Crime fiction 1800-2000: Detection, death, diversity


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Abstract

From its first appearance nearly two hundred years ago, the genre of crime fiction has had a compulsive hold on the imagination of audiences all around the world. Many different detectives have appeared: from the plodding policemen (and a few -women) of the nineteenth century, to the heroic detectives like Sherlock Holmes and Philip Marlowe; and on to the innovative investigators who, in recent years, have embodied the concerns of newly-heard social forces - detectives who are feminist, Afro-American, lesbian, gay, and even postmodern. Stephen Knight's fascinating book is a full analytic survey of crime fiction from its origins in the nineteenth century to the most recent developments. Knight explains how and why the various forms of the genre have evolved, explores major authors and movements, and examines the work of many little-known writers of significance. Drawing on the insights of the best scholarship and criticism, both traditional and up-to-date, Knight argues that the genre as a whole has three parts - the early development of Detection, the growing emphasis on Death, and the modern celebration of Diversity. With full references, and written in a highly readable style, this is the essential guide to a popular and enduring genre - a must-have for readers of crime fiction everywhere!

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