

## Book review

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### SPACE, PLACE AND SEX

L. Johnston and R. Longhurst

*Maryland, USA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010*

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Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst's *Space, place and sex* weaves together the intellectual fruits of the 1990s, highlighting on-going conceptual trajectories as they develop in the 2000s, to demonstrate that sex, sexuality, and gender, on the one hand, and place and space, on the other, are necessarily intimately entwined. The chapters in this book explore a framework for subjectivity constituted by what might be compared to a series of ripples expanding outwards on the fluid surface of sexuality. The premise on which the book progresses is that subjectivity and identity are negotiated through all scales of this metaphorical rippling liquid expanse; from the body, flowing at once outwards and inwards to the home, the city, the internet, the nation, or the networks of globalisation. Each scale, as the authors aptly demonstrate, sees differing factors pertinent to sex, gender, place and space come in to play, but all are complicit in comprehensive formulations of sexuality. In turn, to fully explore the geographies of sexuality, the authors argue, we must navigate all scales of place and space, implicitly acknowledging the interconnectedness and fluidity of the ripples of scale, and the responsiveness of each tier to the enduring buoyancy of hegemony.

Aotearoa New Zealand features prominently in this work, with erudite analysis centring on, among other topics, New Zealand's wedding tourist industry, rural bachelor competitions, transsexual mayor and Member of Parliament Georgina Beyer, and Air New Zealand's 'pink flight' destined for the Sydney Mardi Gras in 2008. Hamilton's Riff Raff statue, moreover, in shimmering bronze glory, graces the cover. Johnston and Longhurst's analysis draws on both historic and contemporary evidence, and utilises case studies from a range of geographic locations as well as New Zealand. The book covers both positively placed and spaced sexuality, and the negation of, or the subjectivity that comes from a lack of, that placing and spacing. Topics are consequently diverse, ranging respectively from asexuality, homelessness, and marriage, to dolphin sexuality and the tourist industry.

While this book is theory-rich, it is exceptionally accessible, with chapters building theory into case study from the ground up. The survey approach of early chapters provides an excellent, if forgivably dry, introduction to issues pertinent to contemporary tensions in the field. As the book progresses, the theoretical positioning dovetails to underpin a rich, engaging series of miniature case studies. The authors demonstrate that the approach to place and sexuality championed in the book is a necessary outcome of earlier feminist and queer concerns. Moreover, they do so in an engaging way. As the authors note in the conclusion, through their analysis of space, place, sex, and sexuality, they have put the flesh back on the 'body' of academic dis-

course: taking Riff Raff's bronze metal casting off the plinth and breathing life into its shaven, stockinged soul, perhaps. In this light, it sits well against recent research in other fields similarly seeking to add depth to 'the body'. Linda Fisher's (2011) 'Gendering Embodied Memory', for example, similarly seeks to bring the fleshiness of bodies, in her case bodies as affected by time and memory, into academic view.

This book will be a valuable read to the comparatively uninitiated with regard to geographies of sexualities because of its accessible, targeted use of theory and case study. It will also be invaluable to feminists, cultural geographers, gender researchers, and queer theorists, as a foundation work outlining future directions in research that does justice to both place and sexualities.

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#### **Reference**

Fisher, L. (2011). Gendering embodied memory. In C. Shues, D. E. Olkowski & H. A. Fielding (Eds.), *Time in feminist phenomenology* (pp. 91-110). Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press.