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Book Reviews

Tourism and the Postcolonial Encounter: Landscapes of Longing in Egypt. Jessica Jacobs (2010) Ashgate, Aldershot. Pp 154

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Sex, tourism and the postcolonial encounter offers the reader an insight into the motivations of female tourists and their desire to lose themselves in the longing of a faraway place. The book offers a comparative perspective, of the post-modern and modern characteristics of female travellers to Sinai in Egypt, and initiates in-depth debate surrounding sex, tourism, and the spiritual encounters of female tourists with Egyptian (Bedouin) men.

The book, from the offset, highlights the historical connection of travel to the colonial past, and highlights the associations of nostalgia to the dichotomies of tourist characteristics and motivations, by exploring the traits of gender, place, ethnicity, and modernity through the hegemonic clarifications of travel. This determines the overall structure of the book, and addresses the quest for escapism via a search for authenticity, experience and spirituality.

Based upon 57 interviews, there is an air of depth which is anticipated to unravel throughout the text to address the purpose of the publication and to answer the central question: are female travellers who engage in sexual interactions the same as male sex tourists? However, the account fails to address this anticipation. Instead the sexual encounters are centred on the historical fascination with the colonial past, and do not whole-heartedly question the similarities and variation of female and male sex tourist's motives and purpose until the closing chapter, where a somewhat non-convictional suggestion of romance tourism is given.

Therefore, it is felt that the 'sex' incorporated into the text occurs in somewhat isolation from the broader themes of 'sex tourism'. Hence the title 'Sex, Tourism...'

and not 'sex tourism'. Instead the 'relationships' are documented, and the incidental and accidental motivations of the female tourists are given, rather than sex being determined as a primary motivation of travel. Although the author highlights key issues and compares the motives of these female travellers to a range of academic material, it is felt that the text fails to focus the discussion on the role of women as sex tourists which would warrant the inclusion of 'sex' in the title. Instead the interaction which occurs, may, by some, be deemed closer to an interaction, and a relationship, as opposed to a sex tourism encounter.

Nevertheless, there are some merits to the publication. The book attempts to understand the role of women in sex tourism, and endeavours to expand the definition that has been criticised by authors for being narrow and exclusive. The book does add value to the current research in this field, which primarily focuses on the relationship between the Western female tourists travelling to underdeveloped countries in the Southern hemisphere. Instead the book focuses on the sexual relationships that transpire in the Middle East, and incorporates interviews from White heterosexual female tourist as well as local men, which is unlike other noted sex tourism research, which heavily relies on interviews with local males. Therefore the book does offer a wider perspective and more reliable interpretation of the motivation and desire of a female tourist.

This understanding is imbedded in the interpretation of Orientalism and Occidentalism. The dichotomies of culture are not however seen as binary opposites within the text, but are addressed as being influential upon one another, and that it is *escapism* that underpins the ethno-sexual relationships which exist. In this, the view of the orient provides an escape for Western women *from* modern life to the un-modern, pre-modern and anti-modern life in the Sinai, whereas the view from the occident offers Egyptian (Bedouin) men an escape *to* modernity. The local men incorporate stereotypes into their behaviour, they hold dehumanising views of the Western world, and they utilise the tourist space to heighten their masculinity and create opportunities linked to wealth and social mobility. This escape *from* and *to* modernity is highlighted by Jacobs as being representative of the thoughts of Egypt's

greatness as being in the past. This incorporates the ideas of modernity and heritage, and the occidental geographical imagination of the Western world by Egyptian (Bedouin) men.

These views are established through the interpretation of the 'other', via an exploration of images, ethnic encounters, and the construct of place and gender, by recognising the romantic gaze of female tourists, the role of the male, and the connections between the Sinai and the relationships which occurred. Resultantly, the need to seek personal and sexual freedom, express gender differences and the paradox binary of fear and desire, as well as the Western longing for the 'hopelessly romantic' idea of the desert and the spiritual connection to nature were suggested in the text. It was therefore felt that the text was about the ethnic encounter, not sex *per se*.

Throughout the book, there are explicit links being made between these interpretations and the broader realms of sex tourism, however the overall flow of the text has been compromised. This is due to the continual referral to forthcoming and previous chapters when key elements are initially shared with the reader. It is also due to the lack of conclusive remarks, and the need to consume the book as a whole text, rather than utilising specific chapters for research purposes. Furthermore, there are a series of statements made within the book which detract from the authenticity and strength of publication, and although each chapter has a specific objective, it is difficult to conclude each subject matter, without drawing on the wider links.

Overall, I was therefore left unconvinced by the focus and structure of the book and the relevance of the sections to the wider sex tourism literature. There is a clear identification of Egypt's colonial past; however the links are tentative and problematic. As a result, it is felt that this well researched and detailed understanding of the motivations of female tourists is disjointed as a full text, as it fails to address in great depth if female travellers who engage in sexual interactions are the same as male sex tourists. Instead the focus remains on the desire to 'lose oneself', to escape from modernity, rather than on sexual encounters. This has lead to some confusion

over who the book is targeted at? Perhaps it is best suited to the female tourist travelling to Egypt to better aid them in their interpretations of their own encounters.

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Con el Corazón Mirando al Sur. Transformaciones en el Sur de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. (With the Heart seeing Southward: refurbishments on South of Buenos Aires). Hilda Herzer (Editor) (2008) Espacio Editorial, Buenos Aires. Pp. 367. ISBN 978-950-802-291-2.

The south of Buenos Aires city has gradually changed in the last 15 years, neighborhoods and squares as Barracas, San Telmo and La Boca have been altered and the importance of tourism in the process of urban-refurbishment seems to be unquestionable and, of course, for better or worse irreversible. To some extent, there were broader socio-economic, geographic and environmental conditions that certainly determined the failure or success of this process of touristification. This book not only synthesizes years of investigation but also it provides 10 well-written chapters combining fine qualitative research with sociological insight investigating the role played by tourism and hospitality in the transformation of urban space during the last 9 years. Not all the chapters will be reviewed here, rather, the connections between tourism as a modern agent of gentrification and real estate development will be examined.

The aims of the book are clearly stated as first, to analyze state policies in the promotion and investment of urban areas as well as the consequent improvement in State taxes; second, to study the evolution of property speculation and different changes contextually suffered by the residential market and, ultimately, and third, to explore the role played by social networks by mitigating the negative effects in the process of place-making through the theory of sacralization. The discourse of

development which emphasises private investment and access to financial loans as a form of enhancement for stakeholders is not always successful. The financial crisis which whipped Argentina in 2001 and the latter abandonment of the currency parity system by the government of Eduardo Duhalde, triggered new alternatives and challenges for the economy where tourism played a significant role. The main thesis of this valuable work is that the patrimony (or heritage) engenders policies of exclusion. Through processes of valorization, touristification encourages a set of speculative policies where the poorest sectors are often relegated to peripheral zones by reinforcing the previous and profound material asymmetries.

In the introductory chapter, the editor notes how gentrification creates a rise of the average income and material benefits because of increased rents, government taxes and house values, while at the same time creating more negative effects such as exclusion, conflict and emotional resentment among those involved, and that this is often underestimated. Although some scholars suggest that gentrification can help residents to boost the well-being of their community, the fact is that it represents a symbol of social inequality rooted in the core of late-capitalism. This happens simply because the financial loans are not affordable for low-qualified workers.

Basically, Herzer argues that some places rich in tradition are fertile sources to be patrimonialized and of course subject to gentrification. This process has been widely described by many scholars in last decades but the following points illustrate better how this complex dynamic operates. First, a borough or neighborhood situated downtown, which is occupied by middle class families, experiences a decrease of inhabitants since many people move to other areas in the quest for work and opportunities. Second, this space is gradually occupied by temporal workers or migrants (less-qualified) who pay rent and have lower salaries. At this time, the owners do not invest in infrastructure and the borough slowly starts to decline. Social pathologies as drug abuses, prostitution or crime may emerge during this phase. Third, expatriates who had success in other cities return home with their new families deciding to revitalize the borough by means of heavy investment. And fourth, as a final outcome, the low-skilled workers are pushed to migrate towards other

destinations. Sometimes, the mobility can be forced, whenever the government exerts violence over certain “undesired groups” or ethnic minorities or indirect, which is orchestrated by means of taxes and other financial instruments. In addition, this research emphasizes tourism as another important element that initiates the process of gentrification. Most importantly Herzer realizes the gentrification is often difficult to study in field-work unless undertaken over a broad period of time.

To what extent the low-qualified workers voluntarily migrate or are pushed is almost impossible to determine. Perhaps, the fear of crime and the process of victimization, a widely-studied issue in urban sociology, wherein some inhabitants live in isolation of the rest of residents can be an interesting indicator of this phenomenon. This question of course opens the door for a new channel for research in tourism and hospitality that contrasts notably with the current conceptualization of how heritage and patrimony are being defined. This book provides a good reason to re-examine the concept of patrimony in this light.

The second chapter by Rodriguez, Bañuelos and Mera focus on the reinvention of Buenos Aires’s south in the 1990s and how the mixture of cultural capital and private investment was realised. Taking their cue from Zukin who has argued that “patrimonial restoration” is strongly associated with a need for mass-consumption, the authors address the connection between development, heritage and conflict. Since patrimony can be considered as an important aspect of social life that revitalizes the lore and traditions of a community, the real conflicts among stakeholders, which take place after a process of restoration, are substituted by environmental and cultural concerns. By underplaying conflict the negative effects of a process of touristification are often ideologically blurred (p. 48). The hegemonic discourse of development allows privileged groups to accumulate richness at lower cost whereas the most vulnerable stakeholders are affected by the negative consequences. The encounter between new owners and occupants seems to be troublesome and fraught with tension. Incidentally the role played by the marketing, advertising in creating a sustainable image of consumption, is of paramount importance to situate the city as an international tourist destination abroad. Under

the promise that urban growth will bring stable jobs and a fairer redistribution of wealth, the town becomes itself a product of consumption for both domestic and international markets.

Similarly Redondo and Singh focus on the demographic changes to La Boca, San Telmo and Barracas, all areas situated along the emblematic Río de la Plata (River Plate). From 1880 to 1930, Buenos Aires has witnessed a mass-migration of farmers coming from Europe (Spain and Italy, to be precise) who settled south-wards of this growing town, and in some areas the percentage of foreigner inhabitants was estimated at 50% by 1914. The urban growth that characterized the social life in this period was accompanied with public investment in infrastructure and recycled old housings (conventillos) to lodge these oversea migrants. Many of them returned home after 1930 but a considerable number opted to settle in Buenos Aires. The yellow fever that wreaked havoc in 1871 not only redefined the public strategies in planning the urban landscape but also pushed the high-class families northward. This widespread panic affected the image of La Boca, Barracas and San Telmo as dangerous zones for long time, but the European migration in part changed this image, paving the way for new forms of development.

Nevertheless, in the last 40 years, La Boca and San Telmo suffered a process of decline, partly a product of years of government intervention and inaction, and now have become areas housing migrants from Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile. Unlike the mass-migration encouraged by the State in the twentieth century for encouraging migration, recent migration is often deemed as “undesired”. The discrimination and prejudice, rooted in an historical disdain for these migrants, reinforced the process of gentrification as an effective way to get rid of these undesirables. Under pretexts such as crime, the discourse of the Argentine social imaginary draws a specific depiction of what “being Argentine” means, alluding to a problematic otherness which is overtly rejected.

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In the fourth chapter Di Virgilio et al, in the fourth section, focus on the scarcity of resources, social pathologies, unemployment and working vulnerabilities in the study of housing conditions in La Boca and Barracas, and in particular on how the low-qualified workers deal with risk. However, since this risk works as a social construct, circumscribed by an ideological discourse, those who live there are often unable to envisage the real dangers the ongoing real-estate speculation represents for them. Basically, they write

the perception of risk is inextricably linked to the ownership and the integration to the formal Estate. Therefore, inhabitants of La Boca, who had bought their properties through private transactions, perceive the more favorable assets of the process of touristification. They also recognize how the building or refurbishment works in progress will bring security to the borough, but to some extent, they do not acknowledge the negative aftermath of this process or potential reappraisal of lands (p. 153).

Finally the valorization of San Telmo's valorization is examined by Gomez and Singh who confirm that commercialized culture, particularly urban patrimony, sets the preconditions for property negotiations between former owners and estate agents. Here, staged-authenticity plays a crucial role in valorizing the existent housing. The main thesis here is that the commodification of patrimony engenders a discourse involving various actors, ranging from politicians, investors, estate agents, owners, journalists and even scholars who consider patrimony as the only alternative to improve the profitability and security of a destination. As a result, the material forces of production find a much broader complicity in academicians and other stakeholders who voluntarily or not reinforce the sense of what "being developed" means in terms of popular wisdom. The competition in the international tourism market often results in tradition and folklore becoming sources of distinction and attractiveness. Based on the belief that the culture should be defined as a resource, a prerequisite for development, Gomez and Singh recognize that culture seems to be something else than a mere alternative for improvement. Far away of being an on-sided space of order and agreement, culture may also function as an organiser of social

relationships and conflict that articulates the discontent among stakeholders and become a form of shared-consciousness.

In this vein, Gomez and Singh write that

...in consequence, the patrimonial sites are erected as zones that protects the diversity and heterogeneity of life before to the advance of trade, where the traditional practices and customs which are being altered by globalization are monitored. Nonetheless, the patrimonial policies, far away of being a form of surveillance that mitigates the negative effects of urbanism, has been transformed in a promoter of zones dilapidated by years of inaction. That way, the construction of urban patrimony under the premise of economic resource, has been historically interlinked to theory of development and adopted by Latin American politicians to intellectualize the tourist experience from the lens of Spanish paradigm. (p. 331).

It is not only the tangible patrimony that is at stake here. For example the Tango, a dancing historically related to criminals, allows the reconstruction of a new intangible patrimony where certain beliefs are evoked. This means that the social memory, identity and sentiment of us are symbolically recycled and transformed in narrative of authenticity depending of material interests of privileged-groups.

Over more than 10 years, the boroughs situated to the south of Buenos Aires have witnessed a process of renovation and patrimonial restoration that originally encouraged by government rescued many historical sites. In so doing, social identity played an important role because it provided the involved stakeholders not only an economic resource but also a symbolic element to enable a sentiment of belonging to a broader nationhood. This process has been accelerated whenever Argentina experiences fiscal crisis and uses tourism as one of their primary options to generate stable jobs. These policies not only allow protecting a zone supposedly threatened by globalization but also placing Buenos Aires as a brand-product worldwide.

The main thread of this book aims to explain that late-capitalism and its trends towards the patrimonialization of space for local consumptions is the result of complex processes. Culture then is the efficient motivator for travel to exotic destinations, and this suggests that being tourist in a society characterized by mass-production denotes a propensity to consume patrimony and folklore which serves not only for the emulation of social distinction but also forms of identity.

In addition, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that tourism-related research has experienced in recent years sustained growth. One realizes how studies focusing on tourism and hospitality as primary concerns have multiplied in recent decades and while the goals and aims of tourism as a discipline seem not to be clear, In many cases ecological and development issues have been prioritized over other themes, whereas tourism is also an efficient mechanism for the revitalization of heritage and sustainable development. In a moment of tourism research where the paradigms of sustainability and use of patrimonial capital predominate, this book opens the door for new and critical discussions. .

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