

## EDITORIAL

*Richard Phillips and Scott McCracken*

Fredric Jameson has called for a rethinking of 'cultural politics in terms of space and the struggle for space'.<sup>1</sup> This issue of *new formations* looks at where the spatial imagination is taking cultural criticism. Five of the articles (by Clive Barnett, Richard Cavell, Jess Edwards, Gerry Kearns, and Andrew Thacker) were originally given as papers at a conference session, 'Textual Spaces, Spatial Texts', at the Royal Geographical Society in London in 2004. That three other articles drawing their impetus from the same disciplinary intersection were submitted to the journal during the editorial process suggests that the session reflected broader debates in cultural studies. These currently operate around: textual space (a term deployed by Stephen Muecke); mapping strategies and territorial disputes (Graham Huggan); maps of meaning (Peter Jackson, after Raymond Williams); cognitive mapping (Frederic Jameson); geographies of writing (Nedra Reynolds); writing space (Jay Bolter); geographies of reading (James Secord); conceptual space (Paul Werth); and spaces of print and cartography (Robert Mayhew).<sup>2</sup>

The first of these three articles, Peter Brooker's 'Terrorism and Counter Terrorism and Counternarratives; Don DeLillo and the New York Imaginary', asks how New York has been re-imagined since 11 September 2001. Looking at narratives as different as DeLillo's work from *Mao II* to *Cosmopolis* and Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Brooker asks how New York's urban imaginary as a 'lived perceptual and interpretive framework, operating in a dialectical relation with the physical fabric and institutionalised systems of the urban or metropolitan complex' has changed in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center.

Ian Buchanan's article 'Practical Deleuzism and Postmodern Space' takes the discussion from redefinitions of a city we think we know to the lack of definition of what Marc Augé calls 'non-places - malls, airports, freeways, office parks, and so forth, which prioritise cost and function over look and feel'. In his discussion of postmodern space, Buchanan moves through three separate, but related stages: cinematic anticipations; the mall as realisation; and the application of the concept of 'deterritorialisation' to its transformations. Understanding postmodern space in relation to land value and ground rent suggests, he argues, an application of Deleuzian theory that is in keeping with the practical philosophy Deleuze demanded.

In the third article in this section, Jody Berland examines the significance of a spatial imaginary to Canadian national identity. In 'After the Fact: Spatial Narratives in the Canadian Imaginary' she argues that in Canada 'the emphasis on land and space has both expedited and resisted forces of colonial power'. Berland's central metaphor for the forging of a national

1. Frederick Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London, Verso, 1991

2. Graham Huggan, *Territorial Disputes*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996; see also: Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning*, London, Routledge, 1989; S. Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, Kensington, New South Wales University Press, 1992; Nedra Reynolds, *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2004; Paul Werth, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, London, Longman, 1999; Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext and the Remediation of Print*, New Jersey, Lawrence Earlbaum, 2001; James Secord, *Victorian Sensation: the Extraordinary Publication, Reception and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000; Robert Mayhew, 'British Geography's Republic of Letters: Mapping and Imagined Community, c. 1600-1800' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65, 2 (2004).

imaginary is the train-radio that broadcast as it crossed the continent, making a Canadian space through the air waves. But Canada's ambivalent position as both part of North America and politically and cultural distinct from its powerful neighbour means that its national space is far from secure. Here spatial politics is an ongoing battle for definition and redefinition.

The articles that emerged from 'Textual Spaces/Spatial Texts' are framed by Andrew Thacker's call for 'a critical literary geography' and Miles Ogborn's 'Afterword'. Thacker, working in an English Department, traces the influence of geographical ideas as they have seeped into literary studies. He proposes 'a *critical* literary geography', stressing its difference to the 'effortless mapping of represented landscapes in literary texts'. Such a literary geography would, he suggests, 'raise more complex questions about space and power, and how space and geography affect literary forms and styles'. Ogborn, who responded as discussant to the conference papers on the day, here gives a considered response from the perspective of cultural geography on the distinctions and differences highlighted by the dialogues the articles establish.

The other four essays in this section, also demonstrate the transgression of disciplinary boundaries such dialogues involve. Gerry Kearns, who works in a Department of Geography, offers a nuanced analysis of the spatial politics of James Joyce's fiction. Jess Edwards, from an English Department, engages with early modern mathematics to respond with an account of the 'dirtiness' of early modern maps, which were used 'not just to represent space but also to negotiate the identity, the legitimacy and the agency of individuals, groups and ventures'. Clive Barnett, another cultural geographer, in 'Disseminating Africa: Burdens of representation and the African Writers Series' offers a new perspective on Heinemann's African Writers Series as not primarily 'ideological', but instead engaged in the generation of new public forms of space. While in the final article in the section, Richard Cavell asks in 'Geographical Immediations: Locating *The English Patient*', what impact the increasing hegemony of electronic mediation has had on the relationship between space and text. Writing from within an English department, Cavell argues that "text" remains useful for our understanding of a fundamentally mediated space only to the extent that it can be understood as having superseded the regime of writing, as in Barthes' suggestion that texts are networks'.

Such dialogues are not, of course, without disagreement. Cross-disciplinary misunderstandings are the inevitable consequences of differences in perspective, language and values: of different critical literacies. As editors we have had vigorous debates about the issue, debates coloured by our different disciplinary perspectives which changed in character and emphasis according to the spaces in which they were situated at the time. The conference, for example, took place on geographical terrain, while the editorial process was conducted in the context of a journal which includes, culture, theory and politics, but not geography in its title.

Despite the tensions this threw up, we accept that such debates reflect the difficulties and realities of interdisciplinary exchange. Situated inevitably amidst the realities of disciplinary power and influence, in the end, our dialogues were both critical and productive, resulting, we feel, in a better issue than if they had not taken place. Nonetheless, the dialogues go on. As Ogborn concludes, there are still significant differences. Speaking productively across boundaries is something that has to be worked at.