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Of Spaces and Ideas: The Novels of Jim Crace and Simon Mawer

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Contents

Introduction

This monograph seeks to provide a deeper insight into the work of two contemporary British novelists – Jim Crace and Simon Mawer. Their narratives are interpreted primarily from the perspective of their treatment of space and place since they derive a significant part of their meaning from the synergistic relationship between their protagonists and the environment they inhabit. Apart from this noticeable focus on the representation of space, there are also other thematic and aesthetic preoccupations as well as biographical similarities between these authors. Not only are they contemporaries, both having begun their writing careers relatively late – in their forties – but each also has an idiosyncratic approach to the creative process, which adds other levels of complexity to the comparison. This is reflected in their reluctance to unequivocally specify the genre of their works and thus be pinned down by categories, preferring to see their novels as works of ideas which thematise a variety of related topics. Their works tend to be classified as historical fiction, but each views and responds to this labelling differently: while Mawer dramatises his historical narratives with scientific elements and narrative strategies from popular genres, such as the thriller and the spy novel, whose settings are inspired by real-life referents, Crace's stories function on the principle of the parable, whose properties, including the settings, are products of pure imagination. Moreover, neither of the authors has received much scholarly attention, even though their novels deal with some of the focal points of contemporary fiction, namely those of space, place, history and identity.

Out of the many similarities between the two authors and their literary creation, the present monograph is concerned with their embrace of spatial representation as a productive instrument of their narratives.

It therefore seeks to identify, chart and interpret the various forms and roles that space and place assume in their novels. We understand space as a general notion referring to a rather abstract category, while place as a concretised and familiarised portion of space to which personal meanings are attributed by its occupants. In order to ground its spatial analysis within a theoretical framework, a comprehensive overview and taxonomy of approaches to space, place and their treatment in literature is provided. Applied to selected works by Crace and Mawer, they exemplify that the ways in which both authors render the interaction of literary spaces and characters echo contemporary literary theory and philosophy's preoccupation with the mutual interference between humans and their environment. Our monograph stems from an interdisciplinary approach, triggered particularly by what is known as the (postmodern) spatial turn, i.e. the increased tendency to refocus literary study on the treatment of space and place as its point of departure. This tendency to acknowledge the primacy of space and time in determining our existence and identity has further solidified the position of place as a key category enabling humans to comprehend and assess their experience of space.

The focus of the interpretative part of the study was established by means of systematic textual and comparative analysis of the literary representations of place and space in selected works by Crace and Mawer. The resulting chapters address their narratives' thematic concerns, key aesthetic elements, structure, and the conception of the protagonists, which are shown to adhere to and complement the novels' treatment of spatial properties and vice versa. They illustrate the authors' preferences in terms of genre, themes, structure, characters, and treatment of place and space. There are two major determining and inherently intertwined features of Crace's novels: the creation of imaginary environments which, despite their historical and geographical differences, evince a number of idiosyncratic properties that make them seem real to the reader; and the theme of communities in a transitional moment of their existence in which their members are forced to readjust their values and the very essence of their identity to these newly emerging circumstances.

Identity plays a prominent role in both Crace's and Mawer's novels. This preference corresponds with one of the pivotal elements marking Mawer's narratives – liminality. This quality is shown to permeate all aspects of his writing and can be seen as determining its position between serious and popular fiction, being a mixture of the historical novel, the spy novel and the thriller. The characters' borderline position is often expressed by means of their bilingualism and hybrid cultural and personal

identity, but the most explicit form of liminality in his novels is his choice of historical and geographical settings. Mawer mostly opts for culturally complex areas in the midst of profound historical transformations. This, together with the (auto)biographical elements he projects into his writings, results in a predominance of the two regions where he tends to situate his novels – central Europe and the Mediterranean.

The first analytical chapter outlines the character of Crace's imaginary landscapes as it is introduced in his first two novels, *Continent* (1986) and *The Gift of Stones* (1988). *Continent* comprises seven thematically linked stories that are variations of a fictitious realm, an imaginary seventh continent whose inhabitants are going through an identity crisis that, symptomatically for Crace, is reflected in their spatial experience. The chapter provides a geocritical analysis of the novel and explores how it dramatises the intricate interaction between the geographic and topographic properties of the landscapes and the protagonists' psyches. *The Gift of Stones* not only depicts a community in transition, but also elaborates on the significance of making up stories in human life. This chapter demonstrates how the novel's physical environments intertwine not only with the main protagonist's mental world, but also, and above all, with his talent for imaginative storytelling.

The parallels between Crace's construction of characters and the fictional landscapes they inhabit in *Signals of Distress* (1994) and *Quarantine* (1997) are discussed in chapter two. It shows that the power of his writing rests in the combination of distinctive main characters and the conception of unique fictional topographies. Through the form of a satirical parable, *Signals of Distress* explores the position of an individual in the process of a community's transition due to larger historical, social and economic circumstances, and the formative role that landscape plays in such a character's development. The chapter also demonstrates the various roles that space, place and landscape assume in the lives of *Quarantine*'s protagonists, and argues that Crace's approach transcends that of phenomenological spatial representation by making the environment a deciding agent within the narrative's ethical framework.

The third chapter focuses on Crace's urban novels, particularly on *Arcadia* (1992), and discusses the diverse particularities of the author's fictional cityscape. The novel brings to bear a wide range of thematic perspectives, such as the ambivalent symbiosis of the rural and the urban, the archetypes of modern city dwellers and the importance of the agora for a functioning urban social life. Moreover, it integrates a celebratory narrative voice with a satirical one. Its story takes place in an unnamed

English city, which allows the author to employ a mixture of genres, namely the psychological novel, sociological and urban studies and the quasi or mock-pastoral. The first part of the chapter shows how *Arcadia* contributed to the transformation of the British urban novel and, consequently, to the overall process of the hybridisation of the genre of the novel in general. The second part argues that, along with *The Melody* (2018), *Arcadia* can be subsumed within so-called transmodern fiction, and that it carries out its critique of globalised capitalism through so-called *entre-deux*, or in-between, places. Accordingly, it observes that the novel's liminal and heterogeneous places display non-linear and complexly interrelated temporalities that are indicative of their role in the city's progress.

Crace's employment of literary cartography, or mapping narratives, in *The Pesthouse* (2007) and *Harvest* (2013) is elaborated on in the fourth chapter. *The Pesthouse* is set in a devastated America of an imagined future, a country that has reversed and deteriorated into a pre-modern and pre-industrial wasteland so hostile to sustainable existence that most of its inhabitants have become refugees travelling eastward to set sail for a new life on another continent. These refugees are leaving their homes behind to flee not only misery and destitution but also the trauma and pain from the fateful loss of their relatives. This chapter presents and analyses the ways in which Crace's novel maps and explores its spaces, landscapes and places, as well as how it links them with the transformation of the protagonists' psyches and mental worlds. *Harvest* is even more complex in this regard as it includes the map-making of its imaginary landscapes as one of its main themes. The chapter thus shows that the novel is a remarkable example of literary cartography in that it combines subjectivist and objectivist approaches to the textual representation of space.

Mawer's debut novel, *Chimera* (1989), which outlines all the dominant aspects of his poetics, his thematic focus and his chief structural and formal preferences, is the subject of chapter six. *Chimera* marks Mawer's first immersion in the subject matter of war, resistance movements, and espionage, as well as his first work set in the Mediterranean. The novel also aptly incorporates a field of science, namely archaeology, in both its thematic orientation and its narrative structure. Pioneering Mawer's distinctive fusion of protagonists and their setting, *Chimera* derives a considerable part of its meaning from its profound sense of time and place.

The seventh chapter revolves predominantly around Mawer's arguably most famous novel, *The Glass Room* (2009), which helped to establish

his position as both a well-known and critically acclaimed novelist. *The Glass Room* revisits a number of signature aspects of Mawer's works, such as a tempestuous historical period, a culturally and geopolitically complex region, and protagonists whose identities are intertwined with radical historical, social and cultural transformation. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the novel introduces a spectacular central conceit which simultaneously encapsulates the central dilemma of the novel and embodies the essence of its poetics. It is the eponymous Glass Room, a spacious room with walls made entirely of glass, whose austere geometrical frame braves the course of the tumultuous twentieth century in central Europe and shelters the histories of individuals against the backdrop of the traumatic period. Along with *Mendel's Dwarf* (1997) and *Prague Spring* (2018), *The Glass Room* represents Mawer's venture into central Europe and its turbulent modern history. Both *Prague Spring* and *Mendel's Dwarf* are mentioned to illustrate the aspects of the spatial poetics Mawer employs in connection with the depicted region. The former is presented as a paean to the liminality of the Prague Spring as a historical period, echoing the liberating efforts of the First Czechoslovak Republic evoked in *The Glass Room*. The latter introduces one of the most memorable of Mawer's creations in the character of an undersized geneticist while skilfully combining two parallel but historically distant plotlines and situating a part of its action in the area of the present-day Czech Republic.

The final chapter focuses on the duo of critically acclaimed spy novels, *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* (2012) and *Tightrope* (2015), set in France and England during and in the aftermath of WW2, charting the ways in which Mawer's ability to merge the protagonists and their psychological states with the rendering of space and place contributes to the overall sense of excitement, suspense and unease that is typical of the genre. These two novels, as well as the rest of the works analysed in this volume, exemplify Mawer's ability to thematise subjects as diverse as archaeology, architecture or espionage while shedding light on forgotten or lesser-known historical developments.

The analytical chapters thus not only attempt to theoretically conceptualise Crace's and Mawer's renderings of space but also, and more importantly, to demonstrate the various ways in which the authors make use of these spatial representations in order to express, exemplify or accentuate the principal ideas lying behind their novels' framework of meaning.

1. After the Spatial Turn

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, literary theory and criticism began to focus on the representation of space and place, which gradually acquired the significance that time and temporality had enjoyed for centuries. This focal shift, which insisted that the spatial properties of the narrative should not be confined to mere background setting, emerged from the recognition that the relationship between human beings and their environment is reciprocal and highly interactive. The fact that human beings live in space-time, and that these two dimensions significantly determine our existence and are equally crucial for the formation of our identity, opened up a fruitful field of interest for theorists, culminating in what has been called the postmodern "spatial turn". Its immediate consequence, as Emmanuelle Peraldo notes, is that space "is now considered as a central metaphor and *topos* in literature, and literary criticism has seized space as a new tool and stake" (2016, 1). This relationship is reciprocal: not only do the spatial properties of our existence shape who we are and how we perceive ourselves and the world around us, but our perception and interpretation of space, whether in the form of mental projections, scientific delineations or artistic representations, also determine the character and significance of our living environments. Their temporal and spatial coordinates are thus supplemented by a social one as we try to make them intelligible by (self-)projecting meanings onto them. These endow spaces with new layers of meaningfulness, both private and public, which combine and interact, appropriating them discursively and thus allowing them to get narrativised. The study of textual representations of space is therefore one of the ways in which we can better understand not only the spaces in question, but also our own spatial, and possibly even social, experience.

In order to clearly define the object of a textual spatial inquiry, it is crucial to make a distinction between space and place. The first is a general notion, a broad concept that refers to any environment in which a person finds him/herself. As such, it is rather loose and indeterminate in terms of the individual's personal relation to it. Place is a segment of space which is particularised and localised on the basis of an individual's more intense attachment, formed through the ascription of meanings, the projection of ideas and the making of interpretations. Space is concretised into place by "being named" by the flows of power and negotiations of the social relations of its occupants (Carter et al. 1993, xii). Therefore, place is "a setting to which individuals are emotionally and culturally attached" (Altman and Low 1992, 5), a section of space "enriched with human experience and understanding; an organized world of meaning" (Tuan 2018, 179). Prieto (2012, 13) suggests that it is "any geographical site […] that is meaningful to someone, for whatever reason," and immediately mitigates this definition's vagueness by stressing its two principal features: first, it involves a human relation; we can speak of a place only when "a person comes along and enters into a meaning-generating relationship with it"; and second, it is an unstable relationship, which may vary depending on the context of who thinks of a given site in terms of place and why and when they do so.

It follows that place has a much more immediate impact on our existence and identity than space and that it also represents a much more "formable" entity in that it can be unrestrictedly infused with new discursive meanings, which, in effect, prove more determining of the place's significance than its actual physical and historical attributes. If we understand place as being defined by human relations, then we have to accept their inherent variability and recognise the resulting contestatory and dialogical dimension of place. Rather than focusing on individual distinct places, we are then concerned with "place" as a mode of human existence or of being in the world. Any meaning of any place can be contested by other individuals and/or other contexts, so "any given site is going to be subject to a dialogical struggle over the meaning of that site" (Prieto 2012, 14). Approached and appropriated by a multiplicity of subjects, places evince a multiplicity of meanings projected upon them, often of a disparate or even contradictory character, which is precisely the case of interstitial territories, and fiction can serve as an apposite and illustrative medium for this dialogic contestation. Humanistic geographers, neo-humanists and phenomenological philosophers can be seen as the practitioners of this stance (Creswell 2015, 56).

Finally, the notion of "landscape" should be clarified in relation to the above-established space-place dyad. It can be defined as a middle term between the indeterminate space and the more fixed place since it "typically consists of several places, and yet it is linked to an area, a region, in a way space is not" (de Lange et al. 2008, xvi). Landscape is thus a greater geographical, but also meaningful, unit than place, formed when several places interconnect as a result of a person's longer-term habitation in, recurrent visits to or journeying through them. Endowed with meanings, places and landscapes are embedded with narratives, just as narratives allow us to comprehend and organise places. Reading and studying literary representations of places and landscapes, both real and imaginary, therefore enables us to think about them more thoroughly and systematically and be more attentive to how the ways in which we perceive and mentally appropriate places leave traces in our inner universe.

As a result of the above-mentioned spatial turn, a number of critical approaches investigating literary representations of both real and imaginary space and place have been developed since the late 1970s. All of them are intrinsically interdisciplinary, complementing and enhancing literary studies and poetics with an insight from other disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology, ecology and geography. Such a broad scope necessarily produces a diversity of theory-practices, as can be demonstrated on the examples of geopoetics, ecocriticism, psychogeography, humanistic geography and geocriticism.

Geopoetics challenges what it sees as a "separation of human beings from the rest of the natural world" and proposes "that the various domains into which knowledge has been separated can be unified by a poetics which places the planet Earth at the centre of experience" (Scottish Centre for Geopoetics). Kenneth White, the creator of the concept of geopoetics, advocates an alternative treatment of the space we inhabit to the prevailing quantitative approach, one that would attempt to restore the principles of natural philosophy towards what may be called "cosmoaesthetics". In this sense, geopoetics represents a particular fusion of poetry and geography, a higher unity of the two in which the poet discovers the nature of the explorer in themselves (White 1992, 165–176). Geopoetic thinking forces and equips us to revise not only our relationship with the world, but the very relationship between language and our being in this world. Geopoetics is thus far more than a literary or critical school, it is an interdisciplinary field that invites all like-minded thinkers, poets, and writers to share ideas and experience, an umbrella platform "where poetry, thought and science come togeth-

er, in a climate of reciprocal inspiration" (The International Institute of Geopoetics). One of the more specifically oriented approaches that this platform has generated is ecocriticism, which is concerned with how written texts respond to modern environmentalism and the most acute ecological issues. Compared to geopoetics, ecocriticism is more avowedly ideological, tying its "cultural analyses explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda" (Garrard 2011, 3).

Like geopoetics, psychogeography strives to critique the dominant, mainstream Western thinking of rational and pragmatic materialism. Yet, being an ultimately urban practice, psychogeography rests in spontaneous, solitary acts of unrestricted strolling or wandering along the "off-centre" paths and terrains of the city. It is walking with the aim of subverting the politics and ideology of the authorities by deliberately avoiding officially promoted routes and places in favour of exploring and mentally mapping territories and spaces unlikely to be utilised for commercial purposes and thus destined for oblivion, the "landscapes of the id" as Iain Sinclair calls them (Sinclair 2003, 306). Psychogeography searches for experience, not knowledge, of the present through the prism of the past. This practice is fundamentally nostalgic and in practical terms ineffective as it does not strive to save or protect these vanishing aspects of the cityscape but merely records their existence and their impact upon the explorer's psyche through mental projections, textual discourse, and visual mediation. It is also reactionary in that it deliberately undermines the commonly held ideas of modern urban progress and planning, cherishing what in most cases stands in their way. A literary psychogeographer aims to reconstruct, though in an inevitably fragmentary and eclectic manner, the city's physical and mental topographies through "a superimposition of local and literary history, autobiographical elements and poetic preoccupations" (Coverley 2018, 12). This strolling practitioner attempts to expose the hidden layers and lines of force of impalpable urban experience and transform them into a representation, fusing the political, the visionary and the artistic: "Walks for their own sake, furiously enacted but lacking agenda […] Walks as portraits. Walks as prophecy. Walks as rage. […] Walks that release delirious chemicals in the brain as they link random sites (discrete images in an improvised poem). Savagely mute walks that provoke language" (Atkins and Sinclair 1999, 15). The result of such a practice cannot be other than subjective, biased, eclectic and fragmentary, based on layering, superimposition and juxtaposition rather than on logical causality and correlation.

However, although geopoetics and psychogeography have been in-spiring for literary studies and criticism, their actual applicability as a general method of textual analysis and interpretation is rather limit-ed. The former is too broadly conceived and too embedded in various extra-textual realities, while the latter is narrowly focused on a specific segment of human experience. Critical theories that are much more universally applicable to literary studies are humanistic geography and geocriticism, which are methods of analysis that combine literary theory with the study of geographic space. Unlike geopoetics, they are primarily concerned with the interaction between physical space and its literary rendering. Unlike psychogeography, they involve all kinds of spaces that are meaningful from the perspective of their inhabitants or observers.

Humanistic geography originally evolved as a branch of critical geography, a blend of geography and left-leaning social sciences and humanities responding to acute issues such as human rights, female emancipation, environmental problems, and anti-imperialism in the early 1970s. In the late 1970s and 1980s, humanistic geography gradu-ally separated from the more radical Marxist and feminist currents of critical geography, focusing generally on the multi-layered relationships between geographic properties of space and place and human beings, its aim being to examine "how geographical activities and phenomena reveal the quality of human awareness", and, by doing so, show "hu-man experience in its ambiguity, ambivalence, and complexity" (Tuan 2018, 84). In order to achieve the necessary empathy to do so, geography needs to seek assistance from various branches of the humanities, espe-cially history, philosophy, the arts, theology, and literature. Drawing also on Bachelard's spatial poetics, Yi-Fu Tuan, the main proponent of this practice, is particularly interested in the ambivalent human experience that is generated by the interaction of opposing forces of place and space, that is, between the intimate, secure, and rooted on the one hand, and the remote, intangible, and expansive on the other. Literary representations of place and space assume a crucial role in his investigations as he be-lieves that language and communication, especially in the form of written texts, play a crucial role in people's creation of a sense of geographical environment, and, as such, can serve them as a useful guide in their dealings with the potentially progressive dialectical tensions between the existential poles of place and space.

Lately, psychogeography, whose field of research has been restricted almost exclusively to urban landscape, has proved to be an inspiration behind the development of new approaches, such as *deep topography*,

developed by Nick Papadimitriou (Self), or *deep locational criticism*, demarcated by Jason Finch in his *Deep Locational Criticism: Imaginative Place in Literary Research and Teaching* (2016). Both of these approaches involve archaeological research as one of the key aspects of their respective fields of inquiry and both study real places and their artistic reflections. What both of these disciplines share is their aspiration to provide a deeper and wider-reaching analysis of the functioning of a place, focusing mainly on the effects of environment, both natural and man-made, on the human psyche (Finch 2016, 199). Deep locational criticism is an interdisciplinary practice merging a number of techniques based on several academic disciplines grounded in empirical study, such as "architectural history and the study of the built environment; local history; cultural geography; industrial-age archaeology" (Finch 2016, 21). Deep topography focuses on natural rather than man-made landscapes and is mostly concerned with their ethical and ecocritical implications. It acknowledges "the magnitude of response to landscape" (Coverley 2018, 179), which Nick Papadimitriou, its key proponent, considers to be insufficiently featured "in most accounts that I read of landscape" (Coverley 2018, 179). Both deep locational criticism and deep topography regard the literary text as an irreplaceable aspect of imaginative places as it "participates in [their] construction" (Coverley 2018, 22). The privileged position of place as the centre of the study echoes the position of scholars such as Betrand Westphal, who formulated the essence of so-called geocriticism.

Geocriticism, which aims to create a more universal use for literary studies, is a method of analysis that incorporates literary theory into the study of geographic space. It explores how different recipients engage with the spaces and places that are formative for them in terms of their identity and sense of being in the world and, along with this, how their lived spatial experience is translated into textual discourse and its interpretation. Like Lefebvre's Spaces of Representation and Soja's Thirdspace, it is based on the premise that all lived spaces are, at the same time, "real-and-imagined" (Soja 1996, 11) in that they exist both as geographic entities and their imaginary projections, and that the relationship between them, and their very nature can, in consequence, best be discovered through the study of their textual representation. Geocriticism believes that it allows us "to understand 'real' places by understanding their fundamental fictionality. And vice-versa, of course. We understand fictional spaces by grasping their own levels of reality as they become part of our world" (Tally 2011b, x). As such, it can cast some light on the ways in which we attempt to make sense of our world

and our place in it, through an in-depth examination of the diverse ways in which we approach and process our spatial experience.

Developed at the beginning of the millennium by the French scholar Bertrand Westphal, and formulated in his 2007 comprehensive study *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (*La Géocritique: Réel, Fiction, Espace*), geocriticism soon proved to be an effective tool for looking into the convoluted relationship between human beings and the environment they occupy. In its original form, it is a set of critical practices that explore the ways in which literary representations of space interact with the geographic reality of the world. Owing to these practices, various people – readers, critics, scholars, geographers – can "engage with the spaces that make life, through lived experience and through imaginary projections, meaningful" (Tally 2011b, xii). Westphal is primarily interested in spaces of heterogeneity, in what Deleuze and Guattari call smooth spaces, which are characterised by nomadic free action as opposed to the systematic workings of the State apparatus in striated spaces, organised around points rather than lines and directioned in open rather than closed intervals. As a result, they evince a strong tendency towards deterritorialisation (2000, 480). Similarly, Westphal's geocriticism is based on three underlying principles: the first – spatiotemporality – denotes an increasing tendency of modern theory to entwine space and time, that is, not only to temporalise space as before but also to spatialise time. This tendency ran simultaneously with another paradigmatic shift when the historical perception of time was challenged by the relative laws of space-time, breaking down the continuous and steady timeline into a dynamic profusion of (time)lines or even points. Therefore, the most apt metaphor to express this new perception of space-time is that of entropy, i.e. the property of a system that is characterised by a state of disorder, randomness, and uncertainty in which, as this state intensifies, the system eventually evolves into a new state. The result of this increasing disorder, or turbulence, is nonequilibrium. Unlike orderly equilibrium, which is immune to metamorphoses and, persisting only in one condition, is a nonstory, nonequilibrium is far more interesting since it offers a complexity of stories corresponding to its disarrayed lines and separate points of instability (Westphal 2011, 18–19). Two more metaphorical concepts related to entropy that Westphal makes use of are bifurcation and isotropy: while bifurcation refers to the fact that a profusion of timelines tends to organise in forking paths, an isotopic system of (time)lines is one whose progression defies hierarchy as the directions and configurations of all the timelines possess equal properties. The par-

amount consequence of this spatialisation of time is that "space appears as heterogeneous as time" (Westphal 2011, 25), defined by movement, mobility, and temporariness.

The second principle, called transgressivity, refers precisely to this characteristic feature of contemporary space, namely its capacity for movement and mobility. As said above, such space is inherently heterogeneous, in fact limitless, since it unfolds between points that connect an infinite number of lines. However, this space is always subject to homogenising (or striating to use Deleuze and Guattari's term) forces through which the various institutions of the state apparatus impose boundaries and limits on it. However, all boundaries and limits call for crossing and trespassing, just as rules and norms call for violation and deviation. This transgression, that is, the intentional leaving of one's own space and stepping into a foreign one, is in essence inseparable from movement and change, but can be random and spontaneous rather than the result of some organised activity or impulse. However, when it becomes recurrent and continual, it develops into a state – transgressivity, the perpetual operation of peripheral and destabilising processes that operate upon heterogeneous spaces. This permanent transgressivity of movement, transition, transformation, and transgression in defiance of established norms renders the given space incessantly volatile and it is "eventually governed by an almost impalpable deterritorialising and evolutionary dialectic" (Westphal 2011, 52),[1] particularly in the tension between the centre and the periphery. Spatial representation of such a territory is therefore inevitably palimpsestic in order to capture all the ongoing successive changeovers as "erasures and overwritings" (Westphal 2011, 60).

Accordingly, referentiality, the third of these principles, which speaks of the relations between real spaces and their textual renderings, claims these links between the referent and its representation are also constantly moving and oscillating. Drawing on Lefebvre's notions of conceived space and lived space, Westphal notes that a textual representation of space can be quite consistent without directly corresponding to the actual reality, sometimes forming a wholly fictional space of representation. In any case, such a representation never reproduces the referent,

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1   Such a system evinces all the defining properties of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, namely the principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, signifying rupture, cartography, and decalcomania. Although every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified and organised, there is a rupture in it whenever these explode into lines of flight and deterritorialisation. It may be broken but it will always start up again, either on its old lines or on its new ones (2000, 6-12).

but constitutes a discourse that establishes it. The representation thus reproduces an experience of the real, and human spaces exist only in the modes of this experience (Westphal 2011, 80–85). However, the distinction between the real and the represented becomes blurred as the represented becomes part of the real or even participates in its formation. The relationship between the fictional and real place (if there is one at all) is volatile due to the transgressive nature of the referent, based on the highly variable degree of correlation arising from the oscillating interaction between the world and the virtual, discursively produced reality of textual representation.

These major principles of spatial-discursive heterogeneity are supplemented with other consequent phenomena, namely multifocalisation, that is, inviting a multiplicity of views on a geographical referent without privileging any of them; polysensorality, that is, promoting the experience of an environment using all the senses; stratigraphy, that is, highlighting the temporal variability of spaces that never unfold in pure simultaneity but through a permanently reactivating layering caused by the concatenation of diverse temporalities; and intertextuality, which refers to the architecture/architexture of space, that is, the inherent interplay between spaces in texts and texts in spaces (Westphal 2011, 114–164, Tally 2011b, xiv–xv). The pivotal aspect of Westphal's geocriticism is its strictly geo-centred focus, which means that it takes the actual spaces/places at the centre of debate and draws on their textual representations in order to grasp them more thoroughly. In other words, it is a comparative mode of analysis aimed at "understanding a given place (through the problematics of representation) rather than studying a given set of representations (through the thematics of place)" (Prieto 2011, 21). What follows from this restricted scope is not only the absence of an ego-centred dimension that would be concerned with how the sense of a place affects those who encounter it, but also that it can only be used for textual representations of real-life territories. However, he does not present his concept in a doctrinaire manner that would delegitimise the other approach, but rather aims to build on it so as to conceive "a kind of metacritical endeavor" that "extends literary studies into the realm of the geographical referent in a way that transcends the aesthetic function of literature and seeks to show how it can actually participate in and inflect the history of the places in question" (Prieto 2011, 21–22). Given all this, Westphal's geocriticism operates somewhere between the geography of the real and that of the imaginary. Moreover, its defining principles are formulated in such a way as to legitimise alternatively focused geocritical approaches.

A more markedly ego-centred form of geocriticism, though admittedly derived from Westphal's, has been developed by the American literary scholar Robert T. Tally Jr. in so-called "literary cartography". This is a form of narrative that takes into account both the social and psychological experience of space/place and the possibility of reflecting such spatial experience through a wholly imaginary literary environment. In his view, geocriticism can become a tool with which we can examine how our spatial experience and awareness determine the very nature of our being in the world. It should therefore include as a subject of its interest not only the spaces, both real and imaginary, that we experience through texts, but "also the experience of space and place within ourselves" (Tally 2011a, 3). He believes that just as textual representations can establish and mobilise spaces, spaces are infused with meaning and thus possess a unique potential for narrative. As he puts it, literary cartography is a "practice by which writers figuratively represent, or attempt to represent, the social space of the narrative or text, as well as the relationship of the individual or collective subject to a larger spatial, social, and cultural ensemble" (Tally 2016, 25). A crucial part of these meanings and narratives is linked to the spatiotemporal and transgressive character of spaces, which is why spatial criticism should pay attention not only to representations of the actual places, but also to "the experience of place and displacement, while exploring the interrelations between lived experience and a more abstract or unrepresentable spatial network that subtly or directly shapes it" (Tally 2014, x). In other words, his geocriticism concerns not only spaces that readers get to know through textual representation, but also their mental reflections, through which it "can examine how the ways in which we are situated in space determine the nature and quality of our existence in the world" (Tally 2011a, 8). In doing so, it goes far beyond the reproduction of real-life referents towards imagined and mental spaces, thus accentuating the experiential and aesthetic dimensions of spatial representation and appropriation.

Tally's aim is to pay attention not only to places that writers and readers experience through texts, but also to the very nature of that experience and its impact on how we see ourselves. He speaks of so-called "mapping narratives", which attempt to map the real-and-imagined spaces of human existence, and which are expressions of a "productive ambiguity" – something that maps while also being something to be mapped (Tally 2014, 3). Such a narrative provides a textual cartography of actual and/or fictitious spaces, but is also "mapped" by readers' interpretations and the interpretative frameworks and socio-spatial contexts

in which they are situated and which make them meaningful to those readers. Literary cartography has a wide field of interest as "its activity requires the meticulous coordination of different registers, from the individual subject's subjective experience of spaces and places to the vaster, abstract or even scientific apprehension of a spatial and historical constellation of forces" (Tally 2016, 21). It is based on the premise that the narrative both represents and shapes the spaces depicted in it, thus creating the fictitious environment of the story while also projecting a certain reality into it, and that this real and imaginary can then be comprehended at once. Mapping narratives thus "make possible novel spaces" (2014, 12), and the geocritical explorations of these literary cartographies can help us better understand our own spatial experience.

From this understanding of geocriticism, it is only a step to the phenomenological conception, which places emphasis on the interaction between the physical environment and the human psyche. As Jonathan White puts it, as humans, we cannot discount the psyche, i.e. "the mental perspectives with which we endow spaces and places" and the fact that "place, and the way that it is imagined, is imbued with attitude" (2019, 5, 6). This premise informs the phenomenological conception of geocriticism, which emphasises the interaction between the physical environment and the human psyche and, drawing in part on Tuan's humanistic geography, examines the relationship between the psyche of individuals and the physical environment they occupy by "emphasizing the embodied, environmentally constrained nature of human consciousness" (Prieto 2011, 16). It is subjectivist in that it looks at places from within, giving "precedence to the density, complexity, and qualitative aspects of place experience", while the opposite, objectivist or scientific, approach "relies on the analytic abstraction and decentred perspective associated with maps" (Prieto 2012, 187). However, by focusing on the geocritical inquiry into "place as a manifestation of the dynamic interpretation of consciousness and world" (Prieto 2011, 25), Eric Prieto argues for a comprehensive theory of space that would reconcile these two visions by bringing them together and looking for ways in which to adopt both perspectives simultaneously.

Prieto tries to combine the two approaches in his geocritical analysis of fictional representations of space, seeking to find out how they shape our attitudes towards the environment and how they imprint themselves on the mental space of our consciousness. In line with the current understanding of spaces as inherently heterogeneous and transitional, he emphasises the concept of the *entre-deux* or in-between place, that is, the

borderlands situated between the officially recognised landscapes/city-scapes and what lies beyond their limits, where the entropic, transitional, and transgressive momentum is most palpable. It designates "the many different kinds of sites that fall between the established categories that shape our expectations of what a place should be and that often tend, therefore, to be misunderstood, maligned, or simply ignored" (Prieto 2012, 1). These emergent, liminal and interstitial territories, although generally perceived as "defective variants of more-established, better understood places", possess a substantial productive potential which tends to be largely overlooked and underappreciated, but which makes them "unexpectedly resourceful loci of innovation and development" (Prieto 2012, 1). Prieto thus argues for this latent dynamic potential of these interstitial "non-places", such as borderlands, edges, peripheral areas, brownfields, backstreets, and the need to "examine the ways in which literary representations help us to understand the often misunderstood properties of emergent forms of place" (2012, 1–2).

Prieto notes that although these sites have always existed, they have taken on a particular significance within the unprecedented rapidity of recent socio-cultural transformations, as these transformations have allowed for new forms of spatial organisation and modes of habitation that have generated areas "destined to become an enduring part of the physical and cultural landscape even if they are not yet fully understood or accepted" (2012, 9), particularly on the margins of established habitats. As such, they naturally attract imaginative appropriation, including literary representation. Thus, according to Prieto, the *entre-deux* can be said to be "a kind of master trope for our era" (2012, 9), as they appositely reflect the transitional moment of history in which we live and thus prove a particularly useful object of geocritical study. Imaginative literature, which tends to be preoccupied with the productive potential of the peripheral, the liminal, the transitory, and their underappreciated properties, can thus become a crucial mediator in our understanding of lived spaces. Drawing also on the premise that the loss of one kind of place leads to the emergence of new spatial alternatives, Prieto calls for a systematic inquiry into literary representations of *entre-deux* places, not only in order to better comprehend the overlooked properties of border-line and emergent forms of place, but also to provide further insight into our experience of place/space in the current, globalised era.

The tendency to examine the ways in which (literary) texts render the intersection of human consciousness and the environment links geocritical conceptions, and especially the perspective of Eric Prieto, to another

equally influential and inclusive contemporary approach, ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is generally understood as an attempt to connect literary theory and criticism with environmental concerns (Garrard 2011, x). However, its field of study is not limited to natural landscapes or wilderness areas, but "also includes cultivated and built landscapes, the natural elements and aspects of those landscapes, and cultural interactions with those natural elements" (Wallace and Armbruster 2001, 4). According to Kathleen R. Wallace and Karla Armbruster, the editors of *Beyond Nature Writing* (2001), a collection of scholarly essays dedicated to expanding the boundaries of ecocriticism, environment need not only refer to "natural" or "wilderness" areas. Therefore, ecocriticism should assess even those texts which feature "less obviously 'natural' landscapes and human attempts to record, order, and ultimately understand their own relationships to those environments" (Wallace and Armbruster 2001, 4). Cheryll Glotfelty, the author and editor of a pioneering work of ecocriticism, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), proposed a path of more "interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international" (1996, xxv) ecocritical scholarship, believing that "the environmental crisis has been exacerbated by our fragmented, compartmentalized, and overly specialized way of knowing the world" (1996, xxii). Glotfelty's message concerns mainly humanities scholars, whom she urges to gain knowledge of scientific disciplines so that they are able to meet the demands of the interdisciplinary nature of the ecocritical approach. Ecocriticism thus echoes the universal call for the merging of individual scientific and artistic fields in order to overcome the traditional dualistic division.

At this point, one more crucial spatial concept should be mentioned – that of Michel Foucault's heterotopia (1986, 24–27). Heterotopias are places of heterogeneity with the curious property of reflecting and being linked to all other places, while simultaneously contradicting them and challenging the set of relations that they happen to mirror. They are counter-sites, absolutely different from all the other real sites to be found within the culture, in which all these other sites are both represented and designated as well as contested and inverted. Heterotopias can be specified by five defining principles: They exist in all cultures and take varied forms. Although each heterotopia has its precisely given function, it can assume one or more other functions as society evolves. The heterotopia can juxtapose several other places within itself, even if these are incompatible in themselves. The temporal arrangement of heterotopias is that of heterochrony, since they are usually linked to slices of time and function best when liberated from traditional temporality. They also