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Book Review: Axel H. Goodbody and Carmen Flys Junquera, eds., *Sense of Place: Transatlantic Perspectives / Sentido del arraigo: perspectivas transatlánticas* (Instituto Franklin de Estudios Norteamericanos - Universidad de Alcalá: Servicio de Publicaciones UAH, 2016), 231 pp.



In this collection Axel Goodbody and Carmen Flys Junquera bring together twelve eloquent essays that enrich the scholarly dialogue on “sense of place,” place attachment and alienation, and the representation of place in contemporary literature and the arts. As the Preface explains, *Sense of Place* is the third publication in the University of Alcalá’s Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin series dedicated to Culture, Literature and Environment (CLYMA, in Spanish), an editorial endeavor that contributes to internationalize ecocriticism. It is fitting that this volume be included in the CLYMA series, as the ecocritical gaze spotlights the intricacies of how the human world interacts with places. In keeping with this effort to secure a space for ecocriticism in the Spanish-speaking community, *Sense of Place* opens with a bilingual critical introduction translated with precision by Irene Sanz Alonso, and four of its twelve essays are in Spanish.

The study of place is, of course, not new, but in so far as it is driven by the spirit of ecocriticism and designed along the lines of an environmentally inflected place-based education, *Sense of Place* offers fresh perspectives on a concept that stands out for its elusiveness. As the editors explain in their introduction, “sense of place” is “an openness to appreciation of the characteristic features of a place, whose understanding may give insight into how people interact with their environment, and facilitate efforts to make this interaction more sustainable” (17). As this definition suggests, sense of place is intrinsically personal; places mean different things to different people, and their meaning can vary over time. The introduction traces the trajectory of spatial discourse in critical theory, a route that includes the contributions of Yi-Fu Tuan, J. B. Jackson, Setha Low, Axel Goodbody, David Harvey, Edward Soja, Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, Doreen Massey, Val Plumwood, Kate Rigby, Ursula Heise, and Lawrence Buell. Recent scholarship on the study of place and place attachment has questioned the meaning of these concepts, converging on the idea that in a globalized world characterized by mobility, our relationship with place is “unfixed, contested, and multiple” (20). *Sense of Place* thus advocates for a stronger sensitivity to “the different historically and culturally shaped connotations of place and sense of place” (17). This approach informs the construction of *Sense of Place* in two specific ways. First, the

transatlantic focus of the volume brings together academics and a visual artist from Spain, United Kingdom, Portugal, and the US, writing about American, French, Swiss, Spanish, and African literature by men and women, Canadian art, Swedish museum displays, and landscape photography. With this network of authors and topics the volume expertly fulfills its aim to examine the myriad meanings of place and our relationship to it. Second, while the editors acknowledge the complexity of place and place attachment in today's globalized society, they equally recognize sense of place as a local and personal category. By allowing the contributors to probe their own relationship to place if they so wish, the collection as a whole demonstrates that invoking personal experience may very well enrich critical engagement with spatial analysis.

The twelve essays are divided into three sections. The first section is titled "Sense of Place as an Educational Tool" and its three essays are the most theoretical of the volume. Scott Slovic's "Re-Scaling Geo-loyalty: Considering Impressions of Trans-scalar Thinking" delves directly into the local vs. global debate, arguing in favor of thinking about place attachment, or "geo-loyalty," in terms of scale. Drawing on examples from literature, art, and film, Slovic demonstrates that trans-scalar thinking offers a viable model to understand the complexities of life in the twenty-first century. Esther Rey Torrijos expands on place's role in the construction of identity in her essay, "The Pedagogical Quality of Place: Relevance of Place-Based Educational Models in Globalized Societies." Eudora Welty's writing and Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Lacuna* offer Rey Torrijos a platform from which she defends the value of literature as a tool to teach students about place. María José Sueza Espejo's "Amin Maalouf y Jean Marie Le Clézio o el sentido poliédrico de lugar" incorporates the concept of the "other" into spatial discourse, as the experiences of these two French contemporary writers exemplify how place and movement construct identity. Pedagogy has played a central role in the development of ecocriticism, and these opening essays of *Sense of Place* are a welcome resource to develop further this curricular thread.

The five essays that make up Part Two address the treatment of place in literature, and they display most clearly the volume's diversity in terms of geography and gender, even as they build on the theoretical framework shaping the concept of place mapped out in the first section. The poetry of Henry David Thoreau, Dylan Thomas, and Claudio Rodríguez is the subject of María Antonia Mezquita Fernández's study. Framing her reading in a personal reflection on her own experience with place as an identity-shaping force, Mezquita Fernández illuminates the relationship of these poets with New England (US), Wales, and Zamora (Spain), respectively. Novels from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Anglophone Africa are the focus of three essays in this section. Rafael Ruiz Pleguezuelos identifies in the narrative fiction of the Northern English writer Allan Sillitoe a treatment of nature, place, and working-class issues that resonates with his own experience as the son of a miner in democratic Spain. Ruiz Pleguezuelos

reads Sillitoe's fiction as a case study in how the characters perceive the landscape and interact with it. Likewise, Isabel María Fernandes Alves traces how the characters of Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* demonstrate distinct senses of place, namely attachment to and escape from the Mid-West prairie, thereby making this an ideal work of fiction to be included in a curriculum based on the issue of place. Guided by her own experiences in rural Zimbabwe, Bibian Pérez Ruiz explores the treatment of place, space bonding, and movement, especially by female characters, in Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Condition*, a landmark novel in fiction by African women writers. Finally, the concept of *espace vécu* organizes Montserrat López Mújica's analysis in Spanish of the representation of French-speaking Switzerland by C.F. Ramuz, Maurice Chappaz and Corinna Bille, thereby expanding the critical framework of *Sense of Place*.

In 'Place as Landscape and Nation,' the final section of the volume, the editors put together a dynamic collage of essays that incorporate photography, landscape painting, museum displays, and bilingual poetry into the study of sense of place. In these distinct formats the artists studied project their relationship with place and, by extension, they develop a narrative of the connections between place and identity, both personal and national. Captivated by the indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest Coast, Emily Carr produced a collection of paintings that foreground the issues of place, nature, and identity, as María Luz González Rodríguez examines in "Sense of Self, Sense of Place: The Female Body as Canadian Landscape in Emily Carr's Art". Similar themes are traced in Christopher Oscarson's study of the display of the natural world in Stockholm's Biological Museum upon its opening in the final years of the nineteenth century. Carma Casulá's own photography projects prove to be a useful way for her to explore sense of place, rootedness, and belonging. The section, as well as the volume as a whole, closes with Terry Gifford's "Towards a New Multi-dimensional Ecopoetics of Place," an essay that takes as its point of departure the author's own intent to apprehend a foreign space [Spain] through his own language [English] in a collection of poems about place and his experience as a resident of Alicante (Spain). Gifford's "reflection on a failed experiment" highlights how culture and language shape the perception of place, one of the central arguments elaborated throughout the volume (215). This section brings out the interdisciplinarity of the concept of "sense of place," and reinforces the volume's pedagogical component.

With its reading of literature and art in spatial terms, *Sense of Place* will be an important resource for teaching and research on the topics of place and place attachment. Moreover, it will lead many readers to reflect on their attachment to the places they come into contact with in their own lives. If one were to point out any weaknesses, it would be that an equal distribution of essays in Spanish and English would have strengthened this already excellent collection. The most lasting contribution of this volume lies in its successful reconstitution of the category of

place as a crucial element in the study of contemporary society and its literary and artistic traditions.