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Bertram M. Gordon, *War Tourism: Second World War France from Defeat and Occupation to the Creation of Heritage*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018. x + 307 pp. Figures, notes, and index. \$42.95 U.S. (hb). \$20.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-5017-1587-7.

Review by Kirrily Freeman, Saint Mary's University.

In *War Tourism: Second World War France from Defeat and Occupation to the Creation of Heritage*, Bertram Gordon brings his considerable expertise in the history of tourism and the history of Second World War France together to demonstrate the many fruitful and revealing linkages between World War II and tourism in France in the twentieth century. This is not new terrain for Gordon, whose 1996 article “*Ist Gott Französisch? Germans, Tourism, and Occupied France, 1940-1944*” was seminal.[1] The book, however, connects what, until now, have largely been two distinct areas of study: wartime tourism (i.e., tourist activity in France between 1939 and 1944-1945) and war tourism, or the tourist industry associated with sites and monuments of the Second World War. The synthesis of these two areas is the book's greatest contribution. In integrating the wartime period into the history of tourism in the twentieth century, Gordon demonstrates conclusively that tourist activity not only continued in France after 1939, but it assumed many forms that are politically, culturally, and historically significant.[2] Exploring tourism as a dimension of the analysis of French *lieux de mémoire* of World War II enriches our understanding of these places and monuments, and emphasizes the shifting meanings associated with many such sites—including the Maginot fortifications and the Compiègne forest clearing and railway car to which Gordon devotes a chapter—which saw multiple shifts in symbolism, meaning, and tourist demographics. “The attention given by historians to Vichy and the war years in memory,” Gordon states, “has rarely addressed it in terms of touristic curiosity” (p. 15).

Gordon begins by emphasizing that the “tourist imaginary,” rather than the tourism industry more narrowly, is the central theme of the book. This “imaginary” is a set of cultural and aesthetic constructs that shaped images of an ideal and idealized France. In chapter one, he locates the emergence of this image of France in the Belle Époque, and it is this vision of France and French culture, he argues, that subsequently shaped tourist behavior and expectations throughout the Second World War and beyond. Gordon illustrates the myriad ways in which German soldiers were “tourists in uniform,” and the considerable German effort at organized tourism in Occupied France (p. 120), which was intended to provide rest, rehabilitation, and reprieve for German troops from the Eastern Front, but also to demonstrate to German soldiers the cultural superiority of the *Volk*. Gordon details the ways in which the French public, by touring their own country and especially its rural areas, participated in the

“return to the soil” that was so dear to the État Français’s National Revolution; and he examines the behavior and experiences of Allied soldiers through a tourist lens. Tourist behavior and impressions are only one side of tourism, however, and Gordon also looks at the tourism industry in France during the war, citing the many guidebooks and itineraries that were produced for French, German, and Allied tourists to capitalize on their curiosity and buttress France’s “tourism self-image” in a time of hardship and instability. By expanding upon his earlier work on the town of Vichy—itsself a major tourist destination before 1939—Gordon supports his broader argument that both tourist imaginaries and France’s tourism self-image played important cultural and political roles during the Second World War.

In investigating wartime tourism, Gordon adopts a broad view of what constitutes “tourist behavior” and the “tourist gaze” (both generally constituted by a sense of curiosity, he argues). Here, for example, crowds drawn to the spectacle of German parades, Vichy’s antisemitic exhibitions, or Liberation purges were all engaged in touristic behavior. Some readers may take issue with this interpretation, but it prompts important questions, especially when juxtaposed with war tourism to sites such as Vichy, the Atlantic Wall, the concentration camp at Rivesaltes, or the “martyred village” of Oradour-sur-Glane.

In his analysis of postwar memory tourism, Gordon balances detailed discussions of the most popular Second World War tourist sites in France—Normandy beaches, Allied cemeteries, the Mémorial de Caen, Mont Valérien, Oradour—with “minoritarian” tourism to such sites as Pétain’s grave, his birthplace, his office at the Hôtel du Parc in Vichy, and even Sigmaringen castle in Germany where the Maréchal and other officials of the État Français spent the last months of the war. Gordon is keen to emphasize that not all war tourism is dark tourism. Nor is that which appeals to political minorities such as Vichy “*nostalgiques*” necessarily evidence of the afterlife of the regime. Rather, Gordon sees initiatives such as the publication in the 1980s of a “Paris by Right” tourist guidebook as representing a sign “of the historicization of Vichy and the collaboration” (p. 192). Tourism itself, and the tourist lens as a methodological tool, he argues, also work to humanize the experience of war.

Throughout the book, Gordon grapples admirably with phenomena that are difficult to analyze, such as mentalities, motivations, and reception. To get at these, he draws from a wide array of sources: film, letters, diaries, guidebooks, photographs, publicity material, and fieldwork, in addition to archival records and a broad range of secondary studies. I hesitate to mention typographical or other small errors—these are inevitably present in any text and, as an H-France colleague recently stressed, we all live in glass houses. There is one issue, however, that should be noted. On page 181, Gordon misidentifies Claude Malhuret, the mayor of Vichy from 1989 to 2017, as a socialist. In fact, Malhuret is a politician of the center-right, a member of the UMP (Union pour un mouvement populaire) and its successor Les Républicains. Malhuret wrote a tract in 2003, *Les vices de la vertu ou La fin de la gauche morale*, which describes his political outlook: “il convient d’en finir une fois pour toutes avec les dernières illusions semées par la gauche morale épuisée: le nihilisme multiculturel, la candeur antisécuritaire, le poujadisme antimondialiste, l’écologie à sens unique, la surenchère droit-de-l’homme, la dérive de l’État-complaisance et quelques autres. C’est le but de ce livre.”[3] Malhuret’s political orientation is significant for several reasons. Since the Liberation, the town of Vichy has exclusively elected mayors of the right or center-right. Malhuret himself was reelected four times, and in 2017, he stepped down, replaced by his one of his deputies. This indicates a political stance on the part of the population and administration in Vichy that has been

significant in shaping the town's self-image and its approach to tourism and the wartime past. It complicates the narrative of victimhood that the town of Vichy puts forward, and that Gordon describes. Malhuret's long-standing refusal to countenance a museum of the war years in Vichy (an initiative that has been demanded by tourists as much as by historians) is not so much embattled self-defense as it is defiant denial.[4] Gordon is correct, however, in his suggestion that the stigma of collaboration has been less detrimental to tourism in Vichy than other factors (such as decolonization and shifts in luxury and thermal tourism), or than the Vichyssois themselves imagine. This issue aside, by integrating tourist behaviors, gazes, and imaginaries into the study of wartime France and its legacy, *War Tourism* makes a significant contribution to scholarship in several areas, most notably by demonstrating how fruitfully these areas can be combined.

NOTES

[1] Indeed, the book draws on several earlier publications. See Bertram M. Gordon, "Ist Gott Französisch? Germans, Tourism, and Occupied France, 1940-1944," *Modern & Contemporary France* 4:3 (1996): 287-298; "Warfare and Tourism: Paris in World War II," *Annals of Tourism Research* 25:3 (1998): 616-638; and "Reinventions of a Spa Town: The Unique Case of Vichy," *Journal of Tourism History* 4 (2012): 35-55.

[2] Likewise, tourism in France did not cease during the First World War. In the case of WWI Vichy, see Kirrily Freeman and Katherine Crooks, "Amusez-vous, Vichyssois': Wartime Morality and Home Front Tensions in First World War Vichy," *French History* 31:2 (2017): 194-218.

[3] Claude Malhuret, *Les vices de la vertu ou La fin de la gauche morale* (Paris: Laffont, 2003).

[4] On this denial, see John Campbell, "Vichy, Vichy, and a Plaque to Remember," *French Studies Bulletin* 27:98 (2006): 2-5. Also cited by Gordon.

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