

# DETECT – Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives

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DETECT was funded by the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme to explore the ways in which popular narratives can contribute to give expression to a new, shared European cultural identity. The project was launched on April 1, 2018 and will come to a close on October 31, 2021. It has been coordinated by Professor Monica Dall'Asta and the University of Bologna in collaboration with 17 other institutions, both public and private, based in 10 European countries. The academic partners also include Rome's Link Campus University from Italy, the Universities of Limoges and Paris West-Nanterre from France, the Universities of Aalborg and Aarhus from Denmark, Queen's University Belfast from the UK, KU Leuven from Belgium, the University of Umea from Sweden, the University of Bucharest from Romania, the University of Debrecen from Hungary and the University of Ioannina from Greece. The non-academic partners are Paris' Bibliothèque de Littérature Policières from France, the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin from Germany the public broadcaster TV2, the film and television company Miso Film and the public tourism organization Visit Aarhus from Denmark.

DETECT responded to a specific call released in the framework of H2020 Societal Challenges – Europe in a Changing World programme,

which looked for innovative approaches to the study, teaching and dissemination of contemporary artistic and creative practices across Europe. The consortium decided to focus on crime narratives because of their ability to circulate widely across borders, eliciting collaboration among producers and making cultural exchanges among citizens all over the continent. The scholars involved in the project are from a varied disciplinary background, allowing them to engage with different media, focusing particularly on literary fiction, film and television. Through a mix of literary, film and media studies, cultural studies, cultural history, sociology and Digital Humanities, DETECT has examined the creation and transnational circulation of popular narratives in all their key aspects: the production strategies; the modes of distribution; the role of reception; and the central issue of representation of European cultural identities in the specific case of crime narratives.

DETECT's research started from the study of the industrial strategies and public policies that in the last few years have led to an increasing ability of European crime narratives to circulate internationally. Quantitative and qualitative methods have been adopted to understand how the recent changes in the media market, particular in the



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television sector, have both encouraged the implementation of transnational funding and distribution practices and made more visible the persistence imbalance among different countries and regions on the European level. The results of this research have been presented in several conference papers, research reports (see in particular [Location Marketing and Cultural Tourism](#), eds. Cathrin Bengesser, Kim Toft Hansen, Lynge Stegger Gemzøe) as well as two special issues of peer-review journals: the one you are reading, focused on TV crime series, and one devoted to the production and distribution of European crime films, to appear in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* and edited by Stefano Baschiera and Markus Schleich.

Research on the reception of European crime narratives have allowed to compare and contrast how the consumption of this genre, and TV crime series in particular, show some significant continental trends — such as the role of OTT services and pay-per-view channels — as well as the existence of obvious differences in the ways Europeans engage with non-domestic shows depending of the country or are of origin. An online survey with more than 1,200 respondents has also collected and analyzed quantitative data. The results, first presented in a confidential research report (eds. Federico Pagello, Markus Schleich), will be published soon in a series of articles.

The main strand of research in DETECT concerned the representation of European cultural identity as a set of transcultural identities, expressing the complexity and diversity of European society and history and promoting a greater mutual understanding among the citizens of the European Union. DETECT scholars have therefore developed in-depth analyses of the multiple ways in which crime narratives have indeed been able to offer a more and more diverse image of the human geographical across the continent, while showing how the stories and characters

depicted often still fit into some established stereotypes or tend to adopt a sensationalist approach, which reduced their cultural significance. Many conferences papers have been devoted to these topics and two research reports have been completed. Most importantly, the research findings are being published through a series of publications, including special issues of *European Review* (eds. Jan Baetens, Fred Truyen, Ana Schultze), *Academic Quarter* (eds. Monica Dall'Asta, Natacha Levet, Federico Pagello), *Journal of European Popular Culture* (eds. Valentina Re, Thomas Morsch), as well as the publication you are reading. An edited collection entitled *Contemporary European Crime Fiction: Representing History and Politics* (eds. Monica Dall'Asta, Jacques Migozzi, Federico Pagello, Andrew Pepper) will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2022.

As per the requests of the programme to which it was responding, DETECT has put as much emphasis on the research activities as on the transferring and co-creation of knowledge through the implementation of a variety of innovative teaching and dissemination activities, including the creation of digital tools and resources. In addition to including the topics and methodologies adopted in the research in their university courses, DETECT scholars experimented with new learning methods involving [the realization of video essays](#) and the writing of Wikipedia pages. Interaction among students from different countries has been promoted not only through the coordination of courses completing similar activities (such as the editing of Wikipedia entries) but also through the creation of a series of learning material to be delivered through a dedicated [MOODLE](#). Learning material have also been designed for non-university students: members of DETECT delivered lectures and workshop addressed to high-school students; in-person and online conferences and masterclasses,

also involving professionals such as writers, screenwriters and directors were organized by many partners institutions; and an Open Massive Online Course entitled [Euro Noir: Cultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives](#) was made freely accessible on the Internet. Two additional key digital outputs for the dissemination of the project findings are also available to scholars, students and the general public: the DETECT [Atlas of European Crime Narratives](#), showing the continental dimension of the genre, and the DETECT app, offering walking tours on [the locations of crime in Aarhus](#) and, in the next months, in Bologna. A range of dissemination activities addressed at the general public have also been completed, including the creation of an exhibition (*L'Europe du polar*, held in Paris in 2020 and now online: <https://europedupolar.paris.fr>), the organisation of a [screenwriting contest](#) accompanied by a [webinar on how to write a crime series](#), and the written and audiovisual contributions of many DETECT scholars to print media, radio programmes, as well as literary, film and TV festivals.

## Notes

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