



Hard-Boiled: Working Class Readers and Pulp Magazines

By Erin A. Smith



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In the 1920s a distinctively American detective fiction emerged from the pages of pulp magazines. The hard-boiled stories published in Black Mask, Dime Detective, Detective Fiction Weekly and Clues featured a new kind of hero and soon challenged the popularity of the British mysteries that held readers in thrall on both sides of the Atlantic. In Hard-Boiled, Erin A. Smith examines the culture that produced and supported this form of detective story through the 1940s.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Picking up a classic 'hard-boiled' detective novel by Dashiell Hammet or Raymond Chandler-or even modern-day Sara Paretsky-is an entirely different experience after reading Smith's fascinating book. Now the pages of these novels and their close cousins, the pulp magazines, have become rich canvases for working out struggles over readers' class and consumer identities." -Lizabeth Cohen, Harvard University "Not until Erin Smith's innovative study have we had such a fully-grounded look at the imagined community of working-class fraternity, masculinity, and consumerism through which pulp audiences interpreted the 'fast-talking' heroes of hard-boiled detective fiction. A lively, engaging book that ranges from the linguistics to the sartorial dimensions of the genre, from labor to cultural capital, from advertising copy to literary theory." - Christopher P. Wilson, author of *Cap Knowledge: Police Power and Cultural Narrative in Twentieth Century America* "Hard-Boiled [is] a valuable contribution to the study of American literature between the wars." - *Modern Fiction Studies* "Erin Smith's *Hard-Boiled* is an extremely interesting and well-written analysis of the pulp magazines." -*American Literature* "Hard-Boiled ably demonstrates that detective pulp fiction functioned contradictorily, simultaneously empowering its readers and keeping them in line. Moreover, Smith's careful research persuasively reconstructs the proletarian readers who left no written records of their experience, thus making a substantial contribution to the field of working-class studies." -*The Journal of American History* "One of the few works of pure American Studies that I have as yet encountered, *Hard-Boiled* is a work of interdisciplinary scholarship..." -*Journal of Social History* "...offers a thoroughly inventive approach to sensational crime fiction... Smith's deft readings demonstrate the often surprising ambiguity of the pulps' gender, labor, and consumer politics." -*Novel: A Forum on Fiction*

From the Publisher

An examination of the culture that produced and supported pulp-fiction

About the Author

Erin A. Smith is Assistant Professor of American Studies and Literature at the University of Texas at Dallas.

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