

imagination and that cinepoetry should be thought of as a form, almost a genre, in its own right.

While this latter, stronger thesis can fall short of itself, such overemphasis may be currently necessary. Wall-Romana belongs to the first concerted wave of scholarship that has set out, courageously, to dismantle the longstanding “purity” of insular disciplines. By mounting a case against hermeticism this work has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that medium impurity was a central feature of twentieth-century art. As Colin MacCabe has written in an article on the “dialectics” of film and literature: “We live in impurity up to our eyes and ears; the question is how to think it.”

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### Notes

1. Most of these studies—such as David Trotter’s *Cinema and Modernism*, Susan MacCabe’s *Cinematic Modernism*, and Andrew Shail’s *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism*—have focused on Anglo-American high-modernism. Others, such as David Seed’s *Cinematic Fictions*, have focused on American naturalism and modernism alike.

2. Eisenstein famously found in Dickens a pre-cinematic forerunner to his own montage theories. A more recent study, Grahame Smith’s *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema*, argues that Dickens’s novels can be regarded as proto-filmic.

3. Christophe Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein: Corporeal Cinema and Film Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

Verena Andermatt Conley, *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory*, Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures 21. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012. 171 pp.

The latest book by Verena Andermatt Conley, renowned feminist scholar and pioneering ecocritic, follows the “spatial turn” of French thought in the wake of May 1968 in order to trace how space “can now be appreciated for its ecological implications” (1). Conley’s book has two separate aspects. First, it is a guide to French spatial theory, which will prove useful for those new to the field or for those, especially in English departments, who are familiar with one or two works of these theorists but who lack the historical and cultural context of French thought since the 1960s. But it is also a re-reading of these texts in light of today’s pressing ecological concerns with an eye

to finding new critical tools that could build habitable spaces and spaces for resistance. Conley's book is a success on both accounts—she presents a group of notably diverse and difficult thinkers in a clear and engaging way that is accessible to the uninitiated, while also providing valuable insight for those of us who have been immersed in French spatial theory.

The nine French spatial theorists presented here (Lefebvre, Certeau, Baudrillard, Augé, Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari, Latour, and Balibar) are more or less familiar to English-speaking audiences (Bruno Latour perhaps overly so, Marc Augé not nearly enough). Conley shows the richness of spatial thinking in France, and also provides glimpses of an even wider field of spatial thinking in France, from Henri Bergson to Gaston Bachelard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Marin, Georges Perec, Hélène Cixous, Michel Serres, Jacques Rancière, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Michel Foucault. She carefully presents the thought of each of her authors in his or her own terms, with the result that complex notions of space, the city, the West, and globalization are crafted anew in each chapter. Space means something different for each of these thinkers; separating and juxtaposing the diverging formulations brings out the richness of the term. Each theorist redefines, reinvents, and distorts concepts that exist within the specific ecosystem of French thought, and that might seem opaque to English speakers without Conley's work of translation and interpretation.

Chapters on catastrophic or paranoid thinkers (Virilio, Baudrillard) are mixed with more practical thinkers (Balibar, Certeau), a structuring device that allows the reader to see how others can productively appropriate critical tools invented by even the most pessimistic of writers. Virilio's influence on Deleuze and Guattari, Balibar's incorporation and critique of Lefebvre and Deleuze and Guattari, the friendships forged between Baudrillard, Augé and Virilio, all constitute essential details that contextualize what amounts to thirty or more years of dialogue. The only one to seem slightly out of place is Latour, whose media presence and relative lack of interaction with the other writers studied in the book makes of him a useful insider/outsider precisely because his new perspectives prove to be less convincing.

Conley begins with Henri Lefebvre, a writer whose work reflects the changing spatial realities in France from World War II through the end of the *trente glorieuses*. His seminal work, *La Production de l'espace* from 1974, inaugurates the search in France for the creation of habitable spaces in a world pulverized by capitalism. Conley follows with a chapter on Michel de Certeau, "as a foil and complement to Lefebvre" (28), who argues for the ability of the ordinary man to refashion space in the everyday. Space

becomes a practice opposed to “proper places.” To deepen and illustrate Certeau’s argument, Conley evokes the work of novelist, politician, and sociologist Azouz Begag, which describes the immigrant’s experience and subsequent invention of space in France. Juxtaposed to the art of spatial practice of Certeau, chapter three focuses on Jean Baudrillard’s conception of media spaces, spaces of control that have substituted simulacra for the real. While Baudrillard uncovers dangerous tendencies in the contemporary media sphere, Conley is critical of his theoretical overreaching, especially evident in his idiosyncratic vision of “America” (59). Chapter four studies Marc Augé, whom Conley calls “The Anthropologist-Painter of Postmodern Life” (62). Augé’s work on the Parisian *métro* and especially his concept of the “non-place” describe new challenges but also new possibilities for identity within what he calls supermodernity. Paul Virilio’s thought, outlined in chapter five, exposes the disastrous effects of speed on democracy, art, and the body. The acceleration of information technologies has shrunk space and time, confining our range of motion, our ability to act in the world.

Conley segues from Virilio’s concept of “deterritorialization” to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s appropriation and elaboration of the term in chapter six. Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking on space is the richest of the authors studied in this book, with concepts from their *Mille plateaux* such as nomadism, the rhizome, smooth space, and the plateau greatly expanding the spatial critic’s toolbox. As Conley points out, many of their concepts might be coopted in the new context of global capitalism, but they never stopped adapting their thinking to new contexts. Conley highlights Guattari’s late work, *The Three Ecologies* from 1989, and the need for an “ecosophy.”

The last two chapters juxtapose Bruno Latour and Étienne Balibar as two theorists who propose ways of negotiating space “in a world with waning nation-states and striated city-states” (111). Latour rejects ways of thinking inherited from modernism, proposing a “non-modernism” that would free us from reductive concepts and allow us to invent new spaces within machinic networks. Instead of conceiving networks as a transfer of information, Latour proposes we think in terms of transformation. Conley remains skeptical of Latour’s conclusions, however, since he seems blind to questions of wealth, privilege, and citizenship. Étienne Balibar’s work argues for a new conception of citizenship and subjectivity after decolonization and globalization. Balibar envisions the creation of new, fictional spaces and calls for a new type of intellectual who can translate concerns between competing universalisms.

Conley calls her book an open-ended sequel to her earlier *Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997), which traced the birth of ecology in poststructuralism. *Spatial Ecologies* deals with a paradox of sorts. Post-'68 thought was focused on the state as a site of repression, and pushed for new spaces of contention for collective action. However, the acceleration of a globalized economy has led to a weakened nation-state and the loss of spaces for resistance, leading to creative shifts and new alliances in French thought. All the thinkers of the book share similar experiences of the loss of space, all point to similar causes, all propose the creation of new spaces. But Conley conveys the incredible diversity of conceptual responses to our new reality—given the enormity of the challenges we face, we will need all of these critical tools.

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