

# Captivating Criminality 8

# Book of Abstracts

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**Captivating Criminality 8: Crime Fiction, Femininities and Masculinities**

University of Bamberg, 30 June - 02 July 2022

Annual International Crime Fiction Association (ICFA) Conference



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## PANEL 1.1:

Supernatural Crime, Vengeance, and Domestic Abuse. (pre-organised panel)

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Since the pandemic hit, the level of domestic abuse perpetrated against women has risen exponentially. However, there has always been domestic abuse. This panel presents three papers that look at different aspects of domestic abuse against women. From the ghost stories of the nineteenth century to stories from a present-day anthology, this panel opens up debates about what the crime of domestic abuse is, how it's been represented, and finally attempts to see how we can look at positive ways forward.

**Ruth Heholt. "Raising the Ghost of Domestic Abuse: E. Nesbit's Radical Critique of Crimes Against Women."**

Ghost stories deal with a return of the dead, and this is often classified as a return of the repressed. Ghost stories with their returning revenants expose past crimes. Violence, sexuality, death; the big taboos come (often literally) home to roost. Because of the subject matter and the (usually) domestic settings, ghost stories are very often associated with women. And many of the ghosts featured in women's ghost tales are female and it is often forms of domestic abuse and violence that cause the haunting. For this reason, and because so many ghost stories bring to light the plight of abused, violated, powerless, and murdered women, they have been seen as a place of resistance which highlights the violence and injustices perpetrated against them. This paper looks at the work of the late Victorian writer E. Nesbit whose ghost tales exemplify the way that women's ghost stories explore crimes perpetrated against women. It argues that her tales presented a radical feminist critique of patriarchy, misogyny, and men's crimes against women, that was unusual in the strength of the denunciation of abusive men.

Falmouth University, UK

**Jennifer Young. "Domestic Abuse and the Empowering Vengeance of Creative Writing."**

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, domestic abuse incidents have risen. However, even before, this trend has been growing year on year and, in December 2021, local radio station Pirate FM reported that 'Domestic abuse offences across Cornwall and Devon almost double[d] in six years'. The report says that 'the area has seen a 97% rise in domestic abuse offences since [...] 2015–16 when records began.' There is also an accepted correlation between poverty and



economic deprivation and domestic abuse incidents. Cornwall is one of the most economically deprived areas of Europe which is why we are beginning our study here.

We ran a pilot project in the spring and summer of 2022, looking towards a creative response to this unacceptable state of affairs. However, it goes beyond just a 'response' and seeks non-violent redress for the violence, the gaslighting, the mind games, the controlling behaviour, and the attempts to steal someone's dignity, sense of self-worth, and power. Domestic abuse is a crime, so why shouldn't survivors of domestic abuse seek revenge? And what better way of doing it than through telling their stories loud and clear? This project pivots on the clichéd quote: 'the pen is mightier than the sword'.

The project explored the use of storytelling to exact vengeance on perpetrators through the non-violent practice of creative writing. It asks: how can storytelling realise empowerment through creative practice? We invited the participation of those who have experienced DA, collaborating with local DA charities and support groups to historicize and contextualize people's experience of DA through storytelling – past and present. The project and workshop also centred on survivors who have moved further on with their lives without their abusers. DA stories often focus on the moment a woman leaves, but there are fewer stories about how their lives are many months or years down the line. These survivor stories are important for people who are still trapped in DA situations. This paper will explore the outputs of our research, as well as discussing our plans for a larger project and anthology of creative work.

Falmouth University, UK

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**Vik Gill. "Disappearing Without a Trace: Permeable Boundaries between Feminist Vigilantes and Vengeful Ghosts in Crime and Gothic Fiction."**

Women authors have used ghost stories and crime fiction to explore revenge and anger directed at men as a facet of the female experience. The 'feminist vigilante' trope of transgressive crime fiction could be said to embody the female rage that haunts ghost stories; transmuting female rage against patriarchy into a site of corporeal resistance. Distinctions between the Gothic and crime fiction have been said to reflect the 'permeable boundaries' of crime fiction rather than key tenets of either genre. Illuminating these commonalities, the theme of a recent anthology, *Giving the Devil His Due* (2021), from The Pixel Project, is the comeuppance of men who commit violence against women and girls. The Pixel Project, whose mission is 'to raise awareness, funds and volunteer power for the cause to end violence against women,' hopes this uncanny anthology will start a conversation about violence against women. This paper looks at one story from the anthology, 'Sweet Justice', to explore some of the challenges, contradictions and complementarities of the female Gothic and feminist literary noir fiction. It will argue that the female vengeful ghost has much in common with the feminist vigilante.

Falmouth University, UK

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## PANEL 1.2:

### Dangerous Masculinities.

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Laura Major. "Lethal Masculinity, History, Crime and Resistance in Philip Kerr's *Prague Fatale*."

This talk will explore Philip Kerr's *Prague Fatale* (2011), the eighth book in the Bernie Gunther detective series, examining the interplay between crime fiction, history and ideology in the novel, with an emphasis on the theme of masculinities portrayed in the novel. Indeed, part and parcel of the Nazi persona presented in the novel is a form of masculinity that is dangerous in its extremity, and must be matched by the masculinity of the hardboiled detective.

In the novel, Reinhard Heydrich, the freshly appointed *Reichsprotektor* (governor) of Bohemia and Moravia (now the Czech Republic), summons the mordant and reluctant Bernie Gunther from Berlin to the Prague Castle in order to act as Heydrich's personal detective. While there, a (fictional) murder is committed and Gunther is tasked with solving it. The possibility that the victim is homosexual, the ultimate threat to Nazi masculinity, is an underlying motive for the murder.

This locked room murder mystery, which explicitly references Agatha Christie's "whodunit" *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) and borrows from it, is a crime within a crime within the large scale crime of Nazism and indeed the Holocaust. And it is this historical framework of the large scale crime that determines the bleak and harsh tone of the novel and its narrative style. Gunther, the narrator, is a hard-boiled protagonist and a deeply flawed man, perhaps even an anti-hero, but in Prague, his self-reflective insights and his language, both literal, cloaked in irony and sarcasm and figurative highlight the struggle to resist the current of Nazism. The talk will show that the novel cannot play out as a mere detective novel if it is to properly represent the realities of Nazism and the Holocaust. So, Kerr undermines his own genre, even at the risk of failing to deliver the binarism of good and evil and the closure that satisfies crime fiction readers. This undermining, together with the tone and language of the novel, cause uneasiness in the reader, an uneasiness that is appropriate to any ethical representation of the horrors unleashed by the likes of Reinhard Heydrich in Nazi Germany.

Achva Academic College and Hemdat Hadarom College, Israel

**Stuart Molloy. "'Fathers can be killers' – The domestication of psychopathy and the desire for murderousness in *Hannibal* and *The Fall*."**

This paper focuses on the anti-heroic protagonists of Bryan Fuller's *Hannibal* (2013-2015) and Allan Cubitt's *The Fall* (2013-2016) with a critical emphasis on the unsettling psychoanalytics bound up with their characterisations. Hannibal Lecter and Paul Spector, played by Mads Mikkelsen and Jamie Dornan in the American and British series respectively, are commonly depicted both as committed fathers and violent psychopaths. Lecter is the FBI's most wanted serial killer, the Chesapeake Ripper, who adopts Abigail Hobbs after engineering the murder of her father, himself a serial killer; Spector is the Belfast Strangler, hunting young women by night, doting on his two children by day. In *The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives* (2018), Luigi Zoja highlights the psychic imperative that fathers display strength. A father who is incapable or unwilling to show that he is strong is liable to be disavowed by his children because he reveals himself to be lacking the requisite potency to protect his family. What is at once fascinating and repelling about Lecter and Spector is their fictive realisation of the unconscious desire in all of us for the father – and, by extension, masculinity – to exhibit strength to the extent of extreme violence. Not only *can* fathers be killers, as Lecter remarks to the character of Will Graham, they *should* be killers. At least at the level of latent fantasy, we want the capacity for murderousness to be part of paternity because it is the ultimate seal of strength and therefore the best guarantee of security. It bears refraining, however, that this psychoanalytic dynamic shared by the two texts is not unambiguously supported by them. In *Hannibal* it is complicated by being yoked to cannibalism and homoeroticism, and in *The Fall* by association with predatory sexuality.

University of Western Australia

**Matthew Gurteen. "A Masculine Picture of Murder: The Totemisation of Regional Manhood in Bill's-O'-Jacks' Reporting and 'Revivals'."**

When an unknown assailant(s) murdered William and Thomas Bradbury at The Moorcock Inn - or 'Bill's-O'-Jacks' - in Saddleworth, 1832, they also initiated a regional engagement process visible from initial journalism to modern cross-media productions where creators adapt – or 'revive' – the case. These liminal textual spaces allow authors to scrutinise and negotiate notions of regional masculinity. Although representations of manhood in the imagined murderer vary historically, the figure continually acts as a totemic tool for gender construction. This paper addresses the process of regional masculine negotiation in the liminal space of Bill's-O'-Jacks' texts through the constructed murderer. Using primary archival material, it argues that engagement with regional masculinity in this true-crime case corresponds with periods of interest in the North of England in times of economic depression. Furthermore, a new wave of Bill's-O'-Jacks' 'revivals' has, for several reasons, recently emerged as modern authors once again negotiate manhood in the northern region. Understanding this repeating

adaptational process reveals how true-crime figures hold totemic value in the North today, contributing to the growing body of literature on masculinity and regional identity.

University of Huddersfield, UK

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## PANEL 1.3:

Aspects of Femicide.

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Nicole Kenley. "Steubenville, Temporality, and 21st Century Crimes Against Women in Sue Grafton's *Y is for Yesterday*."

Over the course of its publication run, Sue Grafton's alphabet series enters into a temporal disjunct. That is, Grafton's decisions to set her novels in monthly installments creates an ever-growing lag between the dates of the novels' publication and setting. "*A*" is for *Alibi* is set in 1982, the year in which it was published, and thereafter, Grafton sets each novel within months of the previous entry in the series, such that series' final novel, "*Y*" is for *Yesterday*, is set in 1989 and published nearly 30 years later in 2017. This disjunct works counter to much contemporary crime fiction, which frequently races to include the newest technology as a means to solve previously-unimagined global crimes. Grafton's detective Kinsey Millhone, meanwhile, continues to handwrite her clues on index cards as she tracks down conventional murderers, rapists, and thieves.

This paper argues that Grafton proposes a vision of and strategy for containing contemporary crimes against women through Kinsey's ongoing investigation of in the 1980s. Reading Grafton's final novel, *Y is for Yesterday*, as a response to the viral 2012 Steubenville rape case demonstrates how Grafton uses her temporal disjunct to insist that, while global crime continues to expand, traditional crimes remain worthy not only of investigation but also of priority. While Kinsey might not be equipped to contain contemporary crime on a global scale, she continues to bring a measure of justice to victims of rape and sexual assault, crimes which continue to impact women directly in the 21st Century. In this way, Grafton maintains the social message that that detective fiction can focus not only on the broad unsolvable but also on the cases where an impact on women's lives can be made, even in the era of global crime.

Baylor University, Waco, USA

Barbara Pezzotti. "Femicide as Social Construct in International Crime Fiction."

Crime fiction has been long accused of being a conservative genre that reaffirms the social order and endorses a patriarchal society. This view has been challenged by a number of crime novels which successfully denounce violence against women, and the evil of patriarchal societies that feeds such violence. In my talk I will analyse the representation of femicide in Italian, Spanish and US crime fiction. In particular, I will analyse Dacia Maraini's *Voices* (1997; *Voci*), Maria-Antònia Oliver's *Study in Lilac* (2001; *Estudio en Lilac*), and Sandra Scoppettone's

*Everything You have is Mine* (1991). I will show how these crime novelists use the crime fiction genre to shift the readers' attention from an individual crime and an individual culprit to point to a systematic failure of Western States. Throughout their narrative, these writers historicise the evil of femicide, arguing that far from being merely a matter for psychiatrists, it has profound roots in Western culture. They describe it as a pervasive evil in contemporary society and a gangrene very difficult to eradicate as it concerns everybody, and is not only identifiable with deviant personalities. Ultimately, I show how crime fiction can act as a privileged genre for exposing how the judiciary and social order has failed women.

Monash University, Melbourne, Australia



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## KEYNOTE 1

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### Andrew Pepper: "From Domestic to Global Noir: Genre and Gender Breakdown."

My keynote is organised around two central claims; (1) that there is a new or emerging type of popular/crime fiction which I want to term 'defective fiction' because it is shaped, formally and thematically, by socio-political problems which are impossible and cannot be solved; and (2) that domestic noir, as it is typically understood, contains some elements that would characterise it as defective – e.g. a willingness to explore what has been broken by male violence and an emphasis on the working out of negative affects. But in resituating a particular kind of female experience (typically white, middle class and Anglo-American) at the centre of its narratives, it ends up servicing and being serviced by a rather narrow feminist politics. In this talk, I try to widen the terms of the category (a) by thinking about the complex folds between the domestic and the global (or what Pratt and Rosner call 'the global and the intimate'); (b) by looking for/at stories of crime and the domestic realm which pay fuller attention to the intersections of gender and race, class, sexuality; and (c) by considering what happens to this thing we call domestic noir when the categories of gender and genre both more radically break down. Works to be considered include Ivy Pochoda's *These Women*, Kiley Reid's *Such a Fun Age*, Natsuo Kirino's *The Goddess Chronicles* and *Grotesque*, Okinyan Braithwaite's *My Sister, The Serial Killer*, Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* and Catriona Ward's *The Last House on Needless Street*.

Queen's University, Belfast

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## PANEL 2.1:

Pandemic Crime Fiction (I).

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Katharina Hendrickx. "Reading, discussing, and living domestic noir: The women's crime fiction book club during the Covid-19 pandemic."

Drawing on recent PhD fieldwork conducted with women readers over three months in the form of 'domestic noir' book clubs in Brighton (UK), this paper focuses on one of the all-women's 'domestic noir' reading groups that was organised at the beginning of 2020. This study aims to understand women's interaction, interpretation and experience with the crime subgenre and, as the last in the series of six book clubs, this group started just before the first lockdown began and quickly moved online. In this book club the house and the home became the focal point of the discussion on 'domestic noir', which the participants also connected to their experiences of the current situation and the claustrophobic feeling of having to stay inside all day every day with very few, only necessary exceptions. Domestic noir's thematic portrayal of the dangerous and claustrophobic Gothic home, domestic violence as well as limiting and stereotyped femininity were specifically highlighted during the discussions and functioned as catalyst for exchanges of personal experiences of misogyny, loneliness, gendered fears as well as burnout for the participants. Importantly, the book club created community and solidarity with each other's experiences, which then developed into a regular crime reading group and still continues every month. This paper then argues that women's reading groups – with a specific focus on crime reading groups – are an excellent tool for women to build communities and spaces to talk about experiences of misogyny, gendered violence and sexual harassment as well as, in the current situation, their heightened struggles around the home, domestic duties and childcare. The book club meetings enable the participants to create space and time for themselves, away from their everyday duties, which is often even more difficult to find during the Covid-19 pandemic.

University of Sussex

Melissa M. Culver. "The confines of confinement: *El confinado*, by Roberto Dominguez Moro."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Domínguez Moro chose the form of the personal diary in *El confinado* ("a thriller stranger than fiction") to tell the story of a thirty-something IT specialist who anxiously begins preparations to enter lockdown.

This novel explores how pandemic measures, enacted all around the "global village" to avoid catastrophe, prove unable to avert it: a germaphobe serial killer and rapist roams Madrid while the police, otherwise engaged, appears powerless to stop him. Thus, *El confinado* exposes the dangers of the "domestic sphere"—particularly for women—and interrogates the role of governments and institutions as protectors of its most vulnerable citizens by highlighting the abandonment of victims in favor of containment measures.

In my presentation, I explore, firstly, how the form of the diary meshes with a content that deals with the novel reality of a global pandemic and how the restriction of the "public" contributes to the victimization of women. Secondly, I analyze how the logic of the thriller emerges as a master narrative uniquely suited to explain institutionalized sexism through the core tenets of the genre: mistrust of institutions; permanent vigilantism; entrenched suspicion of all; unapologetic individualism.

Texas A&M University, USA

### Colette Guldemann. "Post-pandemic future in recent South African thrillers: gender, genre, hybridity."

Two South African writers produced prescient pandemic thrillers in recent years which explore post-pandemic futures. Both were published prior to Covid-19: Deon Meyer's *Fever* (2017) and Lauren Beukes' *Afterland* (2020). In *Fever* a corona virus, manufactured (to save the earth), eliminates 95% of the world's population and the text focusses on the emergence of one new community within "South Africa" (national borders have been destroyed). This group represents "a new start for good people" amidst destruction, devastation and warring factions of humanity.

Lauren Beukes' *Afterland* (2020) is set in a "female" future in 2023, after a virus has eliminated 99% of those carrying the Y chromosome (the Manpocalypse). Men, who have survived are a scarce commodity, there is a black-market trade in semen, "white gold", and male bodies. The main character, Cole, is a South African traveling across America with her 13-year-old son, Miles, attempting to protect and disguise him from the government - "the Department of Men" (actually women) - and the traffickers; the main villain in the latter group being her sister. She dresses Miles as a girl (she becomes Mila) and they join a group of nuns on a bus trip.

This paper will explore the very different ways in which a post-pandemic future is imagined in these texts and the implications for genre, as well as understandings of "home", gender and crime. While these novels might be read as speculative fiction, I argue that both plots are both framed within crime fiction, while also representing new hybrid forms of the genre.

University of Pretoria, South Africa

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## PANEL 2.2:

(Ab)using the Female Body (I).

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Réka Szarvas. "Embodied Detection – Crime Fiction through the lens of Feminist Corporeographic Metafiction in Gillian Flynn's Novels."

The human body has always played a central role in detective fiction, both on the account of the victim and the detective. The genre's preoccupation with the body lends itself to be analysed through the lens of narratological approaches that are centred on corporeality (Plain 2001, Punday 2003, Kérchy 2008, Sandberg 2019). Elaborating on these literary theoretical approaches, I wish to introduce the analytical notion of *embodied detection* with the aim to explore the intersection of the textuality of the body and the corporeality of the text in crime fiction narratives – with a special focus on Gillian Flynn's novels. In Flynn's fiction the main character's body, traumas, and bodily memories play a crucial role in the process of detection. Through studying somatic and semiotic manifestations of *embodied detection* I will explore how in contemporary women's detective fiction the protagonist has to examine her own body to be able to solve the crime case. Thus, the process of the detection inevitably becomes an embodied experience with feminist political and poetical significations. Studying embodied detection allows us to scrutinise how earning the secrets of the detecting body can reveal more about the crime case itself, but it also reveals the body's influence on the de/construction of the textual corpus, facilitating a commentary on the literary and cultural traditions regarding artistic representations and lived experiences of femininity and the family, from a feminist metafictional point of view.

University of Szeged, Hungary

Emily Alice Farmer. "The Diseased and Deadly Woman: Problematic Sexuality in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *Roseanna* (1965)."

Crime fiction has long been lauded as a genre that offers a forum for reviewing and critiquing harmful social and cultural values. One such concern frequently narrativised is the perceived threat posed by female sexuality to the social organisation of any given society. This paper will explore this condemnation by analysing the presentation of liberated female sexuality in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *Roseanna* (1965), a novel that suggests such an existence has the capacity to harm not only the individual but the health of a nation also. Achieving this outcome will involve examining the presentation of sexuality in the novel, both in its presence structurally as well as close textual analysis of significant extracts. Examining the novel through this route will add to the field of research by demonstrating that *Roseanna* is not merely a novel

concerned with individual pathology as critics have suggested but is in fact an indictment on the poisoned psyche of a nation that desires to cleanse its population of sexually liberated women. Furthermore, the essay's concentration on the close textual analysis of *Roseanna* will demonstrate the importance of engaging with crime fiction texts in an academic context by using gendered theoretical frameworks to interrogate the pervasive social values regarding the behaviours expected of women.

Bath Spa University, UK

### Heike Henderson. "AI, Crime and Gender: Investigating the Role of the Body."

What is the role of gender in society and crime fiction of the future? Will it still be a feasible category to identify and classify human beings, when the borders between genders, and between human and machine, become more and more permeable?

Tom Hillenbrand's thriller *Qube* (2020), a sequel to his bestseller *Hologrammatica* (2018), shines a fascinating light on future ramifications of technological progress and efforts to optimize human life and society. In *Qube*, set in 2091, a significant part of the population has become "quants," which means that they have replaced their organic brain with a digital "cogit." For those people, (gendered) bodies have become mere vessels that are exchangeable at will. Consequently, gender as well as descriptive attributes have ceased to play a role in identifying people, both for official purposes (passports etc.) and in crime and detection. AI, on the other hand, which is often perceived as genderless but nevertheless incorporates many gendered attributes, is playing a larger and larger role in organizing and steering society – which not surprisingly results in both positive and potentially disastrous outcomes.

In my presentation, I will use theories of posthumanism and transhumanism to investigate Hillenbrand's blurring of boundaries between human and machine. I will explore the role of the (gendered) body in Hillenbrand's world and consider ramifications for our society that might not (yet) resemble that world but is certainly moving towards it.

Boise State University, USA



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## PANEL 3.1:

Spies and Politicians.

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**Federico Prina. "Class, Espionage and the Phoney War in Nancy Mitford's *Pigeon Pie*."**

Published in May 1940 but set at the outset of WWII, Nancy Mitford's *Pigeon Pie* relates the story of Sophia Garfield, a lethargic aristocrat who discovers a nest of Nazi spies in her own home in London. After the murder of her maid and the abduction of her beloved French bulldog, Sophia becomes herself a counterspy and does her utmost to save Britain. The present paper considers how, behind the light veil of irony about the paranoia that characterised the early days of the conflict, this unique spy story by Nancy Mitford offers a precise narration of real historical events – the deterioration of the Anglo-German relations in the late 1930s, the turbulent period immediately after the Declaration of war – intermingled with the presence of biographical elements related to the Mitford family such as the pre-war world of the English upper classes, Unity and Diana Mitford's connections with fascism and their Nazi sympathies. This ostensible light comedy also draws attention to the reaction of the English aristocracy to the imminent war, a class that had not yet understood how their pre-war lifestyle – that Mitford satirises in many of her novels such as *Christmas Pudding*, *Highland Fling*, *The Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate* – would radically change after the conflict: Sophia's elegant furs, her chauffeur driven Rolls-Royce and her lavish dinners in restaurants that serve pink champagne by the bucketload are all part of a world of privileges that would become only a distant memory for that closed, elitist circle.

Università degli Studi di Milano.

**Stefanie Sumner. "Writing the First World War – Exploring gender representations in selected short stories of Sherlock Holmes and Max Carrados."**

The British nation not yet at war had a clear adversary in early 20th-century detective fiction – the German spy. Unsurprisingly, Conan Doyle's short story "His Last Bow" is, therefore, explicitly patriotic in both plot and language. Originally entitled "His Last Bow. The War Service of Sherlock Holmes", it touches upon the same topic as Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados short story "The Secret of Headlam Height". Both threats are neutralised by the cunning and clever detective. Both times, however, they also require help from their loyal sidekick – and a woman. Or was it an "old lady"? Or a "good girl"?

This paper aims to examine the aforementioned short stories, focusing in particular on gender representations within the stories, both in terms of the role of the sidekick as well as

that of the female aide. Furthermore, it will assess the short stories' contribution to shaping and upholding British (gender/class) identity, an issue particularly important in times of international conflict. Considering the ongoing popularity of detective fiction, the two short stories will serve as helpful examples to further examine the so far often overlooked relationships of 'detective – sidekick' and 'sidekick – detective fiction' - and the marginal role of the female in both.

University of Potsdam

### Mareike Spychala. "Nostalgia, Masculinity, and Real Person Fiction: The Obama Biden Mysteries Series."

Published in 2018 and 2019 respectively, *Hope Never Dies* and *Hope Rides Again* by Andrew Shaffer, subtitled *An Obama Biden Mystery*, offer crime stories that feature the former President and Vice-President as amateur investigators. Described as "[e]vocative of noir thrillers and bromantic buddy-cop movies" on Penguin Randomhouse's website, the novels rest on a premise that, this paper argues, is carried not only by a liberal nostalgia for the Obama presidency (indeed, this nostalgia is also referenced on the website) but also by certain stereotypes about gender and race.<sup>1</sup> Thus this paper wants to ask how nostalgia, masculinity, and especially a certain kind of liberal white masculinity, and race interact with the depiction of crime in this series. Furthermore, this paper aims to trace how all of these aspects are influenced by and contingent on the conventions of the (sub-)genre of real person fiction.

<sup>1</sup>"Obama Biden Mysteries Series." Penguin Randomhouse, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/series/D42/obama-biden-mysteries/>. Accessed January 25, 2022.

University of Bamberg

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## PANEL 3.2:

Pandemic Crime Fiction (II).

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Sarah Heinz. "'There is no way out' - The Re-Assessment of Home in Peter May's Thriller *Lockdown*."

When COVID-19 hit countries at the beginning of 2020, governments attempted to slow the spread of the virus. Chief among these attempts was putting societies into lockdown. People were forced to remain in their private homes, an experience that made many re-evaluate this seemingly familiar space. Instead of a cosy space of retreat, home became associated with tedium and dullness at best or isolation at worst.

Peter May's thriller *Lockdown*, allegedly the first English-language Covid-19 novel, responded to the pandemic by expressly tackling the experience of lockdown. Published in April 2020 and set in a London under strict curfew, May uses the thriller to create the radical uncertainty and psychological tension at the heart of this sub-genre of crime writing, delivering its typically intense reading experience or 'thrill'. I argue that this reading experience is tied to the novel's re-assessment of home during lockdown. By showing a society confined to their homes, the novel fosters a sense of home as a space of imprisonment, violence, and control. This awareness questions positive associations of home as warmth, belonging, and safety and makes the reader re-assess their own home spaces, and, incidentally, the places where they may be reading the novel itself.

University of Vienna, Austria

Hannah Derwent, Kimberly Scott. "Pandemic Possibilities: Crises and Gender-fluidity in Dorothy L. Sayer's *The Nine Tailors*."

Roughly nine decades ago tonight, Lord Peter Wimsey and his man Bunter began the adventure of *The Nine Tailors* by running off the road during a snowstorm. Author Dorothy L. Sayers created this and other crises to explore changing roles for women under the guise of a detective story set ten years after World War I within a British village. Sayers herself manned the front lines of societal upheaval; as an Oxford-degreed vicar's daughter she was determined to be her own person, earning her living and deciding for herself what course her life would take. Through her male protagonist and sleuth, Wimsey, she justified her emancipated lifestyle, lending support to like-minded young women facing a dearth of marriageable men.

In our proposed paper, we will examine the multiple forms of crisis (epidemic, theft, death, flood) detailed in Sayers' story, contrasting her female characters' reactions to each

situation and identifying Sayers' presentation of gender roles. We will then draw upon contemporary, historical, and modern sources to evaluate Sayers' success at using exigency to advance the concepts of equality for women, which Winston Churchill would later encapsulate as "never let[ting] a good crisis go to waste."

Grand Valley State University, Michigan

**Anne Delgado. "Victorian Ghost Hunters and the Evolution of the Occult Criminal."**

In 1886, the British Society for Psychical Research published *Phantasms of the Living*, a groundbreaking investigation of telepathy and supernatural phenomena. Critical reception of the book was largely negative; however, the investigation itself inspired fictional stories that were characterized by their authors as "cases for the SPR." By the 1890s, fiction featuring "exposers of ghosts" and "occult psychologists" appeared in the pages of various literary periodicals. As the century ended, the fictional psychical detective was born. Early incarnations of the psychical detective included Robert Eustace's and L. T. Meade's John Bell and E. and H. Heron's Flaxman Low. These stories, while they formally introduced the fictional psychical detective, also reflected the imperial and patriarchal anxieties of the period. Threaded through these stories was an abiding fear of the potential contamination that might result from contact with the foreign/imperial occult criminal. This mysterious character did not fade with the Victorian empire, however. Instead, the occult criminal transformed into a threat from within in the stories of M.R. James, William Hope Hodgson, and Algernon Blackwood. This paper charts the evolution of both the psychical detective and his quarry, the occult criminal.

Indiana University, US

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## PANEL 3.3:

(Ab)using the Female Body (II).

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**Mona Raeisian. "Bodies and Borders: An analysis of the Function of Female Bodies in American Police Procedural Fiction."**

Female bodies are significant and intriguing elements in American police procedural fiction. The battered and wounded bodies of victims, the presumably tough and embattled body of the female detective and to a lesser extent the deviant body of the female perpetrator all function as sites in which the most integral ideological conflicts of the society are embodied. The bodies mentioned are often framed in various defining ways; the female police officer's badge and gun or uniform, the yellow tape that separates the body of the victim from the rest of the society, the metaphorical space of monstrosity or the physical space of a jail cell for the female perpetrator place these bodies as texts within various interpretive and identifying processes. The female cop for instance is always defined by virtue of the uniform or the badge as a member of a male-dominated police force and thus will always be subject to scrutiny by the male gaze of her colleagues and superiors. The framing practices that identify these women as ideological subjects or extra-ideological abnormalities are highly significant because they correspond to how dominant ideologies such as capitalism, individualism and patriarchy create an idealized femininity. This paper analyzes these framing practices in order to identify these correspondence between the portrayal of female bodies in American police procedural fiction and the constructed ideal femininity of the three dominant ideologies mentioned.

Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany

**Jeanie R. C. Toscano. "The weaponization of women's bodies in *Las mujeres matan mejor* by Omar Nieto."**

My paper discusses a contemporary Mexican novel by Omar Nieto, *Las mujeres matan mejor* (*Women kill best*) (2013), in which the structuring effects of narcoliberalism have trickled down to all aspects of Mexican society, including the female body. As the title suggests, in this novel the female body has become a commodified tool of narco-warfare.

My analysis focuses on the contentious space that women's bodies occupy when mobilized into roles that violate deeply rooted conceptions of femininity. Under the market logic of narcoliberalism, rather than affirming traditional conceptions of femininity as life-givers and nurturers of human life, women have become destroyers of that very life in their roles as hitwomen (*sicarias a sueldo*) and snipers (*francotiradoras*). I explore the role of gender in this



contentious space that has turned women's bodies into weapons of warfare, even as their sexualized bodies continue to be a currency of exchange and necro-empowerment through predatory uses of their bodies.

University of California, Irvine

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## PANEL 4.1:

Scottish Crime.

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Jennifer Schnabel. "Mapping 1970s Glasgow: William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* and the Scottish Women's Aid Collection."

William McIlvanney, widely acknowledged by writers and scholars of the genre as the godfather of Tartan Noir, published his first crime novel in 1977. *Laidlaw*, set in Glasgow, takes us into the gritty streets, from Drumchapel to St. George's Cross. The narrative follows an aggressive police detective inspector with contacts in the criminal underworld who works to solve the murder of a teenage girl whose brutalized body was found in Kelvingrove Park. As critic Allan Massie notes in his review of the 2013 reprinting of *Laidlaw*, "William McIlvanney did for Glasgow what Chandler had done for Los Angeles, giving the city its fictional identity." *Laidlaw* also features the real life, everyday violence occurring in the city—including violence against women.

In response to this violence, Scottish women's aid groups began forming in 1973, offering support and housing for women and children in abusive situations. The Scottish Women's Aid Collection, housed at the Glasgow Women's Library, is open to researchers and includes member newsletters, locations of safe houses, and regional newspaper clippings about domestic abuse. In this paper, I will discuss how I explored the archive, conducted textual analyses, and used a digital mapping tool to identify commonalities in locations and discourse between the Glasgow Women's Aid materials and McIlvanney's novel. I argue that the places, spaces, and issues highlighted in the archive both reflect and interrogate a history of violence in Glasgow during the 1970s and can help us reevaluate similar representations in the crime fiction of the period.

Massie, Allan. "Laidlaw by William McIlvanney Review." *The Spectator*. 6 July 2013  
<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/07/laidlaw-by-william-mcilvanney-review/>.  
 Accessed 24 January 2020.

Ohio State University, USA

Daphné Cousin-Martin. "Translating touch: gender stereotypes and relationships in Tartan Noir."

Between 2018 and 2021, a scandal involving former PM Alex Salmond and Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon made the headlines in Scotland and abroad, evidence of a change induced by

the #MeToo movement. And, in this respect, it has led people to reconsider what was deemed acceptable or unacceptable.

Since Val McDermid declared that "The crime novel had become the novel of social observation"<sup>1</sup> - a belief shared by fellow writers such as Chris Brookmyre – Tartan Noir appears to be the perfect space to investigate gender and sensuality in crime fiction.

In order to explore how gendered stereotypes and relationships have evolved over the past decade in Scottish crime fiction, especially since #MeToo, my paper will focus on the new wave of Tartan Noir novels (from McIlvanney to Broadfoot). Re-examining traditional representations of hardmen and *femmes fatales*, and drawing on a few selected examples, my paper will highlight the ways Val McDermid and Neil Broadfoot explore touch, sensuality and alienation, taking into consideration the narrator, the characters of novels and the reader. By comparing a few extracts from French crime fiction writer, I will then analyse the way it translates into French.

<sup>1</sup> *From a talk delivered at the 24th St Hilda's Mystery & Crime Conference in Oxford in August 2017.*

Rouen University

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### Šárka Dvořáková. "'You Can Choose Not to Go to the Island:' Boundary Crossing and Remembering in Peter May's Lewis Trilogy."

Fin Macleod, the protagonist of Peter May's Lewis trilogy, is at a crossroads in both his career and personal life. In an attempt to leave the tragic death of his son behind, he takes up his last assignment as an Edinburgh police detective which takes him back to the Isle of Lewis, his birthplace.

In Island Studies, "islandness" is the neutral equivalent of "insularity." Having boundaries, or boundedness, is a significant component of islandness, suggesting that a conscious act of border crossing is always necessary in order to visit an island. For May's characters this conscious act is accompanied by an involuntary act of recalling the repressed memories and of reconstructing personal identities which can only be stabilized after the past has been uncovered and contained. In the first novel, *The Blackhouse* (2009), which will be the main focus of this paper, Macleod struggles with various possible masculinities and the notion of "true" masculinity is questioned when the local rite of passage to manhood is abused as a means of exacting revenge on those who do not wish to undergo it.

Using the tools of the interdisciplinary field of Island Studies, this paper will offer a close reading of May's trilogy with special attention being paid to the boundedness of both physical and mental spaces.

Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic

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## PANEL 4.2:

Crime Fiction before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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**Christian Feser. "Wicked Wives and Horrible Husbands: 'True Tragedies' on the Elizabethan Stage."**

Before *The Ripper* (2020), *In Plain Sight* (2016), *Serial* (2014-) and similar TV shows and podcasts quenched our current thirst for gory docu-drama, Elizabethan audiences found delight in the excessively violent *Arden of Faversham* (1592), *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599) and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), representatives of a short-lived "true crime craze" (Nicholl) on London's stages. Based on well-known criminal cases – typically homicides sensationalized in chapbooks, ballads and news pamphlets – these plays simultaneously raise a moralising finger and allow themselves to revel in gore and violence.

Taking a cue from Alex MacConochie, Frances Dolan and Charles Nicholl, all of whom have recently shed light on this understudied literary phenomenon, the proposed paper will focus on murder of the spouse or child as the ultimate transgression portrayed in these plays. Specifically, it considers the ways in which these self-proclaimed "true tragedies" stage this particular type of hierarchical violence and in how far they do (or do not) subvert gender and marital roles in doing so.

Nicholl, Charles. "Murder on Bankside", *London Review of Books*, Vol. 43, No. 21.

University Duisburg-Essen, Germany

**Chaima Aouadi. "Women and Crime in Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress*."**

Criminality is a revealing activity which elicits a deeper understanding of not only the society and political system in which it develops but also the private space. An illegal act or an immoral offense holds significant layers of meanings about the individual in reaction to its surrounding milieu. Focusing on this private sphere, my paper examines the function of crime in the development of Defoe's fictional character, Roxana, in *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress*. The immoral and unlawful acts committed by the female protagonist aided by her servant, Amy, determine her status as an enlightening criminal who is constantly escaping a destructive punishment. To reach this research's aim, the study will concentrate on the binary sides of Roxana's personage. Roxana is a perpetrator when she abandons her children, has relations outside the marital bond, and uses identity fraud. However, she proves to be as well a victim of her first husband's imprudent financial decisions, the institute of marriage, and her own self-

punishment. The complexity of Roxana as an eighteenth-century female culprit will allow an informative view about crime as a social construct that altered the lives of many women in their social and psychological struggle during the eighteenth century.

Otto-Friedrich-University of Bamberg

Chandni Rampersad. "'... and what a load of scandal here' – Eighteenth-century Murderesses in the *Gentleman's Magazine*."

This paper is an offshoot of my doctoral research project which investigates the different femininities portrayed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the eighteenth century. My feminist theoretical framework will help shape the discursive notions of crime, gender and topical attitudes depicted in the periodical. The crime landscape of early modern Britain contains few detailed accounts on female perpetrators. Out of the fractional number of women who did commit reprehensible crimes, some of them enjoyed quite the spotlight in the magazine from the discovery of their crime up till their execution. My paper will revisit the cases of two well-known female convicts who filled up a considerable number of pages in the monthly issue. In 1733, Sarah Malcolm featured both textually and pictorially for her heinous crime of murdering her old mistress and two maids. In 1767, Elizabeth Brownrigg made the headlines when her role as employer to two young female apprentices morphed into that of a torturer and eventually as a murderer much to the horror of the public. The journalistic reports on the two women invite us to dwell on the nature, motivations and narratives of female transgressions and the impact they had on people's imagination at the time.

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany



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## PANEL 4.3:

Ambiguous Women.

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Alan Mattli. "‘They Weren’t All Fakes’: Feminist Crime Fiction as an ‘Authentic Copy’ in Marcia Muller’s *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*."

In her 1977 novel *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, Marcia Muller offers a critical revision of traditional crime fiction, specifically the hardboiled convention’s often explicitly misogynist masculinity. Although marked by many of the blind spots now commonly associated with white second-wave feminism, the debut case of serial detective Sharon McCone is nevertheless a significant piece of post-war detective literature, as it helped engender the subgenre of feminist crime fiction.

However, the problems and challenges of subversive genre revision had already been well established by the time *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* was published, with Tzvetan Todorov arguing as early as 1966 that "the whodunit par excellence is not the one which transgresses the rules of the genre, but the one which conforms to them."

And yet, it is my argument that *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, through its narrative theme of art fraud, and by critically engaging with the difficulty of distinguishing between genuine and counterfeit works of art, confronts its own ‘unfaithfulness’ to both its parent genre and its subversive ambitions. In doing so, it suggests that genre revision must needs be ‘impure,’ must needs be ‘compromised,’ lest it discard the revised object – traditional crime fiction – wholesale, depriving itself of a *raison d’être*.

University of Zurich, Switzerland

Magdalena Tosik. "The Female Gaze in Detective Novels by Gaja Grzegorzewska."

In 2006 Gaja Grzegorzewska published the first novel (out of six between 2006-2016) on the adventures of Julia Dobrowolska, a private detective. Polish critics have acknowledged the series for hybridising with romance and exploring the subject of gender and sexual identity within contemporary Polish crime narrative. In my reading of the Dobrowolska series I argue that the way in which the female detective adapts to the gender stereotypes of this traditionally considered male-dominant profession results in introducing camp aesthetics into the series. As a consequence, I analyse how camp aesthetics is developed by the means of a play with the ‘male gaze’ the hard boiled offers. I also examine the fact that the ‘female gaze’ to which the series is submitted is not just a reverse of Mulvey’s *dominant male gaze* concept. The series by Grzegorzewska exemplifies how the awareness of *to-be-looked-at-ness* that characterises the

female detective impacts on the narrative technique: exposing the body, depicting the murder and playing with the genre conventions. The paper intends to investigate how Grzegorzewska dismantles the tradition of hard boiled fiction and re-writes it accordingly to make her female character plausible in this particular literary context through the means of camp aesthetics.

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

**Monika Vecerova. "Ambiguity of the Trickster: Conflicting Identities of Women Characters in Black Hard-Boiled Fiction."**

In crime fiction written by Black American authors, the critique of corrupted society in the urban environment of traditional hard-boiled novels gets further amplified by the inclusion of racialized violence against the African American community. Apart from the conventional hard-boiled tropes and as a marginal genre of crime fiction, Black hardboiled detection employs the vernacular tradition of signifyin(g), double consciousness or racism – internalised, individual and systemic. The paper proposes indirect references to trickster character traits in Walter Mosley's hard-boiled novel *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990) and the numerous ways African and African American oral folk traditions have been integrated into American crime fiction. Specifically, in regard to the teachings of Lewis Hyde and Henry Louis Gates Jr., the paper discusses how behavior of the novel's titular antagonist Daphne Monet – who is passing and presented as the story's villainous femme fatale – pertains to the notion of tricksters being mostly male, genderless or sexually ambiguous. Considering instances of gendered and racialized violence against Daphne's persona, the paper thus argues that Daphne's displayed trickster behavior derives from experienced racist and misogynist occurrences resulting in varying coping strategies to suppress trauma-related psychological effects. As a conflicted hardboiled woman figure dealing with misogynoir, Daphne as a potential trickster manifests various ways of survival in a perilous, predominantly male-oriented setting.

Masaryk University, Czech Republic

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## KEYNOTE 2

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### Gill Plain. "Dull Dogs and Englishmen: Agatha Christie and Masculinity in the 1940s."

The 1940s in Britain was a period of radical cultural change. Men and women were expected first to adapt to the coercive demands of total war, and then to adjust to the equally coercive demands of peace. For men, this meant that ideals of masculinity shifted from uniformed heroism to 'domestic citizenship', a transition that many demobilised combatants found disorientating and difficult. After six years spent in homosocial environments, learning the skills of warfare – and in some cases suffering traumatic injury – it was far from straightforward to adapt to the new culturally mandated roles of family men and breadwinners. The result was an uneasy homecoming, characterised by uncanny misrecognitions and distrust on both sides. These anxieties were mediated by popular culture. War films temporarily disappeared from the screen, and a new cadre of civilian heroes emerged to negotiate appropriate postwar narratives of male becoming. Risk was no longer configured as a bullet or a bomb, but was imagined as threats to the domestic space, the office environment, or the psychic health of the individual. Within this framework, the psychic and social wounds of men were to be repaired through the 'prosthetic home' – wife, children, property, car – the possessions that confirm male authority in a peacetime economy. Whether such 'objects' could in fact replace all that had been lost in the war, and in the transition from war to peace, would remain a source of cultural anxiety for a decade to come.

Agatha Christie is recognised as a writer who 'superintend[s] contemporary battles from a distance' (Knight 1995: 163), and her fiction of the 1940s participates symbolically in the mediation and management of ideal masculinity. In this talk I explore the transitions wrought by war on her writing, and examine two texts – *Towards Zero* (1944) and *The Hollow* (1946) – that address the coercive demands of postwar domestic citizenship. By examining a selection of Christie's male types – in particular, her stoic, often wounded, 'dull dogs' – it is possible to recognise her fictions as part of a therapeutic culture of rehabilitation, and as an anxious reinforcement of traditional gender roles threatened by both the war and its aftermath.

University of St Andrews, Scotland

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## PANEL 5.1:

### Perspectives on Asian Crime Fiction.

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#### Wendy Jones Nakanishi. "The Gendered Nature of Japanese Crime Fiction."

In Japan's traditional patriarchal society there is a clear demarcation between the sexes in every respect, from birth to death, including job opportunities and potential careers. It therefore seems fitting that the gender gap extends even to the crime fiction written by Japanese male and female authors.

Two types of crime fiction are popular in Japan. The first is the 'puzzle' mystery linked to the general influx of Western ideas and texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when, after over two centuries of self-imposed isolation, Japan opened itself up to the outer world and translations of Sherlock Holmes and Edgar Allen Poe's tales flooded the country. The latter author was so admired that a man named Taro Hirai (1894-1965), often described as the 'father of the Japanese mystery,' took the pen name of Edogawa Ranpo, a rendering of the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allen Poe. In 1923 he published an original mystery: the first attempt by a Japanese to write a modern detective story.

The second type of crime fiction is a more recent phenomenon. Crime fiction as a sociological analysis of society became popular in the 1990s. It was both a cause and a result of a surge in female writers who wrote tales of revenge and violence often motivated by frustration at continuing to be treated as second-class citizens in their own country.

Oddly enough, it was a man named Seicho Matsumoto who is credited with founding of the so-called "Social School" of crime fiction. It was largely due to his efforts that, by the 1960s, the murder mystery had become a phenomenally popular literary genre in Japan. Matsumoto (1909-1992) was an incredibly prolific author, publishing over 450 books of detective and mystery novels as well as historical fiction, and has been likened to Georges Simenon and P.D. James, to Agatha Christie and Elmore Leonard.

Seicho Matsumoto apart, most male Japanese mystery writers have tended to produce crime fiction that represents an intricate problem to be solved. There is a particular fondness, for example, for the locked room mystery. Many male writers also are attracted to the supernatural, including elements the occult and the magical in their novels. Female Japanese mystery writers, on the other hand, have often followed the example of Seichi Matsumoto by occupying themselves in their plots with the mundane details of everyday life: personal bankruptcy, divorce, domestic violence, and bullying in Japanese schools. Like Matsumoto, they explore how ordinary people can be led to commit a crime because of the flawed or inequitable social structures around them.

This paper will examine the gender imbalance apparent in the different approaches to crime fiction adopted by Japanese male and female authors while also touching upon the topic of why so little of Japanese crime fiction has been translated into English. I will argue that it is largely because of the uniqueness of Japan's culture: a result of its nearly three hundred years of self-imposed isolation from the outside world during the Edo period from the early seventeenth century till the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Although Japan traditionally had benefited from and was deeply influenced by earlier cultural exchanges with China and Korea, in the Edo Period, from 1600 until 1867, Japan became almost wholly cut off from the outside world. Unsurprisingly, certain mores and customs became entrenched in Japanese society and behavior during this period when Japan's culture developed and flourished and began to take directions unique to itself. Japan's crime fiction offers an example of this phenomenon in the different approaches adopted by its male and female authors.

Shikoku Gakuin University, Japan

**Somjeeta Pandey. "Gender and Genre: A Study of Contemporary Indian English Women's Crime Fiction."**

Crime fiction has experienced a steady emergence in the twenty-first century Indian literary scenario, and Indian writers in English have taken up the genre with an unprecedented gusto. Indian English crime writers are certainly influenced by their American and European counterparts, but they appropriate the genre to suit the local Indian contexts. This trait is prominently evident in the increasing presence of women writers who employ female detectives to often investigate crimes against women. My paper will study three Indian crime fiction series by women writers which provide a corpus to assess how the generic conventions have been modified to accommodate a female detective and to root these novels in an Indian milieu. I will discuss how these women detectives can be seen as a reflection of the uninhibited independent twenty-first century Indian woman and as Maitreyee Chaudhuri suggests a "celebration of the new-found 'self' of Indian women." I will also discuss how these works provide a space for creating new roles for women while also illustrating a wide spectrum of female experiences. Lastly my paper will try to explore these works in the context of India's economic growth and how they affect and are affected by India's publishing industry.

Gobardanga Hindu College, West Bengal, India (Assistant Professor of English)

Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India (Doctoral Fellow)



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## PANEL 5.2:

(Neo-)Victorian Imaginations.

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### Deren Gülsever. "Feminine Sherlock."

The young adult novel series "The Enola Holmes Mysteries" is about young detective Enola Holmes, created by Nancy Springer, to find missing persons and uncover mysteries. In this series, Enola Holmes is the fourteen-year-old sister of famous detectives Sherlock Holmes and Mycroft Holmes and sets out to find her missing mother who raised her. While the cult characters of Arthur Conan Doyle have been adapted to many different media to date, it is seen that the adaptations made by women or the transfer of detective character traits to a female character are rare. The problem of the "male" gender coming to mind when the "detective" image is considered, finds a place for itself in feminist youth literature and women's rewriting works, and the character of Sherlock Holmes and his stories are rewritten. In the study, "The Enola Holmes Mysteries" series, one of the rewritings of Sherlock Holmes, will be examined by considering feminist criticism and intertextuality, and the character traits of Enola Holmes and Sherlock Holmes will be compared. The changes in the adaptation of a male private detective's behavior to a female private detective will be revealed and the importance of rewriting in feminist youth literature will be emphasized.

Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Turkey

### Linda Ledford-Miller. "The Importance of a Butler."

Charles Lenox is the well-to-do detective of thirteen novels, a short story, and three prequel novels set in Victorian England. The second son of landowners with a father and then a brother as MP, Charles will not inherit the land. Nor does he need to work. In fact, earning a living would be a blow to his status in society. He therefore begins a career as an amateur detective, embarrassed by offers of payment and the very notion that he, as a member of the landed gentry, might (want to) work. But he likes detecting, and his primarily ally is his butler, Graham, his scout since his school days. Graham is essential to Lenox's success, able to enter realms of society closed to a Victorian gentleman. The series follows the detecting duo through substantive changes in society and class, as each man reflects and yet contests the class into which he was born.

University of Scranton, USA

Barbara Braid. "‘A lesbian marching out of the kitchen with a bloody ax’ – a Queer Perspective on the Adaptations of Lizzie Borden’s Case."

The notorious case of the Borden murders committed in 1892 in Fall River, Massachusetts, has sparked a number of fictionalisations. Among the plethora of adaptations of the case, what demands more scholarly attention is Lizzie’s often speculated romantic attachments to women. This motif has been considered by adaptations of the Lizzie Borden case, in novels such as Evan Hunter’s *Lizzie* (1984) and Elizabeth Engstrom’s *Lizzie Borden* (1991), and more recently, Dawn Ius’s *Lizzie* (2018); also plays, such as Sharon Pollock’s *Blood Relations* (1980) and Carolyn Gage’s two short dramas, *Lace Curtain Irish* (2010) and *The Greatest Actress Who Ever Lived* (2011), touch upon the topic of Lizzie’s sexuality. The most recent – and best-known – addition to this body of adaptations is the feature film *Lizzie* (dir. Craig Macneill, 2018), starring Chloë Sevigny and Kristen Stewart. The paper proposes a closer look on this body of adaptations, examining their depiction of queer Lizzie against the lethal lesbian trope as defined by Ruby Rich (2013) and other stereotypes of an evil, violent lesbian, the corrupter of the innocents (Faderman 1981: 277). The purpose of this presentation is to establish to what extent these fictionalisations of the case perpetuate a heteronormative perspective on a queer criminal, and to discuss the ethical implications of associating queerness with brutal murder.

University of Szczecin, Poland

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## PANEL 5.3:

Female Violence and Victimisation.

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Keli Masten. "'Rushing, Shrieking, Each Man for Himself' – Violence and Justice in Detective Fiction."

The treatment of violence in literature is often a divisive one, depending upon the gratuitousness or the motivation behind the crimes. One way for authors to work around society's moral judgement is to create circumstances so egregious as to provide ample justification for vengeful acts of prolific violence, including mass murder. This is true across many iterations of detective and crime fiction, and with the right approach, authors have had their readers thirsty for the blood of the avenger's enemies for generations. Two such disparate but impactful examples come from the cosy mystery and the hard-boiled genres as imagined by American authors Anna Katharine Green and Dashiell Hammett. Their stories, *The House in the Mist* (1905) and "The Whosis Kid" (1925), respectively, provide representative samples of how authors engaged with the social and gender norms of their time period to create perfect-storm scenarios where mass murder ceases to be objectionable and evolves into something that looks more like justice. The unsympathetic "victims" become disposable in the fulfillment of the avenger's quest. In doing so, each author takes a shot at highlighting the human failings of society and the hypocritical disconnect between maintaining social order and avenging personal wrongs.

Ferris State University, USA

Patricia Veronica Green. "Narrative Crime Worlds and the Dynamics of Silent Hegemonies."

This article considers the way 21st female crime fiction deploys the potential of the crime genre by focusing on two crime novels, whose treatment of the conventions of the hard-boiled male detective novel, and the domestic noir, contribute to convey the relation between gender and genre in the stories. In this way, the paper examines how, in *The Lost Man* (2019), by Jane Harper, and in Tana French's novel *In the Woods* (2008), the authors' appropriate the generic conventions and tropes, in order to reconstruct and re-signify the topics related to gendered violence and abuse, with a focus on the notions of victimhood and perpetrators. In this sense, through a close reading of the texts the paper presents a cultural and social approach that draws on feminist theory, psychological and social studies, and Mc Hale's (1987) postmodernist fiction in order to illustrate how the texts' subversive strategies of plot and character, foreground ontological narrative worlds that work to question the economy of the

realist (crime) plot and the ideology of oppression and subjugation that reproduce the politics of male hegemony, within patriarchal contexts.

University of San Martin,

**Caroline Reitz. "Not a Long Way, Baby – *Lady Audley* to *Killing Eve*."**

Feminist anger is having a moment, but the double meaning of "mad" as angry and crazy has shaped the representation of women in popular crime fiction since Lady Audley burned down the house over 150 years ago. When is rage, as Brittney Cooper suggests, a "superpower" and when is it incapacitating? When is it justice and when is it revenge?

This paper is part of a larger project that explores the efficacy and ethics of anger as a strategy for justice for women. In this particular paper, I use the work of Sianne Ngai and Lauren Berlant as a framework for reading the "ugly feelings" of the female characters in the hit BBC spy thriller *Killing Eve*. I argue that even though these women are relatively at the top of their fields as sleuths, spy masters, and assassins their representation reflects the "suspended agency" of Lady Audley, whose path moves from wife and young mother deserted by her husband to governess back to wife – and ultimately murderer. While things of course have changed, the barbaric yawp that is the spectacular violence of *Killing Eve* reflects a frustration both with the crime fiction genre's promises of justice and with gender inequalities, exposed and worsened in the pandemic.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice/The CUNY Graduate Center

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## KEYNOTE 3

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Catherine Spooner. "'All white, but not like a ghost': the woman in white in the crime narrative."

In Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* (2006), a child witness describes seeing a woman in white abducting a missing child. His testimony is immediately doubted by Camille Preaker, the investigative journalist pursuing the story. 'But what if this person simply looked feminine?' she asks. 'A lanky man with long hair, a transvestite, an androgynous boy?' This paper suggests that the woman in white in the crime narrative is a figure in whom gender itself becomes the mystery to be solved. It proposes that the woman in white as she appears in crime fiction is a fugitive from the Gothic novel and constitutes a haunting reminder of the genre's Gothic origins. Exploring the iconic appearance of women in white in Gothic crime narratives including Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-60), Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Robert Aldrich's film *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964), it argues that in these texts, the white dress does not represent 'pure' femininity, but rather a moment in which the secure construction of femininity is placed under threat. In the Gothic crime narrative, white is associated with female deviance and illness, and the white dress acts as a device through which femininity itself is pathologized.

Lancaster University, UK.

## PANEL 6.1:

National Identities and Anxieties.

### Primož Mlačnik. "Domesticated Slovenians in Detective Novels of Avgust Demšar."

I investigate the politics of representation in the detective novels of Avgust Demšar, a prolific Slovenian author of ten detective novels, by deconstructing their narratives and the detective triad. The novels *Thin Ice* (*Tanek led*), *Europe* (*Evropa*), *Miloš*, *The Island* (*Otok*) and *The Church* (*Cerkev*) are presented through the perspective of domestic noir. Demšar's novels criticise bigotry and negotiate with the detective genre's inherent culturally conservative topos, oriented towards re-establishing the social status quo. At the manifest narrative level, homophobia and repressive sexual morale are delegitimised through the character of a murderous homophobic mother and politically correct lesbian detectives Nika Lavrič and macho detective Miloš, and by an emphatic male detective Martin Vrenko. However, repressive sexual morale is affirmed on the level of relationships between men and women or criminals and victims. Unweddedness, non-heteronormativity, divorce or adultery, both categorical pairs share archetypal sins of the patriarchal Christian imaginarium. Therefore, the ambivalent méconnaissance between affirmation and negation of cultural conservatism offers a unique view into contemporary Slovenian society's norms, fears, and prevalent ideological ideas. The norm of the stable monogamous partnership and the fear of private matters becoming public function as the elusive protection against social evil.

University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia

### Elena Ippendorf. "'What kind of a woman are you?' - Policing Femininity in Welsh Crime Narratives."

This question is posed during an interrogation on the TV crime drama *Craith/Hidden* (2018-2022), the central case study of this paper. DI Cadi John addresses it to a woman who helped facilitate and cover up her son's kidnapping, imprisonment, and sexual abuse of young women, taking the cultural trope of the Welsh Mam to a grotesque extreme.

Throughout the series, characters both male and female 'police' what they consider to be 'appropriately gendered' behaviour. Be that in the myriad of forms different characters respond violently to assertive women, of which this particular police department boasts a considerable number, or more insidious ways in which women transgressing socially constructed boundaries are judged in a gendered way. Both crime and investigation in *Craith/Hidden* prove to be inextricably entangled with questions of gender.

This paper investigates the ways in which Welsh crime narratives on screen and page scrutinize social constructions of femininity as well as national identity, focusing on domestic crimes and changing roles of victim and transgressor.

So far, research into Welsh crime narratives remains few and far between. While indebted to Catherine Phelps' doctoral thesis delineating Welsh crime fiction as a separate subgenre, this paper takes a novel approach: examining Welsh crime narratives across boundaries of medium.

Phelps, Catherine. *[Dis]Solving Genres: Arguing the Case for Welsh Crime Fiction*. 2013, [pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ff8d/3bf09d51eee7f09fceb0f33fbf76f8edc7c2.pdf](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ff8d/3bf09d51eee7f09fceb0f33fbf76f8edc7c2.pdf). Accessed 20. Jan. 2022. Web.

Leibniz University Hannover, Germany

#### Milla Fedorova. "Androids, Crime and Gender in Contemporary Russian TV Series."

This paper investigates the role of androids and, specifically, female robots – fembots – in sci-fi crime TV series and films in contemporary Russia. It discusses two major TV shows: Russian Netflix TV series *Better than Us* (2018; dir. Andrey Junkovsky) and mini-series *Project Anna Nikolaevna* (2020 – 2021; dir. Maxim Pezhemsky) against the background of their Russian and Western cinematographic predecessors, such as *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017; dir. Ridley Scott), and *Per Aspera ad Astra* (1981; dir. Richard Viktorov, Nikolay Viktorov).

This pair of shows portrays, respectively, an ideal female criminal and perfect female detective. In the former series, fembot Arisa, programmed to be a perfect mother, becomes a criminal after she kills a man who tried to use her as a sex robot, and flees from the authorities. In the former, on the contrary, the fembot Anna Nikolaevna serves as an ideal police officer, investigating crimes much better than her male (human) colleagues frustrated by her skills.

The paper seeks to answer the following questions: how do these shows represent the connection between crime, gender and artificial intelligence/body? What does each of these concepts add to our understanding of two other? What anxieties about the contemporary Russian society are accumulated in these films?

This paper builds on the discussion "The Post-Human as the New Other: Cyborgs, Fembots, and Androids in Russian Television Series" in Harriman Film Institute, Columbia University, streamed Apr 6, 2021, which did not focus on crime.

Georgetown University, Washington, USA



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## PANEL 6.2:

Detecting the Mysteries of the Past. (pre-organised panel)

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The general boom in popular history formats that has been a conspicuous part of popular culture in the last decades has also been reflected in crime fiction. Historical crime fiction, as Lenny Picker pointed out in the *Publishers Weekly* (2010), has thus become a particularly successful area of crime writing. While both academic and popular historians have long raised comparisons between their historical research and the act of detection (see Winks 1968/9 for the former and the television shows *Time Team*, Channel 4 1994-2014 and YouTube 2021-, and *History Detectives*, PBS 2003-2014, for examples of the latter), the use of historical crime fiction to reveal and interrogate gaps in the historical record has expanded in recent years into multiple subgenres and kinds of media. These narratives either use a past setting and show historical detective figures solving a (fictional or real) past crime or depict present-day detective-historians discovering the (or at least a possible) truth about past mysteries. Both types of historical crime media cover a wide variety of historical periods and settings; moreover, as a genre which is intimately involved with the epistemological problems of truth and knowledge, crime fiction has been acknowledged as a particularly apt form with which to explore the past and to fill – imaginatively – the gaps in the historical record.

In this panel, we aim to revisit the famous topos of the 'detective as historian' (Browne/Kreisler 2000; Korte/ Paletschek 2012) with a gendered focus. We will examine both how female historians and historical detectives explore the past, and how their approach might differ from their male counterparts', but also tackle the question of how crime fiction, through its particular generic conventions and narrative structures, can be used to explore the hidden lives of historic female figures long neglected by (male) historians.

Kristin M. Franseen. "'The mystery is musical... so we need a specialist': Women Musicologists as Detectives."

Musicology (when thought of at all) is not normally considered a terribly exciting field. Crime fiction on musical subjects—such as the various novels over the last century speculating on Mozart's or Tchaikovsky's deaths—tends to focus on recognizable historical figures. Why, then, would someone choose to make a contemporary musicologist the protagonist of a crime novel? This presentation explores the gendered dynamics of collegiality, research, and the musical past in three very different novels: Philippe Delelis's *La dernière cantate* (1998), Magnus Flyte's *City of Dark Magic* (2012), and Donna Leon's *The Jewels of Paradise* (2012). All three novels feature early-career female musicologists with complicated relationships to their

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century research subjects, precarious positions within the academy, and uneasy boundaries between personal and professional life. They also present their scholar-detectives and readers with very different kinds of mysteries to solve, from international conspiracies and murder to more mundane gaps in the historical archive. As an early-career woman in musicology who is both a scholar of musical fictions and a long-time mystery reader, I consider how the research process is reimagined in academic crime fiction as an act of detection conducted at multiple levels by authors, characters, and readers.

Concordia University, USA

### Dorothea Flothow. "Detecting Early-Modern Women's Lives: Crime Fiction, Life Writing and the Unknown Female."

While for too long, the lives of early-modern women had not received sufficient attention, in the last decades, historians, writers of fiction and artists have tried to remedy this lack, both through scholarly work and artistic re-imaginings. Thus, we can now witness a proliferation of bio-pics, bio-fiction and (popular) biographies centring on previously neglected females. As part of this trend, crime fiction writers have like-wise approached previously secret, hidden lives.

This paper proposes to examine how recent crime writers (e.g. Molly Brown, Susanna Gregory and M.J. Lee) have re-created the lives of Aphra Behn and Elizabeth Pepys employing typical features of the genre. These include the use of suspense, limited narrative positions, the focus on secrets, crimes, betrayal and death. Both these figures seem to share a considerable amount of publicity – Elizabeth Pepys, after all, features centrally in her husband's famous journal, Aphra Behn is well known as one of the first female writers to live by the pen. Still, many of the details of their lives have remained hidden under myth and fiction, leaving crime writers with fascinating possibilities to explore. Next to analysing selected texts in details, the proposed paper will also examine the possibilities of crime writing as a form of life writing more generally.

University of Salzburg, Austria

### Sylvia A. Pamboukian. "'Rewriting Victorian Crime in *Crimson Peak*."

In Guillermo del Toro's 2015 film *Crimson Peak*, aspiring author Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) defends her novel as "not just a ghost story." Similarly, *Crimson Peak*'s own ghosts are complex symbols of attractive Sir Thomas Sharpe's (Tom Hiddleston's) past, hideous apparitions, and computer-generated (CG) effects. Not "just" ghosts, they invite viewers to reconsider the relationship between past and present in the Gothic and in crime fiction.

Set in the 1890s, *Crimson Peak* draws upon familiar Victorian Gothic tropes, including Allerdale Hall's Brontë-esque moors and House of Usher-like foundation. As in *Dracula*, photography and phonography provide evidence of both the crimes and the hauntings at

Allerdale Hall. In this Victorian atmosphere, the flayed, blood-red, CG ghost-corpses of Sir Thomas's previous wives seem jarring incongruities.

As Maurizio Ascari suggests, Victorian ghost stories are torn between skepticism and nostalgia. Like Edith, viewers desire to both embrace and escape Victorian femininity. As figures of intrigue and repulsion, the CG ghosts complicate generic conventions about female victimhood. As CG effects, they remind viewers that the ghosts of the past are manufactured in the present and speak to our own fascination with crime, knowledge, and the female body.

Robert Morris University, Pennsylvania

## PANEL 6.3:

### Refuting Feminism...?

Lenka Žárská. "The Girl Who Wanted to Be Feminist: Female Characters in Marnie Riches' George McKenzie Series."

Much has been said about the misrepresentation and stereotypical portrayal of female characters in crime fiction. Especially the hard-boiled tradition, followed by the crime thriller, have frequently been less than amiable towards its women. While this has partly changed with authors such as P. D. James or Marcia Muller, the genre remains predominantly masculine.

In my contribution, I will examine the George McKenzie series (2015-2016) written by the British female author Marnie Riches. The series follows a young female protagonist, Georgina McKenzie, from the time when she was an Erasmus student in Amsterdam, through her PhD studies, up until her career as a professional criminologist. Although in all the novels, Georgina is accompanied by a male Dutch detective, Paul van der Bergen, it is made clear that she is the real heroine of the series – firstly, the titles of all the novels in the series begin with "The Girl Who", referring to Georgina. Secondly, the novels are being advertised as, for instance, a "crime thriller with a strong female lead" (US Amazon) or as featuring "crime-fiction's most kickass female criminologist" (Marnie Riches).

However, I will argue that despite the fact that the series is often promoted as a feminist take on crime thriller, it for instance highlights the positive traits of the female protagonist by degrading the female supporting characters, and as such in fact adds to the persisting oversimplification of women in crime fiction.

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Rebecca Lloyd. "'She's behind you!' – Refuting Feminism in CBS's *Elementary*."

Recent claims have been made for the positive image of the female detective in television crime dramas (Mizejewski: 2004, Cavender and Jurik: 2012), allowing Jermyn to suggest that this figure is no longer innovatory (2017). Many of these arguments centre on the attributes of such women, enabling them to outdo or match, male colleagues or partners, suggestive of an embrace of a feminist position. This is the case in the drama series *Elementary*, where the female Dr. Watson brings her unique perspective and capabilities to crime-solving and to humanising Sherlock Holmes (Kang and Patterson: 2014).

This paper considers that, despite this promising narrative, the series instead re-embeds gender stereotyping about ambitious women, who whether they seek personal or professional

advancement engage in criminal activities and are figured as 'bad' women. Demonising the active woman, particularly if non-white or lower-class, compared to Watson, whose worth is primarily sanctioned by her attachment to Holmes, highlights how any feminist reading of the show is insecure. The argument made here notes that behind the woman who conforms to the standards required by masculinity, *Elementary* situates as bogeywomen those refusing to accept their lot.

Independent Scholar

### Adriane Ivey. "Girls with Guns: Anti-Feminism in 'Chick-Lit' Mysteries."

The immense popularity of hybrid female detective/romance novels beginning in the early 1990s exemplified by series like Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum novels is both an interesting and disturbing phenomenon. Marketed primarily towards women in early mid-life (30-45), these novels, with their simultaneously independent but also amateurish and inept women protagonists, undercut feminism in general and more particularly the image of the female PI created by feminist writers in the 70s and 80s who designed their protagonists as role models for a mass audience previously unexposed to or potentially hostile to feminist ideals. These 21st century iterations of the female detective combine characteristics of at least four genres to create a new, contradictory, and even at times reactionary message of normative womanhood and women's roles.

The works, I argue, are an amalgamation of the specific genres of the British Cozy, itself based on nostalgia for the Golden Age of Mystery, the American hard-boiled PI novels, the female hard-boiled PI novels of the 70s and 80s, and the contemporary romance. The main characters are women who have fallen in social standing and occupy a position in the margins; they are independent and attempt to buck domestic standards for women; however, like in the Cozy, they are not professional detectives and often find their way to murder and investigation accidentally. The characters are often faced with a love triangle, one that includes a mainstream love interest who is part of law enforcement as well as a darker more mysterious man whose relationship to the world of crime is less clear-cut.

This combination of characteristics leads to a text in which the "quest" of the female lead becomes less about a moral/ethical stance or solving a murder, and more about her own return to the domestic and rejection of feminist principles.

Oxford College of Emory University, UK

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## PANEL 7.1:

Masculinities, Disability and Liminality.

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Paul Lohneis. "Darling Men, Lover Boys and Rogues: Connie Sachs, Molly Doran and the Precarity of Institutional Memory in John le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and Mick Herron's *Dead Lions*."

This paper explores the representation of Connie Sachs and Molly Doran in relation to their narrative function using discourses around paradigms of domesticity and motherhood, common associations with disability, and how these together might articulate formulations of abjection theory, in particular, those posited by Julia Kristeva (1982). The focus on women as custodians of family memory and other gender stereotyping, as well as the so-called 'affective charge' of disability (Cheyne 2017), reframe these narratives with implications beyond the usual tropes of reductive genre storytelling. George Smiley and Jackson Lamb, the respective protagonists of these novels, navigate estranged and difficult relationships to access the arcane information held by Sachs and Doran. These women are gatekeepers to a secret but contested past, and in different ways, also its personal construction. Both appear to have been emotionally and physically affected in the course of their work. The question as to whether their gender and somatic representation are significant as expressions of abjection is key, but also how it might correspond to the idea of the grand narrative, or inversely, the notion of the archive as a flawed symbol of intellectual freedom and a postmodernist metaphor for truth.

Cheyne, R. (2017), *Disability in Genre Fiction in The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*, (Eds: C. Barker & Murray). Cambridge University Press: 185-198.

London School of Film, Media & Design, University of West London, UK

Aline Sohny-Knops. "Investigating Masculine Disability – Negotiating Masculinity and Disability in Contemporary Detective Fiction."

Although female investigators populate detective fiction ever since the genre's 'golden age', masculinity still predominates the genre. While the broad spectrum of male detectives generally confirm what Connell conceptualised as hegemonic masculinity, the figure of the disabled detective challenges genre-(stereo)typical idea(l)s of masculinity (and disability). Exaggerating both the classical detective's cognitive extraordinariness and the hard-boiled detective's social alienation, the disabled detective becomes more 'human' as his body and mind significantly dis- and enable his (gender) identity. While academia increasingly recognises

disability in crime fiction, the distinctive category of masculinity is still neglected. Therefore, investigating the specific triangulation of detective fiction, masculinity studies and disability studies from a literary (disability) studies perspective, this paper highlights how the disabled detective negotiates his masculinity in private and professional contexts. It argues that the occupation as a detective supports the disabled investigator to achieve 'masculine disability'. Inverting the term 'disabled masculinity', predominantly used in research, 'masculine disability' introduces a decisively gendered reading of neurodiverse and (acquired) physical disability in contemporary detective fiction. It implies that the disabled detective (re)negotiates his masculine identity by implementing the disability in his professional investigations and accepting it as an essential, yet not defining, characteristic of his (gender) identity.

University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany

**Isabell Große. "'The Great War [of] Memory' – Or, Hazy Memories and Liminal Identities in *True Detective* (Season 3, 2019)."**

With the third season of *True Detective*, creator Nic Pizzolatto tries to continue the show's initial success story by returning to familiar ground: It centres on an investigation stretching over three decades; features two brooding police detectives and depicts crimes in a particularly stifling atmosphere. The world of *True Detective* seems to remain "a tough, grizzled man's world" (Nicholson), or does it? In the second episode, "Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye" (set in 1980), suspect Brett Woodard asks his interrogator Wayne Hays: "You ever been someplace you couldn't leave, and you couldn't stay, both at the same time?" (00:07:57-00:08:09). This scene is followed by a close-up of the elderly Wayne Hays who, in 2015, appears like a mere ghost of his former self. He gradually loses control over his memories due to dementia and inhabits a liminal space between past and present, self and other, (male) agency and vulnerability. Not only does he fail to understand himself as a man with a coherent identity, but his illness also unhinges his professional identity as a detective. My paper, therefore, intends to investigate what the show's portrayal of resurging memories (both literal and figurative ones) reveals about liminal (masculine) identities and how it responds to crime fiction's fascination with reconstructing or 'narrating' the past.

Nicholson, Rebecca. "True Detective Review – Sufficiently Gripping Despite the Mumbling." *The Guardian*, 14 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/jan/14/true-detective-review-sufficiently-gripping-despite-the-mumbling>. Accessed 29 January 2022.

Department of British Studies, Leipzig University



**Norbert Gyuris. "Emasculated Detectives: The Ineffective Investigation in Weird Fiction."**

Detective stories abound in various types of investigators who set out to solve a criminal case to reestablish the lawful order disturbed by the crime itself. The work of the detective is the prerequisite of regaining the social or legal stability that are threatened by criminal acts. Whether the detective is a hyper-masculine hardboiled one, a stereotypical spinster or a more gender-fluid police detective, the aim of the investigation is to reestablish the ontological certainty by epistemological means. Thus detective stories have a teleological burden on the protagonists who have to reinstate law and find the answers for the mystery. The classical position of the detective is laden with the need of an epistemological assurance that attempts to find and rearrange the threads leading to a crime. However, there are literary subgenres that defy this logic. The paper argues that weird fiction, a subgenre of speculative fiction probably best known by Lovecraft's "weird tale", and its revival under the term of "new weird", frequently employ the detective figure to draw attention to the fact that not all mysteries can be solved, that sometimes the attempts to reestablish order is doomed because of the information revealed by the detective. The "weird detective" moves around in a fictional world filled with monsters, aliens, werewolves, vampires and other creatures whose existence and actions defy Cartesian logic, thus any investigation based on the human version of ontology and epistemology is in vain and results in existential nihilism. Neil Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald" (2003) takes on the subject of Sherlock Holmes and Lovecraftian horror in an amalgam of intertextual and Gothic features. The paper examines the emasculated detective figure in the story and gives a general approach to the figure of the "weird detective".

University of Pécs, Hungary

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## PANEL 7.2:

Femininity and Self-Empowerment.

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Amber Huckle. "Power dominance and femininity: the queen-pin(s) of Sinaloa. – Examining female self-empowerment within Don Winslow's *Cartel* trilogy."

Within contemporary crime fiction, the representation of drug cartels, and of law enforcement agencies associated with combatting the cartels, is typically dominated by the masculine perspective.

As such, archetypal power dynamics, masculine-dominance and assumed feminine-submission are often cornerstones of narrative. These expectations, from authors, readers and critics alike often means femininity and feminine power are overlooked in recognition of assumed male-dominated spaces.

This paper will examine female self-empowerment within Don Winslow's *Cartel* trilogy. In order to accomplish this, we will begin by exploring the 'queen-pin' of Sinaloa: Magda Beltran. Introduced in *The Cartel*, Magda begins to curate an empire, quickly establishing herself as both partner, and rival to her male counterparts. Privy to the inner workings of Magda's political machinations, we as readers begin to understand the demands placed on a woman in a position of authority – in a world in which expectations are high, and the stakes deadly.

Continuing with the theme of feminine power, Magda's character may be contrasted with other feminine influences present within the narrative. As such, we will also explore the impact of these (at times conflicting) representations of female power through the characters of Nora Hayden and, on the side of the "angels", Dr. Marisol Cisneros.

Ultimately, as academic attention on Winslow's work to-date, has been limited, this paper aims to prompt further discussion. In taking a closer look at the applied influence of femininity upon the series, such discussion may be better situated within the realms of contemporary crime fiction studies.

Bath Spa University, UK

Dr. Renáta Zsámba. "Agency and the Amnesiac Woman in S. J. Watson's *Before I Go to Sleep*."

Female characters demonstrate new forms of agency in domestic noir as it is exhibited in the novel of S. J. Watson: in middle-class homes of the twenty-first century, housewives are active

participants of their own lives and ably interpret their own victimization against which they fight with alternative strategies in the hope of making a change. Watson's novel is one of the latest attempts to depict the physical danger as well as the emotional abuse that women are exposed to in their homes. The amnesiac female protagonist, Christine Lucas, struggles to regain her memory in order to override the role of the unknowing woman and subvert the established male version of her own life story. The present paper relies on Carisa R. Showden's hypothesis which holds that female agency can develop in situations where it is the least accounted for, such as in violent relationships. The novel as well as its film adaptation give special attention to the relationship between female agency and victimization, although the two texts apply different strategies to illustrate how Christine Lucas, fights for the (re-)construction of a conscious and independent self.

Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary

#### Abby Bentham. "Kiss the Mirror: Realising the Self in Otessa Moshfegh's *Eileen*."

Otessa Moshfegh's 2015 novel, *Eileen*, started life as something of a personal challenge; Moshfegh wanted to play the publishing industry at its own game, by writing a formulaic, commercially successful first novel that would allow her to establish a lucrative writing career. She bought a guide that promised to teach people how to write a novel in 90 days and finished the first draft of *Eileen* in just two months. Yet, far from being a 'thriller-by-numbers' airport book, *Eileen* is a strange, postmodern hybrid of a novel, combining Female Gothic themes with a *noir* sensibility in its deep focus on representing women's experiences and subjectivity. The bleak, claustrophobic, yet wryly funny narrative explores historic and contemporary fears about entrapment in the domestic setting, anxieties around female sexuality, and themes of surveillance and obsession.

My paper will examine Moshfegh's abject vision of female subjectivity through a Lacanian and Kristevan lens, considering how their ideas about the formation of identity and the acquisition of language highlight the titular character's journey to self-actualisation. Iconic representations of femininity from both the Gothic and *noir* fiction will also be explored, as I reflect on their strategic deployment in the novel. Ultimately, Moshfegh takes the limiting roles historically available to women and reworks them into something expansive, empowering and utterly beguiling.

The University of Salford, UK

#### Jean A. Gregorek. "Ethnographic Noir: The Early Thrillers of Celia Fremlin."

"It is when ethnography is practiced at home that its most surreal and critical possibilities are revealed."—Ben Highmore

The Female Gothic (*Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*), and the many bestselling recent incarnations of Domestic Noir generally enable the expression of female anxieties about men and marriage,

negotiate fears of male violence and betrayal, and help female readers to comprehend seemingly inscrutable male behavior. Such texts thrill their readers through a defamiliarization, a 'making strange' of the supposedly safe feminized institutions of the bourgeois home and the heteronormative couple. The 'middlebrow' English novelist Celia Fremlin (1914-2009), nearly forgotten for decades despite winning the Edgar Award for best mystery in 1960, is now undergoing the beginnings of a rediscovery with the reissue of her early novels by Faber Finds in the UK and Dover editions in the US: *The Hours Before Dawn* (1958), *Uncle Paul* (1959), *The Trouble-Makers* (1963), *The Jealous One* (1964). Fremlin produced over a dozen well-written mysteries and numerous short stories from the late 1950's to the early 1990's. In her first novels, the terrain is the drab postwar London suburb as viewed from the perspective of the beleaguered housewife; a terrain Fremlin observes with sharp irony but also infuses with Gothic suspense. Fremlin's strategy, like that of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, is not to unveil the veiled threat of male violence, but to displace this threat onto psychologically disturbed *women*, who prove the real source of danger to the female protagonist. Often what appears to be gender-based male violence (Uncle Paul trying to kill his wealthy new wife for her money in *Uncle Paul*; Mary's husband 'gaslighting' her in *The Trouble-Makers*) in fact comes from an angry woman operating on a completely different logic.

Yet despite their problematic reliance on female hysteria, these novels hold considerable interest for feminist scholars, as they derive much of their appeal from their detailed accounts of the everyday difficulties of 1950's domestic life. The near-disappearance of servants in this period meant that women of the middle classes acquired new responsibilities in the home; rising expectations for home-making and child-rearing increased the pressures of simultaneously performing the roles of housewife, cleaner, mother, attractive sexual partner and modern companion. The disruptive female threat of Fremlin's plots emerges from these stresses—the postwar 'problem that has no name' famously diagnosed by Betty Friedan in her 1963 classic *The Feminine Mystique*. Unlike most contemporary domestic noirs, female madness is not here induced by trauma; the root cause is usually a maladjustment to the domestic role, and female resentments are often shown to produce severe mental disorders. Fremlin's novels are influenced by, and perform some of the same cultural work as, her two earlier book-length ethnographic projects, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* (1940) and *War Factory: A Report by Mass Observation* (1943). These reports on working class female lives explore the gap between mass media representations and the lived experience of working class women, using the ethnographic methods of participant observation. Fremlin's fiction turns the critical lens honed by her work in Mass Observation on her own milieu—that of the educated middle class housewife. Invisible female work is here made visible, and provides the context for the psychic material of these thrillers. Fremlin's domestic noirs effectively 'make strange' the habits of English suburbia of the 1950's in order to challenge the popular discourses of motherhood and domesticity current in the period.

Canisius College, NY, USA

## PANEL 7.3:

Subversive Gender.

Sam Naidu "'... a tough, principled cookie'<sup>[1]</sup>: African Noir and the Ambiguous Female Detective."

This paper examines the figure of the female detective in recent African noir texts by Leye Adenle and Kwei Quartey. Both Adenle and Quartey are transnational authors who pen African noir novels, a literary sub-genre which is located in Africa or one of its many diasporas, and which engages with the specific socio-political issues facing Africans today. Significantly, both authors create a black female detective, Amaka Mbadiwe and Emma Djan respectively, who ostensibly subvert the original detective figures of classic noir, but also seem to submit to some of their contextual exigencies and the genre's conventions. These female detectives are thus ambiguous figures that, as agents, contest their respective social *milieux* whilst remaining subject to or complicit with dominant social and literary conventions. To conclude, this paper considers whether these female detective figures constitute a feminist development in African noir.

<sup>[1]</sup> From an interview with Kwei Quartey. "Modernity and Tradition Clash in Ghanaian Noir". Lori Rader-Day, 27 January, 2020. <https://chireviewofbooks.com/2020/01/27/modernity-and-tradition-clash-in-ghanaian-noir/>

Rhodes University, South Africa

Ffion Davies. "'My proportions are, if anything, too heroic' – Dangerous Appetites and the *homme fatal* in Vera Caspary's *Laura* (1943)."

As Richard Dyer asserts in his seminal study, 'Queer Noir' (2001), homosexual men figure prominently in film noir. Yet, the spectre of 'queer men' figure much more broadly in the wider traditions of noir and hard-boiled crime fiction. These 'deadly sissies and mincing menaces' are in fact located within a much broader category of men who, like the *femme fatale*, display non-conventional models of masculinity that pose a threat to the detective as a figure of normative masculinity. These men are ambiguous, uncertain, and thoroughly queer—though the elements that queer the individual can change. Conceptualizing these men in this framework offers a true counter to the *femme fatale* not apparent in previous scholarship which conflates deviant masculinities with dangerous men through 'wanting both big money and a dangerous dame' (Wager 20), and ultimately dismissing the political significance of sexual difference.

In this paper, I will be analysing the intersections of fatness and masculinity in Vera Caspary's pioneering novel, *Laura* (1943), and how the infamous antagonist, Waldo Lydecker, can be interpreted as a *homme fatal*. I will explore what Forth describes as 'the historical [...] perceptions of fat males as weak, impulsive, and perverse' (387), pushing this analysis further by arguing that Waldo Lydecker is coded *homme fatal*, after undergoing a process of queering—exploring the developing connections between fatness and femininity. I will explore Lydecker's assertion that 'the lame, the halt, and the blind, have more malice in their souls' (30) as an integral component in the composition of the *homme fatal*—that men who are 'less' prove to be infinitely more dangerous to the stability of social hierarchies, just as the excess that characterizes the *femme fatale* dooms her to a fate of 'textual eradication' (Doanne 2).

City University of Hong Kong

### Sercan Ötzeğin. "Amateur Detectives as Subversive Gender Identities in Victorian Sensation Fiction."

Fictional detective figures have often been portrayed as unusual characters with their distinct personalities and eccentricities since their advent in Victorian fiction. In Victorian sensation novels' plots including scandals and mysteries, there are generally unconventional figures undertaking an amateur detective work. Furthermore, these characters' investigation of crimes could also be linked to their sexualities and gender identities not conforming to Victorian patriarchal norms. Wilkie Collins, in *The Woman in White*, presents Marian Halcombe with obviously masculine characteristics both physically and mentally. She is extremely fond of her half-sister, Laura, who has to marry Sir Percival Glyde because of her promise to her late father. Marian, suspicious of Sir Percival and his ally Count Fosco, performs a detective mission with Walter Hartright in order to reveal their crimes. With no interest in men and marriage, she is a transgressive woman with her opposition to the unequal social and legal position of men and women. Her incursion into masculine domains of law and detection indicates her challenging Victorian conventions. Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* features Robert Audley as an amateur detective aspiring to unravel the mystery of his uncle's second young wife, Lady Audley. Actually, he is in search of his beloved friend George Talboys, Lady Audley's former husband whom she considers dead and attempts to murder afterwards. Robert displays some feminine attributes with his extravagant lifestyle and interests. Braddon describes his relationship to George with homoerotic overtones, and Robert actually tries to disclose Lady Audley's secrets to re-unite with him. He also marries George's sister, Clara, in whom he sees his friend a lot. As well as revealing mysteries and restoring order, both characters' detective work helps them maintain their unorthodox lifestyles and ambiguous gender identities. Marian forms an indispensable part of the marriage between Laura and Walter in a similar way to George's position in Robert and Clara's marriage. Alike Marian's ambiguous gender identification, Robert's homoerotic desire is the motivation for the detective work. Accordingly, both characters subvert mainstream Victorian masculinity and femininity, which reflects sensation novels' criticizing the strict enforcement of heterosexuality. This paper aims to

examine how Victorian queer identities are implicated in relation to amateur detection in Victorian sensation fiction.

Kocaeli University, Turkey



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## PANEL 8.1:

### Deviant Sexuality in Golden Age Crime.

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Chiho Nakagawa. "Deviant Sexuality and English Homes: Miss Marple's *Nemesis*."

One of the most popular creations by Agatha Christie, Miss Marple, reaches the truth, often citing "village parallels." Her universal wisdom about human nature can be reduced to heterosexual desires, because a murder often happens when an older, married man wants to be with a young woman. One character in *4:50 from Paddington* asks Miss Marple, "Are we investigating crime, or are we match-making?" In *Nemesis*, however, her matchmaking skills do not help solve the crime, because the murder is motivated by a desire to sabotage a heterosexual coupling. Miss Marple's search for the truth is done through a tour of English country houses and gardens, in addition to a stay at a dilapidated manor house. Against the backdrop of these two contrasted images of English homes, the novel presents two contrasted desires—a young delinquent boy's heterosexual desire and an old woman's homosexual desire. Ultimately, as Miss Marple exonerates the wrongly convicted young man, the novel criminalizes homosexual desires. I would like to argue that Miss Marple's trip to reacquaint with English stately homes and gardens can be read as an interrogation into heteronormativity, exploring the connection between Englishness, domesticity, and sexuality.

Nara Women's University, Japan

Christine Hawkins. "The 'playful alligator': Mrs Bradley and the representation of femininity in the crime fiction of Gladys Mitchell."

Female detective crime fiction written by women authors in the interwar period frequently renegotiated ideas of gender and femininity. With her character Mrs Bradley, Gladys Mitchell created a grotesque and repellent figure who is also physically alluring and completely feminine. This paper analyses how Mitchell renegotiates the representation of the elderly female sleuth, compared with characters like Miss Marple who is intelligent and competent, yet fluffy and seen as inconsequential to others. Mrs Bradley does not fade into the background. She is independent, a professional Psychoanalyst, and her femininity is undefined by her age or by others' expectations. Contrary to the idle, fulfilled middle-class woman, Mrs Bradley is the epitome of the successful professional woman. Neither is she the 'failed' unmarried woman. Twice married, she is represented as flirtatious and sexually knowledgeable. Ageless, anarchic, frightening, yet attractive, Mrs Bradley utilises her unique position to emphasise the shifting role of women in society. Mitchell uses her elderly female detective to critique specific gender issues. The representation of femininity offered in her fiction is one

that is uncompromising. Mrs Bradley is not soothing and, though undeniably a 'strange' character, transgresses traditional boundaries, reinforcing the idea of professional authority for women.

Queen Mary University of London, UK

**Suzanne Bray. "Secrets and Mysteries, Love and Idolatry: Women who Live Together in Dorothy L. Sayer's Detective Novels and in Television Adaptations of Them."**

Dorothy L. Sayers managed to publish in 1927, without attracting any unfavourable attention, a novel entitled *Unnatural Death*, in which most of the main characters are single women and some are clearly lesbians. Later, in both *Strong Poison* and *Five Red Herrings*, she created independent women who share an artistic life. In these cases, the women's sexuality is not even mentioned and it is up to the reader to follow the clues and decide if they are lesbians or not. In the context of the mystery plot, full of suspense, the women's private life, and in particular that of the couples who live happy, uneventful lives, remains almost unnoticed. Half a century later, the BBC adaptations of the novels choose different options: one mini-series preserving the ambiguity of the novel while the other depicts an obvious, stereotypical lesbian couple. The paper will study the author, Dorothy L. Sayers' attitude to female homosexuality and how she managed to include clearly or potentially lesbian characters in her fiction without shocking her contemporaries.

Université Catholique de Lille, France

**Gero Guttzeit. "Murderer Unseen: The Golden Age and Invisible Killers in Glaspell, Chesterton, and Christie."**

This talk discusses the figure of the invisible murderer in a selection of short fiction before and during the Golden Age, as it is currently undergoing scholarly revision (Walton 2015, Bernthal 2016, Sandberg 2020), putting special emphasis on how form relates to gendered subject positions. Building on work in political philosophy on social invisibility (Honneth 2001, Butler 2009, Herzog 2019, LeBlanc 2021), I ask how detective fiction construes invisible persons, particularly with regard to the role of the criminal and its difference to the role of the hypervisibilised, frequently female murder victim and her body (Plain 2001). Reading them in contrast to classics of the Golden Age, the paper examines G. K. Chesterton's "The Invisible Man" (1911), Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" (1917, based on her play *Trifles*, 1916), and Agatha Christie's "Miss Marple Tells a Story" (1935, adapted from her 1934 BBC radio play). My assumption is that formal characteristics of these stories such as narrative structure, focalisation and metaphor contain a model of the social construction of the criminal as an invisible character who can escape the vigilance of the other characters except for the detective. The three examples are particularly interesting in this regard because they employ the form of the genre of classical detective fiction and the metaphorical potentials of invisibility to figure social

positions of class (Chesterton) and gender (Glaspell, Christie). The latter texts offer insights into the social invisibility of women, in particular, as they figure them as unseen murderers.

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Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich, Germany

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## PANEL 8.2:

Filming Gender: Femininity and Masculinity on TV.

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Sara Casoli, Federico Pagello. "Changing Masculinities in Contemporary Italian TV Crime Series."

In recent years, the rapid increase in the quantity, quality and diversity of Italian TV series have also contributed to a significant transformation in how the crime genre represent gender identities. While this change has affected all kinds of characters and roles in crime narratives, this paper will look at how recent series have more and more re-assessed the figure of the male protagonist, traditionally embodied by a reassuring cop, amateur or a private detective. The first part of the paper will sketch out the development of Italian TV crime series from this perspective during the last 20 years or so. It will emphasize the structural changes in the production, distribution and consumption of television and how these immediately led to a diversification in the representation of male (and, in fact, female) detectives. The second section will focus on the case of *Inspector Coliandro*, a successful and enduring TV crime series created by the influential crime writer Carlo Lucarelli, broadcast by the Italian public television since 2004. The humorous style of the series, which also focuses on the problematic sexism and machismo of the eponymous hero, is seen not as an exception but as a symptom of the growing awareness of Italian crime fiction writers and screenwriters about the genre's stereotypical representation of masculinity. In the third part, we will discuss a few more recent examples (*Gomorra*, *Rocco Schiavone*, *Suburra*, *L'alligatore*, *Monterossi* and more), which enrich and complexify the kinds of male figures at the centre of the genre, which now offers a variety of antiheroes, from flawed detectives and criminals.

Sara Casoli: University of Bologna,

Federico Pagello: D'Annunzio University, Chieti-Pescara, Italy

Caitlin Coulter. "'One half of a very exciting show' – Ethnicity, Sexuality, and Nationality on the US/Mexico Border."

At the height of the pandemic, there was a sense of loss in the forbidden places of community: it seemed that being conscientious meant being lonely. This suddenly imposed liminality exposed the ways that space and place intertwine and sparked conversations in communities where access had been assumed about diverse identities and inequity. This conversation was not completely new to academia, however, and I argue that crime fiction has a key role; the detective figure is intrinsically concerned with liminality and access to place and space. I argue

that identity informs liminality, and this liminality in turn determines access to the knowledge contained in particular space/places. My aim is to look at mitigations of identity in space/places to investigate Alicia Gaspar De Alba's employment of ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality in her crime novel turned social critique, *Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders*.

The contentious space/place of the national border becomes a stage where ethnicity and sexuality are constantly aberrated and Ivon Villa must mitigate her multiple liminalities in order to gather the information necessary to save her sister from a live-streamed rape and murder. Greed and corruption fester on both sides of the border and the menace of Border Patrol makes material the unequal status of brown femininity's access to space and place. I argue that although seemingly focused elsewhere, the novel pre-empts the conversations following Covid-19: access and identity are dangerously intertwined and the hierarchical powers that be are deeply invested in violent spectacle of the status quo.

University of Kentucky, USA

### Enrique Ajuria Ibarra. "Who killed Sara? – Revising Gender Violence, Crime, and the Latin American *Telenovela*."

Written and produced by Chilean *telenovela* scriptwriter José Ignacio Valenzuela, *Who Killed Sara?* (2021 to present) is a Netflix Mexican series about murder, vengeance, and the downfall of a prominent family led by Spanish patriarch César Lazcano. The Lazcano family falsely framed Sara's brother Álex for her death in order to save themselves from a media scandal. After being released from prison, Álex is bent on ruining the Lazcanos, while figuring out the truth about his sister's murder. He eventually discovers that the Lazcanos fortune is based on corruption and sex trafficking, illegal affairs that reveal a rotten family despite their success. This Netflix series combines elements of the Latin American *telenovela* with those of a murder mystery series. Simultaneously, it attempts to address ongoing issues about domestic violence that lead to femicide. Even though *Who Killed Sara?* tries to deal with these social and cultural problems, the presence of mad women and male heroes as key plot aspects condemn its gender criticism. The purpose of this paper is to assess the value of crime fiction and the *telenovela* in relation to gender violence and crime by means of a contemporary TV series that fails to shift narrative expectations on the subject. If the female victim was mad, then what is the real reason behind her murder?

Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP), Mexico

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## PANEL 8.3:

True Crime.

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Kate Quinn. "Dark Domesticity: Chilean True Crime and Women Who Kill."

In 1923, the press in Santiago Chile, was obsessed with the disturbing case of body parts discovered across the city. Each new discovery generated new headlines and speculations as to the identity of the victim and the murderer. The revelation that this was a domestic murder and the killer was a woman, Rosa Faúndez Cavieres, provoked disbelief. Chile has a long and colourful history of crime reporting, with some murders achieving a notoriety that generates an afterlife in true crime writing. Some women killers feature among this select few, particularly when the nature of their deeds challenges traditional views of femininity. This paper will examine media reporting, true crime writing and revisionist reassessment of the Faúndez case, among others. It will close by looking at the scandal surrounding Mariana Callejas's role in the DINA, the secret police of Pinochet's dictatorship, where she participated in high profile political assassinations. Callejas, wife, mother and assassin, also played an active role in the cultural life of the capital as a writer, something that perplexed and horrified her fellow authors. Her case appears in the fiction of Pedro Lemebel and Roberto Bolaño, and inspired the recent television series, *Mary and Mike* (2018).

National University of Ireland Galway, Ireland

Olga Thierbach-McLean. "Likes, Lies, and Lives Lost: The Gabby Petito Case as a Sociocultural Phenomenon."

Few criminal cases have galvanized the global public as strongly as the events surrounding the deaths of Gabby Petito and Brian Laundrie. In July 2021, the young couple embarked on a road trip across the U.S. with the intention of posting about their travel experiences online and winning a social media following. When Laundrie returned without his fiancé Petito, this triggered an investigation that would lead to the discovery of Petito's body and Laundrie's subsequent disappearance and apparent suicide.

There has been ample speculation about what made this particular crime such an exceptional media sensation. Most often, Petito's physical attractiveness and girl-next-door charm is cited as the decisive factor for why her fate resonated so strongly with the greater public. However, this narrow focus on individual personality fails to consider the broader cultural discourses encapsulated in this case: the desire for mobility during a pandemic, the

increased collective attention on issues of sexism and domestic violence, and not least the growing disenchantment with the world of social media.

This paper examines the media coverage of the Petito case against the background of current social discourses on the COVID-19 pandemic, gender relationships, and the psychocultural impact of social media.

Independent Scholar

### Moritz Maier. "Jill and Jack, the Rippers? Gender Politics in Constructing the Sex Murderer."

Notoriously, Jack the Ripper has never been identified, despite what armchair detectives infrequently claim when they present not quite so "final solutions". And yet, the image of the killer constructed by Ripperologists and writers of Ripper fiction alike is strangely unequivocal when it comes to one aspect of his identity, the obvious masculinity of the serial sex murderer already encapsulated in his very name Jack. "Jill the Ripper" by contrast, a factual theory somehow attached to famous writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, remains largely ignored and basically has no impact on the mythic image of the gentleman killer at large in popular fiction. But why is this? This paper explores the gender politics of the Ripper and examines the few rare instances of Ripper fiction wherein Jack turns out to be Jill. While probably no closer to historical truth than any of the theories, of course, stories of female Rippers perform an arguably much more significant cultural work than offering speculative solutions to the historical murder mystery in the sense that they question how we read and mentally construct the sex killer and his relationship to his victims.

TU Dresden, Germany\*

*\*) I suspect I should add that my affiliation status is perhaps provisional, since unfortunately my work contract at TU Dresden has expired. I guess I am technically still a doctoral candidate there, though, until my dissertation has been published.*



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## KEYNOTE 4

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**Fiona Peters. "Patricia Highsmith and the Subversions of Masculinity and Femininity."**

This paper will examine the ways in which Patricia Highsmith's heroes' Victor Van Allen and Tom Ripley, each (in very different ways) refuse the 'injunction to desire' and in so doing subvert categories in ways that proved subversive and shocking during the period that she wrote. Her forensic dissection of gender roles is still, I argue, challenging in today's world. I will discuss her as a precursor of 'domestic noir', along with her critical stance towards relationships, except of course when it comes to snails.

Bath Spa University, UK

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## PANEL 9.1:

Representation of Dangerous Women in East Asian Crime Fiction. (pre-organised panel)

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One of the distinctive characteristics of East Asian literature and media during the transition from premodern to modern periods is the frequent appearance of female criminals. Between the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, crimes committed by women were considered a serious social issue in Japan, China, and Korea in which mass media played an important role in sensationalizing the figure of female criminals. The media-created image of dangerous, materialistic, and ruthless female criminals in turn was reproduced extensively in literature as well. The image of female criminals stemmed from the historical condition of these three countries where a number of major social, political, and economic changes pose challenges for people. For example, women's husband-murder cases were reported often in real time in daily newspapers in all three countries. This phenomenon reflects the public's anxiety over the disintegration of traditional values and beliefs during the period, which was manifest in the figure of female criminals as an antithesis of social unity and tradition. In addition, it also directs us to see the public's recognition of women as capable individuals whose suppressed desire could lead them to commit crimes just as men could when women's right movement and the idea of gender equality arrived in East Asia from the West. This panel investigates the ways in which literature and print media responded to the newly emerging ideas of femininity and justice in Japan, China, and Korea by focusing on the figure of the dangerous female criminal within the context of modernization.

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**Jaejin Yu. "The Epidemic of Poisonous Women and Germination of Desire for the Modern in Meiji Japan."**

When a new print medium called "newspaper" was published for the first time in 1870s Japan, tabloids, so-called "small newspapers" in Japan, also began to appear one after another. These newspapers tried to increase their subscribers, mainly middle-class readers, by serializing "crime novels" that were loosely based on real-life crimes at the time. In particular, in a small newspaper that appeared shortly after the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), a major historical event that established the power base of the Meiji government, female murderers, so-called "poisonous women," became a prominent criminal figure. In this presentation, I will consider the representation of poisonous women during this period through examining Hikosaku Kubota's *Torioi Omatsu Kaijo Shinwa* (1878), serialized in a newspaper. The female criminal in this novel, Omatsu Torioi, was previously despised and oppressed as "non-human" under the feudal class system. She tries to raise her status by making full use of her sexual charm in the

Meiji period in which class equality was promoted as an important part of the government's enlightenment program. However, she fails to achieve her aims and gets punished at the end. Through the story of Omatsu, we can see how the modern idea of liberation produced conflicting responses from the public. I argue that a female criminal such as Omatsu was a cultural imagination of modernity in which the anxiety and fear over modernization were projected through the construction of dangerous women.

Korea University, South Korea

**Jinyoung Park. "Domestic Crime, Media, and Modern Transformation of Detective Narrative in China."**

In 1906, a soldier was murdered in Beijing, China, and his young wife was arrested. This case was sensationalized as major daily newspapers reported the incident, investigation, and trial process in detail for more than two years until the accused wife who died in prison. The public did not believe she was the true culprit, and the unsolved incident remained a case that continuously triggered people's imagination of law and justice. Numerous commercials capitalized on the case, sensationalizing it to promote sales of various products, and newspapers presented it as the feudal government's failure to fulfill the public's desire for a scientific investigation and fair trial. Shortly after the death of the unfortunate woman, the case was adapted into fiction, entitled *Chun-a-shi*, serialized in a newspaper, which became very popular. This newspaper serial was published in books and adapted into plays as well. The popularity of fictional accounts of the case revealed women's desire to express their frustration over injustice they experienced in the domestic sphere. Having been suppressed by patriarchal social controls, female readers in particular identified themselves with the female criminal. This presentation focuses on how the case reflected the public's discontent with the incompetent and corrupt government and how it gave a rise to modern detective fiction by featuring a private detective and handling of the new popular imagination of women's desire for justice.

Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

**Hyeyoung Jung. "The Emergence of a Female Serial Killer in 1920s Korea."**

Western thoughts and ideas flooded into Korea via Japan when Korea was Japan's colony from 1910 to 1945. One distinctive idea that arrived in colonial Korea was the notion of gender equality. More specifically, Margaret Sanger's discourse on birth control or women's sexual self-determination, were widespread in the 1920s, becoming a major challenge against the male-dominated society. It was at this time that Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (*Et dukkehjem*) was translated and introduced to Korean readers and the meaning of the female emancipation was discussed extensively by both male and female intellectuals. Around this time, a crime novel, *Dark shadow* (1927), was serialized in a leading daily newspaper. *Dark shadow* is Korea's first novel in which a woman appears as a serial killer. This female criminal is a married woman in an affair, and her first target of murder is her husband. The fictional account of a female

serial killer indicates how the emergence of a new paradigm of gender equality, and female sexual emancipation gave rise to a new cultural imagination of romantic relationships between men and women while producing social anxiety over the destruction of Confucian-based gender hierarchy. This presentation examines the figure of the female serial killer as an embodiment of the newly transforming society in which Confucian patriarchy was challenged by new ideas of gender roles and sexual identity.

Kyungpook National University, South Korea

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## PANEL 9.2:

Bad Moms and Grannies.

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Roberta Garrett. "Bad Grandmas: domestic noir and the toxic matriarch."

As a specifically female-orientated sub-cycle of the crime story, domestic noir tends to emphasise and explore the patriarchal abuse of power in heterosexual relationships from a female and popular feminist perspective. However, in many high-profile screen and novel examples, post-menopausal female figures are not only excluded from the story's narrative point of view and its locus of empathy, they are frequently presented as either contributing to or being the direct cause of the heroine's suffering. The figure of the toxic matriarch is usually presented as the manipulative, status-obsessed, misogynistic mother of the heroine's husband or lover. The toxic matriarch either colludes with, excuses or encourages the son's ill-treatment of younger women, witnessed in the behaviour of Jacqueline Collings in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, Mary-Louise Wright in the second series of *Big Little Lies* (screenplay by David E. Kelley) Annabelle in Elizabeth Day's *Magpie* and Anita Jenkins in the recent BBC series, *The Rules of the Game* (screenplay by Ruth Fowler). Less commonly she has abused her own daughter or daughters (Elizabeth in *Big Little Lies* and Adora Crellin in *Sharp Objects*).

The paper will offer explanations for the continued presence of such misogynist stereotypes, even in noir examples that are highly attuned to the circulation of negative stereotypes of (younger) wives and mothers and depict younger women as friends and allies. It highlights the anachronistic presentation of such women, who are mainly still in their 60s, as ossified 1950s 'Stepford Wives' figures (who would more accurately now be in advanced old age) and suggests that the antagonism manifested towards such women blends the long-standing patriarchal desire to punish older women who seek power with the current tendency transform resistance to and resentment of the excesses of neoliberal economic policies and social attitudes into intergenerational conflict and anger towards the 'boomer' generation.

University of East London, UK

Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz. "The Mom Thriller: Domestic Noir Scrutinizes Motherhood."

"A New Crop of Mom Thrillers Taps Into Our Worst Fears" proclaimed an essay by Jen Gann. While trolling for information about crime fiction from the mother's perspective, I came across Gann's captivating essay about motherhood-themed thrillers and embarked on a quest for more examples of this new subgenre. My sleuthing paid off, as I found a rich and varied trove of "mom thrillers," most from recent years.

What can the noir thriller tell us about the concepts surrounding motherhood in the early twenty-first century? Is there a boundary separating “normal” and “deviant” motherhood? The noir aspect—arising from crime, wrongdoing, or a false pretense—is central to the mom thriller and generates a myriad of narrative schemes that explore maternal agency and the performance of motherhood in an atmosphere of high anxiety.

My presentation will discuss how selected mom thrillers incorporate and adapt noir conventions to probe concerns such as the murder-suspect mom, the psychotic nanny, the kidnapped child, the death of the child, confronted mothers, the heroic mother, and the evil child. Mom thrillers have captured the imagination of readers, pushing the motherhood theme into the popular culture arena, and this presentation proposes to offer a critical approach to this intriguing new subgenre.

University of Delaware, USA

**Janine Schwarz. “‘She Should Not Have Been a Mother’ – Culpable Motherhood and New Momism in Domestic Noir.”**

Domestic noir, a contemporary subgenre of crime fiction, has enjoyed great popularity since Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* (2012). Drawing on Flynn’s *Sharp Objects* (2006), A. J. Finn’s *The Woman in the Window* (2018), and Araminta Hall’s *Our Kind of Cruelty* (2019), I argue that domestic noir conveys ambiguous feminist messages because it both reinforces and questions dominant societal narratives of culpable motherhood in raising transgressive children who become killers. The novels thus negotiate what Douglas and Michaels have described as “new momism” (2004), a gender ideology which propagates idealized notions of motherhood, and they furthermore suggest that failure to conform to such ideals results in children who transgress social boundaries by killing. In *Sharp Objects*, motherhood is either neglected or exaggerated and creates a multigenerational network of transgressive offspring in the characters of Adora and Amma. Similarly, *The Woman in the Window* and *Our Kind of Cruelty* render mental illness and male violence the result of maternal child neglect in the characters of Ethan and Mike, respectively. In so doing, the novels place childrearing responsibilities in heteronormative pairings primarily onto mothers and neglect the influence of (absent) fathers. However, they also undermine narratives of culpable motherhood, for example through the framing of fictive media coverage or when characters within the storyworld openly criticize them.

University of Tuebingen, Germany

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## PANEL 10.1:

Crime Narratives and Reconstructions of Masculinities and Femininities in the Colonial Period. (pre-organised panel)

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This panel investigates the representation of masculinities and femininities through colonial media and literature. Korean crime narratives and fictions changed rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s, reflecting political and social changes and public perception. During this period, new discourses and narratives appeared through newspapers and magazines under the influence of Western and Japanese knowledge and culture, and translations of modern literature, and they were variously transformed. The colonial rule by Japan, the pre-modern patriarchal order, and the influence of Western modern culture were important factors in the narrative reconstruction of masculinities and femininities. This panel calls for discussions on the universality and specificity of crime fictions and mystery through ethnic, class, and gender ideologies used in colonial crime narratives.

Miyeon Kim. "Rewriting *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* and Homosocial Bonds."

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* portrayed men's inner contradiction between good and evil while alluding to the strong bonds of professional men in late Victorian England. *The Strange Thief* was a rewriting of Robert Louis Stevenson's original work in Korean and serialized in a daily newspaper in 1927. It was the complete adaptation of characters, background, and narrative. In this novel, which unfolded kidnapping, confinement, and organized crime, the character of the criminal investigation was reinforced. The plot was simplified into a confrontation between detectives and a criminal organization, and the critical mind of dual personality was weakened. In addition, detectives were changed to advocates for justice of governing class, and class tensions within homosocial group were replaced by conflicts between male groups divided into good and evil. This rewriting was double and contradictory. This is because, on the one hand, the ruling ideology was effectively implemented, but on the other hand, it secretly expressed the challenges and solidarity of the ruled class against the colonial power.

Chonnam National University, South Korea

**Bohyun Kum. "Female Bodies in Paintings Quoted in Detective Fictions."**

In the first half of the 20th century, when Western modern art was introduced, nude paintings frequently appeared in the illustrations of Korean novels. In particular, Korean detective fictions in the 1930s actively quoted or referenced Western nudes as clues to the motives, psychology, and reasoning of crimes. For example, Nae-seong Kim, the most important writer of detective fictions represented the demonic images through the paintings of Arnold Böcklin, Max Klinger, Alfred Kubin, Felicien Rops, and Hieronymus Bosch, and others. His detective fictions presented the process of reaching a grotesque uncanny (*unheimlich*) through female's naked or decayed bodies. Exotic paintings cited or imagined in the crime narratives acted as a kind of meta-text in that they revealed new senses and aesthetic objects. This presentation will analyze the narrative strategy of early detective fictions using the naked women.

Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

**Dohui Park. "Sexuality of Female Murderers and Commodification of Crime Narratives."**

In the 1920s and 1930s, various crime narratives began to be widely produced and distributed through popular magazines in Korea. Crime narratives, where the boundaries between real cases and fictional creations were unclear, were popular readings that reflected public perceptions and new tastes. In particular, the stories of women who murdered her husband changed markedly over time. There were two trends in the stories of female murderers that increased in the 1930s. First, the images of women overemphasized sexuality and simplified the cause of domestic crimes to the expression of women's sexual desires. Second, the criminal discourse was led by Japanese bureaucrats and Korean male intellectuals, and it was a product of combining eugenic knowledge based on ethnic, class, and gender differences and colonial discourse. This presentation investigates the representation of female murderers through the magazines in the colonial period, and the process of reconstructing and commercializing crime narratives.

Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea



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## PANEL 10.2:

Female Gender Stereotypes in South American Crime.

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**Carolina Miranda. "'We've come a long way, baby': Argentine Women Writers and the New Noir Phenomenon."**

Throughout the twentieth century Argentina has been an avid consumer of crime fiction. While until the late twentieth century the genre was mostly dominated by male authors, the last two decades have seen women writers coming to the fore. Here, I explore a literary phenomenon various newspapers refer to as the 'Black Wave' of Argentine women writers. Observed since the late 2010s, it comprises a large number of Argentinian female writers whose works are receiving major attention after being awarded international literary prizes. This brought an unprecedented boom in female Argentinean authors to enter the English-speaking market. What they have in common is that they challenge dominant discourses as they address gender issues which expose prejudices, discrimination, and domestic violence. In doing so they reflect upon current issues not only at a socio-political level but also at the level of crime writing.

Catapulted by international circulation both in Spanish and in translations, and now crossing over to the screen thanks to platforms such as Netflix, Argentine women writers are now in the driving seat of the local noir wave. In this paper I first briefly explore the long way women crime fiction writers have come in the Argentine tradition. Second, I examine two cases: Claudia Piñeiro's seminal *Thursday Night Widows* (2005), and María Inés Krimer's *kosher* trilogy (2010-2015). These portray some key aspects of the new noir wave: interrogation of history, cynicism and disillusionment with the State, while they also engage with sensitive issues current to the public agenda.

Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

**Monika Jurkiewicz. "Illusions of Choice: Examining the Consequences of Social Pressure, Religious Fanaticism and Legislative Overreach in Claudia Piñeiro's *Catedrales* (2020)."**

The following paper will analyse the theme of constraints to demonstrate the issues of violence which arise as a result of social pressure, religious fanaticism and legislation in contemporary Argentina as explored by Claudia Piñeiro in the novel *Catedrales* (2020).

Set against a contrasting backdrop of post dictatorship (1976-1983) and present-day Argentina, the novel spans across a 30-year period, centring around the death and dismemberment of an adolescent, Ana. As the story unfolds, we discover that Ana's death was a direct result of a clandestine abortion, and her mutilation was an attempt at its concealment.

Through Ana's experience, Piñeiro demonstrates how restrictive laws and enforced social norms around abortion, sex and family structure, which in the case of the novel are propagated by religious fanaticism, can drive individuals to engage in unregulated illegal activities and unimaginable acts of violence.

The purpose of this study is to examine Piñeiro's portrayal of past instances of violence, arising as a direct consequence of restrictions imposed on individuals by the state, religion, and society. Subsequently, it will explore the ongoing institutionalised violence in contemporary Argentina and highlight the impact of Argentina's eras of dictatorship and democratic transition on current legislation and social movements.

National University of Ireland Galway, Ireland

### Diana Battaglia. "Femicide and gender politics in Claudia Piñeiro's *Catedrales*"

This paper will discuss the tension between the persistence of the traditional patriarchal discourse and the debater on femicide and abortion as represented in *Catedrales*, a recent crime novel by the Argentinian writer Claudia Piñeiro (1960).

From the first notorious attempt of adaptation of the genre, done by Jorge Luis Borges and Bioy Casares, to the most recent examples of *Neopolicia* and *Noirs*, Argentinian crime authors consolidated their place on the continent and fictionalised the political, social and cultural changes affecting the life of Argentinians. The production of Claudia Piñero inserts itself in this tradition of socially committed detective fiction. Her novel *Catedrales* (2020), in particular, discusses the contentious themes of abortion and femicide, topics that gained central stage in recent Argentinian political debates with the movement of the "green tide" and the approval of the abortion bill in December 2020.

Thus, focusing on the crime (an illegal abortion) and on the description of the main female characters and their upbringing in a conservative religious family, the paper will first expose the consequences that the persistent sexist and patriarchal habits have on the female characters. Secondly, it will show how Piñeiro uses the crime and the discussion on direct and indirect responsibilities to introduce the social debate on abortion and femicide in her novel.

University College Dublin, Ireland

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## PANEL 10.3:

The Dark Triad: Female Victims, Villains and Detectives in Contemporary Crime Fiction. (pre-organised panel)

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Contemporary crime fiction appears to be showing a fresh interest in women's experiences of and dealings in crime; 'girls' now feature in the titles and plots of crime narratives of all kinds, often as 'morally complex' protagonists who challenge traditional images of women in this genre as either deadly or merely dead (Redhead 2018: 115). This panel will analyse current feminine figurations of crime fiction's dark triad – victim, villain and detective – with particular reference to novels in the subgenre of domestic noir. Sharon Dempsey will begin our discussion with an interrogation of the most ubiquitous female figure in crime fiction: the victim. Her paper will offer a reading of the female body as text, referencing the novel which constitutes the creative component of her PhD research, to explore ways in which the victim may be centred even within narratives focused on bodily detection. Ciara Gorman will examine the victim-villain hybrid in Pierre Lemaitre's 2011 noir thriller *Alex*, whose female serial killer forces reflection on not only tropes of the serial killer narrative form, but also on the gendered nature of serial killing – at the level of practice and the level of ideology – as well as the role which women play in the social production of violence. Eva Burke will close our panel with a thoughtful exploration of the power of non-traditional – which is to say, non-masculine – methods of investigation, exploring how the legacy of the 'amateur lady detective' can be seen in the detective work done via networks of female characters in Gillian Flynn's domestic noir novel *Sharp Objects* (2006).

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Leigh Redhead, 'Teenage Kicks: Performance and Postfeminism in Domestic Noir', in *Domestic Noir*:

*The New Face of Twenty-first Century Crime Fiction*, ed. by Laura Joyce and Henry Sutton (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 115–135.

### Sharon Dempsey. "Outside Herself: The Female Body as Crime Scene."

This paper examines how representations of the female body in crime fiction can provide socio-political insights, allowing for a reading that foregrounds violence against women, while revising ideas of victimhood that affect the female gender. I argue that in reading crime fiction through the lens of the female body, we can gain understanding of the societal attitudes that pertain to violence against women, proving that there is an intersection between male privilege and gender-based social roles that gives rise to patriarchal ideologies of violence. Nearly all

crime fiction is concerned with the body, with the body being 'read', for information pertaining to the victim's last movements and appearance, in order to begin the process of investigation.

In positioning murder at the heart of the crime narrative, there exists what Horsley calls a 'violation of boundaries' (Horsley, 2005). In a work of crime fiction, the dead body moves from being brutalised in death to being sanitised in the process of obtaining evidence and thus an element of control is asserted over the corporeality. The cadaver violates the order, making us aware of the precariousness of our very existence.

Even in real life, this sense of the victim being overshadowed by the murderer and the investigation occurs. Taking inspiration from Gill Plain's statement, 'Murder is written on the body and bodies are never neutral,' I explore how we can 'read' the body for cultural and social signifiers.

My creative work is influenced by the Belfast Rape trial of 2018, which involved four Ulster rugby players. Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding were cleared of raping a 19-year-old woman; while Blane McIlory and Rory Harrison, were cleared of indecent assault and perverting the course of justice. Drawing on this case, my creative work explores the interconnectedness of gender and class, and how the victim can be demonised and blamed with profound repercussions. As part of this a paper, I will discuss my novel and illustrate how the critical-creative nexus centres the female victim.

Queen's University Belfast, UK

**Eva Burke. "'Women didn't kill this way, they just didn't': Re-gendered modes of detection in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*."**

This paper explores the concept of re-gendered detection in the domestic noir novel. Domestic noir is a subgenre that typically foregrounds female subjectivity, and in contrast to classic detective fiction or the police procedural, often highlights modes of detection that centre less on the ratiocinative brilliance of the (often male) detective and more on networks of female knowledge as sources of information. This is a key feature of Gillian Flynn's 2006 novel *Sharp Objects*, which focuses on a female journalist's return to her hometown of Wind Gap following the disappearance and murder of two local girls, Ann and Natalie.

Camille, the protagonist, does not wield any institutional power and is largely treated with contempt by the town's police force, but investigates the murders via a reconnection with the women she grew up with. She may lack the patriarchal privilege of being permitted to work within official structures of power (her unsuccessful attempts to garner information and support from the male police chief of Wind Gap are marked by a distinctly misogynistic irritation on his part, as he dismisses her journalistic interest in the case as ghoulish and unfeminine), but her ability to infiltrate and utilise networks of female knowledge lends her a considerable advantage. Her interactions with these women are distinct from police interviews - often conducted in the manner of a scientific investigation, with the bare facts of the case taking precedence over any consideration of the social or emotional impact of the crime.

Camille's investigative process is markedly different, as she must negotiate the complex and often contradictory power dynamics of groups of women for whom the emotional resonance of these crimes, and of their shared history, is all-important. She is not invested with any true authority, and lacks the institutional support of the patriarchal forces of law; thus, her attempts to learn the truth of what happened to Ann and Natalie are reliant on her ability (or lack thereof) to unpack and unpick the tangled social threads which unite and divide the women of Wind Gap. This paper examines the extent to which this mode of investigation owes a debt to the literary tradition of the 'amateur lady detective', and the extent to which it signifies a challenge to the genre's propensity for 'solving' crimes via the dissection of the female body rather than engagement with social bodies.

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**Ciara Gorman. "Gendered Acts of Violence, Violent Acts of Genre: Female Serial Killing in Pierre Lemaitre's *Alex* (2011)."**

The female serial killer's very existence punctures the patriarchal construction of women as passive by nature. Pierre Lemaitre's noir thriller *Alex* (Albin Michel, 2011) pushes this disruptive energy even further by offering a highly mobile, aggressive female serial killer whose behaviour recalls the more 'masculine' image of the serial murderer as a marauding sex criminal, and is at odds with the popular construction of the female serial killer as one who operates in the 'feminine' social spheres of domesticity or care-giving (Poulin 2002: 220). This paper will examine three distinct elements of the novel's resulting disruption to conventions of gender and genre in the serial killer narrative. First, I will demonstrate how traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity – encoded within the formulaic elements of such narratives and within serial killer lore – are challenged when the killer is a woman and her victims almost exclusively male. The critique of gender-based violence implied by the novel's rape-revenge plot will then be examined for its interrogation of women's complicity in 'horizontal violence' against their fellow vulnerable subjects under patriarchy (Chesney-Lind & Eliason 2006: 43). Serial killing itself is frequently presented as the product of an aberrant psyche, or of a 'decontextualised family romance separable from the social order' (Freccero 1997: 48), and therefore requiring of no further analysis or contextualisation. I will argue in closing that *Alex* offers a clear articulation of what is disavowed in narratives about male serial killers: namely, the social means of production of the serial killer, at the intersection between criminality, gender-based social roles and patriarchal ideologies of violence.

Richard Poulin, 'La fascination morbide, les meurtriers en série, fictions et réalités', in *Les oeuvres noires de l'art et de la littérature*, ed. by Alain Pessin and Marie-Caroline Vanbremeersch, 2 vols (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), II, pp. 209–231.

Meda Chesney-Lind and Michele Eliason, 'From Invisible to Incurable: The Demonisation of Marginalised Women and Girls', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2.1 (2006), 29–47 (p. 43).

Carla Freccero, 'Historical Violence, Censorship and the Serial Killer: The Case of American Psycho', *Diacritics*, 27.2 (1997), 44–58 (p. 48).

Queen's University Belfast, UK