and makes this collection indispensable for anyone engaged in the study of comics and graphic novels.

The collection begins with Frans Masereel’s *The Passion of a Man* (1919), a powerful narrative composed of just twenty-five woodcuts that tells the story of one man’s alienation from the capitalist society in which he lives. Lynd Ward’s *Wild Pilgrimage* (1932) deftly explores issues of race and class through the innovative juxtaposition of wood engravings printed in black and white to signify the main narrative with wood engravings in brown and white to signify the dream narrative. The book ends with the only text produced after the Second World War: Laurence Hyde’s *Southern Cross* (1951), a scathing critique of the U.S. government for its testing of hydrogen bombs on Bikini Atoll. Each of these texts is an excellent example of the wordless novel and its potential to provoke critical thought in its audiences.

Among these important texts, the standout is Giacomo Patri’s *White Collar* (1938), a narrative told in one hundred and twenty linocuts documenting the 1929 stock market crash and subsequent events. As Walker notes, *White Collar* “was first used as a promotional piece by the labor movement to show how white-collar workers were as much in danger of unfair labor practices as the so-called blue-collar workers” (27). *White Collar* took Patri three years to produce and was the only sequential narrative of his career. It is a stunning piece of work and one of the finest examples of what sequential art is capable of conveying. This text, along with the others in this volume, deserves wider recognition and further study.

In bringing these texts together in a beautifully presented and affordable volume, *Graphic Witness* has not only done a great service to anyone interested in sequential art, print-making, and book art, but to anyone interested in ways to approach social-justice issues and cultural critique.

DALE JACOBS

*University of Windsor*


When this volume arrived in my mailbox, my immediate reaction was: wow! A giant coffee-table book on a topic that desperately needs
documentation and commentary, addressing an area of film history that exerts an ever-greater appeal as the years go by and a subject I myself am very interested in, and, in addition, containing 162 pagesized colour photographs of first editions of the books themselves, most with original dust-jackets. After a thorough perusal of the book, however, my enthusiasm is somewhat less wholehearted.

From a film-studies viewpoint, and probably from a literary studies viewpoint also, the question of the literary — in this case mostly novelistic — sources underlying the screenplays for Hollywood film noir in the 1940s and 50s is a scandalously neglected area of scholarship. Most of the novels serving as the basis for the noir films of the era are victims of the periodization of scholarly activity. Writers such as Cornell Woolrich, David Goodis, and Jim Thompson were far too trashy for literary scholars of their time, and later generations have not interested themselves in the subject, even though equivalent contemporary phenomena from Harlequin romances to Batman movies have been seized on with avidity. More substantial writers who turned to crime subjects, like James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Dorothy B. Hughes, have received slightly more attention, but none of these were trying to write the Great American Novel, so they too tended to rate low. Even today it is sometimes difficult to find the work of any of these writers in university libraries. On the other hand, since the 1970s, and with continuing energy and voluminous output up to the present moment, cinema scholarship has become fascinated with film noir. Most of these scholars have been without the means or the serious inclination to engage in a wholesale examination of the literary sources, even though many of them have acknowledged that there is a large and important literary base for the stories that appeared on screen. So when a book subtitled Books that Inspired American Film Noir appeared, it was only natural to feel some excitement.

But it turns out that The Dark Page is not very interested in any detailed consideration of its subject other than the most literal-minded one. We are given all those pictures of the books, together with a detailed physical description of and information about each specific book photographed — and I imagine that booksellers and collectors will be quite entranced by this alone. But as for the organizing idea behind the literature, the cinema, or the relation between them, the pickings are very slim. In his introduction, Kevin Johnson lays out a definition of film noir. This is always a dangerous business, as noir scholars and the surprisingly large population of almost Trekkie-like noir devotees have been conducting furious debates on the subject
ever since the early 1970s, and their intricacies and passions approach those of medieval theological argument. So when Johnson states flatly, “the first and most common misconception is that film noir is a genre, when it is in fact a style” (x), alarm bells ring. This statement is akin to saying that Certs are a breath-mint, not a candy-mint, when everybody who saw that ad twenty-five years ago knows that they are both. Or, less facetiously, that light is waves and not particles, when everybody knows that it depends on how you look at it. Sadly, this posture of knowledge without much substructure is symptomatic of the little critical work behind this book.

Several key decisions about what to include and what not to include appear arbitrary. That is always a potential problem, and it besets even the small handful of noir dictionaries and encyclopedias that Johnson has relied on. What is missing here is any defence of the decisions. Take the temporal parameters, from 1940 to 1949, for example. The whole subject of the book is first-wave film noir, not any subsequent waves, which started arriving about fifteen years after the petering out of the original one around 1955. But of all the first-generation date brackets in currency, the most easily defensible is 1944 to 1956 (followed by 1941 to 1958) – nobody wants to confine it to the 1940s. Again, the decision to restrict the field like this might be defended in a variety of ways, but no rationale is offered. The inclusion of hoary old classics like *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Aspern Papers* (1888) on the grounds that they inspired noir films made in the 1940s, and the exclusion of novels like *In a Lonely Place* (1947) and *Sudden Fear* (1948) on the grounds the movies they inspired were made after 1950, is baffling.

Each entry is accompanied by one or two paragraphs about the author and/or the book, and another couple about the director and/or the film. A great deal of this information is either very general background material or else chatty anecdotes about who got along with whom during the production of the film. In a minority of cases, there is some information about the actual content of the book or film, all quoted or paraphrased from other sources. There is no indication that anyone involved in putting the book together either read any of the books or saw any of the films. And there is no indication of anything other than a superficial scanning of noir cinema, or of any kind of proper bibliographical search for literary works, other than the availability of good-condition first editions of a certain vintage to photograph.

But now the true, basically unstated, organizing principle of the book starts to become clear. It is the opportunity to provide those
photographs of first editions. Many of them are luscious and highly evocative, soft-core pornography for bibliophiles to which I am not immune even though I have no special interest in dust jackets of the 1930s and 40s. And in fact I will be quite happy to have a copy of this book in my library, just as I would a picture-book of vintage baseball cards or comic books unaccompanied by very much in the way of analytical text. As eye-candy it is great; as a work of scholarly interest, not so much.

WILLIAM BEARD
University of Alberta


John Updike’s prolificacy is no secret. In addition to nearly sixty books issued by Knopf, he has published scores of limited editions and broadsides, and his stories, poems, essays, speeches and reviews have appeared in hundreds of periodicals. When I last visited Harvard’s Houghton Library, where his papers are stored, the librarian told me that Updike’s collection of personal papers was among that library’s largest. Although no surprise, keep in mind that the Houghton holds the papers of many major figures in American literature and history. Further, in the twelve years since that visit, Updike has undoubtedly deposited dozens of additional cartons filled with books, manuscripts, notes, diagrams and correspondence, increasing the size of his collection considerably.

Given this unusually abundant creative outpouring, the task of keeping up with Updike’s oeuvre is nearly a full-time job requiring a thoroughly dedicated bibliographer. For four decades now, that man has been Jack De Bellis, professor emeritus of English at Lehigh University. In addition to editing the *The John Updike Encyclopedia* and a collection of essays on *Rabbit at Rest*, De Bellis published the most significant and valuable previous Updike bibliography, which covered the years 1967 to 1993. Upon its publication in 1994, that volume seemed immense, cataloguing more than 3000 primary and secondary entries. Fourteen years later, that same volume, in its hunter green binding, seems surprisingly small, the way one’s childhood home appears after several decades of absence.