

Spanish Women Authors of Serial Crime Fiction

Spanish Women Authors of Serial Crime Fiction:

*Repeat Offenders in the 21st
Century*

Edited by

Inmaculada Pertusa-Seva
and Melissa A. Stewart

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To the usual suspects, all the authors who have shared their time and creations with us, and to our partners in crime (fellow critics and friends) who have collaborated to spread the word about the truly exceptional works by these women, many thanks, muchas gracias

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE MIND OF A SERIAL WRITER

1. EXPLORING THE EXPANSION OF CRIMINAL SERIES BY SPANISH WOMEN AUTHORS

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Reading a saga is not only, as Javier Sánchez Zapatero and Àlex Martín Escribà (2017) point out, discovering the characters that appear in episode after episode but also getting to know the authors behind the literary serial crimes that keep us on the edge of our seats. Just as a criminal profiler scrutinizes the personality traits of the alleged serial criminals in order to understand their mode of operation and the reasons for their behavior, we proceed with the analysis of the criminal production of serial writers that have appeared on the publishing crime scene in the 21st century by identifying the features that they share in the executing and staging of their literary crimes for their readers, the ultimate recipients of these fictitious felonies.

In approaching the concept of seriality in connection with the criminal field, we must cite the definition that the popular American Federal Bureau of Investigation (the FBI) offers us of what are considered serial crimes, “a series of two or more murders, committed as separate events, usually, but not always, by one offender acting alone” and that may be motivated by anger, the search for a borderline experience, economic gain or public attention.¹ While FBI agent Robert Ressler is credited with introducing the concept of serial homicide in 1974, it was not until 1985 when LAPD detective Pierce Brooks employed the term “serial killer,” that it began to be used in a more systematic way to refer to the authors of serial killings.

¹ See Sandra Burkhalter Chmelir (2003). “Serial Killers.” In *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*. 2. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. p. 1.
web.archive.org/web/20090503121235/http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_gx5214/is_2003/ai_n19132282/?tag=content;coll

Just as the terms “serial crimes” and “serial killers” refer to these non-fictional murderers, the same terms could be applied to the world of fiction if we consider the large group of female Spanish authors as “literary” serial criminals. From this perspective, we could say that in the last 20 years they have identified themselves as material authors of criminal series starring female figures who have been repeat offenders in two or more instances, characterized by a peculiar *modus operandi* in each case separating themselves from the conventions in order to create innovative literary crime series. The aim here is to consider the suitability of the use of a series of two or more novels with the same protagonist (in contrast to only one novel without continuity), and thereby assess the use of an episodic sequence (the repetition of the investigative framework, the criminal formula and the protagonist) with a specific creative and critical purpose.

The first literary crime series of current peninsular women writers comes from the pen of the Mallorcan Maria-Antònia Oliver, author of the first Spanish detective saga featuring a woman who committed the first literary crime with a story in the collection *Negra i consentida* [*Black and Authorized*] entitled “On ets, Mònica?” [“Where are you, Monica?”]. Here she anonymously introduced us to the private detective Lònia Guiu who, between 1985 and 1994 would star in that first series formed by three detective novels (*Estudi en lila*, 1985 [*Study in Lilac*], *Antipodes*, 1988 [*Antipodes*], *El sol que fa l'ànec*, 1994 [*Blue Roses for a Dead...Lady?*]). Although her work is located in the twentieth century, we must recognize that she plants the literary-criminal seed of the series of the next century, as the first model of the incursion of a Spanish writer in the criminal serial genre with a woman in the role of “detective” (taking the baton from the first literary woman detective created by Lourdes Ortiz), and thus converting both Lònia, her protagonist, and herself, in a focus of feminist crime fiction critique of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Their literary crimes were considered the gateway for other writers (and protagonists) into the patriarchal world of the crime novel of that period. It is also important to remember that two years after the appearance of Oliver’s last serial novel-victim, in 1996, the first literary body of the writer Alicia Giménez Bartlett is discovered, becoming, with the appearance of two more “bodies” between 1997 and 1999, the author of the now well-known criminal saga of Petra Delicado. She is responsible for a total of 10 criminal plots directed by the same inspector to date, 7 of which have appeared in the present century, so we include her here in our serial count.

Table 1. Crime fiction series featuring a female investigator by Spanish women writers published between 2000 and 2020 in Spain.

Author	Protagonist (Position)	Novels	2000	2002	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Nieves Abarca (with Vicente Garrido Genovés)	Valentina Negro (Inspector)	4										X	X	X		X				
Yanet Acosta	Lucy Belda (Reporter)	2									X					X				
Margárida Arizeta	Mina Fuster (Inspector)	4												X	X	X	X			X
Reyes Calderón	Lola MacHor (Judge)	7				X		X	X	X										
<i>The Lola MacHor Series</i>																				
Clara Asunción García	Cate Mayne (Private Detective)	2								X										
Eva García Sáenz de Urquí	Alba Díez de Salazarra (Deputy Inspector)	3												X	X	X	X			
<i>The White City Trilogy</i>																				
Carme Chamorro	Anna Arén (Inspector)	2															X	X		
Alicia Giménez Bartlett	Petra Delicado (Police Captain)	7	X	X	X				X										X	
<i>The Petra Delicado Series</i>																				
Berna González Harbort	María Ruiz (Police Captain)	4										X		X					X	
Susana Hernández	Rebecca Sannana (Deputy Inspector)	3							X						X					
Antonia Huertas	Bepi Mardigan (Eurocop Analyst)	2													X					
Lourdes López-Peño Navío	Rebeca Dorado (Criminologist)	3										X			X					
Noelita Lorenzo Pino	Eider Chassereau (Bisque Autonomous Police)	4													X	X	X	X		X
Susana Martín Gijón	Annika Kamda (Inspector)	3													X	X	X			
<i>The Saga of the Four-Leaf Clover</i>																				
Susana Martín Gijón	Camino Vargas (Inspector)	1*																		X
Maribel Medina	Laura Thieraux (Forensic Analyst)	3												X						X
Rosa Montero	Bruna Husky (Private Detective)	3								X					X					
Graziella Moreno	Sofía Valle (Judge)	2												X	X					
María Omuña	Valentina Redondo (Inspector)	3													X		X	X		
<i>The Hidden Port Series</i>																				
Clara Feliávier	Ada Levy (Private Detective and Photographer)	3											X	X		X				
Dolores Redondo	Anna Salazar (Inspector)	4											XX	X						X
<i>The Baztan Trilogy</i>																				
Rosa Ribas	Cornelia Weber-Tejedor (Police Captain)	4							X		X			X		X				
Rosa Ribas (with Sabine Hofmann)	Anna Martín (Reporter)	3																		
<i>The Trilogy of the Dark Years</i>																				
Rosa Ribas	Amalia and Nora Hernández (Private Detectives)	1*																		X
Monise Sanjuan	Anna Grimm (Sergeant of the Mossos d'Esquadra-Catalan Autonomous Police)	3												X	X					X
Teresa Solana	Norma Forester (Deputy Inspector of the Mossos d'Esquadra-Catalan Autonomous Police)	3							X					X						X
Maruja Torres	Diana Dial (Reporter)	2																		
Anna Rivera	Graia San Sebastián (Fraud Investigator)	2									X									X
25 authors		87	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	5	6	6	9	10	8	9	9	7	4

* Only one novel in the series so far.

From 2000 until 2020 we have been able to identify 25 authors responsible for 87 different criminal works with the common denominator of a woman in the role of investigator, not alone (something that only happens on one occasion, in the Clara Asunción García series where her private detective Cate Maynes works on her own), but in tandem with one or more assistants connected directly or indirectly with the investigation that is being undertaken.

Most of these protagonists are professionally linked to law enforcement agencies as inspectors, deputy inspectors or police captains, thus starring in works that tend to follow the model of the police procedural novel that began with Inspector Petra Delicado at the end of the 20th century in Spain. This is the case of 15 of the 28 series published in this period.

Table 2. Female protagonist linked to law enforcement agencies

Authors	Protagonists	Position
Nieves Abarca (with Vicente Garrido Genovés)	Valentina Negro	Inspector
Margarida Aritzeta	Mina Fuster	Inspector
Carmen Chamorro	Ana Arén	Inspector
Eva García Sáenz de Urturi <i>White City Trilogy</i>	Alba Díaz de Salvatierra	Deputy Inspector
Alicia Giménez Bartlet <i>The Petra Delicado Series</i>	Petra Delicado	Police Captain
Berna González Harbour	María Ruiz	Police Captain
Susana Hernández	Rebeca Santana	Deputy Inspector
Noelia Lorenzo Pino	Eider Chassereau	Ertzaintza (Basque Autonomous Police)
Susana Martín Gijón <i>The Saga of the Four-Leaf Clover</i>	Annika Kaunda	Inspector
Susana Martín Gijón	Camino Vargas	Inspector
María Oruña <i>The Hidden Port Series</i>	Valentina Redondo	Inspector
Dolores Redondo <i>The Baztán Trilogy</i>	Amaia Salazar	Inspector
Rosa Ribas	Cornelia Weber- Tejedor	Police Captain

Montse Sanjuan	Anna Grimm	Sergeant of the Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan Autonomous Police)
Teresa Solana	Norma Forester	Deputy Inspector of the Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan Autonomous Police)

Women who are connected to an official entity dedicated to criminal investigation, without being police officers, but rather specialized analysts or scientists, appear as protagonists in only three series.

Table 3. Female protagonist portrayed as specialized analysts or scientists

Author	Protagonist	Position
Antonia Huertas	Beppa Mardegan	Europol analyst
Lourdes López-Pacio Navío	Rebeca Dorado	Criminologist
Maribel Medina	Laura Therraux	Forensic analyst

And there are also two series with a judge who is frequently involved in the investigation of the crimes that connect directly with her work in the courts.

Table 4. Female protagonist portrayed as judges

Author	Protagonist	Position
Reyes Calderón <i>The Lola MacHor Series</i>	Lola MacHor	Judge
Graziella Moreno	Sofía Valle	Judge

Continuing with the figure of a private detective of pioneer Lònia Guiu, we find 4 series among the 28.

Table 5. Female protagonist portrayed as private detectives

Author	Protagonist	Position
Clara Asunción García	Cate Mayne	Private detective
Rosa Montero	Bruna Husky	Private detective
Rosa Ribas	Amalia y Nora Hernández	Private detectives
Clara Peñalver	Ada Levy	Private detective Photographer

In the remaining 4 series journalists or fraud investigators take on the investigative work.

Table 6. Female protagonist portrayed as reporters or investigators

Author	Protagonist	Position
Yanet Acosta	Lucy Belda	Reporter
Rosa Ribas (with Sabine Hofmann) <i>The Trilogy of the Dark Years</i>	Ana Martín	Reporter
Maruja Torres	Diana Dial	Reporter
Ana Lena Rivera	Gracia San Sebastián	Fraud investigator

The authors' decision to link their protagonists with institutions either of public order (police or judicial) or with professional independent investigators, meaning that the bulk of the serial novels in the 21st century remain connected to the more classic (and structurally more conservative) root of the crime novel, the police procedural (20 of 28, which constitutes 71.4% of the total of the series), would seem to indicate a preference for the more traditional branch of crime fiction. Certainly, without entering into the analysis of the subversive appropriation (or not) of the classic patterns of the genre by the authors under suspicion, we can intuit the influence of the popularity of current television series in the taste (and thus preferences) of the reading public, who, after all, influences whether a series continues or not. If we accept that a serial killer "writes" his/her criminal account thinking about his/her ideal receiver (the police officer or the detective who will investigate the crimes), a criminal author will have to orchestrate her crime series taking into account the interest of her ideal recipients (readers eager to find in a book-body the same addictive stimuli as in the series that keep them glued to the television or computer screen). This is an influence that does not go unnoticed by publishing houses, which can be considered as "accomplices" of the literary-criminal act not only because they "directly induce others to execute it", but also since they "cooperate in its execution" when carrying out the act done jointly in its phase of execution "without which it would not have happened" (we read this act as publication), as stipulated in Article 28 of the Spanish Criminal Code.² One well-known

² Article 28 of the Spanish Criminal Code states: "Son autores quienes realizan el hecho por sí solos, conjuntamente o por medio de otro del que se sirven como instrumento. También serán considerados autores: a) Los que inducen directamente a otro u otros a ejecutarlo. b) Los que cooperan a su ejecución con un acto sin el cual no se habría efectuado." [Those who carry out the act on their own, jointly or through another who serves as an instrument are considered authors. The following will also

example of this literary-criminal complicity is the advertising surrounding the publication and dissemination of Dolores Redondo's Baztán trilogy that was already conceived as a trilogy in the promotion of the first installment, followed by the announcement of the film version, which was not distributed until the second novel was published, closely followed by the graphic novel versions of the three works and a literary route through the geographical enclaves of the series (something that is also offered in the promotion of María Oruña's *Puerto Escondido* [*Hidden Port*] saga).³

The conjecture that the writers decide to develop a criminal saga as a result of the pressure of publishers or because of the influence of their participation in social networks and the like might be applicable to some of the series, perhaps those of new authors who begin their literary-criminal careers inspired by the success of some popular sagas, imitating the phenomenon of the well-known copycat killers, but it is not tenable in the case of writers with an established literary trajectory unrelated to crime fiction, such as Rosa Ribas, Rosa Montero, Maruja Torres, Alicia Giménez Bartlett or Margarida Aritzeta. It is unlikely, for example, that Rosa Montero, with her constant incursions in different narrative genres, decided to develop her futuristic criminal series starring the replicant Bruna Husky pressured by a publisher or advertising interests.

As we can see in the temporal progression of the appearance of our criminal series, in the first decade of the 21st century, only a couple of works appear each year, with Giménez Bartlett being a repeat offender in the first four years, accompanied then simultaneously by Reyes Calderón, who starts the Judge Lola MacHor series in 2005 and by Rosa Ribas, who in 2007 and 2009 is responsible for two of the four criminal novels of the series starring the Spanish-German police captain Cornelia Weber-Tejedor (the author confirms that she is working on a fifth installment that could well lead to a sixth). In only eight years these three authors were responsible for 11 of the literary crimes that appeared on the Spanish publishing scene of this period (until 2011). They are also the three authors who have published the largest number of criminal novels as part of a saga to date in the 21st century (8 novels each). In the case of Rosa Ribas, the works are part of three different sagas, the aforementioned set in Frankfurt, the second in Barcelona, known

be considered authors: a) Those who directly induce another or others to execute it. b) Those who cooperate in its execution with an act without which it would not have been carried out.] leyes.org.es/art-28-del-codigo-penal/

³ We see this criminal-literary cooperation in the case of the anticipated new crime series by Rosa Ribas that begins with *Un asunto demasiado familiar*, 2019 [*A Too Familiar Affair*], and in the recently initiated saga by Susana Martín Gijón, *Progenie*, 2020 [*Progeny*].

as *The Trilogy of the Dark Years*, with the reporter Ana Martín as an investigator in Franco's Spain in the 1950s, and the third also in Barcelona featuring a Catalan family that works together in their own detective agency.

In the second decade of the 21st century we observe an expansion of the criminal series and not only in numbers (we count 77 serial bodies), but also in the exploration of criminal subgenres among the contributions of the 27 authors who publish novels in this period. Although it is difficult to determine with certainty the reason for this criminal-literary surge that reached its zenith between 2014 and 2016 with 30 published serial works, we are convinced that neither the circulation of one and two euro coins with the likeness of Felipe VI on February 1, nor the demonstration against the “Gag Law” of July 30, nor even the victory of the Spanish basketball team at Eurobasket in September, to cite three of the most prominent events of 2015 in Spain, are milestones responsible for this criminal-publishing situation. We agree, of course, with the assessment of Sánchez Zapatero and Martín Escribà, among many other critics, that the rise of crime fiction (and not just the sagas) is favored both by the commercial considerations of publishers that, as we noted before, bet on crime fiction more frequently in this period, supporting new authors, encouraging those already acclaimed to apply their talents to the *noir* genre and promoting those who had already opted for the genre through their participation in numerous festivals, meetings and congresses dedicated to crime fiction inside and outside of Spain. The presence of female writers dedicated to the genre is increasingly significant in literary and publishers’ meetings, although there is still inequality in terms of the important awards they receive in contrast to the nominations and awards granted to their male colleagues. In this regard, we remember the controversy that arose during the Semana Negra of Gijón of 2016. During this festival, which began its criminal literary journey in 1988, the prestigious Dashiell Hammett Prize is awarded for the best crime novel published during the year prior to the contest. Thus, in 2016 Matías Néspolo wrote in *El Mundo*, “Si tradicionalmente la novela negra ha sido siempre un campo propicio o incluso hospitalario para con el machismo, la violencia de género y la reproducción de las viejas estructuras patriarcales, tampoco la Semana Negra de Gijón se libra de esa sombra de sospecha” (2016)⁴, referring to the criticisms that the organizers of the competition received

⁴ “If traditionally the crime novel has always been a favorable or even hospitable field for machismo, gender violence and the reproduction of the old patriarchal structures, the Semana Negra of Gijón is not free from that shadow of suspicion” Matías Néspolo. *El Mundo*. 11/07/2016. www.elmundo.es/cultura/2016/07/08/577f868322601de03e8b45fa.html

that year from the writers themselves (Rosa Ribas, Graziella Moreno and Empar Fernández among them) for not including among the finalists in any of the award categories the work of a single female writer published during 2015 (something that had also happened in the previous edition). The record of having only one woman recipient of the award in its entire history—Cristina Fallarás for *Las niñas perdidas* [*The Lost Girls*] in 2012—was maintained until 2020 (during 24 years) when Berna González Harbour received the Dashiell Hammett Prize for her novel *El sueño de la razón* [*The Sleep of Reason*]. Rosa Ribas, in reference to the controversy for which she became spokesperson after having served on the award's selection committee that year, declared in 2017 that although the controversy served to make the situation visible, in many meetings and competitions they were still “programming the girls’ table” as if they were doing the women writers a special favor by making them a place among male writers, instead of considering them equally important.⁵ We must recognize that in 2018 Berna González Harbour and Alicia Giménez Bartlett were finalists for the award for *Las lágrimas de Claire Jones* [*The Tears of Claire Jones*] and *Mi querido asesino en serie* [*My Dear Serial Killer*] respectively, both serial works, and among the finalists in 2019 were Noelia Lorenzo Pino and Carme Chaparro for their criminal serial bodies *Corazones negros* [*Black Hearts*] and *La química del odio* [*The Chemistry of Hate*], although neither received the award.

Among the new contributions to the criminal-literary landscape within the diversification of criminal genres (or subgenres) between 2011 and 2015 we highlight the beginning of the Inspector Valentina Negro series, written by Nieves Abarca in tandem with the criminologist Vicente Garrido. The originality of this series lies in its numerous plots full of extreme physical and emotional situations, including mind-boggling criminal apparatus with

⁵ In “El machismo como enfermedad de la novela negra española,” regarding the lack of representation of women writers in the awardss of the Semana Negra of Gijón, Rosa Ribas would declare: “Los premios de la Semana Negra han puesto de relieve que los asesores del jurado han ninguneado las obras escritas por mujeres. No veo maldad en ello, sino algo mucho peor, ignorancia y desprecio. Mientras que las escritoras, críticas, blogueras... no suelen hacer distinciones en sus lecturas, hay muchos hombres que no leen obras escritas por mujeres. Y, además, desgraciadamente, hay bastante grupalismo masculino en este mundo” [“The awards of the Semana Negra have highlighted that the members of the selection committee have disregarded any works written by women. I don’t see it as evil, but something much worse, evidence of ignorance and contempt. While female writers, critics, bloggers ... do not usually make distinctions in their readings, there are many men who do not read works written by women. And, unfortunately, there is a lot of masculine groupism in this world”] (Galindo, 2018).

highly detailed descriptions of the police procedures and the minds of the murderers and psychopaths who are pursued with fury. Yanet Acosta introduces the subgenre of gastronomoir on to the Spanish criminal scene with her first installment of the series starring journalist Lucy Belda and insurance investigator Ven Cabreira. Acosta places these two characters in a criminal environment to offer us a critical view of the world of elite cuisine. In the words of Maureen Tobin Stanley, “The author fuses her expertise in high gastronomy with the crime fiction genre to present a nuanced critique of the dominance and construction of power that continues ruling in the 21st century.”⁶ Margarida Aritzeta and Montse Sanjuan followed the lead of Teresa Solana’s inspector with their highly capable Catalan officers Mina Fuster and Anna Grimm and, according to Melissa Stewart, “mak[e] a significant contribution to the development of the genre in novel directions across the peninsula.”⁷ During this period, Clara Asunción García’s series with her lesbian investigator Cate Maynes is also published, offering a humorous version of the role of an irreverent detective who suffers in her own skin criminal and sentimental attacks simultaneously that takes us back to the first lesbian detective in this subgenre, Emma García by Isabel Franc. As Diana Aramburu comments, “by employing a lesbian detective not only to solve crimes, but also to highlight and stage lesbian sexual pleasure, women writers like Franc, Hernández, and Asunción García have reappropriated and subverted a genre that had been previously dominated by the straight male detective gaze.”⁸ Antonia Huertas also premieres a subgenre in the criminal-literary scene with her series of cyberthrillers starring Beppa Mardegan, an analyst at Europol who will have to prevent international cyberterrorist attacks. Referring to the Huertas series, Kelly Drumright argues that it “depicts the landscape of contemporary cybercrime and its detection via the networked protagonist, thereby introducing readers to crucial information about the empirical circumstances in which they live.”⁹ Susana Martín Gijón reinvigorates the police procedural by granting the prominence in her *Saga of the four-leaf*

⁶ See Maureen Tobin Stanley’s “Gastronomical and Gynocentric Spanish *Noir* in the 21st Century: Cuisine, Patriarchy and Ageusia in *El Chef ha muerto* and *Matar al padre* by Yanet Acosta” in this volume.

⁷ See Melissa Stewart’s “Recent Trends in the Nove.la Negra by Female Catalan Authors” in this volume.

⁸ See Diana Aramburu’s “Reading from the Lesbian Detective Body: Queering Pleasure and Pain in Clara Asunción García’s Cate Maynes Novels” in this volume.

⁹ See Kelly Drumright’s “The Not-So-Lonely Spider: Consciousness-Raising and (Cyber)Activist Ethics in Antonia Huertas’s Networked Crime Fiction” in this volume.

clover to police inspector Annika Kaunda, originally from Namibia, and locating her scenarios in Extremadura, which, according to Eva París-Huesca “le permite a la escritora ofrecerle al sujeto lector muchos detalles culturales y topográficos que llaman la atención sobre el valor histórico de la región y su patrimonio arquitectónico [dándole a los crímenes] una dimensión local/global a través de la incorporación de historias de inmigrantes de Europa del Este que vienen a España en busca de una vida mejor.”¹⁰ Finally, we cannot conclude an account of new contributions within the criminal trail of this period without mentioning Rosa Montero's sci-fi detective series starring the replicant detective Bruna Husky in a world 100 years in the future where humans share their existence with artificial beings subjected to the same consequences of a world deteriorated by the abuse of technology. Kathleen Thompson-Casado observes: “Despite what may have initially appeared to be an enormous change in Montero's novelistic trajectory, readers familiar with the author quickly recognized that many of the major themes that are constants in her work, such as identity, solitude, love, and death, are also prominent themes in this series.”¹¹

From 2016 to the first half of 2020, 38 crime novels have come on the scene, 18 of which are continuations of sagas started before 2016, with 12 constituting parts of 6 new series: Eva García Saénz de Urturi's high-profile trilogy of *La ciudad blanca* [*The White City*], that of Carme Chamorro with Inspector Ana Arén and the saga of the aforementioned Noelia Lorenzo Pino with her Basque inspector. Ana Lena Rivera debuts with a criminal series in 2020 by publishing the second installment featuring fraud investigator Gracia San Sebastián. The remaining novels will be the second installments of the promised series of Rosa Ribas and Susana Martín Gijón.¹²

¹⁰ “allows the writer to offer the reader many cultural and topographic details that draw attention to the historical value of the region and its architectural heritage [giving the crimes] a local/global dimension through the incorporation of stories of immigrants from Eastern Europe that come to Spain in search of a better life.” See Eva París-Huesca's “De la urbe mítica a la periferia histórica: la búsqueda de nuevos espacios e identidades locales en la serie literaria de Susana Martín Gijón” in this volume.

¹¹ See Kathleen Thompson Casado's “The Evolution of Death in the Bruna Husky Novels” in this volume.

¹² At this time, we do not consider the three novels authored by Carmen Mola, *La novia gitana* [*The Gypsy Bride*] (2019), *La red purpura* [*The Purple Web*] (2019) and *La nena* [*The Young Woman*] (2020), featuring Inspector Elena Blanco, as the gender identity of the series' author has not been revealed.

Taking into account the 28 series with their 87 novels published to date, our final observation is limited to a common thematic motive that stands out in these series: that the writers primarily use the crime fiction pen as the voice's murder weapon to make visible the evils with which not only women, but humanity as a whole, are confronted in this 21st century: human trafficking, child abuse, prostitution, extortion by mafias and drug cartels, money laundering, fraudulent dealings of large pharmaceutical companies, gender violence, cyberterrorism and the destruction of the environment, among many others.

2. THE CRITICS' TURN: "FORENSIC" ANALYSIS OF LITERARY CRIME SERIES

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The abundant production of crime fiction by female Spanish authors in this century documented above has received a good deal of media coverage in the form of interviews with authors, commentary on their presence in the many festivals and conferences featuring the genre, and reviews. Critical attention to the texts, however, especially for the more recent publications, has been limited. The studies of crime fiction series offered in this volume analyze their treatment of current social, political and economic problems in Spain and beyond, in addition to exploring interrelations between gender, globalization, the environment and technology in the construction of their plot frameworks. They demonstrate the varied ways in which the use of a series allows for a more in-depth consideration of such issues in addition to permitting the more extensive development of the protagonist investigator and her reactions to and methods of dealing with personal and professional challenges of the twenty-first century, which results in the renewal of the *noir* genre. The critics explore how the authors employ strategies that break with the long-standing conventions, developing crime fiction in unexpected ways, thus further contributing to the reinvigoration of the narrative.

Kathleen McNerney opens the collection with a much deserved acknowledgement of Maria-Antònia Oliver's important role as the creator of the first series featuring a female investigator, private eye Lònia Guiu, in Spain. Writing in Catalan, this pioneer treated issues, both local and global, that we see "updated" in more recent crime fiction.

In the first chapter of "Section One: Cybercrime, Cyborgs and the Role of Technology," Kelly Drumright analyzes the works of Antonia Huertas, a relative newcomer to the group of female crime fiction authors. A trained

mathematician and professor of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunication, her narrative takes us deep inside the dark web and the world of hackers. Drumright outlines the development of cybercrime and connects current trends in technological and human networks that Huertas reveals to us, demonstrating that cybercrime fiction constitutes a new subgenre worthy of note.

Kathleen Thompson-Casado then considers the exploration of death and identity in Rosa Montero's Bruno Husky series. While solving her cases, this "techno-human" turned detective in a futuristic universe populated by humans, androids, and her hybrid group, develops a handful of meaningful relationships that will ultimately help her to face the non-human limits of her existence, including an exact count of her life span from the moment she comes into existence. Thompson-Casado situates Bruno's experiences in an alien land and their consequences within the reflections on mortality and how to deal with it that are found throughout Montero's narrative.

The three chapters in "Section Two: Crime Fiction Occupies Alternative Spaces and Settings" examine alternative geographic, cultural, and linguistic settings for investigators. The development of crime fiction in Catalan is the focus of Melissa Stewart's contribution. Following consideration of the work of Teresa Solana and Montse Sanjuan, she examines Margarida Aritzeta's series featuring Inspector Mina Fuster and her investigations of complicated webs of corruption and crime outside Barcelona, in Tarragona. Mina works closely with her team to uncover the culprits while facing challenges in her personal life with which readers can connect.

Eva París-Huesca explores how Susana Martín Gijón confronts readers with social problems of an international and local nature in her trilogy based in Extremadura. The author presents the challenges of women of diverse social classes and nationalities as they struggle against human trafficking, domestic violence, and discrimination while insisting that we all have a part to play in improving conditions for everyone.

Nina Molinaro traces the development of Dolores Redondo's police Inspector Amaia Salazar in the professional and personal realms in the first three installments of her series, analyzing the interplay of the rational elements of the police procedural with folklore and the legends of Northern Navarre, where the homicides take place, in solving the crimes and uncovering missing pieces of the protagonist's identity. Molinaro offers insights into how Redondo interweaves changes in the protagonist and other figures with the serial's familiar and established bases, maintaining a tension that engages the reader and keeps her wanting more.

"Section Three: The State of Gender Politics, New Readings of Sexuality and Connections with Contemporary Reality in Spain and

Beyond” includes five chapters that analyze the figures of the investigators as they confront current social, economic, and cultural realities. After providing an overview of crime fiction production by women in the past two decades, including the dearth of series with four or more installments, Elena Losada focuses on the development of Inspector María Ruiz in four novels by Berna González Harbour. Her analysis includes consideration of the contemporary social and economic issues that González Harbour examines through the cases Ruiz solves, including corruption, the widespread effects of the financial crisis, and pederasty in the church, as well the turns and twists in the protagonist’s life, illustrating how the author effectively uses aspects of the serial to delve deeper into her characters and develop their relationships far beyond what is possible in one or two installments.

Shelley Godsland explores how Graziella Moreno’s protagonist Judge Sofia Valle and other female characters in her novels continue to be subject to vulnerabilities of all types due to their gender, despite having achieved positions of authority in the judicial and legal realms, as well as economic independence. The continuing threat and danger is apparent at all levels, from immigrants forced to prostitute themselves to women who endure domestic violence, humiliation and manipulation in the workplace, and the kidnapping of the judge. Godsland convincingly ties what appears in the fiction to present-day realities and events in Spain, including the high rate of partner inflicted violence, recent gang rapes and the strong reactions against them, and the national women’s strike that has become an annual event.

Maureen Tobin Stanley examines Yanet Acosta’s critique of the paternalistic and misogynistic elements of haute cuisine in her *gastro-noir* novels, as well as the revelations of serious global consequences of the manipulation of crop cultivation and food trends by agro-business. Acosta’s investigative team—a young bi-sexual food critic and a former special government agent turned gastro-detective who has lost his olfactory and gustatory senses—offers another example of innovation within the genre; against all odds, these two unlikely sleuths are ultimately successful at discovering the real perpetrators of the crimes. In the process, the author makes a case for the need to “kill” the father and expands her characters’ sexuality beyond binary conventions.

Diana Arambaru opens with an historical overview of the development of lesbian crime fiction in Spain (including American influences) and goes on to explore how Clara Asunción Silva situates the lesbian body and desire at the center of her narrative, developing this dimension of the detective’s personal life in new ways that turn the genre on its head. Through the activation of her bodily memories, which involve taste and touch, Asunción

Silva pushes the reader to participate in diverse experiences of her protagonist's pain and pleasure. The results are works that offer a queer alternative to crime fiction's hetero-normativity.

In his chapter on Reyes Calderón's series, Jeffery Oxford offers an extensive analysis of how Lola MacHor, the unusual judge featured in seven novels, differs from the counterparts discussed in this volume and others that populate works of crime fiction by women. Full of contradictions, this feminist, who also professes to being Catholic and sharing certain views of the church, is involved in solving crimes of the upper class and powerful figures. Serving on the Supreme Court, MacHor is tough and decisive, but she also freely displays her feelings and at times demonstrates a lack of emotional stability, as seen in the desperation that leads her to consider suicide. Calderon presents readers with a truly unique protagonist in unusual settings that is developed throughout the many installments.

"Section Four: Reconceptualizing the Genre through Hybridization" includes four chapters about series that combine elements of other genres—the cozy mystery, romance novel, and the historic novel—with more conventional crime fiction models to produce hybrid texts that invigorate the genre. In chapter twelve Salvador Oropesa convincingly argues that María Oruña, in her series featuring Guardia Civil Valentina Redondo and her unofficial "assistant," boyfriend Oliver Gordon, creates a hybrid of the cozy mystery and the police procedural, with a 21st century gender twist: Gordon assumes the traditional female role of the former, while Valentina is the active official on the police force. Their relationship and the various crimes they solve reflect changes and unsettling issues in present-day society.

Fátima Serra reveals how Eva G. Sáenz de Urturi's *La ciudad blanca* trilogy adapts crime fiction structures to rewrite history in order to include those who have been denied a voice or a place in the record, especially during the Franco regime in Spain: women and children. She explores the innovative narrative techniques that Sáenz de Urturi employs to challenge the linear concept of history, moving back and forth between a sometimes very distant past and present, complicating and enriching the story of individuals and the city of Vitoria.

Continuing in this vein of hybridization, Nancy Vosburg analyzes the strands of crime fiction, romance, and the historical novel in Lourdes López-Pacios Navío's Rebeca Dorado trilogy. She illustrates the effects of a mixture of crime subgenres in the novels, as Dorado, a criminologist and independent investigator with a "sixth sense" (certain psychic abilities), collaborates with a Civil Guard officer to solve crimes around Minorca, a novel *noir* location. Elements of the police procedural are combined with

the use of Dorado's often unconventional investigative tactics to solve crimes that include kidnappings, homicides, and missing persons.

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PROLOGUE

A RELUCTANT PIONEER: MARIA-ANTÒNIA OLIVER

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Maria-Antònia Oliver always read prolifically, and even before she could read, she listened enthusiastically to her great-uncle, es blonco Joan, relate “rondalles,” those Mallorcan tales filled with adventure, giants, mermaids, and all manner of magic. By age fourteen, she had read something of Homer, John Milton, Jules Verne, Zane Grey, and José Mallorquí’s *El Coyote*; she didn’t like the novels her girlfriends were reading, nor the Pérez collection recommended by her father as good reading for girls. She had heard about detective novels and in fact her father had quite a few collections of them, but she never felt attracted to them until one day she decided to try Agatha Christie, and was bored with trying to guess who the assassin was before the author felt like revealing it. Years later, her husband Jaume Fuster, who loved detective novels and had written several, told her that if she didn’t read Dashiell Hammet and Raymond Chandler, he would divorce her. With that incentive, she got to like them little by little, and now considers *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Long Goodbye* master works of universal literature.

She read Ross Macdonald, Chester Himes, Arthur Conan Doyle, Georges Simenon and a few others, but she was looking for women. Then she discovered Patricia Highsmith and Margaret Millar, and realized that their works had a woman’s gaze that she loved, and it opened up new paths for her. The world of the detective novel had been masculine, even sexist, with women as shadowy figures: charming young ladies from high society, lovers or secretaries of the detectives, or “femmes fatales,” something like inflatable dolls. She was intrigued by the few exceptions: Hammet’s Nick and Nora Charles, Christie’s Miss Marple, Erle Stanley Gardner’s Bertha Cool.

But Margaret Millar, Canadian wife of the Ross Macdonald who created Lew Archer, a detective who then was transformed by Jaume Fuster into Lluís Arquer, fascinated Maria-Antònia, for Millar presented real women as protagonists, women who had problems, who might be strong or weak, who were human. Then she discovered more feminist writers, such as Amanda Cross, Barbara Wilson, Dorothy Bryant, Antonia Fraser, Marcia Muller, and she related especially well to Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton. She appreciated their ability to use the formulas of the genre, turning them around to give them new meaning, offering criticism of society, as had Hammet and Chandler, but from a different point of view.

Even so, she did not wade into the waters to write her own mystery stories until the collective of which she was a part, Ofèlia Dracs, decided on the genre for one of their creations. “Ofèlia” was a group of friends who were writers and Catalanists and who shared the goal of making literature in Catalan readable and appealing for a public that was not particularly sophisticated or high-brow, in order to encourage Catalan speakers, whose education in Catalan was deficient since the language had been so marginalized for so long. The writers in the group did not sign their names to each discrete piece, and they strove to pick popular themes, including pornography. Maria-Antònia’s contribution to the volume of detective stories *Negra i consentida* led to the birth of Lònia Guiu, protagonist of “On ets, Mònica?” (translated by me as “Where are you, Monica?”), and three novels to follow. Lònia, a Mallorcan PI working in Barcelona, doesn’t like firearms or police, has a male assistant, collects lipstick, and loves dogs. She’s not really a heroine, but she takes her work very seriously. Nor is she autobiographical: all she has in common with the author is that she is from Mallorca, she once worked in a detective agency, and she loves dogs.

Oliver draws on her early detective-agency experience to create the character, and she also takes inspiration from her readings in the genre, as well as from happenings in the world around her, especially violence against women and children. The story “Fils trencats” is not exactly in the detective genre, but contains some common elements. The first-person narrator is not a PI or police officer, but rather a victim who realizes that she has to find her attackers on her own. She sets out to do so by frequenting the only place she can: the scene of the crime. The endless waiting and watching form part of many crime stories, and her patience pays off: one discovery leads to another as she ties the threads together. This intriguing story, translated by John Dagenais as “Broken Threads,” can be considered an understudy for Oliver’s first detective novel, *Estudi en lila*, translated by me as *Study in Lilac*.

The two novels that follow, *Antípodes* and *El sol que fa l'ànec* (translated by me as *Antipodes* and *Blue Roses for a Dead...Lady?*) also deal with issues of abuse of and violence against women and children, in the forms of rape, trafficking, and sexual slavery. Oliver continues with her gender and genre-bending techniques, as she uses the formulas of crime novels but turns them around, and introduces a gay perspective in the person of Quim, Lònia's assistant. Lònia herself becomes a victim as she gets closer to solutions in the two well-crafted tales, by now clearly within the genre. The PI protagonist develops and grows, she gradually becomes more feminist and more leftist, she falls in and out of love, gets beaten up and sabotaged, continues with her lipstick collection, and befriends her author as she evolves from protagonist to interlocutor. It will be Lònia who writes about Maria-Antònia's heart transplant, and any future novels must include dialogues between author and protagonist.

"Serendipity" is a word that translators find difficult to handle: invented by Horace Walpole, it is based on a Persian fairy tale and then a Venetian novel, *The Three Princes of Serendip*, an ancient name for Sri Lanka. It's the quality of discovering something good by accident, without looking. That is how I began translating Oliver's prose. I met Maria-Antònia when I interviewed her for *On Our Own Behalf*, and she later introduced me to Barbara Wilson, who wanted translations of Maria-Antònia's novels to publish at Seal Press. Thus began a relationship that morphed from professional into a great and lasting friendship. I thank Maria-Antònia for the many conversations and reflections that made this prologue possible.