



**“Mirrors of Enforcement”: Contamination
and Resistance in Katherine V. Forrest’s
*Murder at the Nightwood Bar***

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Abstract

In the second novel of Katherine V. Forrest’s Kate Delafield Mystery series (1984-), *Murder at the Nightwood Bar* (1987), the mystery plot is centred on the brutal murder of Dory Quillin, a young homosexual girl is disowned after a brutally abusive childhood. Dory’s parents are emblematic representations of the homophobia that is deeply rooted in middle class conformist society, where the judgemental gaze of God and the community mean more to the victim’s parents than her well-being or even her life. This paper argues that this novel contains a complex process of contamination and resistance to this judgemental gaze pivoting on the characters of detective Delafield, and Dory and Flora Quillin. Flora, the symbol of the heteronormative dogmatic establishment, carries out the process of contamination by murdering her daughter and trying to gaslight Delafield, the symbols of societal resistance, unaware that a providential process of contamination is born within her in the form of a tumour. The cycle of contamination and resistance is seemingly severed, but the novel conveys that the influence of the gaze of conformist society renders this cycle inevitable and never-ending.

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