

14th February 2021

Just finished watching HBO's *Sharp Objects*. It's exceptional as a study of contradictions; its remarkably evocative depiction of small town life is richly detailed and emotionally expansive—every inch of Wind Gap feels lived in—but conveys this suffocating sense of dread that emerges from an insular community defined by its hypervigilance and near-inescapability. In Wind Gap, the urbanite's existential solitude in a crowd would seem a luxury. The series also captures the sensation of memory with more fidelity than most; flashbacks are vignettes, brief moments imperfectly recalled by their emotional, rather than temporal proximity. *Sharp Objects* inverts many of the gendered expectations of conventional serial killer fare; here, men are defined by their relation to women and have simple, uncomplicated motives. Their roles, whether enabler, nurturer, scapegoat, or assistant, are thin characterizations, while the series's women are often moved by interminable, generationally recapitulated trauma toward devious, sinister ends. Highly recommended.

19th January 2021

Having exhausted all other reasonable alternatives for alleviating this pandemic-induced anhedonia, I've turned to journaling, shout-

ing into the void with all the attendant narcissism. Expect disjointed thoughts every couple days.

Maybe part of the reason we tend to regard the media landscape as a sort of vast landfill is how we're introduced to tropes. Few living have experienced the formative years of any popular artistic medium, and so we're inevitably introduced to tropes when they've already been abused to the point of (often inadvertent) parody. Consider how weighty piano bits are used to hamfistedly telegraph equally weighty emotional moments; at one point, this may have been novel and affecting, but decades later, ironic appreciation is the most you'd reasonably expect from *serious* people. Perhaps this is why some mistake a general hostility towards earnestness for a keen critical eye.

I love murder shows, those fixtures of daytime television. By their nature and presentation, they impress upon viewers the leaden significance of the crime at hand, yet simultaneously undercut that perception with a self-aware proliferation of puns and stilted reenactments. It's rather fitting for a genre which uses the backdrop of violent crime to present otherwise mundane happenings in sleepy towns and nondescript alleyways as lurid, frivolous, pulpy entertainment. Shows rarely feature compelling mysteries; the range of possibilities is rather narrow—the husband, the lecherous neighbor, the solitary highway cruiser—on par with the breadth of reasonable burrito bowl permutations at Chipotle rather than outcomes for a game of *Clue*, but they're tremendous, gratifying fun.