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Krishnendu Ray

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**Andrew P. Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011.**

*Turning the Tables* is an exquisitely readable, beautifully illustrated and a conceptually fecund monograph that addresses a number of important questions about the relationship between class and culture while posing others that open the field to further inquiry. Haley deploys a wide range of evidence to argue that by the 1920s, “the tables had turned, and increasingly the middle class, not the upper class, determined what would be served in America’s restaurants” (p. 236). He opens with a delightful popular song “A Bowl of Chop Suey and You-ey,” played by the orchestra at the high-class Hotel McAlpin. He continues with a report in *The Steward*, a culinary-industry journal, that at the teashop at McAlpin “dainty little American born Chinese girls” were serving a Chinese luncheon. This is a sign of the emerging “cosmopolitan” taste of the rising middle class, displacing *haute cuisine*, haughty *maître d’hôtel*, and French language menus of the plutocrats. Thus, he avers a little hyperbolically perhaps, “how one eats can shape the course of history” (p. 4).

The nascent middle class of clerks, managers and professionals (such as lawyers and doctors), the byproducts of the industrial and the managerial revolutions between 1880 and 1920, were transforming “the tang and feel of the American experience,” in C. Wright Mills formulation (1951). Comfortably salaried and with more leisure time they changed the expectations of the good life, which increasingly included urban, public, heterosocial, entertainment. Barriers of ethnicity and tightly gendered spaces (such as saloons and elite restaurants for men, and teahouses for women) were breached as the salaried professional expected to spend a night on the town with his wife, sometimes eating in reputable but inexpensive German, Italian, Chinese and Mexican restaurants. That did not lead to equality but it drew ethnic restaurateurs and white, middle-class, women into the ambit of professional, middle-class hegemony. In the Gramscian sense hegemony here implies more than mere domination. It promised the alignment of the interest of the middle-class consumer with the economic ambition of the ethnic entrepreneur, and an expanding sphere of leisure activities for middle-class women, both as employees and housewives. By the second decade of the twentieth century at least 8 percent of Americans dined in restaurants regularly, and that number would keep increasing (p. 6). The American industrial revolution was producing a class of managers, supervisors, and intermediaries both in the labor process and in the consumer-product chain that had to be fed and entertained.

With the segregation of cities, separation of spheres and the cult of domesticity taking hold, a new form of companionate marriage had already

been articulated, and “slumming” had shown the possibilities of internal urban cross-class tourism. The re-gendering and reclassification of spaces such as home, work and entertainment, and the reorganization of time into leisure, work and recuperation, had also fed reform crusades including temperance, women’s rights, nutrition, hygiene, public health and slum clearance. More evidence could have been deployed from the side of women’s groups and professional organizations to consolidate the argument for a middle-class led counter-hegemonic order, but Haley’s contention is plausible.

Similarly, conflict and collaboration with ethnic and Anglo restaurateurs was inevitable in the making of a hegemonic bloc. In chapter 3—Catering to the Great Middle Stripe. Beefsteaks and American Restaurants—Haley illustrates the struggle between the rich and the middling folks in the remaking of the businessman’s lunchroom which became more important because of longer commutes, apartment living, and the middle-class servant problem. By the late 1870s the lunchrooms were considered respectable and moderately priced with cost ranging from \$0.25 to \$1.25. In a typical New York lunchroom businessmen were offered “beef a la mode, lamb pot-pie, knuckle of ham with spinach, hashed turkey with poached eggs, chicken and oyster patties, roast pork and apple sauce, roast turkey and cranberry sauce, roast venison, wild duck, roast Spring chicken” (*New York Times*, 1881). Then there were *table d’hôte* restaurants that served multicourse dinners, often with table wines, at a fixed price. Many served Italian, German and French *bistro* style food. There were inexpensive beefsteak restaurants or chophouses that served beefsteak for 15 cents, potatoes and vegetables for 5 cents, pies, tea and coffee for another 5 cents, to “well-dressed people, evidently with plenty of money in their pockets” (p. 79). Department store restaurants and coffee and cake saloons must be added to the offerings available to the middle classes.

The highly competitive and precarious nature of the restaurant business played to the power of the middle-class patron. This is where Haley challenges Pierre Bourdieu’s model of class *habitus* as an exclusively conservative force, making room for new, aesthetic, attitudes and options in the war of positions between the ascendant middle class and declining elites (p. 90). This is also where placid continental cuisine is restored to its proper sociological place saving it from posthumous approbation as mere aesthetic error. Opening an interesting epistemological problem, Haley notes that restaurateurs rarely advertised prior to the second decade of the twentieth century and restaurant goers seldom recorded their dining experience, so we have to depend on newspaper reporters as exemplars both of the emerging middle class and their judgments of taste. That is a typical historian’s challenge of making sense from incomplete data, which Haley bridges with his interpretive assertion of the rise of the middle class that is both far-reaching and can be read as overreaching.

In chapter 4—The Restoration. Colonizing the Ethnic Restaurant—Haley shows how members of the emerging middle class “eager to find alternatives to inaccessible aristocratic establishments, colonized and

transformed foreign eateries into restaurants that catered to middle-class tastes” (p. 94). Here we witness the surprising but sobering claim (in light of all the current boosterism) of a 1872 *New York Times* editorial arguing that the United States could become a great culinary power only if Americans learned to celebrate what could be found in various foreign and cosmopolitan restaurants in the city.

German immigrant restaurateur, with enough capital, were leading the crusade to make their restaurants acceptable to middle class families (often with German heritage because that was the largest cohort of American immigrants) against the stereotypes of greasy, filthy, garlicky, spicy foods. In New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Detroit and Milwaukee native-born middle classes joined a growing German middle-class in patronizing a wide range of northern and middle European restaurants (p. 99). Ethnic entrepreneurs often developed hybrid menus as evidenced by a Chinese restaurateur’s response to a police captain’s question in 1903, as to why he did not just stick to Chinese dishes rather than range into ham and eggs, mutton chops and French fried potatoes. He said that he understood that a man might wish to treat his wife or an out-of-town friend a dish of chop suey after a theater but would not eat the stuff himself. “Consequently, he lets his wife have her chop suey, while he orders from the American side of the bill” (*New York Times*, 1903).

By 1901 the *New York Sun* observed that a large part of the clientele of Italian restaurants was already American. Newspaper reporters again played an important role in opening up the possibilities of a middling restaurant which “may be French, Italian, Hungarian or even German, and the price may be 30 cents or \$1.25 a head” (*New York Times*, 1885). Slowly, the middle class’ ability to display cultural capital depended on the capacity to make judgments about cuisine other than French, an omnivorousness that would come fully into play by the end of another century of development and cultural democratization as shown by Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann in *Foodies* (2010). As a reporter from Milwaukee noted, writing about German immigrant food in 1901, “the fear vanishes and something akin to joy fills your soul, for you have experienced a distinctly new gustatory sensation” (*Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1901).

Ethnic restaurateurs eager to capitalize on the expansion of the dining repertoire of the middle-class followed their clientele out of ethnic enclaves. In 1901 The *New York Daily Tribune* noted the spread of Chinese restaurants out of Chinatown up along Third and Sixth Avenues. By the 1910s city blocks in the twenties and thirties in Manhattan were home to the city’s Italian restaurants and modest French *bistros*. By the 1920s inexpensive middle-class restaurants occupied the brownstones between Forty-Third and Forty-Seventh Streets near Times Square (*New York Times*, 1920). Here the ethnic restaurateur recognized the growing power of the middle-class diner and his wife in the transformation of taste in the metropolis.

In 1910 one hundred teachers, solid agents of middle-class socialization, passing through New York on their way to a convention in Boston, stopped and ate at a restaurant in Chinatown, and then a Hungarian one in the evening (Bishop, 1911: 387). For Haley these were clear signs that the tables were turning on aristocratic taste, modeled after European elite's manners and modes, which seemed increasingly narrow and outmoded. Yet, "Dining at a Chinese restaurant did not undermine support for the Chinese Exclusion Act; eating spaghetti did not bring an end to nativism . . . Cosmopolitan dining had a limited influence on attitude towards immigrants because it was so self-centered. The plight of the ethnic restaurateur, whose entrepreneurialism served as a bridge to cross-cultural understanding, was not an essential concern of the middle-class diner" (p. 116). Thus the cast of "cosmopolitanism" that Haley attributes to his subjects is narrow and expedient, often construed as a form of American nationalism against European cultural attitudes, which forces me to keep it within quotation marks throughout this review. I think Johnston and Baumann's "omnivorousness" (2010) may be a more apt term here than cosmopolitanism.

There is a further possibility of a deeper engagement with a spatial argument in Haley's work: as the Anglo middle-class re-claimed ethnic restaurants such as chop suey parlors did they also transform ethnic neighborhoods via tourism? Because so much of Haley's evidence comes from New York City can it be argued that the kind of democratizing middle-class aesthetic relativism that he celebrates, which undermined the hegemony of the Francophile elites, was limited at first to New York City? Perhaps such a posture spread to the middle classes of smaller cities later? Was there a regional difference between Boston, and New York, Chicago and San Francisco? How and why did it become an American national ideal and what role did big-city media play in the nationalization of such a metropolitan ideal? In other words, was there a time lag in the spread of the "cosmopolitan" ideal between various locales? Was the print media complicit in this spatialization? Did radio make an even bigger difference? We don't know the answers to those questions yet.

Drawing on E. P. Thompson's formulation in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1964) Haley spends some time showing the transformation of the middle class from "in itself" to "for itself" in their shared experience of dining out, united by their contempt for the extravagance of the Francophile rich. He cites a number of editorials and essays about price, style and language of elite restaurants, but the evidence was not overwhelming, for this reader, about the birth of a counter-hegemonic order. Because he cannot find enough evidence of class consciousness of his protagonist, the middle class, he has to depend conceptually on the Harvard economist Thomas C. Schelling's (1978) theorization of racial segregation in the 1970s. Where he showed that "subtle, often unstated desire to live near at least one or two neighbors of one's own race explained the nearly absolute segregation of American cities" (p. 85). Analogously, Haley argues, "Micromotives undermined the hegemonic domination of the aristocratic restaurant by creating a more diverse

world of dining organized by unstated middle-class preference” (p. 85). That may be true and may in fact be a very middle class way of exercising hegemony, but it is difficult to imagine how a class can come into its own, generate allies, and overthrow another class’ hegemony without full-throated articulation of its counter-hegemonic project? It is worth digging some more around that conception of quiescent, middle-class, mobilization and provide insightful ways of reading the silences in the documentary evidence.

As much as looking up the class hierarchy with distaste the middle-class surely would have looked down on working-class entertainments that were emerging at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as showed by Kathy Peiss (1986) and Lewis Erenberg (1984). Working with dance halls, amusements parks, and movie theaters, Peiss shows how working-class women transformed urban American popular culture at the turn of the nineteenth century. She also showed how these new forms of leisure reconfigured the spatial and temporal organization of home, work and play. Is the restaurant then an extension of the same logic of reconfiguration of leisure in the twentieth century American city? Or is it a specific place of middle-class hegemony that successfully excluded the working-class? Are those two logics contradictory or congruent? Peiss shows that along with the agency and opportunities for young working-class women there were costs of dependence on men with the commodification of culture. What were the costs of middle-class hegemony over American restaurants? Was the price paid in the realm of industrialized and bowdlerized tastes?

Previously, a number of scholars have argued that the urban middle class had already come together in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Ryan, 1981; Blumin, 1989). How does Haley’s argument work with that established literature? Haley perhaps would point to the newness of some of his middle class at the end of the nineteenth century, the lawyers, the clerks and the managers. Is he laying bare the making of a class or is it about its transformation into a consuming class as Lizabeth Cohen showed in *The Consumers’ Republic* (2003)? It is a tribute to Haley’s excellent work that it provokes so many productive questions that scholars must address now.

Krishnendu Ray  
New York University  
krishnendu.ray@nyu.edu

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