IN THE SHADOWS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

UNCANNY COMPOSURES IN THE CITY OF ADELAIDE

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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University of Adelaide
August 2000
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Contents
Abstract

This thesis examines the actions of ordinary people within a city landscape. Its major focus is on the politics of culture and meaning in cities. I argue that cities are 'cultural landscapes' constantly being constructed, disturbed and transformed by the everyday understandings, meanings and actions of people as much as by the visions, disciplines and products of planners and regulators. My focus on the politics of culture and meaning draws attention to the experiential and inculcated dimensions of action in cities that I characterise as manners and demeanours. My case studies are drawn from Adelaide, a city in South Australia planned and regulated since its inception in 1837.

My ethnography of power reveals how the complex of relations surrounding manners and demeanours is centred on bringing a concrete landscape into being. In this way the investigation demonstrates the 'unsettled' nature of an apparently 'settled' landscape and on-going transformations and contestations in it. I explore how manners and demeanours apply to ways of inscribing and imagining place. The manners and demeanours of people are shown to underpin an active and activated political process in which the growth of material representations naturalises particular "ways of seeing" (Berger 1972) and being. They shape the construction and placement of concrete forms within the city's landscape and the 'taken-for-grantedness' of that landscape. They obfuscate as well as clarify personal and collective psychic, social and cultural values and are accumulated with and without conscious thought.

I argue that struggles for power, authority and meaning in city landscapes such as Adelaide are never clarified or resolved. These struggles are often misrecognised, naturalised and concealed and remain in the shadows of consciousness. By contrast my analysis seeks to highlight the shadowy forms in which these struggles elude detection and the unsettled structures in which they are founded. In looking at the conjunction of demeanours of power and contestation such forms reveal the uncanny ways in which apparent contradictions can remain unresolved. The concept of 'the uncanny' is the gloss for the central dynamic of culture by which I account for the coexistence of orienting and disrupting dimensions of power made evident through the conflicting manners and demeanours of people in city space.