

# Women In Film Noir

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## BRADFORD AMY

**Femme Noir** Rutgers University Press

Film Noir is an overview of an often celebrated, but also contested, body of films. It discusses film noir as a cultural phenomenon whose history is more extensive and diverse than American black and white crime thrillers of the forties. An extended Background Chapter situates film noir within its cultural context, describing its origin in German Expressionism, French Poetic Realism and in developments within American genres, the gangster/crime thriller, horror and the Gothic romance and its possible relationship to changes in American society. Five chapters are devoted to 'classic' film noir (1940-59): chapters explore its contexts of production and reception, its visual style, and its narrative patterns and themes chapters on character types and star performances elucidate noir's complex construction of gender with its weak, ambivalent males and predatory femmes fatales and also provide a detailed analysis of three noir auteurs, - Anthony Mann, Robert Siodmak and Fritz Lang Three chapters investigate 'neo-noir' and British film noir: chapters trace the complex evolution of 'neo-noir' in American cinema, from the modernist critiques of *Night Moves* and *Taxi Driver*, to the postmodern hybridity of contemporary noir including *Seven*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Memento* the final chapter surveys the development of British film noir, a significant and virtually unknown cinema, stretching from the thirties to Mike Hodges' *Croupier* Films discussed include both little known examples and seminal works such as *Double Indemnity*, *Scarlet Street*, *Kiss Me Deadly* and *Touch of Evil*. A final section provides

a guide to further reading, an extensive bibliography and a list of over 500 films referred to in the text. Lucidly written, Film Noir is an accessible, informative and stimulating introduction that will have a broad appeal to undergraduates, cinéastes, film teachers and researchers.

### **Women's Film and Female Experience, 1940-1950**

University of Texas Press

Classic film noir offers more than pesky private eyes and beautiful bad girls—it explores the quest for the not-so-attainable American dream. Winner of the CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title of the Choice ACRL Desperate young lovers on the lam (*They Live by Night*), a cynical con man making a fortune as a mentalist (*Nightmare Alley*), a penniless pregnant girl mistaken for a wealthy heiress (*No Man of Her Own*), a wounded veteran who has forgotten his own name (*Somewhere in the Night*)—this gallery of film noir characters challenges the stereotypes of the wise-cracking detective and the alluring femme fatale. Despite their differences, they all have something in common: a belief in self-reinvention. *Nightmare Alley* is a thorough examination of how film noir disputes this notion at the heart of the American Dream. Central to many of these films, Mark Osteen argues, is the story of an individual trying, by dint of hard work or, more often, illicit enterprises, to overcome his or her origins and achieve material success. In the wake of World War II, the noir genre tested the dream of upward mobility and the ideas of individualism, liberty, equality, and free enterprise that accompany it. Employing an impressive array of theoretical perspectives (including psychoanalysis, art history, feminism, and music theory) and combining close reading with original primary source research, *Nightmare Alley* proves both the diversity of

classic noir and its potency. This provocative and wide-ranging study revises and refreshes our understanding of noir's characters, themes, and cultural significance.

*Film Noir Style* City Lights Books

Sheri Chinen Biesen challenges conventional thinking on the origins of film noir and finds the genre's roots in the political, social and historical conditions of Hollywood during the Second World War.

### **Dames in the Driver's Seat** HarperEntertainment

For this was the summer when, after the hiatus of the Second World War, French critics were again given the opportunity to view films from Hollywood. The films they saw, including *The Maltese Falcon*, *Double Indemnity*, *Laura*, *Murder, My Sweet*, and *The Woman in the Window*, prompted the naming and theorization of a new phenomenon: film noir. Much of what has been written about the genre since has remained within the orbit of this preliminary assessment. While sympathetic towards the early French critics, this collection of original essays attempts to move beyond their first fascinated look. Beginning with an autonomy of that look—of the 'poujadist' climate that nourished it and the imminent collapse of the Hollywood studio system that gave it its mournful inflection—*Shades of Noir* re-explores and calls into question the object first constructed by it. The impetus for this shift in perspective comes from the films themselves, viewed in the light of contemporary social and political concerns, and from new theoretical insights. Several contributions analyze the re-emergence of noir in recent years, most notably in the hybrid forms produced in the 1980s by the merging of noir with science fiction and horror, for example *Blade Runner* and *Angel Heart*, and in films by black directors such as *Deep Cover*,

Straight out of Brooklyn, A Rage in Harlem and One False Move. Other essays focus on the open urban territory in which the noir hero hides out; the office spaces in Chandler, and the palpable sense of waiting that fills empty warehouses, corridors and hotel rooms. Finally, *Shades of Noir* pays renewed attention to the lethal relation between the sexes; to the femme fatale and the other women in noir. As the role of women expands, the femme fatale remains deadly, but her deadliness takes on new meanings. Contributors: Janet Bergstrom, Joan Copjec, Elizabeth Cowie, Manthia Diawara, Frederic Jameson, Dean MacCannel, Fred Pfeil, David Reid and Jayne L. Walker, Marc Vernet, Slavoj Zizek. *Women in Film Noir* Routledge

*Women Who Kill* explores several lines of inquiry: the female murderer as a figure that destabilizes order; the tension between criminal and victim; the relationship between crime and expression (or the lack thereof); and the paradox whereby a crime can be both an act of destruction and a creative assertion of agency. In doing so, the contributors assess the influence of feminist, queer and gender studies on mainstream television and cinema, notably in the genres (film noir, horror, melodrama) that have received the most critical attention from this perspective. They also analyse the politics of representation by considering these works of fiction in their contexts and addressing some of the ambiguities raised by postfeminism. The book is structured in three parts: Neo-femmes Fatales; Action Babes and Monstrous Women. Films and series examined include *White Men Are Cracking Up* (1994); *Hit & Miss* (2012); *Gone Girl* (2014); *Terminator* (1984); *The Walking Dead* (2010); *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015); *Contagion* (2011) and *Ex Machina* (2015) among others.

*The Femme Fatale* JHU Press

Ostensibly the villain, but also a model of female power, poise, and intelligence, the femme fatale embodies Hollywood's contradictory attitudes toward ambitious women. But how has the figure of the femme fatale evolved over time, and to what extent have these changes reflected shifting cultural attitudes toward female independence and sexuality? This book offers readers a concise look at over a century of femmes fatales on both the silver screen and the TV screen. Starting with ethnically exoticized silent film vamps like Theda Bara and Pola Negri, it examines classic film noir femmes fatales like Barbara Stanwyck

in *Double Indemnity*, as well as postmodern revisions of the archetype in films like *Basic Instinct* and *Memento*. Finally, it explores how contemporary film and television creators like *Fleabag* and *Killing Eve's* Phoebe Waller-Bridge have appropriated the femme fatale in sympathetic and surprising ways. Analyzing not only the films themselves, but also studio press kits and reviews, *The Femme Fatale* considers how discourses about the pleasures and dangers of female performance are projected onto the figure of the femme fatale. Ultimately, it is a celebration of how "bad girl" roles have provided some of Hollywood's most talented actresses opportunities to fully express their on-screen charisma.

**Film Noir** I.B. Tauris

For this expanded edition, Kaplan has brought together further essays which reflect the renewed interest in Film Noir which is apparent today.

*Film Noir Fatal Women* Springer

This revised and expanded edition of Eddie Muller's *Dark City* is a film noir lover's bible, taking readers on a tour of the urban landscape of the grim and gritty genre in a definitive, highly illustrated volume. *Dark City* expands with new chapters and a fresh collection of restored photos that illustrate the mythic landscape of the imagination. It's a place where the men and women who created film noir often find themselves dangling from the same sinister heights as the silver-screen avatars to whom they gave life. Eddie Muller, host of Turner Classic Movies' *Noir Alley*, takes readers on a spellbinding trip through treacherous terrain: Hollywood in the post-World War II years, where art, politics, scandal, style -- and brilliant craftsmanship -- produced a new approach to moviemaking, and a new type of cultural mythology.

*Shades of Noir* John Wiley & Sons

Though often thought of as primarily a male vehicle, the film noir offered some of the most complex female roles of any movies of the 1940s and 1950s. Stars such as Barbara Stanwyck, Gene Tierney and Joan Crawford produced some of their finest performances in noir movies, while such lesser known actresses as Peggie Castle, Hope Emerson and Helen Walker made a lasting impression with their roles in the genre. These six women and 43 others who were most frequently featured in films noirs are profiled here, focusing primarily on their work in the genre and its

impact on their careers. A filmography of all noir appearances is provided for each actress.

*Dark City Dames* McFarland

Following World War II, film noir became the dominant cinematic expression of Cold War angst, influencing new trends in European and Asian filmmaking. *International Noir* examines film noir's influence on the cinematic traditions of Britain, France, Scandinavia, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, and India. This book suggests that the film noir style continues to appeal on such a global scale because no other cinematic form has merged style and genre to effect a vision of the disturbing consequences of modernity. *International noir* has, however, adapted and adopted noir themes and aesthetic elements so that national cinemas can boast an independent and indigenous expression of the genre. Ranging from Japanese silent films and women's films to French, Hong Kong, and Nordic New Waves, this book also calls into question critical assessments of noir in international cinemas. In short, it challenges prevailing film scholarship to renegotiate the concept of noir. Ending with an examination of Hollywood's neo-noir recontextualization of the genre, and post-noir's reinvigorating critique of this aesthetic, *International Noir* offers Film Studies scholars an in-depth commentary on this influential global cinematic art form, further offering extensive bibliography and filmographies for recommended reading and viewing.

**International Noir** Springer

"*Film Noir Fatal Women*" focuses on a single aspect of film noir-America's only film movement. Its 400 illustrations reveal the graphic and sensory core of the femme fatale in noir's classic period. As both visual icon and dramatic persona, the Fatal Woman underlies countless doomed narratives of film noir. From torch singers to gun molls, secretaries to sociopaths, black widows to B-girls, both blondes and brunettes, abused and empowered, the entire catalogue is up for discussion"--  
*Postfeminism and the Fatale Figure in Neo-Noir Cinema* Running Press Adult

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**Kiss the Blood Off My Hands** Bloomsbury Publishing USA  
Film Noir Style: The Killer 1940s looks at the fashions of the femmes fatales who were so good at being bad, and the suits and trench coats of definitive noir actors such as Humphrey Bogart and Alan Ladd. Film and fashion historian Kimberly Truhler explores twenty definitive film noir titles from 1941 to 1950 and traces the evolution of popular fashion in the decade of the '40s, the impact of World War II on home-front fashion, and the influence of the film noir genre on popular fashion then and now. Meet not only the fabulous women of noir, including Betty Grable, Veronica Lake, Gene Tierney, Lauren Bacall, Barbara Stanwyck, Ava Gardner, and many others, but also the costume designers that created and recreated these famous stars as killers—and worse—through the clothes they wore.

Transgressing Women Knopf

Women's Film and Female Experience takes a fresh look at a wide range of popular women's films in order to discover what American female consciousness in the 1940s was really about. The author traces the evolution and development of the Hollywood women's film, and describes the social history of American women in the 1940s. She then analyzes dominant narrative patterns within popular women's films of the decade: the maternal drama, the career woman comedy, and the films of suspicion and distrust.

**Nightmare Alley** Limelight Editions

In the context of nineteenth-century Victorinoir and close readings of original-cycle film noir, Julie Grossman argues that the presence of the "femme fatale" figure, as she is understood in film criticism and popular culture, is drastically over-emphasized and has helped to sustain cultural obsessions with "bad" women.

The Femme Fatale Hal Leonard Corporation

This first book published on film noir established the genre—a classic, at last in translation.

Dangerous Dames Routledge

The theme of female transformation informs the Hollywood representation of femininity from the studio era to the present. Whether it occurs physically, emotionally, or on some other level, transformation allows female protagonists to negotiate their own complex desires and to resist the compulsory marriage plot. A sweeping study of Hollywood from *Now, Voyager*, *The Heiress*, and *Flamingo Road* to *Carrie*, the *Alien* films, *The Brave One*, and the slasher horror genre, this book boldly unsettles commonplace understandings of genre film, female sexuality, and Freudian theory as it makes a strong new case for the queer relevance of female representation.

Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir Edinburgh University Press

Foster Hirsch's *Dark Side of the Screen* is by far the most thorough and entertaining study of the themes, visual motifs, character types, actors, directors, and films in this genre ever published. From Billy Wilder, Douglas Sirk, Robert Aldrich, and Howard Hawkes to Martin Scorsese, Roman Polanski, and Paul Schrader, the noir themes of dread, paranoia, steamy sex, double-crossing women, and menacing cityscapes have held a fascination. The features that make Burt Lancaster, Joan Crawford, Robert Mitchum, and Humphrey Bogart into noir heroes and heroines are carefully detailed here, as well as those camera angles, lighting effects, and story lines that characterize Fritz Lang, Samuel Fuller, and Orson Welles as noir directors. For the current rediscovery of film noir, this comprehensive history with its list of credits to 112 outstanding films and its many illustrations will be a valuable reference and a source of inspiration for further research.

A Woman's View Limelight Editions

Consider the usual view of film noir: endless rainy nights populated by down-at-the-heel boxers, writers, and private eyes stumbling toward inescapable doom while stalked by crooked cops and cheating wives in a neon-lit urban jungle. But a new generation of writers is pushing aside the fog of cigarette smoke surrounding classic noir scholarship. In *Kiss the Blood Off My Hands: On Classic Film Noir*, Robert Miklitsch curates a bold collection of essays that reassesses the genre's iconic style,

history, and themes. Contributors analyze the oft-overlooked female detective and little-examined aspects of filmmaking like love songs and radio aesthetics, discuss the significance of the producer and women's pulp fiction, as well as investigate Disney noir and the Fifties heist film, B-movie back projection and blacklisted British directors. At the same time the writers' collective reconsideration unwinds the impact of hot-button topics like race and gender, history and sexuality, technology and transnationality. As bracing as a stiff drink, *Kiss the Blood Off My Hands* writes the future of noir scholarship in lipstick and chalk lines for film fans and scholars alike.

**Film Noir Reader 4** Bloomsbury Publishing

*Transgressing Women* focuses on the literary and cinematic representation of female characters in contemporary noir thrillers. The book argues that as the genre has grown, expanded and been subverted since its initial conception, along with the changing definition of gender, the representation of a female character has also inevitably gone through some dramatic changes. So, the book asks some important questions: What links the female characters in canonical noir to their contemporary counterparts? Is gender division still relevant in a text that transgresses gender boundaries? What happens when it is the human body itself that betrays the traditional definition or constitution of a human being? While many have written about the male protagonists and the femmes fatales in the noir genre, little attention has been given to the 'other' female characters who inhabit the noir world and are transgressors themselves. The main concern of the book is to trace the transgressive female characters in contemporary noir thrillers – both novels and films – by engaging itself with some of the most topical debates within both (post)feminist and postmodernist theories. The book is structured around two key concepts – space and the body. These temporal and spatial indicators are central in contemporary cultural theories such as postmodernism and post-feminism, along with other theorizations of gender and the noir genre. This means that the analysis is drawn from the classical noir examples and will then arrive at the neo-noir sub-genre, and then will move on to the most recent phenomenon in the genre, 'future noir'.