

Brocken, M. 2015. *The Twenty-First-Century Legacy of The Beatles: Liverpool and Popular Music Heritage Tourism*. Farnham: Ashgate. ISBN 978-1-4724-3399-2 (hbk). 236 pp.

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'You really got a hold on me' – Liverpool's love/hate relationship with Beatles tourism

In December 2015, UNESCO declared Liverpool England's first City of Music. The value of acknowledging and capitalising on Liverpool's music heritage has not always been evident, and the history of this ambiguous relation is what Michael Brocken explores in his book on Beatles tourism.

Brocken argues that The Beatles' legacy is a key factor in the development of the city from an industrialised into a modern service economy. Other authors have focused on the role of popular music in the regeneration of Liverpool as well, most notably Sara Cohen (2007). Brocken approaches the topic through the lens of Beatles tourism specifically, advocating that the economic and symbolic contributions of their popular music legacy to the city should finally be taken seriously.

Theoretically, Brocken employs a spatial-historical perspective on Liverpool's relations with The Beatles, drawing on Soja's notion of 'thirdspace' (Soja, 1996) – spaces are both real and imagined, making 'realities and internal space collide' (Brocken 2015: 18). This spatial focus consists concretely of tracing different local discourses that have led to present day tourism representations of the Beatles.

In the different chapters of the book, Brocken gives voice to several key figures that inform those discourses. This includes Mike Byrne, who was involved with several Beatles exhibitions, and the stories of Phil and Pamela Coppell, who run a private Beatles tour company. Brocken combines these histories with his own experiences as a Liverpoolian growing up in the changing city, and as a participant-observer on the National Trust viewings of John Lennon and Paul McCartney's childhood homes, a FAB Tour, the Magic Mystery Bus Tour and in the Cavern Club. In the concluding chapter, Brocken reflects on the future potential of The Beatles as a brand for Liverpool.

The combination of historiography and autoethnography yields interesting finds. For example, the influence of American popular music on The Beatles music is given a new interpretation, as Brocken questions the availability of American records in 1960s Liverpool. According to Brocken, these 'Cunard Yanks' narratives fit better within a 1970s discourse of Liverpool identity building, which discredited the Beatles for leaving the city once they reached fame.

Next to a thorough tracing of the development of Beatles tourism, which has not been done in such great detail elsewhere, the book concludes with a discussion of possible policy instruments to improve and solidify Beatles tourism in present day Liverpool. This certainly makes an interesting read for policy makers involved in managing popular culture heritage.

Because of this focus on policy and on key organizers of tourism, the book does not entirely live up to its aim to understand the Beatles tourist: 'through such a spatial model, individual fans – and specifically tourists-as-fans – might be better understood, and regarded far less as holders of fantasist, pathological tags' (2015: 3). Interestingly, the reference to the experience of a female student suggests Beatles tourism might be influenced by issues of gender and age, but these themes are not further explored.

Hopefully the author takes these up in future research, for an analysis of these dimensions of music tourism experience would fill a void in media tourism literature.

The theoretical contribution of the book is largely affirmative, showing how thirdspace as a concept can be applied in practice. In this light, Brocken's critique on museums (2015:97) is a bit confusing as it presupposes a passive consumer, while experiencing a museum can be as much a creative and polysemic experience of thirdspace as going on the Magic Mystery Bus Tour. This seems to ignore that thirdspaces are created through the minds of the visitors, not by a directive museum narrative alone. A more in-depth study of visitor experiences might have been illuminating in this respect.

These remarks set aside, the value of this book first of all lies in the detailed historical overview and engaging analysis of Beatles tourism to Liverpool, which is a contribution not only to Beatles scholarship but to the emerging field of music tourism research as well. The recommendations for tourism policy that are passionately put forward towards the end of the book add a practical relevance that potentially solidifies The Beatles' hold on Liverpool.

References

- Cohen, S. 2007. *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Soja, E.W. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Key Words

Music Tourism, The Beatles, Liverpool, Heritage, Thirdspace.