



# **A Guide to Walter Mosley 'Devil in a Blue Dress' (Genre Fiction Sightlines)**

*John Lennard*

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The *Genre Fiction Sightlines* series is designed to enable readers to appreciate in much greater depth than usual the richness of fine examples of genre fiction.

Walter Mosley, a favourite author of President Bill Clinton, is the most important African-American writer of crime fiction since Chester B. Himes. This guide offers the reader of Mosley's fiction extensive and illuminating notes and annotations, plus an appreciative essay and a bibliography, all designed to enrich the reader's experience of this writer and this novel.

Mosley's novels chronicling the investigations of Easy Rawlins chart Californian history from 1948, echoing Chandler (and John D. MacDonald) while challenging Ellroy's L.A. Quartet. He has also written other crime and SF novels, Young Adult fiction, a memoir, and activist non-fiction, and is widely involved in cultural and educational projects promoting writing by people of colour. *Devil in a Blue Dress* is the first novel in Mosley's outstanding 'Easy' Rawlins series. The Notes in this book provide an overview of Mosley's career and the series, give historical and literary backgrounds to the novel (including Chandler, Himes, Pinkerton Men and Private Eyes, Hollywood's Gumshoes, and the 'GI Bill'), and consider the film adaptation of *Devil*. Chapter by chapter Annotations detail allusions, slang, musical references, flora and fauna, and fashion, while disentangling Mosley's real and fictive Los Angeles. The Essay is 'In the Mortgage of his Skin', and uses Walcott's and Lamming's great phrase to ask about Easy's purest passion, the house that is his castle. The Bibliography covers all Mosley's work, with critical material on him and on (African-American) crime writing.

John Lennard's publications include *The Poetry Handbook* (1996; 2005), with Mary Luckhurst *The Drama Handbook* (2002), and the *Literature Insights Hamlet* (2007). He is the general editor of the *Genre Fiction Sightlines* and *Genre Fiction Monographs* series, and has written several *Sightlines* titles, as well as two critical collections, 'Of Modern Dragons and other essays on Genre Fiction' (2007) and 'Of Sex and Faerie; further Essays in Genre Fiction' (2010) - both available in Kindle format and in paperback from Troubador.co.uk.

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