

ICGRN

**International Crime Genre
Research Network**

10th Biennial Conference

‘Retrospection, Futurity, Reinvention’

UCD

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Organisers:

Dr Ciara Gorman and Dr Emer O’Beirne

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Friday 12th June
O'Connor Centre for Teaching and Learning

Session One

'Reparation and Reorientation: New Directions for the Crime Genre'

Chair: Monika Jurkiewicz

Maria Butler, 'Mystery, Genre and Reparative Reading in Marion Keyes' *The Mystery of Mercy Close* (2012)'

Popular Irish author Marian Keyes is most famous for writing romance adjacent commercial women's fiction. However, her love of crime fiction and television is well publicised. It is unsurprising then, that her first novel after a long and public battle with depression, *The Mystery of Mercy Close* effectively straddles detective fiction and chick lit, offering a unique textual space for reparative reading. This paper proposes that by combining their knowledge of both genres, readers can engage with the text in a way that addresses the stigma of mental illness. The conventions of detective fiction target the uncertainty and lack of control that often characterize reoccurring mental illness, while the romance plot inherent in the chick lit elements promotes the understanding that people with a mental illness are deserving of love and acceptance. I argue that *Mercy Close* offers mentally ill readers a safe space to reconcile their internal and external selves without having to negotiate the fears and concerns of others arising from the stigma of mental illness. This reading demonstrates the capacity of genre fiction to serve as a powerful tool for self-reconciliation and psychological comfort.

Dr Maria Butler is a postdoctoral researcher on the SFI Insight funded Gender, Culture and Data project at the UCD Centre for Cultural Analytics. Her first monograph, *Marian Keyes and the Politics of Commercial Fiction* is forthcoming with UCD Press later this year.

Sybila Guéneau, 'Happy endings in contemporary noir: rise of hope or return of conservatism?'

The crime novel is commonly defined as offering “modern, urban and violent visions of crime, and as relying to a greater extent on vernacular means of expression, adopting a cynical stance toward social truths and social contracts” (Westlake, 1982). This definition underpins the development of the American hard-boiled novel and, subsequently, its French and British counterparts—distinct literary traditions that nevertheless share a similarly bleak and violent outlook on a world seemingly approaching its end.

Since the late 1990s, following in the wake of the most cynical crime writers of the twentieth century (David Peace, James Ellroy, Jean-Patrick Manchette), a new generation of contemporary noir authors (Val McDermid, Antoine Chainas), has broken with one of the genre’s most emblematic conventions by producing works that frequently conclude with a happy ending.

What does this shift signify? Does it mark a movement beyond the frustrated social struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, allowing crime fiction to project itself into the future? Or does it reflect, in fictional form, the rise of reactionary ideals— anxiously preoccupied, in literature as in reality, with a return to order?

Through a comparative analysis of contemporary British and French crime fiction, this paper seeks to begin untangling the complex narrative and political paths that lead to the happy ending in the noir novel.

Dr Sybila Guéneau is currently a part-time lecturer at Paris Nanterre University, where she teaches English language and academic writing. She completed her PhD at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in late 2023, under the supervision of Professor Philippe Roussin. Her dissertation focused on the néo-polar and will be published as a general literature monograph entitled *Polar et luttes sociales : Réel et violence dans le néo-polar après mai 68*, forthcoming from Agone in May 2026. A member of the CRAL research centre at EHESS, she is also involved in the ANR project POLARisation, alongside Benoît Tadié and Dominique Jeannerod.

Ciara Molloy, 'Ripper Tales: Reimagining the Past, Reflecting the Present and Refreshing the Future in Craig Russell's The Devil Aspect'

The name 'Jack the Ripper' has been described as 'one of the most notorious sobriquets in the annals of crime' (Curtis 2001: 139), and has inspired an extensive range of pop cultural works ranging from Marie Belloc Lowndes' *The Lodger* (1913) to the BBC's fictional drama *Ripper Street* (2012-2016). Drawing on a historico-narrative approach (Bleakley 2022), this paper examines representations of the Ripper case in a recent work of crime fiction, namely Craig Russell's book *The Devil Aspect* (2018). This paper first explores tensions between creative licence and historical accuracy in the novel, highlighting the ethical tightrope tread by crime fiction writers when reimagining the past. Second, it considers how the book simultaneously reproduces and challenges prevailing mythologies surrounding the original Ripper case. While Russell draws on stereotypical tropes surrounding misogyny, madness and the supernatural, his reorienting of ethnicity as a focal point in the book invites a deeper contemporary engagement with the colonial dimensions of the Ripper case. Finally, the paper examines how crime fiction can inspire future directions in academic research by focusing on the endurance of the Ripper moniker over space and time.

Dr Ciara Molloy is an Assistant Professor in Criminology at University College Dublin. Her research interests include historical criminology, cultural criminology, victimology and policing. She has published in international peer-reviewed journals such as the *British Journal of Criminology*, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, and *Crime, History & Societies*. She is currently working on a monograph on Irish youth subcultures in the post-1945 period.

David Conlon, 'True Crime's Apologetic Turn: Atonements for a Cursed Genre'

The explosion in production and popularity of true crime narratives across multiple platforms over the past two decades has been followed by a backlash during which critics have noted true crime's incorporation of the tropes of reality TV, its commodification of crime as entertainment, and its fetishization of serial killer as celebrities. In Anglocentric literary circles, modern true crime has an already murky origin story that is heavily associated with Truman Capote's ethically dubious *In Cold Blood*. With this paper, however, I examine recent attempts to take stock of and atone for true crime's sins, primarily in what are ostensibly true crime texts that contain heightened levels of self-reflexivity and even skepticism towards the genre. Through analysis of texts by Selva Almada, Mariana Enríquez, Mark O'Connell, and others, I explore how these works critique and undermine true crime's more questionable propensities. I go on to show how they also succeed in recovering and expanding the literary, ethical and justice-seeking potentialities that lie dormant in overlooked corners of the genre's history.

Dr David Conlon a Lecturer at Maynooth University, where he teaches Latin American Literature and Culture, including modules on Crime and Popular Culture in Latin America and Latin American Crime Cinema. His main research interests lie in Latin American Literature and Film, with a particular focus on political, ecocritical, and crime narratives. He has published work on Jorge Luis Borges, Norah Lange, and Rodolfo Walsh, among others.

Session One

‘Contested Continuities: Crime Fiction and State History’

Chair: Douglas Smith

Lioudmila Fedorova, ‘History as a Suspect: Evolution of Contemporary Russophone Crime Writing’

My paper examines the evolution of Russophone crime fiction since 2022. I begin with an overview of the genre’s bifurcation: crime writing produced inside Russia, by such writers as Alexandra Marinina, versus texts written abroad by authors who left the country, such as Boris Akunin. Curiously, both of them use time shifts and time travel to set the action of their novels. Akunin continues his historical fiction series, exploring the era of the Second World War and inviting parallels with current events (the *Family Album* cycle). Marinina blends crime fiction with sci-fi: she sends her investigators from 2090 into Russia of 2024 (*The Staff of Two-Faced Janus*). The paper then turns to major tendencies in crime writing. Escapist strategies that create distance from current events through constructed authorial identities and pseudo-English “cozy” mysteries are fully revealed in Charlotte Brandish’s *Drama in Griffin Hall*. By contrast, Karina Shainyan blends crime fiction with the mystic thriller: her novel *With the Latch Key* presents children as both victims and detectives in a peripheral setting. I conclude by stressing that anti-war writers often turn to auto-fiction and various blends of fiction and non-fiction, where they no longer “detect” a hidden crime but instead witness and record one that is fully visible (Natalia Klyuchareva’s *The Diary of the End of the World*).

Milla Fedorova graduated from Moscow State University where she studied Russian Literature and Language. She wrote her Doctoral thesis on Russian Postmodernist Poetry in 2000. Before joining the Slavic Languages Department at Georgetown in 2006, she taught courses in Russian Language and Culture at University of Illinois at Chicago. Her area of expertise is Russian twentieth century literature (including its marginal genres, such as sci-fi and crime fiction), film, and Internet. She is especially interested in intertextual relations: in the texts she studies, she searches for patterns and unexpected connections that sometimes go beyond the twentieth century.

Caylum O'Neill, 'Lesbian Detective Fiction and Neo-Nazi Violence in Hengameh Yaghoobifarah's *Ministerium der Träume* (2021)'

Through its foregrounding of marginal perspectives, Hengameh Yaghoobifarah's debut novel *Ministerium der Träume* (Ministry of Dreams) engages with the cyclical nature of trauma and violence in Germany from reunification in 1990 through to the present day. The novel revolves around the figure of Nasrin, a queer bouncer in her mid-forties whose family migrated from Iran to Germany during her childhood in the 1980s. Soon after the beginning of the text, Nasrin receives news that her younger sister has died in a suspicious accident, and the unsatisfactory investigatory response by the Berlin police leads to an unexpected pivot of genre as she and her ex-girlfriend begin investigating the murder themselves. The death of her sister and the subsequent unofficial investigation lead Nasrin to suffer from traumatic flashbacks of being terrorised by neo-Nazi thugs in her youth, which pervade the novel throughout. This paper posits that the novel's unexpected engagement with the genre of lesbian detective fiction, coupled with the author's foregrounding of marginal perspectives generally, leads to an understanding of right-wing violence in post-reunification Germany as a haunting continuity between the country's past, present and future.

Caylum O'Neill is a Postdoctoral Researcher on the ERC project "VICTEUR: European Migrants in the British Imagination: Victorian and Neo-Victorian Culture". His research focusses on queer themes in contemporary English and German literature. His work has been published in the comparative literary journal *Angermion* as well as the Palgrave edited collection *Queer Trauma Across Borders*.

Maxence Leconte, “À qui profite le crime?” Crime Fiction, sport literature and sensationalism in 1930s France’

First released in a serialized form in the newspaper *L’Auto*, Pierre Benoist’s novel *Le Mystère du Parc des Princes* (1931) mobilizes the codes of crime fiction to interrogate the genre’s involvement with contemporary issues in France, namely, the growth of sport literature and sensationalism during the interwar period. Set at the intersection of sports journalism, celebrity culture, and surveillance, the plot of the novel follows an investigation triggered by the mysterious assassination of a cycling coach in the Parc des Princes, a venue embodying Paris’ embrace of modernity and capitalism turned into the victim of the rise of professional sport and its dangers. By foregrounding the crime genre’s ability to speak to familiar tropes of cover-up, public pressure, and contested truth while concurrently introducing the emergence of sport culture within its fold, the story subtly poses a question for the future of sport literature and crime fiction: who benefits from their success and its sensationalism?

Maxence Leconte is Assistant Professor and Director of French Studies at Trinity University, San Antonio. His research focuses on the rise and representation of sport culture in France and the United States during the first half of the 20th century, with an emphasis on its multifaceted impact on categories of race, class and gender. His work has appeared in various peer-reviewed journals such as *The French Review*, *Etudes Francophones*, or *Sport in Society*. He directed *Sport in Paris: the Culture of Play and Games in the City of Light (1854-2024)*, published in 2025 by Peter Lang (Oxford) in the series *Sport, History and Culture*.

Keynote Speaker: Dr Charlotte Beyer

‘Crime Fiction in the Age of #MeToo: Calling Out Past and Present Transgressions’

Crime fiction has a vital function in exploring transgressions, exposing truth, and demanding justice for victims. However, too frequently the genre is dismissed as formulaic, and the politics of its representations trivialized. My paper investigates how the crime genre calls out violence past and present in the context of the #MeToo movement. Tracing crime fiction’s representation of toxic masculinity, rape culture, and homophobia and transphobia through the analysis a range of case studies taken from the canon as well as from contemporary crime fiction, I examine the genre’s capacity for collusion, resistance, and change. In my book, *Crime Fiction in the Age of #MeToo*, I argue that the genre provides a complex site for the contestation of patriarchal power, and that the era of #MeToo enquiry has provided crime fiction with an expanded and compelling range of themes and issues which impact on the style as well as content of the genre. As we shall see, these themes can also be found in earlier twentieth-century crime fiction; thus, through a comparative analysis, my paper traces the problems the genre faces in reassessing and challenging those plots, conventions, and tropes within crime fiction which embed and reinforce patriarchal transgression.

Dr Charlotte Beyer is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. She has published widely on crime fiction and contemporary literature. She is the author of four single-author scholarly monographs, *Murder in a Few Words: Gender, Genre and Location in the Crime Short Story* (2020), *Contemporary Children’s and Young Adult Literature: Writing Back to History and Oppression* (2021), and *Intersectionality and Decolonisation in Contemporary British Crime Fiction* (2023). Her latest book, *Crime Fiction in the Age of #MeToo* (Anthem, 2024) examines the intersections between fourth-wave feminism and modern and contemporary crime fiction. She has also edited six books, including *Teaching Crime Fiction* (2018) and *Decolonising the Literature Curriculum* (2022).

Session Two

‘Crime Fiction and the State 1’

Chair: Antonija Primorac

Sándor Kálai, ‘Cold Cases of Post-Socialism: Memory Violence and Genre Reinvention in Eastern-European Crime Fiction’

This paper examines how three contemporary authors – Magdalena Parys (Poland/Germany), Petra Klabouchová (Czech Republic), and Zygmunt Miłoszewski (Poland) – reinvent crime fiction by transforming buried history into a central tool for confronting unresolved legacies of post-socialist societies. In Parys’s novels (*188 mètres sous Berlin*, *Le magicien*), the reopening of hidden files and cross-border disappearances exposes suppressed histories of East German surveillance, migration, and state violence. Klabouchová’s *Près du mur nord* plunges into the terror of Czechoslovakia’s postwar communist repression – with political prisoners, forced disappearances, and erased histories – and links it to a contemporary, morally restless narrative in which a ghostly figure hunts down former torturers, and a care-home becomes a locus of buried guilt. Rather than a traditional detective plot, the novel fuses horror, vengeance, and collective memory to challenge the societal refusal to reckon with past crimes. Miłoszewski’s *Teodor Szacki* trilogy similarly mobilizes past crimes – from communist-era judicial abuses to the unprocessed wounds of the early transition – to critique institutional hypocrisy, political manipulation, and the fragility of the rule of law in post-1989 Poland. Taken together, these writers demonstrate how Eastern European crime and horror-tinged fiction performs a double movement: looking backward to resurrect contested archives, memory voids, and hidden violence; while looking forward to reimagine justice, memory and truth mediation in societies where official silence has prevailed. Their works articulate a distinctive regional poetics rooted in retrospection, social critique, and the genre’s capacity for cultural and political reinvention.

Sándor Kálai is a Professor in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. Since 2010, his research has focused on the history of European media culture and genres of popular literature, particularly crime fiction. In 2012, he published a book in Hungarian on the history of French crime fiction (*Fejezetek a francia bűnügyi irodalom történetéből*, Debrecen University Press). He co-edited *"Fantômas dans le siècle"* in 2013 with Robin Walz, *"Euronoir"* in 2022 with Jacques Migozzi as part of the DETECT H2020 project, and *"Contemporary Eastern/Southeastern European Noir"* in 2022 with Caius Dobrescu, Roxana Eichel, Anna Keszeg and Najate Nerci.

Monika Jurkiewicz, 'Victims Who Kill: Vengeance, Impunity and the Afterlives of Dictatorship in Contemporary Argentine Crime Fiction'

The following paper will examine the use of the crime fiction genre as a tool to reflect on the ongoing legacy of state violence in two contemporary Argentine novels *Hasta que mueras* (2019) by Raquel Robles and *Tango del torturador arrepentido* (2024) by Carlos Salem. The narratives engage with the theme of personal revenge as a way of addressing the civilian state repression during the 1976-83 dictatorship and the systemic denial of justice for its victims in its aftermath. Though different in their structural forms, both novels follow their protagonists' story across past and present timelines, depicting their traumatic experiences during the military regime alongside their pursuit of vengeance in later life. It is through the duality of their personas, as both victims and perpetrators, that the authors illustrate the moral conundrums of revenge as a viable alternative to combat the shortcomings of the justice system. Furthermore, the protagonist's actions highlight the role of the society in confronting the unresolved past to prevent the recurrence of systemic oppression. This paper will therefore analyse themes of impunity, survival's guilt and ethics of revenge to demonstrate how these authors reflect the genre's function as a form of literary activism against the systemic violation of human rights.

Monika Jurkiewicz has recently completed a PhD programme in Latin American Literature at University of Galway. Her doctoral thesis entitled *Criminal Violence: Systemic Violence in the Crime Fiction of Claudia Piñeiro*, explored the use of contemporary crime genre as a tool for social criticism. Through a close analysis of six of Piñeiro's novels, the study examined various manifestations of violence across social, political and feminist contexts, to demonstrate how these contemporary crime narratives expose and interrogate the broader systemic structures shaping individuals' experiences and contemporary society. Her current research builds on this work, focusing on the intersection between crime literature, violence, systemic power and feminism. She is currently a Lecturer and Acting Programme Director for Spanish for Bachelor of Commerce International and Bachelor of Law & Business, in the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Galway.

Dominique Jeannerod, 'Shades of Noir, Echoes of Grey: Retro-Noir and Reinvention in Benjamin Dierstein's *Échos des années grises*'

Frequently compared to James Ellroy, Benjamin Dierstein sets to explore in his ambitious, thoroughly researched and wide-ranging novels the reciprocal contagions between the criminal underworld and politics in contemporary France, writing a kind of counter-archive of state memory. Published between 2018 and 2022, the *Échos des années grises* trilogy (La Sirène qui fume, La Défaite des idoles (2020), La Cour des mirages), links investigations into cold cases, institutional cover-ups, and systemic abuse, to construct both a retrospective and prospective point of view on State crime. With a narrative continually oscillating between uncovering a past saturated with violence and corruption, and projecting the consequences of this past into a future shaped by disillusionment, radicalisation, and the erosion of democratic ideals, Dierstein's retro-noir presents an ideal vantage point for examining the interplay of retrospection, futurity, and reinvention within contemporary French crime fiction.

Through its polyphonic structure and meticulous attention to archival detail, the trilogy reconfigures the conventions of the crime genre: while detectives, bureaucrats and journalists navigate institutional opacity, criminals blur with agents of the state and victims appear as both ghosts of a forgotten past and warnings against an increasingly authoritarian future. By analysing the trilogy's treatment of state violence, surveillance, misogyny, and political decay, this paper will assess how Dierstein, building on the legacy of the *néo-polar* and of Daeninckx's *roman(s) noir(s) de l'histoire* reinvents the crime narrative as a tool of historiographical interrogation. It will show how his retro-noir approach in *Échos des années grises* offers a diagnostic on future crises, as linked with, and literally haunted by unresolved crimes of the past.

Dominique Jeannerod is a Senior Lecturer in French Studies at Queen's University, Belfast. He works on crime fiction, cinema and popular culture (San-Antonio et son double, PUF, 2010; La Passion de San-Antonio, PUS, 2021). He edited Frédéric Dard's *Romans de la nuit* (Omnibus, 2014 and 2020) and Boileau-Narcejac, *Suspense. Du roman à l'écran* (Gallimard, Quarto, 2025). With Andrew Pepper and Benoit Tadié, he coordinated the special issue *Polar et Démocratie* of the journal *Belphégor* (2025).

Session Two
‘Feminist Rereadings 1’
Chair: Kate Quinn

Magdalena Tosik, ‘The Feminised Genre: the Zarco Trilogy by Marta Sanz’

The detective trilogy by Marta Sanz comprises the novels *Black, black, black* (2010), *Un buen detective no se casa jamás* (2012), and *pequeñas mujeres rojas* (2020). The writer admits that her decision to turn to crime fiction was her reaction to the economic and political situation in Spain in recent years (the economic crisis and housing bubble, the increasing popularity of far-right parties, the struggle to recover the traumatic memory of the Civil War). Sanz considers that literary genres are rooted into ideological visions of reality, and consequently the author offers the reader the subversive version of detective fiction. The writer is not only determined to present the world from the feminist perspective but, in doing so, she transgresses the literary boundaries of the genre. The aim of my proposal is to analyse the trilogy by Sanz from the perspective of the feminist economy and, in particular, the ethics of care. The latter becomes the starting point for the analysis of the following issues: how the author questions the detective’s agency, why and how the narrative mode becomes ambiguous, how the households and community dynamics are presented from the perspective of carers, and various aspects of violence from a gender-based perspective.

Dr. Magdalena Tosik is Assistant Professor in the Institute of Italian and Spanish Literature Studies at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland.

Her research focuses on crime narrative understood as a medium to examine collective memory. She is currently working on the project *The experience of trauma in Latin American crime fiction (neopolical)*.

Author of the book *La interculturalidad en la traducción de la novela negra. El caso de la serie Carvalho de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán*.

Member of *Asociación de Estudios de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán*.

Diana Battaglia, 'Janus-Faced Noir: Genre Deconstruction and Social Interrogation in Marta Sanz's *Black, Black, Black* (2010)'

This paper argues that Marta Sanz's *Black, black, black* (2010) functions as a Janus-faced text that simultaneously inhabits and deconstructs the conventions of Noir fiction. On one level, it adopts the genre's recognizable framework—a private investigator, a murder, and a community under suspicion—to draw the reader into the familiar dynamics of noir. Yet it also turns these very devices against themselves: the hard-boiled detective figure is destabilized, the narrative climax remains suspended, and the reader is prompted to engage in reflection rather than anticipate resolution. The novel's deployment of parody, fragmentation, and a tripartite narrative structure—alternating among detective Zarco's voice, Luz's diary, and Paula's perspective—unsettles straightforward interpretation and exposes the ideological, gendered, and racial assumptions embedded both in the genre and in contemporary Spanish society. By weaving together metafictional play, ethical ambiguity, and social realism, Sanz's novel thus critiques not only the genre's restorative logic but also the broader cultural narratives that strive for coherence amid crises. The disintegration of detective and noir tropes mirrors, on a wider scale, the erosion of moral, political, and epistemological certainties in twenty-first-century Spain. Ultimately, *Black, black, black* looks both backward toward the noir tradition it inherits and forward toward a postmodern, feminist rearticulation of the investigative act as a mode of interrogating society and its mechanisms.

Diana Battaglia holds a PhD in Latin American Studies from the University of Leeds (United Kingdom) and, since 2017, has served as an Assistant Professor in Spanish and Latin American Studies at University College Dublin (UCD). Her research focuses on contemporary Latin American literature and films—particularly Cuban and Argentine—as well as on socially committed noir and detective fiction. Her work on crime fiction centres on the negotiation and redefinition of cultural memory, spatial belonging, identity and otherness in crime narratives set during periods of transition and crisis. Her first project examined the representation of identity politics and memory in Leonardo Padura's series of Cuban crime novels. Her current project analyses contemporary crime fiction as a tool for denouncing genderbased violence and constructing collective memory around it. As part of this project, she holds a visiting postdoctoral research fellowship with the GRC Cos i Textualitat at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from January to July 2026.

María del Mar Delgado Ricci, 'Women Rewriting the Colombian Canon: Domesticity and the Possibilities of Detection in the Novels of the Second State'

Crime writing in Colombia has long been synonymous with sicarios, violence and drug trafficking—a literary landscape so overwhelmed by social reality that the country's decidedly masculine canon deemed classical crime fiction impossible on Colombian soil. This argument, however, centred exclusively on the hard-boiled detective and noir tradition, that quintessentially masculine expression which became paradigmatic throughout Latin American crime literature. What the canon overlooked were women writing this "fiction," authors not only engaging with noir conventions but incorporating elements of the Golden Age detective story, thereby transforming the genre from within. This paper examines two expressions of Colombian domestic noir—Silvia Galvis's *La mujer que sabía demasiado* and Verónica Villa's *Marina y el caso de Plata*—as detective narratives that expose the social, political and sociocultural structures perpetuated through cruel violence and systemic illegality, sustained by the destruction of women's and girls' bodies. I explore how these postcolonial narratives have inflected understandings of what the crime genre is, was and can be. By centring female detectives who navigate domestic spaces transformed into crime scenes, these works reassess enduring issues—patriarchy, femicide, state complicity—whilst interrogating the very possibility of truth-seeking in societies where institutional corruption renders the state itself criminal, ultimately reshaping our understanding of who can detect and what constitutes a crime.

Dr María del Mar Delgado Ricci is a Lecturer in Spanish at the University of Exeter. Holds a PhD in Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies from the University of Barcelona, awarded with honours (Cum Laude). Early Career Researcher focused on Latin American crime fiction, with particular emphasis on feminist, sociological, political and decolonial approaches to the genre.

Session Three
‘Feminist Rereadings 2’
Chair: Ciara Gorman

Jen Schnabel, ‘Feminist Concerns: Gothic Imagery in Marcia Muller's Early Sharon McCone Novels’

In 1977, Marcia Muller published *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* which is considered the first novel to feature a female private detective. Muller's protagonist, Sharon McCone, works as a professional investigator at a San Francisco legal collective, and she is tasked with uncovering the murderer of an antiques dealer. The novel is rife with gothic imagery, including decaying buildings, moody weather, mysterious artifacts, and infiltration of foreign cultures.

Alison Milbank writes in her chapter ‘Gothic Femininities’ in *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic*, “When Gothic fiction came to modern scholarly attention in the 1970s and 80s, its rise coincided with the second wave of feminism, and criticism was often driven by feminist concerns” (155). This paper will explore how and why elements of Muller’s series, especially the first three novels--*Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977), *Ask the Cards a Question* (1982), and *The Cheshire Cat’s Eye* (1983) reflects the revival of gothic themes in popular fiction and aligns with the increased critical examination of the genre.

Jennifer Schnabel is an associate professor and English librarian at Ohio State University. Her scholarship focuses on women and crime fiction. She recently co-edited a collection on the television series *Murder, She Wrote* published by Routledge.

Jean Gregorek, 'Shadows and Schadenfreude: Female Social Pathologies in Celia Fremlin's Domestic Noir'

Domestic Noir as a popular genre introduces danger into the supposedly safe institutions of the bourgeois home and the heterosexual couple, thus allowing for the expression of female anxieties and resentments. The English novelist Celia Fremlin (1914-2009), nearly forgotten for decades, is undergoing 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* (1965). In the tradition of *Jane Eyre* or *Rebecca*, Fremlin's domestic noirs reassure by revealing that the threat to the housewife protagonist is always another woman, not a man and certainly not her husband. Yet her novels are distinctive in their acute observations of female frustrations on the cusp of the Second Wave of feminism. Fremlin derives her plots from the 'problem that has no name' famously diagnosed by the American Betty Friedan in her 1963 classic *The Feminine Mystique*, and shares an even more direct kinship with the 1957 sociological study *Wives Who Went to College* by the British sociologist Judith Hubback. The pathologies Fremlin explores emerge from the high value placed on femininity in 1950's popular culture, and her novels connect this overinvestment to murderous violence, even as they shore up a precarious heterosexual partnership. This paper examines her fictional accounts of female rivalries in the sociological context of newly servantless postwar suburbia, and argues that her work provides an essential generic link to the explosion of contemporary domestic noir.

Jean Gregorek is an Associate Professor of English at Canisius University in Buffalo, New York, where she teaches 20th and 21st Century British and Postcolonial Literature and Cultural Studies. Her articles on international crime fiction and television have been published in the journal *Genre*, and in the collections *Class and Culture in Crime Fiction: Essays on Works in English Since the 1970s*, and *National Identity and International Crime Fiction in the Age of Globalization*, both from MacFarland Press. Her current research is on the English crime novelist and former member of Mass Observation, Celia Fremlin.

Colette Henry, 'Exploring Trauma and Characterisation in Prime Suspect and Vera Through a Gender Lens: A Work in Progress'

This paper explores trauma (Caruth, 1996; Dodd; 2018) and characterization through a gender lens (Plain, 2020; Arya, 2022) within the genre of detective-focused crime fiction. It responds to recent calls for scholars to engage in theoretical and methodological innovation where they move away from well-rehearsed crime fiction formulae – “prescriptive generic concepts (e.g., detection)” – to explore “individual, non-conforming and innovative features” (Allan, Gulddal, King & Pepper, 2020: 3). The aim is to contribute to existing crime fiction literatures by illustrating how trauma can be used to illuminate non-conforming aspects of characterization in female-led crime fiction, highlighting its impact on the detective’s behaviour, relationships, and approach to detection.

The methodology involves a close reading and narrative analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016) of two contemporary crime fiction novels within the British police procedural genre – *Prime Suspect* and *Vera*. Insights from their associated television drama series provide an additional and valuable layer of analysis. The core research questions ask: What are the innovative features of these female lead detective characters? How do the effects of trauma affect their behaviour, relationships and approach to detection?

The paper intends a theoretical contribution through the development of a *trauma spectrum* highlighting the role of both major and minor traumas, including the cumulative impact of everyday negative experiences or micro-aggressions. A methodological contribution is also intended through the application of an analytical reading guide borrowed from the discipline of management and entrepreneurship (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016), which adds structure and robustness to the analysis.

Session Three

‘Remixing and Reinventing’

Chair: Jeannine Baetz

Antonija Primorac, ‘Reinventing Sherlock Holmes: A Case of Two Appropriations at the Turn of Two Centuries’

21st century film adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, such as Guy Richie’s (2009, 2011), are often analyzed and assessed in terms of their ability to reinvent the Victorian detective for contemporary audiences. Richie’s Holmes invited numerous analyses of its representation of Victorian masculinity: while in neo-Victorian studies the film’s foregrounding of the detective’s physicality was seen as a challenge to contemporary notions of Victorian gender (Poore 2013; Boehm-Schnitker 2015), in genre studies it was seen as exemplifying “detAction”, a purportedly new, hybrid, genre derived through the Americanisation of the detective through hardboiled tropes (Bothmann 2018: 132). This paper will point to an alternative literary precedent for Richie’s reinvention of Holmes by examining the once globally successful and now largely forgotten Detektiv Sherlock Holmes und seine weltberühmten, the German penny dreadful series published at the start of the 20th century that appropriated Sherlock Holmes, reinventing him as an action hero. Combining close and distant reading of archival materials and digitised periodicals, this paper will demonstrate how and why it was possible for the series’ translations to be widely read alongside – and often confused with – translations of Conan Doyle’s own stories. In conclusion, it will outline these appropriations’ parallels with contemporary reinventions of Holmes, such as Richie’s.

Antonija Primorac is Professor of English Literature in the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia. She is the author of two monographs, *Što čitamo kad čitamo hrvatskog Sherlocka Holmesa: prijevod, pastiš i digitalni zaokret u svjetskoj književnosti* (What We Read When We Read Sherlock Holmes in Croatian: Translation, Pastiche and the Digital Turn in World Literature; FFRI Press 2023), and *Neo-Victorianism on Screen: Postfeminism and Contemporary Adaptations of Victorian Women* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018). She has published widely on adaptations and appropriations of Victorian literature, neo-Victorianism, DH, world literature and translation. She is currently PI on the NextGenerationEU project entitled “Croatian and Anglophone Crime Fiction: Text, Context, Translation”.

Meike Heinrich, 'New Narrative Arrangements in Sherlock & Co's "The Hound of the Baskervilles"'

The podcast *Sherlock & Co.* (Goalhanger, since 2023) reimagines Doyle's original stories for the 21st century not only in plot and setting, but also by adapting the storytelling to an audio-based transmedia experience. The ten-episode arc "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (2025) reflects on and expands the limits of the 1901 Doylean plot through narrative rearrangement and exploring the new possibilities fostered by its audio-medial form. Unlike audiobooks which usually remain loyal to the source text's narrative design, the podcast format of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" moves away from a simple dual narrative structure towards a complex network of pro- and analepses and audibly separate narrative strands that eventually intersect towards the solution of the case. The resulting multifaceted audioscape shows that the already extensive Holmesian archive network still has unrealised potential more than a century after its beginning. This paper will expand my analysis of the podcast's metareferencing in character design (Heinrich 2025) towards its reimagination of narrative design for new media formats.

Meike Heinrich is an English Studies doctoral student at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Her research centres around British detective fiction since 1900 with a special focus on games and game-like structures in narration. She has previously given conference papers on crime fiction adaptations and narrative features and spent a research semester at UNSW Sydney focusing on narrative theory. Other research interests of hers include translations, global crime fiction, and detective fiction for young readers.

Nicolas Pillai, 'The Black Disc: Analogue and Digital Surfaces in Amazon Prime's Bosch'

In this paper, I take jazz as a way into considering several tensions and dualities in Amazon Prime's *Bosch* (2014-2021), a TV adaptation that riffs on the novels of Michael Connolly. The show is an exemplar of new streaming practices: its pilot commissioned to full series through a public vote, its appeal dependent on the spectacle of LA landscapes captured in expansive drone shots for reproduction across HD televisions, laptops and phones. Yet against this I set the genre conservatism of the show and the insistence throughout on the authenticity/reliability of analogue technology, particularly Bosch's jazz collection – always played on vinyl.

My aim is to explore the interplay of these digital and analogue surfaces in *Bosch*. Building on my previous work on domestic space in crime films, I am particularly interested in how Bosch's home in the Hollywood Hills exists as both an interior and exterior space, a locus attempting to resolve the tensions of the show. The paper will deploy close textual analysis of TV clips as well as consideration of extra-textual material, e.g. tie-in curated jazz playlists on Amazon Music. In this way, I position *Bosch* as a text defined by retrospection and futurity.

Dr Nicolas Pillai is Assistant Professor of Creative & Critical Practice at UCD. He is academic lead for the Creative Futures Academy project. Forthcoming publications include *Rethinking Miles Davis* (OUP, 2026) and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (Bloomsbury/BFI Film Classics, 2026).

Saturday 13th June

Newman Building

Session One

‘Ghosts and Hauntings in Crime Fiction’

Chair: Eva Burke

Ruth Heholt, ‘The Retrospective and the Future Ghost: Masculinity, Crime, and Domestic Abuse in M. E. Braddon's Short Ghost Fiction’

This paper examines crime and gender in two Victorian ghost stories by M. E. Braddon: ‘Eveline’s Visitant’ (1867), and ‘Her Last Appearance’ (1876). The ghost story adds a twist to the more usual crime fiction narrative, providing a reading backwards - to a past crime and the retrospective ghost, but also a reading forwards to a crime that will be committed and which creates the future-ghost. These two stories use the ghost and the ghostly to surface murder, and different forms of domestic abuse. Both the women in the tales are caught between warring, murderous men. Each story shows a privileging of masculine relationships over marital ones. As victims of criminally abusive behaviour, our ghostly women become more and more ethereal. For each of them marriage is a death sentence. Neglectful and vampiric, husbands and lovers suck the life out of the women they purport to love. Male on male relationships formed out of jealousy and revenge smash through marriages, wives, and lives. This paper examines Braddon’s excoriating critique of both the institution of marriage and masculinity. Crimes of neglect, abuse, and murder, reach out from the past and into the ghostly future.

Ruth Heholt is Professor of Literature and Culture at Falmouth University. She is author/editor of several books and editor in chief of the journal *Revenant: Critical and Creative Studies of the Supernatural*.

Jo Parsons, 'Haunted Rutshire: "Mayhem, Mystery and Murder" in Jilly Cooper's Score!'

Well known for her Bonkbusters and their saucy social commentaries, Jilly Cooper also made a foray into the world of Crime Fiction in her 1999 novel *Score!* in which 'the most successful but detested conductor in the world', Sir Roberto Rannaldini meets an untimely end. Part romance, part murder mystery, *Score!* plays with 18th century Radcliffean Gothic tropes as the action takes place in a haunted 14th century abbey called Valhalla, complete with its own maze and sex tower. Rannaldini is a villain of histrionic proportions as he regularly commits acts of violence towards women and girls, and spends much of this novel attempting to 'seduce' his 'ravishing' 19-year-old stepdaughter, Tabitha Campbell-Black. This paper will examine Cooper's blending of the past and present in her mash up of Gothic and Crime Fiction in which the casual depictions of violence to women reflect their everyday realities.

Jo Parsons is a Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Falmouth University. She is co-editor of three book series, including the new interdisciplinary 'Studies in Romance, Power, and Desire' series at University of Wales Press.

Jennifer Young, 'Goddesses and Ghosts: Violence and Domesticity in Paranormal Cozy Crime'

This paper explores the interplay of violence and domesticity in Annabel Chase's *Crossroads Queen* series and Leanne Leeds's *Owl Star Witch* series. Both series feature women protagonists with divine parentage and being thrust into a typical cozy crime environment of domesticity and community. Both women have survived through violence - Astra has just stopped commanding a hit squad and Lorelei has been trained for battle since childhood. Lorelei and Astra become reluctant detectives and problem solvers, tackling crimes that reverberate beyond their small town into the pantheon/s. Their divine gifts provide a counterpoint for old fashioned detecting. Episodic ghosts carry the typical 'solve the crime' role that drives many cozy paranormal crime novels, providing intel, pointing to smoking guns, and overwhelming the enemy, but these series feature ghosts who temper the heroine's violence and domesticate them into their modern surroundings. Through the interplay of the mythical past and their present small town mayhem, Leeds and Chase challenge and reinvent the cozy genre.

Jennifer Young is the Dean of the Faculty of Business and Design at Falmouth University and Associate Professor of Creative Writing. She has written a trilogy of historical crime novels.

Session One

‘Crime Fiction and the Environment’

Chair: Eric Sandberg

Jiří Jelínek, ‘Worldbuilding, Rules and Murder Case Clues in RJ Bennett's *A Tainted Cup*’

This paper examines the strategies of formulating clues and depicting interactions between the detective and the environment, employed in Robert Jackson Bennett novel *A Tainted Cup* (2024), a murder mystery novel set in a fantasy world rife with fantastic elements and speculative magical and technological concepts.

Following older takes on the possibilities of uniting fantasy and crime fiction (such as *A Literary Symbiosis: Science Fiction/Fantasy Mystery* by Hazel Pierce) and papers on Bennett’s prose (such as “The Divine Cities by Robert Jackson Bennett” by Tereza Dědinová), this paper explores how the fantastic elements in the novel widen the scope of possibilities in areas such as the execution of the crime (the victim being consumed by a tree), the presumed motives (enabling sea monsters to attack) or the justification of such tropes as “the armchair detective” or the photographic memory of the investigator. At the same time, however, the text has new problems to reckon with: namely, the reader not being familiar with the possibilities and limitations of physics, magic and technology in the presented world, which forces the narrator to simultaneously disclose the clues and the rules that they are based on.

Jiří Jelínek studied Comparative Literature at Charles University in Prague, finishing his Ph.D. thesis *Constructed Languages in Literature* in 2018. He is employed as an assistant professor at the University of Hradec Králové. He has published articles on word formation, modern poetry, and speculative literature – among others “Of the Constructivist and the Essentialist” in *Česká literatura* journal, and “Anthropocene vs. Plague”, published as a chapter of *Images of the Anthropocene in Speculative Fiction*. He has attended the *Captivating Criminality* 11 and 12 conferences, and in 2025 published, together with Jana Jelínková, the paper “Turning Tides, Changing Times: Sea in Evil Under the Sun and Journey to the South” (*HJEAS*, issue 2/2025).

Jeannine Baetz, 'Ghost Stories of the Anthropocene: Representing the Ecological Uncanny in Contemporary Crime TV Series'

In the 21st century, the socio-critical dimension of crime fiction has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in connection with the entangled development of crime fiction and Gothic fiction. While recent research into the genre has notably been extended to address the presence of Gothic elements in contemporary European (Noir) crime fiction and the genre's representation of environmental issues and their socio-political implications, many of these efforts emphasise explicit representations of environmental issues and psychological-realist readings of Gothic elements in crime fiction. Expanding on existing research into both ecocritical approaches to EuroNoir and its integration of Gothic elements, this presentation addresses the gap between these research strands by focussing on the representation of ecogothic elements and argues that the ecological uncanny has evolved from a psychological projection space to a symptom of a posthuman awareness in the genre.

This presentation proposes a reading of two EuroNoir works (Kruk, 2018-2022; Höllgrund, 2022) through the lens of Anthropocene fiction to demonstrate that the Anthropocene discourse has become increasingly pervasive within crime fiction vis-à-vis the rapid progression of the climate crisis and continues to restructure even the basic parameters of the genre.

Jeannine Hélène Baetz is a PhD candidate in International Cultural Studies at the University of Galway. Drawing on her academic background in Slavic studies, comparative literary studies, and intermediality studies, her current research project focusses on the representation of environmental crises and haunting presences in contemporary European crime fiction. Her research interests include genre fiction's interfacing with socio-political issues and intermedial approaches to contemporary European literature and television.

Marjorie Huet, 'From page to screen, from Portsmouth to Le Havre: exploring contemporary crime fiction's trends and directions through Graham Hurley's DI Faraday novels'

Since its inception, crime fiction has been widely associated with the city. Many contemporary crime authors choose urban environments not only as the backdrops to their novels but as protagonists.

One example is Graham Hurley, the author of the DI Faraday series, twelve novels published between 2000 and 2012, all set in the city of Portsmouth.

Hurley's work has enjoyed notable success in France. Not only have the novels been translated into French, but they have also been adapted by France 2 as *Deux flics sur les docks*, a TV series of twelve episodes broadcast between 2011 and 2016. A distinctive feature of these adaptations is the relocation of the plots to the French port city of Le Havre.

Drawing on theories developed in Literary Criticism, Translation Studies, Film Studies, Tourism Studies, this paper examines some of the historical and recent evolutions of crime fiction as a genre in both France and the UK, whilst also exploring newer interdisciplinary trends, shifts and directions related to its translation and adaptation across different forms of media and locations.

Dr Marjorie Huet is an Associate Professor in the School of European Languages, Culture and Society - Centre for Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry (SELCS-CMII) at University College London (UCL). Her research focuses on French and British contemporary crime fiction, its translation and its intercultural mediation across borders and media forms.

Session Two
‘Crime Fiction and Social Justice’
Chair: Diana Battaglia

Andrew Pepper, ‘History as Pessimism: Vigilantism and Antiracist Violence in Watchmen (2019)’

Taking up the invitation by the conference organisers to think about how “retrospection and nostalgia, futurity and optimism (or despair)” infiltrate the form and content of crime fiction, my paper considers the 2019 HBO TV series *Watchmen* and its interrogation of the long history of Black political struggle and antiracist violence in the US. *Watchmen* shows us how the historical and ongoing character of the problem of racial injustice, the extent of antiracist violence and the emergence of the Black vigilante figure, rework the terrain of the crime story to such an extent that no good outcome is possible. This paper examines the implications of this move and its connections to unravel the impossible condition of what Calvin Warren describes as the foundational logic of Black nihilism: the ‘attempt to enter the ontological crisis blackness presents to an antiracist world’ (ix). History and indeed narrative in *Watchmen* are reimagined not as causal or consequential in the sense that they are marked by movement and progress (towards some kind of ‘good’ outcome) but rather as an endlessly repeating loop.

Andrew Pepper is Professor of English at Queen’s University Belfast. He is author of *Unwilling Executioner: Crime Fiction and the State* (OUP 2016) and co-editor of *Contemporary European Crime Fiction* (Palgrave 2023), *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2020) and *Globalization and the State in Contemporary Crime Fiction* (2016).

Kate Quinn, 'Policing the Patriarchy: Women Detectives in Hispanic Crime Fiction'

This paper proposes to compare the debut of Alicia Giménez Bartlett's Barcelona police protagonist, Petra Delicado, in the now seminal *Ritos de muerte* (1996) [Death Rites] with Chilean Paula Illabaca's more recent creation of homicide detective Amparo Dávila, who first appeared in *La regla de los nueve* (2015) [The Rule of Nine]. The paper will examine how each fictional creation engages with ideas around policing practices, entrenched misogyny, and gender violence, and will consider to what extent these works can be read as feminist interventions in their respective national traditions.

Kate Quinn is Head of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Galway (since January 2023). She is a co-founder of the International Crime Genre Research Network (founded in Galway in 2005). She has published widely on Chilean crime fiction, with a focus on politics, history, memory and human rights.

Vaibhav Parel, 'The Case of Harry Virdee: Investigating Crime, Race and Identity in the Fiction of A. A. Dhand'

Diasporic South Asian crime fiction in the UK is a relatively under-explored sub-genre. In this paper I will attempt to analyse two novels by A. A. Dhand, *Streets of Darkness* (2016) and *Girl Zero* (2017). These novels are set in Bradford in the UK, a city known for its complex economic and racial history. In these – first two – novels of his 'Harry Virdee' series, where Harry is a Punjabi-British police officer, Dhand brings racial tensions in the city and complex familial entanglements to the fore. I ask two questions: how does the representation of policing change in a multiracial and intensely divided city like Bradford when we have a diasporic detective? And further, what does the future of crime fiction in the UK look like when – post-Brexit – there is an insurgent rise of the political right, and increasingly visible economic and social inequalities?

Vaibhav Iype Parel is currently completing his AHRC-funded PhD as a Northern Bridge scholar at Newcastle University, UK. He is working on Anglophone South Asian Diasporic crime fiction. His academic work has either appeared or is forthcoming in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, *Libri&Liberi*, and *Literature, Critique and Empire Today* (formerly *Journal of Commonwealth Studies*).

Session Two
‘Crime Fiction and Social Justice’
Chair: Diana Battaglia

Eric Sandberg, ‘Agatha Christie’s Legacy: Adaptation and the Problem of Nostalgia’

This paper examines Agatha Christie through the dual lens of adaptation and nostalgia. Christie’s work has left a substantial cultural legacy through its global readership, through the inspiration it offers subsequent generations of crime writers, and not least through its many adaptations. Drawing on Svetlana Boym’s seminal distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, this paper argues that many of these Christie adaptations function as engines of nostalgia, reconstructing a reassuring vision of an ordered past. This reading resonates with critiques of Golden Age detective fiction as a cultural retreat from modernity. However, some recent adaptations, like Sarah Phelps’s, deploy anti-nostalgic strategies, foregrounding poverty, racism, and historical violence. The ABC Murders (2018) for example, explicitly challenges the myth of the gentle past. While this might seem to relegate Christie’s own work to the dubious realm of restorative nostalgia, the paper argues that she increasingly interrogated nostalgia over the course of her career in novels like *At Bertram’s Hotel* (1965), where the carefully staged evocation of a nostalgic past conceals contemporary criminality. Christie’s legacy is thus double-edged: it can consolidate regressive longings for an imagined past, yet both Christie’s own late work and innovative adaptations actively resist nostalgia’s restorative impulses.

Eric Sandberg is an Associate Professor at City University of Hong Kong, and holds a Docentship at the University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests include popular modernism, the contemporary novel, nostalgia, and adaptation. He has published essays in many edited collections and international journals, and his most recent monographs, *Studying Crime in Fiction* (Routledge) and *Crime Fiction and the Holocaust* (Palgrave Macmillan) were published in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Srijani Ghosh, 'Reliving the Golden Age: Retrospection and Nostalgia in Sophie Hannah's New Hercule Poirot Novels'

This paper examines how Sophie Hannah's new Hercule Poirot novels present an evolution of the form, while simultaneously performing a multilayered act of retrospection and genre nostalgia. Through contained settings, limited suspect lists, fair-play clues, and the grand reveal of the culprit, Hannah restores the formal architecture of Golden Age detection by looking back to Agatha Christie's clue-puzzle tradition. At the level of character, Poirot functions as a nostalgic figure whose vanity, precision, and moral certainty enter the novels already infused with cultural memory. Hannah's decision to situate her stories within Poirot's original midtwentieth-century timeline further develops the retrospective structure by deliberately rejecting contemporary forensic or digital investigative methods. Her novels also reassert the Golden Age's moral logic, where truth can be known and order restored, offering a nostalgic counterpoint to the ambiguity of modern crime fiction. However, Hannah's novels differ from the originals in that they employ a distinctly modern authorial voice, Poirot discusses his theories more openly with his sidekick, and the characters' motivations receive fuller psychological development. Ultimately, the paper argues that Hannah's Poirot novels are palimpsests that enable pleasurable retrospection by utilizing Christie's detective to reflect on the genre's evolution while preserving its most enduring narrative ideas.

Srijani Ghosh is a Continuing Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focuses on popular fiction, and her work has appeared in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *Popular Culture Review*, *Women's Studies*, *English Studies*, and *South Asian Popular Culture*.

Eva Burke, “These fucking vampires’: Depictions of websleuths in contemporary crime fiction’

For as long as there have been crime narratives, there has existed the desire to insert ourselves into these narratives, to understand the criminal act and to become part of ‘fixing’ or solving it. In recent years, via social media, this has led to a blurring of boundaries between spectator, detective, and victim. One recent incarnation of this is ‘Crimetok’, an ecosystem of Tiktok microcelebrities whose following is built around the deconstruction and (ostensibly) solving of crimes. Crime fiction authors, ever alert to shifts in the cultural mediation of crime and criminality, have begun to respond to this evolving network. Ashley Winstead’s novel *This Book Will Bury Me* takes as its focus a young woman who joins a team of virtual amateur detectives attempting to solve the murders of a group of college students. Becky Brynolf’s debut thriller *I Found a Body* explores the fallout of an influencer’s discovery of a murder victim while livestreaming. This paper will examine the extent to which both novels observe this culture, asking whether the performance of ‘investigating’ counterbalances the delight which both investigator and audience inevitably take in the retelling of gory details and the sharing of crime scene photos. It posits that in doing so, both texts comment not just on the phenomenon of ‘true crime influencers’ but, in a broader sense, on the cultural construction of crime narratives as entertainment.

Eva Burke completed her PhD, funded by the Irish Research Council, at the school of English at Trinity College Dublin under the supervision of Dr. Clare Clarke. Her research looks at domestic noir fiction and the dynamics of victimhood. Eva has published work in the *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, *Feminist Spaces*, *Trinity Postgraduate Review*, and the 2018 edited collection *From the Domestic to the Dominant: The New Face of Crime Fiction*, published by Palgrave Macmillan. She also co-edited a special ‘domestic noir’ issue of *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, and the 2024 edited collection *Reassessing Murder, She Wrote: The Afterlives of a Popular Culture Phenomenon*, published by Routledge.

Session Three

‘Crime Fiction and the State 2’

Chair: Jean Gregorek

Jerry Carlson, ‘Detecting History by Plotting Palimpsests: Leonardo Padura's *La Neblina de Ayer* (The Mist of Yesterday)’

Considered Cuba’s most distinguished living novelist. Leonardo Padura has written, among many works, a series of crime novels with Havana police detective Mario Conde, active, then retired, as the protagonist. The series initially appeared in the 1990s with Conde on duty investigating from his present. It continues in the 21st century with events as late as President Obama’s visit to the island. Given the collapse of the Soviet Union and therefore its subsidies to Cuba, the decade of the 90s, known to Cubans as the Special Period, was particularly harsh in economic, social, and political terms. The dream of a triumphant socialist future collapsed. Why and how? Enter Mario Conde whose investigations find more than whodunnit. They reveal harsh truths about the path to the disaster. Conde becomes as much an historian as a policeman or private investigator. As Padura has remarked, when a country cannot trust its historians, its artists need to step into the breach. Official Cuban revolutionary history follows a linear, progressive teleology. Events of the 19th century resistance to the Spanish, for instance, become Old Testament prophecies for Fidel Castro’s New Testament. This historiography simplifies, erases, and distorts the many entanglements of race, class, and ethnicity in a settler colony like Cuba. Padura’s work attempts to recover those enmeshments. My presentation will analyze a representative novel in the series *La Neblina de Ayer* (retitled by the British publisher as *Havana Fever!*). Like most mysteries, the novel follows two timelines, the investigation forward and the retrieval of the past. In this case, there are two mysteries that issue from the same crumbling mansion. The deft manipulation of fabula-syuzhet relations reveals patterns of Cuban behavior that point beyond a family tragedy to national history.

Professor Jerry W. Carlson is a historian of narrative forms with special expertise in narrative theory, the history of the novel, global independent film, and the cinemas of the Americas. From 2013 to 2022 he served as Chair of the Department of Media & Communication Arts at The City College CUNY. In addition, at the CUNY Graduate Center he is a member of the doctoral faculties of French, Comparative Literature, and Film & Media Cultures and a Senior Fellow at the Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies.

Mario Kolar, 'Heightened Social Critique as an Emerging Tendency in the Contemporary Croatian Crime Novel'

As Andrew Pepper has argued, the socio-critical potential of crime fiction is often inherently contradictory, since criminal investigation simultaneously interrogates and reinforces the dominant socio-political order. Detection functions both as a mechanism of social control and as a vehicle of critique, challenging dominant values while remaining embedded in the structures that sustain them. Nevertheless, as Stewart King has demonstrated, certain works of crime fiction reject the authority of ineffective national legal systems and instead position themselves under the jurisdiction of a “universal justice”, appealing to a shared sense of moral legitimacy that delegitimises state-imposed law. Carlos Uxó has identified crime narratives that go even further, depicting situations in which the state itself is responsible for the production of crime, and where the police no longer represent justice but rather terror. This paper argues that a sharp critique of the state legal system, alongside sustained representations of political and economic corruption, constitutes a significant new tendency in the contemporary Croatian crime novel. This tendency will be examined through selected works by Jurica Pavičić, Drago Hedl, Ivana Bodrožić, and Edo Popović.

Mario Kolar is a literary critic and associate professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia. His main research interests are related to (Croatian) crime fiction, and social criticism of contemporary (Croatian) fiction. He has published five scholarly and five popular books, and around one hundred studies, essays, and reviews. He is the principal investigator of the research projects “Croatian and Anglophone Crime Fiction: Text, Context, Translation” (2025–2029, funded by NextGeneration EU), and “Social Criticism of Contemporary Croatian Novel” (2025–2028, funded by Croatian Science Foundation).

Sinem Yazıcıoğlu, 'Contemporary affordances of the short story cycle as crime narrative: Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*'

Following Susan Garland Mann's argument that the modern short story cycle originates in the serialization of Sherlock Holmes stories, this study suggests that contemporary short story cycles might offer affordances that expand and challenge the narration of crime. This study will examine Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2004), which is comprised of loosely interconnected short stories on the political violence in Haiti in the 1960's under the regimes of François Duvalier and Jean Claude Duvalier. Depicting a Haitian sculptor, Ka, and her father as they travel from New York to Florida, the collection is structured on the vanishing of Ka's father in the hotel, which soon reveals that he was the torturer of Haitian prisoners. The stories in the collection, however, do not follow a chronological sequence, and more textual space is spared for the representation of the past and its inevitable effects on the present and future, rather than the narrativization of the crime itself. Danticat uses the affordances of the short story cycle form in a renewed sense both for returning to the origins of crime narratives and, by the form's fundamental characteristics of fragmented unity, for engaging us in the process of seeking justice.

Sinem Yazıcıoğlu is Associate Professor of American Culture and Literature at Istanbul University, Turkey. Her research interests include American and Canadian short story cycles, intergenerational trauma and spatiality.

Session Three
‘Crime Fiction and the City’
Chair: Emer O’Beirne

Ayşegül Turan, ‘Past and Present in Ahmet Ümit's When Pera Trees Whisper’

This study analyzes the representation of the recent history of Turkey, and specifically Istanbul, in *When Pera Trees Whisper* (2013) by Ahmet Ümit, the best-selling crime novelist of contemporary Turkish literature. Known for his focus on the intermingling of the stories of Istanbul and its residents, Ümit, in this novel, turns his gaze to Beyoğlu (Pera) and its social, cultural, demographic and architectural transformation over decades. While the novel takes its starting point from a murder committed on New Year’s Eve in Beyoğlu, it also strives to convey numerous narratives about the neighborhood, touching upon political history of Turkey in the twentieth and twenty first century. The novel uses the perspective of Chief Inspector Nevzat, a well-known figure for Ümit readers, hence both personal and official views, as presented by Nevzat, about political violence, minority rights, organized crime and mafia, and gentrification projects come under scrutiny. Thus, this study aims to investigate the representations of micro and macro narratives about urban history to discuss the crimes of the old days and today in continuum and through their interconnectedness.

Ayşegül Turan is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Istanbul Kültür University. She received her B.A. and M.A in English Literature from Boğaziçi University and her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Washington University in St. Louis. Her articles on postcolonial literature and comparative literary studies have appeared in various journals. Her research interests include Anglophone postcolonial literatures, Middle Eastern literatures, crime fiction, cultural studies, and film studies.

Douglas Smith, 'Hydraulic History: Detection and Infrastructure in in E. L. Doctorow's Waterworks and Caleb Carr's The Alienist'

1994 saw the publication of two historical detective novels set in nineteenth-century New York: E. L. Doctorow's *Waterworks* and Caleb Carr's *The Alienist*. The novels deal with quite different crimes (a murderous oligarchic conspiracy; an isolated psychopathic serial killer) in different decades (the 1870s and 1890s), but they converge in using water infrastructure to underpin their plots of murder and detection. The city and its population are depicted as a complex system of flows with alternating pressures and resistances, as competing social forces seek to influence the course of the investigations and conflicting psychological motivations drive characters' actions. Doctorow and Carr present the nineteenth-century U. S. as a 'hydraulic civilization' (Wittfogel) where individual robber barons are displaced by faceless corporate entities and lone killers disguise themselves as bureaucrats managing information. This paper explores how the novels use a fictional archaeology of infrastructure to interrogate the past (the aftermath of the Civil War that unified a vast continental nation and the lead-up to the Spanish-American War that transformed the U. S. into a world power) and to comment implicitly on their time of publication (the 1990s as a post-Cold-War period characterized by global dominance, the multinational corporation and the information economy).

Douglas Smith teaches literature, film and theory in the French and Francophone Studies section of the UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics. Recent publications include a co-edited number of *French Studies* ('Variable Geometries: Hexagonal France in Post-War French and Francophone Culture', October 2024) and a chapter in *Transnational French Studies* (ed. by Charles Forsdick and Claire Launchbury, Liverpool University Press, 2023): 'The French Hexagon: Defining the Shape of the Nation'. He is currently researching the representation of infrastructure in French culture across different media.

Barbara Pezzotti, 'The Detective as a Janus-Faced Character in Crime Fiction'

This paper shows how retrospection and nostalgia, futurity and optimism or despair work their way into the plots of crime fiction. It argues that crime stories are not exclusively concerned with the past of the victim; they also host numerous historical references often inscribed in the fabric of the city or inspired by the many places the detective encounters. While walking city streets, the countryside or the wilderness in search for clues, and remembering old architecture, places and people, fictional detectives experience a physical and emotional journey into the past that allows the sleuth to cast a critical eye on the present. The detective, like a Janus figure (*The American Private Eye* 201), looks at the past to point at the contemporary evils of globalisation, neoliberalism, gender violence and discrimination. Ultimately their virtual “time travelling” becomes a sort of “critical” nostalgia that shows how the real culprit of the crime stories is not a single villain but patriarchy, capitalism and greed. This paper will explore a range of crime stories, from Marcello Fois’ *Dura madre* (2001) to Peter May’s *The Blackhouse* (2009) and Jane Harper’s *The Last One Out* (2025).

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