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Book Reviews

Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation – Enchanting the Past-Future

Staiff, R. (2014)

Ashgate

194 pp.

ISBN 9781409455509

This book ‘...is not a heritage interpretation manual... it is a series of personal meditations...it is an intensely individualistic account’ (p.3). There’s no denying those statements. Indeed, they serve as a caveat. By now, the reader is beginning to think what’s coming up? As with all reading experiences, direct and tangential influences can inform the overall perception of a book. For this reviewer, starting and reading a number of pages whilst visiting Luxembourg City had an impact. Other influences might become manifest.

Having written five pages of densely-packed observations and comments on this book, before reaching page 40, confirms the view that *heritage* is such a loaded term. It also confirmed that I could not keep writing so many points as I read through simply because this review would end up being five thousand words or more. Therefore, the rest of this review is, axiomatically, partial: my caveat.

Bearing in mind that the author was originally an art historian, his views sometimes feel fresh. In chapter 1, there’s no denying that he is right in drawing attention to the advent of digital technologies vis à vis heritage interpretation. It was reading Staiff’s emphasis on the importance of the Second International Conference on Heritage Interpretation that made me feel intrigued: soon after the two volumes based on the conference appeared, I was using some of the material for teaching purposes but had not reflected on the overall importance of this conference. It’s remarkable how heritage interpretation has changed since the 1980s ‘...the move towards a shared terrain’ (p.8) across disciplines. Surely, this phenomenon of interdisciplinarity has been quite widespread over the same time span? Personally, it reminded me of how Cornish Studies has evolved over the same period; ten years ago, Deacon (2005) published a chapter entitled “From ‘Cornish Studies’ to ‘Critical Cornish Studies’: Reflections on Methodology” which showed this.

Critically, ‘...the common denominator at heritage interpretation conferences... was communication and education’(p.8). So, it’s not a complete surprise that Staiff suggests that ‘...the pervasive education paradigm in heritage interpretation is stifling and restrictive in its own way’(p.9) and, of course, digital technologies have been to the fore. His viewpoint is clear but does it really matter if education is dominant? At the end of chapter 1 come a number of ‘anecdotes’, varying in length. The second anecdote reminded me of why The Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society is right to be concerned about intellectual property rights; if you want to know what I mean, have a look at the anecdote...

Anecdote IV, concerning what students recall a few days after a lecture, does not come as a complete surprise. ‘Narrative’ does seem to be really quite important – in teaching as well as heritage interpretation. Being told how few of the eighteen, or whatever it was, gardeners returned from The Great War to work at what is now known as The Lost Gardens of Heligan is one of several stories that visitors recall. It’s almost a case of the social history narrative selling the experience (see www.heligan.com/the-story).

Anecdote VI provides food for thought in terms of how digital technologies have really altered the creation of organic destination image; as mentioned earlier, direct and tangential influences affect perception and clips from television episodes may now be viewed on www.youtube.com long after the event. A television series has finished yet lengthy clips remain on such digital technology and the impact of television cannot be understated (see Busby & Haines 2013).

Anecdote VII reflects on music and sound track importance in any experience; my first thought was how the television executives were spot on with choice of Barrington Pheloung’s score to introduce *Inspector Morse* – the music layering the scenes and affecting organic destination image creation of Oxford’s heritage. My notes for this anecdote run to another hundred words or so: they will not be added here. Suffice to say, Russell Staiff’s book has provoked so many thoughts relating to heritage interpretation and we are only at page 17. Reflecting on the anecdotes, Staiff suggests he has “an ongoing quest to understand myself within whatever

space I'm creating/occupying" (p.22); perhaps I'm cynical but I do wonder how many individuals this phenomenon applies to at heritage sites. Certainly, the interaction of visitors at such sites illustrates a phenomenological perspective. Reading "it is the way visitors perform and engage that makes a place 'heritage'" (p.24) is so true and reminded me of the seminal work of Poria *et al* (2003) who suggest that visitors "who perceive a site as a part of their personal heritage are the basis of the phenomenon called heritage tourism" and that those visiting "because it is there" are not heritage tourists (Poria *et al* 2003:247).

Jumping ahead a number of pages, it was interesting to read the conjunction of Gericault's *The Raft of the Medusa* with Yann Martel's Booker-winning *Life of Pi* – I hadn't made the connection but then I have not been an art historian. I searched my copy of Miles' (2007) *Medusa – The Shipwreck, The Scandal, The Masterpiece* to see if he had the same thoughts but of course the movie was not released until 2012 although the novel was published in 2001 – it needs to be visual to see the connection immediately, I guess. Staiff is recording his thoughts on this under the sub-heading of Romanticism within the chapter addressing embodied heritage experiences. "The emotions are our own. What we call them and how we describe them is something else" (p.66). Phenomenology rules and emphasised ten pages later with reference to visitors at Egypt's Temple of Karnak reflecting on the 1978 film *Death on the Nile* besides the use of guidebooks and maps.

By now, any reader of this review will have come to the conclusion that Staiff's book is rich in material. It is. What else can be added? Well, reflecting on the quality of the writing and editorial process, there are few typographical errors and only at one juncture did I think there was a solecism, according to the 1946 edition of the OED: I think the author should have used *synonym*, rather than *simile* on page 4. OK, page 8 should be Agamemnon, I think. Overall, it's a quality production.

Who is this book for? Without doubt, it's for university libraries. Will any student purchase it individually? I guess those undertaking post-grad heritage interpretation courses might. Personally, I can think of a final year undergraduate elective module that it is really suited to but the students should be examining multiple copies held by the library rather than purchasing.

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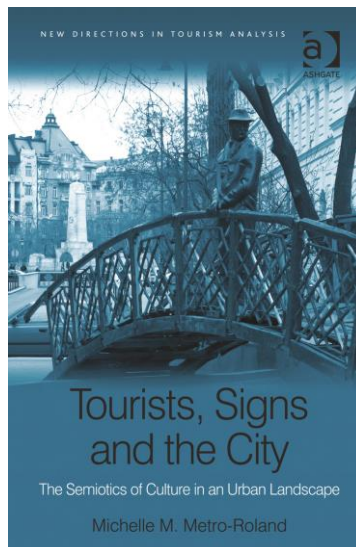
Tourists, Signs and the City – The Semiotics of Culture in an Urban Landscape

Michelle Metro-Roland, M. (2011),

Ashgate.

171 pp.

ISBN : 978-0-7546-7809-0.



At the intersection of cityscape and touristscape, Michelle Metro-Roland proposes the concept of the tourist prosaic as part of a theoretical framework for understanding the way meaning is educed from the built heritage; this '...tourist prosaic [is] a hybrid understanding of the spaces in the city which matter to tourists' (Metro-Roland 2011, 2). Metro-Roland's methodological approach to fieldwork in

urban tourism, which draws on ethnographic methods of street interview, observation and visitor's own photography coupled with the use of interpretive narrative provides new researchers with a well-documented model for their own work on the city. Citing J. Goss's (1988, 398) call for an architectural geography, she proposes that multi-coded space can be read through interviews, literary texts, historical writing and events, but that by drawing on the theories of Charles Peirce, tourism researchers can go further than this simple reading of a city street or market hall and can understand how interpretation compels the visitor to act.

Her respondent group, tourists, generally lack the technical terminology to describe the built heritage in the city she is studying, Budapest, but this does not prevent their engagement with the atmosphere, what Metro-Roland terms the architextuality of the urban experience. She returns to this concept of architextuality, linking it to the history of the city (Metro-Roland 2011, 98-99), in a way echoed in the study of how the literary writer, Marc Lambron architexturalises Madrid through his novel, *L'Impromptu* (2005), (Busby, Korstanje & Mansfield, 2011).

Chapter 2 is a very useful Peirce primer which provides illustration of how his ideas of accretion of knowledge around a sign move that sign closer to the dynamical object itself. In tourism, an undifferentiated rock can be given significance so that it becomes meaningful for the visitor (Metro-Roland 2011, 21), an example being the Brutus Stone in Totnes (see Plate 1 below)

This concept from Peirce coincides with the organic and the induced image from the study of TDI (Tourism Destination Image). Importantly though for Peirce, mythical creations, such as the unicorn, and, in the example above, the mythical stepping ashore by Imogen and Brutus, do not create a problem. Michelle Metro-Roland explains: 'That our beliefs, the satchel of ideas about the world we carry with us, shape our actions is one of the most important contributions of Peirce's interpretive theory' (Metro-Roland 2011, 21). In this accessible chapter she recovers the work of Peirce for tourism and area studies from structuralism and Saussure's semiotics.

Plate 1: Brutus' Stone between 51 and 53 on the steeply sloping Fore Street of Totnes, South Hams, Devon.



Source: Author photo.

Brutus and Ichnogone landed on the shores of, what he came to call Britain, here in Totnes in 1115 BCE, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth's story of the Kings of Britain (Thompson & Giles 1842, 21-23). The granite stone is where they first set foot on Albion on the banks of the river Dart.

A chapter on landscape, written as narrative, tells the story of J B Jackson and the invention of landscape studies in mid-century America. In Britain during this same period of development in human geography, W G Hoskins was carving out the discipline of area studies. This history of the discipline is useful for tourism scholars today as a founding narrative to reinforce, and to help legitimise, work in the field. Laying a theoretical foundation stone, Metro-Roland quotes from the phenomenologist, Anne Buttmer, writing in the 1970s, that Husserl's lifeworld is where enquiry takes place, or should take place, alongside the quotidian activities of everyday life. It was a call taken up in France at the end of the 1970s by Luce Giard and Michel de Certeau in the city, although Edgar Morin had investigated the seaside area around Plozévet as early as 1965 (Morin 2013, 7-8) in an early ethno-methodological inquiry.

The second half of the book carefully steps through the research project, again acting as a useful guide for urban fieldwork, by answering 'what can we know in the urban tourism destination?' and 'how can we know it?' as tourism scholars. Often this type of work, field observations in the liminal space where tourists interface with

the domestic workings of the city, generates a mass of data. It leaves researchers with the tension of presenting thorough, yet mundane, documentation of the service encounters acted out and the intellectual demand for analysis, interpretation and ultimately synthesis into new knowledge of tourist behaviour. The knowledge transfer process at this level of leading edge research requires the tourism academic to evolve a writing practice that will effectively communicate their new knowledge in a managed way that subsequent users can comprehend and employ. Metro-Roland occasionally makes use of illustrative narrative writing to present new knowledge and thus bring about knowledge transfer to her readers. She recounts observed service encounters, eg queuing conflicts, or narrative moments from the interviews, eg the surprise of a couple seeing pork on sale (Metro-Roland 2011, 140) or the way cutlery is brought to the table (Metro-Roland 2011, 144), and essentially this is a positive step on the road to knowledge transfer in tourism scholarship.

Finally, Metro-Roland's book concerns itself with the ends that tourism knowledge serves, pleasure, capitalism, the under-served populations displaced by capitalism, and the intellectual emancipation brought about by examination of everyday practices.

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Philosophical issues in tourism.

Tribe, J. (ed) (2009)
Channel View Publications
272 pp.
ISBN 978-1845410964.

The philosophical concerns of tourism scholars led to question why tourism has not been consolidated as a serious discipline. In this discussion, this project starts from the needs of establishing the basis of a new epistemology of tourism beyond of what it has been already written. As Tribe in his preface, overtly acknowledges, tourism research has advanced considerably over last decades. Not only in the number of specialized journals but also books and other post-graduate programs. However, this was not accompanied with the solidification of a solid argumentative epistemology. It is not my desire to describe chapter by chapter the book all. On the contrary, it is tempting to say that the book should be read as an all encompassing project. What is more than important to discuss is the state of contemporary research in tourism today.

The main thesis of this book rests on the belief that tourism is a creator of representation in an ever mobile world. It recycles old structures re-signifying their values in a macro level of analysis. Paragraphasing Giddens, Tribe coins the term “run-away tourism” to signify the uncontrolled liberal forces that situates the industry out of control. Following this argument, tourism research has been monopolized by the advance of managerial disciplines, which it can be added, promote the profit of industry instead of laying the foundation of a durable episteme. Some of the most troubling points this book tries to resolve may be summarized as follows:

- Tourism has gained recognition to produce an important volume of knowledge but it is not enough to be seen as a science.
- The nature of tourism seems still to be not easily to define.
- There are unresolved delineations in the commonalities and differences between tourism and mobility.
- Since tourism, even, has been framed as a naïve activity, tourists normal-wise refuse to be labelled as “tourists”, they preferably use to be called as “travellers”.

- Tourism applied research was designed from the perspective of tourist alone.
- Tourism research evolution can be studied in three stages, preparadigmatic, paradigm and new approaches.

It is clear that problems and concerns by researchers in defining an established academic discipline was subject to empirical problems of validations. Although Tribe's compilation attempts to contribute in the formation of solid definition of tourism and hospitality, it fails in the aspect that did not provide a clear explanation why tourism has not been a serious academic alternative up to date. Though we formally recognize the valuable efforts of Tribe to resolve the epistemological problems of tourism, much of reviews done after the release of the book not only were superficial, but also did not understand the point where the argument goes to. To fulfil this gap, the present review does not offer a response to the question why tourism has not reach a point of maturation in the standardized guidelines of science, because it stems from the particular interests of some scholars to give formal recognition to their Marketing-related programs. Rather, this review will explain further on the boundaries between classical and postmodern disciplines. The problem is not how the knowledge is produced, but the context where the cosmology of the world evolves. Academic disciplines are formed resulting from the societal order and its respective economy. Instead of interrogating on the failure of Enlightenment as an all encompassing project, this book takes much attention to the tourist experience.

At a closer look, one might realize the science has evolved into three differentiated stages. The scientific thought is determined by three basic pillars:
The inference of laws; The replicability of the data; The explanation of phenomena.

The sources and processes should be duly documented and the results should be capable of being repeated by another researcher. Lastly, science should, by observation, permit the comprehension and explanation of the variation and connection of the variables of the problem. Thus, all scientific research begins with a question, which is answered by following a method.

Unfortunately, for a long time, the positivists, not knowing about the contributions of the Viennese School, introduced relativity in the evaluation of results. Thus, science came to be determined not by the method but by the falsability of the results. This suggests an investment in the production of knowledge in which the result comes to be more important than the intervening steps. As a result of this epistemological confusion, many scientists fell into conceptual relativity which has led to great fragmentation. The form of research then gave way to methodological subjectivity, which, being linked to the situation and politics, facilitates the consolidation of modernity as a general way of life.

In this context, it is worth clarifying that all science rests on two forms of generating knowledge. The first is called '1st state' and is characterised by the isolation of those variables which are studied, generally in laboratories, and which seek to learn about the laws which govern the universe. Physics is one of the sciences which operates under the principle of direct observation. The environment, in this type of situation, is totally controlled. The scientist should always conduct experiments in the present in order to draw inferences about the future. However, '2nd state' science is totally different. Under certain conditions, the grade of repeatability cannot be isolated in a determined frame of time and space, and the researcher must 'reconstruct' the causes of the problem from the past. Within this classification are the so-called social sciences, which include psychology and sociology, among others. As capital expands its influence, breaking down the former notions of time and space with globalisation, knowledge is produced by a great variety of research centres with few links between them. Their results are so dispersed that there is little or no dialogue between the different schools of thought. The most established disciplines accuse newer bodies of knowledge of not being able to infer laws, and this becomes a motive for their rejection. Given the general laws of science, it is of interest to know that historical evolution of science has changed through the years.

We may explain our model of 'The three phases of science' as follows: From antiquity until the end of the middle ages, mankind was interested by questions concerning the connection between people and its cities. His economy was purely a subsistence economy linked to cattle farming and primary agriculture. There was an

important link between a man and his territory and lineage, as there was no concept of salaried work as we know it today, or in other words the possibility of a person to choose where, for what wage, and for whom he would work. The disciplines which governed life were philosophy, astrology, medicine and astronomy among others. We term this phase 'the primary production of knowledge'. In the late middle age, we enter into a second phase, which we term 'the secondary production of knowledge' in which the Industrial and Cromwellian Revolutions have left their mark. Work and the relationship of a person with his lineage started to lose their strong linkage, due to the consensus that labour should be sold according to the conditions of the context. Little by little man ceased to be subject to God, his city, and his master in order to become part of the capitalist adventure based on speculation, control of the results, and calculation. During this process, from the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century, new disciplines were born. These included psychology, anthropology and sociology. These new disciplines were totally orientated to the study of man, but rather than seeking the answers to abstract universal questions, they were specific with emphasis on industrial work, poverty, and development, for instance.

The 'social sciences' entered into conflict with the established disciplines, and so sociology confronted philosophy, and psychology confronted medicine (and psychiatry). Without doubt, we inevitably begin to see a fragmentation in the method of generating and interpreting knowledge. These forms of the production of science cannot be studied outside the context of the standardisation of the modern means of production in general. Systemic standardisation (that is, the possibility of the accumulation of comparative data, as defended by the positivists) was directly proportional to mass production. Society and human behaviour begin to be considered as a systemic whole, where there are inputs, processes and outputs which indefinitely feed back into other systems. Social interaction is the conceptual base which these new sciences claimed to study. Nevertheless, the situation changed radically towards the end of 20th century, or to be more exact in about 1970 when capitalist countries began to realise that they could not guarantee serial production for ever in a sustainable way. This was due to the energy crisis provoked by the Arab-Israeli War, in which industries had to introduce a new form of consumption so that capital, which had been born out of the Industrial

Revolution, could become electronic. The production of capital for the purchase of goods did not now seem to be as important as the opposite situation, where goods become a pre-condition for the production and general accumulation of money. The classic relationship is replaced by symbolic mediators, such as money, generating a total solipsism, or the view that the self is the only thing that really exists. We may call this third state the 'fragmented stage of knowledge' in which the new disciplines (communication, journalism, tourism, gastronomy, management and publicity, for example) begin to gain ground in comparison with second stage disciplines such as sociology. As two of the main characteristics of post-modernity have been social fragmentation and subjectivity, these new forms of knowledge have been oriented towards consumption and the aesthetic. These new values of society are rejected by the already established second stage sciences (Harvey, 1989).

It is tempting to say that sociology and anthropology claim that tourism is a science which does not have its foundations in serious reason. These are the same claims that sociology had confronted from its own predecessors. In order to summarise this model and enable the reader to achieve a greater understanding of the phenomenon, we might synthesise the main aspects which distinguish third stage sciences as follows:

- 1) They are disciplines which are linked to the creation of necessities, in order to explain them.
- 2) They consider social reality as a product.
- 3) They follow parameters which are similar to market engineering.
- 4) Their considerations and findings are isolated, and cannot be integrated into a coherent whole.
- 5) They show great fragmentation or lack an academic base to orientate research.
- 6) Information plays an important role in the construction of their discourse, but is not integrated.
- 7) They appeal to multi-disciplinarity but their results are mere second-order explanations.
- 8) They are purely descriptive.
- 9) They are strongly influenced by the aesthetic and appearance.
- 10) They focus on experience as their principal strength, but lack an integrated

methodology.

11) They confuse the form of data collection with method.

12 They are disconnected elements of knowledge which prioritise reason and not the pursuit of truth.

In other words, as they define reason as an abstract form of thought, these new sciences can express principles which do not have any real direction. The new post-industrial sciences are, above all, incomplete sciences which try to explain what to do in the face of particular problems rather than investigate the cause of the problem. They are linked to the effects and not the causes of behaviour. The discussion in this article has aimed at contributing to those epistemologists interested in the existence or otherwise of the science of tourism. Jafari (1994) precluded that one measures a discipline by the quantity of bibliographic production, ignoring the essential characteristics of science.

It must be admitted that this belief is widely accepted in scientific works, and therefore must be seriously considered. Epistemologically speaking, to define tourism we need first to understand what the object of the discipline is. In so doing, it is important to determine if tourism is a modern activity, surfaced as a consequence of industrial revolution, or depends upon millenarian social institutions many centuries before this event. Epistemological problems to define tourism resulted from the moment tourism-led research flourished.

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