



# **Out of the Woodpile: Black Characters in Crime and Detective Fiction (Contributions to the Study of Popular Culture)**

*Frankie Y. Bailey Ph.D.*

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Contending that a mythology of race consisting of themes of sex and savagery exists in the United States and is perpetuated in popular culture, Frankie Y. Bailey identifies stereotypical images of blacks in crime and detective fiction and probes the implied values and collective fantasies found there. *Out of the Woodpile* is the first sociohistorical study of the evolution of black detectives and other African American characters in genre fiction. The volume's three divisions reflect the evolution of the status of African Americans in American society.

The three chapters of the first section, *From Slaves to Servants*, begin with a survey of the works of Poe and Twain in antebellum America, then discuss the depiction of blacks and other natives in British crime and detective fiction in the days of the British Empire, and lastly focus on American classics of the pre-World War II period. In *Urban Blues*, Bailey continues her investigation of black stock characters by zeroing in on the denizens of the Black Metropolis and their Black Rage. *Assimilating*, the final section, contains chapters that scrutinize *The Detectives*, *Black Lives: Post-War/Post Revolution*, and the roles assigned to Black Women. The results of survey questions carried in *The Third Degree*, the newsletter of the Mystery Writers of America, as well as the views of fourteen crime writers on the creation of black characters in genre fiction are followed by the *Directory*, which includes a sampling of cases featuring black characters, a list of black detectives, relevant works of fiction, film, television, and more. The volume's informed analyses will be important reading for students and scholars in the fields of popular culture, American popular fiction, genre fiction, crime and detective fiction, and black and ethnic studies. It is also a timely resource for courses dealing with race relations and blacks in American literature or society.

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