Rivers and Journeys: Discovering New Selves and New Tropes

Heraclitus said, “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river, and he is not the same man.” This perhaps epitomizes the concept of my forthcoming edited book on “Rivers and Journeys: Discovering New Selves and New Tropes.” This project explores literary works that depict how we embark on such journeys to lose ourselves, to find ourselves, and sometimes, maybe, to be transformed into someone else somewhere else for a while. We travel across these liminal spaces to nourish our souls and, in some bleaker instances, to cross to the other world. A river forms a calmer, less-stormy frontier than a sea, a zone where one has the leisure to speculate and reflect on oneself even when stepping out of one’s comfort zone. If on a riverboat, the journey is relatively slow as river waters are shallow, and the ship needs to maintain a specific speed limit. Because the land is visible on both sides, one feels secure looking at the banks even when temporally not treading on them. This sense of assurance makes journeying across rivers a convenient trope for self-discovery. The physical and psychological liminalities experienced along rivers have inspired authors from multiple cultures.

I have received some abstracts, but looking for a few more contributions. I am looking for essays that cover riverine journeys on almost every continent. I am particularly interested in abstracts that read riverine works on the Seine, the Volga, Rhein, Danube, etc. A paper on Olivia Laing’s To the River: A Journey Beneath the Surface would also interest me. In addition to drawing upon canonical works journeying along rivers, I am also looking for less-known works exploring traveling along these waterways. I want to invite scholars to engage in comparative analyses of different river journeys across the globe—an essential literary trope that has been ignored.

Timeline

The Abstract submission deadline is November 1st, 2023.

Submit Book Proposal to Publisher by December 31st, 2023.

Chapters are expected by May/June 2024.