

Proposal for Term Paper

The tentative title of the term paper will be: *Sigmund Freud and Film Noir: A Marriage Made in Movies*

Thesis: Film historian Frank Krutnick writes,

“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. ... 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.”¹

Krutnick is correct. The plots in *film noir* are directly influenced by the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud and therefore can be understood through the application of the Freudian psychoanalytic model.

To prove this thesis, this paper will demonstrate how Freudian psychoanalytical theory fits in the plots of three works of the *film noir* genre.

Tentative outline

1. A brief discussion of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis.
2. A brief discussion on the movie industry’s decision to incorporate Freudian psychoanalytic theory into *film noir* plots.
3. Discussion of three *film noir* movies (none of which are included in the class syllabus)
 - A detailed abstract of the plot of each movie followed by
 - An interpretation of each plot using Freudian psychoanalytic theory.
4. Conclusion.
 - Political, social, and psychological implications of incorporating Freudian psychoanalytic theory into movies.
 - The degree to which Freud should be credited as one of the contributors to *film noir*.
 - The role of psychoanalytic theory in *film noir* as a function of art.

Tentative Bibliography

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¹ Krutnick, Frank, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (Routledge: New York), 1991, page xii

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Films

Body and Soul (1947), dir. Robert Rossen; United Artists; cast: John Garfield, Lilli Palmer, Anne Revere, Joseph Pevney

The Red House (1947), dir. Delmar Daves; United Artists; cast: Edward G. Robinson, Lon McAllister, Allene Roberts, Judith Anderson

***The Third Man* (1949), dir. Carol Reed; British Lion Films; cast: Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, Trevor Howard, Orson Welles**