

lel narratives of personal and broader social transformations.

During its years of operation the community action programs sponsored by the Fund were able to translate small scale successes, like organizing local clean-up projects or challenging a particularly delinquent landlord, into larger efforts that indeed did challenge the power structure. Much of the book's analysis of these events relies on organizational records and interviews with leaders. One consequence of this approach is that we are sometimes unable to see how the participants themselves understood these events and what sort of lasting mark these confrontations made. That said, the faces and voices of residents are brought into sharper focus in a series of moving photographs taken by Billy E. Barnes which appear throughout the book, as well as in the DVD documentary *Change Comes Knocking* which accompanies the book.

The radical approach of the Fund meant that by 1968 when it shut its doors, the work had begun to come under severe attack from businesses and politicians who complained bitterly about the seemingly partisan nature of the effort. A major strength of the book is its ability to show the interplay between the local, state and national contexts as this political drama unfolded. The authors adeptly demonstrate how national debates came into play with conservative powers in the state and the stark reality of poverty and racial tension on the ground. While the Fund ultimately failed to realize its grand anti-poverty goals, its work created a network of community agencies that still exists in North Carolina. Moreover, the story and lessons of the Fund make this an important book for those interested in understanding the process of social change, and the power and corresponding threat posed by organizing the poor to demand the nation fulfill its democratic promise.

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Scott Laderman, *Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

Thanatourism - also known as death, dark, or trauma tourism- is a practice that has gained increasing attention in the last decade and refers to the attraction to places or events associated with death, disaster, and suffering.¹ Scott Laderman attributes the motivation for this brand of tourism to "martial fascination" (183). To the burgeoning literature on this topic, *Tours of Vietnam* adds a critical analysis of how travel guides, such as the Lonely Planet series, construct an ideologically skewed history of Vietnam in the minds of Western tourists and both rationalize and naturalize US intervention in Vietnam. In addition, as a cross-disciplinary study, it contributes to the field of memory studies, arguing that tourist literature shapes American national memory, reinforcing images of heroism as depicted in

Hollywood movies, and “acting as a salve for America’s wounded collective conscience.” (122)

In his prefatory note, Laderman acknowledges the degree to which language is political, as exemplified in the knotty problem of which term to use in reference to the conflict that took place in pre-1975 Indochina. “Vietnam war,” “American war,” “war against Communism,” and “Vietnamese civil war” are amongst the disputed appellations. (viii) His choice of terms signals a political position and reflects a bias, which goes to the crux of Laderman’s argument. In perhaps the most resonant section on the War Remnants Museum, Laderman assesses the internalization of guidebooks’ representations of war and suffering through visitors’ reactions to the Vietnamese museum. In comparison to guidebook descriptions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, he cogently notes a double standard that prompts accusations of historical bias, and an implicit assumption of the US as the normative focus of history: “To locate the Vietnamese people at the center of the narrative was, for many from the West, to reveal an ideological bias. Yet to locate Americans at the center of this narrative was perceived as ideologically neutral – indeed, it was perfectly natural.” (165) Laderman’s fieldwork consisted of over 170 interviews conducted throughout Vietnam in 2000 and 2002. He concludes that many Americans attributed responsibility for US actions in Vietnam to the abstract and anonymous “horror of war,” while conversely, the Viet Cong’s amoral barbarity was considered directly responsible for inhumane “atrocities.” (171) Probably most gripping when he draws connections to our present political situation, Laderman highlights visitors’ comments that view the “War Against Terrorism” as a continuation of US global ambitions (177).

The title *Tours of Vietnam* reveals itself to be especially apropos to the fascinating discussion on the US Department of Defense pocket guides supplied to servicemen to inform them about the countries where they were to fulfill their tours of duty. Instruments for indoctrination, the pocket guides provided the moral justification for overseas missions. Exposing their kinship to commercial tourist guides, the Pentagon authors astonishingly suggest enjoying opportunities for hunting and deep-sea fishing. They advise, the “dangers of ambush and raid will make sightseeing impossible in some places; but, when security restrictions permit, be sure to see something of the lovely country you are visiting.” (51) Laderman demonstrates that a binary Cold War logic lingers within contemporary guidebook accounts, mistakenly and reductively characterizing US motives as humanitarian in supporting a struggling “South Vietnam” against the global menace of Communism, as opposed to a narrative of reunification and independence that would configure US intervention as imperialist.

Within this well-written in-depth research, two weaknesses emerge. The controversial representations of the Hue massacre and the social inequities wrought by Doi Moi neoliberal capitalist reforms are both interesting and inform-

ative, however they require long explanatory passages that at times lose their connection to the discursive analysis of travel guides. Commentary addressing the devices deployed by guidebooks, such as the selection of what constitutes “sights” worth seeing, the interpretation of local customs, or the evaluation of hotels deemed suitable or unsuitable to “international standards” could have been expanded. The perspective of overseas Vietnamese, which is absent except in a brief reference to the competing narratives surrounding the Huế massacre, would add another important dimension to the study. How are the impressions of second generation Vietnamese, who may have grown up in the West with little knowledge of the war, determined by the guidebooks they potentially carry, or the other forms of guidance they receive through museum catalogues, tour guides, or tourist site pamphlets?

Laderman shows how, particularly in the living and contested memory symbolized by the War Remnants Museum in H? Chí Minh City, “tourism has been (and, in important ways, has continued to be) intertwined with the projection of American power.” (10) In sum, *Tours of Vietnam* is a valuable addition to the scholarship on the larger questions around the US foreign policy and the unexpectedly substantial role that presumably apolitical cultural products play in shaping national memory and global imaginations.

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NOTES

¹ See, for instance, Graham M.S. Dann and A.V. Seaton, *Slavery, Contested Heritage, and Thanatourism*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2002); Malcolm Foley and John Lennon, *Dark Tourism*, 1st ed. (Cengage Learning Business Press, 2000); Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Channel View Publications, 2009); and Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Duke University Press, 2007).

Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Edward Soja states that his point in *Seeking Social Justice* is not to argue only that “space matters” in social practices – and especially in theories and struggles over social justice – but rather “that *whatever your interests may be, they can be significantly advanced by adopting a critical spatial perspective*” (2, emphasis in original). When research and theorizing starts from the ineluctable spatiality of things and processes, Soja argues, a quite different way of understanding what justice *is* necessarily results. As Soja himself claims, this is an ambitious argument. It is also an important one. It is rather disappointing then, that, in fact, it is not the one Soja pursues.

The book begins with a compelling discussion of the Los Angeles Bus