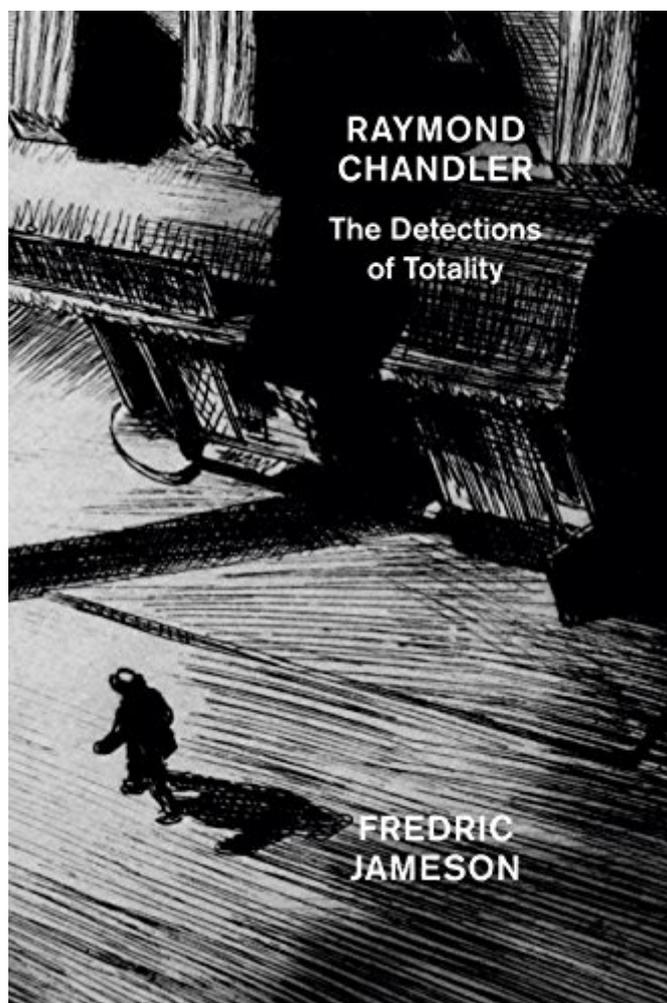


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Raymond Chandler: The Detections Of Totality



Synopsis

The master of literary theory takes on the master of the detective novel Raymond Chandler, a dazzling stylist and portrayer of American life, holds a unique place in literary history, straddling both pulp fiction and modernism. With *The Big Sleep*, published in 1939, he left an indelible imprint on the detective novel. Fredric Jameson offers an interpretation of Chandler's work that reconstructs both the context in which it was written and the social world or totality it projects. Chandler's invariable setting, Los Angeles, appears both as a microcosm of the United States and a prefiguration of its future: a megalopolis uniquely distributed by an unpromising nature into a variety of distinct neighborhoods and private worlds. But this essentially urban and spatial work seems also to be drawn towards a vacuum, an absence that is nothing other than death. With Chandler, the thriller genre becomes metaphysical. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Believe it or not, this isn't the first example of a Marxist philosopher commenting on Raymond Chandler. Zizek examined him and his work briefly in *Enjoy Your Symptoms*. This is the first full

book treatment, though; or, perhaps more accurately described, rather an elongated essay divided into three parts set between hardcovers. Marxist syntax remains notorious for its viscid and sometimes confounding style. Jameson is very much one of its leading practitioners today. Parts of this book reflect that peculiar skill set, but most of it is quite readable. The interesting question that shan't go begging is, of course, who is this work written for? I must admit, I've scratched my scalp almost raw contemplating this. Chandler fans will enjoy Jameson's insightful analysis of the Marlowe novels, although they will likely wince at the leftist academic verbiage. Marxists will follow along with much of it, but I think they could grow impatient with the Heideggerian turn toward book's end. This is a text written for a very select audience that probably never would've have found a publisher if it weren't for Verso. Kudos to Verso, once again, for I mostly enjoyed this book from beginning to end, though I am an old Chandler fan, but no Marxist. Some aspects of this book will not surprise the causally educated and active reader. The prominence of "play" between the "haves" & the "have nots" in Chandler will not reveal anything one didn't already know, or at least guess at after reading, say, *The Big Sleep*. Subtlety requires depositing in Chandler's work, for you won't find it within unless you lend it. Jameson is generous in this respect.

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