LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Catharina Löffler (2017) *Walking in the City: Urban Experience and Literary Psychogeography in Eighteenth-Century London.* **Wiesbaden, Germany: J.B. Metzler, 357 pp., $89 (paper), ISBN 978-3-658-17742-3.**

In *Walking in the City*, Catharina Löffler frames the literary experience of walking in the city through the theoretical constructions and productions of space. Her book also engages theories of the spectacle, geography, postmodernism, and literary landscape. She invokes readings of architecture, the body, and sensuality in her analysis of descriptions of eighteenth-century London. Incorporating primary sources that range from the late sixteenth century to the twenty-first century, Löffler applies a broad theoretical compass to an extensive terrain of literary sources, while focusing on mostly the sensorial experience of walking in London in eighteenth-century literary texts.

In her introduction, 'Psychogeography and the Literary City,' Löffler defines the peripatetic perspective as psychogeography. She eloquently describes walking as an 'experience of the city' that 'rests upon a dynamic imaginary topography that relies on fleeting, chance encounters,' as expressed in William Blake's 'London' (1794) (2). Acknowledging that the peripatetic perspective is gendered, primarily as masculine because of men's 'free movement and access to London's various places of entertainment – a privilege that women were usually deprived of' (17), she focuses on the male peripatetic perspective.

Löffler devotes the first part of her book, which consists of two chapters totaling approximately one hundred pages, to her theoretical approach. Beginning with literary and cultural studies discourse, and space as a concept, she extends her analysis to the street-level experience of the city. Her first chapter, 'Experiencing the City: Urban Space in Literature,' theorizes the space and the experience of walking and writing the city through 'Real and Imagined Cities' (22). In the next portion of this chapter, she defines psychogeography and explores what it means to write the city. She recapitulates theories about the body in physical space in eighteenth-century London and resituates the body along with its spatial experience within the text in her next chapter, 'Bodies and Spaces: Eighteenth-Century Literary Psychogeography and the London Walker.' In this chapter, she sets the scene with seventeenth-century London, from the plague and the fire to London's resurgence. She subsequently describes the kinds of spaces—streets, promenades, and pleasure gardens—and experiences—perambulating, crowding, and walking—that she explores more extensively in part two. The third portion of chapter two consists of defining the experience of the city in the text in terms of an 'Eighteenth-Century Literary Psychogeography': from blending fact and fiction, to multisensorial experience, and concluding with 'Formal Elements of Literary Psychogeography': '*Focalisation*,' '*Multimodality*,' and '*Rhetorics of Walking*' (114-3, emphasis in original).

The second part of Löffler's book spans seven chapters, in addition to a conclusion, and covers approximately two hundred pages. In the first chapter of this section, chapter three, 'The Art of Walking,' Löffler explores John Gay's *Trivia: Or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716), as a guide to walking the city, and John Thelwall's *The Peripatetic* (1793), as a philosophy of walking London. In the next chapter, she analyzes the city through pain and fear in Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722). She compares the crowded cityscape—how the city is usually known—to a crowd of corpses in Defoe's *Journal* (210-1) to convey a sense of the enormity of the plague and its transformation of London. In chapter five, Löffler parallels Grub-Street publication with the connotation of its street life in Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (1698-1700) and Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical* (1700). Löffler points out that Ward presents a carnivalesque experience of the city, while Brown suggests an estranged perspective of London as a 'Grand Tour' through the defamiliarized gaze of the walker's companion, a North American Indian.

While the previous primary texts in Löffler's book feature a spectator lens, primary texts with female protagonists render women as the object of this gaze. For, when women walk in London, they become sexualized, and their reputations can be compromised, as Löffler illustrates in chapter six, 'Women Walkers and Female Experiences of the City.' A woman of the city, Moll Flanders in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) becomes criminalized through having 'to *use* the city in order to survive in it' (271, emphasis in original). However, her criminalization is not only because of gender, as Löffler argues, but is also because of class and how Flanders has to navigate the city as a woman criminal. These gendered class differences are further demonstrated in the anonymous *The Midnight-Ramble* (1754) and Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778). As a woman criminal, Flanders navigates the city in disguise, blending with the London crowds, while Lady Betty and Mrs. Sprightly in *The Midnight-Ramble* and Evelina in *Evelina* have to resist succumbing to the city, where their class status becomes suspect through spaces in which they are sexualized. This sexualization exposes a conflation of class with moral and reputable behaviors associated with public spaces to which women are subjected that men are not.

Löffler reaches into the Romantic vision of the city in William Wordsworth's 'Residence in London' (1805) in her final chapter. She reads the autobiographical aspect of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* as a development of self. For Wordsworth, walking was 'a mode of being' and a way of 'finding one's identity through the walking experience' (296). Löffler posits that Wordsworth's poem reflects his personal growth through his peripatetic experiences of London, theorizing a kind of knowing and writing a city by walking it (Barthes 1982: 36). She follows this idea with the reflexive relationship of the constantly changing self (317), while she avoids addressing how London changes and how people's presence changes that space (Massey 2005: 124-5). Löffler momentarily mentions the sublime, a defining concept in eighteenth-century and Romantic perspectives of various scapes: land, city, nature, sea, and ruins. This concept, as discussed by Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), is crucial to understanding Wordsworth's dichotomized vision of the urban as an inferno, and the pastoral as a paradise. This dichotomized vision connects to Löffler's introduction of a psychogeography of London in Blake's 'London' at the beginning of her book. Her most sophisticated analysis emerges in this final chapter. In her fluid engagement of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Lewis Mumford's *The City in History* (1961), she contextualizes the

Romantic dichotomy of city and nature in Wordsworth's 'Residence in London' by more fully applying her geocritical approach, thereby, integrating her theoretical approach with her analysis.

Löffler concludes with the provocative query, 'How Does the World Enter the Text?' with Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, to posit that texts on London are 'modes of access to the real and to the imagined city' (325). She summarizes the history of psychogeography and her application of it to primary texts in part two of her book. She suggests that this approach may be applied outside the eighteenth-century temporal category, as has been done by many twenty-first-century psychogeographers as demonstrated in Löffler's bibliography. It would have been helpful if Löffler had integrated her analysis of the primary sources throughout her book, rather than devoting the entire first part of her book to her theoretical approach and rarely alluding to or including it thereafter.

Löffler appears to be writing for a general audience, one neither familiar with geocriticism and related approaches to literary analysis nor familiar with eighteenth-century literature. Nevertheless, Löffler's dissertation, noted in the colophon, 'Prefatory Remarks,' and 'Preface and Acknowledgements,' reflects her breadth of scholarship and familiarity with her sources, providing a starting point for important work to be continued in eighteenth-century literary studies.

Works Cited

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