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Book Review: Real cities

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Deleuze in many ways, I therefore hope to hear more from her about Deleuze's normative aspiration in the future.

In highlighting the issue of 'responsibility' for spatial relations more generally, *For space* provides an extremely useful platform from which to stimulate this and many other debates, shaping new understandings of the space of democracy for the Left.

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Real cities. By Steve Pile. London: Sage. 2005. 216pp. £70.00 cloth; £21.99 paper. ISBN 0 7619 7041 X cloth; 07619 7042 8 paper.

Real cities focuses upon the phantasmagorias of the city – the dreams, magic, vampires and ghosts that flit through urban experience – and the book's title is unironic in its insistence upon the centrality of the emotional and imaginary dimensions of city life, every bit as 'real' as material, economic and political effects. Featuring diverse examples, including the dreamy desires produced by advertising, voodoo practices, horror films and terrorist attacks, Steve Pile convincingly conjures up the spectral cast of the city. Drawing on the pertinent if predictable theoretical insights of Benjamin, Simmel and Freud, Pile shows how these urban phantasms are, like dreams, elusive, unexpected and only partially recognizable, and often concealed by seemingly more evident encodings. For instance, the desires provoked by advertisements hide other longings. In urban margins, thresholds in which normally discrete things mingle, temporalities, spaces, desires and fears are mixed up as in dreams. These mundane settings are not sites in which cold, evident meaning is apparent but where whispered, surreptitious messages must be decoded or affectively sensed.

Interestingly, Pile also draws upon ideas about networks to look at the spaces of connection in which hauntings, magic and dreams circulate and intermingle. These networks of affect, meaning and power produce fragmentary inter-spectralities and desires that connect cities and conjure up larger spatial entities and histories. And as is the case with voodoo in New Orleans, these local phantasmagoria are apt to be produced out of such global connections. Cities thus possess a distinctive phantasmagoric mix of particular hauntings, atmospheres and sensations.

There are shortcomings. One longs for a discussion of cities other than London and New York – about popular spiritualism in Stoke-on-Trent, or creepy provincial suburbs, for instance. In addition, the ghost may well be a figure of grief, but I would like to hear about some friendlier phantoms that haunt us with utopian, sensual or convivial impressions. The great unspoken subject in the book appears to be religion, to which many of the themes connect. Moreover, chapters are somewhat uneven in quality, although this is an inevitable consequence of a broad overview such as this. More importantly, Pile shows that phantasms can enter the politics of the city, critique policies that forget the past too quickly, interrogate manufactured desires and disrupt

normative space and time. *Real cities* is a major addition to theorizing emotional and imaginary urban geographies, always lucid and accessible.

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On the border: society and culture between the United States and Mexico.

Edited by Andrew Grant Wood. Lanham, MD: SR Books, Rowman & Littlefield. 2004. 320 pp. \$24.95, paper. ISBN 0842051732.

The border between Mexico and the United States is fast becoming one of the most dynamic cultural regions in North America. As this region expands and evolves, popular perceptions are continuously challenged by new insights into the historical and social development of what has become known as *the* border to most Americans. Without question, it is popular perceptions of border culture that are investigated and challenged by the contributors of *On the border*. Whereas many compilations in border studies seek to produce a more generalized vision of this region, Andrew Wood and his 13 fellow contributors attempt a self-proclaimed 'eclectic'—and at times eccentric—view of the *Frontiera* social mosaic.

Unfortunately, the book's eclectic nature might be seen by some as a weakness of this compilation. Because of the diversity of chapters, a confusing stylistic contrast emerges between pieces that range from traditional scholarly essays to works comprising casual field observations. A variance in methodologies and a surplus of insider terminology will distract some readers who might fail to interpret the connections between, say, Maria Arbelaez's musings on low-budget, *Fronterizo*-aimed films and Dan Arreola's Nogales postcard collection. That being said, the above contributions are perhaps two of the most innovative and insightful, and will, if carefully presented, most likely spur dialogue among graduate students wherever assigned.

The above statement, of course, introduces a necessary caveat. Whoever requires this book for an undergraduate course in regional studies will no doubt incur a wave of scholastic disengagement. *On the border* is a book best suited for graduate seminars—an environment that will facilitate instructors seeking to tie diverse vignettes to a larger framework. It is in this context that students will be positively engaged, and forced to question their own individual constructions of the region. For example, the tenuous history of Mexican Catholicism has long been deconstructed, but Paul Vanderwood's field notes on Juan Soldado encourage a new perspective on the cultural significance of this type of religious veneration. Likewise, Victor Macias-Gonzalez' examination of homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico is an engaging essay with new applications for queer theory to the region—an often misinterpreted social factor in studies of the machismo north.

Despite the inclusion of one or two distracting pieces, *On the border* is an insightful contribution to border studies. In drawing from an interdisciplinary mosaic of academic perspectives and alternative methodologies, Andrew Wood has compiled a volume that