an ideal vehicle for dramatizing antifascism.

Performativity and Intertextuality

Film historian James Naremore notes that "films depend on a form of communication whereby meanings are acted out; the experience of watching them involves not only a pleasure in storytelling but also a delight in bodies and expressive movement, an enjoyment of familiar performing skills, and an interest in players as 'real persons.'"⁴ In *Crossfire*, performance is particularly crucial to the dramatization of its Popular Front politics. The casting decisions made by Scott and the performances of those chosen actors are crucial in embodying on-screen fascism and antifascism, Jewishness and Americanness, masculinity and femininity. These performances were often reinforced in interesting ways by the actors' offscreen personas, created for the actors by the studio's publicity machine, as well as by public perceptions of these stars that accrued from their work in other films.

Following Naremore's lead, this chapter weaves together an analysis of the ideological work of narrative, particularly through the process of revising the screenplay, and a discussion of visual style, performance, and star personas in *Crossfire*. Expanding the previous discussion of performances of masculinity in *The Brick Foxhole*, I argue that the competing versions of masculinity embodied by *Crossfire's* leading men—Robert Young, Robert Ryan, and Robert Mitchum—reflect the postwar negotiation and construction of normative

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masculinity. As Steven Cohan notes, "Film makes it especially difficult not to think of masculinity as a masquerade. Because, as both a medium and an institution, Hollywood cinema depends so greatly on making the sexually differentiated bodies of stars visible to an audience, it invariably brings the performativity of gender to the forefront."⁵ Star personas, aided by studio publicity that emphasize the congruence between the actors' on-screen roles and offscreen lives, played a key role in this negotiation by suggesting that the stars were simply "acting naturally" in these performances of masculinity. In addition, the intertextuality between the actors' previous roles and their performances in *Crossfire* provided a further guide for audiences to read the meanings embedded in the stars' personas.⁶

Visual style, too, played a critical role in constructing meaning in *Crossfire*. By 1947, Dmytryk, considered by one film historian to be "perhaps the most underrated stylist of Hollywood's expressionist period," had come into his own as a noir director.⁷ Working with cameraman J. Roy Hunt on *Crossfire*, Dmytryk masterfully used high-contrast lighting, exaggerated camera angles, extreme close-ups, tight cutting, and other classical noir stylizations to create a visual mood that reiterates the danger, volatility, and vulnerability constructed by the narrative.⁸ Ultimately, visual style and performance intersect to reinforce the ideological work of *Crossfire*'s narrative.

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Screenplay Revisions and the Final Shoot

Before Dmytryk began shooting *Crossfire* on March 4, Paxton wrote three more drafts of the screenplay. Though each follows the same general plot set in the first draft, the various revisions—some large, some small—reveal much. Many of the changes document Scott and Paxton's attempts to reclaim the political material they had excised in adapting the novel. For example, in the early drafts Paxton included a series of establishing shots that precede the murder scene. All three versions opened with a lone soldier walking with a girl against the backdrop of the Lincoln Memorial. In the first draft, Paxton followed this opening with a shot of a faceless soldier walking unsteadily through the night, one foot on the curb and the other in the gutter, perhaps to foreshadow Mitch's innocence by intimating that he was wandering the streets while Samuels was murdered. The second draft omits this wandering soldier and instead opens with the Lincoln Memorial and a voice-over narration:

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This story began a long time ago. . . . It isn't over yet, either. . . . It began in the time of Genghis Khan, in the time of Moses, in the time of Jesus Christ, in the time of Attila the Hun—and in the time before that. . . . This part of it happened in Washington, D.C. in 1946.⁹

Drawn from the final pages of *The Brick Foxhole*, this brief quote condenses Keeley's extended examination of the historical roots of the modern antifascist war. Like author Richard Brooks, Scott and Paxton wanted to convey the long history of intolerance, linking present prejudice to past hatreds. The final script as shot, however, omits these establishing sequences and the voice-over narration. Paxton suggests that these shots, requiring cars and back projection, might have been too expensive to film and so were deleted. However, he also notes that he often began his screenplays with such devices "to help frame the material, and then, in the end discovered nobody liked them, that they didn't really mean much."¹⁰ More importantly, perhaps, Joseph Breen objected to the invocation of Jesus Christ, particularly "in view of the fact that in its present context, being mentioned along with Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun, it might prove highly offensive to religious-minded people"¹¹ (including Breen himself, one might suppose).

The final version of *Crossfire* opens abruptly with the murder of Samuels. As directed by Dmytryk and filmed by cameraman J. Roy Hunt, the opening scene is a stylistic tour de force, establishing *Crossfire* definitely as a film noir. The scene opens with a single lamp burning against a black screen. The camera pulls back to reveal a struggle—though we never actually see the two men fighting, only their larger-than-life shadows projected onto the wall, accompanied by a vivid soundtrack featuring heavy breathing and grunts and the wet, smacking sound of slaps and punches. A body crashes into the table, sending the lamp to the floor, and the screen goes black. Then the lamp is switched on, revealing a man's crouched body, his head obscured by the darkness that dominates the top half of the screen. The camera lingers portentiously on the man's hands: large, limply curled, but definitely menacing. The top of the screen remains black and we see only the man's legs as he crosses the room, picks up another man, and carries him from the room. The door opens and light spills into the apartment, revealing a coffee table littered with glasses and liquor bottles, and then the camera pans back to the lifeless body lying face down on the floor. It is a powerful shot: a murder victim, unknown; a murderer, equally anonymous.

The next scene opens with the body being rolled over, and the camera pans from the bespectacled coroner to a tight shot of Detective Finlay. Played by Robert Young, Finlay is low key, almost deadpan. With his hair graying at the temples and a pipe clenched in his teeth, Young's Finlay evokes both professionalism and a specifically paternal authority—an image that would come to define Young in his later television roles in *Father Knows Best* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.* However, in 1947, Young was known primarily as a debonair leading man, specializing in romantic comedies, though he had appeared in a number of more serious dramatic roles, particularly in antifascist films like *Three Comrades* (1938) and

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The Mortal Storm (1940). Cast slightly off type in *Crossfire*, Young's good-guy screen persona ultimately lent credence to his portrayal of Finlay.

In Young's first appearance on screen, a close-up of his face dominates the shot, just as his character will dominate the narrative of investigation throughout the film. Finlay steps away from the body (and the camera), revealing the interior of Samuels's apartment. Tastefully decorated, with elegant furniture, shelves of books and curios, and artwork on the walls, the setting suggests wealth and class status. Miss Lewis, Samuels's girlfriend (played by Margo Dwyer), is equally sophisticated: dark, attractive, well-dressed. However, Finlay's first question to her—"Was Samuels drunk when you left him at the bar?"—sets a sordid, menacing tone, undercutting the bourgeois comfort of their surroundings. Miss Lewis's story of meeting the four soldiers in the bar is classic noir: a random encounter with strangers embroils innocents in a complicated web of deceit and danger. 10

As if to reinforce the theme of inexorable fate, Finlay then turns his attention from Miss Lewis to the lifeless body of Samuels. In the first draft of the screenplay, the coroner wordlessly illustrates the mode of death with several short quick punches; in the second draft, he comments that "he probably hit his head on the way down." In his personal copy of this screenplay draft, Scott scribbled "no hit table," and in the final draft, Finlay asks the coroner, "Could he have hit his head on the table as he fell?" "He could have. But with the beating he took, it wouldn't have made much difference one way or the other," the coroner replies, removing any speculation that Samuels's death might have been an accident. Having established that Samuels was the victim of a deliberate murder, Finlay sets the investigation in motion. He has a suspect: a Corporal Mitchell, whose wallet has been found in the couch. Finlay instructs his men to begin by asking questions at the bar, saying: "They won't know anything, but check anyway."¹² This gloomy prediction signifies both Finlay's positivist professionalism—he will check all the facts and follow every lead—and his existential recognition of the inadequacy of the investigative process itself, his realization that the facts will not necessarily provide meaningful or enduring answers. 11

At this point Monty appears, filling the doorway with his looming presence. His soldier's uniform, stripped of all military insignia save a discharge button, registers simply as a khaki shirt, suggesting the German Brown Shirts or Italian Black Shirts.¹³ Robert Ryan, ruggedly masculine, dark, unconventionally good-looking, brought a tough physical presence to the role of Monty. Ryan, a Chicago native, had been the heavyweight boxing champion in his four years at Dartmouth College. After graduating, he held a wide variety of odd jobs while studying acting with celebrated German director Max Reinhardt in Hollywood and 12

playing small parts at the Paramount studio. Ryan made his stage debut in 1939, and from 1941 to 1942 he appeared as a cynical lover in the Broadway production of Clifford Odets's play *Clash by Night*. Ryan returned to Hollywood in 1942 with a contract at RKO and appeared with excellent notices in a number of war films. In early 1944 he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served as a drill instructor at Camp Pendleton until he was discharged in November 1945.¹⁴ By 1947 Ryan was beginning to establish a definite screen persona: a "good guy" and a team player. In *Bombardier* (1943), for example, he played a reckless but honorable flyer, a man who defies doctor's orders and the pain of broken ribs rather than be left behind by his crew, and who exposes a ring of fifth-columnists who want him to reveal military secrets. In *Behind the Rising Sun* (1943) he played Lefty, an American coach of a Japanese baseball team, who steps into the boxing ring—with a burly Japanese karate expert—to save the reputation of a friend and fellow expatriate. His breakthrough role came in the romantic wartime weepie, *Tender Comrade* (1944), as Ginger Rogers's charming and very patriotic soldier-husband who gives his life for the cause of freedom. Playing Monty in *Crossfire* was a marked change from Ryan's earlier roles, and it began a new trend for him. While he frequently played heroic roles in later films, he was just as often cast as a menacing, violent, or intolerant character, in films such as *Act of Violence* (1949), *Beware My Lovely* (1952), *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), and *Odds against Tomorrow* (1959). Though the accounts of his wartime conversation with Richard Brooks may well be apocryphal, it is clear from a number of sources that Ryan lobbied hard to win the role of Montgomery in *Crossfire*. The physical presence he brought to the part captured much of the barely repressed violence, latent homosexuality, and authoritarianism that were not always explicit in Paxton's adaptation of *The Brick Foxhole*.

Returning to the scene of his crime, Monty feigns innocence, asking "Has something happened?" and noting cannily, "You're cops?" In this scene, Dmytryk used a series of over-the-shoulder shots and indirect lighting to great effect. Standing just outside the doorway as Finlay questions him, Monty is merely a hulking black presence in the shots taken from his back, and he crowds the frame when the camera is positioned behind Finlay. While the shots of Finlay show his face in full light, Monty is half-hidden in shadow, his face bifurcated into dark and light. Though Monty is deferential to Finlay's authority and frequently calls the detective "sir," there is a subtle defiance in his stance, his arms akimbo, thumbs tucked into his waistband. Finlay asks him if he was drunk that night, and Monty replies, with smug bravado, "I had a couple, but I can handle that." He tells Finlay that he came to the apartment looking for his "buddy" Mitchell. In this first encounter with Finlay, Monty constantly invokes his "buddies," a markedly repetitive litany that not only introduces the film's theme of loyalty and homosocial bonds among fighting men, but also suggests Monty's repressed

homosexuality:

Finlay: Who's we?
Monty: Me and another buddy of mine.
Finlay: Who'd you come here with?
Monty: With these two buddies of mine and this fellow.

After Miss Lewis confirms that Monty was at the bar, but that he was not the soldier Samuels was talking to when she left, Finlay resumes his questioning:

Finlay: What are you doing in Washington?
Monty: I just came back to see some of my buddies.
Finlay: Where are you staying?
Monty: At the Stewart Hotel. The Stewart's where I used to be stationed. I'm sponging a free bunk from one of my buddies.¹⁵

Monty's affirmation (and reaffirmation) of his membership in the band of brothers rings hollow, however, particularly in light of the next scene, in which Sergeant Keeley and his men demonstrate a more authentic military (and masculine) solidarity. The soldiers are playing poker in Keeley's room (which he shares with Mitchell) at the Stewart Hotel. Keeley, brilliantly underplayed by Robert Mitchum, is clearly the leader of these men: he tells them that he's "closing up early" that night because he and Mitch are going "crawling"—soldierly slang for barhopping. One of the men chimes in, "What are you? His father or something?" suggesting a caretaking, paternal element to Keeley's authority. When the MPs arrive, Keeley takes charge. He is the only man who responds to their questions about Mitchell, and he alone accompanies them to the police station to intervene in support of his buddy. Later, when Keeley returns to the hotel, the GIs jump to their feet—as if responding to a superior officer's cry of "Attention!"—and gather eagerly around him to hear the news about Mitch. As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Keeley is an oracle, not only for Mitchell but for all of "his" men. When he tells them that they have to find Mitch, the men respond instantly to his command: "Well, what are we waiting for?" Keeley deploys the soldiers, sending them out into the night on a reconnaissance mission in search of Mitch, while he establishes his headquarters behind the lines, in the hotel coffee shop.¹⁶

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Robert Mitchum, even more than Robert Ryan, personifies the street-smart, wisecracking "city boy." Audiences in 1947 identified Mitchum as a regular guy, both on-screen and off. This impression was deliberately constructed by studio

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publicity that emphasized his marriage to his high-school sweetheart and his work in a Lockheed defense plant during the war, for example, and suggested that Mitchum, rather than consciously pursuing either creative expression or stardom, was a "natural." As gossip columnist Sidney Skolsky remarked in a 1947 article, "Robert Mitchum admits that he originally wanted to be a bum. He became a movie actor." Indeed, Mitchum never formally studied acting, though as a youth he performed in a vaudeville act with his sister. In 1942 he joined the Long Beach Theater Guild and the following year made his film debut in a series of Hopalong Cassidy westerns, making eighteen movies in 1943 alone. Mitchum definitively broke into starring roles in 1945 with *The Story of G.I. Joe* and was nominated for an Academy Award for best supporting actor for his portrayal of Lieutenant Walker. Drafted in 1944, he spent eight months in the Army. Upon his return to Hollywood, he starred in a string of hard-boiled thrillers, including *The Locket* (1946), *Pursued* (1946), and *Out of the Past* (1947), as well as the postwar demobilization drama *Till the End of Time* (1947), directed by Dmytryk and produced by Schary. These roles reinforced the audience's association of Mitchum with a rugged and slightly rebellious masculinity, an image reiterated by the Hollywood publicity machine. For example, according to Skolsky, Mitchum hated the color pink, fancy desserts, and "people who wear monograms on their clothes." Skolsky's article continues, "He takes his work seriously but has fun while doing it. He comes on the set knowing his job, but eager to improve. He is not in awe of any person. . . . He still pals around with the same group he knew when he was struggling, and likes to make the rounds with the boys."¹⁷

As played by Mitchum, Keeley's manliness is never in question. He exudes a virile self-confidence, from the jaunty angle of his soldier's cap to the casual way he tips back his chair, nonchalantly balancing himself during his interview with Finlay. Keeley, like Mitchum, is "not in awe of any person," including Captain Finlay, as his subtle sarcasm indicates. In *Crossfire*, Keeley is tough through and through. As he explains, "Look, Finlay, this sort of life doesn't bother some soldiers. It doesn't bother me much. I haven't seen my wife for two years. When I do, maybe we'll pick right up again. Maybe we won't. But I don't worry about it now. Mitchell's not like that. He's not tough. He needs his wife."¹⁸ In the first drafts, this speech was prefaced by the line, "Some soldiers can get away with this sort of thing," suggesting that for some men the war was a not altogether unwelcome opportunity to be free of their wives. Though this is certainly in keeping with Brooks's emphasis on the complicated nature of marital relations, the line was deleted following PCA objections that it seemed to condone adultery.¹⁹

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In this interview with Finlay, Keeley establishes his own manliness—and Mitch's lack thereof—with great economy. As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Keeley is a war hero:

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he—unlike Mitch—has killed men "where you get medals for it." Keeley used to work as a "newspaperman," an eminently masculine synonym for "journalist" in the Hollywood lexicon. Now, for the Army, he does an "ink job. Purple ink. Instead of the Purple Heart, we get purple ink."²⁰ Mitch's artistic background, established in *The Brick Foxhole*, is also tightly compressed in the film. All mention of his work as a Disney cartoonist is omitted, and Mitch is transformed simply into "an artist." In the early drafts, Paxton characterized Mitch as a painter of nudes, suggesting that he is a "serious" artist. However, the Breen Office objected to this reference to nudity, however attenuated, and Paxton changed the line to the less offensive remarks, "He's an artist. He used to do cows eating grass. He's branched out now. He does signs. KEEP THIS WASHROOM CLEAN."²¹ Later, during Mitch's conversation with Samuels in the bar, we learn that as a civilian Mitchell had painted a post-office mural for the WPA, a reference that serves not only as a hint of Mitchell's liberalism, but also as a quick reminder of the cultural work of the New Deal—an issue of significant importance to the Hollywood Left.

In *Crossfire*, Paxton and Scott deleted the overheard-rumor device that provoked Mitchell's crisis in the novel; instead, the problem between Mitchell and Mary is simply a failure to communicate, though Keeley does hint at a possible infidelity in suggesting to Finlay, "Maybe she said something in one of her letters that made him suspicious of her love life. I don't know." Finlay asks why Keeley called Mrs. Mitchell, spearing the telephone message aggressively with his letter opener. Keeley explains that Mary called him first, going behind her husband's back to get information from his best friend. The problems in Mitch's marriage, particularly the lack of communication, as well as the dislocation of military service, have pushed him over the edge. As Keeley explains: "He's homesick—he's wife-sick. . . . Anyway, he's got snakes. He's been nuts—but not nuts enough to kill anybody." Keeley adds that Mitchell, trying to "act like a real soldier," had gone to find a girl.²²

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Some of Brooks's suspicion of the state filters through in this scene. Though his shirt sleeves are rolled up to signify that he is ready to get down to work, Finlay's evident exhaustion—he sits slumped behind his desk and frequently rubs his face and eyes as if to stay awake—raises doubts about his fitness for this job. As Finlay himself says, "Nothing interests me anymore. It used to, but not any more. I've been at this too long. I go about it the only way I know how. I collect as many facts as possible. Most of them are useless." Earlier drafts included the line, "It's just a job," perhaps in reference to Finlay's concern, in the novel, with keeping his own job.²³ These doubts about Finlay's judgment are exacerbated by his naïveté about Monty's character and his seeming willingness to accept Monty's story as fact.

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The competition between Keeley and Monty to influence Mitch is also clearly laid out in this scene. Finlay identifies the bond between Keeley and Mitchell: "You're Mitchell's closest friend, aren't you?" Keeley replies, "Yeah, but I don't advertise it." In sharp contrast to Monty, who repeatedly announces his place in the buddy system, for Keeley the bonds of male friendship need no elaboration or public affirmation. Finlay, however, seems unable to see Monty's insincerity, and Keeley immediately becomes suspicious when Finlay mentions Mitch's "other friend." "Where does Montgomery come in?" he demands. As Finlay recounts the discovery of Samuels's body and the appearance of Monty, Keeley interrupts him, commenting sarcastically: "You're just taking Monty's word for all this?"²⁴ As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Monty's "defense" of Mitch only casts more suspicion upon him. "Keeley, you hear all this they're trying to pin on Mitch? This is serious. They're crucifying the kid. You know Mitch—he won't have a chance." Though the novel's frank depiction of homosexual pickup and seduction is excised from the screenplay, there is still an insinuation of homosexuality in Monty's line, "Well, I just mean that Mitchell's not the kind of guy who knows the scoop on things like this. He's an artist—He's sensitive." Monty, however, is "in the know," especially about violence and murder. As he reminds Finlay: "I been a cop myself. In St. Louis. Four years in the jungle on the East side. I know the score."²⁵ In earlier drafts, Paxton and Scott used the phrase, "Four years in a nigger precinct," to emphasize Monty's wide-ranging prejudices. Though they later deleted the word "nigger" at the instruction of the PCA, their change to "the jungle" retains the same connotation, particularly in reference to East St. Louis, a historically black city known for its poverty and troubled race relations and located quite literally on "the other side of the tracks"—or in this case, on the other side of the Mississippi River.²⁶ Monty's earlier deference to Finlay's authority is now replaced by belligerence, as Monty asserts his own authority—as a former cop himself, as a soldier (reinforced by the presence of Keeley, his comrade-in-arms), and as a narrator, as he tells his version of what happened.

The scene fades from Finlay's office to a flashback to the bar where Monty and his "buddies"—Mitch (George Cooper), Floyd (Steve Brodie), and Leroy (Bill Phipps)—encounter Samuels (Sam Levene) and Miss Lewis. Reflecting not only his role as narrator, but also his own sense of self-importance, Monty is the center of attention throughout this scene, while the other characters remain virtually silent. Mitch sits moodily at the edge of the group, morose and withdrawn, while Floyd and Leroy sit flanking Monty. Even as Monty presents himself in the best possible light in narrating this flashback, it is apparent that he is trouble. In this scene, Paxton and Scott captured much of Brooks's explication of Monty's authoritarian personality.

When a waiter reaches between the men for a tray of glasses, Leroy steps out of

the way and bumps into Miss Lewis, spilling a drink on her dress. He apologizes in a soft Southern drawl, and Samuels replies civilly, "That's all right. It was an accident." Monty, however, seizes a towel and begins dabbing at Miss Lewis's sleeve, holding her arm familiarly. Her knowing glance at Samuels communicates their shared disdain for the bullying Monty as he barks, "You silly hillbilly, why don't you watch what you're doing? You'll have to forgive Leroy here. Leroy's from Tennessee. He just started wearing shoes." Even as he is making fun of him, Monty drapes his arm insinuatingly around Leroy's shoulders. When Leroy pulls away, Monty says, insincerely, "Well, look there. I hurt Leroy's feelings." Miss Lewis escapes to take care of her dress, saying, "Right back, Sammy," and Monty eases himself into her seat next to Samuels, insinuating himself into a conversation, with "Well, that's the way it is, Sammy."²⁷

As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Monty is too friendly, too familiar; he imposes himself upon others, physically and verbally. Again, he dominates the conversation, while Samuels sits quietly, politely tolerating Monty's aggressive bluster. In his speech, Monty establishes himself as a professional soldier through his bitterness that military standards have been compromised to accommodate the "amateur" citizen-soldiers: "That's what you get when you get an army full of stinking civilians. I been in the regular army, see? But I been out a couple of weeks. . . . And am I glad to be out! I had enough of an army full of stinking civilians. I never seen anything like these guys—" Significantly, Monty notes that Mitchell was "okay. . . . He's very talented." For Monty, Mitch is "one of my boys," a reminder of the struggle between Monty and Keeley for leadership of the GIs in *The Brick Foxhole*, as well as a suggestion of Monty's hidden homosexuality. Monty's reverence for authority is suggested by his complaint that most of the citizen-soldiers "got no manners." As he launches into a diatribe against his fellow soldiers, the camera moves in for a tight close-up. Monty's face fills the screen, giving a disturbing menace to his monologue:

One day one of the men complains to me that he had swiped from him a wrist watch his mother sent him. His mother sent it to him! Half of these guys, I think, got no mothers. They got no respect for the service. You can always tell a man by how he don't have respect for the service; he don't respect his mother. . . . He's the kind of guy that spoilt the army for a guy like me.²⁸

Looking to the far side of the bar, Monty sees Samuels talking to Mitchell. Realizing that he has lost his audience, that Samuels has slipped away from him, his face becomes dark and angry, and he watches Samuels and Mitch through narrowed eyes. When they leave the bar, Monty and Floyd follow them. As Monty explains via voice-over, "Things were pretty expensive in that bar, anyway—and I figured if the Jew-boy was setting up the drinks someplace, we might as well get

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in on it." In early drafts, Monty remarks that he and Floyd followed Samuels because they were worried about Mitch—Monty didn't "like the looks of that Samuels," insinuating that Samuels might have homosexual designs on Mitch. Barging in to Samuels's apartment, Monty claps Samuels on the shoulder too heartily, with barely repressed violence—"You thought you could skip out on us, didn't you?"—suggesting that it is impossible to avoid the fascist menace, that in tolerating Monty, Samuels sowed the seeds of his own destruction. Though there is an undertone of menace in this scene, in his narration Monty presents himself as a good guy. He is understanding when Samuels announces that he has another appointment, saying, "Well, that's too bad, Sammy. We gotta look after Mitch anyhow. Come on, Floyd. . . . Thanks just the same, Sammy."²⁹

When the flashback fades back into the present in Finlay's office, the detective probes for a motive, asking Monty if he and Samuels had an argument. Monty replies, with perfect sincerity, "What was there to argue about? His liquor was good. Everything was okay." When Finlay asks if he had ever met Samuels before, Monty says no, then adds insinuatingly, "Of course, I've seen a lot of guys like him. You know—guys that played it safe during the war, scrounged around keeping themselves in civvies—got swell apartments—swell dames—you know the kind. . . ." Finlay replies carefully, "I'm not sure that I do. Just what kind?" Monty says again, "You know," attempting to draw Finlay into the "understanding" about Samuels and his "kind": "Some of them are named Samuels. Some of them got funnier names."³⁰ In earlier drafts, the reference to Samuels's Jewishness is more open, and Monty tries to win Finlay over by appealing directly to the bond of "whiteness" that they share as Irishmen—a bond that, for Monty, clearly excludes Jews: "Look, Captain, one Mick to another, ain't this a pretty big stink about nothing?" Finlay refuses to cooperate: "About nothing?" Monty hems and haws, saying, "Sure. Samuels. After all . . ." and "Look, Captain—one of them guys more or less." Finally, the detective challenges him: "You mean he was a Jew?" Monty replies, "Sure," and Finlay asks how he knows. Monty cites Samuels's class status, his "swell apartment" and "hot dame," adding, "You could see that. You could smell it. You know what I mean?"³¹

In the final draft of this scene, Finlay does not challenge Monty. Instead, he simply "collects the fact" that Monty is a bigot and lets him go. After Monty has gone, Keeley remarks, "He should look at a casualty list sometime. There are a lot of funny names there, too." Finlay is not paying attention and merely murmurs, "Hmmm?" Keeley snaps, "I said Monty's illiterate. He ought to read more. I was just philosophizing." At this point, it is clear that Finlay and Keeley are at cross-purposes. Keeley is trying to save his buddy by pointing out Monty's untrustworthiness, but Finlay cuts him off: "I'm not interested in philosophy. I'm trying to solve a murder." Finlay's positivist reliance on rational "facts" blinds him

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to the irrational motive behind the murder. He seems only too willing to accept Monty's version of the encounter with Samuels, and in fact, Finlay uses Keeley's own testimony to build his case: "Mitchell was in a strange mood tonight. You admit that. He left Samuels's apartment—intending to come back. . . . We arrive, and find Samuels beaten to death—and we find Mitchell's wallet in the sofa. I say Mitchell did come back—some sort of an argument developed. . . ." Keeley cuts in with, "Monty's a liar. What makes you believe his story?" and Finlay replies, "It just happens to be the only story I've got."³²

As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Keeley realizes that he cannot trust Finlay and that he will have to take justice into his own hands. However, instead of challenging Monty to hand-to-hand combat in a personal battle between fascism and democracy, Keeley turns to his men, mobilizing the soldiers to protect one of their own and sending out his own dragnet to find Mitchell before Finlay does. When Mitch wanders innocently into the hotel lobby, one of the soldiers, Harry (played by Lex Barker), spots him just as the MPs do. Shoving him to the ground, Harry takes off into the night, and the MPs follow him, assuming that the running man is their suspect. In the confusion, Keeley grabs Mitchell and smuggles him out the back door. Hiding him in an all-night theater, Keeley explains the situation: "We can't stay here forever. You've got to have a story for the cops. They've got Monty's and it sounds pretty good, but not for you. I want you to tell me everything you did tonight." Keeley's language here, his insistence that Mitch come up with a "story," reiterates the inadequacy of "facts" or "truth" in the morally contingent postwar world, but it also insinuates that Mitch, who was blind drunk for much of the night, may be as untrustworthy as Monty.³³

As Mitch begins narrating his version of the events, the second flashback picks up the barroom scene in the middle of Monty's complaints about the unfitness of the citizen-soldiers: "Monty was shooting off his mouth. I wasn't really listening to him." In Mitch's version, the dialogue is virtually the same, but Monty is far drunker and angrier. His voice is rough and loud, and his face looks slack and coarse. Mitchell tells Keeley, "I remember I was suddenly sick of him, and Floyd. I wanted my wife. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to be somewhere else."³⁴ He walks to the other side of the bar and sits alone, until Samuels slides onto the bar stool next to him. This begins Samuels's "big scene," but it provides no more than a glimpse into his character—an omission that would later be roundly criticized by Jewish defense organizations.

In fact, Paxton and Scott struggled to attain the "correct" representation of Samuels in *Crossfire*, and the results offer key insights into the complex and contradictory discourses on race, ethnicity, and Americanism following the Second World War. On the one hand, Scott and Paxton wanted to use the character of

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Samuels to challenge common anti-Semitic stereotypes and to suggest the essential Americanness of Jews, and by implication all racial or ethnic Others. In creating a "good" American Jew, whose murder at the hands of a vicious bigot would (they hoped) outrage other "good" Americans, Scott and Paxton flirted with the celebration of a multi-ethnic Americanism elaborated by wartime popular nationalism, and embraced the belief that "America" can not only tolerate but is strengthened by difference. This, of course, is not really difference, merely a surface variation on a standardized and universalized "average American" constructed by social scientists and popular culture. On the other hand, however, the representation of Samuels was fundamentally shaped by Scott's opposition to fascism and the scientific racism that fueled German (and American) anti-Semitism. In this sense, Scott and Paxton used the character of Samuels to challenge theories of a biologically distinct Jewish race and to suggest that the preoccupation with difference was inherently un-American and potentially fascist. This works on two levels in *Crossfire*: 1) in the way that Scott and Paxton constructed Samuels's Jewishness in the screenplay, and 2) in the visual representation of Jewishness embodied by actor Sam Levene.

The casting of Levene as Samuels is particularly important in this context, since Levene was recognizably Jewish—if not necessarily physically, then certainly "filmicly." He had played openly Jewish roles in a number of previous films, particularly in war films such as *Action in the North Atlantic* (1943) and *The Purple Heart* (1944), in which his characters served as Jewish spokesmen for democracy. Of Russian Jewish heritage, Levene chose acting over a place in his family's dressmaking firm in New York. Making his debut on the vaudeville circuit at age 20, he studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and by 1927 was working steadily in legitimate theater. After starring in the Broadway comedy hit, *Three Men on a Horse* in 1935, Levene went to Hollywood the following year to reprise his role in the film version. By 1947, he had established a solid reputation as a character actor, specializing in roles as a "fast-talking, hard-boiled, streetwise New Yorker."³⁵ Nevertheless, Levene's screen persona lacked the edgy rebelliousness of a "city boy." Even in gritty noir films, he was cast as the genial, sincere foil to the bad boys. In *The Killers* (1946), for example, he played Lubinsky, a policeman and childhood friend of the doomed antihero "Swede" (Burt Lancaster), while in *Boomerang* (1947), he played an honorable newsman intent on preventing a miscarriage of justice. Thus, Levene was, in many ways, an ideal choice for the role of Samuels, the good (civil, urbane) Jew who falls prey to the bad (lumpen-proletarian) fascist.

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The representation of Samuels was one of the most revised sections of the screenplay, possibly because the character did not appear in *The Brick Foxhole* and the role had to be written from scratch. Nevertheless, in creating the

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character of Samuels, Scott and Paxton clearly drew more inspiration from Mr. Edwards, the novel's homosexual murder victim, than from Max Brock, the novel's fighting Jewish spokesman. The shadow of Mr. Edwards is particularly evident in the first draft of the screenplay. In the bar, Samuels and Mitchell talk about painting and classical music, and Samuels convinces him that "the most important thing in the world was for me to hear some records he had. Some Prokofiev. Something called 'Lieutenant Kiji.'" There is a seductiveness in this invitation, a "looking at etchings" suggestion reminiscent of the homosexuality at the center of *The Brick Foxhole*. Significantly, Joseph Breen was concerned about Samuels's questionable performance of masculinity in this version, warning Paxton and Scott, "It is understood, of course, that there will be no suggestion of a 'pansy' characterization about Samuels or his relationship with the other soldiers."³⁶

Thus, by the third draft, Samuels's highbrow tastes were significantly toned down and his heterosexuality confirmed. He and Mitchell talk about baseball—a quintessentially masculine and all-American subject—and Mitch thinks he "must have been on a newspaper or something." Instead of taking Mitchell back to his apartment to listen to classical music, Samuels invites him to have dinner with him and "his girl," an invitation that bespeaks heterosexuality. Even with these changes, however, one member of the preview audience, who had read *The Brick Foxhole*, detected a whiff of homosexuality in Samuels, commenting, "It seems a shame that censorship and public opinion should force you to change the true character of Samuels, and the reason for his murder."³⁷ Certainly, there is a sharp difference between the virility projected on screen by Ryan and Mitchum and the softness of Sam Levene. In this context, it is particularly interesting to speculate on the ways in which a different casting choice might have affected the representation of Jewishness in *Crossfire*. For example, a younger, more virile Jewish actor—John Garfield comes immediately to mind—would have brought a fundamentally different persona to the role of Samuels.

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For Scott and Paxton, however, it was not Samuels's performance of masculinity, but his patriotism and war service that were the most contested issues in the representation of Jewishness in *Crossfire*. In the initial version of the screenplay, Samuels (like Mr. Edwards) is not a war veteran, as he reveals in the first flashback when Monty asks him, "You been in?" In this first version of Mitch's flashback, Samuels reiterates the fact that he did not serve during the war, greeting Mitchell with, "But for the grace of God . . ." Samuels's "pep talk" in this first draft is confused and unwieldy:

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It's a funny, complicated thing. It's not something I should be grateful for—that I'm not in your place. Yet I'm grateful—not for that. But for you, to you. It wouldn't be honest to say I envy you, though. I don't. But I

don't envy myself, either, all the time. I've tried to think how I would have made out if it had been different. . . . I wonder if I wouldn't have ended up sometimes feeling just the way you do now.

Paxton and Scott seem to have been trying to translate some of Brooks's conversion narrative, in which Mitchell comes to realize that he and the others have been resisting the recognition of their connectedness and common humanity. When Mitchell asks Samuels how he thinks he feels, Samuels replies, "Alone. Lonely. They're not very good words are they? Well, then, feeling different, not a part. . . ." He nods toward Monty and Floyd, saying, "You're obviously not a part of that. You're too smart."³⁸

By the second draft, however, Samuels is a World War Two veteran—though this is not confirmed until late in the narrative when Finlay receives a report from the War Department informing him (and the audience) that Samuels had served with distinction and was discharged after being wounded at Okinawa, one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific theater.³⁹ Thus rehabilitated, Samuels's conversation with Mitchell in the bar is substantially different in the later drafts of the screenplay. As a decorated vet, Samuels has a new moral authority that enables him to serve as a quasi-therapist, diagnosing the problems of both Mitchell and postwar America. This is clear from his first lines: "My girl's worried about you. . . . She says you're not drinking, but you're getting drunk anyway. Anybody that can do that has got a problem." Mitchell tries to ignore him, but he persists: "It's a funny thing, isn't it? . . . It's worse at night, isn't it? I think it's suddenly not having a lot of enemies to hate anymore. Four years now we've all be focusing our minds on—on . . ." Samuels picks a peanut out of the dish on the bar. "On one little peanut. The win-the-war peanut. That was all. Get it over. Eat that peanut." He pops the peanut into his mouth. "That was all. Eat that peanut. . . . Now—all at once—no peanut. We start looking at each other again. We don't know what we're supposed to do. We don't know what's supposed to happen. We're used to hating and used to fighting. But now we don't know who to hate, or who to fight. So we feel lost." Samuels indicates the crowded bar. "We start milling around like this. A lot of fight and hate that doesn't know where to go. A guy like you could start hating himself." In the final version, Samuels adds, "You can feel the tension in the air. . . . One of these days maybe we'll all learn to shift gears. Maybe we'll stop hating and start liking things again, huh?"⁴⁰ Like Keeley, Samuels is something of an oracle, a father-confessor or therapist who helps Mitchell make sense of his despair and malaise. Though Scott and Paxton clearly intended this as an important element in their construction of Samuels as a sympathetic character, this speech especially was criticized by Jewish defense organizations for pandering to anti-Semitic stereotypes. Members of the American Jewish Committee, in particular, felt this scene showed Samuels as overly intellectual, on the one hand, and as pushing himself in where he was not

wanted, on the other.⁴¹

As a corollary to their sympathetic presentation of Samuels, Scott and Paxton also wanted to repudiate earlier ideas of biological racial types, positing instead a universal humanity. Like Brooks, they suggest that the insistence on racial and/or ethnic categories is inherently fascist, and they insist on problematizing the idea of recognizable Jewishness. A number of texts in the postwar period, particularly *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Focus*, as well as *The Brick Foxhole*, explored the question of a Jewish "type" or "race" through the trope of "mistaken identity." In *Gentleman's Agreement*, a Gentile writer poses as a Jew in order to experience and expose anti-Semitism; in *Focus*, a Gentile is mistaken for a Jew (after a new pair of glasses makes him "look" Jewish), and he comes to identify with his Jewish neighbor after both are harassed by the local Christian Front. The implications of "mistaken identities" are particularly relevant to the question of Jewishness and fascism, in that Jewishness often is not "visible." (Thus, Nazi attempts at racial and other categorizations sometimes proved elusive, requiring literal badges of identity in the form of yellow stars or, for homosexuals, pink triangles.) In suggesting that Jewishness (i.e. "race"), like gender, is *performative*, these postwar texts illustrate the instability of socially constructed categories of race and ethnicity at a critical historical moment.⁴² *Crossfire* deals with these same issues, but uses a "real" Jew (both actor Sam Levene and the character Samuels) to explore and destabilize the categories "Jew" and "American."

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For Scott, particularly, this preoccupation with "looking Jewish" and "seeing Jews" was profoundly un-American and paralleled the German fascist obsession with racial boundary-keeping. Thus, in *Crossfire*, the fact that Monty believes that he "knows a Jew when he sees one" is evidence of his potential fascism. In the first draft, Scott and Paxton played on the popular misconception that Jews did not "do their part" for the war effort: since everyone knows that "real" Americans are patriotic (that is, they fight for their country), the fact that Samuels "played it safe" during the war marks him unmistakably (for Monty) as a Jew. Thus, Monty's question to Samuels—"You been in?"—is really a way of asking, "Are you one of us?"⁴³

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By making Samuels a veteran in the later drafts, Scott and Paxton problematized this association, refusing to give Monty—or the audience—any "clues" that Samuels is a Jew. Just as Paxton and Scott wanted to be certain that the audience recognized Monty as a cold-blooded killer, they also wanted to be sure that he would be understood as a racist. Significantly, Mitchell doesn't know that Samuels is a Jew until Finlay tells him, and Finlay only knows, presumably, because Monty has told him. Thus, when Finlay later confronts Mitch with the fact of Samuels's

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Jewishness, Mitch is baffled, unable to see its relevance:

Finlay: *(coming suddenly to life; raising his voice)*
 Maybe you didn't like him.
 (forcefully before he can answer)
 Mitchell—Samuels was a Jew—

Mitchell: All right—so he was a Jew.

Finlay: Some people don't like Jews!

Mitchell: *(topping him)*
 Some people don't like oranges!⁴⁴

In the final version, this exchange was slightly revised. Finlay suggests that Mitch might have hated Samuels, and "hatred is a good motive." Confused, Mitchell asks, "Why would I hate him? I hardly knew him. . . . He seemed like a nice guy. . . ." Finlay plays the Jewish card: "You know he was a Jew?" Mitchell looks at him blankly, perplexed: "No . . ." Finlay is surprised: "You mean to say you didn't know he was Jewish?" Mitch replies, "No. I didn't think about it. . . . What would that have to do with it? What's that got to do with me?"⁴⁵ Mitch's lack of knowledge or, more precisely, his refusal to "know" that Samuels was Jewish marks him as essentially nonfascist.

However, as much as Scott and Paxton resisted racist ideas of recognizable Jewishness, they also consciously or unconsciously reified it, particularly in the casting of Sam Levene, whose dark curly hair, deep-set dark eyes, and swarthy skin did, indeed, "look Jewish" in the racial lexicon of the 1940s. This was apparent, at least to some on the RKO lot, from the film's rushes. As executive William Gordon pointed out to Scott, "I share the view that one Samuels closeup at the bar is most unfortunate in that its effect is of a bloated caricature so well stereotyped in anti-semitic cartoons."⁴⁶ In fact, despite the narrative's rather facile appeal to Samuels's sameness—the insistence that Jews are just like any other Americans—his difference is reinforced in myriad ways. For example, though as a war veteran Samuels is part of the band of GIs, he is the only specifically ethnic soldier in the film. In sharp contrast to the multi-ethnic microcosm glorified by wartime popular nationalism, the military unit in *Crossfire* appears monolithically white, and the vague ethnicities ascribed to the soldiers in *The Brick Foxhole* are erased in the film. Keeley is no longer specifically Irish, and the various supporting characters in Keeley's band have bland, WASP-ish names like Harry and Bill Williams, rather than Kowalski, Liebowitz, O'Grady, or other "funny" ethnic names that appear on casualty lists. Southernness has shifted from Floyd, the white racist who is collaborator in Monty's fascist violence, to Leroy, the naïve "hillbilly" who is himself a victim of Monty's bullying. Even Finlay's Irishness, which is critical to the argument in the film's denouement that

intolerance is essentially un-American, serves more to confirm his whiteness than to celebrate or mark his ethnic difference. Read against this undifferentiated whiteness, Samuels's Jewishness becomes a visible sign of difference.

In this context, the erasure of Max Brock in the adaptation of *The Brick Foxhole* to *Crossfire* is particularly significant, since Samuels is clearly *not* Max Brock, a risk-taking, fighting Jew, the proud spokesman for Jewishness *and* Americanness. First, though there is no doubt in the film that he is Jewish, Samuels himself never speaks openly of his Jewishness, and *Crossfire* certainly never addresses the "Jewish Question" with the forthrightness or complexity of *The Brick Foxhole*. Similarly, though the murder of Samuels by Monty is intended to invoke the Holocaust, the film does not explicitly mention it or the concentration camps. Instead, Samuels serves primarily as a spokesman for a universal, rather than specifically Jewish, postwar optimism. The final line in his "peanut" speech—"maybe we'll stop hating and start liking things again"—reflects both the general hope for postwar peace and a progressive version of the One World vision. With the defeat of fascism, he seems to suggest, there is no need any longer for enemies, for a world divided into "us" and "them." Second, though he is a decorated soldier—a fighting man—Samuels does not do battle with the forces of fascism as does Max Brock in *The Brick Foxhole*. Thus, his final comment about hating and liking becomes terribly ironic since we already know that Samuels himself is a victim of the irrational hatred and the violence unleashed by the war.

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When Monty and Floyd appear at Samuels's door, the "Jew as passive victim" motif takes on a terrifying resonance. In this scene, the muffled music and dialogue and the disturbing visuals—tight close-ups of Monty's leering face, slow zooms in and out of focus, off-kilter camera angles—reinforce the narrative differences between the two flashbacks. In Mitch's recollection, an aggressive Monty shoves his way into the apartment with a bellicose, "Hiya Sammy! We come to the party!" Though he insists that there is no party, Samuels is exceptionally civil, and his politeness borders on passivity.

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Monty: Sammy, let me tell you something. Not many civilians will take a soldier into his house like this—for a quiet talk. . . . Well, let me tell you something. A guy's afraid to take a soldier into his house—he stinks! And I mean he stinks! He ought to have the screws put to him. Am I right, or am I right?

Samuels: Sergeant, don't you think . . .

Monty: I asked you a question, Sammy!

Samuels: What was that?

Monty: You know what was that! Am I right or am I right?
Samuels: You're right, Sergeant.
Monty: You can say that again. You're all right, Sammy. You're okay.⁴⁷

When Mitch begins to feel sick, Samuels is concerned and nurturing. He tries to get Monty and Floyd to leave, saying politely, "I'm afraid there isn't time for another drink." Monty becomes angry: "What kind of a brush is that? What's the matter, Jew-boy—you afraid we'll drink up all your stinking wonderful liquor?"⁴⁸ In *The Brick Foxhole*, Mitchell at least thinks about warning Mr. Edwards about Monty and Floyd. In *Crossfire*, however, Mitch simply leaves, abandoning Samuels to his fate. Mitchell's failure to recognize the danger posed by Monty links him with the "good Germans" and liberal democratic leaders whose tolerance of anti-Semitism and appeasement of the fascist powers ultimately enabled violence and death.

A trumpet's blare announces Ginny, the jazz riff underscoring her sexuality. From the blur of street lamps and street signs as Mitch wanders in a drunken haze, the camera suddenly focuses, with pristine clarity, on Ginny's face in a medium close-up. In the role of Ginny, Gloria Grahame captured the tough-yet-vulnerable look Scott and Dmytryk wanted. A relative newcomer to film, she had extensive stage experience, making her debut with the Pasadena Community Playhouse at age nine, studying acting at Hollywood High School, and working in stock theater before making her Broadway debut in 1943. She had appeared in only four films prior to being cast as Ginny in *Crossfire*, a role that helped establish her as a sultry siren. Frequently cast as a fallen woman or erring wife, she later starred in several outstanding films noir, including *In a Lonely Place* (1950) and *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952); she won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the latter.⁴⁹ Playing the tramp in *Crossfire*, Grahame is simply superb. She is exceptionally well-dressed for a B-girl, in an elegant black evening dress with a plunging neckline. With long, curly blonde hair, false eyelashes, and a rouged pout, she oozes sexuality, but her sophistication is undercut by her round, almost babyish face. Her obvious youth is an integral part of Scott and Paxton's "rehabilitation" of Ginny. The *soft* toughness that Grahame brings to the role sets her apart from the hard-edged, manipulative, and very duplicitous noir "heroines," such as Claire Trevor in *Born to Kill* (1947), or Barbara Stanwyck in *The File on Thelma Jordan* (1949) or even *Double Indemnity* (1944).

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In *The Brick Foxhole*, Ginny is a whore, working in a whorehouse. This obviously could not be represented on the screen, but translating prostitutes into taxi dancers was the standard Hollywood ploy to evade outright censorship by the

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Breen Office, and audiences were clearly intended to read these characters as "fallen women."⁵⁰ In the first draft of the screenplay, working around the Production Code's prohibition on prostitution, Paxton attempted to capture some of the despair and bitterness in Brooks's depiction of Ginny, and to suggest both her sexual servitude and her streetwise defiance:

Soldiers stink. Just because you work in a place like this they treat you like a bear in a zoo you throw peanuts at—What's wrong with working in a place like this? I don't kid anybody. I'm always here—anytime anybody wants to talk to me and have a drink with me. . . . I know what you think—you all think we go out with anybody asks us. Well, I don't! But you think we do, even if we say we don't! You think we'll go out with you, if you try hard enough, because you think you're special—you're something different—and we been waiting for you! Well, look, to me you're just a bunch of guys in brown suits—and you all got dirty minds!⁵¹

In this first draft of the screenplay, Scott and Paxton also adhered closely to Brooks's representation of Mitchell in this scene, attempting to translate the novel's emphasis on his alienation and frustration with the regimentation of military life:

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Ginny, I've been in this brown suit three years now—so long I don't feel human anymore. I feel—(*interrupting his own thought*) I'll tell you something else. I'm special. I've got signs and writing on me that tells everybody I'm special. If you know how to read them you know all about me—(*with gathering intensity*)—you even know how many Japs I didn't kill. It's the loneliest feeling in the world, Ginny. It feels naked.⁵²

Ginny replies flippantly, "What am I supposed to do about it? Do I look patriotic or something?" This line reflects a sentiment from *The Brick Foxhole*, a condensation of a scene in which Mitchell asks Ginny what she has against the uniform, and she replies: "'Me?' she said, and the word was an accusation. 'Nothing. I'm patriotic. I'm for the four freedoms. I'm for democracy. I'm giving my all for my country. In God we trust. Salute the flag. Hail Columbia.'"⁵³

In the final version, though she is still sarcastic and flip, Ginny is less overtly hostile and all references to her (dubious) patriotism have been deleted. When Mitch follows her out to the patio, she snaps, "You didn't want to drink. All you wanted to do was yap. I don't make any money on that." He replies with a little smile, "You're not getting so rich out here all by yourself," and he asks her what is wrong with him. "You're corny," she replies, mimicking him: "'You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to take you dancing. You remind me of my wife.' What's the idea of saying a thing like that?" Ginny explains that she hasn't been out dancing—for fun, for herself—in years, because she's been working for a living. And when Mitch asks her what she does when she's not working, Ginny's bitter

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reply—"I live"—suggests that it's not much of a life at all.⁵⁴

As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Mitch tries to penetrate the economic arrangement that binds them into commodity and consumer. Attempting to make a human connection, he asks Ginny to dance with him. In the first draft, Mitch says, "Not inside. You work inside. Out here we can dance—just because we're a couple of people who like to dance."⁵⁵ In the final version, in a more overt recognition of the financial basis of their "relationship," he asks her, "How much would you charge to dance with me now? I mean here." Giving him the key to her apartment, Ginny tells him that she wants to make him some spaghetti.⁵⁶ Mitch has told her that she reminds him of his wife, giving her a window through which to step into a new and purer version of herself, to rehabilitate herself and transform herself from a bad girl into a good girl, from dance hall floozy to a shadow, or fantasy, wife. Mitch, too, participates in the fantasy. Though he really wants his wife, he is willing to accept Ginny as a substitute. They kiss, as passionately as the Production Code, with its prohibition on open mouths, allows; Mitch grips Ginny's arms with an urgency that indicates his willingness to betray his marriage vows.

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When Mitch wakes up in her apartment, he finds not Ginny, but The Man (Paul Kelly). The dialogue in this scene, as The Man offers contradictory explanations for his presence in Ginny's apartment, is taken almost verbatim from *The Brick Foxhole*. As The Man makes himself at home in the apartment, bustling around the kitchen making coffee, Mitch asks him, "Do you belong here, or something?" The Man replies, "Or something," and explains that he is Ginny's husband and that he was a soldier, but that he "conked out," tapping his chest to indicate heart trouble. As in the novel, The Man claims to have known that she was a "tramp" when he married her, and though he enlisted to get away from her, he couldn't wait to be with her again. However, he insists that is a lie, saying, "I met her the same as you did, at the joint. I can't keep away from her. I want to marry her. She won't have me." But that, too, he claims, is a lie: "I don't love her and I don't want to marry her. She makes good money there."⁵⁷ Interestingly, though it is not at all clear in *The Brick Foxhole* which, if any, of The Man's stories are true, in Scott's reading of the novel, the character was Ginny's pimp. In earlier drafts of the screenplay, The Man says that he is Ginny's "business manager," a coy way of saying "pimp." This did not escape the notice of the PCA, and Breen asked Scott and Paxton to make "radical changes to this scene to remove any flavor of prostitution."⁵⁸

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According to Scott, "It never seemed important to us specifically what this man was, i.e., friend, lover, husband or pimp." They deleted the offending line, though they kept much of the original dialogue, which to them reflected "purposeful

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confusion. . . . What was important was his insecurity, his lack of root and the dreadful personal agony that results from this." Scott argued that he and Paxton intended for The Man to be "more than a prop" who could confirm Mitchell's alibi. In their minds,

[H]e was part of a pattern of people variously affected by the period of readjustment following a war. We tried to say that this man is symptomatic of a neurosis which is national in scope. If you look around you will see people are upset; they don't know what to do; they are restless, insecure, uncertain. The Paul Kelly character was one of many in *Crossfire* which represented this point of view. This was not an attempt at cross-section—merely a description of a set of neurotic values which have filtered into the national conscious and unconscious.

Scott further argued that the theme of postwar dislocation and "neurosis" was clearly presented, though "in less extravagant terms," in other characters, particularly Mitch, Keeley, and Ginny.⁵⁹ This emphasis on neurosis reflects the shift from the economic and class-based Marxist explanations of alienation that dominated the 1930s to the normative psychological explanations of the postwar therapeutic culture. At the same time, however, the fractured identity described as "neurosis" in the 1940s also anticipates the fragmentation, multiplicities, and identity politics of postmodernism.

As the coffee pot symbolically boils over, Mitch says, "Suddenly the whole thing was screwy." The flashback ends, and Mitchell returns the narrative to the present via a voice-over narration recalling that he was supposed to meet Keeley at midnight. In earlier drafts, this narration has distinctly homoerotic overtones, playing suggestively with Mitch's "date" with Keeley: "I like you, I want to show you the Washington Monument and the cherry blossoms in the moonlight."⁶⁰ In the final draft, however, this suggestiveness was deleted, and Mitch remembers Keeley's instructions simply as: "Meet me—I like you and I want to show you Washington. It is educational. Maybe you'll learn something. Meet me or I'll murder you." And, as if overcompensating for the homoeroticism they had already deleted, Scott and Paxton reiterate that Keeley's motives are pure, that he wanted to meet Mitch only to keep him sober because Mary was coming to Washington.⁶¹

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Hiding from the police in an all-night movie theater, Mitch is terrified to learn that he is suspected of Samuels's murder, but, significantly, he connects his personal crisis to the larger problem of postwar dislocation: "Keeley, what's happened? Is everything suddenly crazy? I don't mean just this—I mean everything—or is it just me?" Keeley, the oracle, replies: "No. It's not just you. The snakes are loose. Anybody can get them. I got them. But they're friends of mine." Keeley explains that Mary is in town and he has to "figure out how much of this to tell her." As

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Mitch digests this news, two of the soldiers, Bill and Leroy, appear out of the darkness, and Leroy tells Keeley that Floyd has contacted him. Leroy, the innocent young soldier from Tennessee, doesn't want to get involved: "I don't want to have nothing to do with this. I shouldn't have told anybody. Keeley, I don't want to get in any trouble." Keeley reassures him: "All you have to do is tell us where Floyd is, then you can go back to the hotel and stay there—and forget it." Keeley leaves Mitchell in the theater, under strict orders: "Watch the picture then—and don't move."⁶² Significantly, this scene in the theater seems to suggest that movies can provide a momentary escape from postwar problems. This, too, is a quintessentially noir scene, redolent of the "lounge" spaces described by Vivian Sobchack: the shadowy theater, bright light spilling from the high window of the projectionist's booth and diffusing into murky darkness below, where the audience sits in scattered lonely clots, waiting out the long empty night by escaping into a Hollywood fantasy. Mitchell sits at the back of the theater, the flickering light highlighting the sweaty sheen of his face, waiting, alone, like the others.

The next scenes, leading up to the death of Floyd, the film's second murder, clearly illustrate the struggle between Keeley and Monty for leadership of the band of brothers. Though both Keeley and Monty are "natural" leaders, there is a sharp distinction between Keeley's liberalism and concern for his men and Monty's violent authoritarianism and concern for saving himself. In the cheap rooming house where Floyd is hiding, Monty takes charge, and like Keeley, emphasizes the need for a story to tell the cops. "We have to be careful now, Floyd. The cops are screwing down. And that Finlay is sharp. I tried out a couple of things on him. But I don't know about him. . . . We'll be okay as long as we keep our story straight." Floyd is jittery and begs for a cigarette to calm his nerves. His hands shake so badly that he is barely able to hold the match. Monty despises this sign of weakness: "Get hold of yourself. I got to leave you here again, right away, so's I can go out and keep in touch with things. All you got to do is keep out of sight until they find Mitch—" Floyd begs Monty to let him go, and he promises to disappear, but Monty, needing Floyd to back up his story, refuses. Floyd is terrified of the cops, certain that there will be trouble: "I can't say there was no argument. Mitch was still there when you went after Samuels. The cops are gonna pick up Mitch . . ." Monty reassures him: "Mitch won't say nothing. Mitch was stinko. He won't remember, exactly. Nobody knows exactly but me and you. . . ." Floyd loses his cool: "What did you have to go after that guy for? Criminy, Monty, what did you have to start an argument for?" In a terrifying glimpse into Monty's rage, he throttles Floyd, shouting: "No Jew is going to tell me how to drink his stinking liquor!" The word "stinking" carries, as critic Nora Sayre has noted, "the savagery of an old-fashioned obscenity—it conveys the fury of the racist in a way that was new to the screen." Getting control of himself and becoming reasonable

again, Monty continues: "There wasn't no argument, Floyd. There was just a quiet discussion. We left right after Mitch did, remember that, Floyd."⁶³

A knock on the door sends Monty into hiding. Floyd opens the door to reveal Keeley and the band of brothers. Keeley demonstrates his leadership and concern for "his" men: "What's the matter, Floyd? Leroy tells me you're in a jam, and need some dough. We don't like to see anybody in our outfit in a jam." He asks if Floyd heard about the trouble with Mitch, and Floyd tries to stick to the story outlined by Monty: "Yeah, I heard about it—this has got nothing to do with that. I wasn't there—I left—me and Monty left—the cops can't pin anything on Monty and me." Keeley says he'll try to scrounge up some money to help Floyd, and asks if Monty knows where he is. "How would Monty know I'm here?" Floyd says, in effect signing his own death warrant.⁶⁴

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After they leave, Monty emerges from the shadows. Though Monty kills Floyd in *The Brick Foxhole*, Brooks did not write that scene and the murder is simply announced, rather than dramatized. In *Crossfire*, too, the murder is not shown, but the film dramatizes the encounter that leads to Floyd's murder. Though the PCA warned about "excessive brutality" in this scene, it is still terrifying. Dmytryk and Hunt's use of disconcerting close-ups and chiaroscuro lighting from a single bare bulb dangling from the ceiling enhance the menace and claustrophobia of the scene. Closing in on Floyd with quiet menace, Monty says softly, "I told you not to go out anywhere, Floyd. You went out Floyd. You went out and got in touch with Keeley. You shouldn't have done that. . . ." Floyd is near hysteria: "No, I didn't Monty. I didn't. . . ." Monty chides him with a barely repressed fury: "I had everything figured out just what we was going to do. I told you to stay here—you went out and phoned—you spoiled everything—" Floyd insists that he didn't spoil anything, that he stuck to the story. Monty boasts: "That's right, Floyd. Nobody can pin anything on me."⁶⁵

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Significantly, Floyd is not a committed racist, as in *The Brick Foxhole*. Instead, he deplores Monty's violence and the murder of Samuels: "I didn't have nothing to do with it—I don't want to get mixed up in it—Criminy, Monty, you went crazy or something—Samuels didn't do anything to you—you went crazy. . . ."⁶⁶ In earlier drafts, Floyd adds, "You went after him like he was a nigger or something," but this was deleted even before the script was submitted to the Breen Office.⁶⁷ Floyd's refusal to go along only enrages Monty more. The camera angles here enhance Monty's physical menace. His face a shadowy distorted mask, his shoulders bunched with rage, he seems to tower over the cowering Floyd. Monty sneers, "I didn't do nothing to Samuels, either, except I flicked him—" He slaps Floyd's face. "Like that—not that hard, maybe—More like that—or that—Not hard enough to hurt anybody. . . ." The first three drafts added, "Not hard enough to

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hurt anybody with any guts—but he didn't have any guts!" Monty slaps him again, harder now. Floyd screams, "Stop it, Monty! Stop it, Monty! You went nuts! I haven't got nothing against any Jews. . . ." Drawing the line between "us" and "them," Monty snarls: "I don't like Jews! And I don't like nobody who likes Jews!"⁶⁸ Monty launches himself at Floyd, and the scene fades ominously to black.

At the police station, Keeley is stunned to learn that Floyd is dead, "strung up by his necktie." Finlay, furious that Keeley acted on his own, lays down the law: "You might as well work with me now. It's the only way, if you really want to help Mitchell. Because you're in custody, in case you didn't know it. So is Williams. You're both going to stay there—forever, if necessary. I'll listen to anything constructive either one of you have to say, but I won't stand for any more interference." Outraged at the inadequacy of liberal justice embodied by a bureaucrat, Keeley explodes: "You've got a mind like a dogcatcher! Okay! I'm in custody! Williams is in custody! Everybody is in custody! What's that prove—except that you've got a big jail?" Though he refuses to reveal where Mitch is hiding, Keeley tells Finlay about Ginny, the girl who can provide an alibi. At this point, Mary (played by Jacqueline White) steps forward, out of the shadows and into the light. Though shaken by the news of her husband's infidelity, she makes a deal with Finlay: if he will let her talk to Mitch alone first, Keeley will tell them where to find him.⁶⁹

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In dramatizing the reunion of Mitch and Mary in the theater, Scott and Paxton drew heavily on the scene written by Brooks in *The Brick Foxhole*. In early drafts of the screenplay, Mary wants to know why Mitch didn't write to her, while in the later versions, she focuses on the investigation, explaining to Mitch that the police are waiting outside for them. Mitch, however, wants to talk about the miscommunication that has threatened their marriage, explaining that his anxieties about the return to "normalcy" made it impossible for him to write. In the first draft, Mitch's concerns focus largely on class status and the trappings of bourgeois consumerism. He says, "Look, there's a time when a man is young enough—and crazy enough—to be able to plan—to work his tail off—for some beautiful dream—for a living room with a bar in it—for being able to buy six bottles of whiskey at once to put on the shelf." Mitch feels that the war has derailed his desire for upward mobility and his faith in the American Dream. "I've a hole shot in me—a big four year hole." He explains to Mary, "I got to the point where I got sick at the idea of beginning everything again—then I got sick at the thought of you sitting there, waiting for me to come back and expecting me to start again—I couldn't even think about you." In this early version, Mary smiles at him tenderly and replies, dismissively, "Mitch, is that all it was?"⁷⁰ Like a good postwar therapist-wife, Mary can take this all in stride. In the final version, Paxton

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simply links Mitch's inability to communicate with his wife with a generalized postwar malaise. Mitch's explanation to Mary echoes Samuels's "diagnosis," prefiguring the therapeutic culture of the 1950s:

Because I was depressed and jittery. Samuels—the man I'm supposed to have killed—he understood. . . . He said a guy like me, now, with the war over, could start hating himself. Maybe that's what happened. Maybe I started hating myself because I was afraid of getting going again—of trying to draw again—of looking for a job—of having you waiting all that time—after having waited four years already. . . . It began to be too hard to think about you. I couldn't write. Does that make any sense?⁷¹

In the next scene, Mary and Finlay confront Ginny. In *The Brick Foxhole*, this scene occurs in the final chapter and has a tacked-on feeling. Here, it is integrated into the narrative as a critical part of the murder investigation. Nevertheless, the scene is taken almost verbatim from *The Brick Foxhole*. As in the novel, Mary's prim propriety contrasts sharply with Ginny's overt sexuality. Wanting to appeal to her woman-to-woman, Mary asks Finlay to wait while she talks to the girl alone, but Ginny is uncooperative:

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Mary: All I want you to do is say he was with you tonight—
Ginny: Tonight's a long time ago. I wouldn't be able to remember.
Mary: You'd remember Mitch—
Ginny: Why? Does he have two heads or something?

Though surprised that Mitch told his wife about her, Ginny is still hostile: "Well, he lied to you. If he was here I didn't know about it." She tells Mary to leave and throws open the door to reveal Finlay, leaning nonchalantly against the door frame, his hand tucked into his waistband. As in *The Brick Foxhole*, Ginny resists Finlay's authority, sneering, "I don't like cops." In early versions of the screenplay, as in the novel, Ginny confesses that her real name is Esther Goslav; however, this was deleted in response to criticisms after a screening of the film for members of the Anti-Defamation League, who felt the name made Ginny appear to be Jewish.⁷² Thus, in the final print of the film, Ginny merely tells Finlay that she is from Wilkes-Barre. Finlay asks what she does, and she replies flippantly, "I work." She tells him she works at the Red Dragon, then explodes, "Well, what's wrong about working there? Does that make me a criminal or something? Does that give you the right to bust into my house and start asking a lot of questions?"⁷³

Finlay explains Mitch's dire situation to Ginny, noting, "Mrs. Mitchell doesn't think he did [it], of course, but that's only natural." Mary bursts in here, "I know he

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was here—he told me—but that doesn't matter anymore—never mind me—you've got to think of him—" With a barking laugh, Ginny mocks Mary's selflessness: "Oh, brother, listen to that! 'Never mind me—you've got to think of him.' Now isn't that sweet! Isn't that just too sweet!" As in *The Brick Foxhole*, the women remain adversaries, and Ginny turns the tables on Mary, raising doubts about the wife's goodness and her own deviance:

He wasn't here with me. He could have been, but he wasn't. He could have come up—I could have cooked him something—and we could have talked. And what would have been wrong with that? What's the matter with me being with her precious husband? Does he break or something? And where was she? Okay, where were you when he needed you? Maybe you were someplace having beautiful thoughts? Well, I wasn't. I was in a stinking gin-mill where all he had to do to see me was walk in and sit down at the table and buy me a drink. And that's all I know about it. I didn't ask him if he killed anybody.⁷⁴

At this point, The Man appears from a back room; though he is able to confirm that Mitchell was in the apartment that night, the timing is off, and Mitchell's alibi remains unconfirmed. As far as Finlay is concerned, this interview has been a waste of time; Mitchell is still a prime suspect in the murder of Samuels. Interestingly, though this scene is taken almost verbatim from *The Brick Foxhole*, as filmed by Dmytryk and Hunt, it has a dark poignance: The Man hangs pathetically over the banister, rambling about his troubled relationship with Ginny and his fears about what the postwar world holds for him, as Finlay and Mary turn their backs on him and walk down the stairs.

Back in his office, Finlay interviews Mitchell, who reveals that he is not a bigot, that he was not even aware that Samuels was Jewish. At this point, Finlay's assistant hands him the paperwork from the War Department that definitely establishes that Samuels was a decorated war veteran. Finlay again confronts Monty, asking how he knew that Samuels had not been in the Army. Puzzled, Monty smiles shiftily: "Well, like I said, you could tell. You could see. Those guys got ways of keeping themselves from getting dirty."⁷⁵

As dawn breaks over the Capitol dome and sunlight streams through the window into Finlay's office, the detective literally *sees the light* and understands that the motive for Samuels's murder is irrational, racist hatred. At this point, the film shifts from a narrative of investigation to a narrative of conversion. In *The Brick Foxhole's* conversion narrative, each of the major characters recognizes the essential interconnectedness of all humanity and takes personal responsibility for their actions. Keeley, in particular, realizes that the actions of each individual have repercussions that affect every other person in the world. In *Crossfire*, however, Captain Finlay, the representative of the liberal state, works to convince

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the GIs to work with him to catch the murderer. This represents a significant shift in the locus of antifascist responsibility, from risk-taking individuals—seen in the vigilante justice meted out by Keeley in *The Brick Foxhole*—to a version of the Popular Front, in which committed individuals work together, in concert with the scarcely visible but omnipotent state, to bring the fascist murderer to justice. Though this shift was in keeping with the narrative conventions of the investigative thriller genre, it also reflected Scott's liberal faith that the rule of law distinguishes democracy from fascism.

Significantly, the dawn's early light also reveals two pictures on the walls of Finlay's office: a portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt and a copy of the Declaration of Independence. It is no accident that Roosevelt's picture, rather than Harry S. Truman's, decorates the walls of Finlay's office. According to John Paxton, "It wasn't my idea and it's not in the script . . . I do think I know who put it there, but only because I was given a quite similar photo which I still have." Paxton does suggest that "it could have been the set dresser, or art director,"⁷⁶ but it seems more likely that Scott was responsible; or at the very least, as the film's producer, he approved the use of these two visual markers of American democracy in *Crossfire*. For Scott the idealist, the state represented the will of the people—or at least it should; and for him, Roosevelt's New Deal was proof that, in fact, it could. Scott may have been a Communist, but he had great faith in the power of the liberal state to transform the lives of ordinary citizens. For Scott, socialist democracy would come to America not through violent revolution but by popular participation in representational government and the constant expansion of a protective, activist state.

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Though leftists of every persuasion sometimes disagreed with policies of the Roosevelt administration, the Popular Front vision also frequently overlapped with the New Deal agenda, and, particularly after his untimely death in the spring of 1945, FDR remained a powerful symbol for American progressives. The literature of the Hollywood Democratic Committee, for example, constantly invoked the memory of Roosevelt and the principles of the New Deal, particularly to measure and illustrate the illiberalism of his successor and the failure of the Truman administration to live up to the legacy of the New Deal. In fact, Scott had hoped to use an excerpt of one of FDR's speeches, either as a voice-over or as a written prologue in *Crossfire*. The speech, delivered to the Brooklyn Academy of Music on November 1, 1940, succinctly expressed the vision of American strength and unity through cultural pluralism that dominated wartime popular nationalism and dovetailed neatly with Scott's own antifascist commitment:

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We are a nation of many nationalities, many races, many religions—bound together by a single unity, the unity of freedom and equality.

Whoever seeks to set one nationality against another seeks to degrade all nationalities.

Whoever seeks to set one race against another seeks to enslave all races.

Whoever seeks to set one religion against another seeks to destroy all religion.⁷⁷

Scott was "very anxious" to include this quotation in *Crossfire*, as was Schary, apparently. On April 26, Schary send a long telegram to Eleanor Roosevelt, asking her permission to use the speech. Noting that its inclusion "would make a contribution to what I know you stand for," he offered to screen a rough cut of the film for her. There is no evidence, however, that Mrs. Roosevelt replied to Schary's request, and the excerpt did not appear in the film.⁷⁸

The presence of the Declaration of Independence reiterates Scott's belief that the state represents the will of the people, but also references the revolutionary origins of the United States and a radical democratic tradition in America. Though the "Americanism" of the Communist Party during the Popular Front has been criticized as cynical and self-serving, Scott himself was anything but cynical. He was an idealist, a man who truly believed in America and the promises of the Declaration of Independence, particularly that "all men are created equal." In this sense, he was far more optimistic and "liberal" than Brooks. Brooks mourned the historical amnesia of American culture, seeing the "forgetting" of the Civil War as the reason America had to fight again, against fascism. For Scott, however, the Civil War was not forgotten, and in fact, he saw the war against slavery and the figure of Abraham Lincoln as part of the historical continuity of democratic progress toward the New Deal and social democracy.⁷⁹ As Finlay, explaining the irrational motive behind the murders, comments: "You almost have to be a historian to understand it."⁸⁰

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In the first draft, Paxton and Scott envisioned another flashback—this time a glimpse into American history—to convey their message of the historical continuity of intolerance and the interchangeability of prejudices. In this version, Finlay tells the story of his Irish immigrant grandfather to Keeley in a voice-over narration that explains the images on the screen. As the scene in his office dissolves to a printing shop in 1850, Finlay explains, "My family arrived in the land of the free and the home of the brave about 100 years ago. Some of them stayed in New York, some of them went on to Philadelphia. Thomas Finlay was an editor—a pamphleteer. He was what we used to call a God-fearing man. He loved America. The only thing he didn't like about the Constitution was that he didn't write it." A discordant note of music signals a shift in mood, as Finlay's grandfather sees an orator speaking to an angry, milling crowd and realizes that

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something is terribly wrong: "He discovered that some people didn't think the Constitution applied to Irish Catholics. He discovered that the Irish Catholics who had come to America—looking for freedom—were really—" Here Paxton envisioned the screen image focused on the orator mouthing the words Finlay speaks: "Dirty Papists! Scheming against native Americans! Depriving us of our jobs and infecting our children with foreign idolatry! Hanging our flag in their windows but secretly worshipping their Pope in their parlors! Smiling in our faces, but plotting behind our backs with their fat, licentious priests!" Now the mob attacks a Catholic priest, then the scene dissolves to a pamphlet in Finlay's grandfather's hands with the title, "America is Big Enough For All Races and For All Religions." The angry babble of the mob underscores a shot of the immigrant pamphleteer being engulfed by the mob. The scene ends with a shot of the pamphlet on the ground, stained by blood. As the image slowly dissolves back into Finlay's office in the present, the detective drives home his point:

That's history. They don't teach it in schools, but it's history just the same. . . . Thomas Finlay was killed in 1850, because he was an Irish Catholic. A few weeks ago, a Negro was lynched, because he was a Negro. . . . This evening, Samuels was killed, because he was a Jew.⁸¹

Admitting that his own faith in the American Way of Life blinded him to the motive behind Monty's murders, Finlay reiterates the film's central tension between positivist idealism and irrational contingency: "It's always hard to believe. You keep looking for a stronger motive. I did—this time. . . . When you can't find one, you suddenly realize there isn't any stronger motive than the right combination of prejudice, ignorance, and hate—especially when it's mixed with whiskey." Keeley asks simply, "How can you pin it on him?" and Finlay replies, invoking the Popular Front against fascism, "I think it can be done, if we work together."⁸² In this version, Finlay makes an off-the-cuff comment to Keeley about using Leroy to set a trap for Monty, and the next scene cuts to that trap.

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By the second draft, Scott and Paxton had made substantive changes to this section of the screenplay. In this revision, Finlay and Keeley are equal partners in the antifascist struggle. Finlay does not need to win Keeley's consent through the story of his grandfather since both men clearly understand the nature of the enemy. Finlay says, "I'm taking the chance that you're smart enough to know what—" but Keeley interrupts him: "You don't have to draw me any pictures. I know what you're getting at. And I think you're right. What do you want me to do?"⁸³ Indeed, Keeley has always been "in the know," while Finlay struggled throughout the investigation to understand the irrational motive behind Samuels's murder. Finlay explains the investigative process, underscoring that his usual "routine" is useless in such a case since none of the suspects had known Samuels well enough to have an "ordinary" motive—to be in love with his wife or know

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that he had money to steal. Instead, Finlay acknowledges that "the motive had to be inside the killer himself . . . something he brought with him . . . something he had been nursing for a long time."⁸⁴ This construction of prejudice as a psychological aberration signals the growing hegemony of the therapeutic culture. In the postwar period, intellectuals of varying political persuasions would link a potential for fascism—or in its Cold War articulation, totalitarianism—to psychological disorders, from the "other-directed" individual described by David Reisman to the "authoritarian personality" elaborated by Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School intellectuals. In suggesting that social problems were really individual problems that could be solved by personal adjustment or social engineering by psychologists and other experts, this ideological shift worked to delegitimize the mass political action of the 1930s and paved the way for the "consensus" society of the 1950s.⁸⁵

Though Scott certainly accepted the psychological model of prejudice, he also recognized the political dangers posed by organized groups of "personal" fascists. In this, he drew on the model of fascist Germany, particularly the Nazi mobilization of economically and psychologically threatened lower-middle-class men into bands of thuggish storm troopers. Scott clearly believed that under the right conditions—that is, with a resurgence of the Depression and the rise of a demagogic leader—fascism might indeed come to America:

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Monty, the antisemite in *Crossfire*, exists. This very night he is roaming the streets of Queens, N.Y., looking for a Jew to beat up. He has already beaten up many. He has associates. They are looking to prove their superiority by kicking around someone they consider decidedly inferior. They want a scapegoat for their own insecurity and maladjustment. They are ignorant and organized. They hoot and howl with fanatic energy at the Messianic raving of Gerald L. K. Smith. They are the storm troopers of tomorrow. If this country were depressed enough to fall victim to a Leader, these men would qualify brilliantly for the chieftains of American Buchenwalds and Dachaus. Such a group, the native American fascist, organized and disciplined, is a threat to the Jews, and to the entire population. It is depressing at this point in our history to find it necessary to say that.⁸⁶

In *Crossfire*, however, though they clearly articulate the danger in Monty's influence over the other GIs, Scott and Paxton do not explicitly link Monty's "personal fascism" to a larger network of fascist organizations or structures. Instead, Monty is represented as a solitary psychopath. Given their experience on *Cornered*, in which the studio quashed John Wexley's attempts to locate the postwar fascist threat in an international industrial cartel, it is possible, of course, that they deliberately chose a liberal rather than Marxist framework in order to assuage the studio heads. However, I suspect that, despite his obvious concerns, Scott's faith in the democratic state and right-thinking Americans made it difficult

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for him to articulate the precise mechanism by which "personal fascism" might be translated into a fascist state in America.

Thus, in the final version of *Crossfire*, the democratic state, embodied by Finlay, and right-thinking, risk-taking individuals, represented by Keeley, collaborate to expose and destroy the fascist threat. Pointing out that it "might take months to polish this off the usual way," Finlay says he wants to take "a long chance on nailing him quick." As in *The Brick Foxhole*, the homosocial bonds of the GIs can be marshalled both for and against the antifascist cause, and in this final version, Finlay draws on Keeley's knowledge of his men to set a trap for Monty:

Finlay: Just how do you think he [Leroy] feels about Monty?
Keeley: You're getting ahead of me.
Finlay: I was hoping he didn't like Monty.
Keeley: I think he's scared to death of him.
Finlay: Is he really as dumb as Monty says?
Keeley: He's pretty young. He doesn't always know which end's up. . . .
Finlay: Monty doesn't think he's smart enough to lie. What if he told Monty a fantastic story—would Monty believe him?
Keeley: He might.
Finlay: I'll risk it.⁸⁷

Instructing his assistant to keep the news of Floyd's murder out of the papers, Finlay sends Keeley back to the Stewart Hotel with orders to sneak Leroy out and bring him back to the police station.

Most importantly, the final version of the screenplay places Leroy, an "average" American, at the center of a conversion narrative. Though Finlay does tell the story of his grandfather, there is no flashback in the film. Instead, the story is only one element in Finlay's attempt to win Leroy's allegiance to the antifascist Popular Front consensus. Leroy says he can't imagine Monty doing "a thing like that" without a reason. Finlay tells him that Monty thought he had a reason: "You know the way Monty feels. You've heard the things he says." Leroy is not only reluctant to think the worst of Monty, but is also uncertain about Finlay's version of the "truth" about Jews and the evils of bigotry. He stammers, "Well, yes, I—I—guess I heard him say a couple of times about Jewish people living off the fat of the land while he was out there—you say that's all lies—and I guess it is—I don't know." Finlay patiently maps out the coordinates of American anti-Semitism for Leroy: "This business of hating Jews comes in a lot of different sizes. . . ."

There's the You-Can't-Join-Our-Country-Club kind . . . and the You-Can't-Live-Around-Here kind . . . yes, and the You-Can't Work-Here kind."⁸⁸

While Scott deplored what he called "casual" anti-Semitism, the violent consequences of hatred are critical to his vision of the dangers of intolerance. To the critics who argued that *Crossfire* was "not about you and me," and therefore, failed as a "message" film, Scott answered: 70

Lunatic fringe antisemitism is important, dangerously and terribly important. It was important in Hitler's Reich and in Czarist Russia, and in most of the countries in Europe at some time. The social discrimination variety is important, too; so is every minor and major practice which goes to make up the whole hateful body of antisemitic practice. And anyone who attempts to estimate which kind of antisemitism is most important or which should have the most emphasis announces an incomplete understanding of antisemitism.⁸⁹

For Scott, violence was the ultimate and possibly inevitable result of "genteel" anti-Semitism. As Finlay insists, "Because we stand for all these, we get Monty's kind. He's just one guy—we don't get him very often—but he grows out of all the rest." Reminding Leroy that the United States has laws against carrying a loaded gun because guns are dangerous, Finlay explains: "Well, hate—Monty's kind of hate—is like a gun. If you carry it around with you, it can go off and kill somebody. It killed Samuels last night."⁹⁰

The final draft of this conversion narrative includes an Army major, the soldiers' commander, who witnesses Finlay's interview with Leroy. During the March 1947 script conference with Colonel Davidson, it was decided that "[i]n this sequence, it will be brought out that although the Major does not directly advise and command Leroy to lay the trap for Monty, he does encourage Leroy to assist the police in cornering Monty."⁹¹ Nevertheless, the Major's presence does give a stamp of approval to the proceedings, suggesting that the antifascist front can include the military as well as the liberal state and risk-taking individuals. Confused by Finlay's pressure and reluctant to betray another soldier, Leroy appeals to the Army major for advice. The major replies noncommittally, reinforcing the conversion narrative's emphasis on individual responsibility rather than official coercion: "That's up to you. I can't tell you what to do. This isn't an Army matter." However, the major reassures him that Monty's actions set him outside the bonds of military or male loyalty: "The Army has never been proud of men like Montgomery. So don't worry about being disloyal to your outfit." Finlay reminds him that Monty killed Floyd, and Leroy says sadly, "I hate to think of anything like that happening to Floyd—after going through the Philippines and everything—and I hate to see Monty get away with anything." However, Leroy still doesn't want to get involved, especially since he is about to be demobilized: 71

"I might get in trouble. And I don't see this is any of my business, anyway."⁹²

Finlay tries another tack, pointing to the connection between Monty's hatred of Jews and his contempt for Leroy: "He calls you a hillbilly doesn't he? He says you're dumb. He laughs at you because you're from Tennessee." Thus, Finlay suggests that it is indeed Leroy's business, that Monty's hatred affects him personally. Through Finlay, Scott and Paxton reiterate the contemporary notion that prejudice was the product of ignorance: "He's never even been to Tennessee. Ignorant men always laugh at things that are different—things they don't understand. They're afraid of things they don't understand—they end up hating them." Leroy still resists: "You get me all mixed up! You know about all these things I don't know anything about! How do I know what you're trying to do? How do I know you aren't a Jewish person yourself?"⁹³ Though he asks Leroy if that would really make a difference, Finlay tells him the story of his Irish grandfather. On the one hand, this story works to remind Leroy of the interchangeability of prejudice and its historical continuity, and to suggest that just as anti-Catholicism is a thing of the past, so too will anti-Semitism one day be eradicated. On the other hand, however, the story also works to remind us that Finlay is *not* Jewish.

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Reiterating that this is "real American history," Finlay narrates his grandfather's death at the hands of a drunken mob, noting that, like Monty, they didn't start out to kill. But they started out hating, which led inexorably to murder. Rejecting historical specificity to assert a timeless universal humanism through the parallel between the murder of his Irish Catholic grandfather in 1848 and the murder of the Jew, Samuels, a century later, Finlay asks: "Do you see any difference, Leroy? Any difference at all? Hating is always the same, always senseless." Finlay's litany of the potential victims of American intolerance is reminiscent of Pastor Niemoller's recitation of the victims of the Nazis:

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In Germany, they first came for the communists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me—and by that time no one was left to speak up.⁹⁴

Finlay's version, however, is specifically American: "One day it kills Irish Catholics, the next day Jews, the next day Protestants, the next day Quakers. . . . It's hard to stop. It can end up killing men who wear striped neckties. . . . Or people from Tennessee."⁹⁵

Ultimately, Leroy agrees to help Finlay trap Monty. Lying in wait for him at the Stewart Hotel, Leroy follows Monty into the communal bathroom. While the two

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men shave together, Leroy lays the trap: Floyd is alive and wants to see Monty. Leroy gives him a slip of paper with the wrong address written on it and instructs Monty to meet Floyd there later that night. In all versions of the screenplay, Monty returns to the room where he killed Floyd. When Finlay confronts him with his mistake, he realizes that he is trapped and makes a run for it. According to Paxton,

The "right-house-but-the-wrong-address" ploy was Adrian's idea. I think it was inspired and a wonderful example of his talent. Neither of us thought of it as "entrapment," I don't think of it as that now; it was a dramatic device, a quick, economical and surprising way of getting from Monty an instantaneous, unspoken, irrefutable confession. If Monty showed up, Monty was the man. As simple as that.⁹⁶

The details of the trap, however, are far less interesting than its setting. This scene, which was not in *The Brick Foxhole*, could have taken place anywhere—the coffee shop, a bar, even a park bench. Yet Paxton and Scott set the scene in the communal bathroom at the Stewart Hotel, where Monty and Leroy, stripped down to their T-shirts, shave together while they talk. There is an almost palpable intimacy to this scene, with its male bodies on display, underscoring the homoeroticism of the all-male world of the military. It is hard to imagine that Scott and Paxton intended the scene in this way, given their other overt attempts to "straighten" *The Brick Foxhole*. Nonetheless, the scene heightens the visibility of the homoerotic subtext that permeates the film despite the filmmakers' desire to render it invisible. Though the men wear undershirts in deference to the Production Code, they seem naked, visibly reminding us of the almost limitless possibilities for male homosexual fantasy (and more covert sexual acts) that made the military such a disturbing site in the postwar period. The erotic masculinity of Monty (Robert Ryan, the former Dartmouth boxing champion), with his muscular arms and big hairy chest, is sharply contrasted with the softer, more boyish and vulnerable (even womanish) body of Leroy, who looks barely old enough to shave. On the one hand, their physical asymmetries imply the prevailing 1940s stereotypes of homosexual couples (virile stud and "fairy"), and indeed, it is possible to imagine that under different circumstances, this solitary meeting in the bathroom might lead in a different, more explicitly sexual direction. On the other hand, however, Monty's obvious physical superiority suggests that "ordinary" men like Leroy cannot hope to challenge the fascist threat physically. Instead, they must rely on their wits and work in solidarity with other risk-taking individuals (men) and the democratic state.

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The film's denouement—the trapping and killing of Monty—proved quite controversial, and Scott and Paxton struggled to find an appropriate way to bring Monty to justice. In the first version of the screenplay, Monty flees into the street

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and Finlay shoots him through the window of the apartment above. Though wounded, Monty rises and keeps running, and Finlay nods to the waiting MPs, who close in on Monty with tommy-guns. In the second draft, Finlay merely fires a warning shot from the apartment window, but Monty, undeterred, makes a break for an alley. In both of these early versions, Paxton envisioned that one expressionless, gum-chewing MP would follow Monty into the alley, and the sound of a single blast from his machine gun would signal Monty's death.⁹⁷ Despite the clear deliberation in these versions, suggesting a cold-blooded execution rather than the swift hand of legal justice, only two objections were made during the process of revising the screenplay. Colonel Davidson, the Army's representative, objected to the participation of MPs in the "trapping and destruction of Monty," and insisted that city police be substituted in this scene.⁹⁸ RKO executive Harold Melniker also suggested to Scott that the white-coated doctors in the scene be replaced by uniformed or plainclothes policemen to avoid the impression that "the police were definitely expecting an ambulance case."⁹⁹

Once the filmmakers actually saw this scene on film, however, they themselves began to have doubts. Though their original intent was that Monty "should appear like a rat who is cornered—and you kill a rat," after they screened the dailies, Dmytryk expressed concern that they "might get a totally different reaction from the one intended, that it would look overpowering; it was kind of overkill." RKO executive William Gordon felt the scene played as an "ambush set up by Finlay" and warned, "Those who will sympathize with Monty (and let's face it: there will be varying numbers of them in different communities) will feel that he's a rat in a trap who has not been given his day in court and according to his constitutional rights." He continued, "I don't want people to say, 'Maybe this guy would be convicted in Jew York (or some other place) but no jury in my town would find him guilty.'"¹⁰⁰ Schary agreed with him wholeheartedly:

I said, "I think it's a terrible mistake . . . 'cause you got all these big figures with helmets—it's like Storm Troopers," I said, "I think people would feel sorry for him, and I said why doesn't Bob Young order him to stop and just with one shot knock him off. It's legitimate. He's going to escape but Bob Young warned him."¹⁰¹

In the final filmed version, written by Paxton on the set, Finlay warns Monty to stop running, and then fires a single shot from the window. The policemen and soldiers gather around the body, and Leroy asks if he's dead. Finlay says, "He was dead for a long time. He just didn't know it." "I guess I did the right thing?" Leroy asks, and Finlay replies, "The rightest thing you ever did soldier."¹⁰²

From William Gordon's perspective, this ending still left much to be desired. After screening a rough cut of the film in mid-April, he reluctantly conceded, "If you

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have to shoot him, and I suppose you do, then he should be felled by Finlay's shot through the window." However, he advocated some changes that would explain the "justice" of this ending for moviegoers.

I think that your film can be so edited that Finlay can then come down the stairs and join the others who surround the body. This would of course delete the chase. I would like it even more if Monty were not dead so Finlay could deliver a little speech about a long-suffering democratic Society now being forced to go to the trouble and expense of curing a repairable body in order to bring an apparently incurable mind to trial. Keeley might conceivably reply that the enlightenment resulting from such a trial could halt the spread of the same insidious infection in similarly diseased people.

Gordon's comments capture perfectly the various tropes through which prejudice was understood in the 1940s: the medical model of prejudice as an infectious disease and the psychological model of prejudice as the product of an "incurable mind."¹⁰³ However, Gordon also saw parallels to the treatment of Nazi war criminals and urged Scott not to violate the democratic principles and due process of law—the very values that distinguished "us" from "them"—in bringing Monty to justice in *Crossfire*. Thus, he argued, "Maybe we're just too damned fair in this country. It's important that we maintain that reputation here and abroad. Germans laughed at us for staging war criminals' trials, but maybe they admired us a little bit, too. Let's not out-Nazi the Nazis."¹⁰⁴

Scott and his collaborators may well have discussed an ending that included bringing Monty to trial. Schary later argued that there was not enough time to include a trial in the film, though it is unclear whether he is referring to the shooting schedule, the pace and running time of the film, or the race to beat out *Gentleman's Agreement*. In contrast, Paxton suggested that they were guided by dramatic conventions in framing the ending. He recalled, "For the time and the idiom of the time, I think it was obligatory to conclude with this kind of melodrama, in action, and not leave Monty's fate to some future trial. I believe my instinct or inclination was to satisfy this convention as quickly and un-objectionably as possible and get out of there." Interestingly, Paxton preferred the spirit of his original ending, in which Monty was killed offscreen, "indicating that he had somehow . . . broken through the ring of men surrounding him into the clear, and that there was no other way to stop him."¹⁰⁵ In fact, he was "angry and offended" by the ending that ultimately appeared on film, which he felt was "dramatically crude, in lousy taste, and improbable marksmanship."¹⁰⁶ Novelist Richard Brooks, however, supported the film's ending, arguing that "the picture is powerful enough as it is to carry through over the end without further philosophizing." Brooks believed that *Crossfire* would have a tremendous impact, and congratulated the filmmakers on a "great motion picture."¹⁰⁷

Though Scott and Paxton did not heed William Gordon's suggestions, they did include a final scene to tie up the loose ends. In early versions of the screenplay, the film closes with tidy heterosexual pairings, undercutting the male bonds so critical to solving the murder and winning the war. The first draft shows Keeley, Mitch and Mary leaving the police station together. Keeley, spying a pretty girl walking by, says with suggestive nonchalance, "Well, I think I'll get a drink," and follows the girl down the street. Left alone to face the future together, as in *The Brick Foxhole*, Mary asks, "Mitch, will everything be just the same again, with us, I mean?" and he replies, "No. It can't be. It won't be the same. But it'll be better."¹⁰⁸ 80

In the final version of the screenplay, the film ends at the site of Monty's death, as the policemen and soldiers gather around his body. Though Mitch and Mary are absent from this final scene, an exchange between Keeley and Finlay makes clear that their marriage has survived this ordeal and that they will eventually "return to normalcy." Finlay asks if Keeley thinks Mitch and Mary will be able to "make a go of it." Keeley replies, "It'll be a little rugged for a while. But they'll be all right." In this version, there is no pretty girl to distract Keeley. Instead, the film ends with an affirmation of the homosocial—and quite possibly homoerotic—bonds between men that solved the murder and won the war. Keeley turns to Leroy and asks him out: "How about a cup of coffee, soldier?" Leroy accepts the invitation and the two soldiers start off together up the sidewalk.¹⁰⁹ 81

The Industry Buzz

On March 28, 1947, after only twenty-three days on the set, Dmytryk wrapped filming on *Crossfire*. Scott was thrilled with the results, stating publicly, "Dmytryk brought it in on schedule and, most important, achieved his finest direction to date."¹¹⁰ In fact, as Schary boasted, "The script was so carefully prepared . . . that from the first assembly to the final cutting we lost only 150 feet of film."¹¹¹ Despite the relative ease with which *Crossfire* was made (compared, for example, to the studio meddling with *Cornered*), questions about the reception of the film—by moviegoers, critics, and particularly American Jews—loomed large for the filmmakers. 82

Once RKO began screening a rough cut of the film to select colleagues in the industry, however, the industry buzz was overwhelmingly positive, despite the doubts expressed when Scott first announced his plans for an anti–anti-Semitism film. The filmmakers received dozens of congratulatory letters and telegrams from Hollywood liberals, praising *Crossfire's* courage, daring, and innovation. Jerry Wald, the powerful Warner Bros. producer, wrote to Schary, "As a mystery story, it is a slick, exciting film, but your clever blending of the racial hatred problem 83

through this project, has made it a triple 'A' film. I'm glad you made it because it might open the screen to a whole flood of such pictures. If so, I hope they are all done as well."¹¹² Paul Nathan, who worked with Hal Wallis's production unit at Paramount, raved, "Last week I saw *Crossfire*, and I can think of nothing else. It is the tightest, most brilliant job of picture making I have seen in a long time."¹¹³ Character actor Sam Jaffe (who played a small but important role in *Gentleman's Agreement*) described *Crossfire* as "one of the most gripping and violent pictures I have ever seen. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I am sure that it will be one of the most talked of pictures of the year."¹¹⁴ Entertainment attorney and liberal Jewish activist Martin Gang wrote, "I think you have shown that freedom from fear is just as important in the motion picture industry as it was in world affairs when we entered the depression in 1932."¹¹⁵ Applauding both *Crossfire* and *The Farmer's Daughter*, Gene Kelly praised Schary, "You've proven very successfully (as you've always known) that good entertainment can be combined with truth and be commercial. . . . But more important—I think that from now on it will be a lot easier for a lot of fellows in this business to say a lot of things—and I give you the credit."¹¹⁶ Schary's mentor, David O. Selznick, sent him a brief telegram: "It is a fine achievement, especially because of its cost, but not only because of its cost. My congratulations to you and to all concerned." To which Schary generously replied: "Scott, Dmytryk, and Paxton should take most of the bows on this one, and I am glad that you agree with me that they did a helluva job."¹¹⁷

Scott also received his share of praise for *Crossfire* from exalted Hollywood players. Academy Award-winning screenwriter Robert Riskin, best known for his extended collaboration with Frank Capra, wrote to him, "It is a magnificent job. Exciting, intelligent, and for a delicate subject handled in the finest of taste. It will create a great deal of talk and you've a right to be proud."¹¹⁸ Congratulating both Scott and Paxton on their "superb work," Allen Rivkin, a liberal screenwriter (who worked with Schary and Dmytryk on *Till the End of Time*) and long-time activist in the Screen Writers Guild, enthused, "I want to tell you what a genuine thrill I got out of looking at your picture last night. It is one of the best of its kind I've ever seen. . . . I was gripped from beginning to end. . . . Thank you both for saying so many good things about tolerance, understanding, and the human decency of man. It is an important subject and you have set it importantly."¹¹⁹

Scott was also quite pleased about a request to screen the film that he received from a transportation desk worker at Paramount. He sent a note to Schary asking permission to run it for the man and his friends, noting "he is clearly one of Henry Wallace's 'common man' as are his friends. I'd like to run it for them."¹²⁰ For Scott, the interest expressed by these "common men" indicated that *Crossfire* had tapped into a substantial segment of the population: the "good" Americans who believed in tolerance and democracy and would support a film exposing the evils

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of anti-Semitism.

However, the filmmakers were troubled by signs that the public response to *Crossfire* might not be so positive. Dmytryk, for example, recounts the reaction of "one of the young assistant sound cutters, an Argentine," following an early screening on the lot for the sound department:

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"It's such a fine suspense story," he said. "Why did you have bring in that stuff about anti-Semitism?"

"That was our chief reason for making the film," I answered.

"But there is not anti-Semitism in the United States," he protested. "If there were, why is all the money in America controlled by Jewish bankers?"¹²¹

Dore Schary was particularly disturbed by the ominous rumbling from key players in the Jewish community. As RKO's vice president in charge of production and the sole Jew involved in the making of the film, Schary had a great deal invested, both professionally and personally, in *Crossfire's* success. Though he certainly supported the film and applauded its political intent, he was particularly sensitive, perhaps more than Scott, to the potential for a public backlash. As early as February 1947, even before filming had begun on *Crossfire*, the powerful and respected American Jewish Committee voiced concerns and began actively maneuvering against the project. Concerned that this opposition would damage *Crossfire's* critical reception and box-office appeal and might even lead to a Jewish boycott of the film, Schary decided to fight fire with fire and began actively recruiting Jewish support for *Crossfire*.

Notes

Note 1: Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton, *A Panorama of American Film Noir, 1941–1953*, Paul Hammond, trans. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 115–116; translation of *Panorama du film noir américain 1941–1953* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955), 115–116.

Note 2: Borde and Chaumeton note that a number of directors of social problem films—Anthony Mann, John Huston, and Robert Wise, as well as Edward Dmytryk—cut their teeth on classic noir before grappling with such noirish "social documentaries" as *Border Incident*, *We Were Strangers*, *The Set-Up*, and, of course, *Crossfire*. However, instead of seeing this as rooted in the political commitments of the filmmakers, they argue merely that "it's an ongoing tradition for so-called American 'realist' films to include noir elements. One even gets the impression that the Hollywood producers only accept a realist screenplay to the extent that it's capable of being noirified. Noir sells, and it permeates the documentary." *Panorama of American Film Noir*, 113–114.

Note 3: Review of "Cornered," *Hollywood Reporter*, November 14, 1945, in *Cornered* Production File, AMPAS.

Note 4: James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988): 2.

- Note 5:** Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the 1950s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xvi.
- Note 6:** On the ideological work and cultural significance of stardom, see Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979) and the essays in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).
- Note 7:** Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 131.
- Note 8:** For a fascinating discussion of noir stylistics, see Foster Hirsch, *The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), 71–112.
- Note 9:** *Cradle of Fear*, First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 1, in Scott Papers, AHC [hereafter, First Draft Continuity Revised].
- Note 10:** See Paxton to Kelly and Steinman, n.d. [July 1977], in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS.
- Note 11:** Joseph Breen to Harold Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.
- Note 12:** First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 3; *Crossfire*, Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 2–3, in Scott Papers, AHC [hereafter, Final Script as Shot].
- Note 13:** I am indebted to James Naremore for this insight. See *More Than Night*, 121.
- Note 14:** Franklin Jarlett, *Robert Ryan: A Biography and Critical Filmography* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 1990): 3–24.
- Note 15:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 4–6.
- Note 16:** *Ibid.*, 7–9, 25.
- Note 17:** Ephraim Katz, "Robert Mitchum," in *The Film Encyclopedia*, ed. Ephraim Katz (New York: Perigee Books, 1979), 815; Sidney Skolsky, "Hollywood is My Beat," *Art News*, April 10, 1947, in Robert Mitchum Bio File, AMPAS.
- Note 18:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 12–13.
- Note 19:** *The Brick Foxhole*, First Draft Continuity Unrevised, January 25, 1947, 13 [hereafter, First Draft Continuity]; First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 13; Breen to Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.
- Note 20:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 10.
- Note 21:** Breen to Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC; First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 11.
- Note 22:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 11–12.
- Note 23:** *Ibid.*, 12; *Cradle of Fear*, Final Script with Changes, February 19, 1947, 12, in Scott Papers, AHC [hereafter, Final Draft with Changes].
- Note 24:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 13.
- Note 25:** *Ibid.*, 14.
- Note 26:** Breen to Melnick, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC; First Draft Continuity, January 24, 1947, 15.
- Note 27:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 16–18.
- Note 28:** *Ibid.*, 18.
- Note 29:** *Ibid.*, 18–21.
- Note 30:** *Ibid.*, 22–23.
- Note 31:** First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 23–24.
- Note 32:** Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 23–25. The heroics of the beleaguered Allies during the Battle of the Bulge, particularly General Anthony McAuliffe's curt reply: "Nuts!" to the Germans, was widely publicized. See Stephen Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers* Ambrose,

Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944–May 7, 1945 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 224–225.

Note 33: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 29–30.

Note 34: *Ibid.*, 31–32.

Note 35: "Actor Sam Levene, 75, Dies," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, December 29, 1980, in Samuel Levene Bio File, AMPAS. Interestingly, the studio biographies and obituaries in the AMPAS files disagree on the place and date of Levene's birth. A Warner Bros. publicity bio claims Levene was born in 1906 in New York City, while the obituaries state that he was born in 1905 in Russia and immigrated to New York in 1907 (becoming a citizen rather belatedly, in 1937).

Note 36: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 35–36; Breen to Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 37: Final Draft with Changes, February 19, 1947, 37; typescript, "Breakdown from 89 Preview Cards Sent In from *Crossfire*," May 19, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC. RKO's preview screenings are discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

Note 38: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 34–35.

Note 39: First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 77; Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 70.

Note 40: Final Draft with Changes, February 19, 1947, 35–36; Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 32–33.

Note 41: For a full discussion of the response to *Crossfire* by Jewish defense organizations, see chapter 7.

Note 42: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 187–199.

Note 43: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 18.

Note 44: *Ibid.*, 71.

Note 45: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 70.

Note 46: RKO memo, William Gordon to Adrian Scott, April 17, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 47: Final Draft with Changes, February 19, 1947, 38–38A; Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 34–35.

Note 48: Final Draft with Changes, February 19, 1947, 38B; Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 35–36.

Note 49: "Gloria Grahame," in Katz, ed., *Film Encyclopedia*, 497.

Note 50: Joseph Breen specifically cautioned the filmmakers about the proper attire for the female characters, in guidelines that were clearly meant to contain the representation of Ginny's sexuality and "profession": "We also direct your attention to the need for the greatest possible care in the selection and photographing of the dresses and costumes for your women. The Production Code makes it mandatory that the intimate parts of the body—specifically, the breasts of women—be fully covered at all times. Any compromise with this regulation will compel us to withhold approval of your picture." Breen to Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 51: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 41.

Note 52: *Ibid.*

Note 53: Richard Brooks, *The Brick Foxhole* (New York: Harper, 1945), 130–131.

Note 54: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 37–39.

Note 55: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 42.

Note 56: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 40.

Note 57: Ibid., 41–43.

Note 58: Breen to Melniker, February 27, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 59: Scott to Sol London, June 16, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 60: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 47.

Note 61: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 44, 46.

Note 62: Ibid., 45–47.

Note 63: Ibid., 48–49; Sayre quoted in Jarlett, *Robert Ryan*, 27.

Note 64: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 50–52.

Note 65: Ibid., 52–53.

Note 66: Ibid., 52–53.

Note 67: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 54.

Note 68: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 53–54.

Note 69: Ibid., 55–59.

Note 70: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 60–61.

Note 71: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 60.

Note 72: See chapter 7 for a further discussion of these issues.

Note 73: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 63–65.

Note 74: Ibid., 66.

Note 75: Ibid., 72.

Note 76: Paxton to Kelly and Steinman, June 20, 1977, in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS.

Note 77: RKO memo, William J. Fadiman to Dore Schary, April 25, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 78: Schary to Eleanor Roosevelt, April 26, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS. Giuliana Muscio notes that Roosevelt and his aides instituted strict rules prohibiting the commercial or promotional use of FDR's image and voice. Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 23. Apparently this policy remained in force even after Roosevelt's death.

Note 79: In fact, even as he was working on *Crossfire*, Scott was also adapting, with Paxton, his own one-act historical play, *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*, which RKO eventually purchased and planned to film.

Note 80: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 75.

Note 81: Ibid., 75–78

Note 82: Ibid., 78.

Note 83: Final Draft with Changes, February 19, 1947, 81–82.

Note 84: Ibid., 80–82.

Note 85: David Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Theodor Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950). These issues are discussed more fully in chapter 7.

Note 86: Adrian Scott, typescript of "Some of My Worst Friends," 5, in Scott Papers, AHC, 1.

Note 87: Final Script with Changes, February 19, 1947, 81–82A; Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 76–77. This speech appeared in the final filmed version, with the exception of "they aren't sweethearts," which was deleted at the request of the PCA.

Note 88: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 78–79.

Note 89: Scott, "Some of My Worst Friends," 4–5.

Note 90: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 79.

Note 91: Harold Melniker to Paxton, March 1, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 92: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 79–80.

Note 93: Ibid., 80–81.

Note 94: Martin Niemoller was a pastor in the Confessional Church. A decorated submarine captain in the First World War, Niemoller initially welcomed Nazism as a bulwark against Bolshevism, but soon became critical of the regime's flagrant disregard for the rule of law and its efforts to co-opt the churches. In 1937 he was imprisoned for his outspoken sermons and spent the next eight years in a concentration camp. See Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 151–152.

Note 95: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 81–82.

Note 96: Paxton to Kelly and Steinman, n.d. [July 1977], in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS.

Note 97: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 90; First Draft Continuity Revised, February 12, 1947, 99–100.

Note 98: Harold Melniker to Paxton, March 1, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 99: Harold Melniker to Scott, March 11, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 100: Gordon to Scott, April 17, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 101: Kelly and Steinman to Paxton, June 29, 1977, in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS. Kelly and Steinman quote in full the text from a previous taped (but unidentified) interview with Schary.

Note 102: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 93–94.

Note 103: Medical metaphors dominated the language of prejudice during this period. This is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but several examples will suffice here: In the educational film *Can We Immunize Against Prejudice?* the Anti-Defamation League argued, "We have learned to protect our children against smallpox and diphtheria. How can we find some antitoxin against this other disease? . . . How can we immunize our children against prejudice?" Similarly, John Slawson, director of the American Jewish Committee, insisted: "Prejudice is a disease of the personality and is susceptible to cure. . . . Just as your city must have a health department to prevent disease, so also must your city have a sound program of human relations to prevent prejudice and disorder based on prejudice." Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 30.

Note 104: Gordon to Scott, April 17, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 105: Paxton to Kelly and Steinman, n.d. [July 1977], in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS.

Note 106: Kelly and Steinman to Paxton, June 29, 1977, in Paxton Bio File, AMPAS.

Note 107: Brooks to Scott, April 25, 1947, in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 108: First Draft Continuity, January 25, 1947, 92.

Note 109: Final Script as Shot, August 4, 1947, 94–95.

Note 110: Scott, "You Can't Do That," 327.

Note 111: Seymour Peck, "There's New Hope for Hollywood in Dore Schary of *Crossfire*," *PM*, July 22, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F3, WHS.

Note 112: Jerry Wald to Schary, June 20, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 113: Paul Nathan to Schary, June 30, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 114: Sam Jaffe to Schary, June 28, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 115: Martin Gang to Schary, October 15, 1947, in Schary papers, B126-F16, WHS. Ironically, Martin Gang, who represented a number of leading Hollywood Communists including Dalton Trumbo and Larry Parks and who signed an amicus curiae brief on behalf of the Hollywood Ten in 1947, eventually served as the main intermediary between the studios and blacklisted seeking "clearance" to work. Representing more "informers" (including Lee J. Cobb, Sterling Hayden, Richard Collins, and many more) than any other Hollywood attorney, by 1951 he had become a "symbol of collaboration," and Charles Katz, one of the legal team for the Ten, likened Gang to "Torquemada's adjutant." Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981): 98.

Note 116: Gene Kelly to Schary, July 30, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 117: Selznick to Schary, September 17, 1947; Schary to Selznick, September 30, 1947, both in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

Note 118: Robert Riskin to Scott, n.d., in Kenny-Morris Papers, B10-F4, WHS. Riskin's screenwriting credits include *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Lost Horizon* (1937), *You Can't Take It With You* (1938), and *Meet John Doe* (1940). Katz, ed., *Film Encyclopedia*, 975.

Note 119: Allen Rivkin to Scott and Paxton, April 25, 1947, in Kenny-Morris Papers, B10-F4, WHS. Ironically, Rivkin—who wrote the screenplay for the highly antifascist Schary-Dmytryk film *Till the End of Time* (1946)—was part of the group of "moderates" who orchestrated the purge of the left wing of the Screen Writers Guild following the 1947 HUAC hearings and encouraged the union to withhold its support from the beleaguered Hollywood Ten. Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, especially 292–298.

Note 120: Bob Laurence to Scott, July 30, 1947; Scott to Schary, n.d., both in Scott Papers, AHC.

Note 121: Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life*, 92.