

# Bonnie and Clyde

The tragic love story of the fatalistic duo Bonnie and Clyde has left its mark on history and culture. The couple grounded the iconic narrative of the romanticised fugitives on the run, eluding capture, driving through seemingly boundless land towards an uninhibited horizon and a quintessentially American form of freedom. They rob banks, kill cops and make headlines nation-wide; crafting their own fate, they defy all law and order. But their story is a doomed one; culminating in the collision of love, blood and forsaken self-determination. These lovers are destined to meet their violent end.

Bonnie and Clyde inscribed and immortalised their own legend in the self-dramatizing pictures they artfully posed for. In these relics of their lives was their tragedy written.



Figure 1, anon, < [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonnie\\_and\\_Clyde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonnie_and_Clyde) >

Here, Bonnie scowls at the camera with performative antagonism, her brash glare directed towards her spectators in a knowing manner, reversing the camera's gaze. She rests

upon the bonnet of a stolen car, cigar in mouth, gun on hip, foot aloft. It is a measured pose, saturated with dramatic theatricality as she plays at ‘the wanted murderess’; her posture and props both masculine and illicitly sexualised. Bonnie relishes in her identity, making a spectacle of her criminality.



Figure 2, anon, < <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/bonnie-and-clyde>>

In the next shot the performance continues. Bonnie aims a gun at Clyde with playful phallic power; the gun is a fetishized toy, a sexualised prop in this couple’s romance. A vague smile plays on Clyde’s lips at the scandal of it all. These renegades delight in their violation of the law.



Figure 3, anon, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/feb/26/we-dont-want-to-hurt-anney-one-bonnie-and-clydes-poetry-revealed>>

But now the mood shifts, the curtain has dropped, and the real Bonnie and Clyde appear. This photo holds all the sweetness, innocence and purity of a couple in love. They are good and humble people, their faces seem to say. There is a Robin Hood and Maid Marian sensibility in the couple's aura; they thief from the rich to make it through the hard times of the depression era. They are true folk heroes.

But in these lawless photos lies an awareness of Bonnie and Clyde's transitory existence. These ill-fated lovers meet their destiny in a brutal shoot out – a Tarantinoesque, Romeo and Juliet climax. Eternal love is enshrined in their spectacular demise.



Figure 4, anon <<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/bonnie-and-clyde>>

Our gaze shifts to that of the lovers' blazoned, bloody bodies and the bullet holes riddling their final snatched vehicle. The gaze consumes them, ownership of their bodies is claimed by the public and their image is stolen from them forever.

The duo permeate the film canon, transitioning from *Bonnie and Clyde*, to *Thelma and Louise*, and *Queen and Slim*; their narrative is interpreted and re-interpreted through Marxist, feminist and black lenses respectively. This chain of doomed nomadic duos are all seemingly good people, but they are bound by the fatalistic unfairness of a corrupt society.



*Bonnie and Clyde*, Dir. Warren Beatty



*Thelma and Louise*, Dir. Ridley Scott



*Queen and Slim*, Dir. Melina Matsoukas