



Race, Gender and Empire in American Detective Fiction

John Cullen Gruesser

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From its inception, American detective fiction has been adaptable to a multiplicity of artistic, personal, ideological and political programs. The wide range of directions in which authors have taken the genre reminds us of Raymond Chandler's view that it is a "fluid" form that cannot be pigeonholed.

This book highlights detection's malleability by analyzing the works of particular groups of authors from specific time periods written in response to other texts. Specifically, it traces some of the roles that gender, race and empire have played in American detective fiction from Edgar Allan Poe's works through the myriad variations upon them published before 1920 to hard-boiled fiction (the origins of which derive in part from turn-of-the-20th-century notions about gender, race and nationality), and it concludes with a discussion of contemporary mystery series with inner-city settings that address black male and black female heroism. In addition to fiction by Poe, the book analyzes texts by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Harriet Jacobs, Mark Twain, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Susan Glaspell, Dashiell Hammett, Carroll John Daly, Pauline Hopkins, John Edward Bruce, Chester Himes, Walter Mosley, and Valerie Wilson Wesley.

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