

CRIME FILMS

This book surveys the entire range of crime films, including important subgenres such as the gangster film, the private-eye film, film noir, as well as the victim film, the erotic thriller, and the crime comedy. Focusing on ten films that span the range of the twentieth century, from *Fury* (1936) to *Fargo* (1996), Thomas Leitch traces the transformation of the three leading figures that are common to all crime films: the criminal, the victim, and the avenger. Analyzing how each of the subgenres establishes oppositions among its ritual antagonists, he shows how the distinctions among them become blurred throughout the course of the century. This blurring, Leitch maintains, reflects and fosters a deep social ambivalence toward crime and criminals, while the criminal, victim, and avenger characters effectively map the shifting relations between subgenres, such as the erotic thriller and the police film, within the larger genre of crime film that informs them all.

Thomas Leitch is Professor of English and Director of Film Studies at the University of Delaware. A contributing editor of *Literature/Film Quarterly*, he is the author of *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation* and *The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock*.

GENRES IN AMERICAN CINEMA

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Genres in American Cinema examines the significance of American films in a series of single-authored volumes, each dedicated to a different genre. Each volume will provide a comprehensive account of its genre, from enduring classics to contemporary revisions, from marginal appropriations to international inflections, emphasizing its distinctive qualities as well as its cultural, historical, and critical contexts. Their approach will be methodologically broad, balancing theoretical and historical discussion with close readings of representative films. Designed for use as classroom texts, the books will be intellectually rigorous, yet written in a style that is lively and accessible to students and general audiences alike.

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To Gloria A. Leitch

Thanks, Mom

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