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Book review

Walking in the European City: Quotidian Mobility and Urban Ethnography, T. Shortell, E. Brown (Eds.) (2014), (Burlington, VT: Ashgate. £95.00 (hardback)) ISBN 9781472416162 (hbk).

This edited volume brings together works that employ walking as a research method or theoretical point of departure. Three sections frame chapters on theory, visual methods, and ethnographic methods, respectively. All but one chapter present largely qualitative work and there is a common focus on immigrants and cities. Flâneury and the Situationists' dérive feature strongly throughout the book, but interestingly the definitions of these practices sometimes disagree, as do their utilizations as method. Frequent, albeit brief, mention of the importance of the neglected senses, such as scent, to walking and qualitative methods enriches the material.

The introduction takes the reader on a tour of the editors' key theorists on walking, such as Simmel, de Certeau, Benjamin, Baudelaire, Debord, and Sinclair, as well as intersecting concepts such as consumerism, symbolic exchange, embodiment, and psychogeography, names and themes that come up often throughout the rest of the book. They suggest that the book furthers the mobility turn in sociology, but it is also clear that urban studies and anthropology are disciplinary backgrounds for several authors.

Over the chapters of the first section the concept of flâneury is extensively reviewed; a distinction is made between recreational and transportation walking; and several typologies are proposed, such as a "secessionist/pro-mixing" attitudinal polemic that determines public transport *versus* private automobile mode choice, the young dynamic executive, DIY creative, and NGO representative hypermobiles who walk in different ways, and demographically different mobility responses to international economic influences. Despite the rubric of theory, several chapters here rely upon quantitative and/or qualitative studies of various sizes and designs to exemplify their propositions and readers are taken to Danish, Italian, and Greek contexts.

All chapters in the second section employ auto-ethnographic descriptions of what was observed during various types of walks, such as "big urban walks," derive, and hikes. This fieldwork occurs in New York, Paris, London, Istanbul, Oslo, Paris, Naples, and Rokytka. Foci include evidence of immigrants and its meaning, and sensory challenges to illusory preconceptions of consistent city landscapes.

Chapters in the third section include conversations with research participants, and seemed the strongest contributions to the volume. Giulia Carabelli takes a reflexive feminist standpoint approach to her fieldwork in Bosnia. This chapter may make good reading for students new to fieldwork; many of Carabelli's struggles are common in international ethnographic research, and she deals with them well *in situ* and on paper. She concludes that long-term engagement with locals' narratives allow slower, more informed and connected walking, and thus interpretation, of the city. Helena Holgersson's chapter stands out as exemplary with respect to its clever research design and clear communication. Her research brings otherwise remote development proponents—including planners, marketers, and construction company representatives—on a walk through an area in Gothenburg that their designs have completely reconfigured, displacing not only criminal elements, but also productive minority communities. By resituating them she finds the interview dialogue more genuine and the participants' rationalizing narratives productively disrupted. Hilary Ramsden discusses her work unsettling thirty research participants' routines of walking in order to alter their perceptions of Bristol. This is predicated on the idea that urban sensory bombardment desensitizes people to their environments, a challenge to the belief, found elsewhere in the book, that walking is an unmediated mode of comprehensive perception. Federica Gatta and Maria Anita Palumbo use recorded walk-alongs with walking groups to investigate experiences of urban transformation in immigrant neighbourhoods in northeastern Paris.

Those interested in methodologies of urban studies, and urban immigrant communities, may find this book of interest. However, few of the chapters actually discuss *walking*, directly, at any length. In fact, the editors and several authors repeatedly use the term "quotidian mobility" in their discussions, leaving the reader to wonder whether they mean walking or some other form of everyday, ordinary mobility. Thus, as a volume, it may be less useful for those who are specifically interested in active transportation as a topic of discussion.

Too many chapters in the first and second sections failed to state a clear argument. There seemed a tendency among many to wander long in theory, and then under-analyze the empirical material, sometimes presenting it as thus more genuine or objective. Similarly, many of the authors failed to interrogate their methods, instead presenting them as uncomplicatedly useful. In places this took the form of unreserved generalizations such as, "…qualitative interviews, 'mobility diaries' and 'photographs selections', methods that enable us to overcome the limits of representation…" (45), "walking the road… exhausts judgement and classification" (135), or, "in walking we harmonize with the place we walk through and with the people we walk with" (175). Many claims were either overstated or oversimplified, and it was not always easy to tell whether a particular statement was a theory, a speculation, or a finding. All of this said, these sections do possess some enlightening nuggets and provocative contentions.

While this book offers some strong chapters, its usefulness as a whole is undermined by a number of shortcomings, from risky claims to subpar copy editing. Regardless, it may be worth jumping in where the reader finds topical relevance.

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