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Crime writing is ultimately a response to specific social and cultural conditions within its writer's context as crime writer Ian Rankin asserts, "everything I wanted to say about the world, I could say in the crime format." The enduring popularity and relevance of crime writing can be attributed to its elasticity and flexibility as a genre as it is able to ~~adapt~~ adapt and explore ~~diff~~ aspects of crime and human nature within different contexts. Through an examination of PD James' The Skull Beneath the Skin (1984), Michael Ondaatje's Avril's Ghost (2000), Sara Paretsky's Hard Time (1999) and Patricia Cornwell's Scarpetta (2008), the reader is able to identify how crime is able to adapt and evolve ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ response to different social and cultural conditions. Through the effective manipulation of structure, language and crime conventions, all four authors ultimately demonstrate ~~the~~ ^{how} the enduring popularity of crime lies in its ability to investigate and reflect human nature in different contexts.

PD James' The Skull Beneath the Skin depicts a ~~a~~ corrupt, materialistic world symbolic of James' 1980s British context. James reflects the rising waves of feminism in the

1970s through the introduction of her female private ~~detective~~ detective, Cordelia Cray. Regarded by many as crime fiction's first female detective, Cordelia not only differs from her traditional male counterparts in terms of gender as James chooses to depict her as "sweet [and] gentle", ~~not~~ with a certain degree of innocence, as is illustrated in her statement, "I never knew a human being could be so evil." Cordelia's naivety is put in direct contrast to the hostile, corrupted society that can be seen as James's condemnation of the materialism ~~and~~ of Thatcher's rising capitalist industry in the 1980s. The gothic representation of Courcy Island, "it stood on the edge of the sea, as if it had risen from the waves", bears syntactical similarity to 'risen from the grave', suggesting supernatural connotations and a macabre setting for criminal activities. The mystery and gothic imagery of the castle also adds to the horror of the novel as James describes the violence of death in horrific detail, "this pulp was Clarissa's face, clotting and oozing serum... spiked with the brittle fragments of smashed bones." The graphic imagery and violence within Clarissa's death can be seen as James's reflection upon

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the violence within human nature and the corruption of society. Within Ambrose's tax evasion, Roma's financial problems and Clarissa's selfishness, James depicts a highly materialistic and self-centered society and makes clear her condemnation of capitalism and Thatcher's revival of Victorian values. James subverts the traditional practice of presenting a closed ending as she allows Ambrose to escape justice by portraying ~~him~~ his position in positive terms, "by the best advice, the most prestigious lawyers." This further highlights the materialistic view within society and by creating an open ending James effectively reflects the lack of existential certainty within her context which stems ~~is~~ from corruption and self-centeredness. Thus, through her novel, James demonstrates how crime is able to subvert and change conventions in order to reflect ~~the~~ specific social and cultural conditions as she creates a critical study of her 1980s British context.

However, James's obvious adherence to the classic crime storyline has been criticised by many writers for what Carl Malmgren calls in his paper 'Anatomy of a Murder' as "a lack of verisimilitude".

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ture, a failure to be true to the 'real' world." Malinjen explores this idea of realism and ultimately concludes that the ability of a writer to reflect the 'real' world is "inevitably a matter of conventions", as writers call upon existing conventions, ~~rather than they challenge~~ in order to make meaning within their work.

This is certainly true of Michael Ondaatje's text, Anil's Ghost as Ondaatje challenges the traditional value of truth ~~and morality~~ in an attempt to mirror the violence and devastation within a war-torn country. Ondaatje undermines the traditional value for truth within the crime genre as he illustrates a society where truth and justice is not easily defined. Within war devastated Sri Lanka, the truth is seen as transient in nature, as evident through Sarath's statement that, "he would give up his life for the truth, if the truth were of any use." Anil's assertion that "the truth brings the light", is seen by Sarath as a simplistic Western concept as Ondaatje reveals that sometimes, restoring order is not as simple as revealing the truth. Through a hybridized mix of crime, history and post-colonialism, Anil's Ghost is a

perfect example of the elasticity of the genre and its ability to adapt to ~~span~~ different context as it responds to specific social and cultural conditions. Similar to James's use ~~to~~ of graphic imagery to depict the violence within human nature, Ondaatje's gruesome depiction of his incredibly hostile environment, "heads on stakes... in a pit in Matale," adds to the horror and violence ~~to~~ that is experienced through war. Ondaatje's subversion of many of the traditional crime conventions can be seen as a technique in which he uses to communicate the realities of war and human nature and a place where justice and truth are not easily defined. Furthermore, the reader is ~~a~~ forced to question the value of ~~the~~ truth as Anil's 'evidence' comes at the expense of a human life. Thus, Ondaatje's violation of traditional conventions acts as a way of illustrating the war-torn devastation and danger within a violent and politically unstable country.

While James and Ondaatje use graphic imagery in order to depict the corruption of society and human

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nature, Sara Paretsky in her novel Hard Time illustrates and condemns a patriarchal, socially corrupt world through her female private eye, VI Warshawski. Described as a "love ranger", ~~VI is in many ways similar~~ stands for ~~the~~ female empowerment and a reflection of the rising awareness of gender equality and women's rights in the late 20th. Warshawski is in many ways, similar to her male hard-boiled counterparts as her tough-talking language pays homage to Chandler and the novel's structure, from the opening scene in the detective's run-down office to the final triumph of good over evil, similarly owes a debt to Marlowe's investigative process. Within Hard Time, Warshawski is portrayed as a modern-day Cassandra as Paretsky illustrates the gendered nature of truth. The political thrust of the novel is squarely aimed at a society that distinguishes between first and second-class citizens along the lines of race and gender. Warshawski is pitted against a male-dominated society and Mallory's comment that VI has "made a

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career out of something no nice girl would touch." highlights society's patriarchal values and illustrates Paretsky's condemnation of them as she responds to the ~~patricia~~ them within her 1999 context.

Crime writing's ability to ~~fast~~ adapt and respond to specific social and cultural conditions can be seen in Patricia Cornwell's Scarpetta (2008) with increasingly sophisticated forensic science of the 21st ~~a~~ came insights into the ways the body divulged its secrets and Kay Scarpetta's demonstrates the ability of technology and how it has changed crime writing. Scarpetta's comment that "blood...tattles on who did what and how, and in some instances, why," highlights the new ways of perceiving crime through the eyes of science. Scarpetta's ability to 'read' the body can be linked to Avil's ability to construct a life story out of Sailor's bones as the body becomes an intense and intensive site of looking and analysing. This ability to read the clues, interpret signs or evidence in the language of analysis, deduction and explanation has always been a

convention of crime. And Cornwell's popularity is essentially in her ability to respond to a modern desire for a scientific explanation of the mysteries of crime.

Ultimately, all four authors demonstrate the ability of crime writing to captivate audiences due to its flexibility in adapting to specific social and cultural conditions and thus creating enduring relevance.

~~the~~ Through their texts, James, Ondaatje, Paretsky and Cornwell all testify to the popularity of crime fiction as a response to contextual values ~~and~~ as they explore values of truth, gender and essentially depict ~~the~~ a corrupt and materialistic world who is in need of a hero or heroine.

It is interesting to note that all four detectives are female, highlighting the rising awareness of gender equality and women's rights within the 20th towards the 21st as it began from James's pivotal adoption of Cordelia Gray.

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