

*Hatice Bay*

**“Instead of Pumping Iron, She was Pumping Bullets into her Husband”: The Portrayal of a Female Perpetrator in Nanette Burstein’s *Killer Sally***

**Abstract:** In the media, the law, and public opinion, women who resort to violence within abusive relationships are often depicted as either victims or monsters. Nanette Burstein’s three-part docuseries, *Killer Sally* (2022), reexamines this binary which focuses on Sally McNeil, a former professional bodybuilder who murdered her husband, also a professional bodybuilder, in Southern California in 1995. Drawing on Belinda Morrissey’s *When Women Kill* and *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, this article argues that Burstein questions the discursive, performative, and one-sided dimensions of media and legal portrayals of female perpetrators. By placing both the perpetrator and the victim within complex socio-psychological and posthuman frameworks, Burstein broadens the discourse on battered women who kill by granting the perpetrator agency and voice.

**Keywords:** female perpetrator, battered women, Sally McNeil, Ray McNeil, Nanette Burstein, *Killer Sally*