In the Anglophone literary climate publishers are often reluctant to ‘advertise’ the foreignness of translated literature. Concerns over the commercial viability of the foreign are often cited, and a fluent, transparent translation style tends to be favoured (Venuti’s ‘translator’s invisibility’). In the case of contemporary Italian fiction, the publication and sales of translations are far outstripped by the commercial success of crime fiction set in Italy but written in English by British or North American authors including Donna Leon, Michael Dibdin, Magdalen Nabb and Tobias Jones. Inscribed by different cultures, languages and genres, such works are written from outside the culture in which they are set, and largely for a non-Italian audience, yet the authors are people with considerable knowledge of Italian culture, who use particular strategies to articulate an Italian ‘other’ for Anglophone audiences. Indeed, the subgenre some affinities with travel writing in that it ‘translates’ an exotic culture for outsiders. Drawing on Carol O’Sullivan’s analysis of such novels as examples of pseudotranslation, I explore the way they use Italian language and culture to create an Italian milieu, while at the same time exploiting the comforting familiarity of an English name on the front cover and a known and trusted detective protagonist who serves almost as a tourist guide for the Anglophone reader. I also explore the extent to which the stylistic and linguistic freedom afforded some Anglophone ‘ambassadors’ of Italian-set crime fiction might be extended to translators who wish to imbue their work with a strong sense of place and of linguistic otherness.

Brigid Maher is Lecturer in Italian Studies at La Trobe University. Her research interests include literary translation, the translation and circulation of crime fiction, contemporary Italian literature and society, transnational literature, humour studies, and film and comics translation. She is also a published literary translator, having translated into English four novels by the acclaimed Sardinian novelist Milena Agus and one by Nicola Lagioia.

Presented by
School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

Enquiries
Colette.Gilmour@anu.edu.au

This lecture is free and all are welcome

Please visit our website for further information: sill.anu.edu.au/

CRICOS #00120C