UDC 821.111.09-311.1 Atkins L.
(410.117)OXF:82
378.4(410.117)OXF:82
https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2024.16.23

Antony Hoyte-West*
Independent scholar
United Kingdom
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4410-6520

SPIRES AND SHADOWS: DEPICTIONS OF OXFORD IN LUCY ATKINS'S *MAGPIE LANE*

Abstract
Oxford is one of the world's most iconic cities, and over the centuries it has been a source of inspiration for many authors. A recent addition to this body of literature is Lucy Atkins's 2020 psychological novel *Magpie Lane*. Set in a fictional Oxford college, the narrator, Dee, has been engaged as a nanny for the unwanted child of the college's newly-appointed Master who has just arrived with his new wife. Amid a turbulent background of family trauma, mysterious personages, and seemingly supernatural occurrences, this contribution illustrates how the book's Oxonian location, characteristics, and traditions enrich the complexities of this gripping work, exploring how these features and the unique atmosphere of its setting are crucial to the events and development of the novel.

Key words: Lucy Atkins, *Magpie Lane*, Oxford, place, psychological novel, setting

1. Introduction

In the words of the famous nineteenth-century English poet and critic Matthew Arnold, Oxford is legendary for being the city of "dreaming spires" (Arnold 1865/2024). It has a global reputation as an ancient seat of learning: its university was founded sometime before the twelfth century (University

* antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com

of Oxford 2024a) and is the oldest in the British Isles. Together with the University of Cambridge, with which it shares structural similarities in its collegiate, tutorial, and administrative systems, the University of Oxford enjoys worldwide prestige. Over the centuries, the university has educated a wide variety of prominent men and women, including monarchs, scientists, explorers, writers, Nobel laureates, and actors (University of Oxford 2024b). However, the omnipresence of Oxford in British education, culture, and society has meant that the institution has not been without criticism for perpetuating elitism and inequality (Richardson 2017), as well as for its role in ongoing discussions and debates on Britain's colonial legacy (Chigudu 2020). With regard to the latter, institutional measures have been put in place to engage with these issues (University of Oxford 2024c; 2024d), as well as other important modern-day concerns such as environmental sustainability (Kapranov 2022).

With many prominent writers, poets, and playwrights also featuring among Oxford's alumni or having an association with the university, it is unsurprising that the city has been a source of inspiration for many works of fiction over the centuries. In offering a preliminary investigation of a recent addition to this sphere, the focus of this article is *Magpie Lane* (2020). Written by the British author Lucy Atkins, it is a psychological novel set in a fictional Oxford college. With the role of the city representing a constant backdrop, this study aims to explore the importance of the novel's Oxonian setting to the events and the development of the book as a whole.

2. Place and setting: Oxford in literature

As Croatian literary scholar Miroslav Beker observes, "the city or locale in general is often of outstanding importance in modern fiction" (Beker 1972: 375). Building on the ancient notion of *genius loci* (Stojmenska-Elzeser 2013; Vecco 2020), the interlinked notions of place and setting have been well-attested in literary works, especially with regard to certain genres of realist fiction. This includes, among others, in psychological novels (Gibbs 1962), as well as in crime novels and detective fiction (McManis 1978; King 2020; Bubíková 2022, etc.). Indeed, British author and academic Philip Hensher notes that "psychologies are rooted in setting, and revealed through place and physical setting" (Hensher 2013); in detective

novels, settings are "an indispensable and thus unjustly underestimated component" (Stýblová 2018: 115).

To differentiate between the two interwoven concepts, a place can be described as "a portion of space with its own identity, its special local colour, smell, sound, climate, legends, and history" (Stojmenska-Elzeser 2013: 116), with Milford A. Jeremiah adding that this conceptualisation is "usually combined with time and events to establish what is known as the social setting or the social context of a literary work" (Jeremiah 2000: 23). For the above-mentioned examples of genre fiction, specific places and settings are crucially important in the creation of a mimetic world where the events of a given work take place, but this is equally true for canonical works of English literature. For example, as Charles J. McCann articulates, the rural country-house setting of Jane Austen's novels plays a fundamental role as an "essential ingredient of her art", observing that it serves as a "cognizable emblem for a complex of social, economic, and intellectual realities." (McCann 1964: 65). And in Mary Petrus Sullivan's study of the novel *The Landlord at Lion's Head* (1897), by the American writer William Dean Howell, she highlights that the work's setting represents a "unifying and pervasively meaningful element" (Sullivan 1963: 38). For Howard Babb, Thomas Hardy's settings go beyond simply acting as a "sheer backdrop to the narrative" but rather, as in the case of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), help to delineate and support broader thematic aspects present in the novel (Babb 1963: 147).

Examples taken from literatures other than English also highlight this point. Returning to genre fiction, examples can be seen in the mysterious Paris portrayed in Georges Simenon's Inspector Maigret detective series (van Diepen 2012; Rüth 2024), or in the atmospheric Sicily of Andrea Camilleri's Inspector Montalbano novels (Ponton & Asero 2015; Asero & Ponton 2021). Additionally, setting is important for those novels which take place in university contexts, as exemplified by its unique role in many British and American campus novels (Blashkiv 2016; Kraszewska 2022; Anténe 2022: 102–103). Indeed, in his detailed analysis of several Anglo-American case studies, Czech literary scholar Petr Anténe observes that "the campus comes to represent a microcosm that reflects, to a large extent, the issues and problems of the surrounding world" (Anténe 2015: 7). This state of affairs has been heightened through the recent advent of 'dark academia', a related literary genre which synthesises various influences to highlight some of the challenges and idiosyncrasies which can characterise modern-day university life (Nguyen 2022: 56).

Though not formally a campus university (like Cambridge, the colleges and departments are spread around the city), as a setting Oxford undeniably plays an inextricable part in many fundamental works, as has been chronicled in John Dougill's comprehensive monograph on the topic, *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of the English Athens* (Dougill 2010). As might be expected, given the seminal role of its university, the city has been the setting for many *Bildungsromane*. These include exemplars of the so-called 'Oxford Novel', which comprise such well-known classics as Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911) and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). Oxford has also been the setting for modern works, such as *The Lessons* (2010), by prize-winning contemporary British novelist Naomi Alderman, as well as for works written in languages other than English, such *Los crimenes de Oxford* (2003) by the Argentinean author Guillermo Martínez, and which was later made into a Hollywood film, *The Oxford Murders* (2008). Several of these works also deal with conflicts between 'Town and Gown' – i.e., the ordinary Oxford residents and the university body. These tensions, indeed, are evident in other Oxford-inspired works: citing Carter (1990: 5), Anténe (2015: 9) states that Oxbridge feature in almost three-quarters of British academic fiction, which helps to support the elite status of Oxford and Cambridge as elite in society and among the wider public. In the case of the phenomenal global success of Dexter's *Inspector Morse* novels, Oxford's iconic setting has attracted international attention owing to numerous film and television adaptations (Reijnders 2009; Cateridge 2015, etc.). However, it has been noted that "the Oxford of Inspector Morse is cleaner, quieter, better ordered, prettier, less industrial and certainly sunnier than the real Oxford" (Barker 1994).

To turn to the object of analysis of the present study, *Magpie Lane* is the critically-acclaimed fourth novel by the British author, journalist, and lecturer Lucy Atkins. She was educated at Oxford, and now lives in the city and currently teaches creative writing at the university (Atkins 2024). Though Magpie Lane is in fact a real Oxford location (Kavanagh 2015; Jenkins 2024), the novel's plot primarily occurs in the cloistered setting of a nameless fictional Oxford college, and the story is told from the perspective of Dee, an unreliable middle-aged narrator from Scotland with a hidden past. In terms of structure, the work takes the form of flashbacks, as Dee is being interviewed by the police. She had been engaged as a nanny for Felicity, a selectively mute eight-year-old girl

who is the unwanted offspring of the first marriage of Nick, the college's distinctly non-traditional new Master. Indeed, Nick has just moved into the college accommodation, together with his new wife, the naïve but dislikeable Mariah, who is pregnant with their first child. Chillingly, amid the other events and happenings in the work, it also later transpires that Nick's first wife died in uncertain circumstances. As might be expected, one of the themes that the novel discusses includes family trauma, and this exploration of interpersonal relationships is also complemented by the characters' own explorations of Oxford's hidden alleys mixed with murky stories from its past. These, together with the arrival of mysterious personages (such as Linklater, the eccentric 'House Detective' who Mariah contracts to research the history of the Master's lodgings) and even supernatural occurrences, ensure that the city plays an important role in the novel's dramatic events.

Thus, in providing a preliminary study of this complex and multifaceted work, the aim of this article is to ascertain how the Oxonian location, characteristics, and traditions featured in *Magpie Lane* are portrayed in the work as a whole, focusing particularly on the narrator Dee and her perspective. This will be undertaken through examining three interlinked considerations – firstly, how the city of Oxford is portrayed in the novel; secondly, how Oxford as an institution is portrayed in the work, and lastly, how Oxford's traditions are portrayed on the pages of the novel. In delving into these factors through reference to the source text, it must be highlighted that *Magpie Lane* is indeed rich in other avenues for thematic analysis. Most notably, these include the mathematical elements which feature in the novel's plot and characterisation – by way of example, the narrator, Dee, is an amateur mathematician, and several maths-related symbols and plot devices occur at several points in the work. In addition, the supernatural aspect is also a further feature which could certainly be examined in further detail.

3. The portrayal of Oxford as a city, an institution, and its traditions

As the novel's principal location, unsurprisingly Oxford features prominently right from the opening pages of the work. Indeed, as the

following quotation exemplifies, the reader's first introduction to the city is certainly not complimentary, as the narrator Dee details:

> I often walk through Oxford as the city sleeps; it is something of a compulsion. At that early hour the city pavements are otter grey and hopeless, dotted with burger wrappers and stains of student vomit, but above them the ancient buildings have already begun to glow, to broaden their shoulders and pronounce their status to the world. Even before the sun has made it to their honeyed stones, they have begun to emit a subtle, confident light. (Atkins 2020: 2–3)

As a city often stereotyped for its beauty, it may seem unsurprising that it is Oxford's appearance that is the focus of Dee's thoughts. However, though its honey-coloured edifices are mentioned, it is the less appealing urban underside of the city that is revealed in the narrator's night-time walks, as she highlights its litter-strewn streets and the tell-tale hallmarks of excessive student alcohol consumption. Yet, in symbolising the institutional power centred in the university and its colleges, the dreaming spires are personified, aware of their august majesty and importance and thus aligning with Polish scholar Katarzyna Jarosz's assertion that, in distinguishing a place's identity, there is a need to "define and describe the individual, specific, or recognisable features that are characteristic and typical" (Jarosz 2021: 97). As such, these initial observations foreshadow the narrator's general negative perception of the city of Oxford, which to her seems inextricably linked with its famous university, an institution which she appears to have little time for.

A further example comes later in the work, where in an attempt to draw attention to some of the seemingly bizarre quirks of the university, Dee outlines the tradition underpinning the chiming of the bells in the clock tower at Christ Church, one of the University's most well-known and prestigious colleges and which, as Dougill attests (2010: 282), "the literature of Oxford is written into its walls":

> Oxford's time zone is officially five minutes and two seconds behind Greenwich Mean Time, so Great Tom rings every evening at 9.05 p.m. It rings 101 times, […] once for every student who was enrolled at Christ Church in 1663. This nightly farrago seemed to me to embody the entire narcissistic psychopathy of

> Oxford: a city mired in the past, saturated with self-importance. (Atkins 2020: 246)

In presenting her take on this ostensibly odd tradition through her own eyes, Dee extrapolates the reasons underpinning it to provide a scathing analysis of the city, portraying it as self-obsessed and trapped in the past. These strong words, therefore, could also arguably draw attention to the narrator's latent anger and disquiet, which from the outset of the novel could be attributed to the constant sense of uncertainty as to her mission and presence in the city: "I found myself wondering, not for the first time, what on earth I was doing in Oxford" (Atkins 2020: 4). Indeed, this is highlighted by her sense of feeling out of place in the Oxford environment, to which her background (she does not hold a university degree) and job as a nanny add further fuel. Indeed, throughout the novel, academic and occupational aspects feature as a potentially important marker of belonging in sociological terms of ingroup and outgroup – i.e., as Giles & Giles (2012: 142) define it, "a social category or group with which you identify strongly" (or not). This leads Dee to state that "nor, did I feel, after all these years, that the city was my home. I was the perpetual outsider, neither 'town' nor 'gown', at best an adjunct" (Atkins 2020: 5).

With these words, Dee underscores her perception of her own outgroup position in Oxford. Indeed, the multiple meanings of the noun "adjunct" draw attention to this in-between status. Whilst the standard meaning in British English is someone "joined or associated with another; an assistant; a subordinate" or something "joined or connected to something else and auxiliary to or dependent upon it; something subordinate or supplementary" (Oxford English Dictionary 2024), the word also has academic implications in American usage (see Danaei 2019) where the term is used for university teachers who are typically "occupying a junior, temporary, or casual position of employment" (Oxford English Dictionary 2024), a description that could certainly be applied to Dee's own professional circumstances.

Indeed, though the narrator highlights her sense of feeling distinctly peripheral, it could be argued that all of the main characters could be considered – in different ways – as outsiders. Even the college's new master, Nick, though he studied at Oxford, is perceived differently by the fellows of the college because his professional background was at the BBC and not in academia; his new wife, Mariah, is an outsider because she is a foreigner and also is not a scholar by profession; and Nick's daughter, the friendless Felicity, is also relegated to the periphery owing to the trauma that has left

her unable to speak to anyone except for her father, thus rendering her unable to interact with her peers at school and with wider society. As for the eccentric Linklater, who though a member of the college has never managed to complete his doctorate (despite working on it for countless years), he too is emblematic of the shared peripheral nature common to these principal characters. Dee even writes of Linklater that "he was just like me – wandering in that hazy territory between town and gown; a lungful of Oxford diesel, a borrowed grasp of hallowed air" (Atkins 2020: 267). Yet, despite Dee's overwhelmingly negative observations of the city of Oxford itself, there are nonetheless occasional glimpses of a different perspective. Indeed, when Linklater takes Dee and Felicity on whistle-stop tours of old Oxford, full of exciting adventures and intricately-woven stories, the city appears to be somehow tolerable. And further evidence can be found when Dee describes her early days in Oxford, when she was beginning her career as a nanny to the children of visiting academics there, noting that "eventually, though, I mapped a different Oxford – one of parks and swings, duck feeding, community centres, church halls, messy play" (Atkins 2020: 290).

To turn to the depiction of Oxford as an institution – i.e., its colleges and the university, this institutional portrayal is closely interlinked with many of the views that Dee has about the wider city. As such, the nameless fictional college is highlighted as being a difficult, idiosyncratic place. As demonstrated in the following quotation, even Nick, despite being an alumnus of the college and a prominent figure in media administration, has challenges:

> As the summer progressed, Nick grew even more gaunt and distracted – presumably as he began dealing with the tormented Governing Body. After years as a senior BBC executive, he could hardly be a stranger to overeducated employees, budgetary crises and Machiavellian egos. He must have been aware, too, that an Oxford College operates according to its own obscure principles, opaque traditions and unspoken rules. (Atkins 2020: 72)

Indeed, this quotation underlines that even for a relative 'ingroup' member such as Nick, the day-to-day regimen of life in college is proving demanding. As such, if the portrayal of life is so difficult for an apparent 'insider', raised and presumably accustomed to such scenarios, then the obscurity and opacity could be considered even more daunting for Nick's new wife, Mariah, who is a foreigner and thus – in the eyes of Dee –

seemingly unaware of many of the unwritten conventions: "I wondered if this level of indiscretion was a Danish thing. I'd heard the Danes were direct. I wanted to warn her that an Oxford College is no place for transparency" (Atkins 2020: 34). In reiterating this apparent lack of openness in college life fomented by a perceived clash of cultural values and approaches, Dee observes the potential for conflict to erupt. Despite her desire to avoid such a situation, her own strained but superficially cordial relations with Mariah preclude her from doing so. This absence of institutional transparency and clarity is also exemplified by using the metaphor of light, as depicted in the following excerpt:

> But Oxford has no need for light; light is anathema to it. Light destroys its ancient manuscripts and disturbs its concentration. Oxford is a place of dust motes, vaults and arm-span alleys, of Anglepoise lamps and dimmer switches, of creaking floorboards, and whispers in oak-panelled libraries. Its energy is stored in archives and silent corners, in book stacks and cellars. (Atkins 2020: 162)

Light – both physical and metaphorical – is therefore something to be avoided, bringing with it both disruption and destruction. Here, through being personified as a being of its own, the institution is portrayed once again as mysterious, arcane, and even almost otherworldly – i.e., as a traditional and ancient entity, harking back centuries and shunning the advances of modernity. In this regard, by storing the power needed to sustain the vast reams of knowledge and scholarship upon which the institution depends. Oxford's libraries are portrayed almost like batteries, as repositories of its unique and special energy.

Yet, elsewhere in the novel, Dee does acknowledge the seminal importance of Oxford in terms of its contributions to the world. On the trio's informative walks and tours around the city, she notes that "Felicity was learning more from Linklater about the history of Oxford – which is, of course, a history of Western thought, of literature, philosophy, politics, art and scientific discovery – than she ever could sitting inside with a book" (Atkins 2020: 195). Yet, though attesting to its global influence and significance, Dee's portrayal of Oxford as an institution is generally profoundly negative.

This unfavourable image also extends to the narrator's observation of Oxford's traditions, as seen through her interpretation of various college activities. These include her commentary on an incident where Mariah,

who is by then pregnant with her and Nick's first child, attends a formal dinner in the college dining room, and commits a faux pas. A group of male college fellows, appalled by this breach of protocol, write a letter of complaint to Nick in his role as the Master, "in order to raise the issue of Mariah's 'inappropriate attire' at Formal Hall. It seemed that Mariah borrowed an old academic gown of Nick's to wear over her dress" This occurrence was viewed as being "'disrespectful' since Mariah did not have a University of Oxford degree" (Atkins 2020: 157–158). To Dee, the whole concept of the event of Formal Hall is a ridiculous construction, with the dinner described as "a preposterous candlelit affair that took place weekly in term time" as well as being "a weekly reminder that the feudal system is thriving in Oxford" (Atkins 2020: 158). In outlining the format and traditions linked to this event, Dee is particularly scathing about the idea of a second dessert course, with the whole charade surrounding the serving of this supplementary pudding dismissed as a "particularly lunatic ritual" (Atkins 2020: 158). By writing a letter of complaint to Nick about his wife's sartorial error, Dee surmises that:

> […] these men, I felt, longed for a simpler, bachelor-only Oxford – days when loyal manservants served up chaffinch on toast and puddings called 'whim wham'; when each don was master of his own tiny fiefdom and there was no call for any gender-neutral pronouns, inclusivity, diversity. A time, in fact, when there were no women at all. (Atkins 2020: 159)

She goes further, putting aside her own lukewarm feelings about Mariah to analyse the situation through a broader lens:

> The problem Mariah faced had nothing to do with home décor or clothing; it was about deep, institutional misogyny. Those old men hated her because she was a young, attractive, pregnant woman without a degree. And by wearing Nick's DPhil gown to Formal Hall, she'd inadvertently mocked the structure that made them who they were. All the little emperors suddenly had no clothes. (Atkins 2020: 161)

As such, Dee succinctly points out the complex challenges inherent in the life of the fictional college. This is accentuated later, when Mariah confides in Dee about the reason why a friend of Nick's was unsuccessful in his application for a job at the college. This leads Mariah to vent about the intricate and difficult nature of her life there:

> 'He's published by Faber instead of Oxford University Press! And oh my God, all the secret rules – nobody will explain anything to me. It's like if you don't already know, you don't belong here.' (Atkins 2020: 211)

By focusing on the seemingly minute yet ostensibly crucial differences (having a book published by a prestigious London-based publisher vis-à-vis a prestigious Oxford-based publisher), this aspect also highlights the accusations levelled against Mariah by wearing a gown she was not entitled to wear – i.e., that there are 'certain codes of behaviour within the ingroup, which are promoted and promulgated but rarely shared beyond the confines of select members of that group. Therefore, in this regard, this reiterates the sense of being an outsider, a sentiment which, as mentioned above, is a characteristic common to all of the novel's principal protagonists.

4. Coda

Through the eyes of the narrator, the present article has aimed to briefly examine how Oxford's unique location, characteristics, and traditions are depicted in *Magpie Lane*. From Dee's standpoint, it is challenging to separate these interlinked aspects – i.e., to divide Oxford the city from the Oxford the institution and its traditions, which Dougill (2010: 289) also concludes in his analysis of its role in English literature. In general terms, the city and the institution are presented from a largely negative viewpoint, as a forbidding, arcane, and closed-off world with bizarre traditions.

With its cliquey sense of an ingroup vs outgroup mentality, the Oxford portrayed in the novel is a place difficult for outsiders to negotiate, as highlighted not only in the case of Dee, but also with regard to the other characters too, who all seem to be outsiders in some way. Indeed, the complex yet unseen codes and rules can be highlighted in Mariah's assertion that the behaviour she comes across is "just not normal", to which Dee replies that "it's normal for Oxford" (Atkins 2020: 212). Though Dee's depiction of the Oxford featured in *Magpie Lane* is overwhelmingly unfavourable, she does note towards the end of the novel that her friendship with the eccentric Linklater has influenced her emotions towards it, though she is still aware of her outgroup status: "he had altered my perception of the city

for ever; it was a richer, more interesting and layered place now. But I still did not belong in it" (Atkins 2020: 293).

Although Dee's view of Oxford in the novel is certainly highly stylised, this stereotypical view of the city and institution as inaccessible and archaic can be considered vital for the novel's setting. Oxford's unusual combination of historical, sociological, and cultural factors bring an added layer of complexity which goes beyond a mere backdrop to provide an important element in the events and the development of the work. As such, in creating a fictional space where the unbelievable can sometimes seem commonplace, it can be argued therefore that Oxford, its unique setting, institution, and traditions, are fundamental in conceptualising and underpinning the events in *Magpie Lane* as a whole.

References

Anténe, P. (2015). *Campus Novel Variations: A Comparative Study of an Anglo-American Genre.* Olomouc: Palacký University Olomouc. https://doi.org/10.5507/pdf.15.24448596

Anténe, P. (2022). On writing and college life: Rainbow Rowell's Fangirl as a campus novel. *East-West Cultural Passage*, 22(1), 100-114. https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0005

Arnold, M. (1865/2024). Thyrsis: A Monody, to Commemorate the Author's Friend, Arthur Hugh Clough. *Poetry Foundation*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43608/thyrsis-a-monody-to-commemorate-the-authors-friend-arthur-hugh-clough>

Asero, V., & Ponton, D. M. (2021). Film tourism in south-eastern Sicily: In the footsteps of Inspector Montalbano. *Athens Journal of Tourism*, 8(3), 163–176. https://doi.org/10.30958/ajt.8-3-2

Atkins, L. (2020). *Magpie Lane*. London: Quercus Editions.

Atkins, L. (2024). *Lucy Atkins – Novelist*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.lucyatkins.com/>

Babb, H. (1963). Setting and theme in Far from The Madding Crowd. *ELH: English Literary History*, 30(2), 147-161. https://doi.org/10.2307/2872087

Barker, S. (1994). 'Period' detective drama and the limits of contemporary nostalgia: "Inspector Morse" and the strange case of a lost England. *Critical Survey*, 6(2), 234–242.

Beker, M. (1972). London as a principle of structure in "Mrs. Dalloway". *Modern Fiction Studies*, 18(3), 375–385.

Blashkiv, O. (2016). The university campus as contemporary heterotopia. In: J. Stolarek & J. Wiliński (eds.), *(Inter)relations and Integration in Multicultural Language Scapes*. Siedlce: Wydawnictwo IKR[i]BL, 15–25.

Bubíková, Š. (2022). Urban setting in contemporary American crime fiction. *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies*, 9(1–2), 74–80.

Carter, I. (1990). *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post-War Years*. Routledge.

Cateridge, J. (2015). Deep mapping and screen tourism: The Oxford of Harry Potter and Inspector Morse. *Humanities*, 4(3), 320–333. https://doi.org/10.3390/h4030320

Chigudu, S. (2020). Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford: A critical testimony. *Critical African Studies*, 12(3), 302–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1788401

Danaei, K. J. (2019). Literature review of adjunct faculty. *Educational Research: Theory and Practice*, 30(2), 17–33.

van Diepen, W. (2012). Maigret et le flâneur de Benjamin: la figuration de Paris chez Simenon. *Neophilologus*, 96(3), 349-367. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11061-011-9272-2

Dougill. J. (2010). *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of the English Athens*. Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse.

Gibbs, B. J. (1962). Spatial treatment in the contemporary psychological novel of Argentina. *Hispania*, 45(3), 410–414. https://doi.org/10.2307/337401

Giles, H. and Giles, J. (2012). Ingroups and outgroups. In: A. Kurylo (Ed.), Inter/cultural communication: Representation and construction of culture (pp. 141–162). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544304106.n7

Hensher, P. (2013). The importance of place in fiction. *The Guardian*. (17 May 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/17/philip-hensher-importance-place-fiction>

Jarosz, K. (2021). Bridging East and West: The Orient Express as a driver of sociocultural development in the Balkans. In H. Kiliçaslan, Ö. F. Can, & B. Çağlar (eds.), *Living in the Ottoman Lands: Identities, Administration and Warfare*. Istanbul: Kronik Books. 88–110.

Jenkins, S. (2024). *Magpie Lane (formerly Grove Street)*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/high/tour/south/magpie_lane.html>

Jeremiah, M. A. (2000). The use of place in writing and literature. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 16(2), 23–27. https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.1352

Kapranov, O. (2022). The discourse of sustainability in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the University of Oxford: Analyzing discursive representations. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 24(1), 35–48. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2022-0004

Kavanagh, H. (2015). The secrets of Magpie Lane: Prostitution in Oxford in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. *The Local Historian*, 45, 40–53.

King, S. (2020). Place. In: J. Allan, J. Gulddal, S. King, and A. Pepper (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 211–218. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429453342-26

Kraszewska, M. (2022). Fictional campus: Its people and their lifestyle. *East-West Cultural Passage*, 22(1), 115–139. https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0006

McCann, C. J. (1964). Setting and character in Pride and Prejudice. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* 19(1), 65–75. https://doi.org/10.2307/2932788

McManis, D. R. (1978). Places for mysteries. *Geographical Review*, 319–334. https://doi.org/10.2307/215050

Nguyen, M. (2022). Nostalgia in dark academia. *East-West Cultural Passage*, 22(1), 54–72. https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0003

Oxford English Dictionary (2024). *Adjunct*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.oed.com/dictionary/adjunct_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#12231584>

Ponton, D. M., & Asero, V. (2015). The Montalbano effect: Re-branding Sicily as a tourist destination? *On the Horizon*, 23(4), 342–351. https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-05-2015-0014

Reijnders, S. (2009). Watching the detectives: Inside the guilty landscapes of Inspector Morse, Baantjer and Wallander. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 165–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323108101830

Richardson, H. (2017). Oxbridge uncovered: More elitist than we thought. *BBC News* (17 June 2024). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-41664459>

Rüth, A. (2024). Maigrets Paris. In: H. Doetsch & W. Nitsch (eds.) *Simenon: Ermittlungen, Existenzen, Atmosphären*. Berlin & Heidelberg: J. B. Metzler, 109–122. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-67990-6_8

Stojmenska-Elzeser, S. (2013). Representation and production of the *genius loci* in literature. *Primerjalna književnost*, 36, 115–122.

Stýblová, Ž. (2018). The role of setting in the Golden Age detective novel. *American and British Studies Annual,* 11, 115–126.

Sullivan, M. P. (1963). The function of setting in Howells's The Landlord at Lion's Head. *American Literature*, 35(1), 38–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/2923019

University of Oxford (2024a). *History*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/history>

University of Oxford (2024b). *Famous Oxonians*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/oxford-people/famous-oxonians>

University of Oxford (2024c). *Oxford Access*. (20 May 2024) <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/oxford-access>

University of Oxford (2024d). *Oxford and Colonialism*. (20 May 2024) <https://oxfordandcolonialism.web.ox.ac.uk/>

Vecco, M. (2020). Genius loci as a meta-concept. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 41, 225–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2019.07.001

Received: 31 May 2024
Accepted for publication: 23 October 2024