

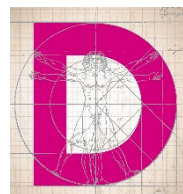
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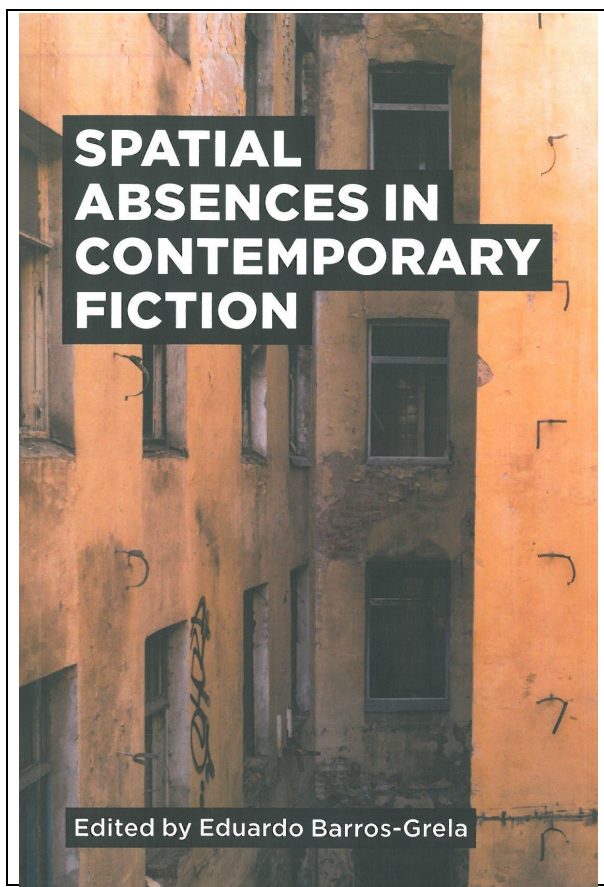


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BOOK REVIEW: *SPATIAL ABSENCES IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION*

RESEÑA DE LIBRO: *SPATIAL ABSENCES IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION*

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This book is a well-curated compilation of essays that brings a variety of scholars together to discuss spatial absences and presences, which in this review will be arranged by topic. Each author in the book analyzes at least one primary source, ranging from books and video games to musicals. Thanks to the different examples, the reader can fully grasp what space literature entails and how this perspective can be employed to analyze different forms of media. The book starts with an introduction by Eduardo Barros Grela, the curator, introducing what is understood by space absences and presences, and how all essays are related to this. After the introduction, it follows a total of fifteen essays ending with a brief bibliography of each of the writers. Altogether, and even though some essays do it more explicitly than others, this book compiles a wide range of analyses that perfectly contribute to the studies of “space literature.”

The first section can be seen as essays in which the setting is urban, included here are: Xan Guitián Carril’s paper called “Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines: A Foray into the City’s Subjectivity through Robert McFarlane’s ‘Invisible Cities.’” (pp. 7-18) and “Invisible Mazes and Immaterial Borders: Invisibility in *The City and the City* and “In the Walls of Eryx” (pp.48-59) by Martín Mallo Meilán. The first essay has done its analysis by examining the interaction between the real and unreal parts of the city through Robert McFarlane’s story, while in the second, the author explores how invisibility works in literature through the different sources and how it works as a defense mechanism against colonizers and for protection. Moreover, how invisibility can be explored as being created by those who are observing and those observed. Xan Guitián’s work can be challenging to read because of the complexity and, at times, metaphorical use of the language. However, this also represents how much control the author has over the English language, even when he is not a native speaker.

Another series of essays falls under the premise of interactive sources, those analysis done by using video games and web series. For the web series, Noelia M^a Galán-Rodríguez wrote “Transmedia Narratives: The Lizzie Bennet Diaries [TLBD] and its Didactic use in the Twenty-first Century Classroom,” (pp. 19-32) which analyzes an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. The author acknowledges changes made to the original book, but also gives reasoning behind said changes, showcasing a deep critical analysis of what this web series encapsulates. It is important to mention that the essay appeared to be further away from space literature because of its focus on TLBD as a transmedia product; however, upon closer attention, the web series format does not allow the viewer to see the spaces being discussed, which means there is a lack of physical space.

The next interactive source would be the video games *Death Stranding* and *League of Legends* in the essays “Learning to Walk in a Gestating Body: Male Pregnant Embodiment in Hideo Kojima’s *Death Stranding*,” (pp. 76-92) and “Viego and the Absence of Isolde: Reading Characters from *League of Legends*” (pp. 185-196) by David Muñños García and Marta Pazos Blanco respectively. The first essay explores a “walking simulator” game with the theme of pregnancy in the aftermath of an apocalyptic cataclysm in which the protagonist works as a delivery guy. A vital part is the fact that the male protagonist is also carrying a baby in an artificial womb. This characteristic is introduced by the writer by posing a question to the reader that, while still maintaining an

academic tone, involves them in the paper. The second paper makes an analysis of the character Viego with a narration style that makes it seem like a story. Nonetheless, even when having a storytelling feel, the author does so while also analysing his actions and comparing him with other characters.

The next five essays will have a focus on Latin-American stories. The first one by María Medín-Doce, “Alteration of Space: Encounters with Otherness in Alberto Rangel’s *Inferno Verde*,” (pp. 93-103) talks about the Amazonian space, surrounding themes of possessions, spatial alteration, the meaning of home and its importance. Then there is “Spatial production and poetics of home in *Vidas Secas* and *O Quinze*” (pp. 104-113) by Beatriz Solla-Vilas. The author quotes a question made by Sara Ahmed– “How does it affect home and being at home when someone leaves?” (qtd. Solla-Vilas 104) – to reformulate it by considering leaving home by force. Beatriz Solla explores the concepts of non-space, a space that can acquire a multiplicity of meanings and the question of a space being home but, at the same time, feeling that it is not, which gives numerous examples of the different readings space can have.

The third essay is “Decolonizing Gothic: Finding New Spaces in Moreno García’s *Mexican Gothic*” (pp. 114-125) by Lucía Fraga Viñas, which aims to discuss the novel’s changes of Gothic Literature from a postcolonial perspective. To do so, Lucía Fraga explores the gothic characteristics within the book and shows the colonial aspects through an analysis of the plot, the setting, and the characters in the novel. The last one in this group is by Yarizan Pan Pérez called “Latinidad, Space, and Agency: *In the Heights* and Latinx Culture” (pp. 127-142). It considers the different spaces within the musical– Caribbean countries, the neighborhood, the workplace, the educational and the artistic space– and analyzes how the Latin community is affected by each of them. Lastly, Elena Canido’s essay “Lost & Found: Exploring the Absence and Longing for Roots in Jessica Abel’s *La Perdida*” (pp. 33-45) focuses on borders and border-crossing, analyzing a character who is trying to find her Mexican roots.

The following essays are related because of their intercultural approach to the texts. The essays are by Natalia Moreiras Arias (“The Role of Hollywood and the Conflict of Identities in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1949” (pp. 60-75)), Andrea Patiño Artaza (“Afropolitanism and Resistance in the Works of Mr Eazi and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*” (pp. 156-170)) and Carla Portela Marín (“Reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* Transculturally” (pp. 197-211)). Natalia Moreira’s aim is to explore how Germany was and still is influenced by the United States’ media, specifically Hollywood. To do so, the author has smartly chosen to have people answer questions in a survey for more personalized and concrete results needed for her research. She also included graphics of the results and explanations as to why the questions were being asked. The one by Andrea Patiño Artaza starts by explaining what Afropolitanism is and highlights problems within this approach. The essay, while also using a book, introduces the source of music pieces, which adds to the variety of sources used in the collection. Moreover, Carla Portela’s essay covers the same book as Andrea Patiño de Artaza, *Americanah*, but employs another perspective making it seem not repetitive. The author here explores how multiculturalism and interculturalism need to be revised due to the current social needs and proposes the term transcultural, because it involves the first

two terms while also expanding the idea. In this essay, we find a typing mistake previously believed to be a quotation because of the different font and its shortness but that is regarded as part of the analysis upon reading.

The next section has the focus on language with the essays “Word, The Redeemer. Analyzing Language and its Relationship to Cultural Identity and Place in *House Made of Dawn* by N.Scott Momaday,” (pp. 143-155) and “Narrative and Linguistic Strategies in Luis Alberto Urrea’s *Into the Beautiful North* and *The House of Broken Angels*” (pp. 171-184) by Seán Keane, Antía Rivera de la Vega. Seán Keane focuses on Native Americans and highlights the importance of language for this community specially. Analyzing the healing journey of a displaced protagonist whose healing journey of acceptance starts with language which dives back to his opening explanation of the importance of language. Antía Rivera de la Vega, analyzes migrant experiences and their converging cultures. To do this, she utilizes the two novels mentioned in the title and analyzes their different narrative techniques and language choice that not only showcase a dual identity of the characters but also makes the reader feel displaced because it uses two languages at the same time.

As for the general review of the book three aspects have to be noted. First, the placement of footnotes. The footnotes appear right at the end of each essay, which in printed form can be troublesome because of the going back and forth between notes and the paper itself. That being said, it can be assumed that this is most likely a preferential or required display of the publisher. Another aspect to highlight is that most of the papers have been divided into sections, using bold headings to thematically sort out the different aspects covered in the essay. As a reader, this is greatly appreciated as it makes the reading process more visual.

In addition, in terms of language, some of the essays have maintained quotations in their original language without a translation. This can seem to lessen the scope of readers for the book; however, this is a stylistic decision that appears in essays covering Latin-American stories making it necessary and understandable to include original quotations. All in all, the essays collected in the book display a fascinating compilation illustrating the variety of analyses that can be done through a special perspective. What is more, readers can expand their knowledge on literary criticism and approaches as well as their choices of source materials encouraged by the diversity found in the collection.