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Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885–1940* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009, £24.00/\$35.00).

Pp. 420. ISBN 978 0 226 32243 8.

In this book Chad Heap challenges the popular image of “slumming” as one simply of blacks entertaining whites in the Cotton Club in New York City. The reality was more complex, as Heap sets out to demonstrate, for slumming held a “crucial role ... in shaping the popular conceptualization of race, sexuality, and urban space” (2). The author uses as his framework a comparison between New York and Chicago, and this is used effectively throughout the book. Moreover, the inclusion of maps of these cities helps the reader to place precisely where he is talking about.

Heap demonstrates clearly that slumming changed over time, moving from being something that “well-to-do” whites took part in to pleasure seekers looking for something different, an exotic escapism. Continuity was evident, however, and that was in the opportunity provided for cross-class encounters. In the early days – the 1880s and 1890s – slumming was an activity which involved women going into the slums and observing the lives of those who lived there: the European and Chinese immigrants, or, later, African Americans who had moved north as part of the “Great Migration” from the southern states. At the same time, many middle-class men went into the slums to watch sport with working-class men – a feature of slumming that was prevalent in both cities. Slumming, as it came to be known, emerged from these two traditions, which became part of a process Heap regards as a feature of the emerging leisure industry in the United States. Slumming remained voyeuristic, but it was what those who went to such areas observed, and how far they would interact with those being observed, that changed over time.

The book is divided into two parts. The first focusses on how slumming came about (especially its origins in London’s East End), and where slumming existed in the two cities under study. The second concentrates on what Heap terms the “everyday racial and sexual negotiations” (9) – the black/white and hetero-/homosexual interactions. Such interactions were often made possible in the night-clubs of Harlem where the colour line was crossed, a marked difference from the largely segregated daily life of Americans in this period.

This book is certainly a landmark study. It makes good use of a wide range of primary sources, both written and photographic. As important, however, is that the specific nature of the study is placed well within the context of the Gilded Age and the early twentieth century: the era of Jim Crow segregation and mass immigration. Certainly there is no shortage of studies of this era from a variety of perspectives, but where this book is effective is the attention given to the 1880s and early 1890s, so often left out in Jim Crow-era studies, which largely focus on the early years of the twentieth century where the sources are more abundant. In addition, Heap is sensitive to the terminology of his subject, especially to the nuances of the very word *slumming*. All in all, this is a well-written book on what is a little-known subject.

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