

Landscape in detective fiction. A view of Julian Symmons's *Thirty First of February* and *The Players and the Game*, P.D. James's *Shroud for a Nightingale* and Sarah Dunant's *Under my Skin*

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Resumen

El ensayo estudia el paisaje y la descripción de mundo natural en la novela policíaca, prestando atención, brevemente, a la evolución del género y analizando más específicamente tres autores que hemos conocido personalmente: Julian Symmons, P.D. James y Sarah Dunant, citando sus propias palabras, cuando sea necesario, en referencia a la novela policíaca. Hemos seleccionado como material para nuestro análisis, de Julian Symmons, *Thirty First of February* y *The Players and the Game*, de P.D. James *Shroud for a Nightingale*, y de Sarah Dunant *Under my Skin*. Nuestra conclusión es que lejos de ser meramente ornamental, los paisajes en estas narrativas tienen todos ellos las tres funciones básicas de: conectar al lector al mundo religioso, mágico, misterioso, desconocido; conectar al lector al género literario y conectar al lector a la vida diaria de sueño y realidad, de felicidad y tristeza, de trabajo y sufrimiento, de amor y muerte.

Palabras clave: paisaje, naturaleza, novela policíaca.

Abstract

The essay studies landscape and description of natural world in detective narrative, paying attention briefly to the evolution of the genre, and dealing more specifically with three authors we have met personally: Julian Symmons, P.D. James and Sarah Dunant, quoting their own words, when necessary, in reference to detective narrative. We have selected as material for our analysis, Julian Symmons's, *Thirty First of February* and *The Players and the Game*, P.D. James's *Shroud for a Nightingale*, and Sarah Dunant's *Under my Skin*. Our conclusion is that far from being merely ornamental, landscapes in these detective narratives have all of them the three basic functions of connecting the reader to the religious, magical, mysterious, unknown world; connecting the reader to the literary

genre and connecting the reader to the daily life of dream and fact, of happiness and sadness, of work and suffering, of love and death.

Keywords: landscape, Natural world, detective narrative.

I

D. J. Enright in his poem "Paradise Illustrated: A sequence" displays an ironic description of the interplay between God and Adam naming the creatures and plants of the Garden of Eden. God called Adam and Eve and asked them to *name* all the things and creatures:

I

"Come!" spoke the Almighty to Adam.
"There's work to do, even in Eden."

"I want to see what you'll call them,"
The Lord said. "It's a good day for it."
"And take your thumb out of your mouth,"
He added. (Adam was missing his mother.)

So they shuffled past, or they hopped,
Or they waddled. The beasts of the field
And the fowls of the air,
Pretending not to notice him.

"Speak up now," said the Lord God briskly.
"Give each and every one the name thereof."

"Fido," said Adam, thinking hard,
As the animals went past him one by one,
"Bambi", "Harpy", "Pooh",
"Incitatus", "Acidosis", "Apparat",
"Krafft-Ebing", "Indo-China", "Schnorkel",
"Buggins", "Bollock" -

"Bullock will do," said the Lord God, "I like it.
The rest are rubbish. You must try again tomorrow."

I don't think I have invented it but there is another story to the effect that it was Eve who named the flowers. Adam suggested it.

God created from Chaos an ordered world, a world which has all the basic elements of any landscape but He demanded from man and woman the effort to name all its parts and to be a part of it. Then, there is a distinction between the universal, archetypal landscape and the personal landscape to write our private and singular narrative, different for Adam and for Eve. Once they both did not obey the commandment and ate from the forbidden tree, landscape turns to have a religious meaning and all the actions, reactions, sins and punishments refer to this symbolic way of life. From now on in the Bible we will find these two different perspectives in landscape, the real, natural, even historical journey of man/woman through visible with our senses landscape, and the allegorical, symbolic, inner landscape.

If we turn to Classical tradition, we can clearly state that Greek and Latin authors have a point of reference in landscape, and with landscape classical writers show their permanent relationship between man/poet and known and unknown world. In Vergil and Ovid, for instance, we see how they express their individual state of affairs, their feelings and fears in *The Eclogues*, the former and in *Tristes*, the latter. In both writers we appreciate two different perspectives which express “real world” in two different levels: the daily life and the fictional, “literary” level. Consequently we have two different landscapes, or we may say two different views of the same landscape. The physical description which have all the elements we saw in the book of Genesis, the forest, the birds, the cattle, the sea, the storm, the light, the darkness, etc., and the psychological description full of happiness and beatitude in Vergil and full of anxiety and fear in Ovid. In fact both quotations build up a literary pattern of landscape to which we can refer, and indeed do it, when we want to define, in Literature, character, plot and mood, among other things. So we see how both in the Bible and in the Classical references the archetypal landscape is a way and means of interpreting life, but also literature and art.

Even more important is that the study of the literature and its relationship to landscape and Nature must take into account those references that present not only recognition, but also mediation. The ideological critique unveils the ways in which the use of the landscape masks or forgets social and political aspects. On the other hand the intellectual history has sought the property of various forms of landscape to express a given historical period. When these periods are critical the writers and artists favor or are opposed to the renovations or to the revolutions using landscape to show the effects in the rural scene. Criticism has gone from seeking formal unit, thematic resolution and coherence, to discover fissures and discontinuities in literature and its relationship to landscape.

"Suspicious" and "ideological" criticism has reconceived the social role of art and of interpretation. At the moment, we are not going to deal with those topics since it is the literary genre what is our main subject of study.¹

II

Literary genre has its conventions and set of rules, and forces us to accept as plausible and adequate to the genre specific aspects of the narrative, among them, landscapes. Deviation from those generic rules arose either a reinterpretation or a rejection of that genre. The historians locate the Golden Age of the police genre between the beginnings of the 20th century and the World War II. Certainly because in that period are found the most relevant and canonical novelists, but I would dare to assert that it was at the end of that century and facing a new millennium when the popularity of this genre, of science fiction and mystery fiction reached their highest levels. The answer may be that through these genres, anxiety, dread, search of the truth before the unknown is better expressed.

Every literary expression is a response to some needs and social conditions, individual and historical of the era in which appears and the form that adopts reflects, in some way, the form that the society, the individual and the historical propose for their own consolidation. The search of justice, the repair of the wrong and the restitution of welfare and order are the aims that the humanity has pursued from its beginning, therefore the release of the sense of guilt, the sensation of being innocent allow us to approach with more easiness and without scare to our particular and collective destiny. If we had to explain briefly the path and development of the detective novel, as literary genre, we would have to make it fixing our attention upon its three basic features: the effect, the intrigue or plot and the detective character. In the first stage of the genre, even when "what is detective fiction" is known without having appeared the narrative genre as such the importance of the extension is reduced, is compressed, making it to turn around the effect and the plot.

In a second phase plot is stressed and widen, the suspense is introduced, the development of the action, the Gothic environment, the profile of the central character, the detective and everything that surrounds the inquiry process are paid more attention. In this second phase the detective character seems more central, individualised and singular, though if we compare Sherlock Holmes and Henri Poirot, we will see that, finally, they are prototypes, with a special idiosyncrasy, it is true, but having similar mental and physical

¹ See our essay: "Landscape and description natural world in Chaucer". *Selim* 8. 1998. 77-90.

qualities, abilities to observe and discover things, details, to recall names and accidents, that surpass the customary capacities that the middle reader possesses, or so is made him to believe.

The definitive building of the genre and its narrative elements that specify it as a genre, on the one hand, and that allow us to recognise it and to distinguish it from fantastic, science fiction or terror and horror literature, on the other, comes in the last stage. And this occurs in the first half of the 20th century, the Golden Age of the detective novel. There is a coming back, in many cases, to the effect as the main strategy for the reader, to the resource of the surprise without neglecting the intrigue. Sometimes the narrative framework is "naturalised" - if we may say so -, desmitifying the detective character and approaching him or her to the ordinary qualities and capacities of the reader giving him or her a certain "naiveté" and romantic halo, as lieutenant Colombo, who shares with the reader the hardships of a difficult daily life. It is as saying: we all carry a detective inside or any circumstance and environment is suitable for detective action. This is the kind of narrative Sarah Dunant, this colloquialism, daily life and post-modern fragmentation, this is the "naiveté" and romanticism she uses in her feminine detective, Hannah Wolfe.

I would like to go back to something I have mentioned before: The Gothic environment and remark the importance of "setting" in detective narrative. Poe in *The Philosophy of Composition* after having explained and discussed effect and rhythm says talking about his poem "The Raven":

(...) it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space (sic) is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident: - it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place. (878)

It is true that the concept of "locale" for Poe means not only landscape, but also any space be it enclosed or open, but it is something that he remarks as unavoidable in order to make clear the effect, the tone, the plot.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber. (878)

The 19th century literature, both in England and United States, was seminal to the development of many generic forms usually known as subgenera: mystery, terror, horror, philosophical and detective novel. Writers such as Wilkie Collins in England, and Hawthorne and Poe in America were clearly the initiators of detective novel, but it was

19th century writers at large with its mixture of romanticism and realism who gave definite shape to the peculiar elements in the landscape of most of those subgenera: Nature opposed to Town; enclosed space opposed to open space; night vs day; dark vs light; old ruined mansions, cemeteries, etc. Here we are in the generic landscape.

III

Julian Symmons, P.D. James and Sarah Dunant represent three different approaches to this kind of narrative, but the three of them, in one way or another are aware of the rule defined by Poe, that the “locale”, the setting, the landscape frames the plot, the character and the mood, and sometimes defines action and person.

Julian Symmons was born and died in London (1912-1994). In his lifetime he collected a vast bibliography about all the fields of knowledge, of literary, political and social thought. Relevant poet in the 30s, literary reviewer, historian, essayist, journalist, founding and publisher of magazines, collections and literary anthologies, personal friend of George Orwell and W.H. Auden, teacher and visitor in numerous literary encounters all around the world, at the end of his days remained classified and well known as writer of detective novels. The same as Shakespeare he only attended public school and did not have university studies; the same as Shakespeare he used the genre to reveal the truth. In Symmons’s words:

The thing that absorbs me most in our age is the violence behind respectable faces, the civil servant planning how to kill Jews most efficiently, the judge speaking with passion about the need for capital punishment, the quite, obedient boy who kills for fun. These are extreme cases, but if you want to show the violence that lives behind the bland faces most of us present to the world, what better vehicle can you have than the crime novel? (Omnibus, Introduction)

Julian Symmons made it clear when he was in Alcalá that although he liked to introduce in his detective novels some humorous incidents nevertheless his aim was to use this kind of narrative as “ a social comment...about the nature of British civilization” (*British Writers*, 143). Then he quoted Auden:

According to Auden the most satisfying detective stories are those set in idyllic conditions, preferably rural, so that the corpse appears as shockingly out of place as when a dog makes a mess on a drawing room carpet. They contain, he says, the magical quality of easing our sense of guilt. We live under - this is Auden and not me - and in fact we accept the rule of law, but what we are looking for in the ritual of the detective story through which the person whose guilt is presumed proves to be not guilty, and the person who appeared outside the circle of suspicion turns

out to be guilty, is an escape from reality and the return, Auden says, to imagined primal innocence, where we can know love as love and not as the law. (British Writers, 146)

Then we can state that in detective narratives interact three kind of perceptions or appreciations in landscape: The literary/generic, the religious-magical and the natural world of our daily life.

Yet the first thing that we notice in Julian Symons's *The Thirty First of February* (1950) is that there are no landscapes, neither at the beginning nor at the end of the novel. On the other hand, much of the plot happens in London, and Anderson, the main character, lives in a poor quarter of the town though at the back of Buckingham Palace. The mention of the palace, nevertheless, may bring us the memory of a specific park in the city and so refer to a kind of enclosed landscape, a man-made landscape. Mr. Anderson works in an advertising agency and most of the intrigue and suspense turns around and is linked to his goings and comings, ups and downs in his job. The first landscape we have in the narrative frames Anderson's childhood and again the description of it has the characteristics of man-made: small garden at the front of the house, even smaller at the back. The father, who worked as a gardener for a rich family living in Wimbledon Common, was always imagining that their little-well-looked-after garden was equal in beauty and grandeur to that of his employers. Anderson's grandmother ironically puts things right when comparing both places mocking Anderson's father's garden. This false perception shows and creates in Anderson's character a double personality. On the one hand, a clear and straightforward professional attitude, good for business; on the other, insecure and shy in private attitudes, always afraid and scare of the others.

Landscape here helps us to identify the character, and the running away from the natural and familiar landscape carries him/her to the urban landscape. These two frames crash and contrast in Anderson's personality.

Other times just one detail helps to change thoroughly the landscape and takes us to a symbolic world that removes us from reality and introduces us into the religious and fictional archetype. When Anderson, at the end of the story, is being harassed by the suspicion of the fact that his wife's death was not accidental, but provoked, he finds himself in front of two symbolic landscapes. The first comes when he is having a walk around in London and feels his head wet. He thinks that it is blood, but realises that it is a fine rain. Blood would be the sign of guilt, the water is the symbol of purification, as in the Bible. In the second, almost at the end of the novel Anderson enters a cinema. The movie is

about gangsters and the protagonists are Benny Bailey and Lucy Lalange. The open landscape with roads, trees and cliffs, fit for an ambush and the body struggle between gangster and detective with the sea at the background are two familiar images of the literary genre. Nature frames the action of destroying the wrong. There is thus a shock between reality and fiction, and landscape is outlined as a means of evasion and fled from the reality.

In his second novel, *The Players and the Game* (1972), Julian Symons structures the plot in connection with the months of the year encased in the formula of a diary. In this way the general framework of the history is the seasonal process from spring, in the month of March, to summer, in the month of June. The season points, consequently, at a generic landscape even though it is not mentioned. As we saw in the previous novel, the identity of the families are known through places and environments that presume, though are not described, specific landscapes. The Dowlings live in an Edwardian style house in the small town of Rawley. The Services next to Bay Trees - the name is in itself a landscape - "in a road full of trees". The sanatorium, "in a vast Victorian field house to which one can get by a sinuous road with oaks", defines Hatford, a rare and authoritative character, and his family, his confined and ill wife. The writer is seeking the contrast between what is beautiful, the landscape, and what is ugly, the disease.

The natural world does not appear with profusion and abundance in the novels that we are commenting. In this last, however, it calls our attention that the finding of the first victim happens in a rural landscape described in detail as "a peaceful countryside", "a typical place in the South of England", "a plain with green fields on both sides", "a highway with hedges on both sides, with some wild flowers perfuming the air that leads to an abandoned little house. All this is in clear contrast with the "loneliness of the road", the isolation of the place, and the death in the house. From here on all the victims are found in ancient houses, ruined, forgotten and in the middle of the field, reinforcing, thus, the opposition open-enclosed. In the last victim it appears the persistent combination between the season/spring-the month/june-the day of the week/Sunday-the part of the day/the night- and the weather/raining and wet. The landscape defines not only to the characters, but also the atmosphere of the narrative, and even the narrative itself.

* * * *

P.D. James was born in Oxford in 1920 and educated in the Girls' High School in Cambridge. Her vast production as detective novel writer, goes together with an active public life that begins in the Second World War where she worked as a nurse in the Red Cross. It has worked in the Regional Hospital Board of London, in the police department of the Ministry of the Interior and it has been Judge of Peace in Willesden, London, something that recalls us to Henry Fielding. She has been chairwoman of the Authors Society and from 1988 is Chairwoman of the Arts Council Literature Advisory Panel. Her working experience is reflected in the development of plots within enclosed communities: a hospital in *Shroud for a Nightingale* (1971), a religious refuge for handicapped in *The Black Tower* (1975), a psychiatric clinic in *A Mind to Murder* (1967), a forensic laboratory in *Death of an Expert Witness* (1977), a nuclear station in *Devices and Desires* (1990). With her first police novel "Cover Her Face" 1966, James presents us to the first of her detectives the commander Adam Dalgliesh, who shows a conventional personality and style and that will be followed by Miss Cordelia Gray and by inspector Kate Miskin. James though skilful in the development of plot and intrigue pays much attention to characterisation, to topics such as truth, faith, responsibility and justice, and to setting and landscape

"Setting is very important in any work of fiction, but it is very important in any detective story, in any crime novels. First the setting creates the atmosphere of the book, and the atmosphere of horror, of murders, of terror, of loneliness. If you can create that horror and loneliness through contrast, for instance, if a place is particularly beautiful and peaceful, then the horror of the murder is the greater....Setting influences plot and it can influence character..." Finally when setting is rooted in a recognised place it affects not only to our credibility, but also to our sense of terror ...even in this place which I know so well, even on this familiar territory, I don't feel safe".²

P.D. James's novel, *Shroud for a Nitghingale* (1971), opens with a reference to a murder before it has happened. Muriel Beale, inspector of Nurse Schools, is about to visit John Carpendar Hospital in Heatheringfield, in the limit between Sussex and Hampshire, a Georgian style village, provincial and dull. The hospital property enclosed by a wall is at the end of high street which is flanked by an avenue with elms on both sides. It is raining. Inside the walls and in the middle of a mixture of an untidy forest, a formal garden and a

²Extract from the talk she gave to the students on the annual program "British Writers in Alcalá" sponsored by the British Council in Madrid and the English Department at the University. The talk was recorded with the permission of the author. (1992-1993).

chunk of green is the building. To a side of the central building is The Nightingale House, Nurses School. To get there, there is a narrow road

(...) banked high on each side with sodden leaves so that there was barely room for the single car. Everywhere was dampness and desolation. The trees grew close to the path and knitted themselves above it, ribbing the dark tunnel with their strong black boughs. From time to time a gust of wind brought down a spatter of raindrops on the car roof or flattened a falling leaf against the windscreen. The grass verge was carred with flower beds, regular and oblong as graves and spiked with stunted blushes (SN 15-16).

Later on, when she faces the school building is surprised by

(...) an extraordinary house, an immense Victorian edifice of red brick, castellated and ornate to the point of fancy, and crowned with four immense turrets. It was brightly lit in the dark January morning and after the gloom of the road it blazed at her like a castle from some childhood mythology. An immense conservatory was grafted onto the right side of the house..." (SN 16)

In the tradition of Agatha Christie, P. D. James has a precise and thoughtful narrative and descriptive technique. The characters, less artificial than those of Agatha Christie, always are found inside a landscape. This landscape is part of a whole, of a setting, of a space and answers to the need of the plot and its incidents. However, instead of a landscape we should talk in this novel of *the* landscape, central and structural for everything else. We see its description places the reader in the appropriate atmosphere and tone: narrow and sinuous road, desolation, darkness, dread, fear, graves, etc. All the elements collaborate to create the vision of what is fantastic with reference to childhood mythology. And one of the sides of what is fantastic/childish comes accompanied by horror, mystery, the unknown, the fear, the terror. That is to say, what is Gothic. We are in *the* place.

After that the first murder comes and the storm thunders and the wind becomes the central character. The night of the 28th to the 29th of February everybody remembers the darkness and the terror, and the landscape, once again, is identified with those feelings

It was a night of violent but erratic storm, the wind varying in intensity and even in direction from hour to hour. At ten o'clock it was little more than a sobbing obligatio among the elms. An hour later it suddenly reached a crescendo of fury. The great elms around Nightingale House cracked and groaned under the onslaught, while the wind screamed among them like the cachinnation of devils. Along the deserted paths, the banks of dead leaves, still heavy with rain, shifted

sluggishly then broke apart into drifts and rose in wild swirls like demented insects, to glue themselves at the top of the hospital.

But shortly before midnight the storm abated, as if sensing the approach of the witching hour, the dead of the night when the pulse of man beats slowest and the dying patient slips most easily into the last oblivion. There was an eerie silence for about five minutes, succeeded by a soft rhythmic moaning as the wind swooped and sighed among the trees as if exhausted by its own fury” (SN 43).

Except by detective Adam Dalgliesh’s quick trip in London, the rest of the story develops in this basic and archetypal landscape. Here the evidences of the crimes are hidden, here the reflections of the detective arise, here the murderer is hidden and here he attacks. A slight reference, a memory of one of the suspects and one of the victims, Jo Fallon to Ventnor beach in the Isle of Wight, place of happiness and love, it is not enough to break through the pressure of this suffocating environment (SN 295). And when all ends the fire destroys it all, including the landscape. It is the solution to recover light and freedom; it is the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one: the idea of regeneration. So when Mrs Beale comes back a second time to survey the place everything is new and different, “an unfamiliar face, a new youngish porter” receives her at the entrance gate. Then

She drove down the familiar path between the parched summer lawns, the flower beds blotched with overblown roses, and turned into the green tunnel of the trees. The air was still and warm, the narrow road chequered with the first bright sunlight of the day” (SN 299).

* * * *

Sarah Dunant following Liza Cody and Joan Smith, checks the paper of woman in the police novels, and creates a character, Hannah Wolfe, who from being a normal woman with a normal job is transformed into a detective who, in *Birth Marks* (1992), investigates the disappearance of a ballerina, in *Fatlands* (1994), finds the responsible for an attempt and, in *Under my Skin* (1995), solves the funny sabotages, with tragic end, of a beauty centre. In this double questioning the "risk," says Sarah, "is that, sometimes, we invert the myth instead of subvert it." She stated, when she was in Alcala, three important characteristics in her detective narrative. First she believed that “all detective narrative is about moral facts. It is about good guys and bad guys. It is about order broken apart by murder and order put back together again by the detective who is a kind of god figure”. Second she declared herself closer to American detective novelists as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell

Hammet than to Agatha Christie and the British writers of the early 20s, she said: “the other thing about R. Chandler as opposed to A. Christie was that Chandler was writing about real life. A. Christie was writing about a period of British history which was almost frozen...When you went to R. Chandler and read about the sleazy but glamorous world of Los Angeles in the 1940s, you were actually reading a book about American society”. And third that she wanted to create in Hanna Wolfe, the heroine of her novels, a real woman rejecting Christie’s Miss Marple as a real woman. But the problem was how to figure out a detective woman being competitive with Chandler’s Philip Marlowe: “One of the things I discovered about detective fiction was that there were certain rules to keep, and when you started and tried to count on these rules, to put a woman at the front of it, you realise how powerful these rules were.”³

Sarah Dunant likes subverting the myth, the topic and the archetype. This reversion, however, can not be made for nothing and, sometimes, one risks falling in the absurd or the ridiculous. In her novel *Under my Skin* (1995), the story is hovered by “Castle Dean, a health farm in Berkshire”. The description of the residence stresses the reference to the archetype, to the genre in this case, and its reversion: “the facade a rather crude fake Gothic, probably nineteenth century” The reader remains thus familiarised with a real landscape and with a fixing of the genre. Though the narrative is written in first person, the landscapes are either an objective representation or an expression of personal feelings. In this way, more than through the incidents of the argument, or even the plot, the writer traces the romantic tone - other characteristic of the genre - through the eyes of her “feminine private-eye, Hanna Wolfe, a woman half way between anxiety and determination, between professionalism and privacy.

“As I entered the atrium, the moon emerged from behind clouds and bathed the pool in a cold, foggy glow. I saw a figure moving cleanly through the water, a lovely smooth breaststroke, up, down, up, down, the ripples flowing out like cut silk behind her”(UMS 19).

It is a magic scene, mysterious and romantic. The landscape and the beauty of the feminine body are joined at the moonlight.

With references to Philip Marlowe, Quentin Tarantino, Gene Hackman, etc., what has been called “hard-boiled detective fiction”, Sarah Dunant recalls us her preference for the

³ Extract from her talk she gave to the students on the annual program “British Writers in Alcalá” sponsored by the British Council in Madrid and the English Department at the University. The talk was recorded with the permission of the author. (1997-98).

American cinematographic and narrative schools. However, Hanna Wolfe's romanticism unveils her deep roots in the English tradition. Genre rules and birthplace are often stronger than subversion. Here it is the landscape that identifies her as belonging to this tradition, a landscape mixture of reality and dream, of present and past, of mystery and clarity, of light and shade: "I went out through.....but only sometimes ". (*UMS* 33-35). A vision that returns later on, briefly, in the form of dream and recognition: "This time I knew it was a dream "(*UMS* 165).

From time to time, slight strokes draw landscapes which frame the chapter, the following step in the story, the tension of the plot. It is the awareness of the fact that everything, real or fictitious, happens in a time and in a place: "Sunday morning I stayed in bed. Why not? Outside Winter was making an unexpected comeback, the wind hurling the rain horizontally against the windows" (*UMS* 74), or describes a cricket-pitch lawn, a back garden. Or describes a London that Sherlock Holmes would not recognise, "...is one of those cities where foreigners come to have a good time when the sun goes down... "(*UMS* 94). Or imagines the landscape suitable for an offence, for a murder "With the sudden rush of summer, even Berkshire looked green and pleasant. I disturbed its dull Englishness with a few violent thoughts. I put a surgical knife into Olivia Marchant's hand and watched her plunge it into her husband turned back. "(*UMS* 173), in contrast with the landscape of our desires and evasions, " In my imagination I was already halfway to Tuscany and that heart-aching early evening light that makes everything rosy, both in landscape and in life,... "(*UMS* 227). Or when the landscape is personified and adopts moans and feelings, pathetic fallacy, echoing the tension and the mood of the moment: "outside it was airless, a heavy sky creating an early dusk"(*UMS* 200); "outside, the sky moaned with distant thunder and the trees shivered with a prospect of rain"(*UMS* 203-4). "The next day the weather broke with the morning and I looked out on a leaden sky, the wind whipping up the crisp packets, and children in duffel coats on their way to school. Another English summer reasserting its right to perversity "(*UMS* 226).

In conclusion we can say that; far from being merely ornamental, landscapes in these detective narratives have all of them the three basic functions of connecting the reader to the religious, magical, mysterious, unknown world; connecting the reader to the literary genre and connecting the reader to the daily life of dream and fact, of happiness and sadness, of work and suffering, of love and death. Hanna Wolfe sums up her perspective as a detective and as a woman with some words that I might also use to put an end to this essay and that links us to the beginning of it. Landscape: "It is not what you see, it's the

way you see it. Or the way that you want (sic) to see it" (UMS 229). Or the way *they* make you see it.

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