



Module A: Genre.

Question four

Elective 2 → crime fiction

Conventions of crime fiction genre, are elements in which allow the author to portray a message to an audience. Conventions may not necessarily be strictly followed, but allow for the authors vision to be expressed. Conventions of crime fiction are evident in The Big Sleep, directed by Howard Hawks, Snow falling on cedars, by David Cuatterson, & the Australian television show Stingers. ~~and a novel by Chris ~~the~~ ~~genre~~~~. The above texts follow or may not strictly follow conventions such as, a red herring, main character being flawed / outcast in society, comments on society and is basically a modern morality tale.

The Big Sleep is a film starring



Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.
The film follows conventions quite strictly,
but also allows for a romantic element
also. The text was firstly written by
Raymond Chandler and although it is
a very confusing, twisted plot, a red
herring is apparent. In the first half of
the text a car is found to have
gone off the bridge, just after the
dead body of Arthur Geiger is found.
The body in the car is found to be
that of the cheffer of the Sternwoods
(family that hired Phillip Marlowe
to investigate gambling debts). At first
to the viewer, this is the first
suspect along with Carmen Sternwood.
The convention is able to express the
composers vision as it creates an
element of discovery and mystery.
In Snow falling on cedars a different
technique is used by the author



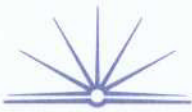
to implement this convention. In most crime novels the red herring is normally a person, however in this novel the red herring is that the town is looking for the murderer of Carl Heine. This is seen as a red herring as Carl was not murdered, but died due to incomprehensible circumstances, and the crime that is really commented is one by society, that is prejudice and racism.

Stingers is an Australian television show situated in Melbourne and is based upon catching criminals through a series of "stings". In the episode named Beyond Redemption, in which is about Kevin Mason and his supposed rape, murder and torture, a red herring is not generally used. Why it is not used is due to the fact, that at the beginning of the show, we are told



that there is a high chance of it being Mason and that he has merely repented. This technique puts us in a position, in which we are told what to think and we are not guessing.

The above texts have several characters, in which are detectives that are flawed or seen as social outcasts. The Big Sleep introduces the audience to Phillip Marlow. A 38 year old private detective, that ~~is~~ possesses charm and charisma. Phillip Marlow is not an outcast in society and to a certain degree, not necessarily flawed. Every woman Marlow occurs, throughout the film attempts to swoon him, the scene with the taxi driver is a perfect example "here's my card, call if you need me again"



Marlow: "day or night?"

TD: "nights better, I work during the day"

Marlow is merely flawed in that he has a sarcastic tone and likes to take risks.

Snow falling on Cedars demonstrates a crime with no real detective, except for local journalist Ishmael Chambers.

Ishmael is an outcast to society as he and his family have a tolerance towards the Japanese and Japanese

community. Due to this tolerance in a town with high racial tension,

Ishmael is isolated from society. Also

Ishmael went to war and fought against the Japanese. The war

brought back an angry Ishmael, full of hatred. Ishmael even states

when his arm is amputated "Fucking Jap Bitch".

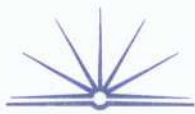
The amputation of Ishmael's arm also shows he is not just flawed emotionally, but



also physically. Ishmael is also flawed in that he is continuously being reminded of his father and the strength and courage he possessed and not Ishmael, this causes Ishmael to be emotionally flawed, through a lack of self esteem.

Although Stingers is part of the crime genre, the detective, Angela Piper, is not flawed physically and is welcomed into society. Angela is only flawed mentally through the past of her sister and her drug addiction. Although not necessarily considered a flaw, it does make Angela shut herself out from society, become more solitudo, but even more determined to seek justice, not just for society, but for herself.

Each of the above texts make some sort of comment on society, whether negative or positive. In earlier forms of crime fiction comments were made



on a broader scale; that is that the detectives were more worried about the triumph of good over evil, than about the psychology of it all, like modern society is. The Big Sleep demonstrate that society is not all that it seems and that greed, ambition and power, are all going to be the driving force of any society. In Snow Falling on Cedars the comment on society is that bad things in society are generally covered up and a mere facade of society is shown. In the novel, this is illustrated and symbolised by the continuous snow that is falling throughout the novel, and just like snow is able to put a white blanket on things, so is society, when an issue or action is occurred and must be covered up for the benefit of society.

In Stingers comments that are made



on society are ones that encompass our need for truth and justice, no matter what the price. Beyond Redemption is an episode that comments on the way society stereotypes people, for example those with a religious perspective or outlook. Instead of looking onto them with admiration for their actions with society, instead we ridicule.

Lurie is seen as a modern morality tale as good is always triumphing over evil, and this is clearly demonstrated in The Big Sleep and Snow falling on cedars. It's the obvious nature and expected outcome, that good will triumph over evil and that just like in a Shakespearean era, the universe will become ordered again. In The Big Sleep, this occurs, although in Snow falling on cedars, although good does triumph over evil, society may not



necessarily go back to the way it was, as now a problem within society is found, that being racism and prejudice. Society will now have to become more tolerant of each race and more accepting and that societies life will be changed as well as the so called "ordered universe".

Stingers is more realistic, in that good doesn't always triumph over evil, sometimes the case may never be solved. This is realistic in that not all cases in society are solved and this supports the composers vision of the show being realistic and able to be seen as possible real events and not that of the type of ~~an~~ old crime fiction text like The Big Sleep, in which everything was about good guys and bad guys.

From the above texts and conventions stated, it can be seen that conventions generally support the composers



Vision and if not then the convention is not abolished, but on the contrary the convention is reshaped or moulded to the composer's needs and wants of the text.

Just like a board game has rules, so does writing and if crime fiction didn't conform to these conventions/rules then how would it be classified a genre? Therefore one must ask, is detective fiction so strict in its convention as it is portraying our lives and societies modern morality tale as seen through the eyes of the composer?