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When Baltimore resident Kevin Johnson started selling books in 1997, he didn't think he would be publishing his own books before too long. But as a specialist in crime fiction, at Royal Books, Inc., he soon became aware of how many obscure crime books had become the basis for well-known movies in the film noir tradition. He also noticed that a lot of noir movies had "not just obscure crime fiction sources, but an interesting array of literary sources, as well, like Hemingway and Maugham." One evening, at a party ("I don't like parties, so I always talk to one person, or read a book"), Johnson picked up an art monograph showing vintage cereal boxes (*Krazy Kids' Food*, by Steve Roden and Dan Goodsell). "I loved how the book was so specific, yet had a huge variety of stuff—all the crazy one-off boxes the cereal makers had tried," he recalled. "I had been thinking about doing a bibliography of film noir's literary sources, but I knew that would be pretty dry. After seeing the cereal box book, I started thinking it would be cool to show big pictures of the dust jackets, because they're such an important part of these books."

He pitched the idea to Bob Fleck of Oak Knoll Books, and despite it being something of a departure for Oak

Reading in the

Welcome to *The Dark Page II*, the second volume in a series that began with *The Dark Page* in 2007. This is a book about books, a book about American film noir, and a book about the novelists, screenwriters, and directors that make up the fascinating and rarely-discussed relationship between the two.

Every title you see in the pages that follow has been documented for the same reason—it was the basis for a film in the American film noir cycle between 1950 and 1965.

Film noir has been the subject of much scholarship since the 1940s, beginning in France and moving later to the United States, and has a well-established critical history that is unknown to the average filmgoer. The collision of this scholarship with the huge popularity of noir films has resulted in some major misconceptions.

The first and most common misconception is that film noir is a genre, when it is in fact a style. The noir thread runs through virtually every genre, including Westerns, melodramas, science fiction, crime, and horror. The 1956 sci-fi classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a film noir, as is the 1948 Western, *Blood on the Moon*.

The second most common misconception is that a film noir always involves detectives or a crime. While these elements are commonly found in noir films, they do not define the style, nor does the style require their inclusion. Noir protagonists run the gamut from housewives to bankers to journalists, and while a criminal element is typically somewhere to be found, it is often subtle, tangential to the story, or even altogether absent.

The third most common misconception is that film noir is meant to be a broad term, covering everything from a film like *The Maltese Falcon* to Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* to the Coen Brothers' *The Man Who Wasn't There*. The film noir cycle, by critical consensus, did not begin until 1940, and depending on who you ask, ended somewhere between 1959 and 1965. Key crime films before 1940, such as *Little Caesar* or *Beast of the City*, are considered noir antecedents, with the distinction being that all the elements of noir had not yet come together. Films after 1965 are considered post-noir or neo-noir, and that dividing line is based on the point at which noir films became "self-aware." In other words, once filmmakers were consciously making films in the noir style, the original cycle had effectively come to an end.

The noir style is defined as a combination of several elements that came together in American film beginning in 1940. Speaking generally, three of those elements are (1) the arrival of German directors and cinematographers in Hollywood during both World Wars, who brought with them the expressionistic style of German films of the 1920s and 1930s, (2) a cultural malaise in America, resulting from both World Wars, that brought about a more cynical outlook and a strong response to darker themes, motivations, and story lines in films, (3) Hollywood's adoption of the "hard-boiled" school of storytelling, which had existed in print since the early 1920s, but did not reach full realization on the screen until 1940. There are other factors as well, such as the rigidly structured Hollywood studio sys-

Knoll, Fleck decided to give film noir a try. So Johnson joined forces with fellow bookseller and photographer Dan Gregory, of *Between the Covers*, and designer John Malloy, and together they produced a volume called *The Dark Page: Books That Inspired American Film Noir, 1940–1949*. The first volume quickly sold out, and now Johnson's second volume, covering the 1950s, will be released by Oak Knoll next month.

Johnson says he still hasn't mined all of the possibilities. "I've got an idea for the third one—the last great era of crime cinema, 1965 to 1975." As he rightly says, "a whole bunch of amazing movies were made during that time"—*Bullitt*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *The French Connection*, *Madigan*, *Dirty Harry*—a proud lineup that ended with the summer blockbuster success of *Jaws*. Johnson estimates that 65 percent of these movies had literary sources. And as he says, "Hollywood didn't yet have a vigorous system of vetting screenplays during this period, so all kinds of things got made."

With regard to film, Johnson calls himself "an enthusiast more than a scholar," and in that spirit he easily persuaded two fellow noir enthusiasts, film directors Paul Schrader and Guy Maddin, to write forewords to volumes one and two of *The Dark Page*. Following is an excerpt from volume two, in which Johnson discusses six books that took part in the great tradition of film noir.—Editor

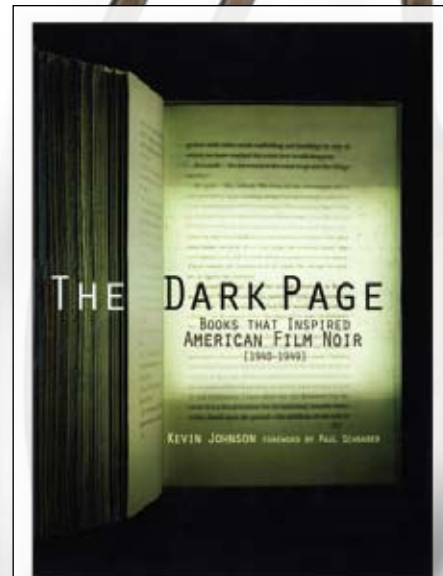
Dark

tem, which accommodated the aforementioned elements and caused the noir style to flourish once it became popular with audiences.

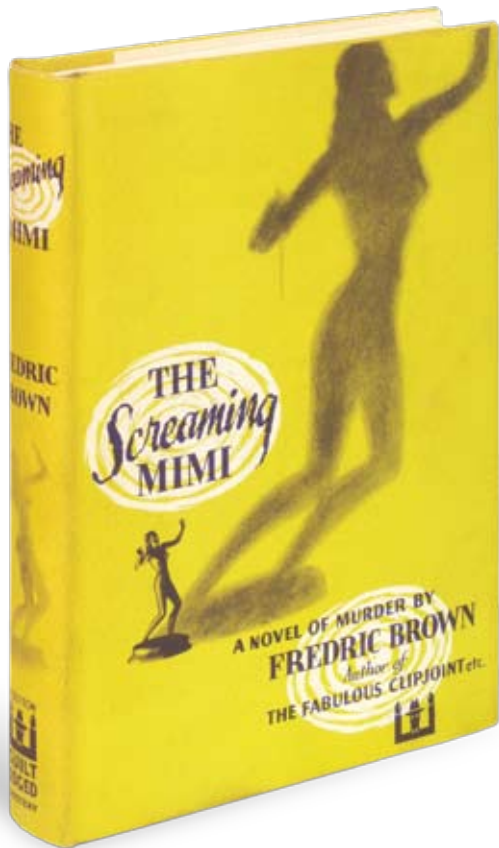
The Dark Page II is built on a foundation of existing scholarship on film noir, but is meant only to be an in-depth study of the book sources themselves. The two best pieces I can recommend with regard to a more comprehensive definition of film noir are by Paul Schrader and David Spicer. Schrader's seminal 1971 essay, "Notes on Film Noir," which has remained completely relevant and undated over the past thirty-five years, can be found in *Film Noir Reader*, edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini and published by Limelight Editions in 1996. David Spicer's book simply titled *Film Noir*, published by Longmans in 2002, is the most straightforward and thorough primer on the subject I have encountered, with detailed discussions of everything from the expressionist origins of the noir style to the role of the Hollywood system in its development.

The books represented in *The Dark Page II* came from many sources, including major institutions, personal libraries, and the photographic archives of rare booksellers. My goal is to reproduce with complete accuracy the first edition of the book described in each entry, with extreme attention to detail regarding color, size, and texture. Most of the books you see in the pages that follow are actual photographs of a given book. In the case of a few extremely rare books, however, the book and jacket have been carefully reconstructed from parts that exist in different collections, often located in different parts of the world.

Kevin Johnson
Royal Books, Inc.
Baltimore, Maryland



A Sneak Preview
 from Kevin Johnson's
 Film Noir Opus,
The Dark Page, Vol. II



The Screaming Mimi

Fredric Brown

PUBLISHER: New York: Dutton, 1949

Born in 1906 in Cincinnati, Fredric Brown was an American author of science fiction and crime fiction. Though he wrote several well-received novels in both genres, Brown is best remembered for his sense of humor, his alcoholic protagonists, and his unquestioned mastery of the short story form. Brown has traditionally been cast as a “writer’s writer,” more esteemed by fellow practitioners than the general public—he was one of the dedicatees of Robert A. Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land*, was singled out as an exceptional writer by Ayn Rand in her book, *The Romantic Manifesto*, praised by Philip K. Dick, and called “my favorite writer of all time” by Mickey Spillane.

Yellow cloth with the Dutton Guilt-Edged Mystery logo in reverse against a panel of dark blue at the bottom right corner of the front board. Guilt-Edged mystery logo, title, publisher’s name, and rule in dark blue on the spine, with title in reverse. No topstain. Title page shows a date of 1949, with “FIRST EDITION” stated on the copyright page. Front flap shows a price of \$2.50 at the bottom right corner, along with a plot summary. Rear flap is an advertisement for *The Bloody Moonlight* by Fredric Brown, ending with the publisher’s name and address. Rear panel begins with a photo of the Edgar award at the top left, with a note about Fredric Brown having been given the award at the right, ending with notices for four books by the author.

Screaming Mimi

Gerd Oswald

PRODUCER: Harry Joe Brown,
Robert Fellows

SCREENWRITER: Robert Blees

CINEMATOGRAPHER: Burnett
Guffey

COMPOSER: Mischa Bakaleinikoff

CAST: Anita Ekberg, Philip Carey,
Gypsy Rose Lee, Harry Townes,
Linda Cherney, Romney Brent

STUDIO: Columbia, 1958

RUNTIME: 79 minutes

While the Victorian interiors do not exactly make one think of San Francisco, location shooting in both that city and nearby private beaches brings an appropriately opaque atmosphere to *Screaming Mimi*. Unique too are the thoroughly modern, spaced-out sounds of the Red Norvo Quartet (billed as the Red Norvo Trio, though there are indeed four men performing), and Gypsy Rose Lee doing what she does best—running a nightclub called El Madhouse and singing “Put the Blame on Mame.”

Midway through the film, the patient viewer will be thoroughly involved in an effective and slightly perverse rendering of Fredric Brown’s trademark dream narrative. That narrative is brought to life nicely by Burnett Guffey’s creative visuals, Harry Townes’ turn as a the scummiest of personal managers, a serial killer on the loose, and an oddly effective Anita Ekberg, who spends the entire film in a state of semi-dissociation. It somehow makes sense that Ekberg, on her way to the surreal world of Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* and *Boccaccio '70*, would intersect here with the redoubtable Gerd Oswald, who was on his way to television to direct episodes of *The Outer Limits* and *Star Trek*. Combined with the superior source material, the results were memorable, making this one of the best Columbia “B” noirs of the 1950s.

Remade as an Italian *giallo* film by maverick Italian horror director Dario Argento in 1970 as *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with Crystal Plumage*).



The Furies

Niven Busch

PUBLISHER: New York: Dial Press, 1948

Niven Busch had a long and successful career both as a novelist and a screenwriter, and is credited with having spawned “the psychological western” with novels like *Duel in the Sun* and *The Furies*, as well as original screenplays such as the noir western, *Pursued*. In a 1983 interview with David Thomson, Busch remarked, “My objective was to make the people real and to give them three dimensions in terms of modern culture. People in westerns weren’t often like that. And maybe some of my characters are more modern in psychological terms than people of that period really were. Certainly their actions were self-revealing. But the Freudian element is one we impose, like a surface coating. It was not my intention. It came from the eyes of the viewers. Now, of course, let’s face it; I’d had some psychoanalysis—not a huge amount, but some. So I may have been influenced; I don’t know. Really and truly, if you look at any of the masterpieces of literature, not that I’m putting myself in that class, there’s a Freudian level. You could say that Shakespeare and Dostoevsky prefigure Freud and Wagner—even Balzac and Stendhal. So if I’m accused of initiating a Freudian picture...it’s a good label, but it wasn’t intentional.” (McGilligan, *Backstory 1*)

Gray cloth with red titles on the front board and spine, matching red topstain. Matching dates of 1948 are present on the title page and copyright page. Front flap shows a price of \$3.00 at the top right corner, followed by a plot summary that continues to the end of the rear flap. Rear panel contains an author biography, with a photo of the author at the top right.

The Furies

Anthony Mann

PRODUCER: Hal Wallis

SCREENWRITER: Charles Schnee

CINEMATOGRAPHER:

Victor Milner

COMPOSER: Franz Waxman

CAST: Barbara Stanwyck,

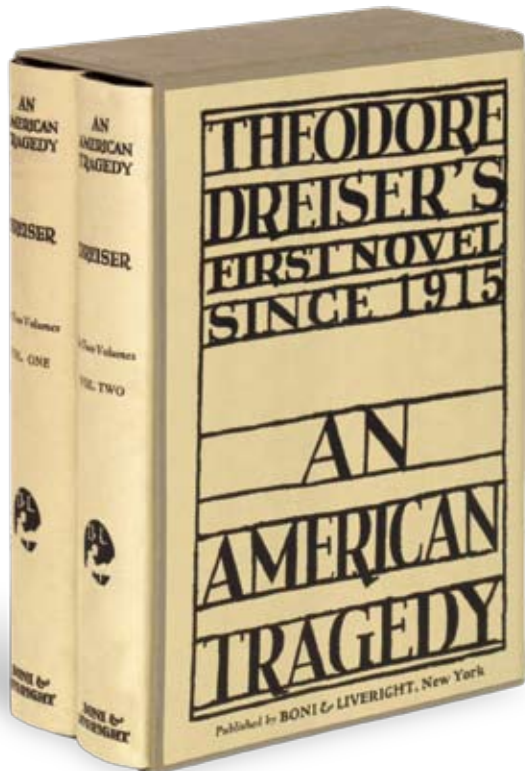
Wendell Corey, Walter Huston,
Judith Anderson, Gilbert Roland,
Thomas Gomez, Beulah Bondi,
Albert Dekker, John Bromfield,
Wallace Ford, Blanche Yurka,
Louis Jean Heydt,
Frank Ferguson, Charles Evans,
Movita Casteneda, Craig Kelly,
Myrna Dell

STUDIO: Paramount, 1950

RUNTIME: 109 minutes

Beginning in 1950, Anthony Mann made a shift from crime thrillers and urban settings to Westerns. John Ford and Howard Hawks had brought new sensibilities to the genre, but it was Mann that would use the precedents set by films like *Red River* and *My Darling Clementine* as a foundation for something new. By infusing the characters and archetypes associated with the genre with the psychological complexity of film noir, the director paved the way for a new era. *Winchester '73*, *Devil's Doorway*, and *The Furies*, all made in 1950, would be the first films of a cycle with a style so profound that even John Ford would sit up and take note.

Among these films, particularly in terms of characterizations, *The Furies* is pure noir. Fate, madness, and hunger for power and money are its primary concerns. Much of the action takes place at night, and a noirish duality is set up between pairs of characters. All the devices the director learned in his 1940s films are brought to bear—depth of field, shadowed lighting, menacing and overpowering interiors, bizarre camera angles, diffusions, and silhouettes. With *The Furies*, Mann made a mark in the sand, and cinematographer Victor Milner earned an Oscar for his work on the film. (Basinger)



An American Tragedy

Theodore Dreiser

Publisher: New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925

Born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1871, Theodore Dreiser was an American novelist and journalist. He pioneered the naturalist school and is known for portraying characters whose value lies not in their moral code, but in their persistence against all obstacles, and literary situations that more closely resemble studies of nature than tales of choice or agency. (Van Doren)

Haycraft Queen cornerstone.

Two volumes housed in a publisher's slipcase, identical except where noted. Black cloth with gilt titles on the spine, and "Vol. 1" in gilt ("Vol. 2" on the second volume) just below the publisher's name at the heel. Boni & Liveright logo on the spine in blind, just above the publisher's name. Author's initials at the center of the front board, in a monogram style. No topstain. Date of MCMXXV on the title page, with no statement of edition or later printings on the copyright page. Front flap indicates price as "2 Vols. \$5.00" at the top right corner of the front flap, followed by a plot summary that continues to the end of the rear flap. Rear panel begins with a one-paragraph quote by H.L. Mencken about Dreiser, beginning with "He stands alone..." followed by a woodcut illustration of Dreiser, signed "SLH," then a two-column list of Dreiser's other books, beginning with *An American Tragedy*, with seven titles in each column. Publisher's slipcase is thick gray card stock, a bit too small for the two books, with a paper label on the front panel only, replicating the front panel of the book jacket exactly, except for the added line at the bottom that reads, "Published by Boni & Liveright, New York."

A Place in the Sun

George Stevens

PRODUCER: Ivan Moffat,
George Stevens

SCREENWRITERS:
Michael Wilson, Harry Brown

CINEMATOGRAPHER:
William C. Mellor

COMPOSER: Franz Waxman

CAST: Montgomery Clift,
Elizabeth Taylor, Shelley
Winters, Anne Revere,
Raymond Burr

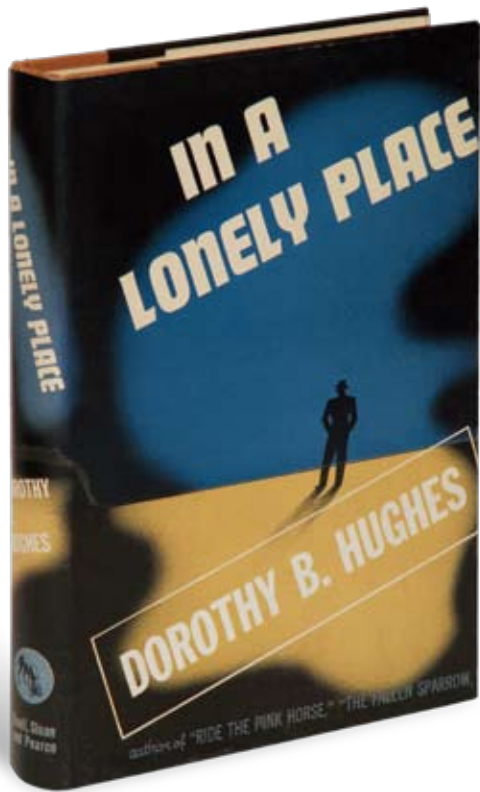
STUDIO: Paramount, 1951

ALTERNATE TITLES: The Lovers
(working title)

RUNTIME: 122 minutes

Director George Stevens: "I had read Dreiser's novel as a young man and was quite impressed with the hazards of the protagonist, and wanted very much to make a film of it. The [public] wasn't crying out for Marxist-Leninism in 1946 like it might have been in 1912 or 1922, but we thought the story was valid and that it could be updated to the present era with some reasonable editing, and relate perfectly to what was going on in 1946. Paramount had title to the book, but they didn't want the film. They said they had already made it years before (as *An American Tragedy* in 1931), and it had been a failure. It was obvious to me that they hadn't made the first film properly. It had been produced at a time when they weren't prepared to undertake a story of that character and consequence. They had done some cut-out episodes from the story, like you do in a funny paper, with none of the nuances or subtlety of the novel.

"[We finally won approval, though, and moved ahead] to make the film with real excitement. We [did] it very carefully, [and] in many ways it was designed with a form similar to a symphony, with its moods, interludes, and alternate changes of pace. It had real bravura, with naturalist episodes in between." (Hughes)



In a Lonely Place

Dorothy B. Hughes

Publisher: New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1947

In a Lonely Place was the last of eleven novels author Dorothy B. Hughes wrote in the prolific first seven years of her career, and is generally considered to be her finest work. She continued to write after 1947, and completed three more novels and numerous book reviews between 1950 and 1979, but directed her attention primarily to family matters during that time.

While Hughes spent most of her adult life in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and set many of her novels there, *In a Lonely Place* is set in Los Angeles—specifically Hollywood—and is today thought to be one of the great “Hollywood novels,” evidence of the author’s extraordinary range. In interviews, Hughes has acknowledged the influence of Eric Ambler, Graham Greene, and William Faulkner in her work, but always brings a feminine brand of moral depth to her characters and situations while maintaining a distinctive hard-boiled style. Haycraft Queen cornerstone.

Black pebbled cloth-covered boards quarter-bound in tan cloth, with black titles and publisher’s device on the spine. No topstain. No statement of edition or later printings on the copyright page. Front flap shows a price of \$2.50 at the top right corner, followed by a plot summary, ending with the publisher’s name and address. Rear flap contains three reviews, the publisher’s name and address, and a diagonally set proof-of-purchase label at the bottom left corner. Rear panel begins with a photo of the author, followed by short biography, ending with the publisher’s name and address.

In a Lonely Place

Nicholas Ray

PRODUCER: Henry S. Kesler,
Robert Lord

SCREENWRITER: Andrew Solt,
Edmund H. North

CINEMATOGRAPHER:
Burnett Guffey

COMPOSER: George Antheil

CAST: Humphrey Bogart,
Gloria Grahame, Frank Lovejoy,
Carl Benton Reid, Robert Warwick,
Art Smith, Jeff Donnell,
Martha Stewart, Morris Ankrum,
William Ching, Steven Geray,
Hadda Brooks

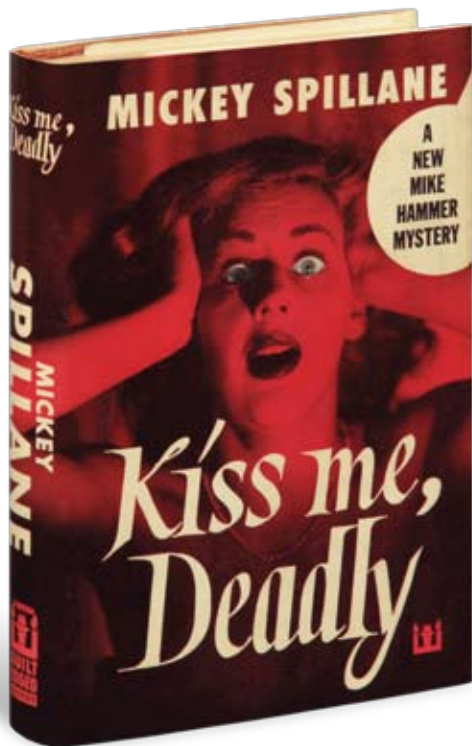
STUDIO: Columbia, 1950

ALTERNATE TITLES: Late at Night
(working title)

RUNTIME: 94 minutes

Humphrey Bogart’s production company, Santana, after completion of its first project with director Nicholas Ray (*Knock on Any Door*), surprised RKO by wanting to exercise its option to use the director once more. So while the production circumstances were the same, the adaptation of Dorothy B. Hughes’ *In a Lonely Place* was to be as enigmatic as *Knock on Any Door* was explicit.

In a Lonely Place explores many facets of its title, borrowed by the book’s author from a poem by J.M. Synge. It is a portrait of Hollywood seen through the lens of a single player, an eternally slighted character whose dislocation begins to take on a life of its own. In the film we never see a sound stage, but the central character is an aging scriptwriter, tacitly blacklisted by producers as an alcoholic with a taste for brawling. The film’s style ultimately surfaces somewhere closer to Nathanael West or F. Scott Fitzgerald than to hard-boiled crime fiction, and though the hard-boiled element is there, the non-crime elements stand as a testament to the breadth of the *noir* style present in the films of the 1940s and 1950s. (Eisenschitz)



Kiss Me, Deadly

Mickey Spillane

Publisher: New York: E.P. Dutton, 1952

By the time the seventh Mike Hammer novel, *Kiss Me, Deadly*, was published, Mickey Spillane's management was a busy and relentlessly effective marketing force. Not only were the author's books selling by the millions all over the world both in hardcover and paperback, but Hollywood was subject to the author's demands. An internal memo from United Artists during post-production read: "Mickey Spillane's name must be above the title and in the same type style as appears on the *Kiss Me Deadly* book jacket." Spillane could not control alteration of content, however, as Robert Aldrich's radical film adaptation would prove.

Pink-red cloth with titles, design, and rule in blind against a silver panel on the spine. No topstain. "FIRST EDITION" stated on the copyright page. Front flap shows a price of \$2.50 at the bottom right corner, along with a "note" from Spillane's series character Mike Hammer. Rear flap is an advertisement for a new reprint of Spillane's first book, *I, the Jury*. Rear panel begins with a photo of Spillane in the woods, crouched in a squatting position, and aiming a gun, followed by a blurb regarding the author's previous work.

There are two variants of the jacket, with no known priority. Variant A, shown here, has a white circular framing device at the top right corner of the front panel. Variant B has a triangular framing device (see *Appendix A: Secondary Book Sources*).

Kiss Me Deadly

Robert Aldrich

PRODUCER: Robert Aldrich,
Victor Saville

SCREENWRITER: A.I. Bezzerides

CINEMATOGRAPHER:
Ernest Laszlo

CAST: Ralph Meeker,
Albert Dekker, Paul Stewart,
Maxine Cooper, Gaby Rodgers,
Nick Dennis, Cloris Leachman,
Jack Lambert, Jack Elam,
Juano Hernandez, Wesley Addy,
Marian Carr

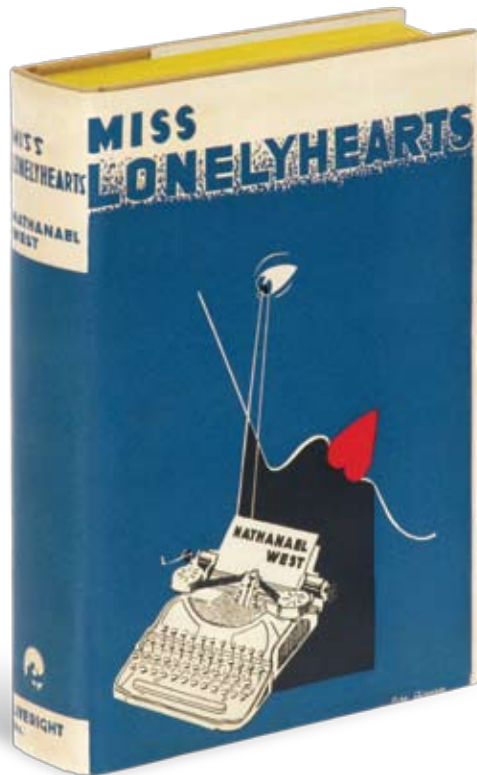
STUDIO: United Artists, 1955

ALTERNATE TITLES: Mickey
Spillane's Kiss Me Deadly

RUNTIME: 105 minutes

Shot in twenty-two days, *Kiss Me Deadly* may be the most influential film noir produced in the 1950s. Beginning with a woman dressed only in a raincoat and high heels running in panic down a dark road, and ending with a nuclear explosion in a Malibu beach house, the film is cited time and again by directors both in the US and abroad—particularly France—as a strong stylistic influence. The detached, almost surreal portrayal of Ralph Meeker's Mike Hammer was an altogether new approach to the "private detective," and the film's daring visual style was finding imitators overseas within a year. In many ways the film marked the end of the traditional detective story.

Director Robert Aldrich has claimed that he and scriptwriter A.I. Bezzerides used nothing from Spillane's source material but the title, but this is somewhat untrue. It would be more accurate to say that the plot was used, but that the content and themes were altered wildly. Aldrich: "The scriptwriter, A.I. Bezzerides, did a marvelous job. That devilish box, for example—an obvious atom bomb symbol—was mostly his idea. To achieve the ticking and hissing sound that's heard every time the box [was] opened we used the sound of airplane exhaust overdubbed with the sound made by human vocal chords when someone breathes out noisily." (Greenberg)



Miss Lonelyhearts

Nathanael West

Publisher: New York: Liveright, 1933

Born on the Upper West Side of New York City, Nathanael West was an American author and screenwriter. Although he had been working on his writing since college, it was not until his quiet night job at a hotel that he found the time to put his first novel together. It was at this time that West wrote what would eventually become *Miss Lonelyhearts*. In 1931, however, two years before he completed *Miss Lonelyhearts*, West published *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, a novel he had conceived of in college. By this time, West was working within a group of writers in and around New York that included William Carlos Williams and Dashiell Hammett.

In 1933 West bought a farm in eastern Pennsylvania but soon got a job as a contract scriptwriter for Columbia Pictures and moved to Hollywood. He published a third novel, *A Cool Million*, in 1934. None of his three books sold well, however, so he spent the mid-1930s in financial difficulty, sporadically collaborating on screenplays. Many of the films he worked on were “B” movies, such as *Five Came Back* (1939). It was at this time that West wrote *The Day of the Locust*, taking many of the settings and minor characters of the novel directly from his experience living in a hotel on Hollywood Boulevard.

Brown cloth with titles and rule in silver on the spine against a black panel, publisher's name in silver at the heel with no panel. Yellow topstain. No statement of edition or later printings on the copyright page. Front flap shows a price of \$2.00 at the top right corner, followed by a plot summary. Rear flap is an advertisement for *Light Again* by Blair Niles, ending with a price of \$2.00 at the bottom right corner. Rear flap shows a “faked” facsimile of three letters (each laid on top of the one before it) addressed to the book's title character.

Lonelyhearts

Vincent J. Donehue

PRODUCER: Walter Reilly,
Dore Schary

SCREENWRITER: Dore Schary

CINEMATOGRAPHER: John Alton

COMPOSER: Conrad Salinger

CAST: Montgomery Clift, Robert Ryan,
Myrna Loy, Dolores Hart,
Maureen Stapleton, Jackie Coogan

STUDIO: United Artists, 1958

ALTERNATE TITLES:

Miss Lonelyhearts

RUNTIME: 100 minutes

Nathanael West's novel *Miss Lonelyhearts* was first adapted for the screen in 1933 as *Advice to the Lovelorn*, starring Lee Tracy. This first adaptation used little of the novel's content but took advantage of the topic as the basis for a film comedy. In 1957 the novel was adapted into a stage play entitled *Miss Lonelyhearts* by Howard Teichmann. It opened on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre on October 3, 1957, but ran for only twelve performances.

Lonelyhearts marked the first independent production effort for Dore Schary after his departure as the head of production at MGM, and Schary was determined to produce the first serious film translation of West's masterpiece. The result was stark and faithful, if not as impossibly bleak as the book itself; still, one of Montgomery Clift's great unsung performances and an excellent example of the breadth of the noir style.