

## The festivalisation of crime fiction in Romance-speaking Europe: towards heritage?

**Field of Study :** Arts and Culture, Literature, Sociology

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### KEYWORDS

Crime fiction – Festivals – Cultural tourism – Territorial enhancement

### ABSTRACT

Long considered a sub-literature, a "bad genre", the detective novel seems to have gained its credibility on 21st century. Not only is it no longer regarded as a pulp novel, relegated to the newspaper kiosks, but it has conquered the institutional and cultural space of the city in the form, among other things, of the growing number of festivals devoted to it each year. Since the 1980s, there has been an unprecedented expansion of thriller festivals in France, Spain and Italy in particular, as part of the international movement to promote and circulate books. While major cities such as Barcelona, Lyon and Milan are organising their own events, the phenomenon seems to be spreading to medium-sized towns and even small cities across Europe. In Italy, for example, the most important crime fiction festivals are held in small provincial towns (Suzzara, Monticello Brianza, Pietrasanta). These festivals are often run by crime fiction writers, who then become cultural agents in their area, and enjoy remarkable support from local institutions. It will be interesting to analyse the phenomenon in all the countries of Europe's Romance languages in order to study the way in which this literature is currently undergoing a phenomenon of ontological promotion and how, in turn, the territories are seizing on the phenomenon to promote a form of literary tourism that is booming.

## Research aims and methodology

The thesis is part of a vast research project entitled ROM'POL, set up as part of the UNITA alliance. The UNITA consortium offers the opportunity to develop a research network, unprecedented in Europe, dedicated to crime fiction in Romance languages.

The main thematic line of enquiry of the network is developed around the notions of identity and territory, in order to better address the hypothesis of an emerging cultural heritage constituted by the crime genre literature in Romance languages. If we start from the assumption that a linguistic kinship is undoubtedly the breeding ground for a community of culture, the contours of Latin Europe should be able to be drawn through the study of a popular corpus, in a historical and/or current perspective.

The members of the network, who met at the University of Pau in September 2021, have identified several areas of research which have already led to the organisation of a first international conference devoted to the "transnational and transmedia circulation of detective fiction in Romance languages" in 2022. The book resulting from this first event is currently in press. Three other conferences devoted to the feminisation of the genre, the regional anchoring and the resurgence of history in crime fiction in Romance-language European countries are scheduled for the coming years.

The analysis of the rise of crime fiction festivals in Romance-speaking countries and their impact on the regions concerned will form part of the dynamic of this vast research project and will help to measure the phenomenon of heritage that this literature is currently undergoing.

## Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

The rise of festivals devoted to crime literature in Europe is part of two trends highlighted in literary and sociological studies. The first is the "spatialisation of literature" and the "projection of the work into physical space" emphasised, among others, by Anne-Marie Thiesse. The second trend is the "festivalisation of culture", analysed by Emmanuel Négrier, a sociologist at the CNRS, who highlights the public's renewed interest in cultural events after two years of deprivation as a result of the pandemic. A number of studies have looked at the phenomenon of the festivalisation of crime literature on a territorial or national scale (Cristina Pérez Sierra in Spain, Lucie Amir in France), but to date no significant work has been devoted to this phenomenon on the scale of Europe's Romance languages.

### Short bibliography :

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## Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The research for this thesis is based on both a literary and sociological approach. After identifying the major trends and emblematic authors of the detective genre in each of the countries concerned, the PhD student will have to identify the various festivals established in the countries of Romance-speaking Europe in order to draw up an interactive cartography of them, and then carry out a field study designed to gather data (historical, statistical, economic indicators) making it possible to measure the cultural as well as the social and economic impact of these festivals.

The student will also be required to analyse the networks of sociability that develop within these festivals (between organisers, authors and audiences) and also between the different festivals within which authors and audiences circulate.

To carry out this work, he/she will be required to travel to the countries concerned in order to meet the festival directors as well as the writers taking part in these events and their audiences.

**Emilie GUYARD** is University Lecturer at the University of Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (ALTER UR7504). She is an expert on the Spanish detective genre. Since 2016, she has organised an annual scientific event at the University of Pau dedicated to the detective genre in collaboration with the festival "Un aller-retour dans le Noir". As an extension of these events, she has already published four books: Emilie Guyard (ed.), *L'imaginaire social dans le roman noir espagnol et portugais du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Binges, Éditions Orbis Tertius (Collection Universitas), 2017, 236 p. Emilie Guyard (ed), *Roman Noir: espaces urbains et grands espaces, Líneas* [URL: <https://revues.univ-pau.fr/lineas/2370>]; Emilie GUYARD et Myriam ROCHE (ed.), *Roman noir et journalisme : enquête de vérité*, Chambéry : PUSMB, 2020, 308 p., ISBN : 978-2-37741-055-2SB and COLIN, Christelle ; GUYARD, Emilie ; ROCHE, Myriam, *Le polar dans la cité*, Pau, PUPPA, 2022. In December 2018 she gained her "Habilitation à diriger des recherches" by presenting a study entitled *Carlos Salem: le polar déjanté ou la quête du sens*.

[https://alter.univ-pau.fr/fr/organisation/membres/cv\\_-eguyardc-fr.html#contenu](https://alter.univ-pau.fr/fr/organisation/membres/cv_-eguyardc-fr.html#contenu)

**Alessandro PERISSONOTTO** is not only University Lecturer in the Humanities Department at the University of Turin, where he teaches creative writing and storytelling, but he is also the author of some twenty crime novels, translated in France (Gallimard "Série noire", Odile Jacob thriller, La Fosse aux ours), the UK, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Romania, Estonia - under the pseudonym Arno Saar -, Russia and Japan. Finally, he is the artistic director of a literary festival in Rivalta di Torino called the RiStory Festival, in homage not only to its location but also to the process of restoration and narrative recycling that is characteristic of literature.

## Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

- Oral interviews with festival directors, writers and audiences
- Evaluation of the socio-economic impact of festivals in the regions (local, national, transnational)
- Analytical description of the sociability networks developed within the festivals

Dissemination :

- Travelling exhibition
- Interactive map
- Publication of a book



## Estimated schedule

1st year: State of the art/theoretical reading

1st and 2nd year: fieldwork in the various areas concerned

2nd year: analysis of the data collected and interactive mapping 3rd

year: Completion of data analysis / writing of thesis