

Excerpt from *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*

The popularization of Freudian psychoanalysis was already well underway in America before 1940, and by that time had already infiltrated a variety of Hollywood genres. However, during the early years of World War Two there was a notable intensification of Hollywood's interest in and use of psychoanalysis. It is in the thrillers of the 1940's that Hollywood's appropriation of Freud found a particularly comfortable niche. For many of the crime films of the period betray an interest in the "personalization" of crime, rather than framing criminal activity as of either a "social problem" or the product of organized gangs. This fascination with internal, subjectively-generated criminal impulses has widely been recognized as a crucial characteristic of the 1940s *film noir*. The incorporation of a psychoanalytic frame of reference served both to explicate and contextualize a growing interest in the excesses provoked through "psychical disturbance". It furthermore proved a useful means of circumventing some of the institutionalized restrictions of the Hays Code form of censorship, enabling a more elliptical and displaced mode of representation which could be "de-coded" by audiences familiar with popularized psychoanalysis.

This popularized "Freudianism" did not in itself cause the various shifts within the crime films of the 1940s, but rather it was coopted into a more general transmutation of stylistic and generic parameters marking Hollywood productions of the wartime and postwar periods

**Source: Krutnick, Frank, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*
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