



Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1930s and 40s: The Postman Always Rings Twice / They Shoot Horses, Don't They? / Thieves Like Us / The Big Clock / ... a Dead Man (Library of America) (Vol 1)

By Robert Polito, Horace McCoy, Kenneth Fearing, William Lindsay Gresham, Cornell Woolrich, James M. Cain, Edward Anderson

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Jim Thompson, James M. Cain, Chester Himes....When the masters of noir fiction moved from the pulps to the mainstream, American literature was changed forever. Here, in two volumes, are the complete texts of eleven of the most brilliant and influential crime novels ever written.

"To be brief, these two volumes constitute the most important collection of crime fiction ever published in the United States. Bar none...a wonderful and lasting gift". -- Ed Gorman, Mystery Scene Magazine

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Literature and film buffs will be delighted by this collection of pulp novels, most of which were made into important films. James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is a literary masterpiece with its spare prose invoking a savage, sexy, desperate world. It inspired no less than three great movies: Luchino Visconti's classic *Ossessione*, in 1942; the 1946 remake, starring John Garfield and Lana Turner and directed by the extraordinary Tay Garnett; and Bob Rafelson's underrated 1981 version with Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lange. When you read the magnificent source for these movies, you'll be astonished at how three different incarnations could all, in their own ways, be faithful to the novel.

Cornell Woolrich's *I Married a Dead Man* also became three movies: *No Man of Her Own*, with Barbara Stanwyk; the French *I Married a Shadow*; and the American comedy, *Mrs. Winterborne*, which starred Shirley MacLaine and Ricki Lake. Edward Anderson's vivid *Thieves Like Us* was transformed into *They Live by Night*, Nicholas Ray's first important movie and one of the seminal noir films of the 1940s. It was brilliantly remade in 1974 by the great revisionist director Robert Altman. Kenneth Fearing's *The Big Clock* was transformed into a marvelous film starring Charles Laughton; 40 years later, the same source, retitled *No Way Out*, brought Kevin Costner to stardom. William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley* was the source for Tyrone Power's best movie; Horace McCoy's experimental *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* became one of the seminal films of the 1960s.

These dark, evocative novels, when taken together, are a fascinating study of how words can inspire a magnificent variety of cinematic images and styles.

From Library Journal

The Library of America gave a tremendous boost to the reputation of hard-boiled detective fiction with the inclusion of Raymond Chandler among its illustrious ranks (Classic Returns, LJ 9/15/95). This new two-volume set is another giant step in the direction of legitimacy for the pulp mystery genre. This duo collect 11 of the best crime novels in which the criminal rather than the sleuth is the central character. Included here are such gems as James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Cornell Woolrich's *I Married a Dead Man*, Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me*, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and Chester Himes's *The Real Cool Killers*. These tales of murder and mayhem belong in all fiction collections.

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From the Back Cover

This adventurous volume, with its companion devoted to the 1950s, presents a rich vein of modern American writing too often neglected in mainstream literary histories. Evolving out of the terse and violent hardboiled style of the pulp magazines, noir fiction expanded over the decades into a varied and innovative body of writing. Tapping deep roots in the American literary imagination, the novels in this volume explore themes of crime, guilt, deception, obsessive passion, murder, and the disintegrating psyche. With visionary and often subversive force they create a dark and violent mythology out of the most commonplace elements of modern life. The raw power of their vernacular style has profoundly influenced contemporary American culture and writing. Far from formulaic, they are ambitious works which bend the rules of genre fiction to their often experimental purposes.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stephanie Rodriguez:

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