



Book review

## Book review

Tourist Studies

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**Reviewed by:** Michael O' Regan, *Institute for Tourism Studies, China*

*Difference*, Clevedon, Channel View Publications, 2014, 208 pp., US\$44.95 (pbk). ISBN 9781845414153.

David Picard and Michael Di Giovine (eds) *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of*

While representations of Otherness are manifest and broadly applied (and misapplied) in the social sciences, it remains a slippery term with divergent pictures emerging as various perspectives explore the paradoxes of “Self–Other” relations. *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference* is an edited book that explores Otherness through the lens of (primarily European) tourists by combining various ethnographic case studies underpinned by anthropological theory. While anthropologists writing about tourism are now common place, with a growing corpus of anthropological studies of tourism, this book is focused on explaining how different forms of Otherness can seduce, disrupt, and eventually renew everyday life. Picard and Di Giovine, in the introductory chapter, explore how Otherness can lead to transformed beings, but importantly, they argue that Otherness is not always *other to*, as “intimately bound forms of Otherness are always in a mutually constitutive relation with the touristic Self” (p. 4). Given that the focus in this book is a study of the relationship between Otherness and self, the introduction is primarily concerned with the “cultures” of the industrialized countries and the means by which tourists reaffirm their identity in the face of Otherness. After a deep philosophical and anthropological underpinning, the book is split into three parts, with each part containing three ethnographic case studies.

The first part, “Travels into a Past Golden Age,” explores how Otherness can promise encounters with the enchanted worlds of a golden past. Camila del Mármol (Chapter 2) illustrates how the idealized mountainous landscape of the Pyrenees is elevated in official discourse as an almost motherly land and origin for the emergent Catalan nation. In Chapter 3, Paula Mota Santos explores the fading Portuguese empire made tangible at a theme park, while Verschaeve and Wadle (Chapter 4) explore Eastern Europe as an imagined rural past for western European tourists. Here, the longing for many tourists is an imagined geography and landscape rather than an imagined community. Part 2 of the book, “Tourism and Others in Dialogue,” starts with Gupta’s “Frozen Vodka and White Skin in Tourist Goa” (Chapter 5), which explores “everyday processes of looking at others and being looked” in a tourist destination where 2 million visitors per year are creating sparks of “friction.” Chapter 6, “Seduction: Learning the Trade of Tourist Enticement,” by Noel B. Salazar examines tourism discourses and their underlying imaginaries in Tanzania by way of

guiding schools and apprentice tour guides. Through an ethnographically grounded analysis, he shows how guides “become acquainted with seductive representations of their own culture and heritage that are deeply rooted in foreign conceptions of Otherness” (p. 120). Sammells, in Chapter 7, considers how “cultural authenticity” is constructed through reference to markers of poverty within the context of touristic encounters in Bolivia. Indigenous people are portrayed as “mystical and timeless populations” (p. 127), as splitting and naming processes reinforces Otherness to create attraction. The chapter details the pressure on locals to stage backwardness and poverty as cultural difference is insightful.

Part 3, “Travel, Other and Self-Revelation,” starts with Scheltena’s exploration of encounters between male tourism workers and female tourists in a coastal town in Turkey. Adding complexity to our understanding of embodied encounters, the chapter describes how northern European women are seduced by what they perceive as the more “sensual” and “attentive” Turkish men. In Chapter 9, Knapp and Wiegand explore the myth of a romantic and authentic Africa by “seduced” travelers. The authors explain how for tourists, it is “a question of mastering the Other, which means taming it” (p. 163). Ghasarian, in Chapter 10, investigates people who had been exploring neo-shamanic practices through contemporary new age travel practices. From an anthropological point of view, these nine chapters are solid and grounded with their application of anthropological theories pertinent to exploring the paradoxes of “Self–Other” relations. The anthropological perspectives are strong in terms of anthropological theory, with each case illustrating ways people co-exist with and relate to the Other within contemporary tourism. However, while the individual chapters illuminate connections between identities, imaginaries, belongings, and geographies, they don’t overly force us to reexamine theories of Otherness. The chapter diversity does not call attention to “alternative” imaginaries that make available competing reality-principles for the development of accountability and responsibility seem possible.

The lack of an afterword means there is no step back to explore how the chapters interrelate to contemporary western societies and tourist cultures, and the growing tensions between the tourist and Other as cultures of fear arise from the financial crisis, immigration, sectarianism, the war on terror, and military interventions. One wonders whether tourist-Other distinctions are installing themselves more or less into tourist discourses and practices of everyday life. There is no sense from the book whether there has been a hardening of attitudes toward “Others” among Western tourist cultures or a rise in creativity that breaks distinctions of “set in” socio-cultural relations. While the chapters remain focused on the seductive nature of Otherness, there is little exploration of other forms of Otherness. Michalis Lianos (2013), for example, argues that fear is a major factor in contemporary social and cultural life, and it can be argued that fear of Otherness is actually making travel and tourism more attractive. **[AQ1]** Shedding light on the contemporary cultures of fear and risk in relation to the Other could, for example, open up a forum for new debates on tourism’s relationship to Otherness. It may also address how native people or residents are beginning to see the tourist as Other. Recent calls for Chinese mainland tourists to be geographically limited to shopping malls near border gates in Hong Kong, fed-up Venetians asking whether tourists has finally gotten out of hand, slum tourism protests in Mumbai, and a recent TIME cover story about tourists-turned homeless in Bangkok mean Otherness and relative fear of tourists themselves has become an issue to explore.

While addressed by Sammells, more variable book chapters may also have addressed how institutions increasingly regulate Otherness on behalf of tourists and address situations where the Other become obstacles to the values and lifestyles of imaginaries around the globe, by asserting a position of non-adherence, or refusing to be immobilized by their Otherness. However, overall, I heartily recommend the book to senior undergraduates and graduate students who study anthropology of Tourism. I believe that the book allows readers to share a sense of the power of Otherness that extends beyond the realms of prevailing language in many tourism textbooks, which often merely validates the tourist-host encounters. By drawing on the language and theories of anthropology, it encourages all of us to attend to and work through with differences that make a difference. **[AQ2]**

### Reference

Lianos, M. (ed.) (2013) *Dangerous Others, Insecure Societies. Fear and social division*. Farnham: Ashgate.