

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 27 - English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Noirwich: Advancing the Practice, Pedagogy, and Perception of Crime Writing		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2010 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Henry Sutton	Professor of Creative Writing and Crime Fiction	2007 to present
Tom Benn	Lecturer in Crime Writing	2013 to present
Dr Nathan Ashman	Lecturer in Crime Writing	2018 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between 2014 and 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>'Noirwich' is an eco-system for crime writing at UEA designed to advance the practice, pedagogy, and public perception of the genre as a serious form of literary expression capable of addressing major contemporary concerns. New educational pathways deliver research-led teaching on eco-crime, regional deprivation and BAME perspectives, training the next generation of crime writers to explore these topics and secure major publishing deals, thus reshaping the genre. The model established by Noirwich has demonstrably influenced other UK institutions into launching crime writing programmes. Noirwich Crime Writing Festival brings UEA researchers into dialogue with leading writers to show public and professional audiences how the genre can help us think collectively about such pressing contemporary issues as systemic racism, environmental catastrophe, and gender equality, as well as providing creative development through writing workshops, and boosting the local economy.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The creative practice and critical research of the Noirwich team at UEA underpin its impacts. Professor Henry Sutton's novels experiment with form and genre to address contemporary concerns. <i>My Criminal World</i> (2013) (3.1) brings the genre into conversation with itself through a novel-within-a-novel, provoking reflection on the genre's possibilities. Regional deprivation is played out in the Great Yarmouth trilogy <i>Time to Win</i> (2017), <i>Red Hot Front</i> (2018), and <i>Dark Good Night</i>, (2019) (3.2). Financial crimes leading to the 2008 credit crunch are scrutinised in <i>Get Me Out of Here</i> (2010). His research is published by highly regarded imprints, including Harvill Secker/Vintage and Corsair/Little, Brown. Industry esteem is marked by invitations to judge prizes, including the Theakston's Old Peculiar Crime Novel of the Year, and the East Anglian Book Awards, commissions for survey-style articles for <i>The Guardian</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i>, and appearances on radio and television, including BBC One and BBC Radio 4.</p> <p>Sutton co-edited and contributed to the first overview of the domestic noir/psychological thriller sub-genre, <i>Domestic Noir: The New Face of 21st Century Crime Fiction</i> (2018) (3.3) with former early career academic colleague at UEA Dr Laura Joyce. It was shortlisted for The International Crime Fiction Association Book Prize (2019), and the H.R.F. Keating Award (2019). In 2020, Sutton was invited to edit Cambridge University Press's 30 monograph series devoted to the critical study of crime writing (under peer review) and contracted by Manchester University Press to write an expansive and personal guide to crime writing for academic and general readerships.</p> <p>Tom Benn's fiction, non-fiction, and screenwriting explore race, class, and region. His debut work <i>Doll Princess</i> (2013) was shortlisted for both the Dylan Thomas Prize and the Portico Prize, and longlisted for the Crime Writers' Association's John Creasey Dagger. It was first in the 'Henry Bane' trilogy of which <i>The Guardian</i> writes, Benn 'takes all the genre's most potent elements and makes them new and vital again'. Benn's first crime film, set on a Manchester housing estate, <i>Real Gods Require Blood</i> (2017) (3.4), was in official selection at Cannes, premiered at Noirwich Crime Writing Festival in 2017, and was nominated Best Short Film at BFI London Film Festival in 2017.</p>		

He was a winner of Creative England's iWrite scheme for emerging screenwriters in 2016. Benn's short fiction 'Stuart Hall and Stuart Hall' (2020) **(3.5)** was runner up for the international Desperate Literature Prize 2019. Benn received an Arts Council England grant for the arts for his experimental working-class crime novel *Oxblood* in 2015, which was acquired by Bloomsbury in 2020 to be published in 2022.

Dr Nathan Ashman's academic research into crime fiction focusses on eco-critical analysis and gender/sexuality. Ashman is editing Routledge's first collection of crime eco-criticism, *The Routledge Handbook of Crime Fiction and Ecology* (2023). Ashman engages with queer studies and feminist theory in his articles 'Nostalgic Masculinity: Homosocial Desire and Homosexual Panic in James Ellroy's *This Storm*' (2020) **(3.6)**, and '*The Street Was Hers: Deconstructing the Hardboiled in Megan Abbott's Noir Fiction*' (2020).

3. References to the research

- 3.1** *My Criminal World* **Henry Sutton** (Harvill Secker, 2013; Vintage, 2014) ISBN: 978-0-0995-7856-7
- 3.2** The Goodwin trilogy **Henry Sutton** writing as Harry Brett
Time to Win (Little Brown, **2017**) ISBN: 978-1-4721-5263-0
Red Hot Front (Little Brown, **2018**) ISBN: 978-1-4721-5268-8
Good Dark Night (Little Brown, **2019**) ISBN: 978-1-4721-5273-2
- 3.3** *Domestic Noir: The New Face of 21st Century Crime Fiction*
Henry Sutton and **Laura Joyce** (**2018**) Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-3-319-69337-8
- 3.4** *Real Gods Require Blood* **Tom Benn** (**2017**) *BFI Network*, <https://network.bfi.org.uk/funded-by-network/real-gods-require-blood>. Film available to view on the director's vimeo: vimeo.com/209083540
- 3.5** 'Stuart Hall and Stuart Hall', *Eleven Stories: Desperate Literature Short Fiction Prize Shortlist Selection 2019* (runner-up story). **Tom Benn** (**2019**) *Desperate Literature*, Madrid. 7 p (**PDF available**)
- 3.6** 'Nostalgic Masculinity: Homosocial Desire and Homosexual Panic in James Ellroy's *This Storm*', **Nathan Ashman** (**2020**) *Crime Fiction Studies*, 1 (2), pp. 221-236. ISSN 2517-7982. DOI:10.3366/cfs.2020.0022

4. Details of the impact

Underpinned by the creative and critical research of Sutton, Ashman, and Benn, the Noirwich 'eco-system' aims to advance the practice, pedagogy, and perception of crime writing as a serious form of literary expression capable of addressing major contemporary concerns. Growth of the eco-system through the development of innovative crime writing training and the Noirwich Crime Writing Festival, has had impacts on a new generation of writers, higher education institutions, publishers, public perception, and on the City of Norwich. Major archive donations from leading crime writers including [text removed for publication] reflect the position of UEA as a home for crime writing research established by Noirwich.

Pedagogy: Training the next generation of crime writers

Research conducted by Sutton, Ashman, and Benn underpins innovative crime writing training within and beyond UEA. There have been 794 participants in taught crime writing courses and workshops created at UEA by Noirwich, between 2014 and December 2020 **(5.3)**. BA and MA crime writing modules have supported the appointment of three early career researchers (ECRs), plus the employment of other tutors and visiting writers, adding to the research base.

The Creative Writing MA Crime Fiction is the first standalone course of its kind in a UK university, and has been fully subscribed since it launched in 2015. The online dimension of MA teaching makes the course accessible to mature and international students and has brought its pedagogical expertise to a wide range of ages and nationalities. The UEA programme is training a new generation of highly acclaimed writers, benefitting them artistically and economically through the awarding of prizes and lucrative publishing contracts. Graduates have achieved publishing deals totalling over GBP350,000, publishing in translation across more than 25 global territories **(5.3)**, for example:

- Harriet Tyce's novel *Blood Orange* (Wildfire, 2019), 'smart #MeToo noir' – *The Guardian*; *Sunday Times* top 3 bestseller; nominated for Dead Good Reader Awards 2019; forthcoming in 13 publishing territories (5.4).
- Trevor Wood won the 2020 Crime Writers' Association's John Creasey Dagger Award, for the best crime novel by a first-time author for *The Man On The Street* (Quercus, 2020).
- Kate Simants won the 2019 Bath Novel Award for *A Ruined Girl* (Serpent's Tail, 2020).

[text removed for publication] won the UEA Little, Brown Award for Crime Fiction in 2018 for his novel *Lightseekers*, which 'masterfully explores the smouldering historical tensions underpinning modern-day Nigeria, the role of social media, and the complexities of family, friendship and belonging', according to a review by US writer Lauren Wilkinson. *Lightseekers* will be published by Bloomsbury's Raven Books in the UK and Little, Brown in the US, forthcoming in 25 publishing territories (2021). [text removed for publication] described the impact of the MA on his writing (5.5):

'The variety of masterclasses, workshops and several assignments really helped to sharpen my understanding of self, my voice and the kind of stories I wanted to tell. This self-exploration was encouraged by the Tutors and I am very proud of the kind of writer I am becoming because of that experience.'

Pedagogy: Impact beyond UEA in universities and online

The Dundee University Crime Writing and Forensic Investigation MLitt, launched 2017 by former UEA PhD student [text removed for publication], was directly impacted upon by Noirwich (5.3):

'The introduction of the Crime Writing Master's programme at UEA was influential and transformational ... It opened up new possibilities, and it certainly helped us here at the University of Dundee to create a business case for our MLitt in Crime Writing and Forensics. The ways in which the UEA programme articulated with cultural events such as Noirwich Festival and involved industry partners in the worlds of publishing and the media serve as a model for the modern University. At Dundee, we were keen to develop a programme that would contribute to the local economy and the region's cultural wellbeing; the UEA programme helped us to see how creative and academic practice can work together to achieve that.'

Likewise, following regular participation in Noirwich Crime Writing Festival, author [text removed for publication] developed the University of Cambridge's MSt Crime and Thriller Writing which launched in 2019. The Noirwich eco-system also attracts prestigious research funding. Two of Sutton's crime writing doctoral students received CHASE funding (Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-East England AHRC funded Doctoral Training Partnership), evidencing the scholarly acceptance of the genre by a highly competitive public funding consortium.

Outside higher education, Noirwich ECR appointment Tom Benn designed a low-cost online screenwriting course, with over 120,000 users since 2015, and building on training developed in UEA, Professor Sutton inaugurated the public Creative Writing Online Crime Fiction course with the National Centre for Writing in 2018, taking 30 students per year. This further expands the range and scale of Noirwich's impact on the crime writing scene.

Noirwich Crime Writing Festival: Transforming perception of the genre

Noirwich Crime Writing Festival (3.6) is a vehicle for impact, co-founded by Sutton in 2014 to bring advances in practice and research to public audiences. It is organised with, and co-funded by, the National Centre for Writing (NCW), an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Researchers at UEA in areas such as forensic science, environmental science, law, and psychology are brought into dialogue with crime writers to provoke deeper understandings of the genre. Renowned authors like Lee Child and Yrsa Sigurðardóttir and emerging voices, including Leye Adenle, Oyinkan Braithwaite, Sara Collins, Winnie Li, and Imran Mahmood give writing, screen adaptation, and translation workshops and interviews.

The Festival has grown in size and importance since its inception, offering a key counterpoint to more commercially-oriented festivals. Publisher [text removed for publication] of Orenda Books described the importance of the festival in the crime-writing publishing calendar (5.7):

'It was certainly on my radar right from the beginning ... We had two authors here in the first year and I have pitched every year for it. The whole relationship with UEA and the translation programme and everything else meant it seemed that was the right place for my list ... The

festival is at the intelligent literary end of the spectrum ... It seems to be the 'educated' crime festival. I publish the literary end, a lot of debuts, half of the list is in translation, fresh voices'.

Attendance has increased by 956% (between 2014 and 2019), when it attracted 2,829 people, with visitors traveling from Germany, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Iceland and beyond. 60% of attendees surveyed between 2016 and 2019 said the Festival had brought about a change in their perception of the genre, with 49% leaving with knowledge of new authors and sub-genres. The head book buyer for Jarrolds department store said that the festival encouraged readers to branch out, meaning that *'year on year we make it [our stock] more diverse'* (5.7). Reflecting Sutton's curatorial focus on how crime writing can be a means to address social problems, the most common change in perception concerns the genre's importance *'reflecting the state of the world'*. 33% surveyed in 2017 stated *'how essential the genre is for social commentary'* and *'thought more about crime fiction tackling societal issues'* (5.6). The Festival also gives the public access to writing, translation, and TV/film adaptation workshops with leading practitioners, and 343 people participated in workshops between 2014 and December 2020 (5.3). In 2019, historical crime writer [text removed for publication] said that in contrast to other festivals, Noirwich is a festival for writers and aspiring writers:

'About 60-70% of the audience in my panel were writing crime fiction – an audience of writers or aspiring writers. That is different to the audiences at festivals like say Harrogate crime festival where there are many more punters rather than writers.' (5.7)

In 2017, Arts Council England said, *'This was an excellent festival'* and *'for a budding writer I would highly recommend going anyway for the advice and industry insider knowledge'*. (5.10)

The research-driven programming is key to these outcomes. In 2019, for instance, Ashman's ecological focus set the agenda, and Corinne Le Quéré, world-leading Professor of Climate Change Science and Policy, led a discussion on environmental degradation and contemporary crime writing. Audience members said they *'had never considered eco-crime as a genre before'*, and that, *'eco-crime is to be looked at more closely'* (5.6). CEO of the NCW, [text removed for publication] said of the Festival (5.7):

'I have a much more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of crime writing as a result of Noirwich [Festival]. I am also much more aware, particularly, of the intersections between research in academic fields and the production of crime writing ... Some of these intersections ... have been well documented, but those between environmental sciences, gender studies, linguistics, development studies – are still relatively unknown (or were to me) and it's really exciting to be a part of that'.

Part of the Festival, and curated by Sutton, The Noirwich Lecture delivers current thinking on crime writing to the public. In 2018, Val McDermid examined gender and violence. In 2019, BBC journalist and writer George Alagiah spoke on the power of fiction to illuminate facts around post-colonial natural resource exploitation. In the wake of Black Lives Matter protests, US crime writer Attica Locke delivered the 2020 Noirwich Lecture, contributing to the global conversation on issues of race, power, prejudice, and white supremacy. The Lecture was attended by 1969 people over live stream, YouTube, and podcast, and was published in *The Guardian*. Attendees' comments on the benefits of the event (5.9):

'I have never been hugely interested in crime writing ... but I was very interested in the intersection between crime and socio-political elements as explored by Attica Locke. Her lecture was stupendous and painted 'crime writing' in an entirely new - and much more appealing - light'.

'I intend to introduce Attica's ideas to my creative writing crime fiction students (adult ed. level).'

In 2020, organisers responded to COVID-19 by producing an event that took place entirely online. During September 2020 the online version of the Festival had 5421 attendees (via listening, streaming, online workshops), compared with 2829 in 2019. Attendance by under 45's grew from 21% to 32% and international audiences were up from 2% to 28%. 61% of those who booked online were new to the festival. The Festival was praised for its accessibility, with those surveyed commenting that for *'people like me on low or no income'* and *'no childcare'*, *'online accessible events made this brilliant'*. Further feedback noted that *'writers involved in these events are more*

diverse and less mainstream than writers I've seen at other festivals'. It was 'responsive to our current social situation', and after attending they 'plan to read more crime by African American writers'. And, 'I am thinking about how I can teach a seminar on crime writing' (5.9).

Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Noirwich Crime Writing Festival has brought cultural and economic activity off campus and into the heart of the city of Norwich with benefits to residents, through free events, and to local businesses, through increased trade and tourism. For example (5.8):

- An estimated additional GBP132,000 was spent by ticket holders in the city in 2019.
- The Festival has contributed GBP524,000 in visitor spend to the city's economy since launch.
- Norfolk County Council's reports on economic impact estimate that Noirwich brought GBP200,000 of additional visitor spend over its first three years, including at least GBP10,000 to booksellers; the overall figure increased by up to 37% year-on-year.

Archive Donations: Industry recognition and support for future writers

Noirwich has transformed the perception of crime writing by giving it a home in higher education. Writers and their estates have donated archives to UEA to support future research and practice, which now is the largest crime writing archive in a British university. In 2018, [text removed for publication], who has sold more than 100 million books and was a judge of the 2020 Booker Prize, donated his crime writing archive worth approximately USD2,000,000 to UEA's British Archive for Contemporary Writing to support research and practice in the genre. [text removed for publication] wrote of his donation (5.1):

'All my life I have known UEA as "the writers' university", but what has been especially gratifying is its wholehearted embrace of crime fiction as a serious and valuable form of expression. The work and research being done in my field at UEA is extensive, its teaching is high quality, and its dedicated festival is one of the best in the world. For all these reasons it was a very easy decision to put my archive in UEA's care. I hope future generations of crime writers will find some inspiration there'.

Biographer [text removed for publication], a visiting writer at the archive, accessed [text removed for publication] editorial correspondences which provided *'unique insight into the way big publishing actually works'* for her authorised biography of [text removed for publication]. (5.2)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Author's testimony regarding archive donation, details, website, and press coverage.
- 5.2 Archive Testimonials (Visiting Writer; PhD Student).
- 5.3 Pedagogy Data (Enrolment Crime Writing MA, BA modules, online courses, workshops) and Testimony from Senior Lecturer, English, University of Dundee.
- 5.4 Guardian review of *Blood Orange* by MA Crime Writing graduate.
- 5.5 Pedagogy Testimonials (MA student).
- 5.6 Festival Audience Survey Data 2015-19.
- 5.7 Festival Industry Testimonials (CEO National Centre for Writing; Independent Publisher; Historical Crime Writer; Department Store Book Buyer).
- 5.8 Festival Financial Data and Projections 2014-2023 (devised pre-Covid).
- 5.9 Festival 2020 (COVID-19) Audience Survey and Attendance and Online Engagement Data.
- 5.10 Festival Arts Council England Assessment (2017).