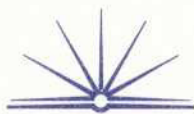


Genre: Crime Fiction.

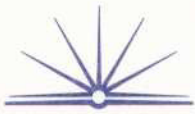
The conventions of crime fiction have been built up and varied over the years. It began with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's popular classics, featuring Steth, Sherlock Holmes, ~~and~~ progressed into a time when Agatha Christie's novels held the reign of the genre. ~~It~~ ^{In the 1940s,} film now became a popular style for crime fiction films, ^{where} dark and dreary settings were commonplace, as highlighted by Howard Hawks' classic, The Big Sleep. The genre has only recently progressed into the relatively unknown where the standard hero, ^a strong, athletic, caucasian male, is being replaced by a woman, as in PD James' The Skull Beneath the Skin, ~~and~~ or even a disabled black man, as



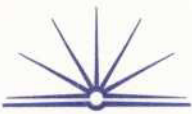
~~is~~ in The Bone Collector, produced by Phillip Noyce.

The conventions of crime fiction are a very standard over the whole genre. The characters are very similar with the stereotyped hero chasing the usually unsuspected villain, negotiating red herrings and twists along the way. The settings are also stereotyped with the sites of the crimes almost always shrouded in darkness and mist in contrast to ~~the~~ the residence or office of the hero.

As Agatha Christie and ~~Edgar~~ Doyle developed this genre, their ~~writing~~ stories, of ~~course~~ course, are restricted to this plan. The Boscombe Valley Murder and Sparkling Cyanide but possess very similar style and elements.



required by a definition of the genre. The crime was committed either at the beginning or before the audience is introduced to the story and many red herrings lead to the eventual villain being left above suspicion and many other characters left as blatantly guilty. The Big Sleep is held within these conventions as well with Howard Hawks expanding his story into the style of film noir. A dark and sinister mood is thrown over the plot by this style of poor lighting and dramatic sound and camera shots. ~~It is~~ the film possesses many plot twists and a somewhat confusing storyline. It is very detailed and the clues are all intertwined together to produce a difficult but enjoyable



viewing experience.

PD James' novel, The Skull
Beneath the Skin also possesses
the same level of detail in its
storyline and clues, sometimes
leaving the audience behind
before ~~typing~~ tying it all in together
to produce ~~and~~ an ending which
solves the crime, but leaves the
detective, an out-of-the-mould
unsuccessful young female, losing
to the real villain, Ambrose Gorrige.

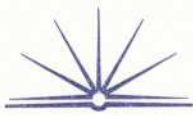
This break from the usual convention
of a crime fiction story hero is
also held by the 1999 film, The Bone
Collector. The traditional hero, ~~a~~
a hard nosed, athletic, young ^{white} male,
always ready to fight and womanise,
much in the mould of The Big Sleep's
Phillip Marlowe, has been replaced
by a disabled black man, ~~considering~~



who has already set ~~his~~ the date for his "final term" - ^{his} euthanasia. This is a major break from the traditional conventions of this genre, totally refocussing the basic plan of ~~as~~ a crime fiction story away from action to a more intellectual role.

The ways in which these conventions ~~and changes to to~~ ^{the} impact the composer's view can be related to ^{the} society's opinion of that time.

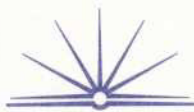
Traditionally, the hero reflected the view that men were superior to women and that white races were more superior to black. This is very ~~an~~ strongly supported by the Big Sleep where there is not one single black actor in the entire film. This reflects the view held



in the 1940's when the film was produced. The storyline of the film is also based on organised crime, also a major issue in America in that period.

However, by the 1980's, public opinion had swung somewhat, accepting to a degree, that women were not inferior. The Skull Beneath the Skin, first published in 1982, has a failing woman as its investigator and hero. The ~~author~~ ^{author} attempts to deal with equality through her novel. However, the constraints put in place by the conventions of crime fiction ~~restrict~~ limit this vision and the result is, ^{ultimately} a failure by ~~the~~ Cordelia Grey, the detective.

This is also very similar in Phillip Noyce's crime fiction film,



The Bone Collector, while exhibiting a similar variation from the classic mould of a crime fiction hero, it also suffers the same fate as PD James' attempt at enlightening the viewers. The essential elements of a crime fiction story are ~~held~~ held by the film, however, a chaotic ending results & in the detective, paraplegic Lincoln Rhyme, being saved by a more conventional character to the genre.

Through time, the crime fiction ~~genre~~ genre has been shaped and altered according to the social contexts of the time. ~~They were~~ clichéd characters have made way for anti-heroes, who are never quite as successful as the traditional



model. The crimes often reflect the issues of importance of the period which they were produced, organised crime in the 40's in The Big Sleep, in contrast to serial killers of the 90's in The Bone Collector. These restraints, or conventions, sometimes support the composer's view, as in Agatha Christie's Sparkling Cyanide or Howard Hawks' The Big Sleep, or limits their vision, as in PD James' The Skull Beneath the Skin ~~and~~ or Phillip Noyce's The Bone Collector. Either way, the components of the crime fiction genre, need to be held, or ~~stay~~ only slightly varied, for the story to be entertaining.