

YOU ARE THE KILLER!

The Giallo Tradition of Romance,
Violence, Hedonism and Bad Taste

Online Conference

May 7, 2025

9 am to 5 pm - Porto, Portugal

Keynote speaker: Alexandra Heller-Nicholas



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CITCEM
CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO TRANSDISCIPLINAR
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Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia



FLUP FACULDADE DE LETRAS
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

You Are the Killer:

The Giallo Tradition of Romance, Violence, Hedonism and Bad Taste

The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of a genre in Italian cinema that celebrated gratuitous sex, grotesque characters, garish set design, vibrant colors, cheesy music, farfetched narrative arcs and, above all, ornate and perplexing murder scenes. That genre was the giallo, which took a cue from the pulp magazines of the same name. At once romantic and grotesque, giallo films stand out from other crime flicks because they oftentimes try to foster an explicit connection (through POV shots, for example) between the act of viewing and that of killing, the spectator and the murderer. Said analogy is of course not exclusive to giallo cinema (one has only to think of such classics as *Peeping Tom* or *Psycho*), but one might say that the genre overindulges the morbid pleasure of identifying with a monster, prompting the question of whether we are as innocent as think we are: could we too be led to commit a violent crime? Why or under what circumstances? And anyway why do we enjoy watching violent acts being committed on screen?

Initially dismissed as a streak of sleazy and very derivative horror thrillers, giallo films have since overcome this reputation, emerging as a highly influential genre celebrated for its distinctive style and unique contributions to cinematic language. As Martin Scorsese once remarked about Mario Bava's 1964 *Blood and Black Lace* – a sentiment that we are here extending to the giallo genre as a whole –, “[it is] an incredible moment for cinema”. These are films that, not in spite of but precisely because of their narrative incoherence and visual eccentricity, can provide us with experiences that other, perhaps more "serious" films, simply cannot offer.

Indeed, the giallo might have emerged from popular literature – in pulp magazines and the libri gialli from the Mondadori series – but it was cinema that established the giallo as an independent genre. Nevertheless, the “yellow” novels – many of which were of Anglo-Saxon provenance – already contained complex plots, sometimes gruesome murders, suspense, and psychological tension. It was assumed by the Mondadori editors that a series of this kind would not require “great linguistic or stylistic sophistication”, but it did need “lively translations which can be read easily and with pleasure” (according to Jane Dunnet in *The Emergence of a New Literary Genre in*

Interwar Italy). Such vivid translations and descriptions endowed these novels with a visual, graphic quality that made the giallo a genre that appeals to cinema. Similarly, and sometimes even more so than the text itself, the eroticism and the stylized violence featured in giallo films can be found in Mondadori book covers. In that sense, the giallo can be approached in various ways, that is, not only through cinema but also crime fiction and visual culture.

We invite participants to explore such topics as:

- The dark side of the human mind: why do people kill and is there anything special about "the mind of the murderer"? Why are gruesome, excessively violent crimes committed? What is the connection between pleasure and murder?
- Fantasy, fairy tales and the supernatural in giallo cinema;
- The influence of Italian giallo on horror, thriller and crime films around the world;
- Homages and pastiche in contemporary cinema and literature;
- Defining Giallo: a generic term in Literature, a genre in Cinema. Disparities and affinities between Italian crime fiction, *Il libri gialli* and Giallo movies
- How crime fiction (Italian and otherwise) played a role in shaping the giallo film genre, due to its themes, style and narrative techniques;
- The translation, distribution and reception of giallo novels outside of Italy;
- Giallo imagery: the impact of visual culture, such as pulp magazines, the distinctive Mondadori covers and film posters, on the identification of a literary and cinematic genre;
- Is there giallo literature today and, if not, have other genres taken its place?

Organizers:

João Paulo Guimarães (ILCML, University of Porto)

Joana Isabel Duarte (CITCEM, University of Porto)

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Scientific Committee:

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Keynote Speaker:

Alexandra Heller-Nichols (Deakin University, Australia)

Conference Date: May 7, 2025 (via Zoom, for presenters / streamed on Facebook)

There is no registration fee. Proposals for papers should include the title of the paper, an abstract of 250 words, a short bio note, and contact details.

The deadline for submitting abstracts is March 7, 2025.

Please submit your abstract proposals to these email addresses indicating 'CFP Giallo':
guimaraesjpc@gmail.com, joanaisabelfduarte@gmail.com, and andre.assis.almeida@gmail.com.