

Abstract

The word ‘space’ has a diverse range of meanings. It can be, geographical and geometrical, real and fictional, liminal, embodied and virtual. Our social practices, cultures, and ideologies determine our interactions with such spaces. The Lefebvrian understanding of ‘social space’ – space as ‘lived’, ‘conceived’ and ‘perceived’ – forms the theoretical base for this thesis that undertakes a geocritical analysis of the Adam Dalgliesh novels by P.D. James, a British crime writer. The Dalgliesh novels are a Police Procedural series, published between 1962 and 2008. This study argues that, this series can be used to understand British history and post-World War II British society, through an analysis of the representations of space within James’ narratives.

This study commences by tracing the evolution of crime fiction and identifying the Police Procedurals as a sub-genre of this popular genre. The literature review on crime fiction and police procedurals indicates the relevance of space to understand the social context. The literature review on spatial studies, determined the gap in existing scholarship, by indicating a lack of an in-depth geocritical study of James’ Dalgliesh series. A comprehensive literature survey on Police Procedurals and spatial studies, in the second and third chapters, reveal the importance of space in the form of landscapes and socio-cultural practices, jurisdiction and power, place-making, spatial identity and transitions, and spatial-memory and human experiences. The subsequent chapters analyse the use of space within the Dalgliesh novels.

The fourth chapter focuses on landscapes and ecology, which explores how the river Thames gives the city of London its identity, how a Nuclear Power Station creates a binary of the artificial and the natural in a countryside, and how an imaginary island addresses the impact of isolation on communities. The chapter reveals that the perception of landscapes impacts social space and interpersonal interactions. In certain cases, contestations in how the

space is ‘perceived’ can lead to crime and violence. The fifth chapter on the scene of crime, determines the impact of crime on spatial formation, identity, and the sense of place-making. It explores how spaces are ‘conceived’, such as the English countryside houses, and how they transition from private to public spaces such as healthcare institutions, museums, or laboratories due to socio-economic factors. However, these spaces socially or structurally disintegrate with the occurrence of crime. The ‘scene of crime’ is a space of liminality where it goes through a process of loss of its initial identity to take on a new one. The study shows that embodied spaces are also a part of liminal space, which forms the crux of the sixth chapter of this thesis. This chapter uncovers the impact of crime over the ‘lived’ space, affecting human body-mind, and the individual’s existence in the social space.

This study is an interdisciplinary effort towards understanding a society in transition through an analysis of literature and geography. The analysis shows a strong correlation between place and crime wherein spaces invoked memories and experiences, and consequently, contributed to interpersonal human relations. Here, the fictional and the real coincided, and the author’s world resembled our own. Rooted in the British context, this study concludes that James’ novels address contemporary concerns regarding topographical change, territorial power dynamics, crime, homophobia, disability and mental health despite belonging to a specific space and time. The lived–perceived–conceived spaces thereby coincide to represent the macrocosmic world within the microcosmic world of P.D. James’s Adam Dalgliesh series.

Keywords: Space, Place, Landscape, Society, Crime, Police Procedural, P.D. James



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