



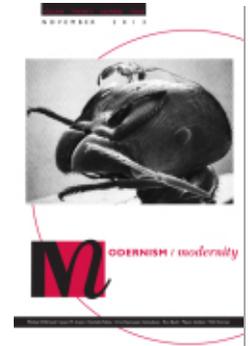
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At the Beach (review)

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when third world goods weren't on display in the imperial metropolis. Unfortunately, globalization as phenomenon and scholarly topic is too large to bring on board at the end of a primer on popular-culture study. The book's format doesn't allow Storey the room to elaborate this argument fully, let alone to persuade. Naming the forces behind the globalization process, and imagining a pedagogy capable of instructing citizens on how to resist the corporate takeover of civil society, seems more urgent work. In his conclusion, Storey drops the connection between cultural-studies work and socialist politics, which encourages him to imagine globalization as simply another construct, or discourse. In so doing, he goes back on the main lesson he expounds about cultural studies and popular culture: that cultural hierarchies are class projects, honoring an economic logic. Without an account of the corporate forces behind globalization, Storey produces a bloodless version of an economic structure with material consequences: uprooted labor forces, enforced poverty, and entrenched social hierarchy.

Yet, as previously stated, the oversights in Storey's conclusion seem the consequence of the book's format, rather than a slight on the author. *Inventing Popular Culture* stands as an extremely useful casebook on its topic, and mounts a powerful argument for the continuing value and efficacy of cultural-studies methods in regard to pop-culture study.

At the Beach. Jean-Didier Urbain. Catherine Porter, transl. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Pp. xi + 362. \$54.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Stephen P. Hanna, University of Mary Washington

Sociologist Jean-Paul Urbain's *At the Beach* is a representational history of the beach as a vacation space in Western societies and of the bodily practices/rituals that reproduce this space. In the work, originally published as *Sur la plage* in 1994, Urbain takes issue with the dismissal of beach vacationers in tourism studies as lazy or sedentary tourists. Of particular concern to Urbain are two ways the beach vacation, one of the most popular forms of leisure, is typically classified. First and foremost, he argues that residential vacationers cannot be placed in a subcategory of tourists. Using the literary metaphors of Robinson Crusoe (the residential vacationer) and Phileas Fogg (the tourist), he demonstrates that vacationers travel only to reach a destination of refuge and repose, while a state of temporary nomadism is the tourist's goal. Secondly, Urbain provides detailed evidence that beach tourism or vacationing is anything but natural. The broad, clean sandy beach of today's vacation dreams is a carefully contrived setting and Westerners have had to learn to enjoy the shore and sea.

Following a preamble which introduces the Crusoe and Fogg metaphors, Urbain lays out his argument in the introduction. Nine chapters, divided into three parts, contain the history of the beach (part I), an exploration of the beach as a social space (part II) and his examination of the contemporary vacation beach society (part III). Urbain concludes with an epilogue that succinctly summarizes his major point; collapsing the residential vacation within the broad category of tourism hides the meanings of this decidedly sedentary collection of cultural practices that occur on and reproduce the beach.

The introduction begins with a call for a reversal of the leisure categories "tourist" and "vacationer." Urbain argues convincingly that the vacation is the generic activity and that tourism is one possible form that a vacation may take. He then works to counter scholars and critics who believe that the summer beach residential vacationer is either uninteresting or should be considered negatively as responsible for the overcrowded conditions plaguing "formerly pris-

356 tine” shores. Finally, Urbain suggests that the place-myth of the deserted island from *Robinson Crusoe* remains “a powerful image that underlies the hedonistic uses of the beach and continues to function today as a model of symbolic behavior, even for overpopulated locations that are not in the least remote” (20). In other words, whether hoping to discover a new secluded shore (a Robinson) or content to follow in other vacationers’ footsteps (a Friday), seaside vacationers are motivated, at least in part, by this search for purity and isolation.

In part I, Urbain draws from period literature and painting to argue that urban, literate Western Europeans found the coast, like many wilderness areas prior to the Romantic movement, to be a threatening and noisome place. Taming this natural space and encouraging elites to enter the sea required representing the scene as sublime, the figurative and literal removal of “the fishermen,” and the prescription of sea bathing as a healthful activity. Many episodes of this history have a familiar ring from other contexts. The othering of the residents of fishing villages by nineteenth century travel writers, for example, recalls the discovery by local color authors of “a strange land and peculiar people” in the Appalachian mountains during the same time period.

Part II, “At the Beach,” contains Urbain’s analyses of representations of the beach. He begins by laying out the place-myth constructed through romantic novels, beach resort promotions, and the contrived landscapes of Club Med and other similar resorts.¹ The place-myth at the root of Urbain’s beach vacation is the deserted shore as imagined through *Robinson Crusoe*; it is an empty space of refuge that permits a solitary and romantic experience. This is juxtaposed against the “overcrowded desert”—the beach as invaded by the masses and threatened by urban and industrial pollution. But this second image is not presented as the reality that contradicts the place-myth. Rather, Urbain notes that newspaper articles and academic works that represent the beach and beach-goers in such negative terms reproduce other aspects of the *Robinson Crusoe* myth. For example, the mass vacationers that “ruin” the dream of a peaceful, solitary refuge become the savages that Crusoe killed to preserve his safety on his deserted beach. Urbain concludes this section by describing the beach as a borderland—a place between not just land and sea, but between the beach produced via the romantic solitary gaze and the crowded beach of the mass resort. The resulting picture is of a residential beach vacationer seeking to find that pure and solitary refuge by focusing on the empty horizon between two beach umbrellas.

In part III, Urbain deploys the language of anthropologists as he promises to decode the almost sacred rituals, behaviors and practices of those drawn to this leisure space. He begins by examining the beach as comprised of “tribes and territories.” Thus, the beach which, from a distance, appears to be a communitarian space occupied by naked women and men whose social distinctions have been stripped away, is, in fact, divided into territories and occupied by groups distinguished by class and sexuality. Furthermore, Urbain argues that the initial rite of settling in on the beach can be interpreted as a territorial claim by a family or “tribe.”

Despite such observations of the beach’s human geography, it is clear that the body is at the center of Urbain’s gaze in this last section. While beach customs have permitted beach costumes to approach nudity, this nakedness has not made the body any more transparent or natural. Tanning, make-up, depilatories, and the way people use and move their bodies on the beach are all ways beach-goers dress and perform to project identities to ever-present voyeurs. Nakedness and child-like playfulness signal that the beach is a place where vacationers hope to be free from the weight of worldly cares, yet Urbain always reminds readers that such states of being and doing are, like the beach itself, socially constructed.

This translation of *At the Beach* gives the Anglo-American leisure/tourism audience access to an engaging study of beach vacationing in Western societies. It is questionable, however, whether the overarching literary metaphor adds much to the work. The constant invocation of Defoe’s classic novel makes the book’s introduction unnecessarily opaque, and the identifications of beach-goers as “Robinsons” or “Fridays” do become stretched in places. Furthermore, the

metaphor, along with a reliance on other literary sources as the book's main data source, keeps readers at a distance despite Urbain's constant promises to take us closer and closer to the individual vacationer. These criticisms notwithstanding, *At the Beach* is a valuable work that notes the often paradoxical meanings both of the beach as a leisure space and of the practices/rituals performed upon it.

Note

1. See also R. Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Lucia Joyce: To Dance into the Wake. Carol Loeb Shloss. London: Bloomsbury, 2004. Pp. 576. \$30.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Finn Fordham, University of Nottingham

It is tempting to present Joyce's daughter Lucia in mythological terms. For her life unfolded—or rather unravelled—beside Olympian figures of twentieth-century cultural life: Beckett was briefly her lover, Jung one of her doctors, and then there was that father. A talented avant-garde dancer, she studied with Isadora Duncan's brother. But her dancing faltered, and in 1936 at the age of 29, after four years during which she saw forty different doctors, she was institutionalized, remaining so until her death in 1982. Her condition, variously diagnosed, was probably manic depression. Add to this tragedy rumors of incest, syphilis, lesbianism and a litigious estate, and you have an alluring vortex of themes, crying out for mythologization.

Such an undertaking has its challenges. Source material—reams of often contradicting documents, letters, interviews and memoirs—is scattered from Oklahoma to Zurich and still emerging from bottom drawers. And there are huge gaps: letters were burned, others snatched away, medical notes shredded and hazy third-hand hints thrown out here and there. Then there is the complexity and volatility of the subjects; a family and a network of friends coping with a daughter going mad: how could one imaginatively yet fairly reconstruct such drama?

The major challenge, however, comes from Lucia's nephew Stephen, the notoriously irascible grandson who stalks the Joycean community, policing scholarship and paradoxically threatening Joyce's standing.

Carol Shloss has met the challenges with mixed results. She has had to struggle for years with the Estate and so, feeling herself a victim, she overstates her central claims, basing them on a victimology. She declares from the start that "Lucia was no lunatic" (31), going against the conclusions of all who knew her after 1932. Joyce did initially resist diagnoses and worked heroically to find a cure for her, but eventually gave in. From this basis, Shloss requires a group of culprits for "exiling" and "incarcerating" Lucia: chief of these turn out to be the mother Nora and brother Giorgio; their motivation is to save Joyce's work.

Stories of mental instability, since long before *Hamlet*, have been used by moralists who identify and censure causal forces—whether parents, families, schooling, society, doctors, drugs, pride or laziness—and protest against those who misdiagnose and maltreat the misdiagnosed, despite the fact that diagnosis and treatment has been and still is highly fraught. Melodrama and tragedy often make use of the first of these while the anti-psychiatric work of Foucault, Laing and Szasz in the 1960s sets a precedent for using the second.

Shloss moralizes insistently, leaping into the gathered ghosts of the family and gracelessly pointing the finger. At one moment we are told that "the problem for the Joyce family was re-