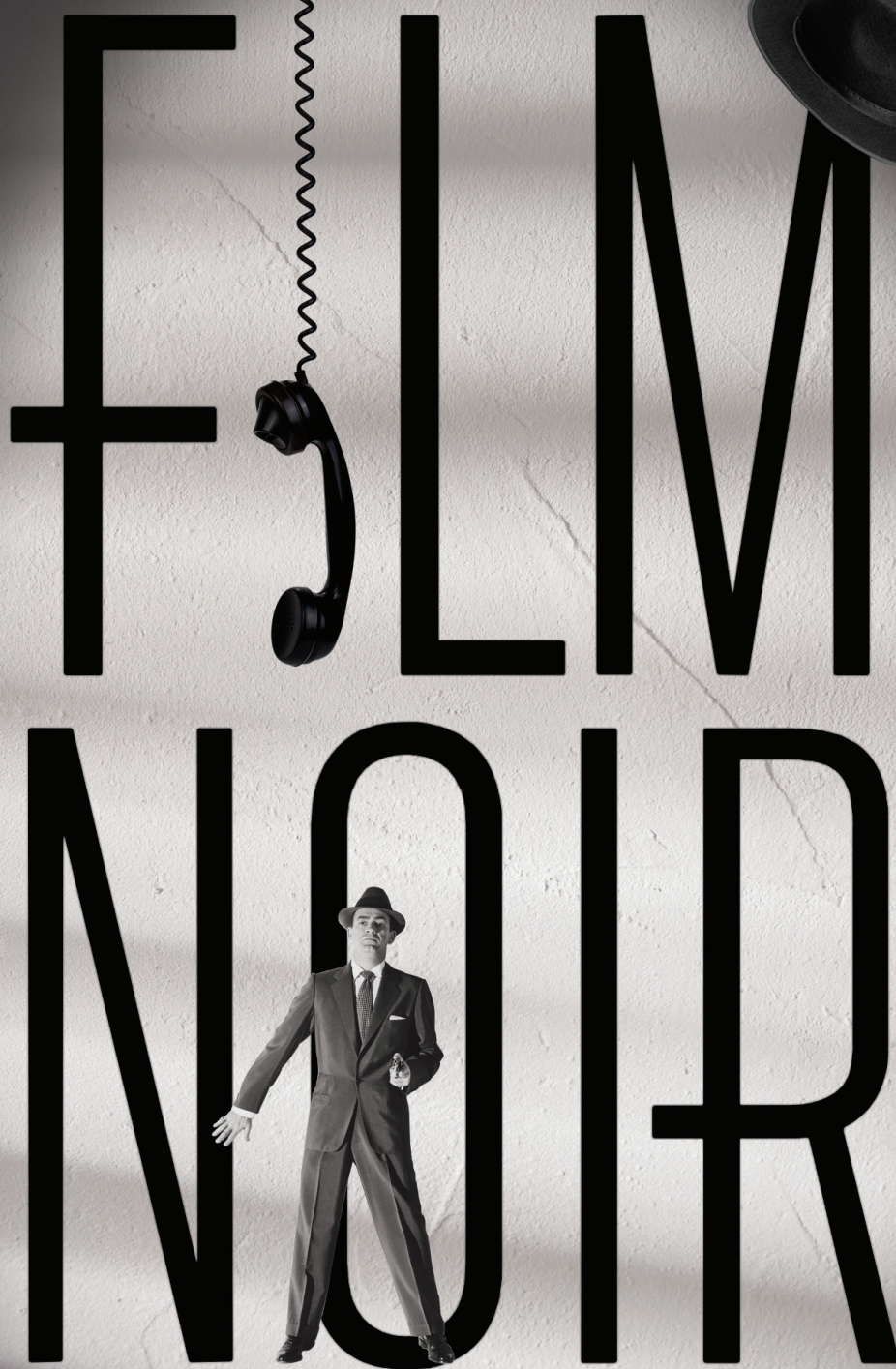# A COMPANION TO

# FILM NOIR

EDITED BY ANDREW SPICER AND HELEN HANSON

**WILEY** Blackwell

# A Companion to Film Noir

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# Acknowledgments

# Foreword

Film noir is the most amorphous yet fascinating category in cinema. I call it a "category" because cycles and movements are more short-lived, and genres, though much less stable than historians make them seem, are somewhat easier to delineate. We usually associate noir with certain black-and-white, Hollywood pictures of the 1940s and 1950s – movies about private eyes seduced by femme fatales, domestic women threatened by killers, criminal gangs planning robberies, and outlaw couples on the run. Famous titles include *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *The Killers* (1946), *Gun Crazy* (1950), and *The Killing* (1956). These are core examples; a couple of them were in fact among the first American movies dubbed "noir" by the French, who had invented the term in the 1930s to describe "poetic realist" pictures such as *Le Jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, 1939). But what about *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1947, the story of three ragged prospectors searching for gold), *Reign of Terror* (1949, a costume adventure set during the French revolution), *Cronaca di un amore* (*Story of a Love Affair*, 1950, an Italian art film with a detective protagonist), *Dr. No* (1962, the first James Bond movie), and *2001* (US 1968)? Each of these has also been described as noir by at least one respected writer on the subject. (The writers in question are Raymond Borde, Etienne Chaumeton, Raymond Durgnat, Jim Hiller, and Alastair Phillips.) They may seem like far-fetched instances, but the idea of noir – born of criticism, subject to different uses, and capable of change or evolution over time – is rich and flexible enough that anyone who has seen enough films can think of unusual suspects that might, at least arguably, be listed under the noir rubric. My own picks would be *A Cottage on Dartmoor* (1930, as skillful and troubling a murder story as anything by Hitchcock); *Wanda* (1971, the rawest and most truthful criminal-couple-on-the-road movie ever made), and *Variety* (1983, a sort of female, avant-garde *Vertigo*).

One way of trying to contain film noir is to define it, as Paul Schrader did in 1972, as a Hollywood movement occurring between 1941 and 1958 which was influenced by American pulp fiction and émigré directors from Germany. This approach has the advantage of confining the topic to a historical period with its own nexus of

fashions and systems of production; we can then invent another term, "neo-noir," to account for the considerable number of later pictures that have close connections or affinities with the original group. But as several writers in this book show, neat boundaries and distinctions are difficult to maintain. Film noir has never been exclusively American; we can find excellent examples not only from France but also from other countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. By the same token, film noir can't be easily limited to a historical period. Some have tried to claim that the 1941 version *The Maltese Falcon* was the first film noir; but while *Falcon* certainly influenced subsequent films, it was influenced *by* earlier ones, several of which are now regularly called noir. It should also be emphasized, as it is in this collection of essays, that noir has never been exclusive to film. Most of the famous early examples were adapted from novels, and during the 1940s and 1950s we can find noir radio drama, noir jazz (known to Hollywood as "crime jazz"), and noir comic books.

None of this means that film noir is a figment of the critical imagination. It's safe to say that before 1941 noir was an emergent, little-known cultural category accurately describing certain French films and French popular literature; between roughly 1945 and 1950, when the French began writing about American film noir, it was a dominant category, its characteristic moods and themes affecting many different kinds of movies and other media; after 1958 it became a residual category, with films of the type appearing sometimes more, sometimes less frequently. But by 1970 the term "film noir" was known to filmmakers and cinephiles everywhere – critical writing about it proliferated, and it soon became available to the industry as something close to a genre or brand name.

Film noir has particularly strong hold on contemporary culture. No other type of popular cinema, with the possible exception of noir's close cousins horror and dystopian science fiction, is more often taught in classrooms or written about by scholars. The western and the musical comedy, which were the most commercially successful and arguably the most distinctively American films produced in Hollywood's classic studio era, have now almost disappeared from movie screens. We live in an intensely urban or suburban society that makes the western seem remote, and we've lost the studio infrastructure that made the best singing and dancing movies possible. Although noir has never been the biggest box office attraction in movies (except, perhaps, in the case of Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy of 2005–2012, which is influenced by the "Dark Night" graphic novels), it continues to manifest itself across all the media: a couple of twenty-first century examples are Sara Gran's pitch-black novel *Dope* (2005) and Nicholas Winding Refn's violent film *Drive* (2011). Where critical discourse is concerned, noir continues to be of interest because of its anti-utopian qualities (the best film noirs tend to be told from the point of view of criminals or deeply flawed characters); its disorienting narratives; its mesmerizing play of style; and its complex treatment of gender, sexuality, and race. You will find all these matters discussed in Andrew Spicer and Helen Hanson's excellent anthology. This discussion, like the fascination of film noir itself, is likely to continue for years to come.

James Naremore

# Introduction
## *The Problem of Film Noir*

### Andrew Spicer

The winter sun was going down on Surfers Paradise. It was my ninety-eighth day on the wagon and it didn't feel any better than the ninety-seventh. I missed my hip flask of Johnny Walker, my ex-wife Jean, my pet dog Somare and my exorbitant salary as Deputy Commissioner of Police. I wasn't sure any more I was cut out to be a writer of controversial exposés of police corruption. At the moment I couldn't lift the lid off a can of beans. I wanted to be twelve years old again and the best spin bowler in Southport High. I wanted a lot of things . . . So did my landlady, including the rent.

This is the voice-over narration of Michael Stacey as he shambles along the shoreline of a sun-drenched beach in a crumpled white suit en route to his shabby boarding house after having been sacked following a rigged inquiry. Asked by an old school friend and state senator to locate his missing daughter, Cathy, Stacey finds himself enmeshed in a right-wing plot led by his former army associates. In an apocalyptic finale in which their attempted coup is overthrown, Stacey realizes he has been used as a pawn by the state authorities to gain intelligence about the conspirators. In the final scene, Stacey bids Cathy farewell and comes to an elegiac acceptance of middle age.

The mode of narration, characterization, and plot mark *Goodbye Paradise* (Carl Schultz, 1983) as a film noir, as it was recognized and received at the time of its release in Australia. However, such an acknowledgment raises a number of significant issues that have important implications for the ways in which we need to understand film noir and this introduction will review some of those significances and how the contributors to this *Companion* have sought to address them. The voice of its world-weary "hero" Stacey (Ray Barrett) is, for instance, clearly indebted

to Raymond Chandler's private eye Philip Marlowe: a sharp, skeptical intelligence that is nevertheless underpinned by a strong sense of honor, a desire to protect the innocent and a sustaining belief, constantly undermined, that the world can be put right. But for the reference to cricket, it might have come from a 1940s' American film noir, and yet the film's screenwriters, Bob Ellis and Denny Lawrence, both admirers of Chandler, saw in his excoriating exposé of the venality and cupidity of Southern California a template for their own attack on the contemporary avaricious decadence of Surfer's Paradise on Queensland's Gold Coast in Australia where the film is set, that "strange, bright place that Australians went to instead of dying." The moral ambiguities, alienation, and existential absurdity that characterize film noir provided a recognizable framework within which Ellis and Lawrence could craft their story of greed, corruption, and duplicity. Extreme low angles, hand-held camerawork, and point-of-view shots are used to capture Stacey's disorientation and bewilderment as he stumbles through a series of unexpected encounters in a film that melds realistic and surrealistic elements to depict a situation at once familiar and absurd.

Although *Goodbye Paradise* works self-consciously with a concept, style, and mode of narration – film noir – derived from American popular culture, it does so in order to explore critically preoccupations and issues that are distinctively Australian, exhibiting what Ellis called its "cultural exactitude." *Goodbye Paradise* presented a deliberately different image of Australian masculinity, a new and more critical cultural image to Australians themselves and to international audiences. It can be understood within an Australian strain of hard-boiled crime thrillers that included *The Empty Beach* (Chris Thomson, 1985).[1] However, it was also clearly one of a number of noir-inflected Australian political thrillers made at this time – including *The Killing of Angel Street* (Donald Crombie, 1981) and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (Peter Weir, 1982) – which creatively reworked American models such as *The Parallax View* (1974), depicting a paranoid society riven by conspiracy theories, the fear of extremist groups, foreign invasion, and the covert actions of administrations addicted to secrecy and the suppression of freedom of thought and action.[2] Understood by its producers as something of a risk, *Goodbye Paradise* occupied what seems to be the characteristic cultural space of films noir, ambiguously positioned in the liminal region somewhere between commercial filmmaking and art house. That liminal positioning is part of film noir's enduring fascination – as popular culture that is entertaining *and* astringent, encoding a critical sensibility with a long historical and global reach.

## An International Genre?

The presence of film noir in Australia should not surprise us. Jennifer Fay and Justus Nieland argue that film noir is the product of the uneven development of modernity as a global force, a critical category that casts doubt on the ability of

capitalism to deliver just and humane societies. The various national forms of film noir that they identify – in Europe, Latin America, and Asia (I would like to add Australasia) – are local instances of this transnational phenomenon that exhibits a complex process of adaptation and assimilation, attaining a particular coherence at certain moments.[3] However, such national manifestations need to be carefully identified and delineated. In Chapter 29 of this *Companion*, BOMBAY NOIR, Lalitha Gopalan locates not an overarching Indian film noir but a "Bombay Noir" that derives specifically from the urban milieu of Bombay. These dark and destructive crime/gangster films express a dystopian vision of city life, a critical and fugitive form of filmmaking in which key films often disappeared from circulation, offering a starkly different picture from the glamour of Bollywood, the dominant image of Indian cinema internationally. Nikki J.Y. Lee and Julian Stringer (Chapter 28, FILM NOIR IN ASIA) adopt a similarly circumspect approach, distancing themselves from the specious unity of a commodified "Asian noir" in favor of the label "Film Noir in Asia," which recognizes the existence of "historically specific characteristics of multiple regional film industries." Lee and Stringer exemplify the productiveness of this term through a detailed investigation of post-war South Korean cinema, analyzing the characteristics of a loose group of crime films that show the incorporation of American and European thrillers into local practices, enabling indigenous filmmakers to probe the "dark hidden secrets of Korean social history."

This emphasis on the internationalism of film noir is part of the revisionist impulse that drives this collection. It challenges a major strand of the construction of film noir that defined it as an exclusively American phenomenon. The title of Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton's founding text, *Panorama du film noir américain 1941–53* (1955) enshrines this conception, "a group of nationally identifiable films sharing certain common features (style, atmosphere, subject) sufficiently strong to mark them unequivocally and give them, with time, an inimitable quality."[4] In the most influential text in Anglo-American criticism, "Notes on *Film Noir*" (1972), Paul Schrader argues that film noir was the inevitable development of the American gangster film that had been delayed by the war, the product of a number of particular social and cultural factors that produced the definitive American noir cycle of 1941–1958, which constituted a "specific period of film history."[5] Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward's *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style* (1979), which defined the noir "canon," had the same unequivocal emphasis: "With the Western, film noir shares the distinction of being an indigenous American form. . . . It is a self-contained reflection of American cultural preoccupations in film form. In short, it is a unique example of a wholly American film style."[6] In addition to Lee and Stringer and Gopalan, several contributors to the *Companion* take issue with this national exclusivity as a serious distortion of film noir, which, as James Naremore, whose *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (1998/2008) has been the most important and influential recent study, argues, operates as "something like an international genre."[7]

# What is Film Noir?

However, the dispute about film noir's geographical reach forms part of a much more protracted debate as to whether film noir is a genre with a tightly defined corpus of films; an artistic movement; a distinctive visual style; a prevailing mood or tone expressing alienation, paranoia, and moral ambivalence; a specific period of film history (1940–1958); or a much more diffuse phenomenon whose boundaries are highly permeable. Naremore argues that the term "belongs to the history of ideas as much as to the history of cinema . . . it has less to do with a group of artefacts than with a discourse – a loose, evolving system of arguments and readings that help to shape commercial strategies and aesthetic ideologies." For Naremore, film noir is both "an important legacy and an idea we have projected on to the past."[8] His formulations are extremely helpful because they register the complexity and capaciousness of the term, and its double sense of film noir as a body of American films from a particular period – those black-and-white murder mysteries from the 1940s including *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), *Murder, My Sweet* (Edward Dmytryk, 1944), and *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944) that had such an impact on the French critics who gave them the label "film noir" – and a shaping discourse that constantly redefines the meaning of those films. It is a discourse that has significance within the academy, the history of ideas, film history, and within the industry itself in the production, marketing, and consumption of neo-noirs such as *Goodbye Paradise*, which work with a loose concept of film noir and have a relationship, however indirect, with this central body of films.

The chapters in Part I engage with these broad issues. Robert Porfirio, whose 1979 doctoral thesis was one of the first major Anglo-American studies, argues in Chapter 1 (THE STRANGE CASE OF FILM NOIR) that this core or "classic" period (1940–1959), is best regarded as a movement rather than a genre. Only with the arrival of neo-noir did this looser association of motifs and ideas solidify, self-consciously, into a genre. In common with other film movements, film noir possesses a recognizable body of films exhibiting shared stylistic characteristics, sufficiently capacious to allow distinct personal variations, that marked a radical aesthetic break – with, in this case, the classic Hollywood style. Porfirio argues that conceptualizing noir as a movement, though it raises problems, enables discussion to be grounded in the analysis of a real material context, examining how specific conditions in the American film industry were transformed by the impact of both external (mainly German) émigrés and internal, domestic émigrés (those involved with the Popular Front). Film noir thus became a way in which both groups could register their profound dissatisfaction with Hollywood studio practices and with current American values, which, in turn, can be related to a more widespread response to broader traumatic sociopolitical conditions: the Depression, World War II, and the Red Scare, though always strongly mediated by the film industry where effects are delayed or oblique.

Mark Bould's take on the vexed issue of how to categorize film noir (Chapter 2, GENRE, HYBRIDITY, HETEROGENEITY), is to problematize the whole notion of genre itself, situating the dispute about noir's status and boundaries within a more general

debate about the nature of genres and developments in genre theory. Bould argues that discussion needs to move beyond the currently fashionable notion of hybridity, in which noir becomes part of a series of proliferating hyphenates (e.g. tech-noir or horror-noir), to a reconceptualization of the fundamental characteristics of genres themselves, which, Bould argues, do not exist as homogeneous, bounded categories but are fluid, heterogeneous, and unstable, shifting over time as the discourses surrounding them mutate. Bould adduces the striking example of *The Lost Weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945), which was initially seen as central to defining and delineating film noir but which has now dropped off the map or is seen as a marginal case. Film noir thus needs to be recognized as the product of the claims of various material agents (writers, producers, distributors, marketers, readers, fans, critics) whose unstable heterogeneity needs to be accepted, keeping the canon fresh.

Henrik Gustafsson (Chapter 3, A WET EMPTINESS) has a rather different orientation: "rather than defining what film noir is, establishing its center and origin, it might be more helpful to ask what it does, how it engages and affects us." Taking his cue from Borde and Chaumeton, who argued that above all else film noir sought to disorientate viewers, Gustafsson argues that film noir constructs an unstable world in which subjective experience is foregrounded, undermining the rational space of classic Hollywood cinema. Drawing on American and European examples, including the Hungarian Bela Tarr's *Kárhozat* (*Damnation*, 1987), Gustafsson explores noir's preoccupation with fringe areas, wastelands, margins, and watery locations, the Surrealist's *terrain vague*, in which alienated, isolated individuals attempt to navigate their imperiled ways through an indifferent universe. He suggests that this mode of attention to film noir should invite critics to "steer away from stable epistemological categories such as genre, iconography or period style toward the more elusive phenomenological notions of atmosphere, affect, and encounter."

## Redefining Film Noir: Cultural Contexts

Moving from the general to the particular, the chapters in Part II explore, and in the process start to redefine, the ways in which film noir has been understood in its "classic" phase, whose boundaries are 1940–1958. Wheeler Winston Dixon's PRECURSORS TO FILM NOIR (Chapter 5) challenges this conventional periodization. He identifies a group of pre-Code crime films from the early 1930s, including *Night World* (Hobart Henley, 1932) and *Heroes for Sale* (William Wellman, 1933), which are arguably "more noirish than noir" as their themes and characterization were not so constrained by later ministrations of the Hays office. These films anticipate the themes, characterization, and plots of the "classic" period – although their visual style tends to be a flat, harsh, direct realism, rather than the expressionist-inflected aesthetic of the 1940s – but they were unknown to the French critics who first identified the category and have not established themselves as part of the noir canon. Of course, to label them precursors implies their subordination to the canonical films of the 1940s, but acknowledging their existence should prompt a reconsideration of

how film noir is understand customarily as an historical phenomenon that emerged as a response to war and post-war changes.

This line of inquiry could be extended productively in the other direction, questioning the supposed watershed of 1958 (*Touch of Evil*, Orson Welles) or 1959 (*Odds Against Tomorrow*, Robert Wise), by taking a fresh look again at the 1960s and such films as *Why Must I Die?* (Roy Del Ruth, 1960), *Blast of Silence* (Allen Baron, 1961), *Mickey One* (Arthur Penn, 1965) or *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966), which cannot quite be called neo-noirs because they lack the temporal and conceptual distance, the self-consciousness, that is integral to that term.[9]

In Chapter 6, CRISSCROSSED, Alastair Phillips investigates the history of noir's construction as both an idea promoted by French critics and a filmmaking practice. First used by French reviewers to describe the qualities of a number of poetic realist films produced in France during the 1930s, including *Le jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, Marcel Carné, 1939), film noir designated both a culturally specific form and a way of seeing that was unique to that mode. This double valency as both idea and practice subtends the ways in which American film noir was identified and perceived. In the process of analyzing its early history, Phillips challenges the conventional linear history that posits the expressionist style of the 1940s' films noir – with their high contrast chiaroscuro lighting, oddly angled compositions, and decentered, subjective narratives – as deriving from the influence of German expressionism mediated through the work of various European exiles and émigrés – including Robert Siodmak, Douglas Sirk and Billy Wilder – who imported this mode of filmmaking onto American soil. In contradistinction, Phillips traces the crisscrossing patterns of a two-way exchange between Europe and America, a complex story of cultural negotiation and assimilation. For Phillips, film noir was "an active site of experiential (and experimental) negotiation between the European migrants and the world they found themselves within," adapting and reworking styles already established in American cinema but in distinctive, and influential ways. Film noir was thus an international form from its inception, but this ancestry was disavowed, as noted, by Borde and Chaumeton and subsequent commentators in favor of a construction that posited the uniqueness of the American cycle.

This European influence was also apparent in the horror films of the 1930s which have been seen as part of the cultural mulch from which film noir emerged. Peter Hutchings's analysis (Chapter 7, FILM NOIR AND HORROR) argues that this supposed influence rests on the problematic assumption that horror is a known, identifiable, and separate category whose coherence can be invoked in order to delineate the apparently more problematic category of film noir. Like Bould, Hutchings argues that genres are not fixed and coherent entities but loose, shifting clusters between which critics can forge connections. Hence noir's ability to absorb numerous films that have a clearly established generic identity and the instability of certain groups of films, such as those by Val Lewton or the female gothic films of the 1940s, which are thought either to be distinct from film noir or to be part of it. Hutchings argues that tracing these connections requires sensitivity to different institutional and historical contexts and that generic categorizations are constantly changing, terms mutate through critical reappraisal.

In Chapter 8, BORDERINGS, R. Barton Palmer also examines unstable classifications and porous boundaries through his consideration of another problematic group of films, the semi-documentaries, deeply influenced by wartime documentaries and neo-realism. They, like Lewton's horror films, are another borderline case having close affinities with, and also significant differences from, films noir, with film-makers regularly moving between the two modes. Palmer analyzes the strange marriage of psychologism and realism that they exhibit, considering in detail *He Walked by Night* (Alfred Werker, 1949), which was based on an actual case but which, in its treatment, was also strikingly expressionist at certain moments through its concentration on the deracinated, alienated sociopath (played by Richard Basehart), whose fate commands more interest than the actions of the forces of law and order that seek to quell him.

Film noir was recognized by Borde and Chaumeton as indebted to indigenous sources as well as European ones and they cited hard-boiled fiction as its central and "immediate" influence. In Chapter 9, CRIME FICTION AND FILM NOIR, William Marling argues that this customary focus on hard-boiled fiction needs to be widened to include the newspapermen (Jack Lait, W.R. Burnett, Ben Hecht, and John Bright) who were instrumental in creating a mass public for the representation of crime. The subsequent developments in crime fiction – detective fiction (e.g. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler), stories that concentrated on sex and violence (notably James M. Cain and Horace McCoy), or stories with a focus on irrationality and psychosis (Jim Thompson or Cornell Woolrich) – were each addressed to different reading publics which can now accommodate a taste for authors who are highly allusive and intertextual, including Elmore Leonard and James Ellroy. Marling's delineation of the history of crime fiction's changing relationship to film noir is complemented by Tom Ryall's account, FILM NOIR, AMERICAN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY (Chapter 10), which argues for the importance of considering a range of indigenous sources. Building on occasional comments in existing scholarship, Ryall analyzes the subject matter and visual style of painters – the Ashcan School, notably John Sloan and George Bellows, and also Edward Hopper and Reginald Marsh – and that of the news photographer Weegee, to provide a coherent and detailed analysis of the rich native cultural context from which noir emerged.

## Redefining Film Noir: Social and Industrial Contexts

As a critical mode of filmmaking, film noir has often been associated with a left-wing agenda that made it distinctive within Hollywood.[10] In Chapter 11, THE POLITICS OF FILM NOIR, Brian Neve revisits Thom Andersen's notion, first proposed in 1985, of "film gris," a group of thirteen crime melodramas written and directed by some of Porfirio's "internal émigrés" – Abraham Polonsky, Joseph Losey, Jules Dassin, Cy Endfield, and Robert Rossen – loosely associated with the Popular Front. Analyzing these films within their specific contexts of production, Neve reveals a creative use of a popular form, the crime film, capable of containing a corrosive critique of corporate capitalism and of appealing to a broad public. Their momentum was halted

by the anti-Communist purges and the blacklist, and their makers eventually forced into exile or marginalized. David Wilt's investigation of who wrote film noir (Chapter 12, THE BLACK TYPEWRITER) also acknowledges the importance of the social and political context, including the deleterious effects of the blacklist, but focuses on the varied assortment of screenwriters who were involved, a far wider range than that of the pulp fiction and hard-boiled authors conventionally thought to dominate the practice. Wilt has a particularly valuable section on women writers, whose significant presence was put under threat as the studios took to employing an increasingly male writing staff.

The concentration on film noir as a retrospective category "invented" by the French has obscured the ways in which it was a recognized mode of filmmaking in Hollywood going under various different labels: "psychological thrillers," "morbid dramas," "blood freezers," or "red meat" stories.[11] In Chapter 13, FILM NOIR AND STUDIO PRODUCTION PRACTICES, Geoff Mayer analyzes the industrial and institutional practices that shaped the development of film noir that he sees emerging as part of a gradual shift within the crime genre that was taking place in the 1930s. He contrasts the influential but short-lived A feature cycle (1944–1949) produced by the majors, with the more prolonged B feature sequence that continued throughout the 1950s as a low-cost form of filmmaking attractive to the Poverty Row studios and independent companies. Mayer's research reveals unexpected clusters, including a series of twelve films produced for Columbia in Canada by Kenneth Bishop between 1935 and 1937 that were intended mainly for the British market – including *Convicted* (Leon Barsha, 1938), the first Cornell Woolrich adaptation – thus further complicating noir's conventional periodization. John Berra's continuation, FILM NOIR AND POST-STUDIO PRODUCTION PRACTICES, Chapter 14, charts noir's survival as a niche marketing strategy embraced by a range of filmmakers. In a marketplace dominated by the blockbuster, film noir continued to exist both as an innovative, critical form of filmmaking – low-budget indies – and as a highly commodified one, slickly stylized and aimed at the cable or rental markets.

Films are, of course, always commodities that have to be marketed and sold. Mary Beth Haralovich's discussion, SELLING NOIR (Chapter 15), considers the ways in which film posters – an art form in themselves – and exhibitors' promotional tactics, including press books and product tie-ins, often constructed somewhat different images (notably of femininity and masculinity), associations, and orientations from the films themselves. Of particular interest is Haralovich's discussion of how the images of the films noir altered in different national contexts, indicating a very fruitful avenue for further analysis.

## The Fabric of Film Noir: Style and Subjectivity

From the outset, film noir was defined in terms of its arresting visual style and concern with psychological problems, its "deep shadows, clutching hands, exploding revolvers, sadistic villains and heroines tormented with deeply rooted diseases of the