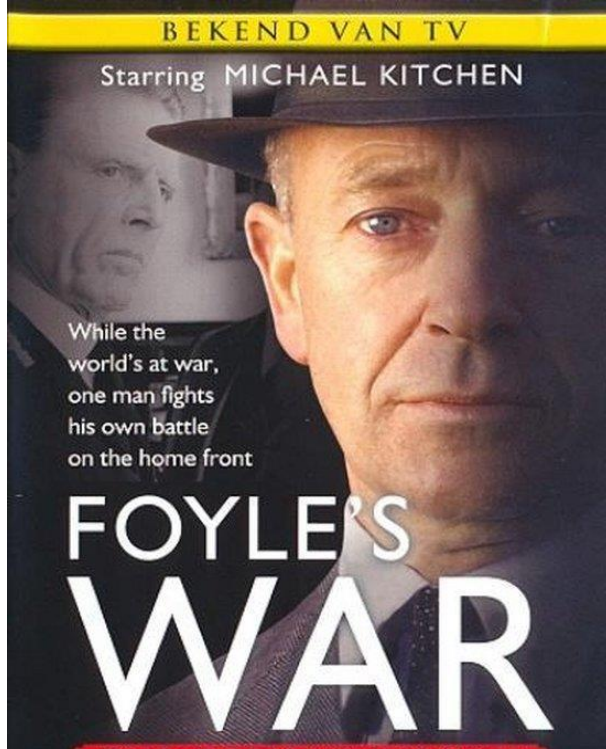


A Good Man: Analysis of Foyle's War

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I chose this image because it aptly represents the central theme of *F22oyle's War*, that every life matters, in any situation, no matter what larger scale events are happening in society.

The image also correlates with my research paper, as I am analyzing *Foyle's War* to see how the



Author unknown, Foyle's War Season 1, Episode 1. <http://www.leukomtekijken.nl/film/foyles-war---the-german-woman.html>. Accessed on 28 April 2022

series, and in particular this episode, entitled “The German Woman,” fits the standards of the police procedural.

This image is rich with symbolism and meaning. First is the quote itself, “While the world is at war, one man fights his own battle on the home front.” This is referring to the title detective, Detective Chief Superintendent Christopher Foyle, and his

continual seeking of justice in domestic and often overlooked murders, despite the raging of the Second World War around him.

The second part of the image is the title of the episode, “The German Woman.” This episode concerns the murder of the German-born wife of an influential English magistrate, and demonstrates the police procedural trope of systematic corruption, as the woman was kept from being interned like other German immigrants at the start of the war because of her husband’s position. One of the people who prevented her from being interned like the other immigrants was Foyle’s senior ranking officer, Assistant Commissioner Summers, who is pictured to the left of Foyle in the image.

For me, this image represents the two sides of the police force in *Foyle's War*, the good, and the corrupt. Foyle, on the right of the image, is the embodiment of quiet, blind justice. On the left side of the image, Summers represents the large number of corrupt or self-serving individuals in the police force and military, and the systematic corruption in England in general at that time that Foyle must navigate in order to obtain justice and truth.

Someone else viewing the image, perhaps someone not as familiar with the series, might think that Foyle is part of the military because of the quote about his battle on the home front. I do think, however, that because of the period dress of Foyle and Summers, and the title, "The German Woman," anyone looking at the cover could guess that the series was set during the Second World War. This image was circulated online, for the purpose of promoting the series.

A Good Man

“She's a human being, and she was murdered. Murder is murder. You stop believing that, and we might as well not be fighting the war” (“The German Woman”). With these words, the title detective of the police procedural series *Foyle's War*, counters his driver Sam Stewart's half-joking suggestion that the woman whose murder they are investigating was German, and therefore not deserving of their attention. By this offhand comment, Detective Chief Superintendent Foyle captures with characteristic bluntness the very essence of who he is, both as a person and as a police officer. He is solid, honest, and uncompromising in his pursuit of truth and justice in his local police district throughout the Second World War, and later in the series as an agent for Mi5, in the sordid world of post-war British counterintelligence. Foyle and the other characters in *Foyle's War*, while retaining utterly unique and captivating personalities, nonetheless serve as a perfect representation of the genre of the police procedural. *Foyle's War* captures the essential police procedural tropes of societal corruption, group effort in solving crime, and the imperfection in justice in this world.

In the very first episode of the series, “The German Woman,” Foyle discovers that a highly ranking naval officer has been responsible for the murder of two people. The man attempts to worm his way out of arrest, pointing out that his work in planning a radar system for the British Navy is essential, and that innocent people may die if he were to be arrested and hung. He even justifies the two murders, pointing out the fact that the woman he murdered was German, and therefore the enemy, and the man he murdered a blackmailer, and unfit to live. Foyle, however, ignores his excuses and arrests him anyway. Furthermore, Foyle discovers that a senior ranking officer in the police, Assistant Commissioner Summers, was part of a corruption ring that allowed the murdered German woman to escape internment because of her husband's

influential position as local magistrate. When confronted, Summers also tries to talk his way out of the charge, assuring Foyle, “We can work this out.” Foyle merely shakes his head, muttering, “I don’t think so” (“The German Woman”).

This systematic corruption, particularly within the police force, and the uncompromising way in which Foyle responds to attempts by the corrupt to evade the consequences of their corruption, are tropes of the police procedural. Often, high ranking officers or politicians in police procedurals are “anti-professional political brown-nosers, boot-licking junior executives, or bird-brained efficiency experts” (Panek 347), and while the first in this list, namely the corrupt political schemer Summers, concerns the plot of “The German Woman,” these other stereotypes come into play throughout the *Foyle’s War* series.

This continuous sense of obstruction from those farther-up in the chain of command creates an isolated, close community for those cops, detectives, and other characters in police procedurals that are genuinely concerned with solving crime and obtaining justice. This closeness, coupled with the nature of solving crime within the bounds of laws and society, create the need for a close network of persons who aid each other in crime-solving, and this stands in contrast to the earlier genius amateur detectives and solitary hardboiled PIs, who work alone. Author Peter Messant addresses this in his essay on police procedurals, writing that “[t]he police procedural, then, seems to be supplanting the private-eye novel as 'realistic' crime fiction. While the latter relies on a model of rule-bending individualism, the former puts its emphasis precisely on procedure and *collective* agency” (Messant). Paperwork must be filed, lab tests run, and court order issued in the real world of criminal justice, and for a police procedural to adhere to reality, the crime must be solved not by the genius or loner individual, but by the collective team (Panek 345).

In *Foyle's War*, this team is mainly comprised of the cheerful, eager driver Sam Stewart, the quiet, intuiting Sgt. Paul Milner, and DCS Foyle himself, their superior officer and, in a special way throughout the series, a father figure to them both. In "The German Woman," Foyle enlists the help of Milner, who is at the start of the series bedridden from injuries sustained in the Battle of Norway, to aid him in the case of the murdered German woman. Milner obliges and spends his time in hospital going through the case notes and quickly steering Foyle on the right track of the killer. Stewart, on the other hand, while at first appearing to be overly enthusiastic and of little help to the solving of the case, quickly reverses this impression by whacking a fleeing suspect over the head with a metal trash can lid within the first few minutes of the show, instantly achieving her place as essential in the workings of the crime-solving team.

While the series frequently has light or humorous moments, particularly between the main characters, *Foyles War* nevertheless maintains sobriety in its recognition of the imperfection of justice in this world. In "The German Woman," not only are two people, imperfect as they may be, murdered, but a young girl is killed in a bombing raid, a German immigrant couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Kramer, are interned and wrongly accused of being spies, and Mrs. Kramer suffers a heart-attack from the strain and dies while being interned, all within the same episode. The series takes place during wartime, and acknowledges that during wartime, the suffering of the innocent and the wastage of human life from violence are made even more apparent than in peacetime.

This reality of injustice is an essential trope of the police procedural. "A policeman's lot is not a happy one" (Gilbert qtd. in Davis 11), and this is largely due to police procedural heroes' constant contact with the worst in humanity, and the lack of justice with which they are constantly confronted. Similar to the hardboiled detective, the police procedural's characters are

aware of the corruption of the system and the largely unchanging nature of the fallen world, yet both are steadfastly committed to obtaining whatever justice is possible, small though it may be.

In the series, Foyle does what he can to mitigate the effects of the corruption and suffering surrounding him, petitioning and arranging to have the widower of the interned woman released, attending the funeral of the girl killed in the bombing raid, and enlisting the help of Paul Milner, who, apart from being a brilliant police sergeant, is at first struggling following his war injuries to find a new purpose in life. While Foyle undoubtedly knows that these actions do not make up for the evil in the world, they offer some sliver of justice.

Foyles War, while maintaining utterly original characters and story, demonstrates the police procedural tropes of systematic corruption, cooperation between multiple characters to solve crime, and acknowledgement of the imperfection of justice in this world. Despite these largely dark tropes of the police procedural, however, and the story's emphasis on the injustice and tragedy of war, *Foyle's War* manages to preserve a hopeful outlook, mainly due to the character of Foyle himself. Foyle will always do the right thing, no matter what the surrounding circumstances or outside pressures. Perhaps this dependability is what makes the story so very captivating for viewers, for the moral grey area of life that Foyle faces is as rampant now as it was during the Second World War. In a world fraught by chaos, Foyle is a dependable force of good, as uncompromising and as solid as the Trafalgar Square Lions at the heart of England's capital.

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