
Book Review

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Gendered Journeys, Mobile Emotions
by Gayle Letherby and Gillian Reynolds
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I am delighted that I was asked to undertake this review on a volume which will become an important marker in this emerging area of study on gender, emotion and travel, both because of the purely selfish delight it provided in enabling me to call upon all of my own intellectual and emotional capital, but also because of the refreshing quality of the participatory involvement in evidence in the many and varied sections within it. It is rare to read a volume which actually does what it claims at the outset, in terms of utilising a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach which at the same time is able to plot and make specific the relationships between travel, 'work', emotion and gender. What at first appears as an eclectic and disparate collection of 24 contributions is organised and made sense of through a structural and intellectual framework which maps and mirrors journeying. As hopefully this review will go on to demonstrate, this volume will be of enormous interest to a wide range of readers, students, scholars, researchers and travellers from a range of different disciplines and vantage points. More obliquely, but nonetheless important, is what this volume has to offer as a refreshing and engaging example of how 'academic' and 'theoretical' writing can be both creative and innovative. It is in this dimension a great text for new scholars who can see that they too can use their own experiences and emotions as a way into rather than an obstacle to their studies and research.

Gendered Journeys, Mobile Emotions, is divided into four sections, each beginning with (aptly), a 'scene' setting piece by the editors. Section 1 is the Introduction, entitled 'Planning the Journey', and has three contributing chapters which provide theoretical perspectives and also set out some key paradigmatic issues on gender and emotion specifically, that work to underpin the subsequent sections. The work of Urry (2000, 2007) is a kind of foundational starting point, and the ways in which questions of mobility have been "embraced across the social sciences" as well as links made to and "within transport studies, history and migration theory" (p.1) are explored from a range of different disciplinary perspectives (those articulated include, for example, "history, sociology, law, transport studies, gender studies, political science, social policy, geography and the arts" (p.1) but the key ingredient in common that worked for me as a reader was the additional 'gender sensitivity' and the "attention to other aspects of difference and diversity" (p.1). Having for some time felt that I had 'imagined' the past

feminist discourse and debates on gender, identity and emotion that I had kind of cut my teeth on as a late starter, mature student, and the ensuing excitement and personal transformation that that had made possible, reading this volume felt like coming home again with its attention to how “gender operates and how gender is negotiated in our relationship with others” (Shields, 2002 quoted on p.24), and, how this is no add on aspect, but key to how

“the emotions that travel and travelling engender, as well as the gendered stereotyping of emotion, and the management of emotion and emotional labour undertaken by travellers and travel workers are therefore affected by masculine and feminine expectations and identifications. Taking gender and emotion seriously, then also produces different perspectives on any analysis of movement.” (Letherby and Reynolds, 2005, Chapter 2, p.25)

This in particular struck a chord with me, for at the time of receiving this book for review I felt under a fair degree of pressure at work and knew that the review would only get done when I went on annual leave. This duly happened and *Gendered Journeys and Mobile Emotions* came with me (in more than one sense) as I left the seeming chaos of the University for the sun filled skies and sparkling seas of Evia – a destination of escape for me for almost 20 years. The irony of the situation of working on this particular volume for review, while a much loved and long suffering partner berated the fact that I always seemed to have to take work on holiday, seems an apposite one to share, for I was participating in the very negotiations that this book plots so successfully in its following chapters.

This is especially the case in Section 2, which again, has an introduction by the editors, and is entitled “Moving Off – Autobiographical Perspectives”, and each of the different sections within this (15 short pieces) makes use of the autobiographical as the ‘I’ in research, in the inquiring and analytical sense as offered in the seminal work of Liz Stanley and others. A quotation from Potts and Price (1995) is placed to demonstrate how

“academic discourse in general isn’t very good at acknowledging the materiality of its own production, the resources and labour that enable its existence ...only the acknowledgements page – split off from the main body of the text ... as euphemised recognition of hierarchised ‘debts’, intellectual over personal and domestic ... gives any clue as to the texts material origins.” (p.45)

What follows then are 15 short chapters which are offered as “outside the comfort zone – outside usual practices” – meaning outside the ‘norm’ of and for academic writing, because each piece is offered as a personal narrative which explores “aspects of gender and emotion”. These, in turn, both affect, and are affected by, “the experience of travel” (p.50). The editors note how this particular section had been problematic in terms of thinking through ways of organisation

“Deciding how to order the chapters of this section was not easy and in the end we opted for an approach that reflects popular sociological concepts: the research process, public and personal identity, paid employment, place/space/time and the body.” (p.47)

The pieces include writings on railway women, boy racers, working in community art projects, painting and rural life in Wales, juggernaut driving, being a cabbie, social enterprise and cycling in New York City, living in a mobile home, grieving on a car

journey to a funeral, road rage, learning to fly, a love affair with a Harley Davidson, becoming a runner and hitchhiking and so one can see the editorial dilemma of organisation. But it all works and each separate piece is a discreet but related offering on identity, travel, gender and emotion. What is common to almost all of them is not just the personal reflection of the narrative, but also, in my view, the pleasure of discovery for the reader as many unexpected aspects and connections with the theoretical foreground appear.

The next section is called “Working on the Move” and here the editors’ introduction provides a brief trajectory of academic studies on travel, work, identity and emotion. Arlie Hochschild in 2003, *The Managed Heart* (who forged arguments and links between the emotional work and the emotional labour of flight attendants and their relations with their passengers) as the editors in their introduction and Drew Whitelegg in the chapter on “When Being at Work Isn’t Work: Airline Cabin Crew, Emotional Labour and Travel” acknowledge, “remains the starting point for any inquiry into the field of emotion and work ... especially ... when travel is thrown into the equation” (p.133). All three chapters in this section also take on the editors’ challenge that “to ignore the presence of emotion is to be content with a very incomplete analysis of travel and the organisational space in which it takes place” (p.118). The final chapter in this section, by Gillian Reynolds and Jackie Rose, “Ambivalent Journeys? Some Emotional ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ of Service Bus Drivers in England”, focuses more specifically on this aspect and provides an emotional audit of this under-researched occupational group. The joys of feeling as if they are helping people, to the moral tirades against drunks and badly behaved passengers as well as the anxieties of late shift working and lack of colleagues provides an excellent cameo of issues which hopefully others will go on to develop and explore further. These emotional factors are also drawn out to elucidate the multiple layers of feeling and responses from workers and passengers to each other in Jo Stanley’s chapter on “Caring for Poor Souls: Inter-war Seafaring Women and Their Pity for Passengers”.

Section 4 – “Making the Journey – Travel and Travellers” is described by the editors as the section where “three authors reflect on the relationship between self and others whilst engaged in travel activities”. The three chapters that follow then look at cycling, walking and the perils of early rail travel. All of the pieces again employ the autobiographical, if in different ways, and all share ideas that work to acknowledge Zygmunt Bauman’s work, 1997 and 2003 and his notion of the ‘community of occasion’ (2003) – that when we travel we have brief, fleeting relationships and acquaintances with strangers where, as he suggests

“the difference which sets the self apart from the non-self, and ‘us’ apart from ‘them’, is no longer given by a pre-ordained shape of the world, nor by command on high. It needs to be constructed, and reconstructed, and constructed once more and reconstructed again, on both sides at the same time ... Today’s strangers are ‘by-products’, but also the means of production, in the incessant, because never conclusive, process of identity building.” (p.159)

These three chapters are fascinating in the ways that each of the authors, through a sharing of something which is important to them in terms of travelling, also provides us readers with brief new knowledge gathering moments – for instance, with Mike McBeth’s chapter “Long Live the ‘Velorution’!-Cycling, Gender and Emotions”,

is initially, about his early memories of cycling and how this was tied up with his sense of identity, leading to his lifetime love of his cycling. This then turns into an absorbing brief history of cycling that demonstrates the links between cycling and protest as well as offering comparative insights with the very different histories on offer in other parts of the Europe. This larger landscape in the next chapter by Phil Nicolls is utilised with regard to a history of walking, concluding and sharing with Urry (2000), whom he quotes, that often in the past and in the present “walkers are regarded as necessarily poor, mad or criminal”. He then goes into a very personalised reflective narrative on, what he calls, ‘sociable walking’, based on his Sunday walks in the local park and of how walking itself is being reformulated in ‘walks for life’ charity events and within the discourse of health as something good – relaxing, ‘self-making’, healthy. The final chapter here, “Women and Young Girls Dare Not Travel Alone: The Dangers of Sexual Encounters on Victorian Railways”, at first glance did not seem to fit with the contemporary pieces, but the use of various press reports from the period again provides a new depth and insight into this period and the links between gender, emotion and travel. Kim Stevenson also very cleverly and artfully switches our preconceptions as she turns the tables within this chapter, from the more familiar arguments of “crimes of moral outrage” against women travellers by rail “which offered new sites for crime and bad behaviour” (p.194), to press reports with examples of women making false accusations and hence, the appearance of the preying female monsters within the carriages and men being advised “to take refuge in the smoking carriage – for any women seen smoking would be automatically be stereotyped as a prostitute”(p.195). The fun of this piece for the reader is in not taking away the still relevant risks and fears, emotions and confusions with regard to gendered spaces and the construction of social and cultural panics.

The final afterword of the book, ‘Destinations Unknown’, playfully uses some theoretical positions (from Urry, Sparkes, Bochner, Giddens and others) to evaluate the following – Where are we going? – Where have we come from and What have we achieved? – connections made and paths missed as well as “Are we there yet?” to very good effect to draw together both the academic debates about disciplinarity, boundaries and collaboration as well as thinking about creativity and innovation in thinking, working, writing and being. The editors note how,

“Our journey and the journey of those who have travelled with us is not unique but part of a growing group of people interested in exploring mobility, travel, transport, journeying ... Like others working in the area we find moving across and between traditional inter-disciplinary boundaries challenging and invigorating.” (p.202)

The use of the following quote from Urry (2000, p.210) provides a fitting ending to this review for a book that works as an exemplar

“academic mobility across disciplinary borders, (is), a mobility that generates ‘creative marginality’. It is this marginality, resulting from scholars moving from the centre to the periphery of their discipline and then crossing its borders, which helps to produce new productive hybridities in the social sciences.”

I thoroughly recommend others to take this book with them on their academic journeys across and between the disciplines.

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Book Review

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On Kindness

by Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor

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Phillips and Taylor's opening line "Kindness, or the lack of it, has been getting a lot of press recently" certainly strikes a chord. Sympathetic to Sennett's "Corrosion of Character" (1998), Phillips and Taylor (2008) accept that we live in a "competitive society, one that divides people into losers and winners ..." and "... breeds unkindness". This book falls into the happy category of being among timely publications. In the present crisis, a book that reasserts an ancient question has a welcome place. With a topic as broad as kindness a book like this can nevertheless serve to pose a question in an interesting way.

The authors observe that kindness is easy to do, highly pleasurable to both giver and recipient and can be bestowed on a great many people. Therefore, they ask, why is kindness comparatively rare instead of promiscuous and ubiquitous.

Phillips and Taylor begin with an historical overview of kindness starting with Seneca's early description of it as the "... fulfilment of humanity". Their brisk review culminates with some suggestions as to why the appeal of happiness as a solution to "... the miseries of everyday life" has been resisted. Early Christians have treated kindness as a moral virtue which then evolves into sympathy which later, in an age of civility and adulthood turns into 'pitié' (after Rousseau); later weakened to a form of yielding, a form of kindness attributed to women, and thus of questionable value.

Reaching the 1990s in a few leaps the authors draw on psychoanalysis to find more reason for less kindness in today's society. This device fits the historical timeline in a convenient way but, we suggest, may create a trap that the authors wish to avoid; inadvertently closing the door still more firmly on kindness. Taking a psychoanalytic perspective, the authors point out kindness is associated with attachment, the activity of a parent to a vulnerable child, and is entwined with the psychosexual basis of being. Following Freud, the authors not only link kindness with sexual pleasure, but also suggest it may be perversely inverted, so that withholding it (and the related guilt of being unkind) can be a source of titillation ... the pleasure to be derived from the power to withhold acts of kindness. Next to sadism is masochism, and the book also offers an excellent introduction to these terrible twins.

However, the problem with Phillips and Taylor's Freudian approach is that it is ahistorical and limiting. Specific shifts in the level of kindness and the persistence of repositories of this virtue are hard to explain. Thus, whilst alerting the reader to Titmuss' (1970) 'gift relationship' and the finding that the kind acts of blood donors persist, they do not account for the many random acts of kindness that do occur daily; not just between parent and child (where its association with weakness is tolerated) but in the 'little things' which a worker, for example, may gift to anxious clients. What of the compassionate manager who accedes to the cabin crew request that a passenger should not pay an extra baggage charge, because she is wearing all the clothes she possesses and is carrying roof tiles in her suitcase to repair her home in Antigua, devastated by a hurricane? What, too, of the busy sales assistant who listens patiently and repeatedly to an aged regular customer who relates his war stories every Saturday? These are not demonstrations of weakness or manifestations of sexual power over the vulnerable. Might they not be demonstrations of enduring human kindness that is pleasurable for its own sake?

Further, Phillips and Taylor's conclusion that while kindness is something fundamental, it is resisted by society as a form of weakness and vulnerability, hinting that there is even some pleasure to be found in that resistance, is certainly a very disturbing notion. In 'Learning to Care', Wuthnow (1995) proposes that the most prominent show of true kindness is often found within the natural instinct of the child, who sadly learns to suppress it as he grows older. He further suggests that there is a tendency in the adult world to imitate kindness, because one donates to charity by monthly direct debit. Wuthnow (1995) is emphatic that the pleasures of kindness are enjoyed by the giver, which is, in part, the same argument made by Phillips and Taylor however, Wuthnow adds that kindness can be taught and learned (in his view, through engagement in voluntary work because it is both pleasurable and makes a demonstrable difference). Thus, we would also suggest that the pleasure of kindness experienced is greater than the sadistic pleasure that may come through withholding.

From the 1990s onwards, Phillips and Taylor note how modern acts of kindness are swiftly dismissed as encouraging dependency, and comment wryly of the quantification of kindnesses within customer services by means of 'empathy audits' in which employees are "... recorded and analysed for their 'empathy quota'" (Bunting, 2004). They conclude that capitalism is "... no system for the kind hearted", and as such Phillips and Taylor find another reason for the withholding of kindness and for mistrust of the Machiavellian power of the seemingly kind act, while offering much less reasoning in defence of kindness. The kindness of the hair stylist who says 'No' to a customer's request because she judges it inadvisable, would not be wholly negated by the commercial nature of their relationship, nor by any attempt to quantify the stylist's 'authenticity'.

It is easy to find arguments that favour the suppression of kindness, yet it is still sought and sometimes found.

Social science has been clever enough to warrant over-regulation of interactions, which Wuthnow observes as the lack of correct channelling of childhood kindness into adulthood kindness. Nevertheless, this remains a two-sided equation. Kindness may be eschewed as a source of weakness. There may be some pleasure in withholding kindness and in deliberate cruelty. However, the other side of the equation, which is at present so unsupportably unbalanced, is that offering and experiencing kindness brings the extraordinary pleasures of which Phillips and Taylor are so aware. It strikes us as improbable that the equation can remain in such a condition of imbalance for the foreseeable future and in this sense, we reject Phillips and Taylor for their pessimism.

'On Kindness' offers an interesting read concerning the development of kindness from both the historical and the psychoanalytical perspective, but it does not hazard much indication of the future of feelings nor how kindness might be rescued. Although the book contains many sparkling manifesto passages declaiming the case for kindness, it provides little illustration of how our 'ultimate humanity' might be realised more adequately. The book is lacking in sufficient vignettes and practical indications of how more kindness is easily possible, and through which kindness may be not just more common, but even promiscuous. It is not that we need more instruction manuals but what if Seneca is correct, and genuine kindness is neither the show, nor encouragement, of vulnerability, nor a surrender to dependency, but in fact the fulfilment of humanity? A book which advances the attainment of that *beau ideal* would perhaps be received more happily.

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