James Clifford Kent, *Aesthetics and the Revolutionary City: Real and Imagined Havana*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. xi + 226 pp. (Cloth US\$84.99)

Aesthetics and the Revolutionary City possesses elements to be revered. Its keen historical passage through visual renderings of Havana, primarily carried out by outsiders, is diligently researched and well narrated. Tracing the entrance of foreign photography into Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century and the emergence of Cuban photography during the War of Independence and in the Cuban republic, James Clifford Kent then pauses to bring to life Walker Evans's 1933 trip to the island. With a commanding interdisciplinary lens, he interrogates Evans's practice of what Guy Debord called *psychogeography*—the de-banalization of urban space, within his representations of Cuba that were initially taken for Carlton Beals's *The Crime of Cuba* (1933). Kent acutely outlines how Evans, as a "flâneur armed with a camera" (p. 19), becomes observer and observed. His description of Evans's work is enriched through references to Cuban writers such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Alejo Carpentier, and Leonardo Padura, which help elucidate an intricate choreography between insider and outsider. Kent's technical savvy, matched by a respect for the photographers and filmmakers he analyzes, reflects his first-hand experience with photography and film.

Less examined in the scope of cultural studies is the subject of Chapter 3, Burt Glinn, Magnum Photos, and the Cuban Revolution, although it should be noted that Ernesto Hernández Busto's "Essays: Revolution, Still Photos" (in *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 2011) did briefly link the post-war boom "visual humanism" (p. 62), characteristic of one of the most prestigious photographic agencies, founded in 1947, to propagandistic photography. Kent extends these connections, discussing the impact of the encouragement that Magnum gave its photographers to engage with their subjects, not only on Glinn's fashioning of the Cuban Revolution, but on spatial imaginaries of Havana for years to come.

Kent's readings of David Bailey's *Havana* and the post-Special-Period photobook build on the work of other writers and scholars on the Special Period such as Ana María Dopico, José Quiroga, Raúl Rubio, Lucía Suárez, and Esther Whitfield, but his analysis of the "intimate distance" in Bailey's portraiture and the practice of "white out" (p. 100) in his early career is especially intriguing. His conclusion that Fidel's death and Trump's rollback on Obama's policies have dramatically increased interest in "all things Cuban" and specifically "the US public's interest in photography of Cuba" (p. 107) is a little less persuasive, though with more examples it could have been justified.

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Kent is most innovative reflecting on the 2010 Havana Club campaign, “Nothing Compares to Havana,” fruit of the Paris-based M&C Saatchi creative agency, and Russell Thomas’s 2001 music documentary, *Our Manics in Havana*—the latter tied to his previous analyses of *Buena Vista Social Club*. The campaign’s reliance on what Keith Dinnie has referred to as the “country-of-origin effect” (p. 120) is further elaborated through Emilio Morales and Joseph Scarpaci’s discussion of the State’s advertising. Kent synthesizes contemporary debates regarding the notion of Havana as a real and imagined city space, to demonstrate how the Cuban capital becomes a “mythical city” (p. 125) in the Western imaginary. In his discussion of the music documentary *Our Manics in Havana* (repackaged in 2001 as *Louder Than War—Manic Street Preachers: Live in Cuba*), which focused on a leftist Welch band that performed at Havana’s Karl Marx Theater, he agilely interprets the cinematographic techniques and publicity strategies through which foreigners can sustain solidarity with a nostalgic, displaced version of twenty-first-century Cuba.

Kent’s rich nourishing of thought far outweighs the study’s few weak points. For a book so highly immersed in visual culture, the inclusion of only seven images is disappointing, and more than likely, the publisher’s decision.

Kent’s tendency to identify the cited thinkers according to their presumed ethnicities and/or nationalities, in addition to their disciplines, seems to be carried out somewhat arbitrarily. This tactic sometimes undermined his efforts to challenge such bounds of belonging in his scrutiny of the way space is lived and imagined across different cultural contexts.

The index’s logic is also difficult to penetrate—while there are, for example, entries on Guy Debord, Michel Foucault, and Siegfried Kracauer, other thinkers who are equally crucial to his analysis, such as Ana María Dopico, Raúl Rubio, Joseph Scarpaci, and Esther Whitfield, did not make the cut. Finally, this book, essential for scholars in Cuban studies with special interest in visual culture, would have benefited from a lengthier conclusion bridging the vast historical expanse it covers.

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