LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Interspatiality

Sheila Hones

The University of Tokyo

sheilahones@hones.org

Almost by definition, literary geographers work with multiple geographies as they overlap and combine: 'lived,' for example, 'fictional,' 'actual,' 'imagined,' 'literary,' 'real.' In recent years these interactions have been particularly important to the work of relational literary geography, with its focus on 'how lived geographies seep into imagined ones and how imagined ones spill beyond the confines of the page' (Saunders and Anderson 2015: 115). This emphasis on the amalgamation of two geographies often treated in literary/geographical studies as if they are self-evidently and essentially different presents literary geography with a terminological challenge: even when 'imagined' and 'lived' geographies are understood to be 'seeping' into each other, there is no easy way to avoid having to name them as separate dimensions, and this tends to undermine the argument for permeability even as it makes it. The aim of this essay is to suggest an addition to the working vocabulary of literary geography designed to help to solve this terminological problem. Essentially, the idea is to find a way to name the *merged* form of the conventionally differentiated 'lived' and 'imagined.' This would enable a way of talking about literary-social-geographical combinations in terms which acknowledge the ways in which they are always inextricably mingled. In brief, the proposal is to combine the geographical concept of *spatiality* with the literary concept of *intertextuality* to produce for literary geography the concept of *interspatiality* and a way to name the dimension generated by the interaction of the spatial, the social, and the textual.

James Thurgill recently argued in this journal that there is a need 'to develop a sophisticated language and terminology' to support progress in literary geography (Thurgill 2021: 152). Thurgill's 'spatial hinge' is an example of this work on the vocabulary of literary geography, providing as it does a way of naming the process by which readers extend their engagement with a text into unrelated locations. In his essay developing the idea of the spatial

hinge, Thurgill talks of 'internal, interconnective, and exterior textual geographies,' a reworking of the 'intratextual, intertextual and extratextual' combination central to the 'text-as-event' (Hones 2008). Both of these ways of phrasing a spatial or relational view of text assume a multidirectional textual-social-spatial interconnectivity and encourage a redirection away from the more conventional 'literary' vs 'real.' This is useful because the binary literary/real distinction not only inhibits the potential versatility of literary geography by emphasising separation, but also implicitly prioritises objects of study (literary texts, lived worlds) over contributing disciplines (literary studies, human geography). 'Interspatiality' takes this move a step further with its more theorised and less unwieldy approach to naming and envisioning the complex totality of 'the text as a spatial event' (Hones 2011, 2014).

Although it would be a new concept for literary geography, interspatiality has been employed in other disciplines, for example in studies of spatial design, the environment and interdisciplinarity (James 2014) and in analysing ways in which 'creative labor entangles people, places, communities, and ways of working and thinking in art' (Mar and Anderson 2012). The proposal here, however, emphasises the ways in which 'interspatiality' is specifically applicable to theory and practice in a literary studies/human geography interdiscipline because of its implied combination of the primary elements of a dynamic and interconnected literary/geographical effect, *spatiality* and *intertextuality* (Hones 2014: 101-14).

The thinking behind this idea begins with the practical point that a focus on *spatiality* enables a sidestep around much of the confusion currently associated with definitions of abstract space and delimited spaces. As Audrey Kobayashi has argued, in human geography the concept of *space* 'no longer carries much analytical utility,' in part because 'its meanings have become so diverse as to be almost meaningless,' but also because geographers have become increasingly aware that their primary concern is 'the spatial-social.' (2017) S*patiality* is not only a more manageable term than *space*; with its emphasis on 'the spatial-social' it also suggests the interpenetration of the literary and the lived. Turning again to Audrey Kobayashi: 'spatiality is a condition of being, not a thing in itself. It is no longer possible – if it ever was – to isolate space from its sticky context, nor is it possible to isolate spatiality as a particular mode of being or historical moment, a particular place, landscape, or setting.' Rather, geographers increasingly recognize and understand spatiality . . . as a dialectical process.' Because it recognises space and human action and thinking as dialectical and indivisible, spatiality offers literary geography the basis for a term able to articulate the amalgamation of the lived and the textual, enabling the idea of a literary-geographical dimension understood as inseparably both literary *and* geographical.

In everyday use spatiality can simply mean 'relating to space' or 'having a spatial property;' in contemporary human geography, however, the concepts of 'spatiality' and 'space' are the subjects of ongoing discussion and reformulation, and this means that the academic field of literary geography has a responsibility to be careful and precise in deploying these terms. The same caution is needed when using the literary term *intertextuality,* also complex and never fully determined in its specialist mode (Allen 2011). The basic idea can nevertheless be briefly summarised as referring to the interconnectivity of texts: the *intertextual* being 'a space in which a vast number of relations coalesce' (12).

A key point here is that these relations are not simply between texts or generated by authors: they also include the connections readers make between texts without authorial prompting, connections which sometimes only become possible post-publication. Intertextuality, in this sense, is spatio-temporally and also socio-spatially boundless. In his work on 'the social space of texts' David Coughlan has suggested that intertextuality is 'not a means by which we can link one textual space with another, or move from one to another, but is itself a part of that space, is, in fact, the whole of that space' (Coughlan 2002: 207). Intertextuality is in this sense a concept with considerable potential for literary geography because of the way in which it connects themes from the field's two primary contributing disciplines, literary studies and human geography. Conventionally, the point of contact between the *literary* and the *geographical* in literary geography and related fields has been assumed to lie at the interface between objects of study, i.e. literary texts and physical or social geographies. But as the spatiality/intertextuality example suggests, the points of contact between theory and practice in the disciplines of literary studies and human geography are potentially just as interesting. Thinking of literary geography in these explicitly interdisciplinary terms enables us to merge literary theory's interest in intertextuality with a theory-driven human geography working with the 'more-than-representational,' relational geography, and spatiality. From this perspective it becomes clear that intertextuality stands out as one of the more geographical lines of work in literary studies, and that this is one of the reasons why it makes sense for literary geographers to be thinking about intertextuality and spatiality together.

A blending of the literary idea of *intertextuality* with the geographical idea of *spatiality,* then, might productively generate the interdisciplinary idea of *interspatiality,* thereby naming and enabling engagement with the dynamic plurality of texts, spaces, places, authors, readers and other agents which is the implied subject of much current work in literary geography. This would enable literary geographers to write and talk about that amalgamation directly, as a totality, without getting tangled up in phrases like 'lived-and-imagined places' and 'literary and non-literary space.' This is not suggested as the launch of any large-scale theoretical modification. On the contrary, it is nothing more than a practical attempt to provide a name for something literary geographers are already thinking and writing about.

In a 2019 review for *Progress in Human Geography* Ben Anderson included work in literary geography on the 'text-as-event' in his discussion of the shift in geographical studies of representation towards 'the question of what representations do rather than what they stand in for,' noting that 'cultural geographers are experimenting with vocabularies for understanding how representational practices are part of and constitute worlds.' The concept of interspatiality can be usefully folded into this shift from the question of what texts represent to how they function, or indeed 'happen,' socially and spatially. Anderson further noted that the idea of 'the text as event' and its 'vocabulary of "intermingling", "unfolding" and "collaboration"' enables literary geographers 'to disrupt and undermine an ontological distinction between literary and non-literary spaces' (2019: 1123). The 'disruption' of conventional binary distinctions noted by Anderson provided the foundations for the proposal made here that interspatiality might be a useful addition to the vocabulary of literary

geography, its key point being the way it could provide a way of reconfiguring 'literary and non-literary spaces' into a unified 'interspatiality.'

Works Cited

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