

BOOK REVIEW

Places of the Imagination: Media, Tourism and Culture *Stijn Reijnders, editor (2011). Ashgate Publishing Limited*

It is with mixed feelings of fear, trepidation and excitement that one approaches a book that 'may' cover the area in which one is currently writing. Fear that they have said exactly what you are trying to say (but better), trepidation that their work may refute your own labours, and excitement that someone else has come to the same place through very different pathways. I often wonder about the 'collective consciousness' and what it can really achieve. While I am aware of Reijnders' work and interest in the media and tourism, and he is aware of my own fascination with film and television, we are yet to discuss the paths we have taken. Clearly though, one element we have in common is a love of the material we study.

So, what is this monograph about? It primarily presents a European perspective to the relationship between TV and tourism, based on a funded research project, which has provided Reijnders with the opportunity to study certain aspects of this relationship in some depth. In the Introduction, Reijnders notes that '...one of the most important questions ... is the meaning that that media tourism has for the tourists themselves' (p.7). It is this 'meaning making' that also fascinates me in terms of how audiences of a movie make meaning and then as tourists what they do with that meaning. Where Reijnders and I depart is in our theoretical approaches (yet the more I read, the more convinced I become that he has taken an excellent and relevant approach...) which for me was the great appeal of this monograph. Reijnders also moves beyond simply presenting more case studies about tourists following a popular film - a state into which much of the current literature into film/TV/media related tourism has fallen.

What is of particular significance and interest is the development of a 'new concept: *lieux d'imagination*' (p.13) based on the work of French Historian Pierre Nora and American anthropologist John Caughey. Nora



proposed that ‘people need physical places to give form to their memory’ (p.14) which Reijnders extends to consider the fictional places created via film. He also applies Caughey’s (1984) notion that we live in two distinct worlds: the real and the imaginary (fantasies, daydreams, stories) which occasionally collide. I am not convinced that Caughey’s premise sits with Reijnders’ proposal of ‘places of imagination’ as described through Nora’s work; however Reijnders is also somewhat critical of Caughey’s separation of the real and imagined worlds.

Based on these two theories, Reijnders’ primary proposition is that ‘the phenomenon of media tourism derives its power and popularity from the symbolic contrast between imagination and reality’ (p.17). This is where we differ – I am more of Baudrillard’s school of hyper-reality where reality and fantasy become one. However, this is simply a personal position and one that no doubt will change, and did fluctuate while reading this work. Already, I was finding that the book was engaging and challenging me.

After establishing the theoretical framework, Reijnders goes on to investigate the role of landscape/s in three detective series, a movie series and through literary and film touring. The TV detective series studied are *Inspector Morse* (Oxford, UK), *Wallander* (Ystad) and *Baantjer* (Amsterdam), while the movies he examines are the *James Bond* franchise, and finally *Dracula*. This theming creates a certain cohesion to the book enabling Reijnders to examine his theoretical premise through them. Reijnders is clearly a fan of all the films and TV series he has studied, which is crucial to such work – it is very hard to study the touristic elements of films one hates, unless that is the actual thesis of the research. I know I will never study slasher movies in any detail!

There is not the space in this review to discuss his work in detail, but the book itself is not over long (just over 100 pages of text plus a most informative Appendix), well written and one can either read it from cover to cover or dip in and out of it according to one’s interests and needs. The Index is particularly good in this respect.

What also made this an enjoyable book to read was that Reijnders recounts his own experiences in the field as well as that of those he studies in a personal and personable manner, which is integral to this methodology. While I wanted to avoid listing the Table of Contents, his chapter headings are informative and point to what is in this work and how he is approaching it, using phrases such as ‘On the Track of 007’, ‘Stalking the Count’ and ‘The Guilty Landscape of the TV Detective’. In the concluding section on the TV detective tours, Reijnders illustrates one

of the connections with Caughey's notions of the distinct worlds of reality and fantasy:

They [the tourists] look for points of recognition amidst the everyday street life, which might serve as an entryway to another, imagined world... [T]he 'materiality of the locations and the associated objects played an important role in the tourists' experience. (p.51)

Reijnders argues his case well, and I leave it to others to form their own opinions and perspectives on this most interesting and engaging work, which certainly contributes significantly to the development of knowledge in the field of film, TV and tourism.

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