

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN MARCIA

MULLER'S SHARON McCONE DETECTIVE SERIES

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ABSTRACT

Feminist detective fiction made its appearance in the late 1970s and 1980s and quickly gained immense popularity. According to global estimates, while one-third of the fiction published in English belongs to the crime fiction genre, feminist detective fiction is its most popular sub-genre. From its early beginnings in the nineteenth century, detective fiction has traditionally been regarded as being masculine and reactionary. After the Second Wave of Feminism in the late 1960s, many women writers began writing stories with feminist detectives. These writers appropriated the conventions of the genre and subverted them for feminist purposes. Some of the most important writers of this period are Marcia Muller, Sue Grafton, Sara Paretsky, Linda Barnes and Liza Cody. Among them, Marcia Muller's contribution to the genre is very significant as her novel Edwin of the Iron Shoes (1977) is generally considered to be the first novel featuring a feminist detective, Sharon McCone. This paper examines selected novels from Marcia Muller's more than three-decade long series featuring Sharon McCone in order to examine the influence of her feminist consciousness on her writing and thereby move towards theorizing the concept of Gender as it emerges in feminist detective fiction.

KEYWORDS: Detective Fiction, Feminism, Women Detectives, Gender Stereotypes

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