

Crime Fiction and Dystopic Landscapes

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The theme of the proposed paper is the peculiar nature of landscapes in the works of some of the most important authors of the so-called hard-boiled fiction set in southern California, especially in and around Los Angeles. If the pastoral mode in literature is often marked by a harmonious continuity between the natural and the artificial, the man-made, the novels of Raymond Chandler or Ross Macdonald can be seen as versions of the anti-pastoral in the sense that they build upon various tensions between man and the specific Californian environment. They make use of the peculiarities of the land- and cityscape of L.A. characterized sometimes by the expression „rurban“, that is, neither „urban“ nor „rural“. The instability of natural environment enters into the plots of their novels in the form of earthquakes, wildfires, landslides or flash floods, their disastrous consequences being presented also as a just retribution for human arrogance and greed, which erects houses in very ill-suited places. The theme of the exploitation and devastation of nature becomes very prominent for instance in the novels of Ross Macdonald, which thus sometimes represent an interesting combination of hard-boiled crime fiction and eco-thriller.

