Book Review: Culture and democracy: media, space and representation. By Clive Barnett. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2003. ISBN 0-7486-1400-1, 0-7486-1399-4

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the text through their decisions on how it is read. Ultimately, *Patterned ground* succeeds because both the editors and the authors have created a compilation of vignettes that interrupt the reader's normal flow of experience and create renewed perceptions of place.

Slippery Rock, University of Pennsylvania   JACK LIVINGSTON

Culture and democracy: media, space and representation. By Clive Barnett. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press. 2003. viii + 232 pp. £47.50 cloth; £16.99 paper. ISBN 0 7486 1400 1 cloth; ISBN 0 7486 1399 4 paper.

This book addresses numerous issues pertaining to the interdependence of culture, democracy and communication. It is a philosophical work, informed by a broad range of cultural and democratic theorists – including among others Derrida, Foucault and Habermas, an evaluative critique of whose writings forms the core of the first four chapters. In Chapter 1 Barnett considers the idea of spaces of representation, asking in particular where the public makes its presence felt through an analysis of the geographies of democratic communication. Chapter 2 examines the production of communicative spaces, while the third chapter is devoted to a critique of the concept of the public sphere as formulated by Habermas. In Chapter 4 the author looks at technologies of citizenship, re-evaluating the Foucauldian approach to understanding power. Taken together, these chapters aim to 'develop a theoretical account of the practical difference that principles of deliberation, communication and representation make to the way power is exercised upon and through practices of mediated public communication' (p. 7).

The book is also empirically grounded. Chapter 5 explores the role of constitutional law in determining the meanings ascribed to democracy when applied to the regulation of new communications technologies. In particular, Barnett charts the way in which in the latter part of the twentieth century the US First Amendment was interpreted in an essentially libertarian fashion to underpin a particular deregulatory approach to communications policy. Chapter 6 examines the contribution of European Union media policy to the process of democratising a transnational polity. Finally, Chapter 7 uses the case of South Africa to discuss issues of media and democratization, and in particular the need for a pluralistic associational culture for the functioning of a healthy democratic public sphere. These three chapters illustrate a specific aspect of Habermasian theory, but they can also be appreciated as free-standing explorations of particular communicative features in the functioning of democratic polities.

This is a work which makes demands of the reader, with the early chapters in particular requiring considerable familiarity with the ideas of key writers in democratic and cultural theory. The book would have benefited from a stronger Introduction and Conclusion which more clearly laid out the key overarching arguments and more

explicitly pulled the two sections of the book together. Despite these caveats, however, the author has written an intellectually stimulating work, which critically combines an assessment of ideas with an evaluation of policies at the interface of media, culture and democracy.

Queen Mary, University of London   RAYMOND KUHN

Backward glances: cruising the queer streets of New York and London. By Mark Turner. London: Reaktion. 2003. 191 pp. £16.95 paper. ISBN 1 86189 180 6.

Mark Turner's basic premise is simple: 'the city is an active force, an agent that creates certain kinds of behaviour, true to the modern urban sensibility' (p. 127). His focus is one such 'behaviour': cruising – the glances exchanged between men on New York and London's streets.

The idea that modern urban life actuates particular social practices is well established. The streets' erotics have their literary and academic canon. But *Backward glances* compels us to rethink how we understand *both* ways of being in the city *and* what makes cities sexy. Its distinctiveness is twofold. First, Turner locates the pleasures of 'mutual recognition' in precisely the fragmentation and anonymity of urban culture. Cruising, indeed, 'exploits the ambivalences and uncertainties inherent in the city' (p. 7). It is, as such, characteristic of urban modernity. Ranging from Whitman to Hockney, Turner moves to evoke the erotic 'excitement of the passing moment' (p. 118). Second: Turner's cruiser disrupts the dominant status of the 'Ur-man of urban modernity' – the ever-watching *flâneur* (p. 29). If the *flâneur* is outside the crowd, the cruiser is immersed in it. Reciprocal glances are 'a vital point of interaction, an expression of togetherness rather than of alienation, of connection rather than separation' (p. 59). Turner highlights those everyday fleeting connections when individuals look at those around them. The cruiser suggests alternative modes of urban movement.

Backward glances thus challenges us to think about the erotics of the city, and the relationship between social formation and subject formation more generally. More problematically, it raises questions about how we write the history of sex and the city. Turner's 'backward glance' signifies his engagement with the past. But what's he glancing at? 'I look to the past to help me understand something about cruising, and our cities, and sexuality, and the ways we have of representing all of these, in the present, *now*' (p. 9). This only gets us so far: how are 'now' and 'then' related? Cruising, Turner states, 'is not transhistorical' (p. 9). Moreover, he repeatedly defines his as a queer history, not the 'recovery' of hidden 'gay' cruisers (pp. 42–6, 112).

Strangely, however, Turner's analysis effaces these points. Turner works by laying fragments from different times alongside one another – moving between 1880s porn and Jarman's journals in one paragraph (pp. 50–1). Sometimes this highlights