

Complutense Journal of English Studies. Special Issue (2020)

Contemporary Scottish Urban Fiction (2000-2019): Space, Emotions, Identity

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In his 1981 landmark novel *Lanark*, Alasdair Gray famously claimed that “if a city has not been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively” (1981: 243). In complaining against the alienation that such voids of representation created in the psyche of Scottish citizens, Gray thus initiated the profuse and complex literary urban production that has followed in subsequent decades. Indeed, Scottish writers have proved to be capable of imagining Scottish cities in varied and rich ways, ranging from James Kelman’s inscription of working-class urban dialects and subjectivities to the *Trainspotting* phenomenon; or from Janice Galloway’s troubled female embodiment of urban spaces in *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* to the more recent social criticism characteristic of crime fiction writers such as Denise Mina, Ian Rankin and Louise Welsh. As such, Scottish cities have been reinvented symbolically, yet also in accordance with the socio-political and cultural debates affecting their geopolitics. In the aftermath of the intense literary and critical exploration of collective identity at the turn of the century (see Hames 2017, Innes 2007, Schoene 2007), Scottish urban writing has complicated these debates, facilitating the inclusion of diverse perspectives, among them gender, sexuality and class (Jones 2017), as demonstrated, for instance, in the work of Laura Hird and Zoë Strachan, while it has also strengthened its translocal connections in the fiction of writers such as Jackie Kay, Suhayl Saadi and Leela Soma.

Contemporary Scottish writers have created literary urban “third spaces” (Soja 1996) from which to explore the heterogenous experience and imagination of contemporary Scottish urban life from different positionalities. Their situated views on Scottish cities serve to analyse the identity processes involved in spatial practices, where emotions and embodied experiences are determinant in understanding how place identity and its politics are constructed. Emotions play a crucial role in these practices, as Sara Ahmed contends, since “emotions work to align bodily space with social space” (2004: 6), blurring the boundaries between the individual and the collective, the self and the surrounding environment.

This special issue will explore the different portrayals of Scottish urban spaces and practices appearing in the fiction produced in the last two decades, a time of important political activity—the devolution of the Scottish Parliament (1999), the Independence Referendum (2014) and the Brexit Referendum (2016)—and prolific literary production in Scotland. The main focus of the issue will be the affective exploration of these urban spaces, as well as the process of “meaning-making” (Wetherell 2012), both individual

and collective, that these works suggest. As such, possible topics to address include, but are not restricted to:

- Affect and embodiment of Scottish urban spaces
- The politics of space: gender, class, ethnicity
- Nation, community and transversal allegiances
- In/visibility, otherness and uncanny spaces
- Ethics and aesthetics of Scottish urban fiction
- Language and the city: difference, identity, use
- Rewriting historical cities
- Movement, displacement and negotiations of the city
- Trespassing boundaries, creating new spaces
- Scottish cities in crime fiction
- Alternative itineraries and urban rhythms
- Trans/nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Scottish urban writing
- Speculative fiction and Scottish cities
- Neo-Gothic Scottish urban writing
- Escaping Scottish cities: exile in metropolises and rural counterpoints
- Cities of Culture/Cities of Literature

Submission details:

Authors are requested to submit their manuscripts in English using the OJS (Open Journal System) web site (<https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CJES/submission/wizard>) and then selecting “**Contemporary Scottish Urban Section (Special Issue)**.” All submissions must comply with the journal’s formal guidelines, as specified in its website: <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CJES/about/submissions>

Deadline: 20 December 2019

For further information about the Special issue, please contact its guest editor: Carla Rodríguez González (rodriguezcarla@uniovi.es)

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