



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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## Editor's Note

Marcelo E. González Z.<sup>1</sup>

Since its inception, the noir genre has shattered the very boundaries with which it was imagined and has become a clear expression of World Literature. Its development has accounted for migration, transactions, exports, hybridizations, transculturation, and literary and cultural transplants, which have enriched and transformed it into the most read, best-selling literary form worldwide.

It was a North American, Edgar A. Poe, who shaped the classic form of the detective novel and set the first detective in Paris at the turn of the 20th century. Poe's character, C. Auguste Dupin, outlined the genre that later the British Arthur Conan Doyle embodied in Sherlock Holmes. Likewise, the British Agatha Christie applied the same formula when presenting a Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, as the astute interpreter of mysteries, while the Belgian, Georges Simenon, did so too with his creation of the French detective, Jules Maigret. Thus, as the genre gained momentum, there seemed to be no national borders for inventing detective mysteries that appeared impossible to solve to the ordinary minds of readers.

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This literary form reached out to readers and writers around the world. In China, for example, the genre became well known by the hand of Cheng Xiaoqing, who began writing this type of fiction around 1910, after several years translating Conan Doyle into vernacular Chinese. In Japan, around the early 1920s, Edogawa Rampo appropriated the genre adding fantastic and erotic elements, initiating a long tradition of authors such as Natsuo Kirino and Keigo Higashino. In British India, in 1932, the Bengali Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay created the detective Byomkesh Bakshi, who starred in 32 different stories until the death of its author in 1970.

However, the most important hybridization occurred when the genre returned to the country of its foundation. It was in the United States and by the hand of writers of pulp magazines such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, when this literary form transmuted into a narrative that gave an account of the economic and social conflicts related to the Great Depression; thus, the hardboiled recreated Poe's legacy. As a way to respond to organized crime that flourished at the time, these writers appropriated the superhuman detective mind and transformed the character into a private detective that seemed closer to reality: a violent, sarcastic and astute man. The investigator became a fearless man of action, acquainted with the underworld who would go anywhere to solve the cases. The impact that this twist represented was such that it sparked a new generation of authors who were already familiar with the archetypal structures of the genre and also, progressively, earned the genre recognition from critics and academics.

From then on, and strongly influenced by postmodern thought, the genre further evolved into other assimilated forms of detectives. At present, we can find the Nordic crime novel with contemporary exponents such as the Swedes A. Larsson and H. Mankell, or the Mediterranean crime novel, whose great exponents are the Catalan M. Vázquez Montalbán and the Italian A. Camilleri. On the other hand, from authors such as E. Leonard or J. Ellroy, the neo noir in the United States has delivered monumental works, while Hispanic America, has explored the genre through the *neopolicial*, with authors such as the Argentine R. Piglia, the Brazilian R. Fonseca, and the Chilean R. Díaz Eterovic.

This *ESLA* issue is dedicated to this literary form, with a generic diversity of texts. Among our academic articles, three authors offer profound readings of writers of the genre: R. Peñalta transports us to Venice, exposing how the Italian Donna Leon uses the genre to convey social and ecological critique of the devastating influence that tourism has had on the historical center of the city, as well as the progressive changes in time, through the contemporary processes of gentrification. A.M. Neira elaborates on a classic work by Christie, *The Mousetrap*, in a comparative study between the original story and its theatrical adaptation, which has been performed successfully in hundreds of venues, transforming it into the longest-running theater show in the world. Finally, A. Mayne-Nicholls develops a feminist reading of the feminist detective novel by Anne Perry, in an analysis of *Midnight at Marble Arch* denouncing violence against women.

In our nonfiction section, Chilean poet and novelist, P. Ilabaca, author of the crime novel *La regla de los nueve* (2015), presents an intimate chronicle narrating how she was seduced by the noir genre and her relationship between this literary form and her father, a former member of the local police.

Finally, beyond our general theme, we present a selection of poems by W. S. Nelson (currently living in Santiago), whose verses establish an intimate dialogue among the human being, nature and the universe, openly evoking Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

We hope that this variety of entries on detective literature triggers your interest in a genre that already accounts for hundreds of accomplices around the world.

The game is afoot.

Marcelo E. González Z.

Guest Editor