



There are many facets of crime fiction that have provided for its enduring popularity, including its teasing-out of order from disorder. However, it stands to reason<sup>as</sup> illustrated by texts such as PD. James' The Skull Beneath the Skin, David Guterson's Snow Falling on Cedars, and even even Tom Stoppard's play The Real Inspector Hound that ~~the~~ the genre's ~~its~~ greatest centripetal force is its contextuality, & ability to adapt & reflect a given time & culture.

PD James' 1982 novel The Skull Beneath the Skin is full of reflections upon the attitudes & values of the late 20<sup>th</sup> C, & hence readers find an affiliation with its themes & issues. Of course, at the core lies the solving of a murder mystery in the secluded, closed environment setting of Courcy Island. But James is not simply ~~the~~ interested in ~~solving~~ finding out who killed Clarissa Lisle. Throughout the novel she makes fleeting references to art, religion, &



history. For example, on page 83, James ~~critique~~<sup>comments</sup> on 1900s art. ~~Not only to~~ The clever thing is, she combines the feminist view of Lora, with her own perspective of ~~the~~ the artwork, ~~weaving~~ weaving her own comments into the plot, & creating ~~an~~ an interesting ~~of~~ scene for fellow 20thC readers ~~who~~ who no doubt share the same cynicism.

Another example is Jo's comment about religion, forming the punchline to a lengthy hyperbolic satire of religion:

"That's all one asks of a sermon. No possible relevance to anything but itself."

Such comments on contextual values draw in the reader, & also add to the creation of a more 'real' story, - showing the crime has not just occurred in a vacuum, despite the conventional closed setting.

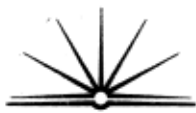
The creation of verisimilitude in a crime fiction ~~to~~ text is widely used, but ~~more~~ no more than in David Guterson's 1995 novel Snow Falling on Cedars. ~~Guterson~~<sup>Many</sup>



argue that Guterson has not really written about a crime, ~~but~~ instead he has used a 'crime' ~~to~~ as a catalyst for an expose of the social dynamics operating in a small, post WWII American town. Guterson engages in ~~extra~~ deep description of the town & setting, ~~and~~ notably ~~in~~ his depiction of working life - ~~in~~ his profound respect for the ~~fisher~~ fisherman, & lengthy descriptions of farm culture. Such depth would appear ~~extraneous~~ & unnecessary, ~~but~~ however his 'fake' fiction undoubtedly engages his audience.

Both Snow Falling On Cedars & The Skull Beneath The Skin are highly indicative of the elasticity of the crime fiction genre, which is a key foundation in the enduring popularity of the genre. James' creation of a metatext loaded with literary allusions & self reflexive remarks such as -

"It had already struck her that their legal powers were a great deal less extensive



than a reading of detective fiction might suggest";

all contribute to a text that is ~~ex~~ clearly crime fiction, but is far richer in content for readers with wider academic experience.

Cuterson, similarly, also creates an elastic combination of crime fiction, historical fiction, & even poetic fiction. All of these further

engage the audience, & his consciously poetic use of language & 'pathetic fallacy' are used ~~to~~ to heighten the emotional effect for the reader.

~~one of~~ the popularity of crime fiction throughout time must surely come from its ability to consistently engage the audience in new & innovative ways. Thus,

most crime fictions adherently adopt a range of conventions in its establishment, but then search for new ways in which ~~the reader~~ the view that the genre is formulaic & predictable can be discredited.

often, to achieve such a purpose, composers will use the genre conventions in attempt to



parody itself. An example of this is ~~the~~ Michael Ritchie's 1985 film adaptation of Gregory McDonald's novel Fletch. In this ~~the~~ 'murder-for-laugh-thriller', there is an abundance of conventions on display. From the mastermind criminal Alan Starwyk, to master of alias & disguise, the journalist sleuth Erwyn Fletcher, this film is loaded with conventions. However, as stated, it is a parody of crime fiction, & so the innovation & audience appeal lies in the ~~humorous~~ self-satirical humour, ~~the~~ both visual & oral. The non-diegetic ~~is~~ music contributes to the cliché, contemporary meanstreets setting of Los Angeles, so as an audience we are ~~already~~ interested in how 'this one' will be different.

And like its ~~enduringly~~ enduringly popular counterparts The Skull Beneath The Skin & Snow Falling On Cedars, Fletch is highly indicative of ~~the~~ <sup>its</sup> contextual attitudes & values. For example, aside from the solving of the crime,



the audience must examine the type of crime, & criminal — white collar crime undertaken by a rich & powerful businessman. Therein lies the evolutionary nature of crime fiction as it has changed to reflect a far more technological & economy based society, in an age when thought to be the 'pinnacle' of existence, but more like substance.

The popularity of such a film lies in its ability to engage the audience through an affiliation with ~~their~~ their own society — we all like something we can relate to: "We only love what we can understand."

~~Of course, we are guards for its~~

Despite the view that "the appeal of crime fiction is in its teasing-out of order from disorder, ~~we~~ today's audience find the genre's enduring popularity in its ability to do the opposite — we love shock endings, & often those which ~~are~~ ~~are~~ somewhat resemble anarchy. In the past, we have loved the resolution of order & patriarchy, as





seen in Howard Hawks' The Big Sleep (1946) & such classic hard-boiled Agatha Christie's Murder On the Orient Express, such classic detective fiction texts were loved for the teasing-out of order from disorder. However, in texts from that very era were also valued for their wittingly confusing, & 'predictably unpredictable' endings such as Howard Hawks' The Big Sleep. This classic of film noir-hosts ~~at the~~ a plot that is almost incomprehensible, & even the femme fatale, Vivian Sternwood (Lauren Bacall) is not killed or in some way deflated as ~~the most~~ ~~some~~ stereotypical femme fatale's were (they were often made to submit to the patriarchy in accordance to the film's values). ~~The Bi.~~

The Big Sleep was a major stepping stone for crime fiction in its evolution from a formulaic & predictable genre for a 'rainy day', to one that is enduringly popular among audiences of all ages in search for new



& exciting plots & composition devices.

To ~~the~~ demonstrate <sup>this</sup> more modern ~~an~~ affection for surprise, one needs to look no further than Patricia Highsmith's novel, now a film, The Talented Mr Ripley. As in Bill Pronzini's short story A Dip In The Pool, the protagonist is a criminal, & even narrates the story (in Pronzini's text). Such innovation describes the modern ~~read~~ quest for variety, & vicarious adventure that is seldom found in ~~the~~ <sup>highly</sup> ~~our~~ our seemingly mundane society. ~~Each~~ ~~the~~ The texts actually establish <sup>our</sup> sympathy for the criminals, & we sometimes don't even know it.

A Dip In The Pool utilises the assumption of crime fiction ~~the~~ readers that the protagonist is the sleuth. ~~Its~~ Its first person narrative doesn't reveal the true identity & stereotype of the protagonist until the very end, with the line:

"Don't you think I was entitled to the





swag?"; in which Proznini smiles at his ability to not only fool ~~the~~ the crim's competition, but also his audience.

Crime fiction is undoubtedly an enduring popular genre. However, this has not been derived from its teasing-out of order from disorder. In fact, texts such as The Red Inspector Howard & The Talented Mr Ripley set out to accomplish ~~the~~ the complete opposite.

The grounds for the genres timeless popularity has been created by a modern thirst for surprise ~~& identification with the crimes~~ & vicarious ~~&~~ adventure, and the ability of composers to utilise existing conventions ~~as~~ to stretch the genre wider & wider. Now we have crime fiction that is comical, historical, & expository - all of which combine to cater to a diverse range of tastes. As the popularity of crime fiction continues to endure ~~at~~ varying times & cultures, the boundaries defining genre & genres will continue to



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*be blurred.*