



Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s: The Killer Inside Me / The Talented Mr. Ripley / Pick-up / Down There / The Real Cool Killers (Library of America) (Vol 2)

*By Jim Thompson, Robert Polito, Patricia Highsmith, Charles Willeford,
David Goodis, Chester Himes*

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This adventurous two-volume collection presents a rich vein of modern American writing too often neglected in mainstream literary histories. Evolving out of the terse and violent hardboiled style of the pulp magazines, noir fiction expanded over the decades into a varied and innovative body of writing. Tapping deep roots in the American literary imagination, the novels in this volume explore themes of crime, guilt, deception, obsessive passion, murder, and the disintegrating psyche. With visionary and often subversive force they create a dark and violent mythology out of the most commonplace elements of modern life. The raw power of their vernacular style has profoundly influenced contemporary American culture and writing.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The best American crime novels deserve their place in the pantheon of American literature, but they hold special interest for cinema enthusiasts, who can both compare them to the movies they became and can roll imaginary films of the stories in their minds. *Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s* is the second of Library of America's two-volume anthology of underground U.S. fiction. The first anthology featured works from the 1930s and '40s that had been made into classic films noir. This volume focuses on fiction written after the crime genre had acquired conventions that younger writers toyed with and sometimes broke. The movies made from such stories were equally radical.

Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is the source for René Clément's bristling *Purple Noon*, a movie that features Alain Delon's quintessential performance. David Goodis's *Down There* inspired François Truffaut's neo-noir masterpiece *Shoot the Piano Player*. Jim Thompson, the brilliant author who scripted *The Killing* and *Paths of Glory* for Stanley Kubrick, wrote several novels that have been turned into movies, including *The Grifters* and *The Getaway*. He is represented here by one of his most uncompromising works, *The Killer Inside Me*, which was filmed by Burt Kennedy in 1976. Charles Willeford's *Pick-Up* and Chester Himes's *The Real Cool Killers* have not yet been made into movies, but the blistering prose and nihilistic worlds of these authors, and of all the writers represented in this volume, is astonishingly cinematic. This lovely hardcover edition contains biographical, textual, and explanatory notes.

From Library Journal

The Library of America gave a tremendous boost to the reputation of hard-boiled detective fiction with the inclusion of Raymond Chandler among its illustrious ranks (Classic Returns, LJ 9/15/95). This new two-volume set is another giant step in the direction of legitimacy for the pulp mystery genre. This duo collect 11 of the best crime novels in which the criminal rather than the sleuth is the central character. Included here are such gems as James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Cornell Woolrich's *I Married a Dead Man*, Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me*, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and Chester Himes's *The Real Cool Killers*. These tales of murder and mayhem belong in all fiction collections.

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Review

These novels, nearly 2,000 pages in length, beautifully bound and arranged--often following rare first-edition design blueprints--contain some of the best crime writing of the genre's golden decades. They should give much pleasure to lovers of film noir and readers addicted to original and eclectic writing. And for cineastes, *Pick-up* and *The Real Cool Killers*, alone among these novels, have yet to be made into films noir. So you'll have to read the books first. -- *Los Angeles Times Sunday Book Review*, Nicholas Christopher

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