



Talking About Detective Fiction

P.D. James

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In a perfect marriage of author and subject, P. D. James—one of the most widely admired writers of detective fiction at work today—gives us a personal, lively, illuminating exploration of the human appetite for mystery and mayhem, and of those writers who have satisfied it.

P. D. James examines the genre from top to bottom, beginning with the mysteries at the hearts of such novels as Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, and bringing us into the present with such writers as Colin Dexter and Henning Mankell. Along the way she writes about Arthur Conan Doyle, Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie ("arch-breaker of rules"), Josephine Tey, Dashiell Hammett, and Peter Lovesey, among many others. She traces their lives into and out of their fiction, clarifies their individual styles, and gives us indelible portraits of the characters they've created, from Sherlock Holmes to Sara Paretsky's sexually liberated female investigator, V. I. Warshawski. She compares British and American Golden Age mystery writing. She discusses detective fiction as social history, the stylistic components of the genre, her own process of writing, how critics have reacted over the years, and what she sees as a renewal of detective fiction—and of the detective hero—in recent years.

There is perhaps no one who could write about this enduring genre of storytelling with equal authority and flair: it is essential reading for every lover of detective fiction.

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