the predatory, curious hookup girls who want a round of sex with a foreigner. Most of them came from somewhere else.

*Shanghai Nightscapes* struggles methodologically to distinguish libido, self-expression, and personal choice from paid genital sex. In chapter 7, “Nightlife Sexual Scenes,” the authors introduce “sexual modernity,” meaning recognition that family formation and recreational sex are different. Farrer and Field’s celebration of what they characterize as an evolution of self-understanding while acknowledging that narcissistic self-realization under a male erotic gaze is in fact rooted in monetized genital sex also known as prostitution. Still this is a celebratory book. Orgasms and orgasmic play are unambiguously classified as historically progressive. This bias ends up nullifying the topic’s scholarly potential since the critique goes missing. Even granting a neoliberal position on sexual pleasure, it is hard to sell the idea that a girl masturbating a boy on a dance floor is emancipatory. It may be a lot of fun. But I am not yet convinced that a bar culture ethnography contributes to understanding what our conjoined social freedoms in the future are likely to be.


Stefan Bargheer

*University of California, Los Angeles*

Michaela DeSoucey’s *Contested Tastes* looks at the production and consumption of foie gras, the liver of geese or ducks fattened by force-feeding, in France and the United States. She presents a fascinating analysis that gets us deep into the world of artisanal farming, high-end restaurants, and social movement activism concerning the ethical treatment of animals.

The book includes a conceptual chapter and four substantive chapters. Attention is evenly divided between the two countries, and the analysis is as rich as the food that it describes. It provides an illuminating account that draws on multiple sources, including participant observation, interviews, and media analysis.

DeSoucey shows how a seemingly marginal food item can stand at the very center of political contests about taste and involve heated emotions on both sides of the debate. In the analysis, food emerges as a potent vehicle for the production and articulation of collective identities, or what DeSoucey conceptualizes as *gastronationalism*, with nationalism understood as the way people self-define as a national group.

The book highlights the more recent origin of the symbolic meaning of foie gras and dispels mythical histories that place the food in an unbroken tradition dating to ancient times. Recent changes from hand feeding to the use of pneumatic feeding machines and a switch from labor-intensive geese to easier-to-handle ducks have made it more affordable. Paradoxically, while these changes made the final product much less traditional or authen-
tic, the accompanying reduction in price has turned it into a product for the mass market, which adds to its symbolic value as a typically French food. Currently, 80% of the world production and 90% of the world consumption takes place in France.

The real strength of the book, however, emerges when the author leaves the well-traveled path of studying the symbolic repertoire out of which national identities are made and instead ventures into the thicket of interactions between market, politics, and social movement activism. It is the interaction of these domains that DeSoucey addresses as *gastropolitics* and that make for the main focus of the analysis. She convincingly demonstrates, for instance, that at least part of the French National Assembly’s and French Senate’s motivation to list foie gras as part of the gastronomic heritage of the country in 2005 was a preemptive move against European legislation. Several European countries had already outlawed production because of animal rights concerns.

Gastronationalism is thus not just about collective identities but has an economic dimension as well since foie gras is a multibillion-dollar industry in France. The fact that its production and sale have proven to be much easier to outlaw in the United States, as for instance in California in 2004, owes not the least to the fact that it has a much smaller market share in this country and only a marginal homegrown industry to back it up. At the same time, this marginal status makes the animal rights campaigns surrounding its production and sale look much less significant, tempting a former Chicago mayor to comment on the ban in his city as “the silliest law” the City Council has ever passed. This niche status in the U.S. food market also had the unintended effect that consumption went up in the wake of the campaign for its prohibition since the media coverage was for many consumers the first time they became aware of the product. Animal rights activism on the topic also stirs an equally moralized opposition by chefs who emphasize the freedom of consumers to make their own choices. In these contests, food consumption emerges as an act analogous to a political vote.

Yet the matter is not solely one of moral or political argument. The book does an incredibly good job in showing how the politics of food is not just about conflicting ethical principles, but is also deeply entwined with detailed knowledge about animal husbandry and veterinary science. The question of whether or not the animals suffer in the procedure of force-feeding is at center stage of the debate. While breeders are presented as unequivocal villains by animal rights activists, they have the clear advantage of knowing about the animals and their well-being from firsthand experience, pointing out that ducks’ and geese’s esophagi lack a gag reflex and sensory nerves, which prevents them from experiencing the procedure as painful. Evidence derives from the everyday observation of farm animals that display neither stress nor fear. Activists counter these rosy portraits with the publication of photos and videos of the horrifying treatment of those animals kept for the purpose of mass production. Both sides in the debate present each other as driven by selfish motives and as distorting the facts. DeSoucey provides a distinctly
even-handed account of these debates and pays an equal amount of attention to each side.

Of course, no book can do everything, and there are questions this study does not address. While food politics, that is gastropolitics, is analyzed in great detail in both countries, the same is not true for food nationalism, that is gastronationalism. *Contested Tastes* describes in much detail how foie gras is perceived as typically French in France, but the opportunity to address the reverse question—what role the imagination of this food item as typically French plays in the United States—is passed by. How do American farmers, chefs, and consumers imagine what it means to eat French food? The cultural imagination of self and other through food emerges by default as something that seems to be a peculiarly French affair.

Still, *Contested Tastes* stands not only as one of the best accounts of food politics but also as an example of how to blend together multiple sources of data into a compelling analysis of how identities are made and moral arguments are fought. In this way, the book enriches our sociological thinking not only about food but also about the way cultural symbols are produced and interpreted in the interaction between markets, politics, and social movements.

*Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men’s Grooming Industry.* By Kristen Barber. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 240. $90.00 (cloth); $27.95 (paper).

Piper Coutinho-Sledge

*Bryn Mawr College*

Kristen Barber’s engaging book, *Styling Masculinity*, begins by briefly outlining the history of men’s beauty products through the stories of her father and brother in relation to the rise of the metrosexual man and the recent widespread availability of such products. In her case study of men’s salons as key sites for the marketing of men’s beauty, Barber deftly weaves together sociological theories of gender, embodiment, beauty, and service work in a thoughtful analysis of the selling of masculinity through relationships between men customers and women stylists in the context of an industry historically defined in feminine terms.

In the introduction, Barber eloquently lays out the puzzling nature of men’s beauty. She situates her study as a bridge across the sociologies of consumption, service work, bodies, emotions, spaces, and symbolic interactionism while at the same time employing an intersectional analysis of the workings of race, class, and gender in the marketing of men’s beauty. This is an ambitious setup that Barber employs beautifully throughout her book to argue that the beauty products and practices for men become valuable as markers of class privilege through carefully crafted performances of heterosexual femininity enacted in the service interactions in grooming salons.