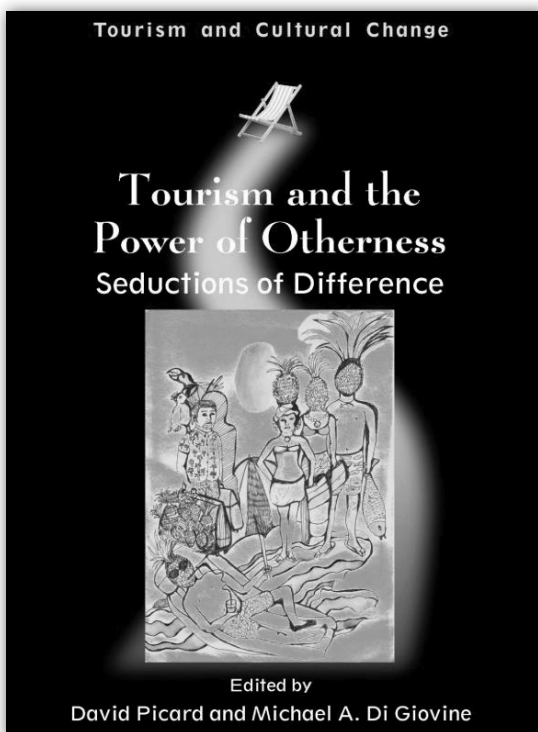


book review

Tourism and the power of otherness: Seductions of difference

David Picard and Michael A. Di Giovine, eds.

The process of "othering" describes the production of distance between one's own individual and collective identity with another's, providing a meaningful ethnographic framework to the anthropological discipline of tourism studies. *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference* (Picard and Di Giovine, eds. 2014) is a comprehensive example of this pivotal point of inquiry. The edited volume provides the reader powerful examples of how "othering" takes shape in different regional and ethnographic contexts as well as in tourism's front and back stages of cultural identity production.



Tourism scholars have historically argued that the act of tourism, simply surmised as escaping one's everyday life through travel, fills up what is lost due to the hectic pull of modern life. Filling this gap and looking to "unplug," tourists often place themselves in "self-other" relationships with the hosts of tourist-defined exotic locales. The editors of this volume define this escapism as "a quest to return to a primordial nature" (Picard and Di Giovine, eds. 2014:15). The ethnographic examples provided detail a tourist utopia in which cleaner lives, a more authentic existence, and a return to nature are all experiences that tourists seek in the process of "othering."

Contributors to this edited volume provide rich ethnographic description of the process of "othering" in each of their unique field sites. From questioning nation-state building during a student trip to the theme park "Portugal dos Pequenitos" to examining the science behind tour guides in northern Tanzania harnessing cultural stereotypes to manufacture tourist experience, the contributors to this edited volume provide ethnographic evidence to suggest that tourists are ultimately seeking a frozen past, open to tour, that is dually suspended in time and completely timeless. The tourism narrative upon reentry to tourist's everyday lived existence also manifests an often-fantastical notion of "otherness" that is rooted in grand narratives of primitiveness and authenticity.

However, the reader is left to wonder if a tourism paradise steeped in "otherness" is post-racial and void of socioeconomic difference as offered in throughout this text. Important theoretical and

empirical questions of ethnicity and phenotype are pushed to the periphery in each ethnographic analysis. If our aim as tourists is to seek out what is lacking in our own daily routines, equally as significant and perhaps more inconspicuously, is another aim to also elevate our individual cultural capital through travel? Ambiguity in each ethnographic contribution of this volume lies in attempts to push characterizations of who exactly is the "other" and their tourist counterpart-- is it the West, the globalized, the developed, the urban, or, perhaps more simply stated, privileged persons who can afford to leave their everyday routines behind to travel? This complex negotiation between actual and perceived notions of identity between host and guest, which often steeped in post/colonial concepts of contemporary tourism, as Knapp and Wiegand relate in their chapter, is the crux of the "otherness" argument. Expanding ethnographic

evidence in unpacking these dynamic expressions of tourist motivation(s) and local negotiation(s) require further volumes dedicated to the subject of "otherness."

Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference is an excellent source for scholars new to the "otherness" debate as its structure is easily accessible with clear linkages between theory, praxis, and well-researched ethnographic evidence. This text is also a great resource for those wanting empirical ethnographic evidence, albeit mainly in the European context, which helps to untangle the complex relationship between host and guest in their eternal quest for a realized Eden as a tourism destination.

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C. Vassallo-Oby