

Call for Papers: Women and Crime Fiction

Workshop at the University of Zurich, 7-8 June 2024

Organised by Dr. Alan Mattli and Dr. Olivia Tjon-A-Meeuw

Ever since the genre established itself in the Anglophone world in the mid-nineteenth century, crime fiction and discussions of crime fiction have tended to underemphasize the role women play in it, unless they are victims or femme fatales. Yet women, as authors, major characters, and audience members, have been a part of the genre since the very beginning. Indeed, it has been about a century since one could have feasibly considered crime and detective fiction (written or otherwise) as a “male-dominated genre,” and scholarship has followed suit: from Kathleen Gregory Klein’s *The Woman Detective* to Sally R. Munt’s *Murder by the Book?*, from Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones’ *Detective Agency* to Gill Plain’s *Twentieth Century Crime Fiction* – the study of femininity and crime fiction has proved to be extremely fertile ground for analysis and debate.

Quite often, however, these studies and debates remain within clearly defined historical boundaries, with the result that the female detectives and authors of the nineteenth century only rarely come into scholarly contact with their peers from the “Golden Age of Detective Fiction,” the femmes fatales of the hardboiled mode, the feminist sleuths of the 1970s and 1980s, or the multimedial third- and fourth-wave-feminist contributions produced since the turn of the millennium. Additionally, the investigation of the contents of genre fiction are rarely combined with a study of female recipients.

Studies have shown that women seem to be the main audience for true-crime books (Vicary and Fraley 82). This interest holds true across various media; true crime is the most popular podcast subject in the US (Stocking et al.) and the audience for these highly popular podcasts consists mostly of women (Stocking et al., Greer 154–155). Women are also active as producers of such fare. For example, the genre-defining podcast *Serial*, hosted, written, and produced by Sarah Koenig, became the first podcast to win a Peabody Award in 2015. Further examples include the podcasts *Drunk Women Solving Crime* or *My Favorite Murder*, both hosted by women.

This workshop seeks to counteract the prevailing scholarly compartmentalisation and to bridge the aforementioned historical and disciplinary gaps by convening scholars to present and discuss their work on femininity and crime literature, film, television, videogaming, podcasting, fan fiction, etc., from any historical period. Not only does this approach serve to facilitate a more holistic approach to the long and varied history of crime fiction; it also allows for interdisciplinary and diachronic takes on the topic, bringing together perspectives from different branches of the humanities and social sciences.

We are happy to announce the following keynote:

Dr. Kerstin-Anja Munderlein (Otto-Friedrich Universität Bamberg): “‘She’s a woman, and women act in a silly way’: Policing and (Re-)Negotiating Acceptable Femininity from the Golden Age to Syd Moore”

We invite abstracts for 20-minute papers in English covering texts from all kinds of media (literature, film, television, podcasting, videogaming, etc.), discussing topics such as:

- Female characters and stereotypes in crime fiction
- The femme fatale
- Women as audience for crime fiction
- Women as producers of crime fiction
- Intersectional approaches to issues of race, class, and nationality

- The rise of female-led podcasts
- The (physical) female voice of podcasts
- The fetishisation of the female victim
- Historical comparisons, from the 19th century to the 21st
- The ethics of true-crime fiction
- The reception of crime fiction by female authors
- Gender-bending in fan fiction
- etc.

Please send your 250-300-word abstracts to alan.mattli@es.uzh.ch and olivia.tjon-a-meeuw@es.uzh.ch in a PDF file. Please also send a separate bionote of about 100 words. The deadline for abstracts is **May 1st, 2024**.

There might be a purse to support early-career researchers from outside of Switzerland by covering a small part of their travel. Please indicate whether you are interested in this opportunity.

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- WALTON, Priscilla L., and Manina Jones. 1999. *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition*. Berkeley: U of California P.