

December 2014

Book Reviews Volume 2(ii)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp>



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2014) "Book Reviews Volume 2(ii)," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 9.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/D7WX3Q>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol2/iss2/9>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#).

Short Book Reviews

Picard, D. and DiGiovine, M. (Eds) (2014) *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (UK). 195pp, \$125.96 (hb), ISBN 978-1-84541-416-0.

Theme: A look at tourism as a transformative, seductive experience of contact with the Other.

My thesis: This is a fascinating volume, one that succeeds in showing that although pilgrimage and tourism may seem quite different, similar forces are at work in both.

In *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference*, David Picard and Michael DiGiovine undertake an exploration of how tourism acts as a force for transformation in which the seductive power of the Other entices the tourist with the promise of self-betterment or a return to a truer, more authentic version of Self. Although the book focuses on secular tourism (apart from Ghasarian's chapter on shamanistic New Age travel), their approach is informed by studies on pilgrimage that see it, too, as inherently transformative, such as Victor and Edith Turner's work evaluating pilgrimage as a rite of passage. If pilgrimage is a liminoid phenomenon, Picard and DiGiovine suggest that tourism must be too, with its promise of a rupture from daily life followed by a return home as a changed person.

The book contains ten chapters, including Picard and DiGiovine's introduction. Most of the authors in the book use ethnographic data in their analyses, drawing on research from such locales as a Portuguese park, the "trance" scene in Goa, India and a school for tour guides in Tanzania. There are many intertwining themes throughout the book, including discussions by del Mármol, Sammells and, Verschaeve and Wadle about how governmental promotion of tourism for economic reasons may inconvenience or even harm the local populations involved; fascinating depictions of how tourists and tourist workers interact and respond to each other, as 'seduction' (in Salazar) and as literal seduction (in Scheltena); and how tourist 'imaginaries' may influence the interpretation of touristic sites (in Knapp and Wiegand) or may be evoked in predictable ways by the sites themselves (in Mota Santos). Ghasarian's final chapter highlights the way that tourists may experience interaction with Otherness as the path to the true Self.

This is a fascinating volume, one that succeeds in showing that although pilgrimage and tourism may seem quite different, similar forces are at work in both.

by **Deana L. Weibel**, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, USA

Extended Book Reviews

Norman, A. (Ed) (2013) *Journeys and Destinations: Studies in Travel, Identity, and Meaning*, Cambridge Scholars, Newcastle upon Tyne (UK). 298 pp, \$68.19 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-4438-4753-7.

The central idea of *Journeys and Destinations* is to explore the idea of travel: a broad topic that has rightly received a lot of coverage. Indeed, despite numerous studies, the importance of studies on travel in a world affording ever more travel opportunities for ever more people cannot be overestimated. Travel has become like a new religion, and this analogy also lies at the heart of the volume.

Although the topic cannot be explored enough, the approach taken in *Journeys and Destinations* leaves

the reader with a feeling of dissatisfaction. The preface describes the overly broad aim of the book as looking at

habits, traditions, and writings of travellers from the past and the present in order to build a picture of what travel is and has been understood to be, for the traveller (x).

Fair enough, the editor points out himself that the volume aims at making a 'modest contribution'. This, then, is exactly what the volume does. The absence of a central focus and the ensuing disparity of chapters do not advance scholarship beyond what the better chapters accomplish.

The various chapters are clearly written towards different academic audiences. The essays span a

historical breadth ranging from the Middle Ages into the present. Geographically, the contributions cover areas all over the world. Topics range from traditional pilgrimage, through religious travel, to travel (indeed doing justice to the aim of the book to present a picture of the meaning of travel for the traveller).

Contemporary travel is addressed in an ethnographic way by Cusack, Saunders, Armson, Theobald, and Eddy. Based on her own experiences, Cusack (Chapter 1) shows that walking St Cuthbert's Way can have many meanings, depending on personal religiosity, a subject also explored by Eddy (Chapter 9). The walk is one more instance of the intertwining of leisure and the sacred, a subject addressed extensively by Campbell (1987) and followed-up by many case-studies ever since the appearance of his work.

Saunders (Chapter 2) analyzes the Kokoda Trail experience and its transformative effects on participants. It is not entirely clear whether Saunders's objective was to analyse the Kokoda Trail experience in terms of flow, or whether the Kokoda Trail served as a case to study the process of flow as such. In the first case, the article exhibits a fundamental flaw, which is noted by the author himself as well. Noting that

flow has previously been recorded as a common and frequent experience of solo long-distance walkers in a nature-based context (30),

the author admits that in the case of the Kokoda trail *the content of operator website testimonials suggests that substantial personal transformations are not common even on the Kokoda Trail (43).*

An interesting observation, though, concerns the role of the guides in making a conscious effort to influence participants' experiences.

Armson (Chapter 3) disentangles the notion of pilgrimage by studying the functions of the 'Pagan Trail' – a Trail that exists by virtue of people visiting 'pagan' sites. Although the phenomenon of people visiting pagan sites could be seen as pilgrimage, Armson argues the opposite. Advancing that traditional pilgrimage is fundamentally reciprocal (hardships of the journey are rewarded at the pilgrimage site), he observes that the Pagan Trail experiences are unidirectional. Modern phenomena indeed pose a challenge to traditional notions of pilgrimage, and require rethinking the notion, as also Eade & Sallnow (2000) and Coleman & Eade (2004) have contended.

Although the contribution by Theobald (Chapter 12) promises an ethnography as well, his contribution reads more like modern history. Nevertheless, engaging with

Eade and Sallnow (2000) and Coleman and Eade (2004), his study is another attempt to further refine the notion of pilgrimage.

Balstrup's contribution (Chapter 4) explores the age-old philosophical dilemma whether culture can be studied at all. Comparing two studies on the Apache, she notes how the authors have followed contrasting approaches, one (Carmichael 1994) seeking to understand the meaning of the sacred from the perspective of a Western academic, the other (Basso 1996) acknowledging the limits of cultural translation and observing how familiar places and the sacred are inextricably linked. Curiously enough, Balstrup introduces a third case of Western Goddess pilgrims for comparison, noting that they 'are affected by similar cultural influences to Western academics' (70) like Carmichael, and that they therefore uphold a similar universalist view of sacredness. Certainly meaning of locality is different for people for whom unfamiliar places can be sacred, but aren't these notions as indigenous as the notion of sacred places in a 'relatively closed community' (70)?

Both Kujawa (Chapter 6) and Worthington (Chapter 10) address the issue of women travelling, albeit in very different contexts. Kujawa presents three stories of female pilgrims in the Middle Ages. While pilgrimage was problematic for medieval women, many successfully liberated themselves from domestic obligations and male authority, seeking personal, socio-political and religious empowerment. Worthington describes a similar process for a contemporary female Muslim traveller, noting that travel experiences became achievable

through adherence to a set of principles that did not compromise her family's interpretation of Islamic rulings and their position in normative gender roles (213).

Norman (Chapter 7) and Petsche (Chapter 8) explore the role of Blavatsky's and Gurdjieff's travel writing respectively. Blavatsky's writings greatly contributed to the development of spiritual tourism to India,

even though the enacted phenomena occur largely without credit to or even reference to the woman herself, or even to the Theosophical Society (150).

Petsche, who strangely enough provides a summary of field research methods just before the conclusion, writes from a more personal perspective as a researcher traveling in Gurdjieff's footsteps.

Furthermore, the volume contains some contributions on highly specialized subjects, in which the focus lays on exploring the subject rather than on theoretical

discussion. Köhler-Ryan (Chapter 5) for examples declares the aim to illuminate the nature of pilgrimage through the study of labyrinthine travel, although one is left wondering what exactly it is that the study illuminates. Wang's contribution (Chapter 11) on Chinese travel writing, though without doubt interesting for a specialized audience, also seems out of place. The same goes for the final chapter by Alderton (Chapter 13) providing a symbolic analysis of artwork by Colin McCahon. Whereas such explorations can be of much value to the audiences these chapters are addressed to, without proper framing in the context of the aim of the volume, they, as well as the volume as a whole, lose their power to make an efficient contribution.

By: **Esther Peperkamp**, Academy for Leisure, Breda University of Applied Sciences, Peperkamp.E@nhvtv.nl

References

- Basso, KH (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: UNM Press.
- Carmichael, DL (1994). Places of power: Mescalero Apache sacred sites and sensitive areas. In: Carmichael, DL, Hubert, J., Reeves, B., & Schanche, A. (Eds.). *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*. Routledge, London, 89-98.
- Coleman, S and Eade, J (2004). Introduction: Reframing Pilgrimage. In: Coleman, S and Eade, J (Eds), *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1-25.
- Colin, C. (1987). *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Eade, J. and M. Sallnow. (2000). Introduction. In: *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. J. Eade and M. Sallnow (eds), 1-29. London: Routledge

Willis, E. (2014) *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and ethical spectatorship. Absent others*. London, Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-113732264-7.

Based on the contributions of Diana Taylor and Alice Rayner, who distinguish between repertoire and archive in the theatrical philosophy, Emma Willis explores the role played by spectatorship in dark tourism sites. The other's death associates didactically to an attempt to control the trauma. Dark tourism sites are in part, spaces of trauma, where the other is not present. This book attempts to respond to the question, - to what extent dark tourism is moved by a theatrical logic. According to this author, tourism may be defined as a way of understanding others under the lens of spectatorship. In this way, the camps of WWII extermination such as Auschwitz, exhibit a space of suffering where others died, but paradoxically, the

infrastructure moved to achieve the mass-death remains. Individual death is accompanied with physical and verbal narratives. Although, Auschwitz does not serve the same purposes as it did in WWII, visitors elaborate their own interpretation of past times. Not surprisingly, cultures construct monuments to remember disrupting events that threaten the social order. Rather, dark tourism sites re-create in the visitor's perception a staged history mediated by death. Unlike others' ways of expression, theatre evokes emotions and engagement. This is exactly, Willis adds, the nature of dark tourism - to unite the objects with their environment. The diverse chapters which comprise this original book discuss this main argument to draw itineraries of pain or "geographies of violence".

In dark tourism, bodies are embedded with the interplay of 'appearance and disappearance' where the figure of representability plays a vital role. In this discussion, Willis is not questioning the authenticity of dark sites, but their effects on visitors. The ways and times of those who want to understand the other's suffering. She has consulted a lot of studies and books that open new fresh pathways respecting dark tourism. For these specialists, thana-tourism shrines help in educating the other regarding our own vital needs of controlling the past. Beyond the attractiveness or profits these types of sites generate, Willis acknowledges that the curiosity for death is enrooted in our social nature. In fact, monuments dedicated to mass-death trigger nostalgia by the other's absence. Certainly, dark tourism produces a 'melancholy' where previous owners of displayed objects are not with us. They have been re-symbolized by new owners who opt to expose them at a museum. The process of resymbolization is of paramount importance to define the theatricalization of trauma. Following this argument, it is important not to lose sight that bodies are construed which mediate between objects and environment (space). Dark tourism acts to digest the other's experience through the embodiment of absence. Thanks to this process, not only experience but also history is cyclically reinvented.

Quite aside from the philosophical character of Willis's development, we do believe dark tourism derives from the spirituality of human agency, but as never before, it has been commoditized by capital and modernity. This is a clear misunderstanding of classical research and books on themes like dark tourism. To understand our criticism of Willis's view, it is necessary to explore the study of pilgrims and spirituality in medieval times.

Unlike modern sightseers, medieval travellers displaced to sacred spaces in a quest of forgiveness or pleading for Saints to alleviate some illness or even mediating between parishioners and God. In the Medieval mind, death was not a problem but the beginning of a new better life. In this respect, dark tourism exhibits the opposite dynamic. ‘Secular tourists’ are not interested in the life of others, neither in their heritage nor biography. They want to avoid their own death. Tourists exorcise death, ritualizing other’s death to expand their own life expectancies. To understand this we have to consider the myths of Noah and salvation of the world in Christianity, oddly the exploration of tragedy for our cosmology. This legend tells us that God annoyed by the corruption of human beings, mandated Noah to construct an ark. His divine mission consisted in gathering animal pairs by species to achieve the preservation of natural life. The world was destroyed by a great flood. Now, the time of Noah is reflected in modern capitalism which leads worker towards an extreme state of competition where only one is the winner.

Based on similarly-minded concerns, George H Mead, one of the fathers of symbolic interactionism, questioned why paradoxically many people are prone to prefer reading or listening to bad news presented by journalists. What is our fascination for other’s suffering?. He assertively found that the self was configured by its interaction with others. This social dialectic alludes to anticipation and interpretation as two pillars of the communication-process. The self feels happiness by other’s suffering, because it represents a rite necessary to avoid one’s own pain. Starting from the premise that the self is morally obliged to assist the other to reinforce its sentiment of superiority, Mead adds, this is the ethical nature of social relationship (Mead, 2009).

In this respect, Z. Bauman (2007) explains that the capitalist ethos has altered the cosmology of workers who passed from producers to commodities. In current times, the capitalist machine not only elaborates products to be traded in the global market, but it exploits the global work-force instrumentally as a mere commodity of mass-consumption. Workers are sold and bought in a much broader system of exploitation. To validate this assumption, one of the examples that struck Bauman’s mind is the Big Brother television show. In this game, participants enter and compete with each other to be the only winner. Big Brother emulates the life of capitalist societies which at the time of improving the style of life for the few, generates a whole pauperization for the rest. The sense of exceptionalism and the sentiment of superiority are

two significant aspects resulted from capitalism. Disasters and trauma-landscapes reinforce these beliefs, by delineating the survival of the fittest (social Darwinism).

In a post trauma context, survivors elaborate special rites (resiliency) to overcome a tragedy which inflicts great pain and suffering. Any victim, before the climate of obliteration, realizes that Gods were benevolent after all. They, who have not died adopt a sentiment of superiority given by outstanding characteristics such as bravery, moral virtue and strength. This type of reaction helps a community to recover in adversity but may generate sentiments of nationalism, superiority or ethnocentrism if it is not controlled. The superiority of survivors, in this vein, depends dialectically on the other’s misfortune.

Late capitalism not only exploits these types of climates, but also obscures the causality of events. Therefore, disasters are cyclically repeated in the threshold of time (Korstanje & Clayton, 2012; Korstanje & Ivanov, 2012). What Willis ignores is that dark tourism consumers seek to reinforce their life through consideration of other’s death. In contrast to what the specialized literature suggests, dark tourism reinforces the modern egocentrism to enjoy a brother’s tragedy. Based on the myth of Noah’s Ark, capitalism introduced the need for eternal competence to be part of a selected people (exemptionalism). An other’s death confers to the survivor an aura of immortality simply because he/she reaffirms their intention to stay in the race. That way, life is symbolized as a great race where only one will be the winner. Therefore on closer observation, there is no genuine compromise in sites of dark tourism.

By **Maximiliano E Korstanje**, Department of Economics, University of Palermo, Argentina

References

- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Consuming Life*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Mead, G. H. (2009). *Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviourist* (Vol. 1). Chicago, University of Chicago press.
- Korstanje, M. E., & Clayton, A. (2012). “Tourism and terrorism: conflicts and commonalities”. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 4(1), 8-25.
- Korstanje, M. E., & Ivanov, S. (2012). “Tourism as a Form of New Psychological Resilience: The Inception of Dark Tourism”. *Cultur: Revista de Cultura e Turismo*, 6(4), 56-71.