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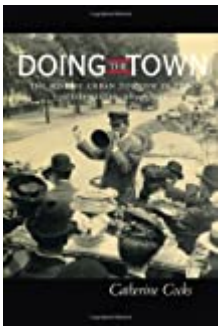

Catherine Cocks. *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. xii + 287 pp. $37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-22746-0.

Marguerite S. Shaffer. *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001. 429 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56098-953-0; $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56098-976-9.

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Seeing America First

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As Catherine Cocks tells us in the introduction to *Doing the Town*, her interest in examining the rise of urban tourism in the United States began with research into San Francisco's Chinatown as a tourist destination. This interest led her to consider the phenomenon of urban tourism more generally. Just how and why did places like San Francisco, Chicago, or New York become tourist attractions in the first place?

Placing the development of urban tourism within the larger context of American culture and society in the years between 1850 and 1915, Cocks argues that "the practice of urban tourism was an important sign of and contributor to the erosion of a Victorian, 'refined' understanding of class, gender, and ethnicity and the gradual emergence of a cosmopolitan, commercial conceptualization of these social relations in the early twentieth century" (p. 1-2).

For most of the nineteenth century, cities were not places for "respectable" citizens to take a tour. Tourism

remained an affluent affair, and these tourists were drawn first to Europe ("The Grand Tour"), or as the century progressed, to the rails in Pullman cars headed for posh resorts like the Antlers in Colorado Springs or the del Monte in Monterey, California. Cities were no place for respectable Americans to go bandying about–in such public arenas, danger (both the physical and moral kind) lay in wait.

The transformation of the city from dangerous to desirable Cocks attributes primarily to increasing and more affordable transportation, rising income and leisure time, and the development of "first-class" urban hotels and "extra-fare" railroad cars which "excluded the unrefined [and] mitigated the reluctance of genteel people to take their leisure in public," while also "erod[ing] the opposition between culture and commerce, public and private" (p. 107). Added to this were concerted efforts by urban tour companies and city businesses to tap into the tourist trade. As a result, "by 1915, urban tourism was not only thinkable, it was profitable" (p. 5). Cities like Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. (the four cities that Cocks focuses her study on) became tourist destinations in their own right and an increasing number of Americans desired to "do the town."

Perhaps the most intriguing chapter of the book, " 'The Noble Spectacle': Historical Walking Tours and Ethnic Slumming, 1890s-1915," explores the development of tourist interest in urban ethnic neighborhoods. Places like San Francisco's Chinatown became desirable tourist destinations. Here Cocks highlights the paradoxical forces of assimilation and ethnic tourism. Ethnic tourism is anti-assimilationist in nature. The tourists' interest in ethnic communities lies in their very "difference." As Cocks points out, "tourists cast aside, at least for the duration of their visit, the assimilationist aims of many reformers. They sought a transient, commercial but vivid experience of what was presented to them as timeless, ineradicable cultural difference" (p. 187). Ethnic urban tourism arose at the same time that Progressive reformers struggled with the question of how best to assimilate the various immigrant groups into mainstream American society.

Although certainly outside the scope of her study, this same paradox can be seen in the rise of Indian tourism in roughly the same period. Increasingly, tourists sought out Native American communities, like the various Pueblos of Northern New Mexico, while at the same time non-Indian "reformers" attempted to carry out forceful assimilationist programs like the allotment of Indian lands and the creation of off-reservation boarding schools.

Urban ethnic tourism appealed to white tourists as a sort of internal American Orientalism: tourists "understood racial and ethnic minorities as living at a different time.... Mired in 'tradition,' nonwhites and non-Anglo-Saxons still lived just as they had centuries (or even millennia) ago. In contrast, white Americans considered themselves the most modern of peoples. In place of tradition, they had reason; in place of superstition, they had science" (p. 197). This American variant of Orientalism served, at least in part, to help define American nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The creation of an American national identity and the role that tourism played in this process is the focus of Marguerite ShafferÎs *See America First*.

Like Cocks, Shaffer offers a straightforward and compelling thesis–tourism served to forge a modern American national identity. National tourism became, in Shaffer's words, both a "ritual of American citizenship" and a "patriotic duty." By "teaching tourists what to see and how to see it, promoters invented and mapped an idealized American history and tradition across the American landscape, defining an organic nationalism that linked national identity to a shared territory and history" (p. 4). Shaffer maintains that "both the production of the tourist landscape and the consumption of the tourist experience [were] central to the development of a nascent national culture in the United States" (p. 6).

The development of tourism, particularly in the West, covered in *See America First* is familiar terrain to those who have studied the subject: the role of the railroads, automobiles, national parks (Shaffer's section on Glacier National Park is particularly good) guidebooks, and travel literature. The strength of Shaffer's book lies in the author's success at embedding these developments within the larger framework of American nationalism.

It would have been interesting if Shaffer had placed the discussion of national tourism in the United States explicitly within some of the literature on the subject of nationalism. In the bibliography, the author does list the three most influential theorists of nationalism, who have become a sort of "theories-of-nationalism Trinity"–Hobsbawm, Gellner, and Anderson–but they are not directly discussed in the text of the book.[1]

Shaffer's book is a welcome, and indeed much needed, contribution to the growing body of literature on tourism in the United States, and even more specif-

ically, on the relationship between tourism and nationalism. The book points to the increasing sophistication with which scholars are approaching the subject.

Both of these books may be charged with what has become a standard critique in that they do not develop the voice of the objectified "other." In the case of Cocks, she does not discuss the views that, say, the residents of Chinatown had regarding tourism; in Shaffer's case, the voice of the Native Americans, within the various Indian communities that drew tourists, remains muted. This would be, however, an unfair charge. Both of the authors set out to support their respective arguments, which necessarily must focus on those who controlled the tourist discourse, and at this both authors succeed admirably.

Doing the Town and *See America First* are highly detailed and meticulous studies of tourism in the United States. They are not pleasure reading for the casually interested, but rather focused, serious considerations of their subjects and substantial contributions to the field.

Note

1. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

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