

The Other Typist Study Guide

The Other Typist by Suzanne Rindell

(c)2016 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Other Typist Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-4.....	5
Chapters 5-9.....	9
Chapters 10-14.....	14
Chapters 15-19.....	19
Chapters 20-22, Epilogue.....	23
Characters.....	26
Symbols and Symbolism.....	29
Settings.....	31
Themes and Motifs.....	32
Styles.....	36
Quotes.....	38



Plot Summary

- This study guide uses the Berkley trade paperback edition. ISBN: 978-0-425-26842-1.

The Other Typist is told from the first-person narration of Rose Baker, who is currently confined to a mental hospital. She recalls the events that led her to her confinement. She begins with her time in New York City in 1925 in the age of Prohibition, when Rose was a typist in a police precinct, typing up the confessions of murderers, sitting in the interrogation room with the Sergeant. Her life appeared to be simple. She worked during the day and lived a quiet life at a boarding house. When Odalie, a new typist, was brought on board, Rose fixated on the young woman. Odalie was vibrant, exuded sex appeal, wore flapper dresses and cut her raven-colored hair in a chic bob.

Odalie dropped a brooch one day as she left the precinct. Rose picked it up, and instead of telling Odalie about, tucked the brooch into her desk drawer. Rose then took it upon herself to keep a close eye on Odalie. She kept a notebook full of her observations about Odalie, from her own thoughts about her to Odalie's work habits and social calendar.

Odalie and Rose struck up a friendship. After Rose learned of a betrayal by Dotty, the woman who ran the boarding house, Odalie invited Rose to move in with her. While Rose was nervous to make the move, she took Odalie up on her offer and moved into the hotel suite with Odalie. Rose questioned how Odalie was able to afford the suite, and Odalie explained that her family has money. Odalie took Rose to a speakeasy, introduced Rose to her finance Gib, and Rose got drunk on champagne cocktails. Rose felt scandalous out drinking and dancing, but could not seem to say no to Odalie. She felt like she was being tested and she felt a need to belong. She believed Odalie to be her kindred spirit.

Odalie took Rose on a vacation to a beach house. Rose felt out of place, especially since Odalie decided to show up without an invite. While at the beach house, they encountered Teddy Tricott, a young man whose cousin Warren was killed in a train accident years earlier. Teddy recognized Odalie, but Odalie insisted she did not know him. While Rose was out for a swim, Teddy swam out to talk to her on a floating dock. He explained that Warren was engaged to a woman named Ginevra who bears a striking resemblance to Odalie. After Warren's death, Ginevra disappeared and Teddy thought Odalie might be her. Not long after their conversation, Rose and Odalie left the beach house.

Back in the city, Rose questioned Gib about Odalie. He tried to talk her through what was happening, but Rose remained insecure. When Teddy encountered Rose in the city, she took him back to the hotel suite to settle the matter with Odalie. Odalie sent Rose out for cigarettes, and when Rose returned, she heard police sirens. Teddy was pushed off the hotel balcony and fell to his death. Once inside the hotel, the hotel employees identified Rose as the woman who went upstairs with Teddy. Rose has a flashback to Teddy's fall and realized she was responsible.

Now in a mental hospital, Rose is visited by the Lieutenant Detective who brings her the brooch from her desk. After snatching the knife from the Lieutenant Detective's person, Rose slices her hair into a bob, assuming the identity of Odalie.



Chapters 1-4

Summary

The Other Typist opens with Rose explaining how the “typewriter would unsex” (1) the women in the office. It is 1924 and Rose, the narrator, is reflecting on her time as a typist who transcribed the confessions of murders at a New York City precinct. The two police officers she most interacted with were the Sergeant and Lieutenant Detective. She considered how the men view women as the weaker sex. Rose considered herself a moral person and did not enjoy hearing the “gruesome details” (7), but remained steadfast in listening and accurately reporting the details. She thought listening to the confessions was “intimate” (7), but viewed herself as an extension of the typewriter.

The other women in the office were Iris and Marie and Odalie who has just been hired. Considered the “fastest and most accurate typist” (11), Rose has worked in the precinct for two years. Narrating, Rose gives background information on the Volstead Act and how the officers reacted to prohibition laws. Returning to the story, the precinct was chosen to be a “crackdown unit” (12), setting examples for the other precincts. This opened up the opportunity for a new typist to join the precinct. When Odalie was first introduced on the day she was interviewed, she did not have the bob haircut – her most defined characteristic. Later, when Odalie reported for work and the haircut was revealed, with the Sergeant commenting that “men were likely to get the wrong idea about a woman with short hair” (14). Rose observed that Odalie gave an air of coming from a privileged background. No one questioned why she took a job as a typist, which was not a highly regarded position. When Odalie left the precinct, she dropped a brooch on the floor. Instead of telling Odalie, Rose took the brooch and put it in her desk.

In Chapter Two, Rose revealed that she lived in a boarding house run by Dotty, a widower, and had a roommate named Helen. Rose admitted that she struggled with loneliness, even though she was often around people at the boarding house or the precinct. Helen considered herself better than Rose, marginalizing her job as a typist, and talking about her “gentleman caller” (23). At work, Rose took dictation during a confession. The suspect told the Lieutenant Detective about a conspiracy theory involving an invisible government. When Rose arrived back at the boarding house, she learned that Helen included her on a double date with Helen’s gentleman caller Bernard Crenshaw, and his twin brother Leonard. Rose and Helen stepped aside to discuss the date and Rose was not pleased, thinking what Helen did to be rude. Helen offered her some clothes to wear to make herself presentable. Rose relented and tried on some of Helen’s dresses. They went to a social club, which failed to meet Rose’s expectations; she imagined something fancier, but the club was a sporting league in Hell’s Kitchen. Helen and Bernard shared a dance, leaving Rose with Leonard. They danced before going back to the table and engaged in awkward conversation, during which Leonard gave Rose the flower from his lapel. After the date, Helen warned Rose not to talk too much about her job at the precinct because it would drive men away.



Chapter Three returned to the precinct. Narrating, Rose describes the precinct as “dark and humid” (39) with the scent of stale alcohol from the drunks brought in after raids. Returning to the story, Odalie arrived for her first day of work and Rose noticed how nice her coat was. Rose watched Odalie throughout the day and how Odalie reacted to the other women, notably how Odalie was aloof with Iris, mirroring her. The Lieutenant Detective introduced Rose as “the lovely Miss Baker” (43) and Rose thought about how the description did not fit because she has always been plain. A wino attempted to escape and Odalie smoothly took him by the arm and escorted him back to the holding cell. The Sergeant approved. Rose thought the only thing she had in common with Odalie was gender.

In Chapter Four Rose noted the mistakes that Odalie made in her typing, but she did not report them. Instead she decided that she should keep watch of Odalie. Narrating, Rose claims that watching people is a skill she prides herself on and claims that it began when she was a child in an orphanage. While at the orphanage, she ended up working for the Lebrun family as a maid. Eventually, this allowed her to attend the Bedford Academy for Girls, offering her a better education. Rose decided that she should keep a record of Odalie’s activities and began keeping a journal. Her notes revealed a desire to connect with Odalie. With regard to her own loneliness, she wrote that “it might be nice to have some clever conversations” (55) and contemplated going to lunch with her. When Odalie later invited Iris to lunch, Rose was jealous. In her observations, Rose determined that Odalie did “not care for most people” (56). Gossip spread around the office about Odalie’s past, including whether she appeared in a film or ran away with a man’s money in California. Rose believed that it was normal to be “curious about others” (59), but declared that she hated gossip. While Odalie was away from her desk, Rose snuck a cigarette and slipped outside to smoke it. She had never smoked before and when she returned to the office, she felt as though she had a secret, considering herself “a wild, smoking woman” (61). Odalie left a pack of cigarettes on Rose’s her desk, which Rose returned to her, explaining that she did not smoke.

Analysis

The novel’s time period is one of the first things that should be noted. By setting it in the mid-1920s, it offers a platform in which the author can examine gender roles both socially and in the workplace. Rose is single, at one point even commenting on her “premature state of spinsterhood” (34). She works to support herself and does not appear to be looking for a man to support her. She understands her place in the office and in society. Given that she considers herself plain looking, she does not pursue men in the way that her roommate Helen does; similarly, she acknowledges her place in the office. A woman does not take a job as a typist – certainly not in a police precinct – unless she has to. Yet Rose does not view women without a strong constitution. She advocates for women’s strength, recognizing that the women in the typing pool must endure the details of murder confessions twice – once taking dictation and the second time while typing up the statements.



The time period also invites exploration of prohibition laws. At this time in American, alcohol is illegal. This restriction can be regarded as a metaphor for the restrictions placed on women at this time. The introduction of Odalie is an invitation into another world. While the reader is unaware of the extent of Odalie's involvement in the speakeasies, she lures Rose into them, introducing her to new people and getting her drunk. It also gives Rose an opportunity to start thinking outside of her comfort zone. She has lived a quiet, moral life by her own admission, yet is incapable of telling Odalie no. She is captivated by Odalie in much the same way that the others are, but is this an accurate representation? As the first-person narrator, everything that the reader learns about Odalie and others is filtered through Rose's lens. If Rose is so enamored of Odalie, then everyone else must be because she perceives it that way. This begins to give the reader insight into Rose as an unreliable narrator; she cannot be trusted to be objective. However, this does not mean that nothing she says is true; it is the reader's task to figure out what is and is not true. The suspect being questioned by the Lieutenant Detective refers to an invisible government. This is an apt metaphor for the power that Rose holds over the story.

Rose also takes it upon herself to observe Odalie. She watches her, makes notes about her activities, and monitors her work. She does not make an effort to correct Odalie's work or help her with it. Rather, she keeps Odalie's mistakes to herself. This may foreshadow the true relationship between Rose and Odalie revealed at the end of the novel.

There is some commentary on class systems as well. The police and the typists are working class. When Odalie arrives, Rose indicates that she gives off an air of privilege. No one questions why Odalie would be working in such a place if she did not need to, but Rose feels as though Odalie is treated differently because of her standing. This standing includes both wealth and appearance.

The author tackles the theme of loneliness in the novel. This is readily seen in Rose's everyday life. She is candid about her loneliness, but when Helen sets her up on a double date, Rose is reluctant. Granted, Helen needs Rose to go with her in a chaperon capacity, but Rose lacks interest in her date for the night. If Rose is lonely, she is not making an effort to remedy it. Much like her plainness, Rose seems resigned to her fate. In withdrawing from others, it makes it easier for Rose to consider herself moral and following the rules. She seeks to live a life without temptation, but this changes when Odalie arrives

While Rose was disinterested in her double date with Helen, Rose is interested in fostering a relationship with Odalie. She is drawn to her, but wants Odalie to seek her out. Rose is jealous when Odalie asks Iris to lunch because she did not ask Rose first. Rose wants to be seen as special in Odalie's eyes.

Odalie drops a brooch on the floor, and instead of calling it to her attention or giving it back to her, Rose hides it in her desk drawer. In doing so, Rose demonstrates that she



is not the rule follower she would have the reader believe. She wants the brooch in her possession because she is drawn to Odalie. Similarly, Rose sneaks one of Odalie's cigarettes. When she returns from outside, she is energized with the secret that she knows something the others do not. These minor instances demonstrate how easily Odalie will be able to control Rose. It is not Odalie that wants to control Rose, per se, but rather that Rose is interested in being controlled by Odalie. Odalie will make Rose do things that she knows she would not otherwise, and this appeals to her. It gives her someone to blame so that she does not have to take ownership of breaking the rules. She does not have to feel guilty.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rose consider listening to confessions as “intimate” (7)?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Rose continue to reinforce the notion that she is plain?

Discussion Question 3

What does Rose's decision to keep track of Odalie's activities reveal about her character?

Vocabulary

virtue, morality, steno-type, ruckus, solemn, matriculation, affluence, mimeographs, pneumatic mail, stodgy, impropriety, tenuous, waif, vagabond, degeneration, ninny, rejoinder, misnomer, gaunt, camaraderie, dubious, cloche, chignon, timbre, covetous, insinuate, pretense, blasé, disposition, lank, countenance, tenure, preen, teleology, qualms, sojourn, inebriated, recede, agitation, stupefied, ferocity, rancid, lucid, reprimanded, pervasive, opaque, carafe, amicable, sobriquets, martyred, chastised, copious, acquiescence, decadent, haughty, abomination, feign, rivulets, catatonic, tirade, gussy, indignant, guttural, environs, incongruous, toque, lewd, deluded, attest, discord, docile, impervious, conscientiousness, inviolable, deviation, curt, wherewithal, intuit, frugality, ephemeral, farcical, impeccable, innate, besmirching, reticent, condescend, perfunctory, languid



Chapters 5-9

Summary

At the start of Chapter Five, Rose was dismissed from work early by the Lieutenant Detective. Rose questioned the decision, which was an unexpected response. He asked where she might go and she told him home and asked if he is mocking her. “Definitely not have a laugh at you” (65), he replied. When she arrived at the boarding house, Dotty and Helen were talking about Rose in the kitchen; they did not hear her come in and Rose eavesdropped. Dotty told Helen that Rose had a “funny-close” (68) relationship with a novice nun named Adele when she was at the orphanage. Adele wrote a letter to Rose, which Dotty steamed open and read prior to giving it to Rose. Just as Dotty was about to reveal the contents of the letter to Helen, a broom dropped and revealed Rose. Narrating, Rose insists that nothing improper happened between her and Adele. Rather they were kindred spirits who considered running away together when they were in their teens. Adele had not really wanted to be a nun, but was sent to a convent after Adele’s stepfather started “popping into the washroom whenever Adele undressed” (72) at bath time. Rose also reveals how she ended up at the orphanage, claiming that she was left at the orphanage as a way for her mother to spite her father for visiting prostitutes. Returning to the story, when Dotty and Helen saw that Rose has come in, they were startled. Rose later told Helen that she overheard them talking about her. Helen insisted they were not. Helen diverted the conversation by returning a pair of gloves she borrowed from Rose. Rose slapped Helen with the gloves and goes out for the evening. The chapter concluded with Rose foreshadowing the coming weeks and her developing friendship with Odalie.

Chapter Six opened with Rose confiding in Odalie about what happened with Dotty and Helen. Odalie extended an offer for Rose to move in with her. Narrating, Rose reveals for the first time that she is currently being treated by a doctor and how Odalie “won [her] over finally” (82). She describes her relationship with the Sergeant, recalling their first meeting when she was sent over from the typing school. Returning to the story, the Sergeant told Rose that he could tell she was “a lady of good conscience and honest disposition” (83). After Odalie began at the office, she asked Rose about the Sergeant’s personal life with flirtatious interest. Rose and Odalie left work and got caught in a rain storm on the way to the subway. Odalie insisted they take a cab and she instructed the driver to take them to her hotel. Once in the room, Odalie drew Rose a warm bath and got her dry clothes. When Rose saw the dress, she replied “Helen would turn absolutely green and die from envy” (91). The girls talked and Odalie explained that her father pays for the suite and that her family has money. Odalie asked that Rose not tell anyone about how or where she lives. They went out and met Odalie’s bohemian artist friends, but Rose did not mesh well with their personalities at the café. They had dinner at the hotel and Odalie signed for it. She told Rose that she can pay her whatever she pays to the boarding house for her share of the rent.



Rose moved in with Odalie in Chapter Seven and she was nervous about the move. The hotel staff did not recognize her when she enters: "I'd long ago perfected the art of plainness" (103). Odalie extended her phonograph and records, explaining that she also had a Victrola in the bedroom. They went out for the evening and Odalie was coy about where. They arrived at a wig shop and selected a wig and told the clerk that "I hear this is lovely in chestnut...but mahogany's twice as nice" (109), revealing the shop to be a blind for a speakeasy. Inside, Odalie ordered Rose a champagne cocktail, which is champagne and absinthe, from Redmond, the waiter. She then introduced Rose to Henry Gibson, who goes by Gib. In private, Rose asked Odalie about Gib and she suggested that they are engaged. Rose got drunk and much of the evening became a blur.

Chapter Eight starts with Rose declaring through narration that she lives "her life by the rules" (119); she also indicates that after the "incident" (120) that Odalie is considered the victim. She considered Odalie's lovers and was confused by Odalie's outward sexuality. When Rose got to work the next day, she was noticeably hungover. The Lieutenant Detective offered her some "hair of the dog" (123), to which she objected. He offered for her to call him Frank, which she declined. He dismissed her as "cold and mechanical" (125). Odalie shrugged off what happened with Lieutenant Detective and took Rose to the movies. Rose was increasingly more enamored with Odalie. Odalie tried to convince Rose that she should give the Lieutenant Detective another shot and pointed out that he kept Marie away from Rose while Rose was coping with her hangover.

Narrating, Rose explains her indiscretion with regard to Mr. Vitalli in Chapter Nine. She explains that Mr. Vitalli had been married several times, with each of his wives having an accident and dying in the bath. The women were all older and windowed and Mr. Vitalli was a young, attractive man. Each of the women were discovered in the same pose, indicating Mr. Vitalli was a serial killer and had managed to avoid being prosecuted. Returning to the story, after the fifth wife died, Mr. Vitalli was brought in for questioning. The Sergeant conducted the interrogation with Rose taking dictation. The Sergeant became agitated and left the interrogation, leaving Rose and Mr. Vitalli alone. Rose told Mr. Vitalli that he was an out-of-control animal who was bound to get caught. She noticed that her hand moved of "an independent volition" (139) to Mr. Vitalli's wrist and that her fingernails drew blood. They locked eyes and Mr. Vitalli gave her a look of recognition. Rose fled the interrogation and went into the bathroom where she saw Odalie. Noticing a drop of blood on Rose's cheek, Odalie wiped it away and smiled at Rose before she exited the bathroom.

Analysis

As Chapter Five begins, the themes of jealousy, identity, and confession are further developed. Rose is sent home from work early. She is caught off guard when the Lieutenant Detective tells her she can leave, so much so that she thinks he is making a joke. At this point Rose's identity is so wrapped up in her work that being asked to leave seems an affront. The request has nothing to do with her work. In fact, the Lieutenant



Detective comments that she has “already done the work of two typists” (64). If Rose is not working, she is not sure what to do with her time.

She returns to the boarding house in time to overheard Helen and Dotty talking about her. As she listens, she discovers that Dotty opened a letter that was addressed to Rose and read it. The women comment on Rose’s relationship with a woman named Adele. Dotty identifies the relationship as “funny-close” (68) as if to suggest that some sexual undertones may exist. The relationship with Adele may be tied into Rose’s identity. Much as Rose defines herself by her work, it is possible that she previously identified herself with Adele. They met as teenage girls and formed a close bond. Later in the novel, Rose reveals that she “always felt the love of women was much truer than the love of men” (210). Rose may feel more comfortable around women, or is able to connect on a deeper level with women, but this does not necessarily indicate sexual love. Rose, if she is self-conscious in her plainness, may feel more comfortable being herself in the company of women because there is not a pressure to be attractive or desired. She may also be projecting who she longs to be on the women she associates this. This may have proved to be too intense for Adele, resulting in the letter, or else Adele did not reciprocate the same feelings. Because the reader is not given access to the letter, there is no way of knowing what the letter might have said, or if it even existed. Given what transpires throughout the remainder of the novel, the episode with Adele, and subsequently Helen and Dotty, may not have happened at all. The limits Rose’s perspective place on the story and her unreliability give the reader a great deal of latitude in interpretation. One of the key questions that may arise is who Rose truly is.

Rose gives some background to Adele’s life, notably why she was placed in a convent. This also leads Rose to confess why her mother put her in an orphanage. Both stories are horrific: Adele is ogled by her stepfather and Rose is put in the orphanage by her mother to spite her father. Of the two, Adele’s story read as the most likely to have actually happened. That is not to suggest that the story of how Rose ended up in the orphanage is not possible, but it could be considered outlandish. Perhaps Rose concocted the story to stand out from more common stories like parental deaths. This may be a way for Rose to search for the identity she feels she deserves.

In Chapter Six, Rose admits that she is currently under the care of a doctor, suggesting that Odalie is being regarded as the victim instead of herself. This is the first indication that Rose is shaping her story to better fit her own narrative. Her comments on what she thinks or how she views herself are a way of convincing both the reader and herself.

Rose tells Odalie about overhearing the conversation between Helen and Dotty. This is Rose’s way of opening up to Odalie and deepening their bond. Helen confesses to Rose that she took and kept Rose’s gloves and apologizes. Helen does not directly apologize for the conversation with Helen, instead denying that it happened and insisting that Rose overheard them talking about someone else. When Rose slaps Helen with the gloves, she breaks a social rule. While it may appear that Helen deserves to be slapped, it is not socially acceptable to do so. The reader likely supports Rose’s decision to do so. This foreshadows and helps to prepare the reader for other



rules that Rose will break that may be deemed acceptable, such as what happens with Mr. Vitalli.

Odalie invites Rose to move in with her and Rose admits that she is nervous about doing so. She does not go into detail as to why, however. While Rose is captivated by Odalie, she notices things that she does not approve of. Odalie asks about the Sergeant's personal life. Rose is protective of the Sergeant's reputation and considers him a moral man, making Odalie's flirtations catch Rose off guard. Rose may recognize what Odalie is doing, but prefers to be lost in what Odalie does for her. Odalie treats Rose like she is special, or at least Rose perceives it that way. Odalie gives her dresses to wear, draws her a hot bath after getting caught in the rain, and pays for a taxi and dinner. Odalie includes Rose in her life, which helps to combat the loneliness that Rose feels.

During a night out with Odalie, Rose is exposed to parts of the city she has not yet experienced. Prior to meeting Odalie, Rose could not imagine going into a speakeasy. She does so, is introduced to Gib and others, and ends up getting drunk. Immediately after this happens, Rose explains to the reader that she lives "her life by the rules" (119). Rose continues to be concerned with her reputation and the perception that she does live a moral, rule-abiding life. Because she makes this declaration immediately following a night of debauchery, it seems difficult to fully believe.

These breaks in Rose's character preface the introduction of Mr. Vitalli. Rose introduces him through a lens that gives the reader no opportunity to form an opinion on him other than he is a monster. The background information on Mr. Vitalli is cut-and-dry. His guilt seems obvious, yet the police are unable to apprehend him. While in the interrogation room, Mr. Vitalli and Rose share a look. She comments that it is as if he is able to recognize something in her. Perhaps he can see that she is not as rule-abiding as she would have people believe, or he may be trying to intimidate her. But if he does recognize something inside of her, he may be able to detect a darkness inside her. That Rose is able to draw blood may appear to be out of character, but it demonstrates her strength. This matchup is symbolic of Rose's final encounter with Teddy, illustrating that Rose is much stronger than she appears.

Discussion Question 1

How does Rose's past relationship with Adele foreshadow what may happen with Rose's relationship with Odalie?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Rose preface her admission that Odalie is the real victim by explaining that she lives by the rules?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Mr. Vitalli give Rose a look of recognition when they're alone in the interrogation room?

Vocabulary

enigmatic, facades, balustrade, repertoire, jibes, ecclesiastical, secular, antediluvian, reverie, craven, gait, dithering, incorrigible, decreed, astute, impartial, equanimity, sundries, demure, disconsolate, carbuncular, torrent, unguents, consternation, loquacious, panache, decorum, derelicts, ebullient, quelled, replete, armoire, ensconced, derrieres, atrocities, sycophantic, frenetic, joviality, pilfered, ribaldry, veneer, congenial, cognizant



Chapters 10-14

Summary

Chapter Ten opens with Rose looking over the notes that she has written while in the hospital. Through narration, she conveys that she is beginning to see what Odalie was doing to her and thinks back to how everything escalated gradually over time.

She remembers the days after moving in with Odalie, how Odalie would put her in a trance, buffing her nails and brushing her hair. They would turn the radiators up and walked around in their slippers. Two or three times a week, they would go to speakeasies or parties. Rose suspected that Gib got the wrong idea about her relationship with Odalie in much the same way that Dotty and Helen did about Adele. Rose did not think Gib was the right person for Odalie.

Rose remembered talking to Gib about Odalie's living arrangements. Odalie told Rose that her father paid for the suite, but Gib was told it was Odalie's uncle. Rose finally understood that Odalie had a sugar daddy. During their discussion, Gib recognized that Rose was "confused" (148) and tried to set her straight and gave Rose Odalie's background. Odalie grew up outside Chicago. Her father died unexpectedly and in order to survive, Odalie's mother Cora-Sue went to work in a brothel. There Odalie met a Hungarian man called Istvan Czako who took a special interest in her. They ran off together to France. After World War I broke out, Czako and Odalie made their way to New York. As Czako's interest in Odalie waned as she got older, Odalie started bootlegging. Rose was shocked by Gib's story and Gib regarded Odalie a "self-made in many ways" (154).

In Chapter Eleven, Rose stood on the balcony, considering the freedom of jumping, but was not suicidal. It was now late spring 1925, and Marie, one of the other women in the office, was pregnant. The Sergeant commented that this was "why women need to occupy themselves with different work than men" (158). Instead of transcribing confessions, Marie was put on limited duty, which meant making coffee.

Later, Rose learned that the Lieutenant Detective went to investigate a body found in a bathtub. They later connected Mr. Vitalli to the victim; his first victim that he did not marry. The Sergeant and the Lieutenant Detective interviewed Mr. Vitalli while Rose transcribed the interrogation. Mr. Vitalli made disparaging comments about women in general, explaining to the Sergeant that "women are not always the angels they would have you believe" (162). When Mr. Vitalli turned the conversation to Rose, the Lieutenant Detective cut him off and Mr. Vitalli accused him of an office romance. Mr. Vitalli picked up one of the crime scene photos and studied it. The Sergeant and Lieutenant Detective went out into the hallway to confer. Rose went for coffee and spoke with Odalie about Mr. Vitalli's guilt. Odalie told Rose that if they needed a confession then Rose "better type up his confession" (167). Odalie convinced Rose that she should do it. Rose went to the Sergeant and asked him to read Mr. Vitalli's



statement. He did and realized what Rose did. He told her that it was “highly unorthodox” (171), but agreed to go forward, knowing that Mr. Vitalli was guilty. When the Lieutenant Detective returned and learned of the confession, he was surprised.

In Chapter Twelve, narrating, Rose thinks about how she would have included different details in her journal about Odalie. She suspects she did not include details about Odalie’s business practices as a way to protect her friend. The excerpts from the journal include shopping items Odalie bought, a discussion about loyalty, and Odalie’s suggestion that Rose cut her hair. The journal also reveals how “enamored of her” (176) Rose was. She even included a list of the names and dates of the men Odalie went out with. Returning to the story, one night at a speakeasy, Rose ran into the Lieutenant Detective. He made conversation before explaining to Rose that a raid was about to take place and that they should leave. He went for the door, but Rose redirected him, telling him that Odalie showed her a hidden door. Rose found the handle behind a bottle on the shelf and they made their way. The door closed and caught Rose’s dress. The Lieutenant Detective took his knife and cut the dress, freeing her. Outside they talked about prohibition and the Lieutenant Detective explained that prohibition “turns more citizens into criminals” (184). Rose told him that Odalie was probably waiting for him at home and he escorted her back to the hotel suite.

In Chapter Thirteen, Rose and the Lieutenant Detective arrived at the hotel. She was self-conscious about bringing a man back to the hotel and realized that violated the oath she made to Odalie about keeping “her living situation a secret” (189). Odalie welcomed him in and offered him a drink. The Lieutenant Detective complimented Odalie on her bracelets. When he asked if the diamonds were real, she said she does not know because they were a gift. She told him they looked like handcuffs and said that “engagement presents always are, in one way or another” (192). Rose realized that Odalie appealed to the Lieutenant Detective.

In Chapter Fourteen Rose thought about the Sergeant using the word “we” about he and Rose getting Mr. Vitalli’s confession. Narrating, Rose tells the reader that there is nothing improper in her relationship with the Sergeant. She views herself and the Sergeant as “two morally upright souls” (199). Returning to the story, Rose was nervous about seeing the Lieutenant Detective after the night before in the hotel suite. She was relieved when he called in sick from work. Rose saw that Gib was brought into the precinct during the raid and Odalie did not appear interested. Something Odalie did, however, allowed Gib to leave. She considered how Odalie took the job in the precinct to “manipulate the system” (204) and was relieved when she saw Redmond released.

Later that evening, Odalie told Rose that she should not put so much trust in the Sergeant. Rose had difficulty falling asleep and got up to make a remedy that Adele made for her, and found Odalie in the kitchen. They made the milk, cinnamon, and nutmeg concoction and Rose complemented Odalie’s bracelets. Odalie told her that they were given to her and her sister Violet. Rose realized that Odalie “had no plans to tell me the story of acquiring the bracelets as an engagement present” (209). Odalie told Rose she was like a sister and that “sisters keep each other’s secrets” (211) and gave Rose one of the bracelets.



Analysis

The reader learns that Rose is in the hospital, but it is not clear as to why. She has notes about Odalie and thinks she sees a pattern for what she has done. From all Rose has told the reader about Odalie, it is clear that her life might be considered reckless. At the very least, Odalie is in proximity to danger more so than Rose. That Rose is the one in the hospital suggests that something significant has transpired and that Odalie's actions are at the root cause.

Because of this, Rose provides more information about Odalie's background. Odalie's story changes throughout the novel. Is this a result of Odalie changing the details of her story or giving different details to different people - or is Rose changing the details for her to protect her? It is difficult to ascertain the motives of both Rose and Odalie or what they may have done to each other. Rose indicates that she thinks that Gib may have the wrong idea about her relationship with Odalie, comparing it to the way Helen and Dotty reacted to Rose and Adele. Rose is self-conscious about how she is perceived by others in a way that suggests that she has something to hide.

Rose gives more information on Odalie's backstory as told to her by Gib. What Gib knows was likely told to him by Odalie, he tells Rose, and now Rose relays the information to the reader. There is no way of knowing what is accurate in the story. It is clear, however, that Odalie is being presented in a different light after the reveal that Rose is in the hospital, likely because of Odalie's doing. While Odalie was previously introduced as likely coming from family money, Rose now reveals that her mother worked in a brothel to support them after Odalie's father died. Rose is vague about the particulars of young Odalie's actual relationship with Czako, but does indicate that he had a predilection for young girls. This story should be terrifying, but it is spun so that Odalie looks to be a self-made woman. It is possible that something dark happened to Odalie or Rose when they were younger. A pattern of sexualizing young women is present: Adele's stepfather, the questions about the true nature of the relationship between Adele and Rose in their teens, and now Odalie growing up in a brothel. While these elements are not reconciled, they do pose the question of what really happened to these girls.

The theme of gender roles is further examined when Rose returns the story to the precinct. Marie is pregnant and relegated to coffee duty because of her condition. Marie's pregnancy makes her appear even more fragile than the men already view the women. She can, however, continue to serve the men by making them coffee.

Mr. Vitalli makes a return after another body is found in a bathtub under similar circumstances. Women are disposable to Mr. Vitalli. The Lieutenant Detective remarks that Mr. Vitalli's pattern of behavior is escalating because he is no longer taking the time to marry his victims. When his wives died, Mr. Vitalli inherited their money. Now his bloodlust takes precedence over acquiring money. During his questioning, Mr. Vitalli sexualizes Rose by suggesting that there is a workplace romance transpiring between Rose and the Lieutenant Detective. He suggests it to intimidate both parties, but also



likely wants to provoke Rose as he did the last time he was questioned. Rose may feel threatened, which prompts her to follow through on Odalie's suggestion that she write Mr. Vitalli's confession for him.

Instead of taking the confession to the Lieutenant Detective, Rose presents it to the Sergeant. She does so because she feels that the Sergeant is moral and that if they are both moral and decide to do this, then it must be the right thing to do. Rose does not view the Lieutenant Detective similarly. If she were to align herself with him, she may have to question whether falsifying the confession is the right thing to do.

In Chapter Twelve, Rose is once again reflecting on her notes. She knows that the manner in which she kept the journal about Odalie served to protect her friend. It does not, however, protect herself. Rose reveals that she encounters the Lieutenant Detective at the speakeasy the night of the raid. He helps her escape before the police come in and they share a quiet moment in the hidden room. This further illustrates why Rose went to the Sergeant with the Vitalli confession instead of the Lieutenant Detective. Because the Lieutenant Detective appears to have a fondness for Rose, it is possible that he would have gone along with Rose's fake confession, but Rose would not have felt the same way about doing so.

Continuing with her out-of-character behavior, Rose invites the Lieutenant Detective up to the hotel suite. He has the opportunity to interact with Odalie and asks about her bracelets. The bracelets are clearly important to Odalie, especially given that she never wears them outside of the hotel suite. They are private. In showing them so blatantly to the Lieutenant Detective, she lures him into her world.

Rose recognizes that the Lieutenant Detective is compelled by Odalie, but she does not react in the way one would expect. Rose's typical reaction would be one of jealousy. Instead she may view that Odalie and the Lieutenant Detective are a more suited pair. Rose does not think that Gib is right for Odalie, and Rose has aligned herself with the Sergeant, so Rose may consider this an apt pairing.

Since Rose is controlling the story and the information she presents to the reader, her reaction to Odalie and the Lieutenant Detective may also stem from what she knows is coming with Odalie. In Chapter Fourteen, Odalie presents Rose with one of the bracelets and refers to Rose as her sister. This solidifies their connection, which is what Rose has longed for.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Sergeant go along with Rose's plan to manufacture Mr. Vitalli's confession?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Rose think she may have included the wrong information in her journal about Odalie?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Odalie tell Rose the bracelets were given to her and her sister Violet instead of the story about them being an engagement present?

Vocabulary

innocuous, disparity, solarium, coquettes, tenacious, predilection, commission, seditious, nadir, deluge, approbation, stalwart, lecherous, amenable, vacuous, exonerate, austerity, gauche, feral, surreptitious, tacit, vigilante, impecunious



Chapters 15-19

Summary

It was hot in the city as Chapter Fifteen opens and the precinct was muggy. Odalie told Rose that they needed a vacation. Odalie took care of everything, including arranging for the time off of work. They took a car out to a Long Island beach house where a garden party was taking place. There were gilded mirrors and waiters with trays of champagne. Odalie loaned Rose an expensive dress. Odalie has a letter of introduction to give to the Brinkleys and when Rose asked if it was from the Hungarian, Odalie gave her a look of anger. Rose briefly breaks the narrative to comment on the doctor currently treating her because she has “complained before that he is not particularly keen” (223) on her. As Rose and Odalie made their way in, Rose felt that her plainness “melted away” (224) in Odalie’s presence. A young man named Teddy Tricott introduced himself, having recognized Odalie. Odalie presented the letter of introduction to the Brinkleys and Max Brinkley looked at the letter and declared that “any friend of Pembroke’s is a friend of ours” (230) and welcomed them to stay at the beach house. In their room, Odalie told Rose that Teddy was trouble.

In Chapter Sixteen Odalie was on the veranda. When Teddy sat next to her she ignored him. Rose found this odd since Odalie “was kind to even the most lowly of her admirers” (234). Later, when Teddy appeared to be coming to ask Rose to dance, Odalie whisked her away to their room. The next morning, Rose went for a swim in the Sound and made her way out to the “swimmer’s raft” (238). She laid in the sun for a rest and was startled to find Teddy swimming toward her. He joined her on the raft and they made conversation. Rose asked if he was from Newport and he asked if she knew anything about Newport. He mentioned a tragedy involving his cousin Warren and a debutante named Ginevra Morris. Warren and Ginevra began dating and Ginevra “had a ruthless way with words” (246) during their arguments. Warren eventually started cheating on her. As Rose listened to Teddy’s story, she thought about how criminals trip themselves up “by either giving too many details or else revealing the wrong ones” (247). Teddy explained that Warren got Ginevra an engagement ring and a diamond bracelet, but that he had also gotten an identical bracelet for his mistress Pearl. Pearl never received the bracelet because Warren was killed when his car got stuck on train tracks and a train hit him; Ginevra escaped in time. The switchman, who bore a resemblance to Gib, supported Ginevra’s story and Warren’s death was ruled an accident. Teddy told Rose that he spoke with one of the officers days earlier and the officer said that “when she gave her statement, Ginevra was wearing both bracelets” (250). Rose asked what happened to Ginevra and Teddy told her that she was missing.

In Chapter Seventeen Rose and Odalie avoided Teddy, while he attempted to join them. During a conversation, Odalie explained that she was from California. Teddy asked what part and she answered Santa Fe. No one corrected Odalie. When another woman talked about Santa Barbara, Odalie got up to leave. Rose had not seen Odalie this angry, but by evening, Odalie returned to her normal disposition. Odalie ended up



talking to a woman named Louise and this made Rose jealous. Louise asked Odalie to dress her like a movie star. Teddy asked Odalie to dance and Odalie reluctantly agreed. Mr. Brinkley asked Rose for a dance. Mr. Brinkley commented that Rose was cold and she excused herself to get her shawl. When she returned to the terrace, she was unable to find Odalie and Teddy. She remembered seeing a topiary maze and went to find them. She spied Odalie and Teddy talking. Odalie told Teddy that she had never been to Newport.

In Chapter Eighteen Odalie and Rose left after two days into their week-long visit. Instead of taking the train, they took a taxi back to the city. Back at the hotel, Odalie received a call from Gib asking where she had been. Rose realized that there was a good chance that Odalie is Ginevra and defended her “devotion to Odalie” (274). When Rose returned to work, the Lieutenant Detective teased that she “cannot go more than two days without me” (277).

In Chapter Nineteen Rose comments on the journal she has kept, admitting that it “reads like one long love-letter” (279). She reveals that the doctor treating her is named Dr. Miles H. Benson and that she made a point to limit her knowledge of Odalie’s business affairs.

Returning to the story, one day on the terrace Odalie told Rose she would look good with a bob and asked her to run an errand for her. Odalie dressed her and gave her cab fare. The cab took her to a building along the East River. Rose met with Dr. Spitzer, who has been making bathtub gin for Odalie. Dr. Spitzer informed Rose that the current batch of gin was not drinkable and could kill someone. He gave her a sample bottle as proof with instructions not to drink it. Narrating, Rose admits that Dr. Benson “theorizes [she has] what he calls an overactive imagination” (295). She remembers that Dr. Benson asked her how she knew Odalie and the Sergeant had an inappropriate relationship. Rose reflects on how she lost respect for the Sergeant, but admired Odalie’s “manipulative powers” (297). Returning to the story, Rose decided she should move out of Odalie’s hotel suite. She packed everything, leaving the clothes, and the bracelet, but then changed her mind. She “wanted her to be sorry” (299).

Analysis

Chapter Fifteen finds Rose and Odalie going on a vacation together. Having recently bonded over the bracelets, this is a type of celebration for them. When they arrive at the Brinkley Beach House, Rose is elated to be in Odalie’s company and comments about her plainness melting away. The joy of the trip is short-lived. Almost immediately upon their arrival, they encounter Teddy, who insists that he recognizes Odalie. She does her best to deflect Teddy, but it unnerves Odalie. Her behavior becomes more erratic and Rose is not quite sure what to make of it. Of particular note is the way Odalie ignores Teddy on the veranda. Rose knows that Odalie does not mistreat or ignore anyone because they may be of use to her in future, so it is best to be accommodating. Given this development, it should not surprise Rose when Odalie later tells her that Teddy is trouble and that he should be avoided.



When Teddy seeks out Rose on the swimmer's raft, Rose becomes a captive audience. Because they are alone, Rose may feel that this is her opportunity to learn more about Odalie, or whomever Teddy thinks she is. Through their discussion, the reader learns about Teddy's cousin Warren and his fiancée Ginevra. Rose attempts to control how the reader interprets Teddy's information. While their interaction appears natural in the text, as those Rose is reliving the moment for the reader's benefit, so abruptly announces that not all may be as it seems. She prefaces the most damning elements of Teddy's story with: "It remains to be seen whether I've become its most accurate transmitter or its greatest distorter, but I will paraphrase here to the best of my ability" (243). This appears to be a deliberate attempt at sabotaging the story, especially given that Rose, from the outset of the story, prides herself on her ability to accurately transcribe confessions. Rose does not want the reader to believe what Teddy is suggesting about Odalie and is, once again, trying to protect Odalie. She does admit that the coincidence of the two diamond bracelets is cause for suspicion, but Rose does not want to believe that Odalie is Ginevra. It is possible that Rose is more fearful that Ginevra might reject Rose whereas Odalie appears to be accepting Rose more and more. She may also be afraid that she would lose Odalie if Odalie ran. Warren's death was classified as an accident and Ginevra disappeared. Even if Odalie is Ginevra, Teddy's appearance may not change the outcome of the case. If Ginevra – and by extension Odalie – knows the truth about what happened to Warren, then the biggest risk to Odalie comes from revealing herself or perhaps Rose.

Rose may not have been bothered by Odalie's interactions with the Lieutenant Detective, but when Odalie starts paying attention to Louise, she becomes jealous. This comes on the heels of Rose learning about Ginevra and Odalie's erratic behavior. Rose would be lost without Odalie, so likely feels desperate to keep her. Louise does not appear to be any threat to the status quo of Rose and Odalie's relationship, but just as Odalie's behavior becomes erratic, Rose's does as well.

They opt to leave the vacation early after Teddy corners Odalie about what happened in Newport. Odalie's insistence that she has never been carries no weight with Teddy: he knows she is Ginevra. Going back to the city early only serves to delay Teddy's investigation, especially now that he has new information: Ginevra was wearing both bracelets when she gave her statement.

Odalie sends Rose on an errand for her. Given what has happened with Teddy, she may be distancing herself from her criminal behavior. Rose meets with Dr. Spitzer about the latest batch of bathtub gin. Because the government regulators are cracking down on methanol. He gives Rose a sample from the latest batch, proving that it is poison.

Back at the office, Rose witnesses an inappropriate relationship between Odalie and the Sergeant. She does not specifically address what transpired, but it alters the way she sees the Sergeant and Odalie. Rose is impressed by Odalie's "manipulative powers" (297), and in keeping with emulating Odalie, Rose concocts a plan, specifically stating that she wants Odalie to be sorry.



Prior to this point, the reader may have been sympathetic to Rose and her situation in the mental hospital. Rose has painted Odalie as capable of just about anything, so thinking that she would be able to manipulate a situation to have Rose put away would not be a stretch. Rose's decision to make Odalie sorry, following being presented with a sample of poison alcohol changes how she is perceived.

Rose's perception is of the utmost importance. When Rose breaks the story to comment on her current confinement at the mental institution, she wants the reader to feel as though she is being wrongfully held and that she is the true victim.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Teddy tell Rose that Ginevra is missing?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Rose jealous of Louise?

Discussion Question 3

How does Rose's admission that her journal "reads like one long love-letter" (279) inform Rose's character?

Vocabulary

brocade, subterfuge, chagrin, mendacity, vehemence, veranda, accoutrements, debutante, voluble, proxy, epistemological, mellifluous, halcyon, raconteur, proclivity, edifice, traipse



Chapters 20-22, Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter Twenty, Teddy arrived at the precinct. He told Rose that he knew that Odalie was Ginevra and wanted to talk to her about it. Rose told him she would help him, wrote on a card and gave it to him, and sent him on his way. That night Rose and Odalie went to the speakeasy dressed similarly. Odalie pinned Rose's hair to look like a bob as well. Inside the speakeasy, Rose waited for Redmond to bring her a champagne cocktail and surveyed the room, looking for Gib. While Odalie and Gib were talking, Rose tried to overhear. A woman knocked into Gib, spilling his drink. Odalie found Teddy and brought him to Rose and she greeted him, thinking about how she meant to tell Odalie that she invited Teddy. Odalie asked Rose to take Teddy back to the hotel suite for her, to which Rose agreed. At the suite, Rose made them sidecars. On their third drink, they went out of the terrace. Rose asked what Teddy would do if Odalie admitted what she did, to which he replied "I think you know, Rose, what I'd do" (316). Odalie arrived with fresh drinks and Teddy noticed the bracelets. She told Rose to go out for cigarettes. The first stands that Rose went to were closed, and she finally found one that was open. On her way back to the hotel, she heard the sirens and saw Teddy's body on the sidewalk and realized that "it was as if [she] had already seen it all before" (319).

In Chapter Twenty-One Rose was called out by the elevator-boy accusing her of going upstairs with Teddy. Rose went upstairs and talked to the police. She told him that he was alone when she left and asked if Teddy was dead. She said it was a "terrible accident" (324) and finished her cigarette. She overheard a patrolman say "she was just as cold as ice" (325).

Narrating, Rose breaks from her story and admits that because she is currently in the hospital, she cannot speak to when Odalie returned to the apartment. She knows that an inquest was held and she was interviewed by Detective Ferguson. Rose explains that she "was not exactly [herself] that night" (327). Rose feels that her interview derailed "somewhere around the time the detective informed [her] that Odalie had already given a statement" (328).

Back to her story, Rose tried to explain as much as she could and told Detective Ferguson that the hotel suite was in Odalie's name because she had family money. Detective Ferguson accused Rose of making a cruel joke because she grew up in an orphanage.

Chapter Twenty-Two finds Rose grappling with her mental state. She does not believe Dr. Benson's claim that the Saint Teresa of Avila Home for Girls has no records of her. Rose also does not like the story Dr. Benson tells her about a former fiancé who died in a train accident. She remembers Dr. Benson asking her how long she plotted to kill Gib. Gib died after drinking a cocktail with bad bathtub gin. When she thinks about how long, she finally determines that it had been a year and that Odalie had been watching her.



She learns that Mr. Vitalli was granted a “retroactive mistrial” (342) and released from prison. Rose thinks about how much she loved Odalie and how much she will miss her.

Rose receives a visitor in the Epilogue. It is revealed that the hospital staff call her Ginevra, but when the Lieutenant Detective arrives, he calls her Rose. He tells her that he does not believe what is being said about her. She asks about Odalie and he tells her that she left, but wanted him to give her the brooch that she got from Rose’s desk. Rose kisses him and reaches for the knife he carries. She gathers up all of her hair and cuts it off. The hair drops to the floor and she picks up a cigarette and asks for a light. She considers that there must be “sacrifices along the road to evolution” (354) and glimpses a flash of Teddy’s face during the fall.

Analysis

When Teddy arrives at the precinct, he asks to see Odalie, but “Odalie had gone to run some errands on her lunch hour” (301). Teddy then greets Rose. During their exchange, Rose invites Teddy to the speakeasy. Given that Rose previously indicated that she wanted Odalie to be sorry, inviting Teddy is certainly a step in the right direction. Ultimately, Teddy ends up in the hotel suite and is pushed to his death. The reader does not witness the murder, but rather follows Rose on a mundane errand to pick up cigarettes. Rose returns to find Teddy’s body and the police. While she speaks with the police, Rose’s demeanor changes. While Rose has controlled the story thus far, her true self is bleeding through. Rose/Odalie feels as though a problem has been taken care of with Teddy’s death and her alibi is sound because Rose is seen by someone at the newsstand around the time of death.

Rose regroups and tries to reinforce her story as Odalie’s victim, but elements of the real Odalie have been adopted by Rose in her confession. She believes that she was raised in an orphanage, while Detective Ferguson claims that it is cruel to exploit Odalie’s childhood for her own personal gain. Also, through Dr. Benson’s questions, the reader learns that Gib was poisoned. Rose can no longer hide her guilt or blame what happened on Odalie. Rose may understand that she is mentally ill and that she is responsible for the deaths of several people, she remains steadfast that it was Odalie’s doing and not hers.

While it is not yet clear what is happening with Odalie and Rose, this particular exchange may cause confusion for readers. Since it is soon to be revealed that Odalie and Rose are the same person and that Rose suffers from multiple personalities disorder (diagnosed as Dissociative Identity Disorder in contemporary times), it may seem questionable that Teddy would ask to see Odalie, and when after he is told she is out, sees Rose and calls her Rose. Firstly, this confirms the presence of someone named Odalie working at the precinct. Odalie is real, but not the character of Odalie that has appeared throughout the novel. When Odalie is first introduced during her interview, Odalie has a long hair. It is not until she reports for work that she bears her signature bob, which is a creation of Rose’s imagination. It is fortunate that the real Odalie is out to lunch because Teddy would see that Odalie is an altogether different person. As for



how Teddy knows to then call Rose by that name, in looking back to their introduction, Odalie playfully introduced herself and Rose in Chapter Fifteen to the Brinkleys: “Rose Baker and Odalie Lazare,’ Odalie quickly supplied” (230), after which, Teddy plays along and repeats the names. Because Teddy suspects Odalie is Ginevra, he may have accepted the dual names as possible aliases, a trip of the tongue revealing the identities she has been hiding behind, prompted by nerves induced by Teddy’s questions. It may have also been viewed as a moment of eccentricity by a woman who arrived at the beach house uninvited.

In the Epilogue, the Lieutenant Detective comes to visit Rose. She goes by Ginevra in the hospital, but he calls her Rose. The Lieutenant Detective stands in for the reader when he tells her he does not believe what is being said about her. He explains that the real Odalie gave a statement and disappeared and that she also gave him the brooch to give to Rose. This may suggest that the real Odalie played games with Rose or set her up in some capacity. Instead it prompts Rose to shift to Odalie in the Lieutenant Detective’s presence. Because the Lieutenant Detective has witnessed much of Rose’s erratic behavior, from her hangover after her first night out with Odalie, to finding her in the speakeasy, and questioning her about the bracelets, the Lieutenant Detective may have been investigating Rose the entire time and Rose did not realize it. When he presents her with the brooch, he solicits the Odalie personality, which he had previously seen in the hotel suite. The Lieutenant Detective used the brooch and his visit to catch his criminal.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Lieutenant Detective return Odalie’s brooch to Rose?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Dr. Benson ask Rose how long she plotted to kill Gib?

Discussion Question 3

What does Rose’s comment that there must be “sacrifices along the road to evolution” (354) mean?

Vocabulary

reconnaissance, genteel, macabre, impasse, taciturn, extrapolation, didactic, credence, adulation



Characters

Rose Baker

Rose is a young, single woman working as a typist at a New York City precinct. She is an unreliable narrator.

She considers herself plain and morel, although it is apparent that the Lieutenant Detective finds her attractive. She also falsifies Mr. Vitalli's murder confession to convict a serial killer. Both of these traits seek to make the reader relate to and empathize with Rose.

She claims to have grown up in an orphanage after her mother put her up for adoption to spite her father. After taking a job as a maid, she was sent to a good school, where she befriended Adele, a novice nun.

Rose tells her story while she is confined to a mental hospital. She claims to be an orphan, but is likely Ginevra Morris, a woman who killed her fiancé Warren (or at least had a hand in his death) after learning he had a mistress. She later admits to killing Teddy, but remains in denial of her mental illness throughout the majority of the novel.

She wants her story to be believed. She simultaneously tries to convince herself about who she is as much as she wants to convince others, including the reader.

Odalie Lazare

Odalie is noted for being a modern woman. She lives in a hotel suite and appears to have an infinite supply of money. She wears flapper dresses and has her hair cut into a stylish bob. She frequents speakeasies and is later revealed to be a bootlegger.

A free spirit, Odalie is a powerful influence on Rose. Involved in a relationship with Gib, Odalie keeps a lot of details about her life and past secret.

Odalie is a foil for Rose, with their personalities in sharp contrast. She drinks, smokes, runs a speakeasy, and has many admirers. She wants to maintain her freedom. The job at the precinct is deliberate to help the speakeasy if and when it is raided.

When Odalie encounters Teddy and he recognizes her, she is unnerved. The stories about her past change so that no one can really know her.

It should be noted that the Odalie character that the reader comes to know is not a real person, but rather one of Rose Baker's alternate personalities. Further, a woman named Odalie Lazare started working at the precinct at the time of Rose's personality break, but the reader never learns who she is.



Sergeant

The Sergeant is an older, rotund man at the precinct. He is complicit in Rose's fabrication of Mr. Vitalli's murder confession. He is protective of Rose and becomes a father figure for her.

Lieutenant Detective

The Lieutenant Detective is the younger officer at the precinct and is the Sergeant's superior. Rose does not feel as comfortable around him as she does the Sergeant. He has a significant scar on his forehead.

He appears to be enamored of Rose, while Rose remains oblivious to what may be construed as advances. Rose views him as being the type who would enjoy a modern woman with short hair who goes to speakeasies. He visits Rose in the hospital and confirms that someone named Odalie worked at the precinct.

Henry Gibson "Gib"

Gib works with Odalie and is involved in running the speakeasy. He is aware of Odalie's issues, "Hmm. I can see you're confused" (148), and helps to put her back on the right track.

Teddy Tricott

Teddy is Warren's cousin, Ginevra's fiancé who was killed. He is unclear on what actually happened to Warren, but recognizes Odalie at the Brinkley's. He tries to talk with Rose about what happened, which prompts Odalie and Rose to leave the vacation early.

Teddy re-encounters Rose in the city. He goes to the hotel suite and, during his conversation with Rose, is pushed off the balcony and killed.

Dr. Benson

Dr. Benson is the doctor treating Rose at the mental hospital. He is referenced only, but the reader does not witness Rose interact with him.

Dotty

Dotty runs the boarding house. She is a widow whose husband died during WWI. She opened, read, and resealed a letter to Rose from Adele.



Helen

Helen is Rose's roommate at the boarding house. She is vain and looks down on Rose for not dating more and making herself pretty for others.

Redmond

Redmond works at the speakeasy. He is small in stature and brings drinks to Rose. He is arrested the night of the raid, but is later released.

Mr. Vitalli

Mr. Vitalli is a widower who has lost multiple wives under similar circumstances. He is suspected of being a serial killer. Rose falsifies a murder confession for him and he is convicted of murder. After Rose is hospitalized, Mr. Vitalli's conviction is overturned and he is released.

Symbols and Symbolism

Bracelets

The bracelets are to symbolize handcuffs; "bracelets" is sometimes used as slang for handcuffs. Odalie holds her wrists together and presents them to the Lieutenant Detective "Yes. They look a little like...like handcuffs, don't they?" (192). They symbolize how, regardless of how far people move away, or if they create a new identity, that a person is handcuffed to their past. They also symbolize that Odalie/Rose will be caught.

Brooch

The brooch symbolizes Rose's transformation into Odalie. It is introduced with Odalie's entrance (Rose takes the brooch after Odalie drops it.) and is returned to Rose in the hospital before Rose embraces the Odalie personality.

Bootlegging

Bootlegging symbolizing Odalie's ability to break rules or laws. From Odalie's perspective, bootlegging is a victimless crime, much like manufacturing Mr. Vitalli's confession.

The Vitalli Confession

The Vitalli Confession symbolizes the way in which Rose can convince herself that whatever she does is acceptable because what she has done is less heinous in her eyes, such as Warren's death in light of his infidelity. Rose fabricates the Vitalli confession in order to convict a serial killer. She justifies doing it because her crime pales in comparison to what Vitalli has been accused of.

Typewriter

The novel opens with "They said the typewriter would unsex us" (1), symbolizing how women are an extension of the machine. Women thereby are told what to say and obediently return the words verbatim as though they cannot think for themselves and must do what they are told.



Knife

The knife symbolizes Rose's transition to becoming Odalie. The Lieutenant Detective carries a knife on his person. He uses it to cut Roses' dress free during the speakeasy raid. Rose later takes it from him in the hospital to cut her hair into a bob.

Train Tracks

The train tracks symbolize Ginevra's metaphorical death and the birth of Rose. Warren is killed on the train tracks while Ginevra is able to escape. Ginevra symbolically crosses the tracks into her new life.

Odalie's Bob

Odalie's bob symbolizes freedom - freedom to live the way Rose wishes she could. Throughout the novel, Odalie's bob is referenced as her most marked characteristic. Rose is captivated by the hairstyle and wears her hair in a faux bob when she goes out. Once she takes the knife from the Lieutenant Detective, she cuts her hair and takes Odalie's persona. It symbolizes her acceptance of the Odalie identity.

Interrogation Room

The interrogation room symbolizes Rose in the hospital giving her confession to the reader. It is in the interrogation room that Rose reveals her capacity to lie and manipulate a situation to fit the narrative she wants. It is also where Mr. Vitalli recognizes a darkness in her, foreshadowing her true self.

Alcohol

Alcohol symbolizes Odalie becoming a bootlegger for her own personal gain. The alcohol can lead to an intoxication that allows people to shed their inhibitions, allowing for their true nature to come to the forefront, indicating Odalie as her true self.

Settings

Precinct

The precinct is in the lower east side of Manhattan. It is a dank, older building where Rose, Odalie, Sergeant, and the Lieutenant Detective all work. There is an interrogation room, a holding cell, and a typing pool. It is where Rose first encounters Odalie.

The Interrogation Room

The interrogation room is inside the precinct and where Rose takes dictation for confessions. It is where she is left alone with Mr. Vitalli, gets into an altercation with him, and ends up drawing his blood with her fingernails.

The Hotel Suite

The hotel suite is where Rose lives with Odalie. There is a bar and a terrace. It is where Rose goes after leaving the boarding house and where Rose pushes Teddy to his death.

The Boarding House

The boarding house is where Rose lives when she is first introduced. After Rose overhears Helen and Dotty talking about Roses' letter from Adele, Rose moves in with Odalie. While at the boarding house, Rose shares a room with Helen.

The Brinkley Beach House

The beach house is the estate where Odalie takes Rose on their vacation. Rose learns about Ginevra's past while talking to Teddy while out for a swim.

The Mental Hospital

The mental hospital is where Rose is confined and tells the story of how she perceived the events that transpired. It is where she cuts her hair in front of the Lieutenant Detective and transforms into Odalie.



Themes and Motifs

Gender Roles and Feminism

The *Other Typist* illustrates how gender informs the perception of others. Set in the mid-1920s, women are perceived differently than they are today, yet the struggles of women may sound familiar to modern audiences.

Before the reader learns anything about Odalie's personality or her job qualifications, Odalie is identified by her appearance. She is striking, with raven-colored hair cut into a fashionable bob. The Sergeant comments that "men were likely to get the wrong idea about a woman with short hair" (14). When Odalie is interviewed, however, her "hair was not yet bobbed" (13), leading Rose to suggest that the Sergeant would not have hired her otherwise.

By contrast, Rose, who has long hair and is considered plain, is noted for her efficiency, claiming to type "160 words per minute" (8), and that she is "simply there to report with accuracy" (8). Further, Rose is self-described as plain, "I am so plain, in fact, that I am almost remarkably so" (43). Because Odalie is beautiful, she is not as good at her job, which leads Rose to monitor the mistakes she makes out of a "voluntary but enduring sense of conscientiousness" (47).

Rose and Odalie become foils for each. Rose is moral and considers herself a prude, while Odalie is amoral and a loose woman. While Rose admires Odalie, she still sits in judgement of her. When Odalie suggests that Rose could cut her hair, she reacts as such: "I did not say as much, but I rather like my long hair, and all the values that go along with it" (174). The two women demonstrate the virgin-whore motif and shun the idea that a complete woman can be comprised of all facets of sexuality and conduct.

Rose makes the point that "They think we are the weaker sex, but I doubt the men have considered the fact that we women must hear every confession twice" (6). Her observation speaks to how the men do consider the women outside the idea of being an extension of the typewriter. Further, when Marie gets pregnant, the men in the precinct determine that she should not be subject to hearing confessions in her condition. Because she makes good coffee, however, she is allowed to continue working.

From the outset of the novel, it is clear that Rose understands that women's roles in society are changing. The novel opens with the line: "They said the typewriter would unsex us" (1). Perhaps this welcomes women into the workplace, but it also denies them their gender. Further, later in the novel when Rose goes to see Dr. Spitzer, he indicates that they are waiting for another male chemist as though it is a job that can only be performed well by a man. Rose asserts herself and her gender by countering with "Madame Curie is the winner of two Nobel Prizes" (288).



Jealousy

The author explores the theme of jealousy by putting Rose in Odalie's shadow. In some respects, this is similar to how the women are juxtaposed with regard to their appearance and sexuality. Rose is drawn to Odalie because they are different, but does not consider herself like Odalie.

At the Brinkley Beach House, Rose becomes jealous of Louise because Odalie pays attention to her. The only reason that Rose is jealous is because Odalie appears to be "acquiring new friends" (260). After learning about Ginevra from Teddy, Rose is likely becoming aware that it is not merely Rose and Odalie in her head, but now another personality is coming to the surface. Rose can project on Louise making a play for Odalie's attention.

It is not clear as to whether or not Adele is real. It is entirely possible that Adele is another personality and that Rose wrote and sent the letter from Adele to herself. If Adele is a real person, then Rose may have exhibited more controlling behavior and inserted herself in Adele's life beyond Adele's comfort out of jealousy. In leaving the convent, Adele would achieve a freedom that Rose does not have. Rose's jealousy of Adele may have even contributed to the creation of Adele and her desire to be free.

Another way in which jealousy is explored is through Rose and Odalie's relationship with the Sergeant. From Rose's perspective, the Sergeant is a moral, family man. She considers him something of a father figure and views him as infallible, much as she views herself. When they join forces against Mr. Vitalli, she justifies what they are doing because they are "two morally upright souls, ridding the world of another foul injustice" (199). Odalie's relationship with the Sergeant differs, altering her perspective on him. She tries to persuade Rose that all may not be as it seems. Odalie tells Rose "you put altogether too much faith in the Sergeant...he's only a man" (206).

Identity

The theme of identity is explored throughout the novel in an effort to demonstrate that women are multifaceted individuals who can and should not be compartmentalized into society's expectations. Not long after Odalie begins working at the precinct, rumors begin about who Odalie really is. Comments are made that she went to California with a man and "stole his money and ran away" (57) as well as dancing with Clara Bow. Rose points out that people did not admit to starting the rumors but that "everyone was utterly unapologetic" (58) and spreading the rumors. These rumors help to keep Odalie's true identity in question.

Odalie plays a part in this mystery as well. She makes no effort to set the rumors straight. She is also inconsistent about certain aspects of her life. With regard to the diamond bracelets, she tells Gib that they were given to her as an engagement present, while she tells Rose that the bracelets were given to her and her sister Violet. This is not the only inconsistency. The identity of Odalie's benefactor remains in question, having



told different people that the hotel suite was paid for by her father or her uncle, when it is likely that Odalie has paid for it herself with the money from bootlegging.

Teddy confronts Odalie about her identity after he recognizes her. He explains the story of Ginevra to Rose. Once Rose begins to understand the threat that Teddy presents to Rose and Odalie, Rose kills Teddy, but does not readily accept her identity as Ginevra.

By giving Ginevra a multiple personalities disorder, the author allows for a female character to explore many avenues of her personality, from sexual agency, business acumen, manipulation, morality and immorality. She is simultaneously the villain and hero in her own story.

Loneliness

The author explores the theme of loneliness by isolating her main character Rose in a mental institution where she must come to terms that the person she most cares for is a figment of her imagination.

Early in the novel, Rose directly addresses her loneliness, foreshadowing the reveal of her multiple personalities. "I know a little bit about loneliness myself, but not about being alone" (21). At the time Rose makes this observation, she is single and living in a boarding house with her roommate Helen. Once Rose's mental illness is revealed, it is questionable as to whether the boarding house, Helen, Dotty, and Adele are real. They may be part of her imagination. Since it is later revealed that Odalie – the woman hired to work in the precinct and not the Odalie Rose interacts with – grew up in an orphanage, it is possible that Rose adopted the boarding house persona from the woman as well. This may have all been to combat the isolation Rose felt while living alone in the hotel suite.

Gradually Rose accepts her creations as a way to help the loneliness. While she does not outwardly admit that they are figments of her imagination, she understands their benefit in her in life. In direct reference to Odalie and Adele, she admits that "a certain loneliness existed in my life and it's true enough to say these women helped alleviate that" (144).

Rose does not appear to have any relationships outside of the ones that are adjacent to Odalie. She dismisses any compliments or advances the Lieutenant Detective offers her. When he introduces her as "the lovely Miss Baker" (43), she deflects by telling the reader that she is plain. She comments on how Gib is a bad match for Odalie because Rose wants Odalie to herself. This is further demonstrated by Rose's jealousy of the attention Odalie pays to Louise. Rose wants Odalie to be alone because Rose is alone and that is the state in which she feels the most comfortable.



Confession

The concept of confession is explored throughout the novel as a way to convince the reader that what the narrator claims is true. Because Rose is an unreliable narrator, she must manipulate the reader. Rose generates sympathy for her character by painting herself as the victim, calling herself “supremely foolish” (221) about her own “gullibility” (221). When she refers to herself as “a madwoman, an unreliable raconteur” (280), she is trying to get ahead of what the reader may think of her by suggesting that these concepts don’t fit her personality because “rule kept [her] safe” (119).

The novel itself is Rose’s confession from the mental hospital. Throughout, Rose denies her role in criminal activity, instead blaming Odalie. She has a journal in which she kept track of Odalie’s activities, but that proves inconclusive by her own admission. “It might be more accurate to say I was still thorough in what I reported, yet was more selective, thus allowing for strategic omissions” (173).

Mr. Vitalli’s confession is another example of how the author uses the idea of confession as a way to manipulate the reader. Mr. Vitalli is portrayed as a serial killer, without leaving much room for doubt as to his guilt. Because he has allegedly murdered several women, it is natural to want a criminal to get his due. Without evidence or a confession, Odalie prompts Rose to try and make justice possible. The reader can support this illegal, unjust act because Mr. Vitalli is viewed as a monster who needs to be stopped.

In doing so, however, it makes Rose a criminal. This is the first time that the reader knows that Rose has done something illegal, but likely supports the decision. It makes the reader complicit in her actions. It also subtly prompts the reader to expect anything from Rose.

When Teddy is murdered, his death takes place off stage. Rose explains what she was doing during the time that Teddy was killed as a way of proclaiming her innocence. While it may be true that Odalie killed Teddy and not Rose, the reader realizes they are one in the same. Rose goes so far as to admit this by confessing that she “was not exactly myself that night” (327).



Styles

Point of View

The point of view of *The Other Typist* is a first person narration. The novel is narrated by Rose, who proves to be an unreliable narrator. While the unreliable narrator is a common literary device, it is often left to the reader to determine the narrator's reliability. Rose presents herself as reliable, comparing herself to the typewriter, "simply there to report with accuracy" (8). As the novel progresses, Rose begins to recognize that she is not: "My recollection of the night's events became significantly less reliable at some point" (115). Rose knows she is not reliable, but attempts to demonstrate that she is by allowing the reader to see that she is aware of the times when she is unreliable.

The novel is told through the perspective of a young, single woman in 1925. She identifies as a prude and often takes a tone of self-righteousness. She passes judgement on Odalie, Helen, Lieutenant Detective and other characters and holds herself to a high standard: "I did not approve of rude behavior in others, and I couldn't very well permit myself a different standard" (30).

The time period contributes to the novel's point of view as well. Men and women have more clearly defined roles in society, and they are gradually breaking down. Odalie is a modern woman who has agency for herself in business and sexuality, and is independent. Rose is representative of women who have not transitioned to more modern roles, but gradually does over time.

As the novel progresses, it is revealed that Rose is telling her story from the confines of a mental hospital. This informs the reader that the story being told is from the perspective of someone with a mental illness. Through this, the reader is then tasked with understanding how much of Rose's antics are because of who she is or because of her illness.

Language and Meaning

The language in the novel is accessible and straightforward. While slang is used, curse words are not. Instead, the author uses 1920s slang to create the tone. Some of the words and phrases used include "ninny" (8), "I didn't give a fig" (19), "sad old biddies" (235), and "keep the extra seeds" (285). The slang is used sparingly and should not interfere with, or be of distraction to, the modern reader.

The language throughout is descriptive, utilizing adjectives and adverbs. At times sentences seem overwritten, such as "Of course I was a little on edge about my own fate that morning; I was very aware of the fact I had been at the selfsame speakeasy that was now at the center of scrutiny" (201). Rose may be presenting the facts to the reader, but she uses more descriptors to drive home what she is saying with "of course", "a little", "very aware" and the like to reinforce the details to herself.



The details are key. As Rose explains “A lying criminal always trips himself up...by... giving too many details” (247). She wants to persuade the reader to believe her telling of events. She provides more detail than is necessary to persuade the reader of her innocence, but she reveals too much.

The ending may be jarring for some readers. The novel concludes with the twist that Rose and Odalie are the same woman. In reviewing key scenes throughout the novel, the reader will be able to more clearly see how the author juggles the two women in conjunction with the other characters. This is demonstrated when Gib tells Odalie “I can see you’re confused” (148), and by the use of italics for the dialogue between Rose and the Lieutenant Detective in the Epilogue.

Structure

The novel is divided in 22 chapters and an epilogue. The chapters are of relatively equal length. Chapters are indicated only by number and do not include chapter titles.

The novel is told from Rose’s perspective in a mental hospital. She takes the advice of her doctor and tells the story from the beginning. The doctor is referenced by name, but does not interact with Rose throughout the novel.

Dialogue is used throughout the novel and takes a conversational tone. In the scenes in which Odalie and Rose both appear, only one of the women directly interacts with the other characters, but will reference the other one.

Dialogue appears in traditional format throughout the chapters, with the use of quotations marks. In the epilogue, dialogue is formatted differently. Dialogue is indicated by italics. The epilogue also shifts to present tense, while the rest of the novel is told in past tense.



Quotes

No one at the precinct dared to question the reason this well-to-do young woman stood before us, laughing as though delighted to be considered for a lowly typist's job.

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 38)

Importance: This quote demonstrates how women in the workforce are viewed at the time. It is unexpected that a woman would take the job unless she needed to and Odalie does not come off as one who would need to ask. Because of her stature, the others do not question why she wants the job.

Out of a completely voluntary but enduring sense of conscientiousness, I took it upon myself to keep careful watch of her."

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 4 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote indicates how Rose takes a personal initiative to keep watch of Odalie, indicating to the reader that everything revealed about her will be exclusively through Rose's perspective and what she wants the reader to know.

But it was not my job to decode the motivations behind his enigmatic behaviors, and during my commute home, I made an oath to myself not to give it much thought or trouble myself over it."

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 11)

Importance: This quote demonstrates how Rose rationalizes the behavior of others reacting to her. If her coworkers are noticing Rose's breakdown, this allows her to put anything she may have noticed out of her mind.

I admit I rhapsodized quite a bit in my letters, and perhaps my romantic vigor over the prospect of our future scared Adele somewhat, but I maintain these had once been our shared fantasies; it wasn't as if I were a madwoman pulling it all out of the air."

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 39)

Importance: Rose learns that Dotty knows intimate details about Rose's relationship with Adele. Rose's narrator attempts to control what impressions the reader may have gotten from Dotty and make her actions more innocuous.

I suppose more warning bells should've chimed inside my head than did at the time."

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 6 paragraph 45)

Importance: Rose is grappling with her situation, reconciling that she is currently in a mental hospital while trying to understand why she didn't know what was really going on with Odalie.

I knew a nice girl would never be caught drinking in a blind or otherwise, but I also sensed I was being tested; I could not refuse just now."



-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 7 paragraph 43)

Importance: In trying to make sense of the conflict between the two personalities, Rose must follow the nature of the personality that will best benefit her in a given situation.

In the absence of flesh-and-blood equivalents, over the years I've taken a series of rules to serve as my mother, my father, my siblings, even my lovers – if an idea of love can indeed be derived from the sort of one-way devotion I cultivated in my regard for the rules.”

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 8 paragraph 1)

Importance: Rose considers herself a moral person who lives by the rules; this quote shows that whatever moral code and list of rules she follows they are of her own creation and serve to justify her actions, whatever they may be.

You can't know that every angel of a woman likewise has within her the secret face of a demon. They all do. But you won't see this demon side unless you marry them.”

-- Mr. Vitalli (chapter 11 paragraph 20)

Importance: During his interrogation, Mr. Vitalli, in discussing his many wives, indicates to Rose that he is picking up on her tendencies, foreshadowing Rose's dark side.

Why did I like Odalie so much? I am still, even now, trying to formulate an answer to this question.”

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 12 paragraph 14)

Importance: This quote indicates Rose's preference for Odalie, foreshadowing that Odalie will become the dominant personality.

When she gave her statements, Ginerva was wearing both bracelets.”

-- Teddy (chapter 16 paragraph 44)

Importance: Teddy's statement indicates to the reader that Odalie and Ginerva are likely the same woman.

One might be inclined to point out what a fool I was, but of course I couldn't know it as the time.”

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 18 paragraph 3)

Importance: The quote demonstrates how Rose continues to distance herself from the reality of her mental illness.

The slope that leads toward insanity has the paradoxical distinction of being both steep and yet undetectable to the person sliding down it.”

-- Rose-as-narrator (chapter 22 paragraph 1)

Importance: Rose is making peace with her situation, accepting her mental illness and what she has done.