



America Is Elsewhere: The Noir Tradition in the Age of Consumer Culture

By Erik Dussere

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America is Elsewhere provides a rigorous and creative reconsideration of hard-boiled crime fiction and the film noir tradition within three related postwar contexts: 1) the rise of the consumer republic in the United States after World War II 2) the challenge to traditional notions of masculinity posed by a new form of citizenship based in consumption, and 3) the simultaneous creation of "authenticity effects" -- representational strategies designed to safeguard an image of both the American male and America itself outside of and in opposition to the increasingly omnipresent marketplace. Films like *Double Indemnity*, *Ace in the Hole*, and *Kiss Me Deadly* alongside novels by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler provide rich examples for the first half of the study. The second is largely devoted to works less commonly understood in relation to the hard-boiled and noir canon. Examinations of the conspiracy films from the Seventies and Eighties -- like *Klute* and *The Parallax View* -- novels by Thomas Pynchon, Chester Himes and William Gibson reveal the persistence and evolution of these authenticity effects across the second half of the American twentieth century.

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Editorial Review

Review

"In this lucidly written study, Erik Dussere deftly combines a wide-ranging examination of social and political forces with the detailed textual scrutiny of a range of films and novels to produce an original and illuminating discussion of film noir as an oppositional critique of consumer culture. *America Is Elsewhere* not only extends our understanding of film noir, but offers a penetrating analysis of post-war American culture."--Andrew Spicer, coeditor of *A Companion to Film Noir*

"*America Is Elsewhere* provides a rigorous consideration of key texts in hard-boiled and film noir traditions. While other studies have considered these texts in relation to consumption and masculinity, Dussere strikes important new ground by including the crucial and contested postwar concept of authenticity in his examination. The result is a nuanced and creative addition to our study of these works and the period as a whole."--Abigail Cheever, author of *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post-World War II America*

About the Author

Erik Dussere is Associate Professor of Literature at American University. He is the author of *Balancing the Books: Faulkner, Morrison, and the Economies of Slavery*.

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