



2005-03-14

# Mystery writers in foreign settings: The literary devices and methods used to portray foreign geographies

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MYSTERY WRITERS IN FOREIGN SETTINGS: THE LITERARY DEVICES AND  
METHODS USED TO PORTRAY FOREIGN GEOGRAPHIES

by

Amy Kimball Engar

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Geography

Brigham Young University

April 2005

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Amy Kimball Engar

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Amy Kimball Engar in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### MYSTERY WRITERS IN FOREIGN SETTINGS: THE LITERARY DEVICES AND METHODS USED TO PORTRAY FOREIGN GEOGRAPHIES

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Department of Geography

Master of Science

A sense of place is important to the construction, believability and success of regional mystery novels. Authentic representation of place is challenging if an author is not originally from the area being portray. Despite this, some authors are able to depict foreign places more comprehensively and realistically than others. Professor Gary Hausladen of the University of Nevada, Reno identifies: narrative description, dialogue, iconography, and attention to detail as the basic literary devices that convey sense of place. This thesis questions the manner in which successful mystery novelists writing about foreign place meet Hausladen's model. Specifically, do they use all four of the literary devices, which are most commonly used, which are consciously used, and what research methods and resources do they use to incorporate the literary devices. Primary and secondary data are collected through interviews and literary analyses. It is found that

these authors use all four of the prescribed literary devices, that some of the literary devices are more challenging to use than others, that place establishing literary techniques are important to the authors and that the authors seek to incorporate sense of place through diverse types of intensive research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people who contributed to the completion of this thesis. My thesis chair, Jim Davis, and other committee members, Matt Shumway and Renee Gluch, gave me the opportunity, guidance and their time to complete my thesis. I also thank my husband, Erek; my parents, Charlene and Allen; my siblings, Sara, Johnny and Jenny; and my friend, Kaye Hansen, for their creative and technical help, as well as encouragement throughout this thesis process.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Writing a novel with a foreign setting is challenging. Everyone is born in a specific place and grows up in a certain physical, cultural, and societal surrounding which “leaves a mark on the way we perceive the world” (Pocock 1981). Despite the challenge, many authors choose to write with foreign geographies as their setting because of the intrinsic excitement and escapism found in a new setting (Pocock 1981). Although definition of place has been recognized as a contested matter, depending upon individuals' experiences (Brosseau 1994; Pocock 1981), many authors turn to their own uneducated and inexperienced “outsider” understandings of the settings and use extremely inaccurate geography, which can influence their readers knowledge and in some cases change a region's identity (Shortridge 1991). But there is a small sample of authors who, despite their outsider vantage point, have been acknowledged for their ability to represent a foreign place with accuracy (Demko 1999; Hausladen 1995, 1996, 2000; Kadonaga 1998; Tuan 1985).

A handful of geographers have studied what literary devices are used to portray a sense of place within literature (Hausladen 1995, 1996, 2000; Kadonaga 1998; Tuan 1985). Most recently Professor Gary Hausladen has created a model of four literary devices he feels encompass the main ways in which an author can use geography to add to their plots and settings (Hausladen 1996, 2000). These devices include: narrative description, dialog, iconography and attention to detail. In what manner do successful fictional authors writing about foreign places meet Hausladen’s model? In this thesis this question will be addressed by answering the following specific questions.

- Do these authors use all four of Hausladen's literary devices?
- Which are most commonly used?
- Which of the devices are they consciously using?
- What research methods and resources do they use to incorporate these literary devices into their writing?

The purpose of this research is to learn what literary devices authors who are foreign to their settings use, as well as what kind of information they need to obtain for the successful use of all of the devices.

This research took place over a period of six months. It was limited by no appropriated budget for in person interviews, as well as prospective authors' availability for telephone interviews.

The following chapters of this thesis include a literature review, an overview of the methodology and conceptual framework used, the research data including content analyses and interviews or answered surveys, a discussion of the results, and a conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes the past literature and theoretical history of studies involving geography and popular literature. Beginning with the initial use of literature for scholarly geographic information, it moves through the history of geographers' uses of and attitudes towards the uses of literature as the discipline's theoretical stances changed. Then it focuses to a more recent scholarly emphasis on geography's importance to the success of popular literature, the complications that authors confront when writing about foreign places, and literary devices by which geography can be portrayed in literature. This summary introduces a natural but unanswered question, namely: In what manner do successful mystery novelists who write about settings foreign to their origin establish sense of place through geographic literary devices? This is the question which will be answered within this thesis.

The use of literature for geographic research has a short history, but its scope has grown quickly, sometimes inviting controversy as to its validity within academic geography. The first papers referencing geographer's use of literature appear in the early twentieth century (Mill, 1910; Anon, 1923). A geographer, J. K. Wright, acknowledged and praised these efforts in the *Geographical Review* (1924a; 1924b), as well as in his "Plea for the History of Geography" (1926), however until the early 1970's, only a handful of published papers referenced literature as a source for their geographical findings (Baker 1931, 1951; Darby 1948; Gilbert 1960; Wright 1947; Lowenthal, 1969; see Brosseau 1994; Pocock 1988; Salter 1977).

The absence of interest in literature as a source for geographic knowledge

coincides with the intra-disciplinary movement during the Fifties and Sixties toward positivist, “scientific” research (Brosseau, 1994; Pocock, 1988; Salter, 1977). A counter-movement from the positivist era caused by some geographers’ dissatisfaction with the seemingly short-sighted objectification placed on studying human and environmental relationships resulted in change including a rise of scholarly interest in literature as a source of geographic knowledge (Brosseau 1994; Pocock 1988; Salter 1977; Tuan 1976). This theoretical movement, “humanism”, was concerned with more subjective geographic research based on human experience (Johnston 1994; Shurmer-Smith 2002; Tuan 1974, 1976, 1977). As a result of this push toward humanism, many of the first papers written during literary geography's reintroduction focus on supporting literature as a viable resource for geographic knowledge (Tuan 1974, 1978, see Brosseau 1994; Pocock 1988; Salter 1977).

Since the initial move towards the use of literature as a geographic resource, disciplinary thought has moved through several philosophical stances, continuing from humanism to Marxism, feminism, post-modernism and post-colonialism (Brosseau 1994; Pocock 1988). These philosophically diverse stances have shaped geographers’ uses of literature for varying purposes. The majority of studies have been for direct geographic information, including historical, cultural, political and physical knowledge (Pocock 1998; Salter 1977). Other geographers have researched beyond the descriptive properties to understand the relationships which humanity has with the landscape or environment (Cresswell 1993; Daniels 1993; Howell 1998; Reichler 1990; Sharp 1993).

One specific topic of discussion has been how the identity of a place is shaped through the influence of literature. In Tuan's “Language and Making of Place,” he states that language has been neglected as a crucial source of knowledge about place making,

and that “words alone, used in an appropriate situation, can have the power to render objects, formerly invisible because unattended, visible, and impart to them a certain character” (1991). Books are recognized as one of those linguistic sources of place-making knowledge. Tuan specifically states that “...books have a certain permanence as physical objects. They are there on the shelf, potentially accessible to all who can read, and all who read the same book share the basic material furnishing and feeling-tone of a common world... Fictional worlds can profoundly infect the real world.”

While books can have a major influence on people’s perceptions of place, not all books are widely read enough to have a significant impact on the general public’s idea of a place (Shortridge 1991). Popular novels are the exception and have the potential of reinforcing stereotypes of places or inaccurately redefining places in popular knowledge (Shortridge 1991; Tuan 1991). In “The Concept of the Place-Defining Novel in American Popular Culture,” Shortridge presents a case for popular literature as a major influence on Americans' images of regions (1991). Shortridge specifically focuses on “broadly popular books with strong regional themes regardless of their literary merit or the accuracy of their geographical vision.” His study suggests that authors have a powerful ability to educate the general public about cultural and physical geography, despite their intentions or whether or not the representation is accurate (1991).

As a widely read escapist genre, mystery novels have the opportunity to influence a large audience because of their popularity (Hausladen 1996, 2000). In 1994, Klein estimated that mystery novels account for twenty percent of all books sold. Hausladen suggests that popular mystery series sell in the hundreds of thousands (1996). These books are not only read by those who buy them but are passed on to friends and relatives, multiplying the potential impact they can have on public knowledge (Hausladen 1996).

As Hausladen states, these numbers suggest that mysteries are a major provider of the public's sense of other places and other cultures, and because of this they should be taken seriously by academic geographers (1996).

The mystery genre is particularly intriguing to cultural geographers who are interested in literature as a source of accurate geographic knowledge (McManis 1978; Kadonaga 1998; Howell 1998). Although not all mystery novels are of equal value for geographic research (Kadonaga 1998; McManis 1978), they often use physical and cultural geography to deepen plots and enrich character development (Hausladen 1995, 1996, 2000; Kadonaga 1998; McManis 1978; Tuan 1985). "Solving a mystery frequently involves reconstructing the complex of movements of individuals through space and time... For this reason geography is often a central element in mysteries, even if the author did not intend it to be" (Kadonaga 1998). Further, Hausladen states, "In these mysteries, much of the intrigue is a function of locale. Place becomes an essential plot element. Nowhere else could these kinds of murders have occurred; they are culturally and contextually specific." He states that "Without the author's sense of a given place, and without our sense of a given society, the commission, discovery and resolution of a murder is hopelessly cryptic" (Hausladen 2000).

Geographers have researched novelists who write about intimately familiar places as well as places which are foreign to them. It is inherently more challenging to accurately write about a foreign place because, as Pocock states, "Our birthplace leaves a mark in determining the way we perceive the world" (Pocock 1981). Similarly, Sillitoe says, "We are all born into the world with a sense of place, simply because a certain part of our senses are rooted forever in the locality in which... we first saw light" (1975). No matter what we do to learn about the rest of the world, we will always have our individual

experiences which bias our perceptions (Pocock 1981). Despite this, authors still write novels with foreign settings, and a few are acknowledged for their good geographic representations (Demko1999; Hausladen 1995; Pocock 1981). As a study of the author Arnold Bennett shows, if interest is there and time is taken to research and incorporate accurate geographic detail into novels of foreign settings, there can be success (Hudson 1982).

The criteria for analyzing mystery novelists' uses of place has developed through time from general humanistic based analysis to semiotic readings of signs within literature and post-structuralist deconstructive methods. One of the earliest analyses of a mystery writer was Tuan's analysis of Sherlock Holmes (1985). In this analysis, he uses Auden's criteria of "nowness" and "permanence" to understand the extent of Holmes' accuracy in local knowledge, contemporary beliefs about nature and environmental influence, as well as an accurate depiction of contemporary and continuous human behavior. Auden's "nowness" refers to how accurately writers are characteristic of their time, making it "easy for historians to place them in their period." This element within a book provides readers with "knowledge concerning the landscapes, habits, and thoughts" of the era and place being written about. Auden's "permanence" suggests that a novel continues to be popular because it also has "roots in a common human condition." Generally, "Nowness" involves the accuracy of the cultural and physical geography, while "permanence" describes its enduring popularity and universal experience (Tuan 1985).

More recently, Kadonaga and Hausladen have used deconstructive and symbiotic techniques. In Kadonaga's study of Ruth Rendell's novels, she specifically deconstructs and analyzes the novels by categorizing text into spatial aspects of description, depictions

of place, depictions of territory, as well as race, class and gender issues. She then compares these with actual characteristics found in the place being described (1998).

Similar to Kadonaga, Hausladen has found that four basic literary devices, namely narrative description, dialog, iconography, and attention to detail, convey a sense of place. In his research, he has come up with this comprehensive list through the analysis of what literary devices authors use to convey sense of place (1995, 1996, 2000). His literature generally overviews the different ways in which an author can convey sense of place.

Missing from current research is a specific analysis of how authors are able to depict a place of which they are foreign through Hausladen's model. While some have come up with certain geographic literary devices which portray sense of place, and others have acknowledged general accuracy of some author's representations of a foreign place, a useful addition to current research would be to question the manner in which authors known for their generally accurate portrayal of place are able to use geographic literary devices to accomplish a comprehensive sense of place. This can be achieved by finding if all four of Hausladen's literary devices are used, which are used more commonly, which they are consciously using, and what research methods and resources they use to incorporate geographic literary devices.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I summarize the methods, data and structure which I used to carry out my research. It includes a description of the types of data collected to answer the questions, the methods used to obtain the data, the sources I obtained the data from, the framework or model used to organize my data for analysis, and the limitations confronted in the process.

Two methods were used to gather information for this study. An interview and questionnaires from selected authors, as well as passages pulled thematically from a selection of the subsequent authors' books. The interview and questionnaires were used to ask the authors about which literary devices they use and what research methods and resources they use to incorporate these literary devices into their writing. The passages pulled from the authors' books include each example were one of the four literary devices is used by the author. This data was obtained to answer whether these authors use all four of Hausladen's literary devices, and if so, which are most commonly used.

The literary devices or model used to organize the data from the interview, questionnaires and novel passages are Gary Hausladen's geographic literary devices; namely narrative description, dialog, iconography, and attention to detail. Hausladen came up with these devices by studying where and how writers use sense of place or geographic information in their literature (1995, 1996, 2000). He found that four basic literary devices convey a sense of place. These devices are defined in the following paragraphs.

### *Narrative Description*

Narrative description is found in the body of the text and describes the physical or cultural characteristics in which the story will take place. It is often in the beginning few paragraphs of a book or at the beginning of each new scene change to introduce the place or people in the setting. Initially it may seem extraneous or unnecessary, but it “provides a grounding place, contributes to character development, supports a secondary agenda or subplot, provides clues for the resolution of the crime, or helps to establish credibility of the author and the authenticity of the story” (Hausladen 2000).

### *Dialog*

Dialog similarly describes the physical or cultural setting of the book, but through a different mode of communication. Dialog is found when an author uses the characters’ conversations or internal thoughts within quotes to describe or exude a certain physical or cultural aspect of a setting. This can be achieved by having the characters specifically talk about certain physical and cultural characteristics, or through the dialects, speech patterns, idioms, and local sayings they use. It can also be accomplished through the importance characters place on certain ideas or beliefs (Hausladen 2000).

### *Iconography*

Hausladen’s description of iconography comes from Cosgrove and Daniel’s definition which is “the identification of conventional, consciously inscribed symbols” (1988). Simply put, it is the author’s use of certain characters or places as symbolic representations of a culture through personality traits, ideologies or backgrounds. Most often iconography is found within characters as icons representing certain segments of society (Hausladen 2000). Iconography can be worked into the body of the text through ideological or social description of a character or place. It can also be utilized through

dialog, where characters' ideals and characteristics come out through their conversations and thought processes.

### *Attention to Detail*

Attention to detail is used by incorporating specific physical or cultural traits and facts about a place within a novel. These details establish credibility and authenticity, securing trust in the author's sense of place. Further, Hausladen states, "Mistakes in detail can render a novel unacceptable. A reader needs to believe the author has been there, has experienced the place and the culture being described, so the plot rings true. If the details suggest that the plot could not occur as described by the author, then the plot itself falls apart" (2000). Attention to detail can be used throughout the whole of a novel, including through the other literary devices, to enhance the authenticity of the physical, cultural and symbolic setting.

Four authors were chosen for this study: Lindsey Davis, Elizabeth George, Dorothy Gilman, and Lynda Robinson. The choice was based on the criteria that they write with general accuracy about settings which are foreign to their origin and that they are alive and possibly available for interview. George Demko, mystery novel enthusiast and Emeritus Professor at Dartmouth University, has read and written extensively about literary geography, specifically about mystery novels and the importance of accurate geography and sense of place to a novel. Two of the four authors, Lindsey Davis and Dorothy Gilman, have been chosen from Demko's, "The Best Geographical Mystery Writers: An Honor Role" ([www.dartmouth.edu/~gjdemko/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~gjdemko/) 1999). This is a list of authors who are acknowledged by Demko for their use of correct geography within their plots. The other two authors, Elizabeth George and Lynda Robinson were suggested to me by members of my committee who are avid mystery novel readers as well as

professors of geography. Lindsey Davis, an English author, Lynda Robinson, an American author, and Elizabeth George, an American author write about the Roman Empire, ancient Egypt, and current day Britain, respectively. American, Dorothy Gilman uses settings in her *Mrs. Pollifax* series from all over the world.

Two or more books written by each of these authors were chosen for analysis. The first novel and at least one later novel of each author's series were chosen to ensure that their different experiential stages were taken into consideration. Each passage from the selected books which represented one of Hausladen's literary devices was pulled out and categorized by type. From looking at these four groups of categorized data I was able to infer whether all four of Hausladen's literary devices were used and which ones were most commonly used by each author. Examples of the authors' uses of each kind of literary device are discussed. Several details within each book were also analyzed for general physical and cultural geographic accuracy by comparing the details with scholarly geographic information.

The four authors were also solicited for interviews, with the expectation that at least one would be available. Lynda Robinson was available for an interview, and Lindsey Davis and Elizabeth George were available for questionnaires via email. The interview and questionnaires were based on semi-structured expert interviews (Flick 2002; Meuser 1991), using a guide with a list of topics to be explored (see appendix A). Expert interviews specifically focus on the subject at hand and the interviewees "capacity of being an expert for a certain field or activity" (Flick 2002). As previously stated, the discussion topics in the guide were directed towards whether the interviewees' consciously use Hausladen's literary devices to portray sense of place, and what research methods they use to find data to incorporate these devices into their novels. The

interview guide is a common tool for expert interviews because of its natural ability to set a specific range of issues to be discussed while leaving flexibility for each expert, in this case, author, to individually reflect on their own techniques and insights (Flick 2002). Idealistically, the interviews would have taken place in person, but logistical and financial restrictions made phone and email interviews the only alternative. The interview was recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts and questionnaire responses were reviewed and coded by main themes found in the guided interview. Then sub-themes were coded, including the authors' various writing and research techniques.

Utilization of the data from both the content analyses of the authors' books and interviews or questionnaires of the authors enabled internal and external insights into the research question. The data answers whether all four of the literary devices were used, which were used more, which were consciously used and what methods were used to incorporate the devices into the authors' novels.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the information that was collected and compiled from both the interviews and analyses is presented. The chapter is organized by author, with two subsections for each author. The first subsection for each author includes brief background information about the author, information from their interviews or questionnaires describing the literary devices employed, and specific data they seek to enhance sense of place within their novels. The second subsection includes a content analysis answering whether all four of Hausladen's literary devices were used and which were used most commonly, giving specific examples of each.

#### Section 1: Lindsey Davis

##### *Background and Questionnaire*

Lindsey Davis was born and raised in Birmingham, England. She studied English at Oxford and joined the Civil Service, but is now a full time author. Her series is set during the period of the Roman Empire, primarily in Rome, but sometimes she ventures into other regions under Roman rule.

The Ancient Roman Empire was chosen as her setting for several reasons. First, she enjoys historical novels. Second, being British, she feels a certain intrinsic kinship with the Romans because they were in Britain and have that shared history. She also has a love of the Mediterranean because of its "sun, wine, vibrant people, and much else

that doesn't occur in Britain." Lastly, she chose the time and area because it is exotic, and exotic places are more likely to allure an audience.

When asked whether she consciously uses any of Hausladen's literary devices within her novels, she said she was not aware of them specifically. She then said that she uses many literary skills which would include Hausladen's in one form or another, just under different names within her field. She said that the "main tool" of her trade is attention to detail, which is specifically one of Hausladen's literary devices.

Lindsey Davis feels that place is "central to colourful description and setting." Place has the ability to set a mood as well as affect who lives there and subsequently the line of inquiry. She feels a main reason people like her books is because of the place in which they are set and the characters that evolve from these surroundings.

To accomplish this sense of place she has spent twenty years researching Ancient Rome. One mode of gathering the information she uses is by visiting the Mediterranean, including most of the countries and many of the towns she has used in her books. Specifically, she uses maps of the towns to understand the layout and building locations of Ancient Rome. She also uses geography textbooks and guide books for the topography and climactic information. These methods gives her information which could aid her use of three of Hausladen's literary devices, being able to gather physical and cultural description for narrative description, dialog, and attention to detail. She also reads books about the period for cultural information. This data has the potential to aid the use of all four of Hausladen's literary devices by providing a better understanding of cultural and societal characteristics represented through narrative description, dialog, iconography, and attention to detail. In some cases she uses the Internet, but is always wary of possible inaccuracies. She finds that these techniques help her find adequate

information to compose the settings in her novels.

Lindsey Davis's background in academic geography is limited, or "hopeless" as she was told early in life. Despite this, she has taken the initiative to read books and visit places when she needs to research a subject or area. The importance of acquiring and evaluating information was taught to her in her own field of study, literature.

As a novelist, Lindsey Davis' advice for other authors is to "observe minutely" and to "look, listen, and memorize" when gathering information for a novel or series. She also feels that details should be integrated to assist the story rather than to deposit lumps of fact because you have found them. In short, she feels details and sense of place are extremely important but that for a good overall novel "the story comes first."

### *Content Analysis*

Lindsey Davis writes about an informer, Falco, who lives during the time of the ancient Roman Empire. Not only does she write about a place foreign to her, but like Lynda Robinson, it is a historical place, adding another element of difficulty to her regional writing.

Narrative description is something that Lindsey Davis uses to bring to life the Forum and other parts of Rome, places familiar to many who have seen the ancient ruins of Rome. Her narratives transform places that are cultural artifacts into a place where real people lived with "the sights and sounds and smells of every day life," letting the reader visualize how it might have been during the time of the Ancient Roman Empire. The following quote is an example of Ms. Davis's ability to transport the reader back to this time through narrative description:

It was the usual scene in the Forum. We had the Record Office and Capitol Hill hard above us on the left; to the right the Courts, and the Temple of Castor further down the Sacred Way. Opposite, beyond the white marble rostrum, stood the

Senate House. All the porticos were crammed with butchers and bankers, all the open spaces filled with sweaty crowds, mainly men. The piazza rang with the curses of strings of slaves crisscrossing like a badly organized military display. The air simmered with the reek of garlic and hair pomade. (*Silver Pigs*, p. 4)

Davis also increases the reader's sense of realism with her use of attention to detail when describing historical events of her setting. In her first book, *Silver Pigs*, Falco, her protagonist, takes a trip to Britain to figure out who is trying to get rid of Emperor Vespasian. While doing so he gives insights into past struggles for the control of the Roman Empire after Nero's fall.

First Galba, a doddering old autocrat from Spain. Next, Otho, who had been Nero's ponce...After him, Vitellius, a bullying glutton.

All that in twelve months. It was getting to seem that anyone with half an education and a winning smile could persuade the Empire that purple was just his colour. Then...up cropped this canny old general Vespasian. (*Silver Pigs*, p.66-67).

An example of iconography is found when political commentary is brought into Davis's novels through Falco, a republican, representing republican ideals of the time.

"Why did your friend call you a tricky character?"

"I'm a republican."

"Why are you a republican?"

"Because every free man should have a voice in the government..."

Because the senate should not hand control of the Empire for life to one mortal, who may turn out insane or corrupt or immoral-and probably will." (*Silver Pigs*, p.17)

As in this last quote, dialog is used throughout her novels to further enhance narrative description and detail of cultural and environmental situations. She not only exposes how the wealthy lived through Falco's dealings with the Emperor, but also how the average citizen lived through her representation of Falco's everyday life. She reminds her reader that everyday living during these early times could be quite primitive for the majority of the population.

"I need to go to the lavatory again."

"There are several alternatives. You can pop downstairs and try to

persuade Lenia to open the laundry after hours. Or you can run along the street to the big public convenience-but don't forget to take your money to get in."

"I suppose," snapped Sosia haughtily, "you and your men friends pee off the balcony?"

I looked shocked. I was, mildly. "Don't you know there are laws against that?" (*Silver Pigs*, p.18)

The data collected from the content analysis, and represented by the previous examples, shows that Lindsey Davis uses all four of Hausladen's literary devices within her novels. Davis is also able to include all four literary devices with similar amounts of representation. There is not one that sticks out as more commonly used than another. She is able to include location specific cultural details and symbolism as well as accurate physical description of the Roman Empire. Her intense research of the Ancient Roman Empire, along with her ability to create humor and depth to her characters, makes her effort to write about another place and time a success (Hausladen 2000).

## Section 2: Elizabeth George

### *Background and Questionnaire*

Elizabeth George was born in Warren Ohio, moving soon after to the San Francisco Bay area where she was raised. She received a bachelor's degree and a secondary teaching credential from the University of California, Riverside and a master's degree in counseling/psychology at California State University at Fullerton. Ms. George was a high school English teacher for much of her professional career, but has moved to short term seminar teaching on writing at the college level since she published her first book and became more involved with her writing career. She has received numerous awards for her writing and has written her own book on writing techniques, *Write Away*. Ms. George currently lives in Huntington Beach, California. She also has a flat in London where she spends a lot of her time.

As an author, Ms. George feels she has always been aware of the importance of depicting a sense of place or setting to a novel, finding that it adds to the verisimilitude of a novel. She believes strongly that it is important to the success of her novels, along with good characterization. When asked about her use of Hausladen's literary devices, she said she specifically uses narrative description and attention to detail.

Academically, Ms. George claims no experience in geography or any other related subject that would help her portray settings. She also claims no direct interest in geography, but says that the topography of specific places is interesting to her and instrumental in why she chooses a location.

Ms. George chose Great Britain as her main setting simply because of her love for the area. She first visited England in 1966 at the "height of the swinging London period."

Later she studied in England for three terms, once in London to study Shakespeare and two summers at Cambridge. Besides these experiences, any other visits Ms. George has taken to England are deliberate research trips designed to give her specific information regarding the area about which she is going to write.

Prior to going on these investigative trips, Ms. George's main resource for information are general tourist books. She reads about the location and highlights anything she thinks might be an interesting aid to the plot or characterization of her story. When she gets to the place she is researching she buys ordinance survey maps to help her understand the layout of her setting. After studying both the tour books and ordinance maps, and deciding what specific places she would like to get more information about, she goes to those specific places making notes, taking pictures and using a voice activated recorder to gather information that will help. These methods help provide information potentially used through narrative description, dialog and attention to detail. For cultural details she conducts interviews, which in the past have included policemen, land owners, university professors, lawyers, firefighters, forensic scientists, members of the Muslim community, members of the black community, presidents of colleges, students, and teachers. She also uses the Colindale Library, a newspaper library in North London, and a press cuttings service to get more information. These modes of gathering information enable her to use all four of Hausladen's literary devices, gaining cultural description and characteristics for attention to detail, dialog, iconography, and attention to detail.

When asked what advice she would give other aspiring authors, she generally thinks it is crucial to obtain first hand and trustworthy information about the places they intend to use in their writing. She categorically states that a writer should never rely

wholly on the Internet for information and that visiting a place before attempting to write about it is crucial, even when writing about another time period.

### *Content Analysis*

Elizabeth George's series is set in current day Britain. London is the home base of her novels, however the primary detectives of her novels, Lynley and Havers, are often taken to different parts of Britain for outsourced detective work. While Ms. George uses all four of Hausladen's literary devices at one point or another, three are used for conveying sense of place more than the other. Narrative description, iconography, and attention to detail are often used to describe her physical and cultural settings and situations. Dialog, though sometimes used in conjunction with iconography, is more often used in the development of characters and their personal relationships.

Ms. George uses narrative description in a very traditional way, yet with an exceptionally vivid, emotional quality. In the introduction to a new scene or physical environment, she not only sets the scenery by describing the physical surroundings, but is able to describe it in a way that the reader feels he or she is present, experiencing the bone chilling bite of the wind, or the warmth and emotion of an artist's passion through a colorful painting. There is a depth found in her narrative description that seems to penetrate the obvious, bringing full dimension to both the land and the characters found within it.

In the fifth novel of Ms. George's series, *For the Sake of Elena*, she opens the murder scene slowly through the eyes of the jogging victim, setting the stage and mood for the rest of the book.

Five days of fog dripped off the buildings and trees, made wet lattice on windows, created pools on the pavement. Outside St. Stephen's College, a lorry's

hazard lights flashed in the mist, two small orange beacons like blinking cat's eye's. In Senate House Passage, Victorian lampposts reached fingers of yellow light through the fog, and the Gothic spires of King's College first rose against then disappeared altogether into a backdrop of gloom the colour of grey doves. Beyond that, the sky still wore the guise of a mid-November night. Full dawn was yet an hour away...

The pavement narrowed to a strip of tarmac with the river on it's left and the wide, mist-shrouded expanse of Sheep's Green to it's right. Here, the hulking silhouettes of trees rose out of the fog, and the handrails of footbridges made horizontal slashes of white where the occasional lights from across the river managed to cut through the gloom. As she ran, ducks plopped silently from the bank into the water, and Elena reached into her pocket for the last wedge of morning toast which she crumbled and tossed their way...

Her toes were driving steadily into the front of her running shoes. Her ears were starting to ache in the cold. She tightened the drawstring of her hood beneath her chin, and from her jacket pocket, she took a pair of mittens and pulled them on, blowing into her hands and pressing them against her chilled face.

Ahead, the river separated into two parts-main body and murky stream-as it flowed sluggishly round Robinson Crusoe's Island, a small mass of land thinly overgrown on its south end with trees and brush and its north end given to the repair of the colleges' sculls, canoes, rowboats, and punt. A bonfire had been lit in the area recently, for Elena could smell its remains in the air. Someone had probably camped illegally on the north section of the island during the night, leaving behind a residue of charred wood hastily extinguished by water. It smelled different from a fire that has died a natural death. (*For the Sake of Elena*, p. 5-7)

This passage is a great example of the depth Ms. George brings to the story through narrative description. The description is not only full of obvious physical details, like weather, but also small details with humanlike adjectives that bring life to otherwise static pictures. One can feel the damp cold that makes Elena bundle up, see the grey colors that dominate the foggy atmosphere, and smell the scent of an extinguished bonfire.

The previous passage is also a good example of Elizabeth George's superb attention to detail. She is uniquely aware of Cambridge, the names of its buildings and roads, the topography and physical characteristics of the river. Another example of Ms. George's attention to detail is found in her novel, *A Suitable Vengeance*.

She turned away, walking towards the lights of Paddington Station where

she took the District line to Nottingham Gate, and from there the Central to Tottenham Court Road with its heady miasma of exhaust fumes and its pushing crowds of a Friday night. She made her way quickly to Soho Square. (*A Suitable Vengeance*, p. 5)

In this passage the reader is able to travel with the character through parts of London as she is going out for the evening. By researching the names of places and transport lines I found the places used are real. Ms. George could have excluded this information but her extensive research of the places she writes about allow for inclusion of details that make the story feel more real and gripping.

Unlike many authors, Ms. George uses dialog less for the continued description of a place, but more in conjunction with iconography, focusing on individual relationships and traits that are sometimes culturally symbolic. Ms. George uses iconography to delve into the culturally geographic issues of class and gender specifically through her characters. In her first novel, *A Great Deliverance*, she confronts issues of class by uniting two seemingly different individuals working together as partners. Barbara Havers, a smart and quick-witted yet self-conscious, self-destructive and somewhat bitter working-class policewoman for New Scotland Yard, is given one more chance as a detective. She is paired with Thomas Lynley, the son of the late Lord Asherton of Cornwall, who has chosen to work in a professional career for New Scotland Yard over the leisurely life of a gentleman. In the following passage, Haver's opinion of her new partner is symbolic of a stereotype the working-class has of the upper-class in Britain.

In her five years working in the same division with the man, she was certain he'd managed to avoid so much as saying her name, let alone having a single second's foul contact with her. As if a grammar school background and a working-class accent were social diseases that might infect him if he were not scrupulously careful to keep himself clear of them.

She left the room and stalked down the corridor towards the lift. Was there *anyone* in all of New Scotland Yard whom she hated more than she hated Lynley? He was a miraculous combination of every single thing that she thoroughly despised: educated at Eton, a first in history at Oxford, a public school

voice, and a bloody family tree that had its roots somewhere just this side of the Battle of Hastings. Upper class. Bright. And so damnably charming that she couldn't understand why every criminal in the city simply didn't surrender to accommodate him... And hadn't his career been convenient and sweet, purchased lock, stock, and barrel with the family funds? (*A Great Deliverance*, p.17-18)

Through this passage and subsequent passages, the reader is introduced to issues of class, specifically stereotypes given to those of a certain class. Also, while the two get to know each other better, current day deconstruction of class rules in Britain are confronted symbolically through Lynley and others characters.

Overall, Ms. George is able to use all of Hausladen's literary devices for geographic representation. Her use of dialog is more focused in conjunction with iconography and character development, but she still uses it, and her ability to use deep description of place through the other devices is exceptional.

Although physical and cultural environment is an important aid to the development of her plots and is the subject of this paper, I am compelled to mention Elizabeth George's unusual ability to create complex and authentic characters. Her characters are so interesting as they evolve that the reader can't help but care about them as they unfold, change, and interact with each other. This is an element that I have decided is also vital for the prospective writer to focus on.

### Section 3: Dorothy Gilman

#### *Background and Questionnaire*

Dorothy Gilman has a lengthy career as an author of books for both children and adults. One of her more recent endeavors is the Mrs. Pollifax series about a sixty year old woman who through a life crisis and unusual circumstances joins the CIA and eventually becomes one of their most useful agents. Dorothy Gilman was born and raised in the United States, now dividing her time between Norwalk, Connecticut and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Ms. Gilman has set her novels in numerous foreign settings, which have gained the attention and acclaim of many readers.

George Demko, emeritus professor of the geography department at Dartmouth College has included Ms. Gilman on his list called “The Best Geographical Mystery Writers: An Honor Role.” His comments about Ms. Gilman include, “Her delightful, little old Mrs. Pollifax requires some suspension of reality but the adventures are wonderful and the geography superb. Before you travel abroad, find and read the appropriate Mrs. Pollifax novel!” He has had students read her novels before foreign field trips, finding the geography is accurate and easy to recognize while at the location (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~gjdemko/strangers.htm>).

Although I was unable to get an interview or questionnaire response from Dorothy Gilman, who seems to be somewhat of a recluse, or possibly retired, I decided to include her in the research because of her ability to write about so many diverse places foreign to her origin, with such high acclaim.

## *Content Analysis*

Dorothy Gilman's Mrs. Pollifax series takes the reader through adventures all over the world. In each new book, the reader gets to experience Mrs. Pollifax's crazy situations as a CIA agent as well as learn a lot about the place to which she is sent. Gilman's inclusion of the CIA as the reason for Pollifax's adventures makes for a natural opportunity to delve into the history and politics of other countries, as agents are dealing with political situations and need to give background explanations, which informs the reader why circumstances are as they are. It also gives Ms. Gilman a great excuse to research and describe the physical and cultural attributes of a place in order to set the novels and create an interesting novel for the reader.

Ms. Gilman uses narrative description in the beginning and throughout her novels to establish the stage for the rest of the story. This gives the reader a chance to become familiar with the surroundings and be able to better understand what is going on visually throughout the story, as she refers back to specific places and landscapes important to the plot.

In Ms. Gilman's tenth mystery in the Pollifax series, *Mrs. Pollifax and the Second Thief*, she introduces the landscape of Sicily through the eyes of Mrs. Pollifax as she is taking her first drive in Sicily from the airport:

They were close to the sea now, the autostrada lined with flowing acacia under glimpses of red and yellow flowers. To her left, in the distance, rose violent and volcanic shapes of rock; in the foreground she saw a calm mountain range, sharp stony peaks and closer wooded hills and rocky protuberances. The Sicilian coast appeared to be the only flat area on the island. (*Mrs. Pollifax and the Second Thief*, p. 18)

As the novel progresses, many trips are taken up and down the mountainous Sicilian terrain. The inclusion of this description makes the novel much more interesting to visualize and also adds to plot clues as the terrain gives the protagonist the ability to hide

in and spy on houses along the slopes. Ms. Gilman is also careful to use accurate directions so that the reader has the ability to look at a map and see precisely where she is headed. In this case Mrs. Pollifax is looking to her left up at the land which is accurate because she is heading west from Palermo toward Erice along the coast. This element might seem small, but in the whole scheme of trying to make a regional novel authentic, it is important for the reader to be able to make sense of the logistics of the setting.

Ms. Gilman also uses dialog to further describe certain elements of the environment or cultural/political setting of a place which become relevant to the story. In the first novel of the series, *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, she uses dialog discussing physical and political geography between her two CIA protagonists, Mrs. Pollifax and Farrell, to uncover the communist friendly place to which they have been secretly abducted too.

Mrs. Pollifax turned to Farrell and said, “But why Albania? Surely you’re wrong!”

“Well, this isn’t Cuba... I thought at first these mountains might be the Himalayas, but this isn’t China. The mountains aren’t high enough, there aren’t enough of them and the whole topography is wrong... One has to think of the few parts of the world where the Red Chinese are welcome. There aren’t many, you know. That town we passed through was definitely not Chinese, it was Balkan in flavor. These mountains must belong to the Albanian Alps, and certainly these men are Europeans.”

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. “I thought they looked Greek.”

“If this is Albania then Greece is only a few hundred miles away,” he pointed out. “You saw how primitive the airport was and you see how primitive the country is. If we’re in Europe there’s no other country but Albania where the Red Chinese can come and go at will... It happened about 1960,” he mused, his eyebrows furrowed. “Until then Russia was Albania’s big brother and pretty much in control of the country. Then Stalin was denounced—that was a surprise to the world, you must remember that. It rocked Albania, too—they’re Stalinists here, you see. I don’t recall all of the details, it happened at one of their Big Party Congresses, but there was rather ugly name-calling, with China and Albania siding against Khrushchev. Russia punished Albania by withdrawing all its aid... and China very happily moved in to help. (*The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, p. 52)

This dialog holds important information that is necessary for the plot to build and

unfold. The political atmosphere and the physical environment in which they find themselves become key both in solving the mystery and escaping from Albania to safety. The inclusion of this description also makes the novel more interesting as the reader is learning about a place most likely new and intriguing.

In a few specific cases, iconography is used by Ms. Gilman to describe certain cultural traits and circumstances that the people of an area confront. This helps the reader understand the frame of mind a culture is coming from and helps give flavor to the plot. In this same novel, *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, the plight of the Albanian people is symbolically shown through the character and experience of a member of the secret police.

“I was brought here two days ago because I speak the English. Before then I was in Sarande... They went searching for those of us in the Sigurimi who speak your language.”

“The Sigure-what?” asked Mrs. Pollifax.

“That is the name of the secret police in this country.”

Mrs. Pollifax gasped. “That means that you-I mean-“

He shrugged. “The time is very difficult here. Those of us who can read and write have two choices, to join the Sigurimi or not to join. Those who do not join can usually be seen on the roads any day. They smash rock. They carry rock. They have no hope.”

“I’m sorry,” said Mrs. Pollifax. “It sounds quite sad.” She looked at him with curiosity, studying him carefully because of his extraordinary kindness to Farrell, but unable to find anything in his face to explain him. It was a dark, secretive face with pointed features; black brows, a long, thin nose, a sharp thin jaw, a thin sharp mouth. She would not have taken him for a kind or an unselfish one, and yet he had flouted orders to help a sick man.

“It was not always this way,” he said. “The Albanians are a proud, fiercely independent people. But without luck,” he added. “First the Turks ruled us, then the Russians, now the Chinese. Whatever the master the country stays the same. Poor, primitive, frightened too.” (*The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, p. 68-69)

This quote, as well as the others I have used to represent Ms. Gilman’s writing, also shows her intense attention to detail. The cultural and physical details she uses in her books, which I have randomly researched for accuracy, are right on. For example

when looking up *Sigurimi* in the Encyclopedia Britannica online I found that it was the specific name of the Dictorate State of Security who controlled Albania during its communist era. Ms. Gilman could have easily left the name as a generic “secret police” of Albania or just said it was a guard hired to interpret for the prisoners, but instead she took the time to research the history of Albania and use an actual group relevant to Albania within the plot. The referenced towns and bodies of water as well as the topography also correlate with the actual characteristics of the places she is describing.

In summary, the data collected from the content analysis shows that Ms. Gilman uses all four of Hausladen’s literary devices. She uses iconography a little bit less than the other devices, but it is still present. Her rich use of narrative description, dialog, attention to detail and some iconography enables her to convey a sense of place beyond description of physical place, including cultural and political details that really enhance the feeling of authenticity within her novels. The attention she pays to her settings adds to her fun and adventuresome novels by giving them true basis in reality for her reader to make sense of and to learn from.

## Section 4: Lynda Robinson

### *Background and Questionnaire*

Lynda Robinson was born and raised in the United States, mainly Texas, where she now resides. Since childhood she has been interested in ancient Middle Eastern cultures, which culminated in a Ph.D. in anthropology, with an emphasis in Middle Eastern archaeology from the University of Texas in Austin. She is now an author of two series, one, a romance novel series written under the name of Suzanne Robinson, and the second, a mystery series set in ancient Egypt. The later series is the one of focus in this study.

Although Ms. Robinson acknowledged use of literary techniques and devices within her novels, she could not name any specifically. Of Hausladen's devices, the one that most fits her description of what she uses is attention to detail. This is a product of her academic background in archeological, anthropology, and the Middle East, which she feels has played a major role in her understanding and portrayal of Ancient Egypt. As an anthropologist she believes she has gained a special awareness of ethnocentricity and culture to the point that she is able to leave the values and rules of her own origins behind and transport herself into the mind set of another culture. In general, she feels she has spent so much time during her life studying this topic, both academically and otherwise, that when she decided to write novels with this setting, she had the knowledge all at her fingertips. For her other novels she has had to do much more research.

While researching specifics about ancient Egypt, Ms. Robinson has relied heavily on scholarly works and reconstructions. This is because most of ancient Egypt's structures where everyday life occurred are now collapsed and are mere traces in the

ground. Despite the absence of most ancient structures, she has also found that having experienced Egypt first hand is very important to understanding the environment of the Nile. “The blue ribbon and the green cultivation on either side...its’ barren desert and sandstone cliffs”, are some of the unique qualities of Egypt that she believes one needs to see to fully understand visually and then be able to write about. Her research techniques give her the potential ability to incorporate all of Hausladen’s literary devices. Scholarly works and reconstructions, as well as experiencing the physical land in which the society lived have the ability to provide the physical and cultural characteristics to enable the use of narrative description, dialog, iconography, and attention to detail.

Ms. Robinson believes that the incorporation of a strong and accurate sense of place has contributed greatly to the success of her novels. While the choice of ancient Egypt as a setting captures readers’ attentions because of peoples’ initial intrigue with the pyramids, artifacts, and culture, Ms. Robinson claims an uneducated use of Egypt and its’ ancient culture could make the people she writes about seem “pretty stupid and boring and stodgy... looking extremely superstitious with all the composite Gods they had.” She thinks that in truly understanding the ancient Egyptian culture one needs to be able to leave behind preconceptions and research what cultural characteristics really meant to give them accurate human traits that can be understood today.

Ms. Robinson’s advice for other authors is that one can never learn enough about how to write and you can never know enough about the place that is being written about. She feels very strongly that a professional writer needs to be an expert on the environment of which he or she is writing. She used an example in the interview to emphasize this point saying that if you are writing about a submarine setting, one must be able to compete in a world with Tom Clancy’s submarine environment in “*Hunt for Red*

October” to be able to succeed or even survive.

### *Content Analysis*

Lynda Robinson’s background in archeological anthropology is apparent throughout her novels. Her writing is saturated with cultural characteristics, including reference to social structures, belief systems and rituals, and physical details that could only be obtained through intense research and experience with Ancient Egypt. Ms. Robinson incorporates all four of Hausladen’s literary devices, but uses iconography less frequently than the others.

Most likely a product of her background, Ms. Robinson’s use of narrative description often lies less in pure description of landscape, but more in describing physical phenomenon that affect the culture around it. This could also be because she is writing of Ancient Egyptians, who she says were very tied to their physical surroundings in everything they did. In her second novel, *Eater of Souls*, her description of the landscape references the inundation of the Nile River, which was very important to the livelihood of the Egyptians.

The charioteer he’d sent to find Nefertiti’s favorite cook had given him a description of the old woman’s house. It was a little removed from the village, to the south and farther toward the desert than any other. Meren left the fertile fields that took up almost all the land fed by the Inundation. He met a few farmers on their way home. They carried digging tools used to repair canals and shore up dikes. Inundation was coming, and Egypt must be ready for it...

The land rose as he walked across the higher, less desirable tracts where Inundation didn’t always deposit its yearly supply of fertile soil. The solar orb turned carnelian as it vanished behind the distant desert cliffs. It was growing late, and he encountered no more villagers. From a field riddled with cracks caused by relentless drought season heat, he could see a solitary farmhouse of an old design. The sun vanished behind it, taking most of the light.

His foot reached sand. He had reached the desert margin. The cook’s house was on a rise that would keep it above Inundation. (*Eater of Souls*, p. 93)

Although Ms. Robinson uses iconography less than Hausladen's other literary devices, she uses it in the following example to represent the unique political mindset of the isolated Egyptians compared to other nations. In *Eater of Souls*, Mugallu, a prince of the Hittites is being introduced into the presence of pharaoh.

During the ceremony, Mugallu waited with an uninterested expression on his face. He was a young man, a warrior of the Hittite court and a relative of King Suppiluliumas. Like most Hittites, he was stocky, like a zebra, and bore a pyramid of a nose that jutted out from his face with an aggression that mirrored the character of his people.

Meren remembered Mugallu from other visits; his most common facial expression was a sneer, and unlike pharaoh's subjects or his vassals, he didn't hold Tutankhamun in reverence as a living god. To Mugallu, pharaoh was another prince like himself, and he stood in the way of Hittite ambitions of conquest. (*Eater of Souls*, p. 24)

In Egypt, pharaoh is given the respect of a living god, but in Mugallu's eyes he is just another ruler like himself. Mugallu's character introduces a political difference between the two cultures. Robinson is able to explain Ancient Egypt's seemingly egocentric nature, which is due to its relative isolation from the other Middle Eastern nations, and regular conquest.

Ms. Robinson uses dialog mainly to enhance the description of the setting and, often, cultural details, which are part of the evolving plots. In the beginning of her first book, *Murder in the Place of Anubis*, she takes the reader through the Egyptian process of preserving a dead body in its traditional setting.

Marshaling his flock of water carriers, fire stokers, bandagers, and unguent mixers, Raneb bustled along an avenue formed by mountains of natron, the salt used to dry a corpse. In the distance priests and laborers made their way to the shelters where new bodies awaited sweetening in a wash of natron and water. As Raneb entered the drying shed, he consulted a sheet of papyrus containing a list of the dead, their dates of lustration and drying, and the name of the lector priest in charge of each. Before him lay a double row of alabaster embalming tables heaped with natron. The surface of each table was concave to allow the fluids that drained from a corpse to collect in funnels that emptied into stone bowls at either end of the table...

Folding his papyrus, Raneb turned to the men behind him. One of them

yawned.

“Close your mouth,” Raneb said. “Have reverence for the work of Anubis. You look as if we should put you in the natron along with Lady Shapu... This is the one.” He pulled a rolled papyrus from his belt. “No, you fool, don’t start shoveling until I’m ready. Let me find the prayer. Here it is...Lord Everlasting who has died and risen again, Lord Osiris, ruler of the dead...” (*Murder in the Place of Anubis*, p. 1-2)

A second murdered body is then discovered with the body being uncovered. This manner of hiding and finding a body is so much more interesting than it would have been lying in a street or a heap of rubble, which could have happened in any other place at any other time. Ms. Robinson’s ability to choose relevant time and place situations with historically accurate attention to detail, like this one, definitely adds to the uniqueness of her novels and subsequent interest to the reader. The reader enters another time and place, able to visualize and understand the environment and culture they are taken to.

While a doctoral degree in a certain subject isn’t necessary or in many cases feasible for an aspiring author to obtain, Lynda Robinson’s writing is a great example of how extensive knowledge about an area, especially a historical area, can really enhance and make the success of the novel. Ms. Robinson is able to use all of Hausladen’s literary devices, although her use of iconography is limited. Her style of writing might lack development of complex characters, but her knowledge of the subject matter and ability to creatively weave it into every aspect of the story makes her novels extremely interesting from a cultural standpoint.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I will give a general overview of how these successful fictional authors meet Hausladen's model. Specifically, I will summarize whether they were able to use all four literary devices, and of them, which of the devices were more commonly used. I will also address which devices they are consciously using and what research methods and resources they use to incorporate the geographic devices into their literature. Finally, I will address other insights I came across during the research process.

*Do these authors use all four of Hausladen's literary devices?*

According to the content analyses, each of the authors used all four of Gary Hausladen's literary devices that establish sense of place, namely: narrative description, dialogue, iconography, and attention to detail. While some authors used one device more than another, or used them in different combinations to enhance each other, at some level each device is used, as seen in the previous chapter. From the analyses, I have seen how these devices enable each author to develop several types of geographical characteristics, (i.e. cultural, physical, political, historical), which together enhance all aspects of the novel.

*Which are most commonly used?*

Although all the literary devices are used by all of the authors, some of the authors use one device less than the others. Dorothy Gilman and Lynda Robinson both use narrative description, dialog, and attention to detail frequently, but use limited iconography. Iconography is a device that necessitates intimate research into a places' culture to specifically understand certain characteristics of different segments of society.

Both write about places where iconography could be extremely challenging. Ms. Robinson's challenge lies in writing about an ancient culture that has no remnants other than scholarly reconstructions and writings. This might limit her ability to understand some of the intricacies of social relationships in order to use iconography fully. Ms. Gilman's challenge could be the diversity of places that she writes about. The intense research that is needed to use iconography more frequently could be impossible because she has less time to spend on one area.

Elizabeth George uses narrative description, iconography, and attention to detail often, but uses dialog as a geographic literary device less. Although her characters are often involved in dialog, dialog is most often used to develop character and relationships than to portray sense of place. In most of the rare cases that she does use dialog to enhance sense of place, it is specifically used in conjunction with iconography. While dialog is used less, it doesn't seem to detract from Elizabeth George's ability to establish sense of place. As Hausladen's definitions state, narrative description and dialog both describe the physical or cultural setting of the book, but through a different mode of communication. Ms. George's frequent use of narrative description seems to take the place of any lack of dialog.

Of the four authors, Lindsey Davis is the one who is able to include all four literary devices with similar amounts of representation. There is not one that sticks out as more commonly used than another. While she does have some of the same challenges as Lynda Robinson, she might have an easier time researching the Roman Empire because it is younger than Ancient Egypt and more information is available from that time period.

From the experience of each of these writers it can be concluded that the use of some of Hausladen's literary devices are harder to use based on the historical nature of a

setting, time spent researching, and emphasis on literary devices other than geographically inclined ones. Iconography seems to be a harder device to use, taking a certain depth of knowledge about a place that is not always available or realistic.

*Which of the devices are they consciously using?*

During the interview process, Hausladen's specific literary devices were not always recognized as devices the authors consciously use. Elizabeth George acknowledges using some of the devices, specifically narrative description and attention to details. Lindsey Davis is conscious of using attention to detail and Lynda Robinson has a more vague, undefined idea about how she incorporates place in her writing. In hindsight, this is not a surprise, seeing that none of them come from the specific geographic perspective of this thesis. Despite this lack of ability to fit nicely into my model, each author consciously understands the importance of place to their novels' success. This is alternately supported through each author's emphasis on intense research techniques, allowing them to use diverse types of physical, cultural, political, and symbolic geographic information within their plots. Each author acknowledges the important role that accurate place has in the context of the story's settings. Expressly, they say that place helps them create specific moods and intriguing locational situations. They all feel that attention to meticulous place representation also adds to the realism of the stories, making them more believable and more successfully escapist. Knowledge of the actual settings also adds to the verisimilitude of their books. By relying on actual details of a place they have unlimited real options rather than having to come up with an inexhaustible supply of imaginative situations, descriptions, and details on their own.

*What research methods and resources do they use to incorporate these literary devices into their writing?*

Each author uses very similar techniques for researching their settings. Lynda Robinson and Lindsey Davis have both had to rely heavily on historical data and replications in order to develop their historical settings. They have both spent countless hours in and out of the library reading about the specific area and culture which they write about. Despite the impossibility for them to see their settings first hand, they both have visited these places, each acknowledging the importance of having an idea of the physical surroundings. Being able to associate what they have learned about the culture to the physical geography is an essential part of fully visualizing and writing about their places. Elizabeth George also spends extensive time reading about her setting and has made several trips to do specific research about the areas she writes. She has the added convenience of being able to experience the culture and landscape she writes about because her settings are current day. This gives her the ability to go beyond the library, gaining first hand information through interviews and exploration. All three authors feel that visiting the site and getting as much physical and cultural information about the place is essential to utilizing it fully in their plots.

The four authors chosen for this research have different writing and educational experiences and write about diverse areas as their settings, places where they are not originally from. Despite this, they have all been recognized for their success as writers, specifically when it comes to portraying a believable and interesting sense of place. It is not surprising to find similar themes of importance from their interviews and techniques which are used to arrive at the same level of success, mainly techniques aimed toward intense attention to the physically and culturally detailed settings within their books.

These techniques and insights are worthy of note for other aspiring authors.

### *Other Insights from Interviews and Questionnaires*

First, while having a strong background in academic geography does not seem to be necessary for an author to be a successful writer of detailed, interesting settings, having an interest in geographic ideas and areas, such as culture and its physical surroundings, is very important. Lynda Robinson is the only one of these authors who has extensive educational background in the area she writes about, and while this has definitely helped her portray Ancient Egypt in a very detailed way, the other authors, through their own self-motivated research have been able to also depict their settings successfully. Each of the responding authors talked of a long term interest in the specific place they chose as their settings. The key seems to be an initial “love” or extreme interest in a setting so that there is motivation to make it part of the story and subsequently more real for the reader.

Second, these authors advise other writers to know their places, but also advise that the story should come first, and place should be a means to the end. Emphasis was also put on getting as much first hand and trustworthy information as possible, and that the internet should be used sparingly, or as initial research that is supported by other sources.

### *Summary*

These successful mystery novelists who write about places foreign to their origins, are able to meet Hausladen’s model by using his four literary devices, thus establishing sense of place. While all of the literary devices are used, iconography seems to be more challenging for some authors representing a foreign place because it necessitates more intimate knowledge of a culture. Although all of Hausladen’s specific

literary devices were not familiar to the author's, they translated to similar literary techniques which they use and general establishment of sense of place was important to all four of the authors. In order to be able to incorporate sense of place into their novels, the authors have spent extensive time and effort researching their regions by reading about the physical and cultural characteristics of the areas and by physically visiting the areas to gather first hand experience of the place.

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## APPENDIX A

### Lindsey Davis Questionnaire:

1. Q: What past experiences have you had in academic cultural geography or any sort of academic subject which would help you understand and portray your settings accurately?  
  
A: Ha! I was hopeless at geography academically, or so I was told. I have no academic qualifications in Geography. That doesn't stop me reading books when I need to know something, and I visit places using observation. I was taught in my own subject how to acquire information the evaluate it.
2. Q: What past experiences have you had with informal/self interested geography, etc?  
  
A: Amy, I don't know what this means. If you mean, where have I actually been? The answer is, to most of the countries and many of the towns within them that I use in my books.
3. Q: For what reasons did you decide to place your novels settings and characters in the Ancient Roman Empire, a place and time so foreign to your origin?  
  
A: Because I like historical novels, and think there is a good readership available for them. I am British; we had the Romans here, and we have a feeling of kinship as a result. Also, we love the Mediterranean because it has sun, wine, vibrant people, and much else that doesn't occur in Britain. Choosing an exotic location is a tried and tested way for an author to lure in an audience.
4. Q: What past experiences have you had as a tourist or resident, etc., in the place of your novels settings?  
  
A: After twenty years of specific research and many visits to the Med before that, I can't even begin to answer this! One location, London, is where I live, NB.
5. Q: What resources and techniques do you use for researching geographic and cultural detail for your settings and characters?  
  
A: For the towns I need maps; luckily there is plenty of evidence for the street layout and building location of ancient Rome. I read books about the period. I read tourguides. I use geography textbooks occasionally for land-lie and weather. I sometimes use the Internet, though infrequently, except where there is a strikingly good website, such as exists for ancient Ostia.
6. Q: Have you always consciously been aware of the importance of relatively accurate sense of place and description of place in you novels? If you feel it is important, why? Do you feel it adds to the success of your novels?

A: Place is central to 'colourful' description and setting. Describing the place can set a mood (though this is a false analogy sometimes, and can be imposed by the author). In my books, places affect who lives there (victims, suspects and witnesses), which is often a subject of enquiry. There is no doubt people like my books because of where the action takes place – and how it is pictured.

7. Q: Do you use specific literary devices for incorporation of geography (sense of place and description of place)?
- o Narrative description?
  - o Dialogue?
  - o Iconography?
  - o Details?

A: Not aware of it. I use literary skills for everything. The main tool of my trade is choice of telling details.

8. Q: What advice would you give other authors who would like to successfully and relatively accurately (true accuracy being somewhat subjective depending on individual experience) portray a culture and its people within their fictional novels?

A: Observe minutely. Integrate to assist the story, not to deposit lumps of fact because you have found them. Look, listen, memorise. Then make it your own. The story comes first.

## APPENDIX B

### Elizabeth George's Questionnaire:

1. Q: What past experiences have you had in academic cultural geography or any sort of academic subject which would help you understand and portray your settings accurately?  
  
A: None at all.
2. Q: What past experiences have you had with informal/self interested geography, etc?  
  
A: I've never been particularly interested in geography, but the topography of individual places has always been of interest to me. Indeed, the topography of a place is largely instrumental in why I choose it as a location.
3. Q: For what reasons did you decide to place your novels settings and characters in Great Britain, a place foreign to your origin?  
  
A: Simply because I like Great Britain, and I always have.
4. Q: What past experiences have you had as a tourist or resident, etc., in the place of your novels settings?  
  
A: I first went to England in 1966 at the height of the swinging London period. While I have never lived in England or anywhere else in England, I have studied in London, taking a course in Shakespeare at which time I lived a short distance from the location of where I ultimately placed St. James's house. I was also a summer student in Cambridge for two summers prior to writing FOR THE SAKE OF ELENA, which takes place in Cambridge. Other than that, my experiences in the locations where I set my novels are deliberate research trips. Therefore, and experiences I have are designed to give me specific information about topography, architecture, flora, fauna and any institutional organization in a location that I might need to know about.
5. Q: What resources and techniques do you use for researching geographic and cultural detail for your settings and characters?  
  
A: The only resources I use prior to going to England to research setting are general tourist books. I begin by reading about the location and highlighting anything that I think might be useful as an element of plot, characterization and- obviously- location. When I get to the place that I'm going to be doing research on, I buy ordnance survey maps to help me. Having identified the specific places I'd like to see from both my guide book and maps, I go to those places make notes, talk into a voice activated tape recorder and take copious photographs. For the cultural details, I conduct interviews and have in the past interviewed

policemen, land owners, university professors, lawyers, firefighters, forensic scientists, members of the Muslim community, members of the black community, presidents of college's, students, teachers, etc. I also use the Colindale Library and the press cuttings service to get additional information.

6. Q: Have you always consciously been aware of the importance of relatively accurate sense of place and description of place in you novels? If you feel it is important, why? Do you feel it adds to the success of your novels?

A: Yes I've always been conscious of this. I feel that it adds to the verisimilitude of a novel. I definitely feel it adds to the success of my novels but I also believe that good characterization is another reason that my books are so successful.

7. Q: Do you use specific literary devices for incorporation of geography (sense of place and description of place)?

A: I use narrative description, telling details, and place worked into the action of the scene.

8. Q: What advice would you give other authors who would like to successfully and relatively accurately (true accuracy being somewhat subjective depending on individual experience) portray a culture and its people within their fictional novels?

A: I would advise other authors never to rely solely on the Internet for their information. If someone wants to write about a real place in the present day it's crucial to go there. Writing about a real place at another period of time is far more challenging, but I still think it's important to go to that place and find materials place that are reflective of that period of time.

## APPENDIX C

Lynda Robinson's Interview:

Amy: So, one of the first things I want to ask you is about your extensive academic background in anthropology and specifically archeology.

Lynda: Ya, I've spent a lot of time in graduate school.

Amy: So, my first question is what past experience you've had academically with geography, but cultural geography is pretty closely related, I think, too.

Lynda: Well, anthropological archeology approaches archeology differently than, say, classical archeology used to, in that it looks at society from the view point of anthropology rather than, you know, and culture as a process and all that kind of thing. So, I came to it from that point of view. So, I had a great awareness of ethnocentricity and the operation of culture on the individual and so on and so forth, so that I could, or I was used to transporting myself and leaving my own values behind and transporting myself into the mind set or world view of another culture. Geography, well, I'm not quite sure what you mean...

Amy: Oh, never mind, that was a very good answer to my question. I think a lot of authors have a hard time transporting....

Lynda: Well, I've thought about it a lot because my, ya know, I specialized in Middle Eastern archeology, and I've been reading about ancient Egypt since I was a kid, so that I had the world memorized, ya know, by the time I started writing, so that after all those many years of not only scholarly reading, but other kinds of reading, I simply had it all at my finger tips. Which is not necessarily the case for other types of topics that I might write about. So, ya, it was an advantage.

Amy: Definitely. Perfect. So, my next question is "What experiences have you had in the place settings of your novels, like physical experience. I know you've done field work?"

Lynda: Ya, that was in Syria, so, you know, I knew what the Middle East was like, but then I also, later on, went to Egypt and saw it for myself. The problem with most ancient Middle Eastern cultures is that where everyday life took place was in mud brick buildings and homes which are now collapsed and are just traces in the ground, so that, where you can see the temples, the places where most peoples everyday life took place exist only in scholarly works and reconstructions, so I already had that at my fingertips, but seeing the place is always great for just that little bit of authenticity and certainly the world of the Nile is a very special type of environment. The blue ribbon and the green cultivation on either side and any time you stop the water it's barren desert and so it is a very unique environment, to believe it you have to see it really, the Nile is probably one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen.

Amy: Ya, I've actually had the opportunity to go there.

Lynda: Oh, well, you know what I mean then.

Amy: Ya, and it's fun, because reading your novels, there are several passages where I think, "Oh ya, I can picture it just the physical description of what your writing. It's really great.

Lynda: Well, I am glad I succeeded then.

Amy: Ya, definitely. So, a lot of your past experiences have help you.

Lynda: Well, ya and not only that, it's really funny but I live in Texas and Texas is the same latitude as Egypt, even though it's not as dry, so, ya know, when it's damn hot here, it's damn hot there. It's a lot hotter in Egypt. And the seasons are relatively the same, summer, really summer, and damn hot summer and then don't blink that was winter, so Utah... I don't know, you probably get a lot colder.

Amy: We do, we have pretty regular seasons.

Lynda: Ya, that's nice, ya know, we don't have that kind of thing.

Amy: I like it except for this winter was so long, it was rough. So, that probably helps you understand the climate a little bit.

Lynda: Just a little bit.

Amy: Okay. My next question is what resources or techniques have you used to research geographic data.

Lynda: Well, most archeological works will... well, geology or geography?

Amy: Either way.

Lynda: Okay, geology I don't really pay much attention too, but the geography there are several different works on geography of ancient Egypt and also most scholarly works of any size will deal with the geography of the Nile, how the river evolved, the increasing decimation of the precedly arrant? Environment of the Holocene period began and so on and so forth, so there's a lot of geography and geology and archeology, so, and of course, they always describe the sandstone cliffs and all that kind of stuff. Ya know, so there are plenty of works like that that you really need to be familiar with if you want to know what Egypt is like.

Amy: Ya, so if somebody wanted to do that sort of thing they would need to do research?

Lynda: Ya, I guess it's not all that complicated an environment relatively speaking, not like, it doesn't vary, say like the United States varies, or Russia would vary, but you do need to be familiar with it.

Amy: Okay, are there any areas, like in your romance novels, where you haven't had to much educational background or physical...

Lynda: Well, I don't have any... well let me put it this way... I had a general education, a BA, from Rice University and so I had all the usual humanities courses which meant that I had English literature and so on and so forth but I also had spent a great deal of my youth reading. My family is originally from England and so I concentrated on English history and I would rather read what life was like in the Elizabethan period than a lot of fiction works I know. So spent a lot of my life reading things like that, everyday life in Tudor England and things like that so I chose those areas for those books because of that.

Amy: Did you find you needed to do any other academic research for those?

Lynda: Well, ya know, it's hard for me to really know, I mean if I need a book I go get it, it's, ya, know writers read and they live and breath in books so it's not really a hard thing, it's not something that they really don't to. I mean it's not like this grand project that you set out to do that's alien and you have to make a special effort. It's just more like, "Oh boy! I get to go read about such and such.

Amy: Ya.

Lynda: So you know, if I need to know about a certain espionage in Tudor England then I'll get myself a book and read about it, so that's the kind of thing I do. There are standard things which a fiction writer needs to know to create a fictional world and those things include the physical environment, the language because it varies by period of course and ya know all sorts of social mores and all that kind of thing, the technology, all ... it's really interesting because I was from anthropology I was used to dividing culture into ya know technology, social organization and so on. And so that's just the way I approached my fictional world, I just transferred the factual world to the fictional world and made sure I had all the important components of culture that would be necessary.

Amy: Okay, that's great. My next question is what is your time frame before and after conscious use of your anthropology in your books but obviously you have always used it.

Lynda: Ya, it's just a natural part of my brain.

Amy: Do you as a fiction writer, do you, how do you decide where your description of the geography is going to be, do you use different literary devices that your...

Lynda: Well I'm sure there are nice complicated and erudite sounding techniques, but I don't really have them memorized. I can tell you that it is a balance between the creative side of your mind and the more factual side of your mind and you have to get those two going together and you have to decide, for example, there are all sorts of things you have to decide like if your writing a mystery novel then you have to decide not just who gets murdered or what gets done, it's the crime, you know, so I have to decide where would it be appropriate for such a thing to happen, ya know, so while some things would be

appropriate to happen inside a city, ya know, some things would be more appropriate to happen in the desert and some things would be more appropriate to happen on the Nile itself, so it just depends on the context I would say. I'm not quite sure If I answered you question or not.

Amy: Ya, you did. My next question is how you feel the incorporation of sense of place has affected your novels, whether it be the success of your novels or.

Lynda: Well, for one thing Egypt has always captured peoples' imaginations, ya know. The very physical reality of Egypt, not just the pyramids, which are some of the most astonishing man made artifacts, but also just the world itself Egypt, like I said, unlike any other country I know of even along the Tigris and Euphrates it's not quite the same because Egypt is not really mountainous it's very gentle, it only changes gradually, and the river is very calm, and of course until recently it was an inundating river that spread over it's banks and deposited rich soil that made it the breadbasket of the world. So that kind of thing creates a unique world that not only is it easy to describe but it creates a certain kind of culture. Egypt is or Egyptians were the way they were because of the place that they lived in that they where much less subject than most other ancient people to being concurred because they were isolated there were deserts on either side and the Mediterranean in the north and Nubian tribes in the South below the cataracts. So they had a relatively peaceful way of life and therefore a continuing heritage that was passed down for thousands of years which made there outlook on the world much more inward looking, much less anxious and so on, except for the interim when the central government broke down and law broke down, but those times where rare compared to the times of peace. And because they had a rich economy because of the Nile and because of their other resources, for example, they mined the gold and other semi-precious stone which are quit valuable, because they were so wealthy and because their technology as it was suited them very well, they were not as interested in change. It really was not necessary to them, as to do as we modern Americans do to change for changes sake always looking to the next best. They more looked at what had been given to them by the gods and worked really well and made sure that it continued to work well, which is a very different cognitive world view than other people.

Amy: So that makes it an easier subject to write about maybe?

Lynda: Well in some ways yes, but in other ways you can make them pretty stupid and boring and stodgy if you don't leave aside your own preconceptions. You can make them look extremely superstitious with all the composite Gods they had if you don't really understand or haven't gone to the trouble of researching what all that stuff really meant.

Amy: Which often authors do and it's just too bad because often it brings stereotypes...

Lynda: Ya, I know I could have made a lot more money doing it the other way. Tyranny of the Gods approach but I just refused.

Amy: I'm glad. Do you have any advice for other authors who might not have your back ground in anthropology as to how they could go about incorporating a sense of place?

Lynda: Well, it's all book on how to write tackle that topic. For most writers it is very, very important to know your environment, whether it's a nuclear sub or it's ancient Egypt, if you don't know it well, there is very little chance that you'll get it published anyway, because you are going up against a nuclear sub of Tom Clancy. So you need to know what you are doing. So my general advice would be you can never read enough about how to write and you certainly can never know enough about the place you're writing about. And there are certain elements to that that help spread out into other areas of writing. The characterization of people, as you know from what I told you about why Ancient Egyptians were the way they were, so certain personality types would occur, ya know, people who were tradition loving and that kind of thing, so it spreads out all over your writing, so there is no way to underestimate the importance of being able to communicate a sense of place. It also helps with the atmosphere of your books because the place will give you the atmosphere. Ancient Egypt is a pretty flamboyant example of that but it's also true that you can simply communicate character by a sense of place in the sense that if you wanted to create a business executive of a certain type you might be able to describe their office as extremely neat with not anything on the desk but their computer and no paper out of place, no paper in the waste basket as indication of a certain type of personality as apposed to another person whose office is piled high with papers and generally looks like a hurricane hit it. So, it's complicated and the best thing I can say is there is not way to underestimate the importance of it.

Great!