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Lieven AMEEL (ed.): *The Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies*, New York, Routledge, 2023, 498 pp.

*The Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies* aims to provide up-to-date source material for both teaching and studying literary urban studies. The book offers a diverse picture of the current state of urban literature: it focuses on theoretical concepts and literary genres; discusses case studies of cities with a street-level view of urban life; and explores possible new directions as well.

After a brief general introduction, the editor, Lieven Ameel, has included another chapter, which discusses issues related to the teaching of literary urban studies. In this chapter, the editor's aim with the *Companion* is clearly explained: it intends to fill a particular gap in a developing discipline. The authors claim that relatively few studies have been published to specifically support the teaching of literary urban studies and that there are still few resources to examine how urban space functions in literature. They assume that the lack of resources is due to the marginalization of the question of space in literary studies as if it were a less important descriptive category than time. Since the *spatial turn* in the humanities and social sciences there has been a renewed interest in space, but this has not resulted in the production of material useful for teaching literary urban studies. The volume aims to bring together different perspectives on teaching this emerging discipline. The articles published in the *Companion* summarize the latest developments based on the interdisciplinary courses recently offered by the authors at various universities, while they also outline future directions.

The book has four main parts, "Key Concepts," "Key Genres," "Case Studies," and "New Debates." "Key Concepts" lays the theoretical groundwork for the *Companion*; it includes five chapters exploring the concept of the map, walking in a city, the palimpsest, the aesthetics of the city, and the role of seriality in literary urban studies. The chapter on mapping by Liam Lanigan shows that the word may have a double meaning in literature: with the advent of the skyscraper and the airplane, the representation of the city enables a panoramic, that is, a top-down perspective, and it also provides a metaphorical understanding, which refers to a subjective encounter with the city. The chapter on walking in the city by Heidi Lucja Liedke, relying partly on Michel de Certeau's idea of "*city idlers*," shows the experience of a narrator-traveller who takes many walks and has personal impressions. Bart Keunen, the author of the chapter entitled "The Aesthetics of the City," investigates the versatility of urban experiences. The city is explored as a palimpsest in Jens Martin Gurr's writing, who argues that it is the task of the reader and the writer to decipher and read the hidden text under the surface both in the case of urban architecture and literary texts. The last chapter introduces the image

of recursive cities; Maria Sulimma claims that the creation of cities in literary works strongly relies on the serial dynamics of storytelling, reception, and production.

The second part titled “Key Genres” includes five chapters and aims to introduce the reader to certain literary genres, explain their importance for urban studies, and demonstrate historical continuity. The genres explored are satire, encomiastic, metropolitan miniature, the city in crime fiction, and infrastructural forms. Grace Gillies deals with satire and traces the roots of this genre to the 2nd century. The following paper by Carrie Beneš and Laura Morreale examines the characteristics of a praising genre, called encomium or panegyric, which is a rhetorical form used to celebrate the spiritual or physical attributes of a city and to praise favoured cities for their physical, moral, or historical virtues. Andreas Huysen claims that writing about metropolitan miniatures was a specific genre of 19th century journalism and enjoyed great popularity in the metropolitan press. Barbara Pezzotti suggests that the crime novel emerged with the growth of the first metropolises, and the genre reflected the transformations taking place in the urban environment. The last article by Dominic Davies in this group responds to the “three D’s” (density, diversity, and dimension) that characterize urbanization with its own list of “three C’s” (comics, cities, and conglomerations). It explores the combination of cartographic and aerial perspectives with a street-level view of everyday life, for example, by showcasing how the city looks when seen through the eyes of a typical urban creature: the superhero.

The third part, titled “Case Studies” is the longest part of the *Companion*; it provides the reader with sixteen chapters on cities. A group of writers explore African cities and black identities: Mohamed Wajdi Ben Hammed focuses on the lumpenproletariat in North Africa, for instance, in Tangier. Alex Halligey writes about the role of the theatre in Johannesburg, Anna-Leena Toivanen examines the representation of West and Central African cities in francophone African narrative, and Patrice Nganang explores the representation of the metropolis in black narratives. Another group of texts focuses on European cities discussing themes such as urban writings from France by Michael G. Kelly, the urban viewpoint of the 2008 revolt in Athens by Riikka P. Pulkkinen, and the Russian provincial town by Tintti Klapuri. Three articles touch on topics from the American continent: Julia M. Hori explores the urban environment in Jamaica, Liesbeth Francois investigates the questions related to social relations and the uneven distribution of power in Mexico City, and Ceri Morgan discusses how mobility appears in contemporary Montreal fiction. The last section of essays is from the Middle, South, and Far East: Chen Bar-Itzak explores palimpsestuous imagination in Haifa and its neighbourhood, among other locations, Annie Webster is interested in the pedestrian perspectives in Baghdad, Rita Nnodim examines Bombay, the Indian metropolis, from the perspectives of unseen and unheard voices, Elizabeth Ho writes about a new wave of authors producing urban comics, and Franz K. Prichard is interested in the urban vocabularies of Japan.

The title of the last part of the volume is “New Debates” and it intends to outline new possible directions in literary urban studies. The topics covered, such as “*translocality*”, Hispanic female perspectives, and queer visions, have not been deeply explored in city studies yet; thus, they can be included either in curriculums or they can serve as excellent fields for further research work for students. Investigating these issues may also contribute to the development of literary urban studies. The literary figure of the urban outcast and the urban subsistence in Patricia García’s essay is the focus of the first chapter. The second essay by Eric Prieto partly revolves around the question of “*mappability*” itself and discusses urban informality as an integral characteristic of the cities in world literature. Davy Knittle’s writing explores queer and trans theories from an urban point of view. Paul Dobraszczyk discusses the future of the city: he highlights the connection between science fiction, cities, and the future and reads science fiction texts as a form of escape from the world as we experience it. The last author, Lena Mattheis, invites the reader to adopt a trans-local perspective, which may lead to a new understanding of space. As digital connections have changed the sense of location, this chapter can be relevant in studying new approaches to cosmopolitanism and intersectionality as well.

The Routledge *Companion to Literary Urban Studies* has been compiled to assist teaching programs, professors, and students by offering an accessible summary of key terms and debates in the field of urban studies. It explores a variety of cultural contexts as well, showing that urban studies is a versatile and flourishing discipline; thus, the book is an excellent source in the developing field of literary urban studies.