

Matthew Gandy. *The Fabric of Space: Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press,

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and

Ruth A. Morgan. *Running Out?: Water in Western Australia*.

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Two books published recently, Matthew Gandy's *The Fabric of Space* and Ruth Morgan's *Running Out?*, both use a focus on water to examine wider conditions of how people relate to their environment. Coming from a geographical perspective, Gandy's book is located amongst new work to emerge on water in urban studies and examines six different cities: Paris, Berlin, Lagos, Mumbai, Los Angeles and London. Each city forms a different chapter and focuses on a different point in time to ask questions about how people relate to water in a city environment, and what this reveals about cultural values. *Running Out?* in contrast focuses on just one area, Western Australia, but follows this state from the invasion of British colo-

nisers to the present day, documenting the relationship different people had to the land and its water. This work takes as its specific focus hydroresilience, and documents the ways in which the Aboriginal peoples' relationship to this land demonstrated such hydroresilience, however, the colonisers did not respect this and their attitudes, actions, and decisions, contributed to the considerable risk of the colonisers running out of water.

Gandy's focus on multiple cities at different times allows him to conduct six fascinating case studies that he uses to illustrate relationships to water and urban spaces, some of them similar across these places and some of them unique. His first chapter focuses on Paris and the ways in which urban space was rationalised in order to build this city's famous sewage system. Through the various stages of building this system the ways in which people thought about waste, water, their own bodies and the body of the city changed significantly, bringing about many of the relationships those in the West would recognise today. Berlin during the Weimar Republic is the focus of Gandy's second chapter and again he uses this case study to elucidate the ways in which people's attitudes to water have changed. This chapter does this through a focus on lakes, and how these bodies of water and the idea of bathing became a specific focus of recreation that was part of an idea of public health. The third chapter examines Lagos and malaria, describing "the epistemological dimensions to urban space" (81) as opposed to those based around leisure. Involving a critique of colonial attitudes and consequences, this chapter discusses in detail the relationship of disease and segregation that come to be a part of urban development in many parts of the world. Further, Gandy argues that there is often a failure to adequately address the ways in which poverty can lead to certain kinds of what he views as "corporeal vulnerability" (108), especially in the case of malaria and water development.

The fourth chapter on Mumbai continues with a class critique, present in all the chapters but most evident in this and the previous chapter. Here Gandy examines the ways in which colonialism, class, capitalism, development and environment all contribute to a tiered system of water supply in Mumbai that disenfranchises those who are homeless, live in *chawls* and tenements, or make their homes in the makeshift towns that are a defining feature of life for so many in the city. Turning then to Los Angeles in chapter five allows Gandy to examine the history behind this city and the ways in which it has denied, pushed underground and obscured its position on the banks of a river. Here Gandy also discusses the various ways in which the river has, often unknowingly to the citizens of the city, shaped the way Los Angeles has developed, and the different urban spaces, and reactions to these, the "buried" river has created.

These various perspectives allow Gandy to trace different attitudes to the urban environment and water, as well as the reaction to and construction of various kinds of modernity, particularly in regards to the city. All this leads to his final chapter, which unlike the others in the book, does not look at the way people's relationships to water have evolved or been constructed, but instead looks ahead to the future. Here Gandy examines London and the different ways in which people have imagined the future of this city, from inundation and despair to adjustment and compromise, to increasingly complex and expensive damning projects, all designed to deal with, live through and confront London's river and tidal location. Using his analysis from previous chapters pertaining to the way people think about and make decisions around water and urban planning, Gandy shows different scenarios that focus on London, but have a wider significance.

One of the key strengths of Gandy's analysis is his focus on power structures and how this can create unequal access to water itself, as well as the ability to contribute to decisions made about the development of water resources. At times the relatively self-contained chapters, each of which focuses on a different city at various time periods, can lead to a sense of fragmentation in the book. However, the consistency of Gandy's analyses in terms of his focus on water, modernity and the city, as well as the well-described and piercing analysis of power structures, lends the book a sense of unity. It also allows Gandy a breadth of focus that is welcome when discussing such a global issue as he does not just focus on the Western world or only major cities on one continent. While the book could have benefited from a more even balance in terms of cities examined, it does not ignore the unequal power measures that have made such a major impact on cities such as Lagos and Mumbai, and Gandy does make mention of other non-Western cities in other parts of his analysis, though usually only in passing.

At points there could have been more connection drawn between the analyses, particularly as Gandy already has such a consistent focus on power structures as well as his stated discussion of urban spaces, water and modernity. Also, so fascinating was Gandy's analysis that at points I wanted to hear about more cities, however, at 351 pages, to do this the book would have to be either substantially, and perhaps unsustainably, longer, or the author would have to sacrifice some of the in-depth analysis to include these additional places.

Indeed it is this depth of analysis that makes Gandy's book stand out as it includes many great discussions of water as "natural," "cultural" and "urban" and how discourses surrounding these ways of categorising water are often used and abused by various groups. His analyses also allow a fo-

cus on structural inequality and the ways in which Western ideas of the city and water are not universally applicable, as well as how “controlling water” may actually equate at times with trying to control the sociocultural elements of cities.

Like Gandy, Morgan in *Running Out?: Water in Western Australia* also examines the power structures that emerge around attitudes to water. In doing this though she chooses to focus on just one area, Western Australia (and particularly on the south-west of this state). As a historian, Morgan discusses the history of this region, the various people who live here, and their changing relationships to water. This allows Morgan to go deeper than Gandy into the development of considerations around water for this one place, and she also focuses on both rural and city populations while Gandy’s focus is only on urban areas. This is not to suggest that one perspective is more effective than the other, but these differences do have a significant impact on the structure and style of the different books.

One of Morgan’s particular strengths is her ability to present information in a highly readable way. Each of the chapters is laid out according to chronology and Morgan weaves the different elements of this story of water in Western Australia in such a skilful way that the reader is never lost, never overwhelmed and the telling appears effortless.

There are frequent paragraphs of deeply original and highly critical analysis in this work as well. For example in her discussion of the suburbs Morgan writes:

Anxieties about the health and progress of white Australians were important influences on the relationships that people in the growing suburbs of Perth had developed with water supplies and their (natural) surrounds by the first half of the twentieth century. Their anxieties led them to develop dependencies on abundant water supplies to overcome their fears, which in turn, weakened their hydroresilience. The application of the concept of environmental anxiety to the households and suburbs of Perth in the early twentieth century questions the security that Australians have long associated with suburban spaces (57).

These dense paragraphs show Morgan to be not only a highly developed storyteller, but also a brilliant analyst who draws out the significance of all that she describes in a highly succinct fashion.

Morgan’s analyses also discuss the difference in attitudes between the many settlers of Western Australia, and the Aboriginal population who have a continual presence on this land. The hydroresilience of the different Aboriginal peoples is constantly highlighted by Morgan, and often contrasted to

the attitudes of settlers. Morgan is also quick to detail the various ways in which Aboriginal peoples have been dispossessed of their lands and prevented from practicing many forms of their hydroresilience. Further, attitudes to water and Aboriginal people have often been combined by settlers to further deny these people access to clean water and adequate living conditions, which have then been used to further dispossess and marginalise these populations. Such an examination is essential to a book like this, and Morgan is deliberate in her reminders to the reader of the ongoing presence of Aboriginal people in Western Australia, as well as the continuing disenfranchisement, poverty and exclusion they still face because of racist attitudes, structural inequality and denial. Indeed the analysis Morgan produces in this respect is one of the strongest in the book as she details the ways in which social attitudes and structural developments have worked together to disenfranchise Aboriginal people in Western Australia, often in ways that are complex and disastrous in their widespread and pervasive nature.

Another element of analysis that this book develops is the ways in which the settlers of Western Australia have managed to divorce themselves from their climatic conditions in a way that allows them to use large quantities of water without thinking through the consequences. For this argument Morgan frequently draws on the relationship to gardens that many settlers in suburbia have, and the ways in which these started as a form of keeping a sense of civilisation, but continue to the present day as a thirsty, yet seen as essential, part of Perth life. Indeed the ways in which people treat their gardens—from choosing plants that require regular watering such as lawns or lush tropical surrounds to enacting swift political retribution on many governments that have enforced total sprinkler bans—allows Morgan to focus on the ways in which people's attitudes contribute to their risk of running out.

One area in which the book could have been further developed is its final chapter. While this highly analytical section sums up the book well and gives some very insightful comments about the future of water in Western Australia and the ways in which attitudes will have to change, it would have been good to see some comments on how these ideas could have relevance to places outside of this state or Australia. While the analysis draws its strength from its extensive analysis of Western Australia, certain conclusions could also be used to contribute to the thinking of the attitudes to water in other places as well. Although this is not the focus of the book, having several pages that discuss the wider significance of this work, which remains mostly implicit, would have been beneficial at this point.

What both *Running Out?* and *The Fabric of Spaces* show us is how

versatile and engaging studies of water can be, especially in different disciplines. Despite coming from the different fields of history and geography, Morgan and Gandy nevertheless demonstrate the way in which water crosses many borders and has a profound influence on many ways of living and thinking. Both scholars examine people's attitudes to water and the ways in which power structures are often directly and pervasively implicated in these, and each provides an analysis that asks us to question the ways in which we may take water for granted.

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