



The Poetics and Politics of the Desert: Landscape and the Construction of America. (Spatial Practices)

Catrin Gersdorf

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This study explores the ways in which the desert, as topographical space and cultural presence, shaped and reshaped concepts and images of America. Once a territory outside the geopolitical and cultural borders of the United States, the deserts of the West and Southwest have since emerged as canonical American landscapes. Drawing on the critical concepts of American studies and on questions and problems raised in recent debates on ecocriticism, *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert* investigates the spatial rhetoric of America as it developed in view of arid landscapes since the mid-nineteenth century. Gersdorf argues that the integration of the desert into America catered to the entire spectrum of ideological and political responses to the history and culture of the US, maintaining that the Americanization of this landscape was and continues to be staged within the idiomatic parameters and in reaction to the discursive authority of four spatial metaphors: garden, wilderness, Orient, and heterotopia.

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