

### Reviews in brief: Geographies of modernism: literatures, cultures and spaces. Edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. London and New York: Routledge 2005. ISBN 0-415-33116-1

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**Home.** By Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling. London/New York: Routledge. 2006. xvi + 304 pp. \$125.00 cloth, \$35.95 paper. ISBN 0415332753.

In *Home* (2006), Blunt and Dowling creatively argue that home must be considered as both a spatial imaginary (the relations between feelings, attachment, and dwelling) as well as a political space of negotiation and contestation. The book begins with a contemporary, largely western conceptualization of the home and moves to outline multiple avenues for exploring a critical geography where home is conceptualized as the multi-scalar, material and imaginative site in and through which power and identity intersect with, disrupt, and extend common understandings of home. While comparative cultural geographies of home are limited here, the resulting book is a solid reference piece that persistently requires a flexible reader willing to extend their own imaginations of home along the journey. As such, reading it becomes a series of engaged moments between authors and reader in which a truly critical geography finds expression.

The historical dimensions of home, through which we have come to understand what home does, should, and could mean, is best found in Chapter 2: Representing Home; and Chapter 4: Home, Nation and Empire. Missing, however, is a temporal dimension more closely connected to the everyday lived enactments, experiences, and expressions of home: the time-specific particularities of the meanings of home. While space is critical to appreciating the 'fluidity of home as a concept, metaphor and lived experience' (p. 21), I suggest that political, social, and cultural processes are disrupting the linearity of home as well. That is, the meanings and attachments of home for single couples; young families; families with teens; empty-nesters; and returnees – home across the life course – suggest that home is indeed dynamic, but both flexible and durable. While a sense of time is introduced in a section on ethnographic research, it is not developed more substantially (pp. 43–4). Thinking about the home across the life course is one approach to incorporate social processes and rites of passage that reorient the material and imaginary home. Rethinking home across the course of one day, the differences in social relations and expectations during the week compared to the weekend, or between the everyday and the celebratory moments might further disrupt the normative and static notions of home. In these temporal frameworks, a deeper understanding of parental control, boundaries and territories of 'adult' space versus 'child' spaces, and the constant renegotiation of norms, expectations, and power relations might be more critically analyzed.

That I can pose these questions without undermining the integrity of the book's argument suggests that Blunt and Dowling have succeeded in producing, not only a geography of the home, but also a framework and approach for a sustained critical geography of the home.

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**Geographies of modernism: literatures, cultures and spaces.** Edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. London and New York: Routledge. 2005. 181 pp. £19.99 paperback. ISBN 0 415 33116 1.

This is a book situated between the fields of literary, media, and cultural studies, geography, architecture, and history. Its focus – the emerging ‘spatial turn’ in studies of modernist literature, art, architecture and more – is a fascinating one. But despite this the book is strangely uneven and rather disappointing. The introduction to a collection like this needs to set a clear agenda, but it does little more than suggest that historicist criticism should involve some consideration of space. What this might mean is largely left to the contributors, who seem equally uncertain.

I hope this isn’t just a disciplinary twitch on my part but none of the contributors are geographers, and beyond the usual suspects there isn’t much discussion of the discipline (though postcolonial historians of cartography, empire and nation are better represented). Does this matter? Well, Andreas Huyssen’s chapter seems to be mired in the debates about the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ which bothered geographers in the late 1990s. Jon Hegglund’s account of Graham Greene’s travel writing is also weirdly familiar, like it fell out of Barnes and Duncan’s *Writing worlds*. Hegglund concludes ‘Perhaps we can take one of modernism’s trademark aesthetic elements – the multiplication of perspectives – and fruitfully apply it to the way we imagine the very nature and history of geographical space’ (p. 53). I was hoping that the contributors to this volume might have *started* from this point, not ended there.

So the most interesting stories are those that are least familiar: Rebecca Beasley on the British intelligentsia’s engagement with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, for example, or James Housefields’ subtle and insightful reading of Duchamp as ‘traveller and geographer’. Or those that mix the familiar and unfamiliar to produce something novel, like James Donald’s provocative discussion of modernist mediations of space and time, or Andrew Thacker’s chapter on Imagism and Orientalism. But in the end it wasn’t the sense of missed opportunities that bothered me – after all, interdisciplinary work isn’t easy and geographers have been slow to catch on to developments in literary criticism – but that the casually historicist approach of some contributors seems as uninterested in history as it is in geography. In a few chapters history seems to be a pretty simple thing, a cultural ‘moment’ of a particular and unproblematic type, and space and cultural production are treated as expressions of this. This strangely uncritical approach compromises what might have been much more than just another eclectic set of essays.

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**Moving lives: narratives of nation and migration among Europeans in post-war Britain.** By Kathy Burrell. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2006. xix + 212 pp. £50 cloth. ISBN 0754645746.

Burrell’s book *Moving lives* is a powerful counter-argument against those globalization theories that downplay the role of nation-states in our modern societies. Taking three migrant groups living in Leicester – Poles, Greek-Cypriots and Italians – Burrell tests the applicability of national identity theories to migrants and artfully uncovers the complexity of migrants’ national identity