

CFP: Urban Netherworlds: Noir and Neo-Noir NY and LA in Film (Abstracts 5/15/16)

Discussion published by Cynthia Miller on Monday, April 4, 2016

Call for Contributors

Urban Netherworlds: Noir and Neo-Noir New York and Los Angeles in Film (under contract)

Film noir is one of the most intensely studied cinematic genres, yet Mark Shiel remarks that while numerous studies have helped define the genre in thematic, stylistic, and technical terms, “they have engaged very little with the local geography of film noirs, whether set in Los Angeles, New York, or other cities.” Yet it is hard to think of another genre where the identity of a particular city or neighborhood or even street carries equal diegetic weight.

The symbiotic screen relationship between New York and Los Angeles in noir and neo-noir is reflected in the work of actors such as Robert De Niro, Roy Scheider, Al Pacino, and directors such as William Friedkin, Sidney Lumet, Martin Scorsese, John Cassavettes, and Roman Polanski. Kathryn Bigelow puts Jamie Lee Curtis at risk in New York (*Blue Steel*) and then does the same thing to Angela Bassett in Los Angeles (*Strange Days*). In Brian De Palma’s *Body Double* Melanie Griffith is menaced by a Hollywood killer with a penchant for disguises and power tools; in Jane Campion’s *In the Cut* Meg Ryan is stalked by a murderer who may be a member of the NYPD.

This book will bring together a limited number of essays on the ways in which New York and Los Angeles have been represented, over the last half-century or more, in noir film. What joins these essays is a thematic orientation toward darkness, in atmospheric and architectonic terms, in social and psychological terms, and in terms of experiencing urban life amidst disruptive change, economic dislocation, and real or perceived existential threat.

We are looking for essays of 7,500-9,000 words that fall into the following categories:

- Close readings or re-readings of individual films
- Comparative discussions of two or more films, related by plot, characterization, location, and cinematography
- Discussions of thematic commonalities within several films set in Los Angeles, set in New York, or set in both
- Adaptations from literary sources—novels, plays, memoirs
- Studies of NY- and LA-based films made by non-US directors, e.g., Sergio Leone’s *Once Upon a Time in America*, Wim Wenders’s *The End of Violence* and *The Million Dollar Hotel*

The editors are especially interested in innovative and unusual approaches to films that have become canonical in the scholarship on film noir and, although it is still an emerging field, on neo-noir.

Redefinition of noir and neo-noir New York and Los Angeles, grounded in new critical and theoretical initiatives in the study of these genres, will be given full consideration.

Please send a 500-word abstract and a 100-word bio to both co-editors: James J. Ward (jjward@cedarcrest.edu) and Cynthia J. Miller (cynthia_miller@emerson.edu).

Publication timetable:

May 15, 2016 - Deadline for Abstracts

June 1, 2016 - Notification of Acceptances

October 31, 2016 - Chapter Drafts Due

March 1, 2017 - Chapter Revisions Due

May 15, 2017 - Delivery to Publisher

Acceptance will be contingent upon a contributor's ability to meet these deadlines and to deliver professional-calibre work. Contributors who do not submit their initial drafts by the deadline will be dropped, unless a prior agreement with the editors has been reached.