

## *Call for Papers*

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### *Workshop*

## *Between Deviance and Marginalization Gendered Perspectives on Transnational Crime*

Date: 26-28 October 2022

Place: Universität Erfurt, Erfurt, Thüringen, Germany

Deadline: 13 May 2022

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In an interview in 2015, the warden of the Whatton prison complex called the gaol a ‘great leveller’, arguing that ‘we’ve got everybody here that you could imagine.’ Yet criminality and justice are deeply affected by, and are understood through the lenses of, significant inequalities, across race, class, gender, and sexual lines. Indeed, it is these inequalities that often foster a public fascination with crime and criminals, leading to intensive discussions about social and gender norms. Conversely, these processes also allow historians to engage with the ways in which certain social groups make sense of the world, as well as their life experiences and conditions, whose meaning and agency are downplayed or ignored in other sources. For instance, when in 1928 Raquel Liberman walked into the police commissioner’s office in Buenos Aires it was the beginning of an extensive trial on prostitution, trafficking and an organization of pimps, madams and brothel owners. Her testimony was reiterated in the Spanish, Yiddish, and English press, that printed stories about abducted young women and the horrors of “white slavery”. Crucially, the trial produced sources that enable historians to tell the story of women between sex work and migration. Criminal cases, court proceedings, and police files that bear witness not only to the (everyday) interactions of these actors but also to the public interest in the same, are at the heart of this workshop.

We are interested in how gender and transnational crime are staged, depicted, negotiated, and discussed within police files, court trials, and transnational media. This vast array of material acts as classical sources in social history and history from below in order to examine social connections and relationships. They not only enable us to learn about crime, conflicts, and criminal justice, but can be seen as evidence of labour conditions, migration, family relations, the history of the body or everyday life. Further, crime generates a large body of media coverage. Since the end of the 19th century, mass media with their “faits divers” and sensationalist (illustrated) stories on crime, that helped in attaining a large and often transnational circulation, emerged. The spectacle of the courtroom drama was paralleled by trials within the courts of public opinion. Policework thus became not only interesting but sensational. Singular cases served as anchor points for debates about norms, deviance, the socially acceptable and “the abnormal”. It is thus intersecting practices *and* discourses that can be examined through the lens of police files and court records and the different sources that come with them.

We are especially interested in the transnational dimensions of police investigation, court proceedings and crime: On the one hand this refers to the border crossing actions, or connections and experiences of the actors involved. We aim at understanding via police files and court cases the global mobility and contacts of people who have not produced other sources. On the other, we are interested in the public perception of border crossing criminality or deviance. We ask how the analysis of crime cases can not only reveal the changing nature of justice, but also differences between regions, states, and societies on a global scale: They not only show what these societies considered new, noteworthy, outrageous or spectacular at a certain point or during a certain period, but they also served as anchor points for transnational (comparative) debates on gender and crime. We are thus interested in two axes:

### *Gendered images of perpetrators and victims*

Articles on crime, police investigation and trials were considered glimpses into the (transnational) underworld, populated by vagabonds, whores, pimps, thieves and murderers or as unique insight into the abyss of the mysterious human behaviour. In that sense they reveal a lot about gender roles and the understanding of sexuality. Single cases could be used for discussing broader questions about “typical” male, female or (other) queer behaviour. Some crimes situated themselves in the public consciousness as “men’s crimes”, others restricted largely (or mostly) to women, and “deviant” gender performances were often seen as “explanations” for a crime. Media and police not only produced highly gendered images of perpetrators, but also of “typical” victims: Further, victims of crime were also frequently judged according to their gender or sexual identities: gay- and trans-panic defences still exist in a number of places around the world, often painting queer victims of violence as responsible for their own suffering; women are frequently counselled as to how to dress and act in public. The interpretation of a person’s gender or sexuality therefore formed an integral aspect of how a perpetrator or a victim is supposed to be seen by the criminal justice system, and indeed the broader public. The authenticity of victimhood, for example, was established in the discourse emerging around 1900 of young, bourgeois and virgin women who were in constant danger of becoming “white slaves.” In court, especially in trials on sexual assault and rape, elements of behaviour were and are still expected to be performed to an unspoken standard in order to be believed.

We are interested in representations of crime that circulated in the public at large, and the narrative strategies of newspapers, theatre plays, novels, television, film, and other media for presenting and explaining gendered crimes within a transnational context. How did articles on spectacular or daily cases portray criminal women, men, and those of other genders outside this binary? How did they depict their gender or sexuality? What kind of conclusions did they draw from the perpetrators or victims’ gender (performance) in these single cases and how did they link them to broader tropes of gender- and sexual specific roles or “characters”? Public representation of single crime cases is thus always about norms and shows how societies discuss and seek to understand crimes, the “normal” and the deviant. Using a media historical approach, we want to investigate temporal continuities and geographical transfers of these narratives and images.

We are also interested in how these images were linked to criminological and police knowledge production and were discussed in a broader transnational context. How were these sorts of depictions used by police forces and how did they determine their actions? Hence, (visual) knowledge about what a criminal ‘looks like’, with specific gender markers, was important for police work in different periods. Their “Verbrecherbilder” were influenced by public opinion but were also perpetuated through police work and the public perception of trials.

### *Gendered crimes, criminalization and living conditions*

We are further interested in the possibilities court and police files offer for analysing the lives of people who haven’t left many sources, their gender roles and sexualities. These sources show not only the gendered

images of the actors involved in the criminal justice system, but also the conditions in which men, women or (other) queer people lived: the possibilities, the rationales they had, the particular challenges, struggles or dangers they faced. Economic precarity favoured illegal abortions or child murder for example, accepted forms of violence such as conflicts about masculinity and honour encouraged bodily injuries and femicides and sexual assault happen(ed) more often in patriarchal societies. Whereas certain crimes or deviant practices tend to be specific to certain genders, or are expected to be (i.e. infanticide, domestic violence, sexual assault, or indeed modes of crime; poisoning, for instance, was long considered a near-exclusively female means of murder), others show hidden logics when analysed with regard to their gendered implications: How can the analysis of these crimes tell us about different gendered labour conditions, rights, or access to resources in different parts of the world and the (transnational) strategies, such as migration strategies, of people dealing with these circumstances?

Finally, the role of gender within the context of criminality is also demonstrated in the case of hate crimes, motivated by misogyny, homophobia, or transphobia. Different practices such as burning witches or marital rape were not always considered crimes but depended on the status of women in different societies, conceptions of sexual consent or sexuality itself: This fact had a massive effect on the lives of women, whose sexuality was thus controlled through the criminal law. We therefore ask how these judicial norms shaped the everyday lives of possible victims of hate crimes. We are also interested in how judicial norms and concepts of hate crimes evolved at certain times and circulated internationally with changing gender roles and moral ideas of sexuality

### *Workshop particulars*

We welcome contributions that present transnational case studies and deal with questions about how media produced “sensations of crime and gender” or that reveal social aspects of crime and gender through the analysis of police and court files. We are especially interested in analyses of global circulation, networks, and perceptions, which centre the actors as active figures of agency. Given our focus on gender and crime, we especially welcome proposals that challenge the standard binary normativities of gender. Early career researchers are especially encouraged to contribute. We especially invite papers and presenters whose research explores areas underrepresented in the academe of the Global North and Western Europe. Though we anticipate many contributions concerning the broadly-defined era of modern history, we also welcome proposals from early modern history.

We therefore seek abstracts of approximately 300 words, as well as a short biography of the presenter (including name, pronouns, contact details, and institutional affiliation if appropriate) by **Friday 13 May 2022**, to be forwarded to the workshop conveners (Dr. Sarah Frenking; Dr. Bodie A. Ashton) at [sarah.frenking@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:sarah.frenking@uni-erfurt.de) and [bodie.ashton@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:bodie.ashton@uni-erfurt.de). We anticipate notifying you of acceptance by **Friday 27 May 2022**. We ask presenters to plan for presentations of 15 minutes and ask that papers be prepared and circulated prior to the workshop, for which we ask that they be forwarded to us by **Friday 30 September 2022**. The workshop will take place at the Universität Erfurt on **Wednesday 26 October through to Friday 28 October 2022**.

The workshop language will primarily be **English**, but there will be the possibility of spontaneous translation (short summaries e.g.) in **German** or **French** in order to enable the lively participation in the discussion. **Accommodation for two nights in Erfurt will be fully funded** through the auspices of the Volkswagen-Stiftung Freigeist research project “The Other Global Germany: Transnational Criminality and Deviant Globalisation in Germany”. Limited funding is available to offset travel costs to and from Erfurt. Where possible, in accordance with our ecological responsibilities, we ask that workshop attendees commute by train rather than air.