

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Editorial

Nearly thirty years ago, in a review article on ‘Geography and Literature’, D.C.D. Pocock remarked that ‘perhaps only increasing financial stringency has prevented the founding of a specialist journal.’ In the decades that have passed since Pocock’s review appeared in *Progress in Human Geography*, changes in both the definition of literary geography and the costs of academic publishing mean that an interdisciplinary specialist journal for work in the field is finally possible.

First, while Pocock, writing in 1988, saw ‘geography and literature’ as an emerging subfield within human geography, the intervening years have seen the emergence of a much broader literary geography, which has come to include work grounded in a wide range of academic fields including not only human geography but also literary criticism, literary cartography, geocriticism, comparative literature, and the digital and spatial humanities. As a result, *Literary Geographies* is being launched as a strongly interdisciplinary journal designed to function as a collaborative forum for a wide range of authors and readers.

Second, while financial considerations would have been a major issue for a new journal in the 1980s, advances in internet technology and the development of freely available online publishing software have meant that today open-access specialist journals can be set up at minimal cost by scholarly collectives working independently of publishers, printers, and distributors. *Literary Geographies* was founded and is currently edited by a group of five editors whose specialisations are evenly divided between geography and literary studies. We produce and publish the journal online collectively using freely available OJS software (Open Journal Systems). The editorial board has also been set up to be as diverse as possible, both in terms of institutional location and in terms of discipline and approach to a broadly-defined literary geography. With the launch of *Literary Geographies* authors working at the intersection of literary studies, geography and cartography can now submit their work to a specialist journal without having to decide whether they are writing for geographers or literary critics.

The new journal is being presented under the plural title *Literary Geographies* in recognition of the many different ways in which the field is and has been defined. It takes the general position that literary geography is essentially a way of reading. In the

conventional sense, literary geography can be understood as an approach to literary texts, a geographically-attuned way of reading fiction or poetry or drama. But literary geography can also be understood as a way of reading in a second sense: not just reading while making connections between geography and literature, but also making connections while reading scholarly work in geography and literary studies, work that may not be defined as literary geography but which nonetheless can be productively read in such a way.

Pocock's vision of a specialist journal was encouraged in the late 1980s by the fact that interest among geographers in working with literary texts had been increasing for some time: there had been a session on the use of the novel in teaching regional geography at the 1972 International Geographical Union meeting; in 1974 the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers had included a session on landscape in literature; and in 1979 the Institute of British Geographers had launched a series of sessions at its annual meetings 'on the intentionally broader perspective of geography and literature.' In that era, in literary studies, the term 'literary geography' was generally still taken to refer to the kind of literary gazetteer aimed at reader-tourists discussed (and critiqued) by Virginia Woolf in her 1905 review for the *Times Literary Supplement* on 'Literary Geography.' It was not until the 'spatial turn' took hold in literary studies nearly a century later that a contrastingly *critical* literary geography started to gain traction. Even then, the impact of the rise of interest in the spatial was grounded in literary studies in work by geographers and spatial theorists on the topic in general, and there was almost no crossover with work by geographers developing critical methodologies for literary geography.

In the last ten years, however, the two lines of work have begun to merge, with scholars becoming more willing to read and write across disciplinary distances, and it has as a result become increasingly difficult to distinguish between various literary geographies – as subfields of cultural geography and literary criticism, for example. This gradual merging and interdisciplinary collaboration has developed despite the fact that until now work has of necessity mainly been published in distinct disciplinary contexts, across the range of geography and literary journals from *Cultural Geographies* to *Early Modern Literature*. Even more recently, the division between academic and creative work on literary geography has also started to be broken down, while literary geographers working on different national canons have also begun to collaborate.

It is our hope that *Literary Geographies* will provide a forum for these and other kinds of interdisciplinary convergences, collaborations, and cross-fertilisations at the juncture where geography and literature meet.

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