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Platten, David, *The Pleasures of Crime. Reading Modern French Crime Fiction*

Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2011, ISBN 978-90-420-3429-7, 269 p.

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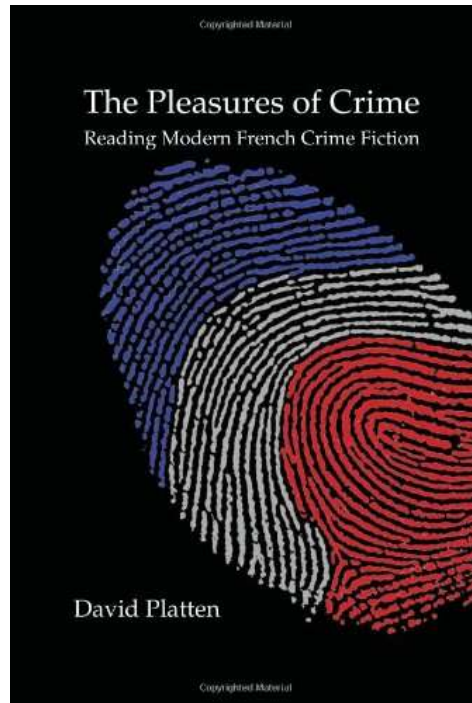
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RÉFÉRENCE

Platten, David, *The Pleasures of Crime. Reading Modern French Crime Fiction*, Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2011, ISBN 978-90-420-3429-7, 269 p.

- 1 David Platten sets out to describe and analyze current French crime fiction by adopting a historical and chronological perspective, spanning more than 75 years of published works, going back to the roots and predecessors of this particular literary genre. He explains his methodology in his introduction (p. 11-20) and develops his themes in 8 chapters, ranging from the emergence of the genre in France (chapter 1, p. 21-42), a detailed overview of the prolific Belgian author, Georges Simenon (chapter 2, p. 43-68), the *roman noir* and its attention to the negative aspects of the consumer society (chapter 3, p. 69-92), the aesthetics of commitment exemplified through the oeuvres of néo-polar authors such as Jean-Patrick Manchette, Jean Amila and Didier Daeninckx (chapter 4, p. 93-131), the representation of the physical environment in specific *polars* by Pierre Véry, Jean Vautrin and Pierre Siniac (chapter 5, p. 133-153), narratives of dystopia – visible in Hugues Pagan, Thierry Jonquet and Maurice Dantec’s novels –, the “triumph of humanism” (p.172) of Daniel Pennac’s crime fiction (chapter 6, p. 155-189), the inclusion of youth culture such as punk rock, jazz, rap, hiphop, Japanese poetry, generational divisions (in novels written by Jean-Claude Izzo, Pouy and Hervé Prudon), moral values (Tonino Benacquista), rebellion and redemption (chapter 7, p. 191-220), to the fast-publishing female author Fred Vargas whose “resolute self-belief and willingness to write against the grain [...] have allowed her to harness a natural predisposition for adventure and invention” (p. 221): here Platten offers the readers a detailed and extensive overview of some of Vargas’ major works (chapter 8, p. 221-249).
- 2 The variety of angles proposed by Platten allows the reader to discover the social, cultural and mythological contexts of contemporary French crime fiction, well-known and less famous authors. Indeed, while the “final drive for disclosure” of the world of the killer remains the main focus of crime fiction, the genre has attained literary status, as it “represents the unknown, the fictional other, that which is both within and at a distance from the conventions and habits of daily existence” (p. 252). Several detailed analyses, such as the interaction between the physical settings of a novel’s plot and its storyline, interesting links with, for example, American post-modern crime writing, philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse, Louis Althusser and Guy Debord, and the subject of the *devoir de mémoire*, as well as a thorough bibliography and index at the end embellish this study.
- 3 As Bishop, author of the foreword, notes, “Platten’s fine study succeeds in rendering the complexity and ingenuity, the imaginativeness and the telluric, the existential urgency so often at play in the novels he discusses” (p. 6). *The Pleasures of Crime* can therefore be described as an excellent reference work, the only regrettable feature is



that the text sometimes reads as a mere combination of articles. More attention should have been given to linking the parts previously published elsewhere (parts of chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 were published in books and journals such as *French Crime Fiction*, 2009, *Violent Histories: Violence, Culture and Identity in France from Surrealism to the Néo-Polar*, 2007) so that a more harmonious, coherent text could have been achieved.

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