



# **Dirty Whites and Dark Secrets: Sex and Race in Peyton Place (Revisiting New England)**

*Sally Hirsh-Dickinson*

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In a surprise rereading of the classic Peyton Place by Grace Metalious, Sally Hirsh-Dickinson contends that it scandalized the nation precisely because of the way in which sexuality in the novel is conflated with America's problematic relationship to race. This charge is buttressed by the oft-forgotten detail that the fictional Peyton Place was founded by one Samuel Peyton, an escaped slave.

Hirsh-Dickinson argues that the town's inability to come to terms with its black history informs its dysfunctional relationship to sex, power, and justice, mirroring America on the eve of the civil rights movement. She writes of New England in the larger American consciousness, touching on discussions of white studies and the racialized lower classes in American fiction. Dirty Whites and Dark Secrets is a thought-provoking study of a genre classic that will speak to both scholars and students about the deeper truths hidden in popular fiction.

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