

## LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

**Brigitte Le Juez and Bill Richardson (eds) (2019) *Spaces of Longing and Belonging: Territoriality, Ideology and Creative Identity in Literature and Film*. Brill. 287 pp., €105.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-90-04-40292-8.**

*Spaces of Longing and Belonging* is prefaced with 'The Globe', a poem from Jane Clarke's poetry collection entitled, *The River* (2015). At the end of the poem, the poet's protagonist is requested to carry a world globe from one classroom to another; unfortunately, 'it falls—bare wooden boards / a crack, a hush, a broken world rolls.' Tragic as this may be for the young protagonist, the reader can visualize a discordant planet that continues to move. This 'broken' globe still constitutes a space, but due to the 'cracks', its inhabitants are consigned to a continuous search for belonging driven by their sense of longing for cohesion. The fifteen chapters in *Spaces of Longing and Belonging* advance theories born out of the spatial turn by presenting readers with perspectives on urban space from across the world. The editors propose that metropolitan zones have generated the need to continue evaluating our various feelings of longing while searching for a sense of belonging in the continually modernizing society. The focal points in these essays range across many continents, utilizing both literary and cinematic interpretations on the two themes of longing and belonging, with an emphasis on the geographical and the textual.

In the introduction, Le Juez and Richardson argue for continued analyses of our urban environment. They draw on the theory of Michael Issacharoff who has proposed that there are twin spaces in literature: geographical and textual (2). These dual spaces allow for a constructive approach to analyzing these varied artistic expressions (via a variety of media) through both their physical settings along with the 'metaphors and symbols' within the work. Expected names appear in the introduction, including Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Gaston Bachelard, Edward Soja, Marc Augé, Doreen Massey, and Robert Tally, among others. The editors propose that 'despite the fact that notions of longing and belonging are directly related to the various aspects of spatiality, it seems that this aspect remained to be developed from a literary perspective' (7). The approach to examining these two connected topics is not limited to traditional texts (i.e. novels, films, short stories, poetry) but also incorporates arguments on less obvious realms present in our everyday life, such as shipping forecasts, folklore, and travel literature. The collection is broken into three sections: 1) In-between Territories; 2) Ideological Sites of Belonging; and, 3) Space, Affect and Identity. Each article is relatively short in length, thus making *Spaces of Longing and Belonging* more versatile since the reader is not bogged down with lengthy expositions that would ultimately blunt the impact of the book. Additionally, the chapters have similar structures with the literary theory established in the first few pages before being applied to the author's work(s) of choice.

Without doubt, the most significant contribution to the collection is provided by Bertrand Westphal, a pre-eminent French theorist on spatiality. Westphal's chapter immediately follows the introduction and is not placed into any of the three divisions of the book. Entitled 'Belonging to the Periphery of the Planet', Westphal, whose primary distinction derives from his manifesto, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2007), puts forth the argument that the world should be viewed 'as a single, immense periphery, thereby enabling us to see the 'Other' as someone we can genuinely get to know' (17). Translated for the first time into English, the argument moves through three stages, Planetarity, Periphery, and Utopia. Stressing the importance of belonging and our relationship with the planet, Westphal proposes that we take a more global perspective concerning interaction with our multifocal surroundings. The key to adapting this new perspective is to contest the idea that the West is a central hub of civilization. If every place is located in the marginal, there are no longer central epicenters from which to derive our 'standards' of normality; as a result, the 'other' becomes people we can get to know since we are all on the periphery. The article, then, stands as a theoretical foundation for the remaining fourteen chapters.

Across three subsequent sections, the essays move through varying positions of longing and belonging in the peripheral. Chapters in 'In-between Territories' are focussed around different regions of the globe, including Chad, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Greece, and Japan. The rich diversity of locales emphasizes Westphal's argument for the decentralization of the West. Themes range from errantry, nostalgia, place and non-place, in-betweenness, and loneliness. A most interesting perspective of everyday life and belonging appears in Sanna Nyqvist's 'Poetics of the Shipping Forecast', which explores how the seemingly mundane forecasts for the shipping channels are interwoven into art, demonstrating a form of association. As such, location names create a sense of nostalgia for past days while also signifying a loss of meaning as the shipping forecasts become redundant amidst our modern technology. A similarly thought-provoking approach is found in Ivan Kenny's article on Julio Cortázar's short story, 'The Island at Noon' (1966). Kenny aptly demonstrates the concept of in-between territories by contrasting the non-place in which the protagonist is employed as a flight attendant, servicing a regular route over the Greek isles, with that of the protagonist's desire to visit one of the islands he regularly views from the window of the airplane. Shifting focus to Japan, Rodger Williamson argues that Lafcadio Hearn emphasized the traditional beauty of Japan in his writings while personally lamenting the loneliness he felt within the isolating Japanese culture. Williamson's work is the only article to directly incorporate unpublished archival materials, thus making it an important addition to *Spaces of Longing and Belonging*, as well as to Hearn studies.

'Ideological Sites of Belonging' comprises four chapters that more broadly approach spaces from territorial perspectives with an emphasis on a longing for a home and a sense of national identity. Two chapters focus on Spain, one on African Diaspora, and the final one deals with the post-9/11 United States. The material covered spans several centuries, demonstrating how spatial patterns are present in all forms of texts; the scholars also utilize a variety of texts, including novels, folklore legends, theatre, and slam poetry. Wole Soyinka is the sole playwright discussed in this collection, and Rosa Branca Figueiredo scrutinizes 'the relationship between history and myth as constitutive paradigms of postcolonial modernity' (168) in Soyinka's African diasporic play, *A Dance of the Forests*

(1960). Omar Baz Radwan provides an engaging look at slam poetry by two Arab-American poets writing in post-9/11, Suheir Hammad and Andrea Assaf. Baz Radwan's analysis of the poetry is engaging and encourages the reader to pursue Hammad and Assaf's publications; additionally, Baz Radwan succinctly highlights how 'the two [poets] display Arab-American identity within an ambiguous state of racial belonging to the [American] nation' (188). Amid the diverse narratives examined in this part, Baz Radwan's article is the most politically relevant as it engages with contemporary longing and belonging in relation to race and identity.

The focus of the third section, 'Space, Affect and Identity', looks to specific cities and how historical facts within these spaces impact on those residing there. Hiroshima, Patagonia, London, Prague, Chenzhou, and Istanbul are locational place markers at the center of the books in focus. The first two chapters focus on the cinematic. In the film *H Story* (2001), a 'transposition' of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), Brigitte Le Juez creates an engaging cross-examination between the Japanese directed *H Story* with the French film set in Hiroshima. Le Juez elaborates extensively on the difficulties Japanese directors face in representing the atomic tragedy that befell the city in 1945. Likewise, in Marc Evans's film *Patagonia* (2010), Jennifer Wood examines national identity in the two different generations of Welsh and Argentine women searching for selfhood while both being connected to the Welsh settlement founded in 1865 in Patagonia, Argentina. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1997), Wood examines the film, essentially a road movie, through the protagonists' search for a Welsh national identity. With an interesting juxtaposition of two historical-based texts, Aytül Özüm examines melancholy and nostalgia in *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2003), by Orhan Pamuk, and *London: The Biography* (2003), by Peter Ackroyd. Crucially, the authorial perspective forms an important factor in how each writer presents their metropolis, as the two authors view each city from divergent vantage points.

In many sections across these fourteen chapters, the authors meaningfully engage with the topic of longing and belonging yet some are more successful than others. Nevertheless, cover to cover *Spaces of Longing and Belonging* is thought-provoking. While this publication may be too diversified to fit neatly into one graduate course, it could be utilized for the close reading and application of previous spatial theories in the classroom. Certain omissions do stand out, including an insufficient number of articles offering wider gender perspectives. There are only three scholars who address works created by women or those that feature women protagonists, which detracts from the collection overall. It's noteworthy, however, that over half of the contributors to the volume are female scholars. This Brill publication is of high quality, with a functional, if not expansive index. As volume 30 of the *Spatial Practices* series, this book contains more than enough material to be a meaningful step forward in the study of longing and belonging within the fields of cultural history, geography, and literature.

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