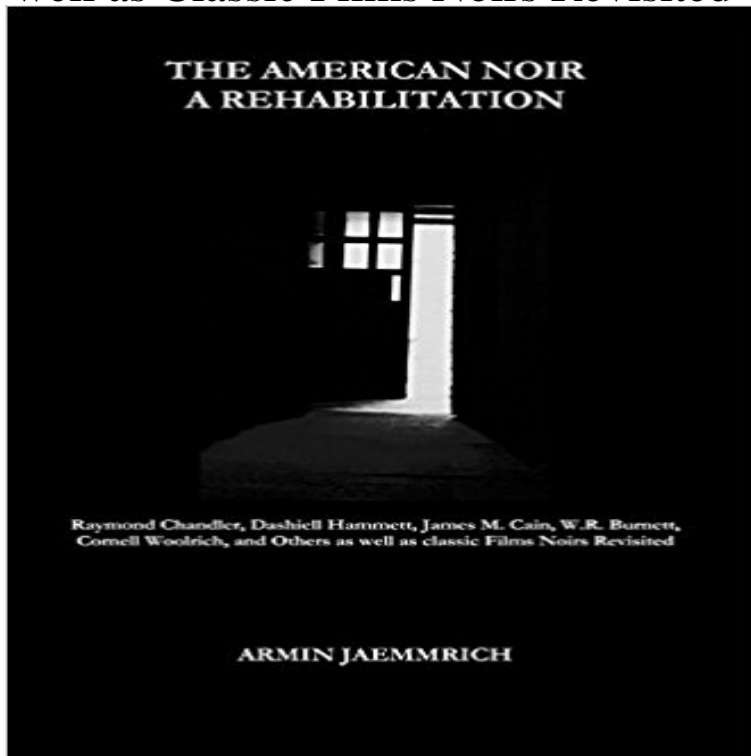


## The American Noir - A Rehabilitation: Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, W.R. Burnett, Cornell Woolrich, and Others as well as Classic Films Noirs Revisited



The focus of this broadly based analysis is on representative noir stories and novels, and the dialogs, voice-over, and stage directions of films such as *The Big Sleep*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *This Gun for Hire*, *The Killers*, *Gun Crazy*, *The Asphalt Jungle*, *Criss Cross*, *Night and the City*, and *Odds Against Tomorrow*, in which the invisible writing Philip Marlowe once mentions in *Farewell, My Lovely* is traced. The author not only takes a fresh look at the works of the usual suspects Hammett, Chandler, and Cain but also of Cornell Woolrich, W.R. Burnett, Lionel White, and Geoffrey Homes. His conclusion is a kind of rehabilitation of the genre, the tenor being that it is about time to re-read the classic American noir and to question not a few of the views presently held. For, in contrast to their alleged general rejection or disdain, we do, in fact, encounter in works of noir traditional values, such as trust, reliability, respect, and friendship. And instead of proof for W.H. Audens oft-quoted judgment on Raymond Chandler's novels (powerful but extremely depressing books), there is discernible in Chandler's and his colleagues' narratives an affirmative stance toward and a longing for the recovery of values. Significantly many noir characters, including femmes fatales, disprove the stereotypes of amoral, areligious, and materialistic this-worldliness typically ascribed to them. Nor do we encounter them as generally fatalistic and emotionless automatons (Camus) but rather as goal-oriented human beings with their contradictions and sometimes downright sympathetically modest desires and dreams of life. The catalog of topics addressed includes, but is not limited to, the true self, the past, trust, the family, faith, catharsis, atonement, grace, plus the didactics of noir, and, yes, humor. All of the above proves the genres yet to be discovered multi-faceted nature. Readers will also, if

mainly in passing, find references to the Western and to authors as diverse as E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Emile Zola, Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, G.K. Chesterton, Lincoln Steffens, Theodore Dreiser, Bert Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Arthur Miller, Albert Camus, and Paul Auster. Beside other paraphernalia, readers will also learn about the death Raymond Chandler and his legendary private detective, Philip Marlowe, forgot to explain, to what French writer Cains plots hark back, and who, as early as 1776, appealed to the reader, instead of simply condemning him or her, to consider the circumstances and the environment that ultimately make someone commit a crime. - The author holds a Dr. phil. (PhD) from Goethe-Universitat, Frankfurt, Germany, in American Studies. His book is aimed at students and scholars but also at those with a deeper interest in classic films noirs and the novels and stories behind them.

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