Ecocriticism and Geocriticism
Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies

Edited by
Robert T. Tally Jr. & Christine M. Battista
Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies

Series Editor:

ROBERT T. TALLY JR., Texas State University

Series description:

Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies is a new book series focusing on the dynamic relations among space, place, and literature. The spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has occasioned an explosion of innovative, multidisciplinary scholarship in recent years, and geocriticism, broadly conceived, has been among the more promising developments in spatially oriented literary studies. Whether focused on literary geography, cartography, geopoetics, or the spatial humanities more generally, geocritical approaches enable readers to reflect upon the representation of space and place, both in imaginary universes and in those zones where fiction meets reality. Titles in the series include both monographs and collections of essays devoted to literary criticism, theory, and history, often in association with other arts and sciences. Drawing on diverse critical and theoretical traditions, books in the Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies series disclose, analyze, and explore the significance of space, place, and mapping in literature and in the world.

Robert T. Tally Jr. is Associate Professor of English at Texas State University, USA. His work explores the relations among narrative, representation, and social space in American and world literature, criticism, and theory. Tally has been recognized as a leading figure in the emerging fields of geocriticism, spatiality studies, and the spatial humanities. Tally’s books include Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical Criticism; Poe and the Subversion of American Literature: Satire, Fantasy, Critique; Utopia in the Age of Globalization: Space, Representation, and the World System; Spatiality; Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel: A Postmodern Iconography; and Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer. The translator of Bertrand Westphal’s Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces, Tally is the editor of Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies; Kurt Vonnegut: Critical Insights; and Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative.

Titles to date:

Cosmopolitanism and Place: Spatial Forms in Contemporary Anglophone Literature
By Emily Johansen

Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative
Edited by Robert T. Tally Jr.

The Geocritical Legacies of Edward W. Said: Spatiality, Critical Humanism, and Comparative Literature
Edited by Robert T. Tally Jr.
Spatial Engagement with Poetry
By Heather H. Yeung

Literature’s Sensuous Geographies: Postcolonial Matters of Place
By Sten Pultz Moslund

Geoparsing Early Modern English Drama
By Monica Matei-Chesnoiu

Africa’s Narrative Geographies: Charting the Intersections of Geocriticism and Postcolonial Studies
By Dustin Crowley

Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives: The House as Subject
By Andrew Hock Soon Ng

Spatiality and Symbolic Expression: On the Links between Place and Culture
Edited by Bill Richardson

Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies
Edited by Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista
for
William V. Spanos
Contents

Series Editor’s Preface ix

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction: Ecocritical Geographies, Geocritical Ecologies, and the Spaces of Modernity 1
Robert T. Tally Jr. and Christine M. Battista

Part I Trans-Theoretical Practices

1 Geocriticism Meets Ecocriticism: Bertrand Westphal and Environmental Thinking 19
 Eric Prieto

2 Ecocritical and Geocritical Conjunctions in North Atlantic Environmental Multimedia and Place-Based Poetry 37
 Derek Gladwin

3 Noncommittal Commitment: Alien Spaces of Ecocosmopolitics in Recent World Literature 55
 Ted Geier

Part II Surveying Territories

4 Affective Edgelands: Wildness, History, and Technology in Britain’s Postindustrial and Postnatural Topographies 77
 Tom Bristow

5 “The sea was the river, the river the sea”: The Severn Estuary and the Bristol Channel in Robert Minhinnick and Philip Gross 95
 Louise Chamberlain
6 Black Jungle, Beautiful Forest: A Postcolonial, Green Geocriticism of the Indian Sundarbans  
Luca Raimondi  

113

Part III Ecocritical Explorations

7 Outside Within: Natural Environment and Social Place in Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca  
Stanka Radović  

137

8 Joseph Hall’s Mundus Alter et Idem and the Geosatirical Indictment of the English Crown  
Dan Mills  

155

9 Nature and the Oppressed Female Body in Nora Okja Keller’s Ecofeminist Aesthetics  
Silvia Schultermandl  

171

10 Toward an Environmental Imagination of Displacement in Contemporary Transnational American Poetry  
Judith Rauscher  

189

Notes on Contributors  

207

Index  

211
The spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has occasioned an explosion of innovative, multidisciplinary scholarship. Spatially oriented literary studies, whether operating under the banner of literary geography, literary cartography, geophilosophy, geopoetics, geocriticism, or the spatial humanities more generally, have helped to reframe or to transform contemporary criticism by focusing attention, in various ways, on the dynamic relations among space, place, and literature. Reflecting upon the representation of space and place, whether in the real world, in imaginary universes, or in those hybrid zones where fiction meets reality, scholars and critics working in spatial literary studies are helping to reorient literary criticism, history, and theory. Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies is a book series presenting new research in this burgeoning field of inquiry.

In exploring such matters as the representation of place in literary works, the relations between literature and geography, the historical transformation of literary and cartographic practices, and the role of space in critical theory, among many others, geocriticism and spatial literary studies have also developed interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary methods and practices, frequently making productive connections to architecture, art history, geography, history, philosophy, politics, social theory, and urban studies, to name but a few. Spatial criticism is not limited to the spaces of the so-called real world, and it sometimes calls into question any too facile distinction between real and imaginary places, as it frequently investigates what Edward Soja has referred to as the “real-and-imagined” places we experience in literature as in life. Indeed, although a great deal of important research has been devoted to the literary representation of certain identifiable and well-known places (e.g., Dickens’s London, Baudelaire’s Paris, or Joyce’s Dublin), spatial critics have also explored the otherworldly spaces of literature, such as those to be found in myth, fantasy, science fiction, video games, and cyberspace. Similarly, such criticism is interested in the relationship between spatiality and such different media or genres as film or television, music, comics, computer programs, and
other forms that may supplement, compete with, and potentially problematize literary representation. Titles in the Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies series include both monographs and collections of essays devoted to literary criticism, theory, and history, often in association with other arts and sciences. Drawing on diverse critical and theoretical traditions, books in the series reveal, analyze, and explore the significance of space, place, and mapping in literature and in the world.

The concepts, practices, or theories implied by the title of this series are to be understood expansively. Although geocriticism and spatial literary studies represent a relatively new area of critical and scholarly investigation, the historical roots of spatial criticism extend well beyond the recent past, informing present and future work. Thanks to a growing critical awareness of spatiality, innovative research into the literary geography of real and imaginary places has helped to shape historical and cultural studies in ancient, medieval, early modern, and modernist literature, while a discourse of spatiality undergirds much of what is still understood as the postmodern condition. The suppression of distance by modern technology, transportation, and telecommunications has only enhanced the sense of place, and of displacement, in the age of globalization. Spatial criticism examines literary representations not only of places themselves, but of the experience of place and of displacement, while exploring the interrelations between lived experience and a more abstract or unrepresentable spatial network that subtly or directly shapes it. In sum, the work being done in geocriticism and spatial literary studies, broadly conceived, is diverse and far reaching. Each volume in this series takes seriously the mutually impressive effects of space or place and artistic representation, particularly as these effects manifest themselves in works of literature. By bringing the spatial and geographical concerns to bear on their scholarship, books in the Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies series seek to make possible different ways of seeing literary and cultural texts, to pose novel questions for criticism and theory, and to offer alternative approaches to literary and cultural studies. In short, the series aims to open up new spaces for critical inquiry.

Robert T. Tally Jr.
Acknowledgments

I want to thank Carol Battista, Nancy Schmittendorf, Julie Battista, Lenora Gasbarrini, Marissa Bickford, Elise Bickford and Diane Bickford for their continued support over the years. These women each embody what it means to be courageous feminists in a territorialized, fraught world. I am indebted to my colleagues and dear friends Kreg Abshire, Judy St. John, and John O’Malley, whose intellect and knowledge continually push me to think beyond the arbitrary boundaries of my disciplinary framework. I would also like to particularly thank and acknowledge Richard Wiscott for his mentorship and support. I would like to thank my dear friend Kate Sheridan, whose intellectual curiosity and thoughtfulness continues to inspire my writing. I especially thank Jillian Lang and Jamie Lang, my sisters, who always provide knowledgeable insight no matter where my writing takes me. Not least I would like to thank Chris Cattron for being a continued source of inspiration and support. I am also grateful to Rob Tally for his friendship and collegiality, as well as his guidance throughout this project. And finally, I am deeply indebted to my mentor, William V. Spanos, to whom this collection is dedicated.

Christine M. Battista

I want to thank Christine Battista for first proposing this collection of essays, for her hard work in co-organizing and coediting the project, and for her general enthusiasm and grace at each stage of the process. I am grateful to the students and faculty of Texas State University for their part in making my workplace a space of engaged and energetic critical inquiry, particularly during the years in which this project was being completed. Among these, I would especially thank Suparno Banerjee, Devin Baumann, Collin Couey, Doug Dorst, Katrina Goudey, Craig Hanks, Michael Hennessy, Priscilla Leder, Daniel Lochman, Emi Kanemoto, Katie Kapurch, Whitney May, Amanda Meyer, Susan Morrison, Rebecca Raphael, Benjamin Reed, Deanna Rodriguez, Teya Rosenberg, Aimee Roundtree, Leah Schwebel, Jon Marc Smith, Victoria Smith, and Sarah Youree. I thank
Reiko Graham for everything, and I recognize Dusty and Windy Britches for their efforts to render these lived spaces more lively places.

Robert T. Tally Jr.

Jointly, we would like to thank the contributors for their excellent contributions to this volume. At a very early stage of this project, we benefited from conversations with Eric Prieto, Bertrand Westphal, and Rachel Collins. An earlier version of Prieto’s chapter appeared in a special issue of *Épistémocritique: Littérature et Savoirs* IX (Autumn 2011), devoted to *géocritique*, and we thank Prieto, editor Laurence Dahan-Gaida, and the journal. We organized a session on this subject for the Tenth Biennial Conference of Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in 2013, and we would like to thank the audience and the panelists, including Judith Rauscher, who revised and expanded her fascinating presentation for inclusion in this book. We are especially grateful to Brigitte Shull and Ryan Jenkins of Palgrave Macmillan for their indefatigable editorial assistance and overall enthusiasm for this project.

We dedicate this collection to William V. Spanos, a true scholar and activist, as well as a monumental figure in the history of literary criticism and theory, notably one who eschews monumentalizing theories and practices. Spanos’s work has deeply influenced and informed our thinking about space, place, and worldliness in an age in which boundaries, borders, human and non-human lives, and indeed Being itself are continually at stake. Spanos has dedicated his career and life to reimagining and activating the role of the public intellectual through his generative writings and inquiries into the ontological state of our current world occasion. We hope this collection offers a small contribution to the intellectual and political project undertaken in the spirit of Spanos’s assiduous, critical, and joyful investigation into the conditions and possibilities of worldly world that we inhabit.
At a Modern Language Association convention several years ago, following a session we had organized on geocriticism, a group of us discussed the possibility of continuing what we took to be a crucial conversation on the relations between space, place, mapping, and literature. While we all agreed that the topic was both timely and necessary, some wondered if the ostensible, if misleading, neutrality of space or spatiality worked against the project. That is, one could not necessarily be an advocate for space or spatiality, as opposed to advocating for a distinctive political policy or social cause, and expect others to rally around that banner. As one colleague put it, naming ecocriticism as the specific counter-example, geocriticism does not have a clearly visible political constituency or program. Whereas ecocritics, along with virtually all scholars associated with environmental literary studies, are generally understood to be advocates for the environment, often serving as activists with respect to all-too-salient matters of environmentalism, conservation, preservation, sustainability, climate change, and naturalism, geocritics presumably had no particular position with respect to the use and abuse of space or place, apart from the fact the geocritics insisted that such uses were themselves meaningful. And yet, the critics and theorists most influential on or connected with geocriticism were far from apolitical themselves. On the contrary, part of the impetus for strenuously asserting or reasserting the significance of spatiality in social or cultural criticism was an abiding belief on the part of such thinkers that the omission of spatial considerations from these fields had serious
political consequences. If ecocriticism appeared to offer a socially and politically engaged form of literary studies that maintained a deep connection to “real world” concerns, surely geocriticism had its own similarly engaged aims and effects.

In fact, the geocritical emphasis on space, place, and mapping correlates strongly to the conviction among spatially oriented critics that space is of the utmost social importance. The key theorists who have been influential on the development of geocriticism have been themselves deeply engaged political thinkers, often coming from oppositional political traditions. For example, Henri Lefebvre’s distinctive Marxist analysis of social space and its production has been instrumental in the theories of postmodern spatiality proposed by David Harvey, Edward Soja, Fredric Jameson, and others. The post-structuralist turn to space in the works of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, similarly, has made possible new ways of imagining the effectiveness of State power in modern societies, while also delineating spatial practices that can serve as forms of resistance. Postcolonial critics like Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have placed greater emphasis on space and geography in their revisionary investigations into the historical experiences of imperialism. Feminist theorists, such as bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Doreen Massey, have insisted on looking at the fundamental ways in which gender, race, and class are configured into variously spatialized social organizations. Literary geography has itself been motivated by intensively political goals, as the need to map the spaces and places of literature appears crucial to the genealogical disclosure or uncovering of formerly repressed narratives. In all of these and more, we find an abiding concern for the environment, however narrowly or broadly conceived. In this sense, the social or political impetus behind much of the ecocritical tradition is also effective in motivating geocritical approaches. While distinctive in meaningful ways, both ecocriticism and geocriticism share a concern for the manner in which spaces and places are perceived, represented, and ultimately used.

As the cartographic anxieties of modernity are compounded by ecological crises, spaces, places, or territories are increasingly called into question. What once seemed to be fixed, stable, or at least reliable spatial or environmental markers, such as national boundaries, regional borders, public or private properties, and even identifiable climate zones, are now threatened by the increasing volatility of both the social and natural worlds. Indeed, this distinction between the social and the natural is itself dubious and unhelpful, and it becomes increasingly untenable as the twenty-first century wears on. The older sense