

2010

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review *Roundtable Editors:* Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables *Roundtable Web/Production Editor:* George Fujii

Volume XI, No. 26 (2010)

18 May 2010

Dennis Merrill. *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009. vi, 327 pp. Cloth, \$65.00, ISBN: 978-0-8078-3288-2 (\$65.00, cloth); Paper, \$22.50, 978-0-8078-5904-9 (\$22.50, paperback).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-26.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles	2
Review by Laura A. Belmonte, Oklahoma State University	6
Review by Dina Berger, Loyola University Chicago.....	12
Review by Kristin Hoganson, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	15
Review by Louis Perez, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	18
Response by Dennis Merrill, University of Missouri-Kansas City	21

Copyright © 2010 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online.

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for non-profit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author(s), web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses, contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles

Empire and soft power rest at the heart of Dennis Merrill's highly-regarded book. These two concepts, and the difficulty of defining what they mean, form the main subject of debate in this roundtable's four reviews. The reviewers all agree that Merrill has written a creative and well-researched history, even though they differ on the precise meanings of his argument's key terms.

Historians of tourism rarely write simply about tourism. Only a few scholars have the audacity to make the study of postcards and hotel lobbies an end in itself.¹ More often, historians study tourism as a way to explore some broader question of power relations, such as class formation, norms of gender and sexuality, or constructions of nationalism.²

For Merrill, empire is the subject that gives tourism its wider significance. Although not the first to make this connection, his book does so with unusually deep research.³ Moreover, Merrill expertly situates his findings within recent scholarship on imperialism, the cultural turn, and globalization. In line with much new work on empire, he treats U.S. imperialism as a multifaceted and diffuse system in which even poor Latin Americans had room to exercise agency.⁴ As reviewer Laura Belmonte approvingly quotes from Merrill's introduction, empire operated as "a textured and fluid structure." In Merrill's empire,

¹ See for instance Naomi Schur, "Cartes Postales: Representing Paris 1900," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Winter 1992): 188-244; Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Harvey Levenstein, *We'll Always Have Paris: American Tourists in France since 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

² A very short list of books includes Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, eds. *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001); Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); and Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³ Earlier studies on travel and empire include Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); and Christine M. Skwiot, "Itineraries of Empire: The Uses of U.S. Tourism in Cuba and Hawai'i, 1898-1959" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 2002).

⁴ On empire as diffuse and multifaceted, see Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States-Latin American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 27 (November 2003): 621-36; and Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

North Americans do not oppress and exploit nearly as often as they “negotiate.” Louis A. Pérez, in his favorable commentary, praises Merrill for revealing U.S. imperialism’s cultural and quotidian dimensions. Pérez highlights two main intersections between tourism and empire. First, for North Americans, travel cultivated the “presumption of privilege” and allowed tourists to perform imperial roles. Second, for Latin Americans, mass tourism tended to “erode the prevailing moral order and subvert existing cultural systems,” a process most clearly seen in Cuba before the 1959 revolution.

Reviewer Dina Berger, in contrast, questions whether all the changes to Latin American cultural systems were imperial in nature. While generally impressed by Merrill’s work, Berger challenges his decision to cast the Mexican case in terms of empire. Both Merrill and Berger agree that, compared to Cuba, Mexicans exercised far greater control over the businesses and promotional images that went into their travel industry. But while Merrill labels the development of Mexican tourism a case of U.S. imperialism, Berger suggests that we can better understand it as one of Mexico’s “national moves toward modernity.”⁵ Conceivably, both points of view can be correct, if we agree that Mexico’s decisions about modernization took place in the shadow of U.S. empire. The unstated question in this debate is what historiographic or political interests are advanced, or obscured, through the use of the term empire. When is it useful to frame a less powerful nation’s history as a byproduct of U.S. empire, and when does it make sense to stress national autonomy?

Kristin Hoganson also raises the issue of U.S. empire in Mexico, but from a different perspective than Berger. Hoganson questions Merrill’s assertion that tourism in Mexico “redistributed power within the empire” (68). “For every taxi driver who extracted a higher fare,” asks Hoganson, “was there a tourist who exercised racial, class, national, or other forms of privilege?” This debate raises at least two questions or assumptions worth unpacking. First, if U.S. tourism did redistribute power, did this transfer of power serve the interests of U.S. empire by making that empire seem more consensual? Or did it weaken U.S. influence over Mexico by removing specific levers of control that the North Americans once had? Second, what does it mean to think about power as a zero-sum commodity that gets redistributed between different sides in an international relationship? If power is the ability to influence other people or to get work done, then the rise of a mass travel industry in Mexico most likely created opportunities for both sides to exercise power that did not exist before. Mexicans held substantial control over their tourist resorts and thus created new opportunities to influence people and get work done, but the acquisition of that power might not have affected other forms of U.S. power in Mexico. Power, like reputation, can be created from scratch rather than taken from somebody else’s holdings.

Hoganson’s comment that Merrill might paint Mexico’s tourism with a “rosy glow” relates to her critique of the book’s use of “soft power.” Building on Joseph Nye, Merrill frames

⁵ For more on this idea, see Dina Berger, *The Development of Mexico's Tourism Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home! Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

consumerism as “a soft resource,” in contrast to “the hard power brandished by marine brigades and financial houses” (11). Hoganson asks “why tourists’ economic power, backed up by national power, is ‘softer’ than bankers’ power.” The distinction between hard and soft is fuzzy, and Hoganson aptly calls for more precise language (e.g. consumer power vs. labor power). More specific terminology, she suggests, could avoid the misleading gendered implications of soft/hard and offer more precise renderings of how power operates in the world of mass tourism.⁶

Merrill’s response at the end of this roundtable illustrates some of the tricky conceptual issues inherent in both the concept of soft power and the study of tourism itself. In reply to Hoganson, Merrill stresses that individual tourists suffered a certain vulnerability when they traveled. A U.S. tourist venturing into Latin America, for instance, was much more likely to get fleeced or arrested than a U.S. investment banker operating in the same country. If anything, this point reinforces the need for clearer terms. If we focus on the tourist as an individual consumer, Merrill is right. Latin American service workers, operating on home turf, could easily find themselves with the upper hand, just as ill-behaved Yankees could get arrested for breaking local laws. But if we switch to a macro-economic perspective, Hoganson has an important point. Mass tourism is a capital-intensive industry that relies on extensive infrastructure investments. The question of who controls the flows of capital required to make tourism a mass industry takes us back to the “hard” world of banking houses and economic power. Whether or not a Latin American hotel waiter or taxi driver wrangled a padded bill from a hapless gringo would do little to alter the more fundamental inequalities of Latin America’s place in the global economy. Moreover, the purchasing power of a tourist bears a direct relationship to the value of the tourist’s home currency in international markets. In other words, depending on how you look at it, tourist power can be either soft or hard.

Every creative book sparks ideas for new research, and the reviews by Pérez and Hoganson both conclude with a call for new research on Latin American tourism in the United States. This is a useful move. It calls attention to the growing economic importance of foreign visitors for a debt-ridden United States. It also provides a potentially interesting test case for the relationship between tourism and imperial power. The act of travel often inspires comparisons to conquest and invasion. If so, then what happened when Latin Americans left the imperial periphery and traveled to the United States? To what extent was being a tourist a privileged position, even if the tourist came from a less powerful country?⁷ Such

⁶ To illustrate the difficulty of clearly separating hard from soft power, I’d stress that even seemingly hard forms of power like military occupations have relied on “soft” cultural negotiations. The work of Eric Paul Roorda on U.S. military power in the Dominican Republic, for instance, shows how U.S. Marines created cross-cultural rituals and symbols to exercise power as occupiers. Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁷ For a head start with this line of inquiry, we can turn to the history of Indians traveling to Britain. See Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

studies would contribute to the history of U.S.-Latin American relations and to the more general history of tourism itself. They would also provide an intriguing supplement to Merrill's well-crafted, stimulating book.

Participants:

Dennis Merrill is professor of history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He received his B.A. in history from Providence College and his Ph.D. in history from the University of Connecticut. In addition to *Negotiating Paradise*, he is author of *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947-1963* (1990), general editor of the thirty-five volume series *A Documentary History of the Truman Presidency* (1995-2002), and co-editor with Thomas G. Paterson of the two volume *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations* (2009). He is also an avid international tourist.

Laura Belmonte is Associate Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Oklahoma State University. She earned her doctorate at the University of Virginia, where she worked with Mel Leffler. She is author of *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (UPenn, 2008) and editor of *Speaking of America: Readings in U.S. History* (Thomson, 2nd edition, 2006; 3rd edition, forthcoming), a two-volume anthology. Her current research explores the intersections of U.S. foreign relations and HIV/AIDS.

Dina Berger is assistant professor of Latin American history at Loyola University Chicago. She is the co-editor with Andrew G. Wood of *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* (Duke University Press, December 30, 2009) and author of *The Development of Mexico's Tourism Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night* (Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2006). She is currently working on a study of gender, transnationalism and diplomacy through an examination of Pan American Round Table women of Texas and Mexico from the 1920s-1960s.

Kristin Hoganson is a professor of History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (Yale, 1998) and *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity: 1865-1920* (University of North Carolina, 2007). She is trying to decide whether her current research is about the global origins of the American heartland, the foreign relations of farmers, the fiction of locality, commodity webs, the scope of our field, or a combination of all these things.

Louis A. Perez, Jr., is the J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of History at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He completed his graduate work at the University of New Mexico in 1970. He is author of a number of books on Cuba and Cuban-U.S. relations including *Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958* (1976); *Intervention, Revolution, and Politics in Cuba, 1913-1921* (1978); *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (1983); *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (1988); *Cuba Under the Platt, 1902-1934* (1986); *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (1999); and *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (2008). His present project, "The Structure of Cuban History," examines the principal driving issues of the Cuban past.

Dennis Merrill's *Negotiating Paradise* is a long-awaited and immensely rich addition to the burgeoning literature on travel, tourism, and foreign relations. A masterful interweaving of prodigious and creative research, cogent analysis, and strong writing, the text deserves a wide audience among scholars of U.S. foreign relations, Latin American history, and cultural studies.

In keeping with the “cultural turn” in diplomatic history, Merrill melds an “emphasis on nonstate actors, transnational interest groups, identity formation, and popular constructions of race, class, and gender” (xi) and a focus on state-to-state relations. Never straying into esoteric jargon, he remains finely attuned to the nuances of power, as deployed and negotiated by a variety of actors. Ambassadors, presidents, and corporate titans comingle with taxi drivers, sunbathers, and blackjack dealers as he leads the reader through the intricacies of tourism as a manifestation of – and challenge to – U.S. empire since the early twentieth century. Throughout this fascinating journey, Merrill portrays tourism “as an ongoing international negotiation and empire as a textured and fluid structure.” (1)

Merrill illustrates these larger trends with three national case studies. Using Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican examples, Merrill aims to convey “how tourist relations have influenced and been influenced by demography and ethnicity, colonialism, decolonization, revolution, nation building, economic development, world wars, and the forty-year international conflict known as the Cold War. . . .” (3). Deploying a marvelous array of evidence including travel guides, government and corporate documents, novels, art, films, and music, he succeeds admirably in reaching these ambitious goals.

Merrill begins with an exploration of U.S.-Mexican relations in the 1920s. In this era, hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens visited their southern neighbor. Their motives were varied. Some indulged in drinking and prostitution in rowdy border towns like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. Others studied indigenous peoples and culture. Leftist intellectuals delighted in post-revolutionary Mexico City's vibrant political atmosphere.

But U.S. tourists were not simply imposing their soft power on passive Mexicans. Instead, Merrill argues, “mass tourism expanded and energized the everyday life of empire, produced new negotiating spaces for Mexican hosts, and modestly altered the hemispheric balance of power.” (31) Mexican officials worked with labor unions in regulating adult-oriented entertainment. Through restoring and promoting renowned cultural sites like Teotihuacán, Chichén Itzá, and Monte Albán, Mexican authorities not only generated tourism revenue but also solidified a new national identity. Private transnational interest groups like railroad companies, chambers of commerce, and philanthropies helped facilitate improved U.S.-Mexican diplomatic relations.

By the 1930s, a number of U.S. interests were helping to promote Mexican tourism. Cruise companies added Mexican ports to their itineraries. Pan American Airlines offered direct

flights to Mexico City. William Spratling, an expatriate art collector, publicized Mexican artists like Diego Rivera and played an instrumental role in development of the internationally celebrated silversmithing of Taxco. Spratling even claimed to have invented Tequila Limonada, forerunner of the margarita.

U.S. policymakers also promoted the Mexican travel industry. U.S. ambassador Josephus Daniels invited Hollywood stars to Mexico City and personally traveled extensively within the country. President Franklin Roosevelt relished the opportunity to deep-sea fish during a 1935 trip to Magdalena Bay.

As more U.S. travelers arrived, they demanded more of their Mexican hosts. New luxury hotels like the Geneve and Americanized restaurants like Sanborn's catered to the desires of U.S. visitors. But Mexico did not remake its physical spaces to meet U.S. expectations. Mexico City and other tourist sites retained their Mexican architectural styles. Accommodation and resistance characterized U.S.-Mexican interactions.

Inevitable cultural misunderstandings also erupted. U.S. visitors grumbled about Mexican workers and crime. Tourists accustomed to Jim Crow segregation found themselves confounded by the subtleties of racial difference and status in Mexican society. Similar complexities suffused U.S.-Mexican gender relations. But these contradictions did not deter most U.S. tourists. "Most travel guides noted that despite persistent complaints regarding bad service, bumpy train rides, labor unrest, racial antagonism, and sexism, most North American visitors seemed pleased with Mexican hospitality and genuinely wished to learn more about the lives of their southern neighbors." (86)

While welcoming the consumer products and income accompanying the arrival of U.S. travelers, Mexicans crafted strategies for managing and containing the tourists' consumer and cultural power. Taxi drivers became master fare negotiators. Unions capitalized on their critical role in serving U.S. business and travel interests. The Lázaro Cárdenas administration cracked down on gambling and corruption. Rejecting Cuba's reliance on U.S. capital, Mexican officials built a nationwide system of hotels and restaurants, partially financed with public funds. The Mexican government crafted its own campaigns to promote U.S. travel to their homeland. Both private and public Mexican actors recognized and used the soft power in the host-visitor dynamic.

The balancing act was mutually beneficial. By the late 1930s, a number of political, economic, and strategic factors were drawing Mexico and the United States closer together. Tourist exchanges informed those deepening bonds and reshaped long-standing attitudes. While U.S. officials did not entirely abandon the cultural supremacy embodied in Manifest Destiny, they now evinced "an appreciation for Mexico's past civilizations, its rural lifeways, its indigenous and mestizo peoples, and its struggle to form a modern state and a unifying national identity." (97) The interwar U.S. tourism boom helped Mexico resolve long-standing disputes about land, oil, and debt and to establish a rapprochement with the United States.

But where U.S. tourism proved a largely cohesive and positive force in Mexico, in Cuba it fueled the outbreak of a revolution that destroyed ties with the United States. In contrast to postrevolutionary Mexico's heavily regulated public-private partnerships, prerevolutionary Cuba's tourist industry mirrored the exploitative, corrupt practices of the island's export agriculture. In juxtaposition to the compromise and negotiation present in U.S.-Mexican travel relations, U.S. visitors to Cuba "demanded that less affluent Cuban hosts bow to North American racial and sexual domination, expansive consumer demands, and desire for control and possession." (106).

Upon reassuming power in 1952, Fulgencio Batista moved to rekindle Cuba's sagging tourist industry. Hotel Law 2074, adopted the following year, granted tax exemptions for all newly constructed hotels and motels. To lure U.S. visitors, government officials updated urban sanitation, trained English-speaking tour guides, and increased advertising in the United States. In response, American businessmen like Juan T. Trippe, Conrad N. Hilton, and Laurance and Nelson Rockefeller became vigorous promoters of international travel as a means of fostering hemispheric cooperation. The American Society of Travel Agents, *National Geographic*, and Hollywood echoed the message. At the same time, U.S. companies continued to monopolize a number of key industries and the United States government maintained its long-standing stranglehold on Cuban sugar exports.

The soft power of U.S. tourists amplified an already overwhelming U.S. presence in the Cuban political economy and military security. Tourism transformed Cuba's built environment. Air travel between the island and the United States became more frequent and less expensive. Initially, many Cubans welcomed these changes as manifestations of prosperity and modernity that benefitted them greatly.

But the realities of the ensuing tourism boom soon poisoned these views. Drawn to the mythologized Cuba concocted by Batista and his U.S. associates, many U.S. visitors expected not only U.S.-style accommodations and big-name American entertainers like Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole, and Frank Sinatra, but also escape from the sexual, racial, and cultural rigidity of Cold War America. They flocked to performances of the *rumba*, a dance whose sexual overtones repulsed upper-class Cubans. Catering to the appetites of Yankee men, the red-light district in Havana employed an estimated 11,500 sex workers. Americans packed the mafia-run casinos that Batista allowed to operate 24 hours a day with unrestricted betting. By the late 1950s, even the most stalwart Cuban admirer of the United States had reason to resent the endemic corruption and vice. To make matters worse, only a small segment of the Cuban population profited from the bonanza of travelers, construction, and modernization. Ignoring rumbling undercurrents of popular discontent, most North Americans clung to assumptions and perceptions of Cubans as weak and dependent.

The Cuban Revolution exploded these notions. When Cubans rebelled against the U.S.-backed authoritarian government that created and sustained the tourist mythologies, U.S. citizens reeled. Some castigated Castro as a communist. Others applauded his reformist passion. But while U.S. policymakers rushed to evaluate the changed landscape, U.S. tourists went elsewhere.

After Castro assumed power in January 1959, U.S.-Cuban tourist and diplomatic relations limped along for several months. Pan Am, American Express, Hilton, and other firms tried to lure back tourists spooked by the unrest that preceded Batista's ouster. Castro revised gaming regulations and fees, but did not ban casinos outright. He struck down racial discrimination at Cuba's recreational facilities. He attempted to equalize economic inequalities without resorting to full-scale nationalization.

Such compromises did little to halt the deterioration of U.S.-Cuban relations. U.S. economic sanctions, geopolitical machinations, and propaganda generated escalating tensions. But so did Castro's efforts to redefine and restructure the Cuban tourist trade. In January 1961, the United States imposed a trade embargo that severely restricted citizen travel to the island. The slim chance for a rapprochement facilitated by soft power exchanges evaporated. In the end, Cold War realities and a legacy of U.S. cultural imperialism overcame efforts to reconfigure visitor-host interactions in the Castro era.

Concurrently, Puerto Rico pursued a markedly different strategy in political, economic, military, and travel relations with the United States. In the 1930s, Muñoz Marín negotiated Public Law 600, legislation changing the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States originally established in 1898. The new law granted Puerto Rico limited autonomy in its domestic affairs while the United States retained control over the island's judiciary and military. Puerto Rican authorities essentially traded political independence for the opportunity to create social and economic progress. They gained immunity from U.S. income taxes and tariffs and the ability to establish favorable economic incentives for private industry. They also won voting rights in U.S. federal elections and the right to emigrate freely to and reside legally in the United States.

In comparison to Mexico and Cuba, Puerto Rico got a late start in building a tourist industry. Unlike their Cuban counterparts, Puerto Rican officials carefully monitored private interests. They courted foreign investments, but also built state-owned hotels. They legalized gambling, but barred organized crime from the heavily regulated casinos. Unwilling to replace agricultural dependence with an addiction to U.S. tourists, they capped tourism's overall contribution to the island's gross domestic product at between five and ten percent. Although Puerto Rico's plans resembled interwar Mexico's, its tourism grew much faster thanks to the post-WWII boom in international travel created by consumerism, modern aviation, and mass communications.

The onslaught of U.S. tourists unsettled many Puerto Ricans. Some expressed their anxieties by joining a resurgent independent movement. Others wrestled with difficult questions about the meanings of nationalism and national identity. At the same time, five-star hotels serving U.S. visitors coexisted with large segments of the population lacking adequate education, nutrition, and housing. In this context, tourism "provided Puerto Rico with both economic and cultural negotiating space within the framework of empire. . . ." (179)

From the early twentieth century, affluent U.S. citizens included Puerto Rico among their favorite tropical playgrounds. Travel writers extolled Washington's civilizing influence on the island as evidenced in health care facilities, highways, civil administration, English-language education. At the same time, few Americans praised the Puerto Rican people and culture. Instead, they pointed to widespread poverty, illiteracy, and health problems plaguing a "mongrel" race. In this context, Puerto Rican tourism adopted some of the exploitative characteristics found in Cuba. "Imposed on the island by outsiders and reliant on foreign capital for hotels and infrastructure, tourism was a colonial project, pure and simple." (181).

By the 1930s, Puerto Rican nationalists were pushing for cultural, political, and social change. Muñoz championed commonwealth status as a middle-ground between independence and imperialism. He called for economic reforms without denouncing capitalism itself. In 1940, after his Partido Populare Democratica (PPD) won resounding electoral victories, Muñoz began a nearly 30-year political dynasty.

The PPD leadership immersed itself in development theories. Rather than wed themselves to one approach, they combined elements of state ownership, free-trade, European social democracy, and even Spanish-style colonial mercantilism. With a U.S.-educated economic advisor named Teodoro Moscoso, Muñoz established the Economic Planning Board, or Fomento. While keeping the *independentistas* in check, they embarked on a program designed to generate economic redistribution as well as growth.

Significantly, the Muñoz government never viewed tourism as the panacea for Puerto Rico's social and economic problems. They updated the island's infrastructure, established training programs for hotel and restaurant employees, and permitted only closely monitored gambling. Eager to showcase their magnificent beaches, Puerto Rican officials solicited private firms to partner with the government in resort development. The stunning \$7.2 million Caribe Hilton resulted from one such joint venture.

Puerto Rican authorities proved as vigilant in crafting an international identity as in manufacturing touristic landscapes. In contrast to Cuba's decadent reputation, they presented the island as a "tasteful, tropical paradise and as a democratic industrial workshop." (194) They faced great challenges in offsetting the negative images held by citizens disturbed by Puerto Rican emigration and unflattering cultural reflections such as those in *West Side Story* and *I Love Lucy*.

Although elaborate media campaigns helped to improve U.S. opinions of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans themselves remained conflicted about tourism. While hotel workers won significant concessions from their employers, others called for an emphasis on less material factors. As a result, the government established a program to restore Old San Juan and created the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Such moves gradually won over even devout nationalists and helped to foster a public memory and identity that departed from traditional colonialist narratives. Commonwealth officials used Puerto Rico's Taíno and *hispanidad* cultures in promoting the island's unique historical ambience.

The rise of Cuban communism added still another dimension to Puerto Rico's efforts to maintain an independent identity. U.S. officials viewed Puerto Rico as "a model for U.S.-backed modernization." It could serve as a new "Cold War paradise" in a world rocked by the promises of communism. (211-212). By 1969, though Puerto Rico became the Caribbean's most heavily visited island, tensions similar to those that impeded the Alliance for Progress could be found in host-visitor relations. Ordinary Puerto Ricans clashed with U.S. tourists on matters of language, race, gender, and sexuality. The widening gap between rich and poor that accompanied the growth of Puerto Rico's tourist industry upended the islanders' sense of identity.

Nonetheless, Puerto Rico managed to avoid the pitfalls of tourism displayed in many other developing countries. The government kept its promise to limit the percentage of GDP that could be derived from tourism. Additionally, hotel and restaurant workers received unusually decent wages and benefits. "In contrast to Cuba's sad experience, tourism provided Puerto Rico a degree of negotiating space that enabled it to manipulate U.S. hegemony, assert its power, and communicate its existence both at home and abroad." (238)

Throughout the text, Merrill is meticulous in situating tourism within the larger rubric of geopolitics. While demonstrating tourism's power and importance, he never loses sight of the many other factors driving U.S. relations with the nations being evaluated. The volume is quite remarkable in its interweaving of a breathtaking amount of theoretical and secondary scholarship. Indeed, one easily sees evidence of mastery of historiographic trends addressed in the entire print run of *Diplomatic History*.

Negotiating Paradise is also notable for its chronological and geographic scope. While he delves most deeply into the history of three nations, Merrill's conclusion brings the narrative forward to the present and encompasses phenomena like eco-tourism in Costa Rica, the growing influx of non-U.S. tourists in Latin America, and the rise of international travel driven by historical, philanthropic, and religious interests. The volume is, in short, a *tour-de-force* that might require an extended vacation to process fully.

Contributing to the burgeoning field of Latin American tourism history, Dennis Merrill presents a comparative study that examines the important connections between the tourism complex and foreign relations, arguing that “the U.S. tourist presence abroad” can be read “as a form of international soft power.”(xiii) Based on three case studies that build a chronology of twentieth-century tourism history – Mexico from the 1920s-1930s, Cuba from the 1940s-1960, and Puerto Rico from the 1960s-1970s – Merrill sheds light on the reach of the U.S. empire in Latin America and on the transnational dialogue between state and non-state actors. More than a study about tourism development and promotion, Merrill reminds us of two important conclusions about tourism: 1) that encounters between hosts and guests are one of the myriad ways in which foreign relations happen and 2) that holidaymaking is inherently purposeful, serving real national, imperial, and hemispheric goals. Ultimately, Merrill makes another good case for examining tourism through the new diplomatic lens which considers the subtle and not-so-subtle intersections between politics, culture, economic development, identity, and power.

Merrill anchors his study in the concept of soft power, the intangibles of diplomacy and foreign relations. Outside of official diplomatic channels, these often intrusive influences and everyday movements often leave lasting marks on contact societies. Expanding on Joseph S. Nye’s original use of soft power as a mechanism to spread American values abroad and Victoria De Grazia’s study on the absorption of U.S. consumerist values in Europe, Merrill argues that U.S. tourism to Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico “drove transnational and local elites to build new hotels and restaurants; to rearrange the physical environment of cities, mountain villages, and beachfronts; and to import golf courses, swimming pools, and other elements of North American material culture.” (12) He goes further to argue that as “agents of empire,” tourists, as a result of their encounters with hosts, “transmitted new webs of cultural significance homeward, altered social, cultural, and political life at the empire’s center, and helped millions of U.S. citizens reimagine American’s place in world affairs.” (13) For the author, then, the soft power of tourism is a two-way street, able to shape meanings, practices, and values at home and abroad.

Armed with this compelling theoretical framework, Merrill explores how soft power plays out in his three case studies. In Chapters One and Two, the author examines the sometimes soft but often loud voices of U.S. tourists in Mexico found in memoirs, guidebooks, and correspondence with the goal to expose, in his words, “the everyday life of empire.” (82) To accomplish this, the author follows two simultaneous historical threads. The first is the history of U.S.-Mexican relations beginning with revolutionary reconstruction of the early 1920s and ending with oil nationalization in 1938. Here we get all the usual suspects – Morrow, Lindbergh, Calles, Daniels, and Cárdenas – tensions, and accords. The second thread is tourism history which mixes well-known developments made by Mexico’s tourism boosters, the most obvious of which was the formation of organizations like the Mexican Tourism Association and the construction of hotels like Alberto J. Pani’s Hotel Reforma, with an intriguing set of tourist narratives of Mexico (the usual smoldering *señoritas*, slow-paced travel, dangerous street food, haggling taxi drivers and market

vendors, cultural backwardness and some surprising modernity). Here, readers find some of the more compelling material on Mexico that tells us about American imaginaries of Mexico and, thus, of the tourists themselves, for guests and hosts naturally define themselves vis-à-vis their encounters with peoples different from them. Some of the most interesting observations can be found in the section “Collision: The Everyday Life of Empire” where readers learn about tourists’ discomfort with Mexico’s ambiguous hierarchy of color (one was surprised that light-skinned men were hanging around the streets of Puebla, obviously unemployed) and perceived racial contradictions (W. E. B. DuBois was surprised that he had difficulty gaining entrance into Mexico). Much of this chapter adds richness to the kinds of conclusions drawn by scholars like Fredrick B. Pike and John J. Johnson.¹ Overall, readers come away with a good sense that despite the presence of “imperial agents,” with their many demands and expectations, as well as increased U.S.-Mexico cooperation during World War II, Mexico’s tourism industry was domestically directed and firmly entrenched in the state’s nationalist agenda.

Merrill moves on to Cuba in Chapters Three and Four and Puerto Rico in Five and Six, focusing less on tourist impressions and more on the islands’ heavy hitters such as mobster Meyer Lansky, President Fulgencio Batista and hotelier Conrad Hilton in Cuba and Hilton, Governor Muñoz Marín and developer Teodoro Moscoso in Puerto Rico. But, like his chapters on Mexico, Merrill intertwines the narratives of foreign relations with those of tourism development. In the case of Cuba, the reach of the U.S. empire stands in stark contrast to Mexico (where its tempered nationalist revolution of 1910 protected tourism development from foreign domination), for scholars have well established Cuba’s neo-colonial condition before 1959. Here, Merrill aptly sets the tumultuous stage of Cuban tourism as a veritable American playground with its pandering to the “empire” and concludes with the harrowing tale of the Havana Hilton-Fidel Castro standoff following the M-26-7 triumph. Expanding on some of the conclusions drawn by Evan R. Ward in his case study of Cuban tourism,² Merrill shows how Castro tried to thwart the tourism disaster that followed his new government by extending, for example, substantial credit to Hilton International in an effort to keep the Havana Hilton afloat in light of plummeting tourist numbers. These concessions, however, failed to meet Fidel’s demands of equality with (or even respect from) U.S. officials and also failed to assuage tourists’ fears of his radicalism and anti-Americanism. Here, the two-way street plays out perfectly.

With Cuba off the tourist grid, Puerto Rico (and Mexico for that matter) became the destination of choice for sun-and-sand, mass tourism by the 1950s. As Merrill shows, Puerto Rico had to overcome a series of obstacles from those in the American imaginary to more concrete ones like an undeveloped beachfront. In these chapters Merrill draws one of

¹ Fredrick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) and John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

² See Chapters 3 and 6 in Evan R. Ward, *Packaged Vacations: Tourism Development in the Spanish Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

the best examples of the give-and-take of tourism and the kind of transnational dialogue and cooperation that brought success to the island by the 1970s. In light of concerns over threats to national identity and sovereignty posed by international tourism, Puerto Rico's influential governor, Muñoz, worked with Moscoso and the newly founded Fomento (the economic planning board) to develop a tourism industry with both private and public capital. Merrill teases out the deals made between the Fomento and American public relations firms as well as American hoteliers while also shedding light on the portrayal of Puerto Rico, at least briefly, as a Cold War "oasis" in contrast to neighboring Cuba. (214-223) Several internal and external factors undermined a long lasting success story in Puerto Rico: destabilizing independence movements on the island, the sheer glut of hotel rooms due in part to the failure of conference tourism, a U.S. policy shift from economic development to counterinsurgency, and the emergence of competitive beach cities like Cancún. Merrill shows that while tourism is fluid, transnational, and a form of soft power, its success or failure is a product of both global and national politics.

For its many illuminations, *Negotiating Paradise* is not without a few shortcomings. One of the first is Merrill's treatment of three case studies. Comparative national histories pose their own set of challenges for the historian, especially a relative newcomer to Latin American history who examines national histories through a U.S. foreign policy lens. While Merrill handles the general contours of these nations fairly well, some readers might ask why the comparative approach? Given his aim, what is it about these three nations that begs for such a study? Certainly proximity to the United States is a given as is popularity, but how does a comparison of these three nations during three different, not overlapping, historical moments (especially Mexico where there was only a nascent industry until the 1950s) provide a cogent map to the question about empire and soft power?

Another question has to do with the use of empire in general. While I appreciate Merrill's post-modern use of the concept as something fluid and always changing, some readers might take issue with it (and here I delicately speak on behalf of Mexicanists and Mexico). Given that the Mexican government has remained in control of its modern tourism industry since the early twentieth century – from development to promotion – and given that the economics of tourism is to strike a balance between tourist wants and needs and national interests, where do we find solid evidence of a U.S. empire? Merrill's right that tourism is transformative, leading to changes in landscape and cultural practices, but is that necessarily an "everyday form of empire," which at its core implies U.S. domination? Might national moves toward modernity and projects of modernization come into play too? Finally, and this has more to do with the standard of copyediting today than anything else, some scholars might demand a more careful editing of names and Spanish phrases, especially in the two Mexico chapters.

In many ways, the shortcomings pointed to here are also the goods for lively discussions among scholars and students alike that in no way detract from its contributions. Having assigned *Negotiating Paradise* in a graduate course on new directions in the diplomatic history of Latin America and the United States, our engagement of these very issues speak to the way Merrill challenges us to make those all-important and subtle connections between tourism and foreign relations.

Dennis Merrill begins this first-rate book on U.S. tourism to Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico with the question: “What comes into focus when the history of twentieth-century U.S. relations with Latin America is viewed through the lens of leisure travel and tourism rather than the traditional prism of diplomacy?” (xi). The answer to this question depends to a large degree on the viewer’s position, for an account rooted in, say, labor history, might reveal very different things than one rooted in environmental history. Although Merrill ventures into cultural and economic terrain, his commitment to understanding the history of state-to-state relations profoundly affects his field of view. Rather than ignore the perspectives derived from the “traditional prism of diplomacy,” Merrill uses them as both starting points and points of contrast. *Negotiating Paradise* is, in sum, not aimed at superseding traditional diplomatic history, but at placing it in dialogue with tourism studies.

So what does this dialogue reveal? On the one hand, Merrill finds that diplomacy and tourism did not always work in tandem. One of the most fascinating parts of this book covers Castro’s ascent to power in Cuba. Merrill finds that even as diplomatic relations started to crumble, Castro and U.S. tourist industry leaders such as Conrad N. Hilton struggled to work together, realizing their common economic interests. Although these efforts proved fruitless in the end, Merrill finds that they slowed the deterioration of U.S.-Cuban ties.

Despite such oppositional moments, Merrill argues that diplomacy and tourism more often followed parallel paths. In Mexico, warmer touristic relations preceded Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. In Cuba, touristic tensions foreshadowed Castro-era animosities. In Puerto Rico, touristic negotiations encapsulated Luis Muñoz Marín’s larger efforts to carve out a middle ground between independence and colonialism in the early commonwealth period. According to Merrill, these parallels were not coincidental. What, then, accounts for them?

Although he situates tourism in a diplomatic history context that includes the Marshall Plan, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Rio Pact, and Alliance for Progress, diplomacy does not drive tourism in this account. In contrast to Christopher Endy, who highlights the U.S. government’s efforts to harness tourism to national interests, Merrill casts the U.S. government as relatively peripheral.¹ True, it granted subsidies to airlines and shipping firms and Export-Import Bank loans to hotel companies, but the central actors in *Negotiating Paradise* are industry leaders, tourists, service workers, guide book authors, and host country officials. Instead of tracing U.S. officials’ efforts to influence tourism, Merrill pursues the ways that U.S. officials were influenced *by* tourism – as seen for example, in their tendency to draw on the language of touristic guidebooks in their assessments of Latin America (244). Merrill is too sophisticated a historian to cast tourism

¹ Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4.

as the central player in twentieth-century U.S./Latin American relations, but he does argue that it “subtly influenced the hemispheric balance of power” (5).

Perhaps the most important way in which tourism affected power relations was by helping to “transform the terrain on which foreign policy and international relations took place” (25). In other words, tourism gave rise to significant new forms of contact beyond diplomacy, military engagements, investments, immigration, and trade. In this respect, tourism is important not just as something that affects international relations, but as a form of international relations in itself.

Negotiating Paradise is full of illuminating glimpses into what Merrill calls the “everyday life” of empire (19). He takes his readers on a brisk tour of hotels, beaches, and ruins; introduces them to tourists, service workers, and hotel magnates; and exposes them to the clashes surrounding prostitution, street crime, and insulting attitudes and behavior. As his attention to moments of conflict suggests, Merrill is sensitive to the racist, ethnocentric, and nationalist aspects of touristic encounters. Yet in his treatment of U.S. tourists, he also searches for alternative moments, characterized by an embrace of difference and new ways of understanding. Many U.S. tourists, he claimed, began to “imagine themselves as international collaborators rather than conquerors” (63). Although the postcards he cites do not strike me as notably internationalist in spirit, his account of the spring-break revolutionaries who rushed to Cuba *because* of Castro, not in spite of him, persuasively makes the point that U.S. tourists occupied a range of political positions.

In addition to crediting tourism with positively affecting U.S. views of Latin America, Merrill finds that it had some benefits for Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. In contrast to studies highlighting the cultural devastation wrought by tourism and the chauvinism of tourists, Merrill finds that international tourism advanced cultural nationalism, insofar as officials applied foreign earnings to archeological excavations and historic preservation.² Tourism brought economic benefits as well, uneven though they were. One of the pay-offs from Merrill's comparative approach is that it enables him to avoid sweeping generalizations about the economic consequences of tourism. Whereas Mexico and Puerto Rico invested in the tourist industry and worked to make it serve community needs, the Cuban government took a more hands-off, market approach during the Batista years. As a result, Mexico and Puerto Rico won greater and more equitably distributed economic rewards than Cuba, which reaped revolution.

Yet even in Cuba, U.S. citizens did not always call the shots. Tourism, writes Merrill, was not so much an imposition as an “ongoing international negotiation,” in which host nations and peoples held some valuable bargaining chips (253). Such attentiveness to local agency is a strength of the book, but Merrill may be putting a rosy glow on his evidence when he claims that tourism “redistributed power within the empire” (68). For every taxi driver who extracted a higher fare, was there a tourist who exercised racial, class, national, or

² On the chauvinism of U.S. tourists to Mexico through 1930, see Gilbert G. González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

other forms of privilege beyond national borders?

When Merrill speaks of tourists' power, he often speaks of it as "soft power". Merrill draws on Joseph S. Nye for the initial definition of this term: "the ability to make 'others want what you want'" (12). He then presents his own definition: "But soft power might be considered more expansively as an intrusive influence wielded wherever global and local cultures meet by agents that often operated outside the purview of the state" (12). Both of these definitions draw attention to the importance of non-state actors, but they are not equivalent. Nye refers to cultural capital, Merrill to monetary capital. Nye speaks of winning hearts and minds; Merrill of obtaining services in the context of tropical vacations.

But is economic power really all that soft? "Soft" strikes me as a gendered term that implies benevolence and comfort; it synonymous with "mushy," "gentle," "sweet," and "vague." In keeping with these concepts, Merrill sets up soft power as a relatively benign alternative to military and financial power. "One of the central themes of this study," he writes, "is that the U.S. hemispheric empire has endured in part because the hard power brandished by marine brigades and financial houses has been accompanied by softer power, based on negotiation and suasion rather than compulsion" (11). I'd suffer a tourist invasion over a military invasion any day, but it's not clear to me why tourists' economic power, backed up by national power, is "softer" than bankers' power. The term "soft power" does not do justice to Merrill's discussions of sharp and edgy relations. More precise terminology, such as economic power, consumer power, labor power, cultural power, the power of citizenship, and the power of sovereignty (as seen in the authority that law enforcement officials wielded over foreign nationals) would help clarify the varying dynamics of cross-cultural interactions.

If a sign of a good book is its ability to spark further questions, this is a very good book indeed. By approaching tourism from a foreign relations history perspective, Merrill takes us off of beaten paths and on to relatively uncharted terrain. I am eager to read the books that follow in Merrill's wake: perhaps one on the ways that touristic infrastructures promoted mobility in multiple directions, including from Latin America to the United States; one that compares touristic encounters outside of the United States to encounters with Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and other Latin Americans in the United States; one on diplomats, officials, and military personnel as tourists; one on consular officers' efforts to mediate between tourists and host nations; one that situates U.S. tourism in the Americas in the larger context of global tourism . . . but in the meantime, I would heartily recommend this book to all those interested in U.S.-Latin American relations, development, the internationalization of the United States, cultural approaches to foreign relations history, Cold War globalization, and, of course, tourism.

In a fitting retrospective summation toward the end of *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America*, Dennis Merrill distills something of the sense and essence of his splendid study:

The U.S. hemispheric empire has been shaped by many hands and by many imaginations. Through the twentieth century, the empire's life has played every day in some of its more crowded public spaces: parks, beaches, museums, cathedrals, airports and railroad stations, and restaurants. In these arenas, travelers and hosts have encountered, observed, insulated, admired, and reimagined one another. Together, they have enriched the empire's increasingly complex everyday life and have helped to construct the transnational cultural context in which political economy and diplomacy took place. (241)

Negotiating Paradise examines North American tourism in Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico over the span of the twentieth century, and in the process accomplishes two important objectives. At a conceptual level, Merrill's attention to the phenomenon of tourism serves to remind scholars of American foreign relations—and especially scholars of American relations with Latin America—of the complexities of imperialism, of the ways that presumption of privilege insinuates itself even in the most commonplace transactions. These suggest conventions that in turn serve to inform the conduct of ordinary men and women, who often—perhaps unknown even to themselves—reproduce the power relationships intrinsic to empire, not with malice of forethought or mischievous intent, but simply acting out/acting on the assumptions with which the First World often engages the Third World. The practices are familiar: to commodify culture, to objectify women, to ratify hegemony.

At least as important, by setting in sharp relief the practice of tourism as an experience conditioned within the time-honored protocols of empire, into which are inscribed an ensemble of shared attributes, *Negotiating Paradise* advances a powerful argument for the need to extend a deeper appreciation of the cultural dimensions of the ways that North American power is exercised and experienced. In choosing to focus on tourism, Merrill has given persuasive voice to Pogo's dictum: "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Travel in Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico functioned as the setting for encounters loaded with established protocols and etiquette, with expectations and reciprocities, almost all of which were themselves historically determined and culturally conditioned. North American tourists traveled to Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico during the first half of the twentieth century, confident of the entitlement implicit in nationality: fully persuaded that being American meant that local laws did not apply to them, and disposed to act on this conviction; that local conventions did not matter, and they were free to flout them—nonwithstanding, of course, the fact that Puerto Ricans also held U.S. citizenship, an instance of culture trumping nationality. But it was also true that the individual tourist was

always fair game to be hustled, scammed, and swindled, to be short-changed in currency transactions, the easy target of pickpockets and purse-snatchers, and at times, unfortunately, the victim of violence. It would not be too much of a social science reach to make the case that the latter encounters fall within the category of the empire striking back.

Merrill is especially good at addressing the ways that mass tourism acted to erode the prevailing moral order and subvert existing cultural systems. Echoes of colonial legacies: cultural appropriation and environment degradation within paradigms of domination. Tourism functioned within a complex etiquette of “guest” and “host,” whereby the residents are expected to receive the visitors within a presumed demeanor of deference. And never more than when tourism flourished—sometime more, sometimes less—as the pursuit of commercialized vice, where the purpose of travel was given to do the kinds of things that one could not—or would not—do at home. As Merrill suggests, alcoholic beverages in Mexico and Cuba during Prohibition were a powerful tourist “attraction,” and which expanded easily enough to include gambling, prostitution, and drugs. In Cuba these activities generated sufficiently large lucrative tourist receipts as to attract organized crime from the United States, which thereupon proceeded to implicate members the Fulgencio Batista government at the highest levels in an ever-expanding network of graft and corruption -- all to serve the demands of the nearly half-million visitors who traveled annually to Cuba in the mid-1950s. This was a tourism that very much derived its *raison d'être* from the premise of transgressing moral boundaries: tropical destinations as places of ephemeral promiscuity, illicit pleasure, and risqué amusement.

Tourists were typically oblivious to the ways that their very presence often served to erode existing cultural systems and undermine prevailing normative structures. That this was not the intent does not lessen the consequences. Indeed, the capacity of tourism to subvert the existing value system was very much on the mind of Armando Hart, former Cuban Minister of Culture, who warned of an impending tourist influx from the United States. That Cuba is a socialist system on its heels matters less than the fact that tourism predicated on unequal resources is driven by an internal logic of its own. Ideological factors only serve to make complex circumstances even more complicated. Writing in June 2008, Hart contemplated the implications of candidate Barack Obama’s commitment to a “new start” with Cuba. “If he fulfills his promise,” warned Hart, “a new stage in the ideological struggle between the Cuban Revolution and imperialism will be born. In this new phase, in order to achieve the ideological invulnerability to which we aspire, it will be necessary to develop a new theoretical . . . conception of our ideas and their sources.” Hart insisted that Cubans “must prepare ourselves culturally” for the hundreds of thousands of tourists likely to descend on the island, adding: “We have before us the immense challenge of how to face a new time in the cultural struggle against the enemy.”¹

Merrill’s study raise far-reaching issues, as indeed all innovative scholarship should: ideas that are set in motion and gather momentum and overtake the scope of the book at hand. Looming in the not-too distant background is the issue of Latin American tourism to the

¹ *Granma*, June 27, 2008, p. 1.

United States. Within the immediate context of *Negotiating Paradise* this means principally Mexican travel to southern California and Cuban pre-revolutionary travel to south Florida. Puerto Rico is a case apart, of course, although it does offer an intriguing variant in which vast numbers of Puerto Ricans visited and lived in the United States as a fixed condition of the island's relationship to the United States. From a larger perspective, this includes all Latin American travel to the North. The degree to which travelers from Latin America are influenced by the experience of travel remains unknown. These experiences too act to undermine local conventions and moral systems at home. Travel itself must be considered as a powerful source of change, and as Merrill so persuasively demonstrates, it occupies a critical place in the process by which values are transmitted which, when associated with power, has far-reaching implications. He has pointed the way to new approaches to empire.

I extend my sincere thanks to Chris Endy and Tom Maddux for conceptualizing and coordinating this discussion. I also thank the four reviewers – Laura A. Belmonte, Dina Berger, Kristin Hoganson, and Louis Pérez – for their close readings of my book and their thoughtful responses. They’ve raised provocative points and challenging questions that permit me to elaborate my arguments.

It’s fitting to begin with Kristin Hoganson’s point regarding the inexactitude of the term “soft power.” I share her reservations – in part. But I’m not convinced that it’s possible to draw a clear distinction between the “cultural capital” wielded by state and non-state actors and the “monetary capital” with which tourists obtain services. In some ways tourism studies confirm Amy Kaplan’s conclusions regarding the inherent anarchy of empire.¹ When tourists book railroad passage or airfare, they certainly engage in a monetary transaction. But once they reach their destination, they enter an unstable, cultural contact zone. Despite the asymmetry of the relationship, hosts may use the tourist arrangement to publicize their existence and display their own power. Cultural capital and monetary capital intermesh as visitors and hosts spar over constructions of race, gender, class, and national identities as well as the price of souvenirs, cab fares, and tips. The outcome is messy and often unpredictable.

Vagabond Yankees in the early days of prohibition, typically male, often imagined Mexico as a remnant of the “wild west” and the Mexican “other” as a border town barmaid. Yet other demographic groups within the tourist population – students, single women, middle aged couples, retirees, artists, and the like – ventured deeper into Mexico where government officials, indigenous communities, archeologists, hoteliers, and local service workers trumpeted the nation’s proud indigenous past at ancient ruins such as Teotihuacán, Chichén Itzá, and Monte Albán. The country’s renowned muralist painter Diego Rivera poked fun at the very tourists who gazed in awe at his representations of Mexican working class life and national consciousness. Returning North Americans spun a multiplicity of narratives about their perceptions of and interactions with the Mexican other. Those stories in turn complicated U.S. discourses on Jim Crow segregation, immigration, and a host of other “domestic” concerns at the same time that they shaped the context in which international diplomacy took place.

Tourism, in short, blurs the line between the inside and the outside of the empire – between the domestic and the foreign. Yes, tourist and host powers have often been vague, even mushy, but perhaps that is the point. Military operations, if they are to be successful, are carried out with a fixed objective in mind and the deployment of overwhelming force. Banks also operate in relatively uniform fashion. They seek profits from interest bearing

¹ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

loans and investments. Consumer power and cultural power, however, are more varied, idiosyncratic, more subject to manipulation, and – for lack of a better word – softer.

Nor is tourist power consistently backed by the power of the nation state. True, Woodrow Wilson took the nation to war in 1917 in the name of freedom of the seas, including the right of neutral citizens to travel on belligerent ships. Outbreaks of civil unrest have often led the State Department to evacuate U.S. civilians from harm's way. But how many U.S. drug offenders languish in foreign prisons? Recall the plight of Michael Fay, the young graffiti artist sentenced and subjected to flogging in Singapore over the protests of the U.S. Department of State. What about those weird, recent cases involving hikers who managed to meander across Iran's mountainous borders and the American college student convicted of murder in an Italian court – U.S. citizens who at least thus far find themselves beyond Washington's protective reach? My book recounts the numerous arrests of traveling gringos in interwar Mexico – fined and incarcerated often on very minor offenses. These examples contrast sharply with the experiences of large, centralized, U.S. corporations who have defied a host government's rule of law. We are all familiar with the national security state's sinister use of hard power to defend the rights of the United Fruit Company in 1950s Guatemala and the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation in 1970s Chile.

Dina Berger raises valid concerns about comparative history – especially its short-changing of unique national traits and trends. I plead guilty. In choosing three case studies rather than one, my purpose has been to explore the terms of life within U.S.-led hemispheric empire. By de-centering specific nation states – including the United States – comparative analysis exposes the shifting terrain of tourist-host relations as well as the empire's textured contours. The three choices came about due to their popularity as U.S. vacation haunts at various turning points in the history of U.S. diplomacy and transnational relations. Laura Belmonte succinctly amplifies my purpose when she notes that I have situated tourism “within the larger rubric of geopolitics.” By linking each tourist-host arrangement to major trends in political economy – the Good Neighbor Policy, the Cold War, the Alliance for Progress, and détente – I have tried to bridge the chasm that all too often separates diplomatic and cultural history, and as Kristin Hoganson aptly puts it, to place both “in dialogue with tourism studies.” Just as tourism blurred geographic and cultural boundaries, I have worked to blur disciplinary boundaries and to spur dialogue between several fields.

As for the question of empire, I agree with Dina Berger's emphasis on Mexican agency and political sovereignty. Due to its program of subsidies and tax breaks for locally-owned hotels and restaurants, tourism never became a U.S.-dominated industry in post-revolutionary Mexico. Even contemporary Cancún for all its glitz boasts an investment base that is as much Mexican and European as North American, and draws vacationing consumers from the world over. For that matter, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico during the 1950s and 1960s also used public capital and its powers of taxation to build a diversified tourist infrastructure and limit the travel industry's share of annual GDP to less than ten percent. But I stick by the term empire because it accurately encapsulates the unequal hemispheric and global context within which tourist-host negotiations are conducted. From the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, to the near extinction of the *ejido*

during the Porfiriato, to the lost decade of the 1980s, the U.S. shadow has hung heavy over Mexico. These days, Mexico's border towns are caught in an orgy of cross-border drug violence. The drugs ship northward, the guns go south, but the river of blood flows below the Rio Grande. The narcotics trade may not threaten Mexico's formal, political sovereignty, but the U.S. presence and the anarchy of empire is palpable. Puerto Rico, of course, endures a more traditional imperialism. Denied political sovereignty outright, it has suffered the unenviable fate of becoming America's postcolonial colony.

I thank Louis Pérez for his observation that an examination of empire through the prism of tourism shows that imperialism is a multi-faceted process. It is shaped and reshaped by cultural as well as political and economic dynamics. In the sad case of Cold War Cuba, the travel industry bolstered dictatorship, enriched U.S. mobsters, and wreaked havoc on the island's social fabric. Even in Mexico and Puerto Rico, where service workers, unions, local businesses, and government successfully contained the tourist invasion, presumptions of tourist privilege found expression in commonplace, daily interactions. Whether manifested through unreasonable service demands, contempt for the Spanish language, outrageous racial epithets, or environmental degradation, the visitor-host relationship in Latin America has always been unequal.

Yet in the end, visitor-host negotiations have played out in a myriad of ways and demonstrated that there are many levels of inequality. It has even *modestly* redistributed power within the empire. One of my principal conclusions is that tourist-host relations, and other cultural dimensions of empire-building and globalization, are more likely to produce humane outcomes when local communities wrestle at least a modicum of freedom from market forces. Lázaro Cárdenas's ban on casino gambling in the 1930s, the counter-veiling power of unions in Mexico and Puerto Rico alike, and minimum wage laws softened or ameliorated tourism's impact. As Louis Pérez astutely notes, even local hustlers and scammers have played a role in the on-going contest. In short, while I do not view international travel as an inevitably predatory force, I reject Milton Friedman's dictum that rich and poor alike are "free to choose" in our global economy.

This leads finally to a consideration of the future. Laura Belmonte draws attention to the final chapter of my book where I carry the analysis forward to consider the significance of super-sized luxury cruises, eco-tourism, and other contemporary travel innovations. I will leave it to the curious among you to investigate for yourselves. But it makes sense to address one question looming on the touristic horizon here, that is, Cuba's emerging options.

Soft or not, tourist power is a force to be reckoned with. Former Minister of Culture Armando Hart is wise to think ahead. While candidate Barack Obama's promise to start U.S.-Cuban relations anew has lost some of its glow, the prospect for rapprochement remains real, since it holds out for both nations the possibility of beneficial economic, cultural, and humanitarian exchanges. At the same time, should normalization come, the opening of tourist gateways will undoubtedly flood a small, impoverished island with a horde of relatively affluent U.S. consumers. The outcome will depend partly on the tourists – and because I do not consider the tourist to be some sort of foreign "other," Pogo's

dictum, “We have met the enemy, and he is us,” rings true. *We* may behave as citizen consumers, cognizant of the social ramifications of our purchases, attitudes, and behaviors.² Or we may approach Cuba as though it was a Walmart superstore full of smiley faces and discount bargains. In either event, the Cuban government would do well to keep a tight leash on holidaymakers – limit casino gambling, implement a rigorous visa system, and maintain a robust “public option,” that is, state-run facilities and tax policies that secure a fair share of tourist revenue. It might also devise mechanisms to assure that the European, Canadian, and South American travel companies that have entered the Cuban field since the 1980s and 1990s do not fold in the presence of U.S.-based competitors. Imperfect as they are, eco-tourism and other niche offerings provide state-regulated alternatives to a laissez faire free-for-all. In the end, the history of U.S. tourism to Latin America should demonstrate to Cubans and to all host communities that nationalism and globalization are by no means mutually exclusive. When it comes to the international travel industry the government that governs most governs best.

Copyright © 2010 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

² The phrase “citizen consumer” is Lizabeth Cohen’s in Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).