

FOR A NEW THEORY ON SPACE AND PLACE
A REVIEW OF *PRZESTRZEŃ I MIEJSCE WE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH
TEORIACH I PRAKTYKACH LITERACKICH*
(SPACE AND PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY
THEORIES AND PRACTICES, ELŻBIETA RYBICKA, 2014)

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Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich (Space and Place in Contemporary Literary Theories and Practices) by Elżbieta Rybicka was published in Polish in year 2014 by Universitas Publishing House in Krakow, Poland. It represents a very extensive and thorough study on well-known theories on space and place which are re-visited and re-organised in such a way as to justify this novel method of geopoetics as an investigating and analysing method of research to be applied in the study of literature.

One of the most important features of the book refers to the interdisciplinary approach the author chooses to undertake in her research, thus aiming at four major aspects of geopoetical criticism: poetological, geographical, anthropological and performative. All four aspects involve both the writer, the reader, the work of art and consequently, in each situation, the relation between man and space/place in an active, poetological manner.

The book is structured in six parts, each further divided into subchapters, and a section of annexes which contains additional studies on research topics related to geopoetics. Amongst these are garden tropes, the myth of *Mitteleuropa* or Czesław Miłosz' *Homo Geographicus* as he appears in his topographies or auto/biographies. The six parts have the following titles: *From Poetics of Space to Politics of Place. Topographic Turns in Literary Studies; Geopoetics as a Scientific Approach; Literature, Geography: Towards a Mutual Glossary; Anthropology of Place; Topographies of History: Place, Memory, Literature and New Regionalism and Local Narratives.*

The first chapter has a rather historical approach, revisiting different space and place theories such as those belonging to Marc Augé, Tim Endensor or E. W. Soja.

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For a New Theory on Space and Place. A Review of Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich (Space and Place in Contemporary Literary Theories and Practices, Elżbieta Rybicka, 2014)

Yet too little attention is paid here to the concept of *heterotopia* of Michel Foucault, a concept which any researcher of space and place would actually consider pioneering and a basis in the development of further theories. The chapter dedicated to an establishment of a glossary raises a certain amount of interest, nonetheless the structure of the chapter lacks construction as does the glossary aspect itself. Even though some key-concepts are discussed in relation either with certain theories or fictional works relevant for their meaning and function, such as *integrative geography, map and critical or literary cartography, mismapping, place, imagination*, etc. the structure of the chapter is rather loose, and sometimes incoherent, underlining the need for methodology and clear theoretical instruments.

The part *Geopoetics as a Scientific Approach*, dedicated to geopoetics as research method to link literature and space/place is both convincing and well-argued as such method would benefit from its interdisciplinary intrinsic feature as well as from unifying the tools necessary in such an attempt. Moreover the chapter *Topographies of History: Place, Memory, Literature* is of certain originality as it illustrates both the relation between man, literature, space/place and memory as a productive, creative factor in this relation. This part of the book is relevant especially for the fictional contemporary revisitations of history in which micro-history becomes stronger than macro-history, as well as the types of writings such as memoirs and (auto-)biographies in which memory becomes the direct intermediate between the two. Moreover, from the point of view of the recent histories revealed after the traumas of the 20th century – the Holocaust or the regimes in the former Communist countries. Thus, as the author puts it, memory, as an interdisciplinary category becomes a wonderful bridge between the historic discourse and the literary one, while literature becomes, through memory, a very personal discourse. Furthermore, because of the interdisciplinary and thus very ample character, memory has never been a strictly literary category *stricto sensu*, and thus remains so in Rybicka's study. Here the author also develops and analyses the meaning of 'memoryscape' – a landscape of memory in the present cultural frames, a key-word in geopoetical analyses.

The last chapter *New Regionalism and Local Narratives*, which focuses on the new regionalism in literature theorises and analyses rather Polish theories, texts and regions, failing unfortunately to integrate the concept of 'new regionalisms' into a wider European perspective so much present in European and world literature nowadays, and which would perfectly fit the newly emerging regional identities. Furthermore, the author does not manage to offer a sustainable explanation for the choice to include the articles in the annexes in the study, as they would easily find a place in the broader perspective the author chose for the main body of the study.

The book *Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* (Space and Place in Contemporary Literary Theories and Practices) by Elżbieta Rybicka is a complex, challenging and erudite study on the relation between literature and space/place, pleading very convincingly on the introduction and developing of geopoetics as a new research method in literary and cultural studies. In spite of its sometimes overloaded information, not always very well organised, and in spite of the multitude of ideas not always adequately structured, the book will remain an important study in its domain both within Poland and beyond its borders.