



# Versions of Hollywood Crime Cinema: Studies in Ford, Wilder, Coppola, Scorsese, and Others

*Carl Freedman*

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No society is without crime, prompting Nathaniel Hawthorne's narrator to make his famous statement in *The Scarlet Letter* that, however high its hopes are, no civilization can fail to allot a portion of its soil as the site of a prison. By establishing the category of crime - by drawing a line between the lawful and criminal, however thin, blurry, or even effectively meaningless the line may in practice become - society offers its own perhaps most consequential self-definition. Film, argues Carl Freedman, is an especially fruitful medium for considering questions like these. With *Versions of Hollywood Crime Cinema*, he offers a series of critical readings spanning several genres, by directors Coppola, Scorsese, Ford, Wilder. From among the mob movies, Freedman focuses on Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy - arguably the foremost work of crime cinema - using it to reflect on the Marxist notion of primitive accumulation and relationship between "gangsterism and capitalism". The volume also includes in-depth critique of classics of film noir (including *Double Indemnity* and *Body Heat*) and, surprisingly, Western, which is not often thought of as a kind of crime film even though its setting is an entire society in which crime flourishes yet is fought against, bringing into focus films of John Wayne. For crime fans and scholars alike, the radical readings of known classics in *Versions of Hollywood Crime Cinema* provide an insightful critique of modern culture and high capitalism that produced, and that are reflected in, the range of films discussed.

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