

## **Crime Fiction(s): Victorian and Neo-Victorian Narratives of Crime and Punishment**

**An interdisciplinary one-day conference at Edinburgh Napier University  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

*Co-hosted by the Scottish Centre for Victorian and Neo-Victorian Studies (SCVS), the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), and the Centre for Literature and Writing (CLAW) at Edinburgh Napier*

Crime and punishment intrigued 19<sup>th</sup>-century commentators from pioneering Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry to novelist Charles Dickens. Their own narratives about crime and responses to it – in fictional or non-fictional form – inevitably functioned as broader receptacles for ideas on socio-political organization, shaped by the writer's perceptions on class, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality. For some, locations such as the tenement slums of Glasgow or London's East End became synonymous with crime and depravity. While reformist writings and crime fiction to some extent operated as a form of social control, some texts also contained critical-subversive potential, promoting socially transgressive ideals through their intervention into penal debates. Genres such as execution broadsides and early prison autobiography also offered platforms for the voices of the convicted (if not necessarily "authentic" ones).

More recently, neo-Victorian writers have focused on crime and punishment to explore and re-imagine hidden perspectives and "social deviance" in the Victorian age, for example Sarah Waters's *Affinity*, which re-envision cross-class encounters and lesbian sexuality in a nineteenth-century prison. Recent television shows such as *Penny Dreadful* reinvent nineteenth-century crime genres for contemporary audiences. Additionally, digital archives have opened up possibilities for uncovering understudied sources while raising new methodological questions for scholars of crime and punishment.

This one-day conference seeks to explore new perspectives on nineteenth-century crime and punishment from a range of disciplines, bringing these in conversation with Neo-Victorian re-imaginings of Victorian narratives of deviance. We invite contributions from literary studies, history, criminology, art history, film, tv, theatre and performance studies, and beyond. Proposals from creative practitioners are also welcome.

### **Confirmed speakers:**

Dr Zoe Alker (University of Liverpool) on 'big data' and digital crime history

Dr Graham Hogg, Rare Books Curator at the National Library of Scotland

Dr Benjamin Poore (University of York), author of *Sherlock Holmes from Screen to Stage: Post-Millennial Adaptations in British Theatre* (2017)

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- New perspectives on canonical authors
- Popular crime genres
- Crime and punishment in the periodical press
- Digital archives and "big data"
- Crime and the visual (art & illustration)
- Penal reform
- 19<sup>th</sup>-century criminal psychology / criminal anthropology / criminology
- Regional or national traditions of crime writing
- Crime and punishment in the Empire
- Gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and age
- Neo-Victorian historical crime fiction
- Neo-Victorianism and questions of adaptation

**300-word abstracts and a short biographical statement should be sent to [scvscime@gmail.com](mailto:scvscime@gmail.com) by 5pm (GMT) on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017.**

*Conference Organizers: Lois Burke, Helena Roots and Anne Schwan*

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