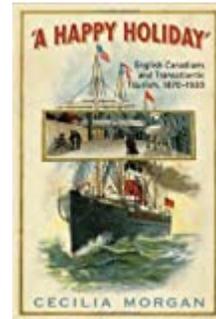




Cecilia Morgan. *"A Happy Holiday": English-Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. xxiii + 461 pp. \$90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8020-9758-3; \$37.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8020-9518-3.



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European Travel and Canadian Identities: English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism

As tourism has become the world's fastest growing industry, so the study of tourism has become a compelling topic for a range of academic disciplines. At the same time, a closely related subject, travel literature, has enjoyed a fresh vogue among historians absorbed with the nature of perception in past cultures, in terms of both what was seen and in the vocabulary available for describing it. Cecilia Morgan's valuable study of English Canadians and transatlantic tourism in the early decades of the Dominion thus combines travel literature, tourism history, and attitudinal studies. The foundational assumption of such a study is the truism that travel literature tells as much about the observer as it does the objects being observed. And it is clearly the observers who interest Morgan. She goes in search of the meanings of Canadians' transatlantic travel and tourism between the 1870s and 1920s. Thus, *A Happy Holiday* approaches tourism from the perspective of the tourist rather than the host. And, despite the author's mild protest to the contrary, it is much less concerned with the mechanics of the tourism industry than with what it reveals about

perceptions, attitudes, and identity formation among English Canadian travelers.

Since there was no typical Canadian during this period, it is no surprise to find that there is no typical Canadian tourist in Morgan's study. Typical is, after all, a somewhat artificial construct. To some extent *what* travelers chose to view—or notice—was dictated by the ruling culture's travel canon, but *how* it was perceived and the way that it was processed were both highly contingent. And it is in the contingencies that Morgan's work makes its mark.

In a clever conceit, Morgan structures her study very much like a tourist trip. Preparation for travel is made in the introduction, where parameters are defined, intentions outlined, and the complexities of sources and their context addressed. Departure and transit follows, embedded in an exploration of the structures and practices of middle-class tourism. The book then travels serially through the salient destinations in the British Isles: Scotland, England (including Wales), Ireland, and the great

hub of empire, London. After an interlude to examine the "social spaces" of tourism in Britain, the book travels to the Continent, where it encounters, sequentially, historical and artistic attractions; natural settings; and, again, a selection of public spaces that allow touristic observation of customs, morality, and national character. Finally, the book returns its tourists to their homeland for an assessment of their travels, if not their long-term effect on the travelers. As she admits, "my study ends as the passengers disembarked from the steamers at Halifax or Quebec" (p. 12).

Within the geographic format, Morgan's evidence is grouped thematically. In temporal terms, it is more or less a static study in that it disregards time differences when presenting evidence, arguing for a significant level of cultural and touristic continuity within the period under study. Only the 1920s is seen as sufficiently different to merit a chapter of its own, although even here Morgan argues for a defining continuity set against measurable changes (largely popular in Great War battlefield tourism and, especially, the transformative impact of the automobile).

It is trite if true to point out that the steamer trunks and portmanteaus of the transatlantic tourist were perhaps less significant than their cultural baggage, and like a historical customs official, Morgan conscientiously checks those bags at the border, looking for telltale patterns in the tourist experience. She filters the tourist gaze through class (her observers are invariably from the middle or upper-middle class); race (they are characterized as "English" Canadians); income; education; and, especially, gender. Each produces its own shades of perception within the individual experience of transatlantic travel: the sites visited, encounters with those "performing" tourism, and the judgment of customs observed. Her well-considered insights are too numerous to summarize, but Morgan's fundamental argument is that the British imperial heritage continued in this period to be a touchstone for identity formation among middle- and upper-middle-class English Canadians, allowing both pride and a sense of their own superiority, but that the relationship between Old World and New glimpsed through the tourist encounter was always complicated, occasionally ambivalent, and measurably contingent on the observer's own background. Like many important and useful deconstructions, Morgan's seems commonsense once elaborated.

Morgan's study group is almost exclusively Anglophone Protestants (she explicitly excludes French Cana-

dian travelers's experience from consideration as being sufficiently different to require a separate study), and she argues, with some qualification, that both her sample and the period under study are sufficiently homogeneous to justify generalization. Nevertheless, in the delicate game of recognizing diversity while arguing for broad applicability, Morgan might be challenged. Although she acknowledges that ethnicity and religion also filtered tourist perception, she tends to apply them to her analysis only in obvious circumstances, for example, how a Roman Catholic priest of Irish descent might perceive the Catholic Irish peasantry, compared to an Anglo-Protestant woman. This is to be regretted for historians have yet to plumb the cultural and attitudinal nuances that seem to have lingered within the Anglo-British identity at the turn of the twentieth century. There were obvious differences still between Irish Canadian Protestants and Irish Canadian Roman Catholics, but what about Canadians of Highland versus Lowland Scots descent? Welsh versus English Canadians? Native Canadians who were the product of ethnic enclaves versus those more fully absorbed into a Protestant Canadian mainstream? For example, Morgan makes little differentiation between how a Highland Scots Canadian might encounter Scotland compared to a Canadian of English or Irish descent. She notes Ada MacLeod's less idealized encounter with the Isle of Skye, which is not just romantic and heritage-based but is also aware of current developments, yet she does not show how MacLeod's strong Scottish Island roots might have shaped her perceptions. How might they compare to, say, Emily Murphy or Harriet Priddis? And what about Jonathan MacKinnon, probably the only fluent Gaelic speaker among the travelers cited and consciously rooted in a Canadian Gaelic culture?

Ethnic difference, so jagged in the immigration period, has ostensibly been polished into a pan-British sensibility in this travel literature, and the historic sites visited by travelers most often reflect popular taste rather than any sense of a more localized or personalized past. This, too, is suggestive. Morgan's travelers have been taught what to see and what to value. They seek the Scotland of Burns and Sir Walter Scott and the England of Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Wordsworth. Indeed, if there is a common set of cultural values and perceptions toward the Mother Country among Morgan's transatlantic tourists, it would be interesting—although a different study—to examine how these were produced, presumably through the young country's public education system, the press (something Morgan does note), and a

literary canon made available through rising levels of literacy.

Similarly, Morgan acknowledges, but could have done more with, the distinction between professional travel writers's published accounts and private diaries, letters, or travelogues. The inspiration for the travel accounts, their explicit purpose, and their intended audience unmistakably shaped the individual writer's approach, style, and content, perhaps as much as their class and gender. Whenever Morgan does address such filters, considering that Murphy was a social reformer or that Margaret Dixon MacDougall came to Ireland to investigate land issues, it is invariably helpful in parsing their impressions. It is not always possible, but always helpful, to know more about Morgan's travelers and the purpose of their accounts, and the study would have benefited from more concentration on such details.

Of course, not every contingency can be thoroughly interrogated, and one must be clear about what *A Happy Holiday* does not discuss. Although addressed in the context of travelers's attitudes toward them, this is not a book about the mechanics of transatlantic tourism: transportation infrastructure, marketing, accommodation, or the staging of attractions. Nor does it particularly try to come to grips with the tourist's conjectured craving for "authentic" experience or expectation that tourist destinations will provide a palpable (but not disorienting) sense of "other." Did Canadian travelers, fresh from

a "new" country—as defined by European standards—attach a different significance to the physical evidence of antiquity than native Britons or Europeans? While there is intelligent discussion of the "performance" of tourism, there is curiously little consideration of the commodification of the tourist experience, a process well begun by the late nineteenth century and a prominent characteristic of the modernism (and antimodernism) that Morgan rightly finds inherent in the whole globe-shrinking, technology-driven, perception-shaping phenomenon of travel during this period (p. 18). And finally, when it comes to the exploration of identity formation and expression, how are we to measure it among that great bulk of the Canadian population who were too poor to afford leisure travel?

The foregoing comments are not meant as criticisms of *A Happy Holiday*. They merely flag conversations that fall outside the one that Morgan pursues with so much nuance and thoroughness. They are an acknowledgement of how much we can learn about Canadians from the study of their tourism, and how much there is still to know. Morgan's study makes an important contribution to our understanding of tourism, of cultural bonds within the British Empire, and of identity formation in Canada's early decade, but even the best-informed tourist cannot see everything, and must make choices that reflect their own interests and priorities. For the historian of tourism as much as for the tourist, there are always more roads still to travel.

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