

***Deterritorialized Lives: Migration, Identity, and the Politics of Space in Contemporary Fiction*, by İsmail Kaygısız, Konya, Çizgi Kitabevi, 2025, pp. 111, ₺134,82 (paperback), ISBN: 9786253965877.**

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To deterritorialize is to lose a center, to discover that home is less a fixed point than a movement within language and memory. İsmail Kaygısız opens his study with this idea and with a sustained attention to what the term deterritorialization can hold in political, philosophical, and human terms. He insists that the concept is not merely descriptive of movement, but transformative in kind. As he writes, “Deterritorialization is therefore a rupture in time and space” (Kaygısız 21), and in the same passage, he names the condition in another register, “Deterritorialization is disillusionment” (Kaygısız 21). These two short claims establish the book’s rhythm, as they set the reader’s expectations for a study that will trace both the violence of loss and the unexpected capacities that follow unmooring.

Furthermore, Kaygısız’s ideas are compact and meticulously argued. As he frames deterritorialization through dialogue with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and with Arjun Appadurai, he treats the concept as a composite, a lived event as well as an analytic instrument. He guides the reader through careful definitions, and, interestingly enough, refuses any single, celebratory account. He writes that “Deterritorialization is ‘becoming’ (devenir): 1) unlimited and unending, as it has no true point of origin or destination, and 2) insofar as the past is itself considered infinite, the present counter-intuitively always occurs as the ‘return’ of recognizable and even foreseeable forms” (Kaygısız 23). This

insistence on process allows the author to think of migration less as an act that isolates a subject and more as a condition that continually composes and recomposes subjectivity.

In addition to this, a second claim structures the book: deterritorialization is political as well as ontological. Kaygısız argues that deterritorialization dismantles totalizing structures, most explicitly the Oedipal codification of territory that links family, nation, and authority. He illustrates this with rhetorical force when he writes, “Put succinctly, deterritorialization is the decentralization of the power and totality of the Oedipus; it is to become anti-oedipal and shatter the blinding binoculars; it is an everlasting metamorphosis, cutting the ties from a root” (Kaygısız 25). The phrase clarifies the author’s method; theory and politics are braided, and literary form is read as a site where those forces play out. From this point onwards, Kaygısız reads two contemporary novels closely, Brian Chikwava’s (1971-...) *Harare North* (2009) and Chris Cleave’s (1973-...) *The Other Hand* (2008). He offers us readings that privilege texture, voice, and the formal enactment of unmooring. His chapter on *Harare North* attends to the novel’s linguistic economy and to the unnamed narrator’s stubborn refusal to submit to reconfiguration. The narrator’s speech, in Kaygısız’s analysis, enacts deterritorialization itself, because language carries the traces of a past vernacular into a metropolitan present, and thus “the narrator’s linguistic hybridity becomes an aesthetic enactment of deterritorialization, a register in which loss and invention breathe together” (Kaygısız 62). The consequence is devastating and intimate, as deterritorialization becomes a mode of both survival and self-erosion.

The reading of *The Other Hand* complements the Chikwava chapter, since Kaygısız seems to be sensitive to difference as well as similarity. He argues that Little Bee’s story is not merely tragic, but also a narrative of remaking. Little Bee occupies a transnational subjectivity, one that “embodies a transnational identity, belonging to both the UK and Nigeria while not being embedded in either” (Kaygısız 82). In contrast to the destructive unmooring that the narrator of *Harare North* suffers, Little Bee’s deterritorialization registers a capacity to assemble new attachments, to perform identity through language and narrative. Kaygısız’s analysis reads form as a moral practice that revolves around how characters tell their stories matters for the ethical imaginations those stories make possible. Throughout the book, Kaygısız returns to the paradox that deterritorialization both dissolves and composes. He borrows and quotes other voices to elaborate on this insight, and he frames these borrowings as provocations rather than resolutions. Quoting Adrian Parr, he foregrounds the empathetic promise of movement when he writes that “to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations” (Kaygısız 24). The phrase captures Kaygısız’s tone, as he is alert to devastation, but he also wants to show how literature might sketch new social relations out of the ruins of older certainties.

Methodologically, the book privileges close reading. Kaygısız generally avoids sweeping, comparative claims; he dwells in moments and voices. The strength of this

approach is evident in his attention to narrative rhythm, to the ways clauses and metaphors bear the work of dislocation, and to how the two novels he analyzes stage the political stakes of migration differently. He makes a careful distinction between forms of deterritorialization. Sometimes the process is “absolute,” a line of flight that permits little reterritorialization, other times it is “relative,” a becoming that opens onto new, if precarious, arrangements of belonging (Kaygısız 24). This diagnostic is useful because it refuses a single, moralizing impression of migrancy, and because it preserves theoretical nuance in the face of political urgency.

There are moments when the book’s compactness is a limitation. By focusing on two novels, Kaygısız achieves depth, but readers may wish for a broader spectrum of texts, particularly given the book’s ambitious theoretical claims. His illustrative corpus is persuasive, yet the work would gain additional authority if the argument were extended to other genres or linguistic traditions. Furthermore, Kaygısız’s interpretations of *Harare North* and *The Other Hand* are persuasive in their precision, yet they are not without contention. Andrew Nyongesa has argued that such readings risk remaining “tentative until a careful examination of the novels is carried out,” noting that while both works explore migration and the transformation of identity and home, they also open into other thematic terrains: “feminism, spirit possession, protest masculinity, dissociative identity disorder, Marxism and other conversations that turn the novel into what Williams (2015) refers to as an ‘interweaving of melodies’ characteristic of music” (Nyongesa 94). This observation complicates Kaygısız’s focus, suggesting that the novels’ polyphonic textures may exceed the conceptual framework of deterritorialization. Yet it also confirms the vitality of his approach, which provokes further readings rather than foreclosing them.

Moreover, stylistically, Kaygısız blends critical exactitude with evocative description. He insists repeatedly that deterritorialization is not merely movement, but a becoming that unsettles time and memory. He writes that “Deterritorialization is ‘becoming’ (devenir), it is the pure movement evident in changes between particular events, it is the very dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or end-state” (Kaygısız 23). Such formulations give the book its tonal center, the prose moves, and it asks the reader to move with it. And lastly, ethically speaking, Kaygısız proposes a modest but important program. He suggests that literature can cultivate an ethic of hospitality that is neither sentimental nor naïve. His closing reflections urge readers to imagine hospitality as an imaginative form, a way of structuring recognition across differences, and as a practice that demands both political critique and empathetic attention. The book concludes with a call for political imagination, and it frames the critic’s work as part of that imaginative labour.

Overall, *Deterritorialized Lives* is compact and generous. It models not only how theory can be used without domination and how careful readings can illuminate larger political formations, but also how a lyrical critical voice can remain faithful to analytic rigor. Kaygısız’s study insists that migration reshapes the architecture of identity and that

literature provides one of the most sensitive instruments for mapping that reshaping. Readers who are interested in contemporary fiction, migration studies, and the spatial turn will find in this book a capacious and intelligible account of what it means to live in displacement. It asks the reader to attend to the losses and transformations, to the destructiveness of uprooting and to the fragile, stubborn work of remaking a world, and it offers, finally, a disciplinary model for how criticism can be both humane and exact.

Work Cited

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