



## **Tom MELS (ed.), *Reanimating Places : a Geography of Rhythms***

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T. Mels (ed.), *Reanimating Places : a Geography of Rhythms*, Aldershot : Ashgate, 2004, 278 p.  
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For geographers, rhythm is one of the most seductive and elusive of concepts. And, as Tom Mels's expansive introductory essay to this collection demonstrates, it is possible to trace the 'lineage of a geography of rhythms' through various theoretical and empirical trajectories. The content and tone of this volume is, however, dominated by one particular trajectory - humanistic geography. As such, in addition to being a welcome contribution to wider geographical engagements with temporality, for this reader the book served as useful reminder of intellectual traditions that have sometimes been under-acknowledged within culturally inflected human geography, and more particularly in work about rhythm. A more specific touchstone for the contributions to this volume is Anne Buttimer's writing in the late 1970s about the rhythms of time-space. As Mels suggests, while Buttimer's interest in rhythm emerges from a particular concern with the phenomenological and existential elements of everyday life, this interest resonates in different ways with aspects of time-geography, Marxist geography, and with the 'rhythmanalysis' of Bachelard and Lefebvre.

Buttimer's humanistic engagement with the rhythms of place is read by Mels as an enlivening gesture - an effort to animate space in the context of an increasingly 'reified world of positivist science and technocracy' (p. 8). Despite the diversity of their subjects, each of the chapters in this book can be read as an attempt to foreground the lived temporality of space and to disrupt the 'danse macabre of abstract time-space' (p. 34). Some chapters have an immediately familiar humanistic tone, most notably those by Tuan, Ley and Bunkse, each of which engages with the rhythms of place, home and displacement. Unsurprisingly, there are also discussions focusing on the possibilities and problems of attuning with a degree of authenticity to the multiple rhythms of place and landscape (Bunkse, Johnson, O'Reilly, Relph, Sack). Other authors work to draw out the literal and metaphoric choreography of the connections and contradictions between the lived rhythms of place and wider social, political and economic processes (Aquist, Clark, Godlewska, Olwig, Relph, Seamon). And at times this choreography is affectively amplified by the rhythms of an enactive style of writing (Olsson).

Admittedly, the diversity of the collection means that the connections between some contributions and the central thematic of rhythm is not always entirely clear, although presumably this reflects the editor's desire to engage the multiple rhythms of the discipline and, indeed, to avoid disciplining the meaning of rhythm itself. More importantly, for this reader - and perhaps others - the humanistic tone of the book prompted a series of important questions. Does abstraction always work against the apprehensions of lived, animate space ? Is rhythm always affirmatively animating ? Are such animations distinctively human ? And what kinds of styles of work might apprehend more (and less) than human rhythms ? While the contributions here hint at possible and interesting answers, they are - perhaps inevitably - circumscribed by the tradition from which the collection emerges.