Frauke Reitemeier, Kirsten Sandrock (Eds.)

Crimelights

Scottish Crime Writing – Then and Now

Sigrid Rieuwerts, Christoph Heyl, Shona Allan (General Eds.)

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E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de
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General Editors' Preface

We are pleased to present the Society for Scottish Studies in Europe's second volume of conference proceedings. *Crimelights: Scottish Crime Writing – Then and Now* offers a lively and multi-faceted investigation of Scottish crime fiction, covering both Tartan Noir and its long and intriguing pre-history. It brings together a variety of voices, approaches and perspectives. The present volume includes not only papers written by both younger and established scholars in the field but also a contribution by a leading practitioner of the genre.

Crimelights: Scottish Crime Writing – Then and Now addresses key issues such as the Scottishness of Scottish crime writing, and with it specific representations, constructions (or indeed deconstructions) of specifically "Scottish" space, culture and people. Without neglecting widely recognized major authors such as Ian Rankin, this collection widens the circle of enquiry. Like a good detective novel, it goes way beyond rounding up the usual suspects.

Sigrid Rieuwerts
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Christoph Heyl
Universität Duisburg-Essen

Shona Allan
Universität zu Köln

Editors' Acknowledgements

The majority of papers included in this book were first presented at the conference "Crime Scotland – Then and Now," which was held at the University of Göttingen, Germany, in May/June 2012. It was the second conference of the Society for Scottish Studies in Europe, and we are happy to publish selected papers from that conference here.

We would like to express our thanks to all contributors to this conference, including not only the presenters but also the numerous helpers and supporters who have made the conference possible in the first place. Special thanks are due to Barbara Schaff for her generous support of the conference in all kinds of ways. Also, we would like to express our gratitude to and appreciation of the help provided by Ines Gundlach, Barbara Eggers, Juliette Irretier and Charlotte Kalla, who proved to be of vital value for the conference. We are also grateful that Lin Anderson and Andrew Lycett immediately took up our invitation to come to Göttingen as keynote speakers, and to contribute to the conference and to this collection. Further thanks are due to Sigrid Rieuwerts, Christoph Heyl, and Shona Allan for their support and their general commitment to the European Society for Scottish Studies. We hope that many more fruitful conferences of the society will follow, and numerous books to survey the ongoing discussions about and investigations into Scottish studies.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of several institutions, including the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Faculty of Arts of the Georg-August University of Göttingen and the Department for Anglophone Literature and Cultural Studies of the Georg-August University. Without them, neither the conference nor this publication would have been possible.

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Introduction

FRAUKE REITEMEIER AND KIRSTEN SANDROCK (UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN)

Scottish Crime Writing – Then and Now

In the opening decades of the twenty-first century, Scottish crime writing is booming. It does not need a private eye to recognize the increasing interest in, and influence of, Scottish crime writing on the national and international book markets. Ever since the publication of William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* in 1977, the first of the Laidlaw series to be released, numerous new and exciting authors have joined the field and, together, have managed to turn Scottish crime writing into a genre of its own. A substantial number of them is discussed in the articles of this collection, though numerous others – including Alex Gray, Michael Innes alias John Innes Mackintosh Stewart, Alanna Knight, Stuart MacBride, Val McDermid or Alexander McCall Smith, to name but a few – could be added to the list. Scottish crime writing has even earned a distinct name: Tartan Noir. This has come to stand as an internationally known trademark for Scottish crime writing.

Yet, while the term Tartan Noir is recognized by readers as well as publishers and authors worldwide, few people would dare to define it. We gladly join the ranks of those who admit that Tartan Noir is too multifarious to come up with a decisive definition. Still, we wonder what it is that shapes the relationship between Scotland and its numerous crime fiction authors. Is it the landscape that inspires the crime writing of Scottish authors? The cities? The people? Or a certain sense of self? In other words, what is it that makes Scottish crime writing so particularly Scottish? In this collection, we try to approach these and other questions about Scottish crime fiction from a diversity of perspectives. Although – luckily – none of the articles included in this collection claims to provide definite answers to the questions, they all help to explore the interaction between Scotland and crime writing, and to develop new theories and arguments about the development of Tartan Noir in historical, literary, and cultural terms.

There are two broad dimensions whose trajectories we are trying to trace in this collection. One is the historical, which looks into the Scottish past to see how crime and crime fiction has influenced Scotland's literary and cultural history until this day. Scotland has a remarkably long tradition of crime writing, and also a long – and notorious – tradition of crimes being committed. The Westport murders of Burke and Hare in 1827-28 may well belong to the most legendary crimes in history, and the list of famous works of Scottish crime

fiction is no less illustrious. James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and, of course, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* narratives (1887-1927) are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to representations of crime in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Scottish literature. It is no wonder, then, that current Scottish crime fiction authors frequently refer to their historical predecessors. Some of them go so far as to rewrite the earlier works from a different perspective, whereas others simply affirm the importance of Scotland's history of crime literature for their own work. In any case, it is evident that the historical dimension is far from being bygone but is, in fact, very much alive today.

The second dimension we are trying to map out may perhaps best be described as a cultural and, in many ways, contemporary dimension. It includes representations of space, culture, and people in Scottish crime fiction as well as the role the literary tourist industry has come to play in the marketing of the genre – everything, in fact, that touches upon the relationship between Scotland and crime fiction in current times. Naturally, this dimension cannot always be firmly set apart from the historical dimension, since historical analyses also draw on cultural aspects of Scottish crime fiction. Yet we find it fruitful to think of the cultural dimension as touching more prominently on questions that may also be part of Scottish history, but which are not concerned so much with history itself but rather with the cultural, material and ideological contexts of Scottish crime literature.

Space, for one, is a central concept for Scottish crime fiction. As Alison Young's readings of the crime locations in detective fiction show, readers form a strong mental connection between the stories and their crime scenes (*Imagining Crime*, 85-87). If we transfer this to Scottish crime, we have to ask how Scotland features in the works of Scottish crime authors. Several essays in this collection attempt to delineate the function of space in Scottish crime fiction, reaching from representations of the Scottish landscape to that of Scotland's two largest cities – Glasgow and Edinburgh – and on to the ways that crime fiction has influenced Scotland's tourist industry. Altogether, the essays offer proof that conceptions of space are not confined to mere geography. Rather, space also comprises the representation of social, cultural and linguistic landscapes, all of which are constructed by humans and, hence, can also be deconstructed again.

It is this latter aspect of deconstructing existing conceptions of space that proves to be especially relevant to Scottish crime authors today. More often than not, contemporary crime fiction opens up perspectives on Scotland that are otherwise not in the foreground of literary or tourist representation. Ian Rankin

has argued in this respect that the very genre of crime fiction is germane to authors who want to portray alternative sides of Scotland: "After all, the detective has an 'all areas pass' to every aspect of the contemporary urban scene, and this is a way for the crime writer to take the reader into forbidden territory" (Rankin vi). This capacity of private detectives or police officers to move through different social, cultural or political spaces as part of their daily work also allows readers of crime novels to peek into parts of society that are otherwise out of their reach. The rich and the poor, old and young, men and women, natives and non-natives: all of them are potential victims or perpetrators of crime, and an author who wants to write plausible crime fiction needs to be able to render all different parts of society. Of course, crime fiction only ever paints fictional portraits of these different societal strata, and it would be wrong to suggest that crime novels deliver accurate images of Scottish society. Several articles in this collection address the complex relationship between crime writing and reality, and they all illustrate that this relationship is not an easy one. Yet, while we are warned not to read crime fiction as a reflection of Scotland's society, the articles agree that Scottish crime fiction offers one of the most diverse fictional lookouts on the prospects and problems of Scottish society, both in the past and in the present.

* * * * *

The articles below are arranged in groups according to their themes or approaches. This does not mean that the articles gathered under one heading do not also touch on other themes mentioned in the other sections. As always in such collections, different articles could well fit in two or several of the sections. In the end, however, all sections are meant to reflect upon each other and it is hoped that the thematic divisions will give as much reading direction as they will open up possibilities of cross-referencing.

We are particularly pleased to feature two 'Crimelight' articles in the opening section of this book. The first is the article by Lin Anderson, the internationally successful author of the Rhona MacLeod series, who opens up a rare personal window into the current happenings of the Scottish crime writing scene. In addition, she reflects on the historical development and recent success story of Scotland's crime authors. Lin's essay offers a refreshing answer to why crime writing might be particularly appealing to Scottish authors – an answer that does not have so much to do with geography or space, but rather with the people of Scotland and their way of seeing the world.

The second 'Crimelight' article comes from Andrew Lycett. He also offers us an insider's perspective on Scottish crime writing, though one that is not con-

cerned with the current literary scene but rather with one of the most prominent historical figures who have shaped the tradition. His article on Sherlock Holmes and his author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presents numerous original views on the influence that Scotland in general and Edinburgh in particular has had on Doyle's creation of his most famous literary detective. As the author of the much acclaimed Conan Doyle biography *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (2008), Andrew is, of course, *the* expert on this theme.

The following section on historical crimes in fiction opens with a study by Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir on the murder of Lord Darnley, Mary Stuart's king consort, in February 1567. The article investigates how the murder and especially Queen Mary's involvement in it are represented in a number of twentieth and twenty-first century historical novels and films. She shows that there is a tendency in certain forms of fiction to romanticize the relationship between Mary and Lord Bothwell, the potential murderer of Lord Darnley and later husband of Queen Mary. In so doing, these narratives portray the historical relationship – and the crime committed for it – in terms of current ideas of romantic love, even if the question of personal and political culpability remains central to the texts.

Silvia Mergenthal's article on "Walter Scott's Walking Stick" sketches the history of textual representations of the legendary Scottish Covenanter Major Weir, who admitted on his sickbed to having been involved in occultist practices, from the seventeenth century to the present. It particularly focuses on three texts by Walter Scott: *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, *Redgauntlet*, and *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*. It argues that, while the trial records and early political and religious pamphlets situate the case at the intersection of sexual deviance and witchcraft, the former allegation – sexual deviance – had largely become confined to legal textbooks by Scott's time. However, while Scott himself shares his contemporaries' attitude to Weir's sexual mores, he does not de-contextualise or de-historicise Weir's story, but carefully places it in a specific historical context, and relates it to historically specific discursive practices. Thus, Scott's treatment of the Weir material also illustrates how he processes – and re-processes – the stuff of "real history" in his work.

Maha El Hissy's contribution offers an insightful reading of another historical crime in fiction, namely the way that the Appin murder committed in 1751 in the aftermath of the Jacobite rising is represented in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped*. The novel uses the case of the Appin murder to both comment on and correct the historical incidents and the injustice committed around the murder of Allan Breck Stewart, who had been tried *in absentia* and sentenced to death for the assassination of the royal agent Colin Roy Campbell of Glenure. While Stevenson draws on this historical material and turns it into a tale of ro-

mance involving the Whig Lowlander David and his friend Alan Breck, who personifies the Highlanders' resistance against British control, Stevenson converts the novel into a testimony that highlights juridical writing as precarious writing.

The next section on space in Scottish crime fiction opens with an article by Samantha Walton which focuses on the crime novels of Inverness-born Josephine Tey. Written between the 1920s and 1950s, Tey's novels touch on many recurrent issues in Scotland's conflicted literary geography. They reflect upon traditional images of Scotland, with its grand and wild landscape, which has often been represented in post-Union literature as an antagonistic, colonised nation or as romantic extremity that forms a continuous and complimentary part of an integrated Britain. The opposition of realism and romance is a key concern in Tey's texts when it comes to the evidence of modernity in the landscape. Probing the relationship between the mind of the detective to the exterior world, Tey critiques constructions of the detective as a Romantic individual, with considerable implications for the long tradition of detective writing.

In Janneke Rauscher's contribution, Denise Mina's crime novel *Garnethill* is investigated with regard to its representation of urban spatial structures. While urban spatial structures are traditionally defined as complex and intertwined webs of places, meanings and symbols that can be variously related to other and varying aspects within the texts they occur, the article suggests the use of a constructivist notion of space for literary analysis. Drawing on the concept of spatial structures in literary texts as developed by the Russian structuralist Jurij M. Lotman, especially his model of the "semiosphere", Rauscher argues not only for a constructivist adaptation of this complex and multi-layered cultural model for the analysis of space and spatial structures in literary texts; she also employs the adapted theory fruitfully to a reading of Mina's *Garnethill* and its representation of many-faceted Glasgow.

A different approach to space is taken by Marie Hologa in her study of ghost tours and Edinburgh tourism. Focusing on the historical West Port murders committed by Burke and Hare, the article investigates the ways the historical crime is turned into a very special kind of 'cultural capital' not only through its representation in different texts (e.g. Robert Louis Stevenson's short story "The Body Snatcher," Ian Rankin's *Mortal Causes* and James Robertson's *The Fanatic*), but also and especially through its commercialization and commodification in Edinburgh tourism. By re-constructing the myth of the Old Town resurrectionists, the city fashions itself as a space of multilayered meanings and conflicting Scottish identities. Hologa argues that ghost tours are constructed in accordance with John Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze,' ideally juxtaposing

Gothic elements of the 'primitive' pre-rational Edinburgh versus an Edinburgh as the Athens of the North, the city of Enlightenment, humanism, science and liberal mercantilism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.

When speaking about the ways in which Scottish space and Edinburgh's urban structures in particular have been transformed through Scottish crime writing, one author and his oeuvre cannot be ignored: Ian Rankin's Rebus series is, without doubt, one of the most influential works to have shaped Scottish crime writing for the past decades. The section on 'Ian Rankin's Edinburgh' testifies to this development. Starting with Caroline Jones's examination of "Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus and the Many Faces of Edinburgh," the contributions explore the ways that Edinburgh is not simply used as a background setting in the Rebus novels but actually functions as living, breathing character in the novels. Jones compares the Rebus series with novels written by Alexander McCall Smith and Irvine Welsh and argues that, out of the three, Rankin's crime fiction provides the most "realistic" picture of Edinburgh. Drawing on recent works that have questioned the applicability of the long-standing idea of Edinburgh's dual nature, which itself encapsulates the "Caledonian antisyzygy," Jones concludes that Rankin refuses to let Edinburgh simply represent a good/evil dichotomy but dwells on the shades of grey in between, without ignoring the importance of the city's tradition of duality.

Agnieszka Sienkiewicz-Charlish follows a similar line of reasoning in her contribution. She argues that the novels of Ian Rankin explore the topography of Edinburgh, and that the figure of the detective provides an appropriate character through which the city can be explored from new and oftentimes disturbing perspectives. Rebus moves between Edinburgh's underworld and its elite, uncovering the hidden worlds of criminality and corruption that exist beneath the surface of the city. Rankin peers beneath the genteel tourist façade of the city, revealing a city of contrasts: between the rich and the poor, the old and the new, the past and the present. His fiction explores the geographical, sociopolitical and cultural limits of the city. The novels also provide an interesting example of the point where the world of fiction merges with reality, as numerous places of the Rebus novels have been turned into contemporary tourist spaces.

A different, very fruitful approach to Ian Rankin's Rebus series is taken by Cyprian Piskurek. In his article on "Ian Rankin's DI John Rebus and Ageism," Piskurek discusses Ian Rankin's fictional detective John Rebus in terms of age and age discrimination. He argues that in his 'retirement novel' *Exit Music* (2007), Inspector Rebus encounters various forms of age discrimination: on the one hand, his superiors readily suspend him under the pretence that his time as a serving officer is running out; on the other hand, the old-fashioned detective ex-

periences his relegation as an allegory for his growing alienation from modern, i.e. post-devolutionary Scotland. Apart from offering an original perspective on the Rebus series, the essay encourages the establishment of 'age' as a marker of difference alongside more traditional categories in literary and cultural studies.

Natascha Haarstick approaches the Rebus series from yet another perspective by looking at different types of villains depicted in the works. She compares her findings in Rankin's novels with another work of Scottish crime fiction, Christopher Brookmyre's *Boiling a Frog*. Haarstick argues that both texts are linked to the long tradition of doubles and duality in Scottish crime fiction, even if they both play with it and develop this tradition in their own ways. The article furthermore links the typology of villains to Scotland's post-devolutionary society and reasons that the crimes and criminals depicted in Rankin's and Brookmyre's works relate to contemporary problems Scottish society is facing.

The final section of the book is concerned with questions of gender and genre in Scottish crime writing. Although it would be wrong to reduce recent Scottish crime fiction specifically concerned with gender to questions of genre, it turns out that many of the novels discussed here challenge traditional understandings of the crime writing genre and, thereby, help to both destabilize and develop it. Christopher Kydd's investigation of Karen Campbell's *The Twilight Time* (2008), for instance, offers a rich and wide-ranging perspective on the way that Campbell helps to advance the crime fiction genre, despite her outspoken refusal to be subsumed under the generic pigeonhole of crime fiction. Kydd astutely analyzes the way that police work is represented in the novel and how the figure of the (female) police officer differs, or not, from male protagonists by authors such as William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin or Irvine Welsh, to name but a few. The article not only offers a discussion of gender in Scottish crime fiction but also of genre conventions, which have shaped the concept of crime fiction in Scotland and elsewhere.

In Mariagiulia Garufi's contribution on Louise Welsh's novel *The Cutting Room* (2003), the conventions of detective fiction are questioned from a post-feminist perspective that challenges the mechanisms of the genre. Welsh's novel defies canonical definitions of detective fiction by turning it into a powerful vehicle of resistance to conventions. At the same time, it disputes feminist perspectives that, while acknowledging the potentiality of the crime fiction genre, have often negated its realization. Welsh redefines the genre from inside its frame, refusing stereotypes in favour of a gendered perspective not only through the character of the male gay detective and engaging with a form of literary transvestism but also through the questioning of the representation of the female body.

Gioia Angeletti's article focuses on Emma Tennant's rewriting of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). In her novel *The Bad Sister* (1978), Tennant rewrites Hogg's masterpiece from a *sui generis* feminist perspective. Apart from discussing the question of gender, Angeletti analyzes how Tennant's rewriting subverts the traditional crime-detection-solution formula, being concerned with the epistemological side rather than the outcome of detection. In fact, another type of detective is asked to look for clues to the textual conundrums: the reader himself or herself, experiencing disorientation and unease in front of the enigmas which neither the characters nor the narrator/s are able to solve. Like its hypertext model, *The Bad Sister* is informed by multiperspectivism and open-endedness, baffling the reader who attempts to grasp and unveil the elusive truth. Resistance to closure and a narrative instability thwarting any univocal interpretation are part of Hogg's legacy in contemporary Scottish fiction, as is also testified by the works of such novelists as Ian Rankin and James Robertson.

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