

Book Review: Disposable cities: garbage, governance and sustainable development in urban Africa. By Garth Andrew Myers. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate 2005. ISBN 0-7546-4374-3

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Lila Abu-Lughod's *Dramas of nationhood* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) is one very good example. Second, the book is unbalanced, with the empirics too limited and too scattered to support the theory; and, at times, structurally confusing (Chapter 1 seems to offer merely a condensed and redundant version of what follows in Chapters 2 and 3).

Third, and most important, the two case studies – an analysis of a Mexican children's television programme, and interviews with a group of young Maronite Lebanese who engage both Arab and Western world-views and media products – do not directly buttress the macro-arguments. Kraidy says, for example, we should always integrate audience reception of media texts into the analysis of cultural hybridity, but signally fails to do just that in discussing Mexico's *Tele Chobis* (a copycat version of *Teletubbies*). He also says that the 'hybridity of media texts is explained by the media's transnational economy' (p. 114); in other words, that producers, with global markets increasingly accessible, make media texts (films, television programmes and so on) that will appeal to as many people as possible internationally in order to maximize distribution and profitability. Fine (and already widely discussed): but to support this argument, why choose, in *Tele Chobis*, a program conceived and produced solely with domestic exploitation in mind?

In sum, *Hybridity* fails by some margin to live up to the grandiose billing promised by the subtitle and its surely deliberate allusion to Fredric Jameson's influential *Postmodernism, or, The cultural logic of late capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991).

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Disposable cities: garbage, governance and sustainable development in urban Africa. By Garth Andrew Myers. Aldershot and Burlington. Ashgate. 2005. xv + 187 pp. cloth; ISBN 0 7546 4374 3.

The title *Disposable cities* draws attention to two different matters. The first is the manner in which the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa have come to be discarded or disregarded, and hence underrepresented in urban studies. The second is the issue of waste management in the context of sustainable development: garbage is an underresearched aspect of urban planning.

The first chapter introduces the rapidly growing African city. The author then outlines four basic themes used to structure the argument, economic, environmental, political and cultural in orientation, which he elaborates as neoliberalism, sustainable development, good governance and the politics of cultural difference. Woven together with garbage disposal, these themes constitute the perspective of 'political ecology'. Chapter 2 outlines the United Nations Sustainable Cities Programme and sets it in the African context. The remainder of the chapter examines the problems of aid donor dependence, and the combative and exclusive character of the local urban settings of implementation.

The next three chapters present the case studies of the cities of Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Lusaka. These are based on interviews, fieldwork, documentary analysis and the research of other (often local) scholars. After an introduction to the city in question and its sustainability programme, each chapter is organized around the book's four themes. All three cities share a history of stark inequalities of British colonialism and experiments with socialism, before facing the rigours of the present era of neoliberalism with its harsh consequences for the poor and their environments. Intricately detailed, the case studies describe the complexity of environmental (mis)management against a backdrop of shifting economic and political circumstances and cultural conflict.

A brief concluding chapter explains the author's doubts about the sustainable cities initiative, while a postscript locates the book within postcolonial studies.

A volume in the Re-Materialising Cultural Geography series, this book has much to commend it to anyone interested in the kind of cities in which a growing proportion of the world's urban population lives. Like the work of AbdouMaliq Simone (*For the city yet to come*, Duke University Press, 2004), in whose footsteps Garth Myers claims to follow, this is a demonstration of the value of carefully constructed case studies of the changing African city, from which urban studies in general has much to gain.

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Extinct lands, temporal geographies: Chicana literature and the urgency of space. By Mary Pat Brady. Durham, NY. Duke University Press. 2002. 274 pp. ISBN 0 8223 2974 3.

Since the early 1990s, a new generation of Latina/o studies scholars have taken up Edward Soja's challenge to emphasize the locality of power, and the particularity of its performance, through a new attention to geography. The new wave of Latina/o spatial studies scholars – Juan Flores and Raúl Homero Villa, to name only two – collectively provide a provocative re-centring of social theory at the site of the barrio, whether it be in East LA or in Manhattan. But despite this profound grounding of new historical subjects, most spatial studies work continues to frustrate precisely because of its unavoidable fetish on a particular locality as the principal site for the performance of insurgent subjectivities. The local always emerges as an *axis mundi* even despite Walter Mignolo's articulation of the local and the global a decade earlier.

Mary Pat Brady's intervention into spatial studies theory and practice, ironically, benefits precisely from her archaeologies of the interstitial spaces in different places, from cities to small towns, border crossings and, of course, the pages of a book. Indeed, her work, grounded in Chicana lesbian and straight feminist authors Patricia Preciado Martin, Gina Valdés, Gloria Anzaldúa, Terri de la Peña, Sandra Cisneros and Cherríe Moraga, is less concerned with privileging any particular geographical place for the performance of Chicana identity and empowerment than with exploring various power