Introduction and overview: crime (fiction) in translation
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ABSTRACT

This is an introduction to definitions of crime fiction, its sub-genres, key features and how these impact on and shape translation strategies. It considers the status quo of research into the field and suggests areas for future work. As an example of genre-specific translation challenges, a more detailed discussion of Inge Löhnig's novel *So unselig schön* (2011) considers how lexical cohesion and intertextual allusions are used to generate clues, create character constructs, and manage suspense and considers what challenges this network of key words and allusions creates for translation. The introduction concludes with a short summary of the articles in this issue.

KEYWORDS

Crime fiction, genre conventions, genre constraints, typical translation challenges in crime fiction translation, cohesive devices, lexical cohesion, crime fiction translation research, reception of translated crime fiction.

Crime fiction is, centrally, about a crime and its investigation (Worthington 2011: 1). It is about the transgression of a country's legal, moral and social values, about understanding how and why this transgression occurred and, with the solving of the case, it is about returning to the normative centre of that society. Because crime fiction engages with the motives and means of how a crime is committed, it is deeply concerned with characterisation, psychological motivation and the minutiae of everyday life which give the investigating detective clues to departures from what is considered normal. Crime and criminals are indicators of what a particular culture views as legitimate and crime fiction functions as a barometer of a society's values and morals reflecting and interrogating what is inscribed as crime. The central engagement with what, who and why a particular behaviour or action is deemed deviant gives insight into structures and ideologies of power and is indicative of cultural and social anxieties at a particular time in a particular culture.

Because crime fiction offers insight into the cultures that produce it and because the definition of what constitutes a crime is constantly shifting, cross-border movements, translations, interpretations and cross-fertilisations of detective stories are particularly interesting and offer access to intercultural and intracultural anxieties, cultural and social shifts and the emergent construction of a popular literary form. Detective or crime fiction has been an extremely popular form from its inception and translation has been a central feature of disseminating what has been seen as an originally Anglo-American genre. Mysteries, thrillers and crime series occupy a prime spot in film and on television and recent screen adaptations of classic crime fiction such as Sherlock Holmes are an indication of our continuing fascination with the genre.

Recent years have seen an explosion of interest in crime fiction in print and audiovisual mediation and, crucially, a marked increase in translated crime fiction into English: according to the Wall Street Journal, translated crime fiction has had a growth of 12% per year between 2005 and 2010 (Alter 2010). Scandinavian Noir and Eurocrime feature regularly on the bestseller lists and in 2005 a special prize for translated crime fiction was created after the Gold Dagger had been won by non-English language crime authors three years in a row. However, while the recognition of crime fiction in translation as a separate category is to be welcomed, the fact that the prize awarded to translated crime fiction is minuscule in comparison to the Gold Dagger award, and has to be shared between author and translator is (yet again) an indicator of the lack of cultural capital translation holds. Despite the success of Nordic Noir and Italian crime bestsellers, translation into English remains at below 5% (2.5% in the UK, 3% in the USA; literature 4.5%) (Zgadzaj and Roberts 2013), while the bulk of translated crime is Anglo-American fiction: translated books make up 25%–40% of European publications.

Despite the relatively higher volume of translation in crime fiction, translation research has focused almost exclusively on canonical literature. Until recently, there has been little research on crime fiction translation and existing studies have tended to use a corpus of crime texts to analyse translation issues which are not necessarily specific to the genre as such. There is not a single monograph on the translation of crime fiction and only a handful of research articles which often only take crime fiction as their corpus but do not address themselves to the specificity of crime fiction translation. Jonathan Evans reported seven results for research on 'detective fiction' in the *Translation Studies Abstracts* and 23 for 'detective fiction AND translation' in the *MLA* bibliography in 2013. A search on *BITRA*, the University of Alicante's on-line Bibliography of Interpreting and Translating, generated eight entries in 2012, but a marked increase by 2014 of 76 hits. However, given that BITRA has a total of over 58,000 entries, this represents just under 0.15% of research into translation, and the fact that *BITRA*'s drop-down menu of keywords includes 'children's fiction' and 'comics' but not 'detective' is not surprising. Similarly, a search of the British Library's electronic archive of theses, *EThOS*, only brings up a handful of doctoral theses on crime fiction in translation. Among these are Kate Sturge's '*The alien within': translation into German during the Nazi regime* (1999), Marjolijn Storm's *Agatha Christie's The mysterious affair at Styles: a case study in Dutch and German translation cultures using corpus linguistic tools* (2012), and Judith Taylor's *The specificity of Simenon: on translating 'Maigret'* (2009).

Nevertheless, there has been a growing general interest in foreign crime fiction and, in particular, European crime fiction with a range of events and publications. Among them are Mark Lawson's BBC Radio 4 series *Foreign Bodies* (2012), investigating European detectives; the British

Library's European Crime fiction in translation day conference (2013); *Murder and Mayhem in Translation*, a literary translation winter school and festival organised by Monash University and the British Centre for Literary Translation in July 2013; *More Crime Across the Continent*, a translation workshop and panel discussion with European crime writers and their translators at Europe House, London (2014), and numerous publisher-led events in bookshops on crime fiction in translation, the most recent *More Bloody Foreigners, Criminally good books* at the London Review Bookshop in June 2014.

Similarly, growing research interest is evident in the organisation of conferences specialising in crime fiction translation (Madrid 2012 and Portsmouth 2013), the publication of two edited books *The foreign in international crime fiction* (Anderson *et al*. 2012) and *The Voices of Suspense and their Translation in Thrillers* (Cadera and Pavić Pintarić 2014), and the fact that of the 76 research entries in BITRA, 48 were published between 2000–2014, and only two before 1990.

Nevertheless there is still a tendency in research on crime fiction in translation to focus on aspects common to literary translation: reception, censorship, cultural and aesthetic shifts, the use of minoritised language varieties and multiple voices, to name just a few. Of course, these aspects are central to much of crime writing too, but the genre-specific challenges of crime fiction translation remain an under-researched field: to what extent and how do genre conventions and constraints, structure and thematic concerns, formal and rhetoric peculiarities impact on and crucially shape translation strategies.

Linked to the question of what is specific to crime fiction and its translation is an investigation of how the genre's conventions have developed historically, how they differ in specific cultural and linguistic environments and to what extent they adapt in cultural and linguistic transfer or influence the receiving culture. This is particularly interesting in relation to markedly different environments. Crime fiction texts lend themselves particularly to an analysis of the construction of culturally relevant meanings, the migration of culture and the processes of cultural transfer, transmediality and genre.

Crime fiction is an umbrella term adopted to refer to a multitude of sub-genres[1], from the early detective stories of ratiocination (Leblanc's Arsène Lupin or Doyle's Sherlock Holmes) to the clue puzzles of the Golden Age (Christie's Poirot or Miss Marple series, Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey or the American Ellery Queen); the private investigators of Hammett's or Chandler's hard boiled or Paretsky's feminist hard boiled; the professional investigative teams in the police procedural to the thriller (action, forensic, pathology, etc.). Each of the sub-genres has its own characteristics and these pose typical challenges for the translator: the early puzzle mysteries with their closed circle of subjects are often set in a country house with

pronounced class differences, making description, culturally specific meanings, register and misdirection central features for the translator. In hard boiled fiction the narrative revolves around action rather than thinking; it also evokes a very particular setting, the mean streets of urban America populated by criminals, often involved in organized crime, with their street slang and investigated by a private eye working for a living and speaking in an everyday, contemporary, often laconic tone. Style is central here, the handling of orality and slang; but the fast pace, dynamic description of action and fight scenes also pose problems. Police procedurals work in the realistic setting of a police investigation with a focus on institutional procedures, team dynamics and the requirements of the professional context, foregrounding legal terminology, institutional phraseology and in-depth understanding of the country's law enforcement frameworks from police ranks to the criminal justice system as highly culturally-specific translation challenges. Terminology, and the need to create believable experts, also plays an important role in the various thrillers (pathology, forensic), as does the emotive, suspenseful use of language which needs to have an impact on the reader and generate a range of emotional responses from thrill and excitement, to suspense and fear.

So, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on sub-genre, the crime translator needs to create a believable and nuanced cultural and professional setting, handle a range of voices, register, dialect, slang and swearing to evoke distinct characters within their social context, location and interaction with each other, convey a sense of social norms and any deviation from conventions or what would be expected, and achieve verisimilitude with credible experts, professionals, suspects, witnesses, criminals and incidental characters.

However, what is central to all crime fiction is the disruption and restitution of equilibrium, a stereotypical plot where crime threatens the social order and the narrative arc is about restoring that social order (fully or partially). On the surface, it is a formulaic genre with tight conventions and many rules (see for example, van Dine (1939), Auden (1948) or the detection club oath) where plot is of prime importance: everything in the narrative must contribute to narrative progress (Lacey 2000: 61). But the central characteristic of the modern detective story is its dual narrative where the crime occurs at the outset and the novel is about the detective uncovering the back story: what led to the crime, the criminal's means, motive and opportunity. This means that in this slow unearthing of detail, the investigator moves further and further into the past; at the same time, there is the story of the investigation, how it moves forward, what obstacles there are and which clues are retrieved in a narrative which poses questions and puzzles and creates suspense. This backward and forward movement of partial unveiling and temporary blockage only comes together at the eventual resolution (Barthes 1974: 17), revealing the perpetrator, solving the crime and restoring order. It is only at this

point that an overall picture becomes available and a linear and chronological narrative of cause, effect and outcome can be (re)constructed. And it is because of this discontinuous and fragmented presentation of events that Umberto Eco (in Lacey 2010: 60), Peter Brooks (1984) and Tzvetan Todorov (1977) claim the detective story to be the narrative *par excellence:* "it dramatises the role of sjuzet (i.e. the order in which events are presented in the text) and fabula (the logical order of events in the story) and the nature of their relation" (Brooks 1984: 24).

Another shared feature of crime fiction is the positioning of the reader through emotional involvement (suspense, thrill or fear), pleasurable exposure to the foreign as an armchair tourist or cognitive participation as an armchair detective trying to outwit the investigator and arrive at the solution on the basis of the clues in the text. And it is this cognitive challenge of creating meaning out of the 'disorder' of fractured narratives without obvious chronological order, shifting and contradictory narrative perspectives (unidentified narrators or first person accounts), partial views and masked locations or identities, that also poses some of the major translation challenges. Indeterminacy and ambiguity, partial evidence scattered throughout the text and across narrative strands, differential treatment of narrative components which may be emphasised or backgrounded, require scrupulous attention to detail and the ability to resist explaining the illogical or filling in inferential gaps where the author was intentionally vague or elusive (for a more detailed discussion of rhetorical manipulation and the exploitation of gender norms and narrative expectations see Seago 2014).

The smallest detail may turn out to be an essential clue. In Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles,* the translator decided to translate 'spills vase' as 'vase' only (Christie/Schindler 2011: 117), omitting the crucial information that it held spills made out of used paper, ready to light the fire: the murderer had exploited this by tearing an incriminating letter into spills and hiding it in this vase. In the source text, the detail of the 'spills vase' is drawn attention to because Poirot rearranges the ornaments on the mantelpiece and recollection of his tidying up triggers understanding of who the murderer is and how they concealed crucial evidence. While the tidying of the ornaments is translated, the foregrounding of the 'spills' vase is lost and the tightly constructed chain of clues is weakened in the translation.

Of course, formulaic narrative mechanisms and genre conventions also allow for and invite subversion, confounding reader expectations and generating misdirection through red herrings, rhetorical manipulation, inferences and, most importantly, exploiting cohesive devices to obstruct coherence or generate false coherence. Pronominal reference is one of the most obvious ways of suggesting links between characters, places or objects which do not really exist. Jo Nesbø uses this extensively in *The*

Redeemer (2009: 23–26) by referring to a range of characters as 'he' over a series of paragraphs where the setting or activity suggest continuity (ringing a doorbell, a woman answering, asking whether she is alone) and that the 'he' is the same person. It is detail (a red neckerchief, plastic bags, a bloated face, a good-looking woman with high cheekbones, etc.) that alerts the reader to the fact that each paragraph deals with a different 'he', a different setting and a different activity or interaction but clearly, the translator must carefully manage the progression between paragraphs mimicking continuity, resist restoring cohesion by replacing pronouns with names, and be alert to the details which signal difference and allow the reader to track the different referents and their identity. While pronominal reference can be exploited to conceal identity, co-reference (where another noun stands in for the referent) can be used to mask gender identity by using unmarked nouns (the assailant, the figure, the child, the business partner, etc). This, of course, poses great problems for translation into any inflected language where endings disclose gender.

In order to demonstrate the sorts of patterning that may happen in detective fiction and how this might affect translation, in the following, I will look at lexical cohesion and analyse in some detail how Inge Löhnig uses intertextual allusions, repetition and lexical patterns to construct a highly complex narrative in her 2011 novel *So unselig schön* (So terribly beautiful; a literal translation of 'unselig' is 'soulless'). This title is a quotation from the anonymous German translation of Baudelaire's poem "Une martyre" "Die Märtyrerin" (The martyr) from *Les fleurs du mal*. The poem describes a painting: a still life depicting a murdered woman's **very thin** and **white** decapitated corpse, displayed on a bed surrounded by **rich gold embroidered hangings** and whose **white bed linen** is soaked with her **blood**; her **head** with **masses of dark hair** decorated with **jewels** is displayed on a **dark wooden chest** near a **crystal vase of wilting flowers** surrounded by **fallen petals**. The murderer re-enacts this scenario choosing victims whose physical appearance and features resemble the corpse and posing them with objects described in the poem such as a **pink, embroidered stocking** and jewellery. These attributes and objects form one chain of keywords (highlighted in bold above) which are cumulatively revealed and interlinked across four narrative strands: the forensic investigation led by Inspector Dühnfort; the amateur investigation undertaken by young photographer Vicki who discovered the first corpse; the perpetrator's interior monologue, flashbacks of the murders, key moments in his childhood, including a 'Rosebud' memory; and the narrative of Baudelaire's poem, and to some extent, Baudelaire's life. In addition, the two investigators also reveal their back stories of lost love, betrayal, misconceptions and misunderstandings which map onto and mirror to some extent the themes of the perpetrator and the tropes of the serial killer thriller: an abusive childhood, the nostalgic yearning for love, betrayal by and adoration of mothers. This incredibly complex and fractured narrative jigsaw is connected through keywords, lexical patterns and themes. The network of allusions provides clues, creates character

constructs, links characters, puts them on the suspect list or marks them out as potential victims. For example, suspense is built up through keyword associations and allusions in the physical description of Vicki towards the end of the novel. Once the police realise that the murderer chooses his victims on the basis of how they look, not what they do (two are prostitutes), Vicki starts being described in terms which mark her out as the victim type: very thin, masses of dark and beautiful hair, there is an allusion to a severed head when one of the suspects compares her to a picture of Salome. In addition, there are repeated descriptions of her anxiety as having butterflies in her stomach (*Schmetterlinge haben*), linking her to the butterfly which is found next to all of the victims. These allusions only occur towards the end of the book, as she becomes more closely and emotionally involved with Jobst Wernegg and as suspicion is built that he might be a potential suspect.

Wernegg is also a good example for how allusions and keywords contribute to building character constructs, placing them on or removing them from the suspect list. Wernegg is explicitly vouched for by a police constable establishing that he was out of the country at the time of the first murder, Vicki is increasingly drawn to him because of his sensitive and caring support of her, and the children's charity she represents, and the explicitly described trust these disadvantaged children show him. He also does not fit the psychological profile of serial killer with an abusive childhood: he describes an idyllic childhood with a loving mother. Her physical profile (she is blonde) does not match the dark haired victims, contradicting the popular profiling assumption that a serial killer would choose victims who resemble his mother. However, Wernegg is also described as having slim hands and slim fingers; there are references to his stony face, to crystal, white bed linen, and a still life of peonies with a butterfly. These are all keywords linked to the Baudelaire poem and the murder scenes and they associate him increasingly closely with the perpetrator monologues. In addition, there are a number of indicators which contradict his idyllic childhood and call into question the loving relationship with his mother which puzzle Vicki. All of these minor hints, scattered across the different narratives accrue to increasingly suggest disparities in his character construct leading to the eventual disclosure of him as the murderer.

Baudelaire's poem plays an important role in narrative descriptions of environments, scenes, situations and events throughout, slowly building up images and phrases for the reader to recognise and link across the different narratives, but the poem is also decisive in progressing the investigation. Inspector Dühnfort is puzzled by a recurring phrase triggered by the victims' luxurious dark hair (*dunkler Haare Massen* 'masses of dark hair') and the accidental flash of the pathologist's earring near the last victim's hair prompts Dühnfort's recollection of the phrase as a quotation from a poem which he immediately finds in an internet search.

This poses a tremendous translation challenge. Not only does the translator need to be aware of the initially fragmented quotations from the poem and understand the significance of, for example, mention of a crystal vase or still life painting whose function appears to be simply background description to establish setting; but they slowly build up into a recognizable quotation from the poem and are revealed to be a crucial ingredient of the murder scenario. Since the poem is an existing German translation available on the internet, and since the inspector accesses this translation on the internet, the requirements of verisimilitude mean that ideally the translator would need to find an appropriate translation of Baudelaire in their target language to generate the keywords, allusions and quotations, and this translation should be available on the internet.

However, in the case of English, there are five translations available but their rendering of the relevant passages, descriptions and key phrases differs significantly from the German and not one of these English translations provides quotations which can also perform the textual functions in the narrative. For example, the phrase "So unselig schön" is rendered in the English translations as "fatal beauty" (twice), "Nature's gift," "fatal splendencies" and "to charm a lover's eyes." "Fatal beauty" might be punchy enough to work as a title, but if we then look at how these two translations render other keywords, problems arise. Both translate the crucial "Kristall," which generates reader awareness of interlinked key allusions and which is one of the indicators that Wernegg is a suspect, as "glass." "Dunkler Haare Massen," the quotation which keeps occurring to the inspector, is rendered as a "mane of hair piled up in a dark mass," a "huge mass of dark hair," a "dense curly mane of somber hair," a "great mass of rich and somber hair" and the "weight of its dark mane." The challenge here is to find a rendering that is sufficiently poetic to trigger the reader's and the investigator's awareness that it is a quotation, but it also needs to be appropriate in non-poetic contexts. All elements of the phrase are partially used throughout the text in describing the hair of the victims, of incidental characters and in the sections aligning Vicki with the victim profile; these partial reiterations occur across a range of text types from narrative description, newspaper articles, crime scene reports, email / forensic evidence to interior monologue, so they need to be appropriate to a wide range of domains and contexts of use. This immediately rules out "somber" as a rendering of "dunkel" because it could not be used in a forensic report, for example. In addition, each of the items (*dunkel*, *Haare*, *Massen*) occurs across a range of synonyms (for example hair, mane, tresses, curls, strand, wild curly hair; or dark, chestnut, brown, black), and the modifier dark and its synonyms is also used to describe the colour of wood, blood and a butterfly, so needs to collocate across these semantic fields.

None of the English translations meets all the requirements of satisfying the demands of multi-situational appropriateness, denotative meaning, wide collocation range and poetic recognition, so the translator faces the

choice between verisimilitude (actual Baudelaire translation available on internet) and ensuring that the clues generated by lexical patterns and intertextual allusions work across the range of textual functions without being too marked, are sufficiently evocative to generate growing recognition of the lexical pattern, but do not provide more information than the source text. Of course, the translator could always modify an existing translation of the Baudelaire poem so that the key phrases meet the requirements of the German quotations and upload this to the internet.

However, the challenges posed by the network of semantic patterns and lexical chains is not restricted to literary allusions. There are a number of significant semantic fields (smells/scents, colours, fruit, art, still life painting and flowers) which suggest links and generate many red herrings. Among these, the semantic field of flowers is one of the more interesting and challenging ones. It is very frequent and occurs in narrative description, evoking settings and memories, but also in detailed descriptions of paintings found in the houses of the suspects (all of them painters or art collectors). And flowers are of course a central motif in the Baudelaire poem and thus central to the murder scenario. Maintaining the dense network of allusions within and across these semantic fields is further complicated by lexical non-correspondences. The frequent descriptions of vases of flowers in actual settings or in paintings refer primarily to roses and peonies. In German, peonies (Pfingst**rosen**) are a hyponym of roses (**Rosen**) and this partial repetition establishes a confusing set of connections where the reader has to try and keep track of which kind of 'rose' appears in which context, linked to which character in order to identify which is the crucial link to the murder scenario and which suspect is implicated.

A similar problem occurs with the register-differential use of the neutral 'Kopf' (head) and the formal / poetic 'Haupt' (head); 'Haupt' links to the murder scenario, is used by the perpetrator in his internal monologues and its presence in the narrative establishes an association between Wernegg and the murders. This clue is not available in English and the translator would have to attempt compensation through other linguistic resources to maintain this link in the allusive net which increasingly encloses Wernegg.

And finally, "Flieder" (lilac) as the flower and "fliederfarben" as the colour link the beginning and end of the novel, bracketing the discovery of the first victim and the lilac coloured butterfly with the rosebud moment just before Wernegg dies in hospital. This memory explains the significance of the butterflies which are found at the crime scenes but do not occur in the blueprint poem; they are revealed as a crucial element in the nostalgic recollection of a key scene in his idyllic childhood (a butterfly lands on a lilac bush) just before he is driven from paradise (the death of his father, sexual abuse by his mother, banishment to boarding school). This key

memory provides the ultimate insight into the full psychological motivation for the crimes, bringing together all motifs and tying up loose strands, but, crucially, it is only available to the reader, not the investigators within the narrative.

Crime fiction works within tight generic conventions, deploys formulaic plot components and developments, and needs to negotiate informed reader expectations. The translator has to work within the constraints of genre norms, but their task is further complicated by the shift to a different set of linguistic resources, a target cultural context which may not supply relevant real world knowledge to close inferential gaps, and a possibly very different set of social and cultural norms which define what is deviant or transgressive along different boundaries. Crime fiction is a hugely creative genre making very great demands on authors and translators alike, demanding literary and aesthetic skills and the ability to deploy these within the constraints of genre norms. Genre does not make crime fiction writing or translation easier; like the formal constraints of poetry, genre constraints can produce greater creativity and ingenuity. Auden (1948) praised the 'art' of the detective story, in particular admiring Chandler's style, Inge Löhnig's novel is an excellent example of self-reflexive exploitation of genre conventions and literary allusions, and increasing numbers of 'cross-over' crime fiction are appearing, genre novels written by authors associated with elite literary production, for example Kate Atkinson, John Banville (writing as Benjamin Black) and Julian Barnes (writing as Dan Kavanagh, originally written in the 1980s but being reissued now).

The articles in this issue offer a wide and satisfying engagement with the different challenges of crime fiction translation and crime in translation. Esther Morillas discusses in which way genre conventions determine the translation of Spanish crime fiction, Jean Anderson argues that stylistic expectations of American hard boiled / noir have shaped translation strategies (and restricted reception) of the stylistic excess of Leo Malet, while Ellen Carter considers metaphor translation and explains the deletion of metaphor in translation in the context of crime fiction's non-canonic status.

Both Daniel Linder and Marjolijn Storm consider indirect translation where the original translation is not (fully) acknowledged and explain this in the context of the publishing culture of Spain and Germany.

Kerstin Bergman and co-authors Blanca Arias Badia and Jenny Brumme discuss multimodal mediations of crime. Bergman analyses the transmedial strategies in the move from Stieg Larsson's hugely successful trilogy to graphic novel, while Arias Badia and Brumme look at formulaic exchanges in TV crime series, analyzing what functions these text blocks perform and to what extent they support subtitle translation (with its time and space constraints).

Brigid Maher discusses how a range of typical translation challenges were identified, addressed and resolved in a consensus translation workshop. We are very grateful for permission to publish the source text chapter by Carlo Lucarelli and the consensus target text in this volume.

But it is not only in fiction that translation meets crime, as Lucile Desblache's editorial has already indicated. The police and the courts rely heavily on public service interpreters and translators. Translation itself is criminalised in various ways, e.g. in relation to copyright infringement, legal proceedings against translators of 'problematic' texts and various forms of piracy and this issue has three contributions addressing aspects of legal translation and interpreting. Nicholas Whithorn analyses the range of meanings of the culturally-specific concept of the 'mafia', evaluating how the terminology of anti-Mafia laws can be translated. The two contributions on legal interpreting both focus on aspects of ethics. Aída Martínez-Gómez discusses to what extent using criminals as interpretators breaks or shapes interpreting norms, while Maria Rosario Martín Ruano interrogates the two central concepts of accuracy and neutrality in legal translation practice.

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Biography

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Notes

[1] John Scaggs (2005), Martin Priestman (2003) and Heather Worthington (2011) offer good introductions to crime fiction.