

- Harries, K.D. 1980: *Crime and the environment*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.
- Davidson, R.N. 1981: *Crime and environment*. London: Croom Helm.
- Herbert, D.T. 1982: *The geography of urban crime*. London: Longman.

Western, J. 1982: *Outcast Cape Town*. London: George Allen and Unwin. xvi + 372 pp. £13.95.

The potential themes with which the reader is presented by the title, cover photo and foreword of this book seem in part to overlap, and yet to contradict one another. Is the book a general study of 'outcast Cape Town' or is it a specialized treatment of the Group Areas Act (the legislation which provides for compulsorily segregated residential areas) as applied to that city? Does it analyse the political response of the 'outcasts', or does it focus on their 'sense of place'? A review of the actual contents is instructive.

Western begins the introduction by discussing what he calls the 'dialectic of person and place'. He claims that geographical place – 'knowing one's place' with respect to residential location – plays a significant role in moulding social relations (p. 5), and thus that in a social system such as apartheid which requires that people live in specific areas, space is used for domination; while 'the dominated may begin to find in space an ally in challenging their domination' (p. 7). The author then proceeds to discuss the people of Cape Town, focusing particularly on the meaning of 'coloured' in South Africa. Here he introduces the argument that segregation under the Group Areas Act has been imposed, in Cape Town, on what was the least segregated city 'perhaps even in all of sub-saharan Africa' (pp. 3, 27). At this point it is still not entirely clear which of the themes suggested as the book opens is really the central motif.

Chapter 2 (Cape Town before Apartheid) does little more substantial than reproduce material from Scott's very useful article on Cape Town as a 'multiracial' (i.e. ethnically mixed) city (*Geographical Journal*, 1955). The notion of the 'ideal apartheid city' as a goal of social and spatial engineering in the subsequent chapters adds little to R.J. Davies's notes on ideal-typical apartheid urban geography, which Western does not mention; Davies has also linked the form of preapartheid South African cities to the third world city in general, a theme avoided by Western. What is more original and more valuable is Western's account of the implementation of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town (Chapter 5). Given the reticence of government officials and the apparent unavailability of the records of public hearings on the subject, Western's primary source here is the Cape Town daily press. The survey is brief and while it mentions questions of conflicting state and landlord goals, it does not develop an analysis of this significant theme.

Having covered the preliminaries, the reader encounters Part 3: People. Here must lie the core of a study which seeks to view the geography of a city 'through the texture of the lives of its inhabitants' (p. 327). The chapters reflect this goal, as in the title of Chapter 6: 'Group Areas and the meaning of place: whose mother city?' This chapter includes brief sketches of the meaning of place in central city districts of Cape Town, the Gardens (upholding 'white', 'sacred space' in the city's heart) and District Six, now the barren wasteland of a bulldozed inner-city working-class area with symbolic meaning for many people in Cape Town, not only those who once lived there.

The next three chapters essentially reproduce the author's PhD study of Mowbray (an area a few miles from the centre of Cape Town) and the removal of its

coloured residents to the council housing estates on the Cape Flats. The essence of this study has previously appeared in a chapter of *Humanistic geography*, edited by Ley and Samuels. In the book form, more material is presented from the questionnaires and interviews which formed the main source for the author's thesis. In addition, Chapters 8 and 9 give a fuller discussion of the changes in the conditions of life experienced by the ex-Mowbrayites in their new residential locations. A small number found housing in older still-coloured or mixed areas, such as lower Wynberg and Salt River. The majority became tenants in segregated city council housing estates. Western details changes in social status, degree of social distress and relative disadvantage in relation to such things as transport to work. Less tangibly, the author attempts to assess the changes in individual feelings: the primary indicator here becomes the extent of fear.

Because Western has tried to set his study of a specific group's experiences (about 100 coloured families moved from Mowbray) in the wider Cape Town setting, at the end of the book he returns to the city-wide context. In Chapter 10 he discusses the squatter communities in which many coloured and perhaps the majority of black African people in Cape Town have lived in recent years. Here Western relies almost entirely on work published by University of Cape Town research groups (e.g. Maree and Cornell), and on some newspaper material. Further broadening of the scale, the last chapter is an 'uncertain conclusion' on 'apartheid in South Africa', where Western raises questions on the future of South African cities. He concludes on the city of his study that 'the astonishing physical beauty of the Cape Peninsula is (through the lives of most of its inhabitants) transformed into a remarkably bleak experience of living for many Capetonians' (p. 327). He expresses pessimism on the prospects for a peaceful future. Then Western adds a postscript up to July 1980. Having been back in Cape Town during the schools boycott, food and meat strikes (and boycotts) and commuter transport struggles of that year, he feels that his pessimism has been justified. To Western, *race* is becoming the 'important element of self-definition, especially among the young' (p. 331).

Has Western reached justifiable and useful conclusions? *Outcast Cape Town* does not examine the conditions of life of the majority of the poorer working class of its chosen city. While Western recognizes that his central case study deals with essentially middle-class people (pp. 147-48), and not, for example, the working class displaced from District Six, he does not actually investigate the occupational structure of his sample, nor that of the city as a whole. Still less does he enter into the terrain of the political response of the 'outcasts', though he does describe some of the disturbances of 1976. In his postscript, he mentions, as noted, the strikes and boycotts of 1980. But he fails to recognize the organizational background among the 'outcasts' of the Cape Flats which made these events possible - in unions, community organizations and students' committees. As a result the extent to which the political actions of 1980 (and subsequently) contradict his apparent view that *race* has become the central form of self-definition denies the ways in which Cape Town life has been changed through organization on workplace, feminist and community lines, which in many instances cut through lines of race. In the case of community organization especially, he misses an area which could have added immeasurably to his own theme of the 'texture' of life for many 'outcast' Capetonians. Part of the reason for this situation lies in Western's view that the population of Cape Town (or any city) can best be located on a 'socioeconomic continuum', and his consequent (and frequent, though usually implicit) denial of the complex material circumstances usually referred to by the notion of class. Thus he does not analyse the processes of proletarianization (immanently

geographical) which have produced the coloured working class in Cape Town over a century or two, and the ways in which these processes have combined with the increasing separation of coloured and white in the Cape (well described by Robert Ross in a recent paper at the University of Manchester). So not only is Western's conclusion on political developments in Cape Town rather unfounded, his title's suggestion of a parallel with Stedman Jones's work on classes and geography in London's history is somewhat misleading. (*Outcast London* does not appear in Western's bibliography.)

As a study of a specific group areas removal in Cape Town, Western's book is readable and suitably detailed. As a study of place and its significance, it is well-written and provocative. At the same time it does rely on much already-published material (including its author's own) and at times its interpretations seem a little stretched: as in the insistence that there was a clear line through Mowbray between coloureds and whites before 1960, despite not knowing the 'race' of 25 per cent of house occupants (cf. map 2, p. 41); or its missing the possibility that many of those named in the 1936 street directory were coloured, not white (cf. pp. 21–22). But Western's study is certain to excite a high degree of interest even where it goes beyond its own research base. *Outcast Cape Town* will be read by many concerned with South African cities and society, including academic geographers. I would be hesitant to recommend it to students, who would perhaps do better to read Davies, Scott, Western's earlier article, and other more recent material on the separations in South African society. Western writes that humanistic geography implies 'looking at the city through the texture of the lives of its inhabitants' (p. 327). His book achieves this in so far as it treats the lives of a representative middle-class coloured community subjected to the violence of the Group Areas Act. But it does not do so with respect to the majority of Cape Town's 'outcasts'. Ultimately, even if it did, we would be left to question whether 'humanistic geography' can contribute to the explanation of why things are as they are; and whether it can hope in any form to contribute to ending the 'distress', 'disadvantage' and 'fear' upon which Western touches – not to mention the poverty, racism and sexism which is the texture of life for so many in Cape Town – or anywhere else.

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Davies, R.J. 1972: Changing residential structures in South African cities, 1960–1970. In *International Geography 1972*, Montreal: International Geographical Union.

1976: Of cities and societies: a geographer's view. Inaugural lecture, University of Cape Town.

Ley, D. and Samuels, M. editors, 1978: *Humanistic geography*. Chicago: Maaroufa.  
 Scott, P. 1955: Cape Town, a multiracial city. *Geographical Journal* 121, 149–57.  
 Stedman Jones, G. 1971: *Outcast London*. London: Oxford University Press.

Cox, K.R. 1980: *Location and public problems: a political geography of the contemporary world*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. viii + 352 pp. £17.50 cloth, £6.50 paper.

This is an important innovatory text and political geography is widely, though not universally, still thought to be in serious need of innovation, if not revitalization or, according to some, even rescue from a 'moribund backwater'. This being so, any reader of a prospective, trend-setting text sets out with high expectations. Judgement must rest on what the author achieves in the light of what he set out to do,