

Essay on the end of noir

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Whether it is a genre, subgenre or visual style, or if they followed German expressionism and French poetic realism, noir films came about as an outcome of circumstances of political relevance (Hayward 129). Under the shadow of the fore coming World War II, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, many European film makers decided to run away from their homelands and reside mainly to Hollywood (Hayward 129). Naturally, noir films created during the 1940s and 1950s expressed the political crisis of the time and dominant societal ideologies, such as the nuclear family that became “ an absolute political and cultural imperative during the war years” (Blaser). Interestingly enough, noir films extoled women in a very contrasting way that implied misogyny, given that women were presented as very sexual femme-fatales, self-reliant, dominant and expressing their independence in sexual terms; however, they would always pay a heavy price for it at the end of film noir movies, either by death or be taken over the patriarchal system (Hayward 130). Regardless of a noir film’s end, women had a very different role in noir films, compared to what people were used to. Of course, this representation of women came into contrast with classical Hollywood filmmaking too, where the role of woman was rather passive (Hayward 130). In reality, the message of noir films was that when women go past the established behavioral standards, that of belonging and supporting the nuclear family, were to confront major punishment, and the same applied to men that would fall in for those women’s sexual charms (Blaser). In other words, any kind of threat for the nuclear family would be suppressed and precluded.

On the other hand, independent females as demonstrated in noir films of late

1940s were representing the changing society during the War, when women dynamically entered a male dominant field, that of employment (Blaster). As soon as the War ended, though, the political scene changed and so did societal perceptions on many issues. The number of marriages skyrocketed and baby boom was distinctive of the 1950s (Blaster).

Noir film makers, then, opposed to a variety of status quo institutions, like the criminal justice system, and specific values, like that of the family, created noir films that depicted the American public and family ideology (Polan 29). Hollywood film makers were into happy endings in their films, where couples would seal their relationship with the bonds of marriage and they would live happy ever after. Film noir filmmakers, on the other hand, would practically reject that “ happy-ending” notion and even if femme-fatales were replaced by nurturing women that felt safe within a marriage, rather than trying to establish their sexual independence, the males would be offered the chance to marry, such resolution would somehow sound impossible (Blaster). Like Sylvia Harley (1980) mentioned, replacing the element of romance that is linked with the stable institution of family, with noir films’ denial of marriage, then noir films are “ structured around the destruction or absence of romantic love and the family” (25). The same applies to the rest of noir films themes, where institutions important to communities, like the criminal justice system and law enforcement, are showcased as fraudulent and corrupted. It becomes evident that noir films were opposed to prevailing societal concepts and given that the majority of people want to see films aligned by their models and values, noir films became rather faded visions of the distant past. In other words, people are

not interested in watching films that contrast to their principles or right and valued.

Works Cited:

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