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THE TANGLE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL TOURISM: HOW THE CONSUMPTION OF FANTASY AND ACADEMIA SHARE COMMON SPACES

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ABSTRACT

Using Susan Buck-Morss's *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* as a theoretical backdrop to study the intersection of anthropology and tourism, this article suggests an epistemological shift from structuralism to poststructuralism. Although a standalone theoretical piece, it also introduces each of the articles below as they comprise this special section on anthropology and tourism. Finding common epistemological threads among the four—those of Sorensen's Viking Village, Maestas's Native Anthropology, Reyes's critical epistemological treatment of tourism in Nicaragua, and Forgash's post-catastrophic commentary on tourism after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan—we collectively move beyond structuralist notions of object and subject, as is discursively implied in an "anthropology of tourism," to a poststructuralist approach, as is discursively implied in the new frame—"anthropological tourism."

KEY WORDS: Anthropological tourism, epistemology, poststructuralism, dreamworld

Introduction

As a sociologist and anthropologist working in Yucatán, México near the epicenter of the *Dreamworld* created through the commodified, consumer-driven romanticism of Mayan antiquity and the so-called Mayan prophecy of 2012, I jumped at the chance to be involved in the 2011 High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology's conference panel, "Tourism, Anthropology, and Quality of Life: Interdisciplinary Perspectives." It was organized, as are the articles in this set, by Rebecca Forgash of Metropolitan State College of Denver. As I read the manuscripts by Helle Sorensen, Enrique Maestas, Julie Reyes and Forgash, I was transported back to a startlingly brilliant book by Susan Buck-Morss titled *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Buck-Morss speaks of "dreamworld and catastrophe," which psychoanalytically-framed the death of state-sponsored utopian ideologies and nationalist visions of history. In Buck-Morss's analysis, the propaganda-soaked imagery of a government-sponsored modernity—the nation-state—was heralded as the rightful decision-making apparatus of histories past, present, and future. The real and the imagined, fantasy and reality became one and were the goals of state policy.

Now in an intricate postmodern, post-nationalist world, the ever-emergent *Dreamworld* unfolds not from a centralized planning system, nor a state-controlled political economy, but from the clamoring of the free-market and the individual. These claw out from the void remaining from a state-sponsored modernity's failure to produce the so-

called Good Society. Now we find existential fantasies, pleasure principles, avoidance of pain, avoidance of labor, and avoidance of sobriety, that dismembers the past and consume the present, suggesting alternative accounts of the past and more importantly, presenting no legitimate claims on the future. In this sense, the nation-state fails.

This elimination of "real history" cleanses too, the academic from the potential culpabilities and indiscretions of academic imperialism. Now the present can be premised on the truly unreal with the clarity of cynicism. By direct confrontation and also by proxy, the spoils of academic privilege are teased away from the social injustices of government-controlled academic agendas and placed within the milieu of the free market. Contemporary dreamworlds and catastrophes undergo this same gestalt shift to the land of relative interpretations—the place where social facts and social justices go to die. It is in this context that the anthropologist weathers the tsunami on the global high seas of fantasy, consumption, education, and tourism; these are the tangled spaces that are addressed in this special section within *The Applied Anthropologist*.

We are culpable by proxy as our actions are directed towards cultural redefinition and cultural preservation—all potential continuances of academic charities offered to those in need of a paternalistic cultural guidance. These cultural assemblages can be masked in beneficence, e.g., the medical-tinged ethical principle that allows doctors to mend patients, for the healthy to assist the diseased, for the educated to teach the ignorant, and here, through tourism for the fantasy (perfect) to replace the

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real (flawed). By contrast, native communities actively define social justice and engage in practices that lead more effectively towards those ends. However, social justice in response to catastrophe has also been actively defined and practiced by academia.

Epistemological Shift

The importance of this set of articles is many fold. The context from which they emerge must be explained. This work draws on an academic border crossing experience from within academia: Sorensen from the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management; Maestas, Reyes and Forgash from the Department of Anthropology, and Piacenti (speaking) from Sociology with a background in Psychology and Philosophy. What is more, Sorensen has developed a Tourism Management concentration in the Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management department and with assistance from Forgash and Reyes, is seeking to integrate courses from anthropology and geography. Using this same model, these same parties are seeking to develop a larger and distinct Interdisciplinary Program (IDP) called Cultural Tourism. Likewise, the content of these articles reaches across programs, departments and schools, fluidly existing simultaneously in the School of Professional Studies and the School of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Metropolitan State College of Denver. Meanwhile and in collaboration, Maestas initiates the discussion of anthropological tourism as related to Native Anthropology, effectively framing the epistemological shift from the anthropology of tourism (dualistic structuralism) to what we suggest here—the post-structuralist anthropological tourism.

The anthropological tourist blurs the lines through cooperative efforts and exists on a continuum between native anthropologist, outside ethnographer and the myriad positions found within, ranging from non-profit organizations, governmental entities, corporate benevolence, poets and writers, I-journalists and lone-wolf philosophers motivated by nothing more than human curiosity.

As Reyes and Sorensen return to their respective homelands of Nicaragua and Denmark, they too simultaneously and fluidly exist as insiders and outsiders, tourists and academics. Maestas too, simultaneously coexists as a self-defined and native anthropologist, but one who shape shifts among identities such as anthropologist, gringo, foreigner, Apache, Danzante, and Indian and buena gente or well-meaning tourist. Forgash, who directs a study abroad program to Japan, also practices here the roles of insider and outsider academic, teacher, mentor, and most importantly documentarian and journalist of an unfolding disaster. It is along the lines of the book *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2004).

Below the anthropology of tourism becomes anthropological tourism—the annihilation of object and subject. Historical revisionary reenactments echo backward (and forward) to *la bella época*—the Golden Years of Hollywood cosmopolitanism sans the low-brow, tabloid reality show and encroaching paparazzi. Real examples of imagined pasts are projected through the paradiseitic and parasitic lens of a simulated, yet authentic, lived experience—a fantastic and secure haven for anthropological tourists jet setting towards a heaven within the hell of real catastrophes. Here, tourists (subject) and anthropologists (object) go to die respectively, by experiencing death and where each like a Phoenix rise from their own ashes with Japan in their tangled, consumptive arms of anthropological tourism.

So, going forward as the reader, keep conscious the idea that here, schools, disciplines, programs, and identities are in constant gestalt shift, extending beyond the structuralism and dualities of academia to poststructuralism and the de-centered complexities of a new kind of art—not the anthropology of tourism, but anthropological tourism.

Helle Sorensen

In Viking Village Ecotourism Sorensen offers a glimpse of the process by which a new, global humanism and trending towards diversity reorganizes misconceptions of the past. In Sorensen's discussion the academia-tourist Viking Village promises "a tourism experience that is in harmony with the natural environment and which respects cultural heritage." Sorensen calls on us to challenge the crude stereotypes applied to Viking pasts produced by mass tourism and commercialism. These stereotypes are of the Viking as robber, as rapist, as hulking brutal plunderer of enemies; the Viking who is a bloodthirsty savage, crazy on the taste of enemy blood. This modern imagery of mass consumption evokes Sam Keen's *Faces of the Enemy* (1991) where wartime propaganda art dehumanizes the enemy into rats and rapists who sully the modern myth of cultural purity and cultural homogeneity. This is the modern Dreamworld to which Buck-Morss gazes and which Sorensen calls on us to overcome.

Rather than draw on and exploit these stereotypical imageries of Viking pasts, the Viking Village Ecotourism experience presents a more authentic, bucolic and pastoral scene. This too is equally Dreamworld, but retells a history of harmony and serenity, rather than relying on violence, brutishness, hostility, and the modern dualities of good versus evil and us versus them. Sorensen eloquently demonstrates the synthesis from which history emerges; Hegelian idealism, not Marxist materialism, is the analytic frame. That is, we re-imagine the Viking past and from this idealism we act as Vikings at Viking Village. Sorensen focuses not only

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on deconstructing the stereotype of the brutish Viking through idealism, but also on producing a Marxist educational-tourist experience that reorganizes the economically-deterministic relationship between students and their historically-accurate natural surroundings. Sorensen brings us Marx's land of historical materialism by focusing on the sensual nature of the Viking Village environment: the smells, tastes and sounds of the experience. This ecological orientation is simultaneously couched within the discipline of tourism and academia.

Tourism is typically thought of as a leisurely-paced experience where the privileged and powerful enjoy the milk and honeyed atmosphere of exotic places, where locals in their broken English serve elites wine, cheese and local game. Here though, Sorensen challenges with a contemporary, if not futuristic imagery which re-bundles the past to fit within state-of-the-discipline understandings of what tourism could or should be—that it can be satisfying intellectually, historically accurate, and environmentally sustainable. Sorensen proposes that education through eco-tourism has a mandate to conceptualize and produce educational experiences that take into full consideration the ecological damage produced by a globalized society while still engaging education through global endeavors, where students come from far and wide, ironically with equally far and wide carbon footprints, to experience the eco-educational good life in the name of forward-thinking. This bridges the work of Maestas, Reyes, and Forgash, creating a multi-hued array of the new anthropological tourism. It provides the broadest re-framing of pasts, presents, and futures possible.

Enrique Maestas

In the Maestas article we are provided with a different example of the academia-tourist complex as the academic selects "tourist" on their immigration forms mid-flight, before landing abroad. Maestas initiates the discussion of anthropological tourism as the "complementary activity" of anthropology and tourism. His choice blurs if not annihilates the lines between the benevolent social scientist, fun-loving tourist (looking for the next-best hidden all-inclusive vacation) and the practices of anthropological tourism examined through the lenses of his multiple positions as a Native Anthropologist. In this piece, Maestas offers ethnographic descriptions of anthropological tourism and Native Anthropology. The utility of framing himself as an anthropological tourist, borders on humorous if it were not so profound in bringing to light how academics do what they do in this academic Dreamworld. Here, the dirt is in the details, which are swept under the rugs of official debriefings and actual methods. However, his discussion of Native Anthropology, couched within his auto-ethnographic experiences, extends

the discussion of an epistemological shift that decenters academic power towards community-defined notions and practices of social justice.

In something out of a Cold War James Bond thriller our heroines invade Peru under cover of tourism, like CIA operatives. Since the military and science both have been guilty of war crimes and collusion with regimes of oppression and hatred, becoming-the-tourist is the shining example of the new politically-correct way to present one's intentions abroad. Though serious in its implications, the tale conjures Bob Hope and Bing Crosby's lighthearted jaunts to the South Pacific, where the Road leads inevitably to the exotic Dorothy Lamour in her banana republic.

This new imperialism by tourist proxy allows the academic to be seen as a seemingly-benign visitor, a consumer, a friend, and a provider of economic support to a tourist-based economic development. While in-flight, somewhere over flyover country in no-person's land, we find existential liberation; we find freedom through unincorporated and indefinable airspace—it is utopia which literally means "nowhere." In this moment, when not technically belonging to any particular nation-state, our heroes become tourists with the flick of a pen and a bag of peanuts.

Once on the ground and controlled by the politics of soil control our heroines must again shift to the role of tourists when confronted with the social discord of a potentially violent labor protest fighting for human rights. This is the stuff to which the U.S. State Department routinely warns in its warden emails to U.S. travelers (read: imperial tourists of all agendas) abroad. In something akin to the footage of the fall of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War, the academic embassy is evacuated by anthropologists in tourist disguise, or is that tourists in anthropological disguise? Our heroes' path to survival (and elimination of transnational red tape) sounds like this: "We are tourists, we are here to help, and we do not really represent and embody the companies and governments whose funds we request and gladly use in our endeavors."

We connect here to the work of Reyes, who evokes similar lineages of imperialism in Latin America, but where the music of Guy Lombardo sets the tone of the *bella época* of the Golden Years, where Nicaragua is the Dreamworld, the hinterlands, the holy grail of western tourism beyond the reach of western gods and western science—it is the exotic.

Julie Reyes

With personal Nicaraguan roots and as director of a Nicaraguan study abroad program, Reyes drops the needle softly on the record. Through the pops and crackles of imperialism we hear the notes of nostalgia; "Managua, Nicaragua is a beautiful town; you buy a hacienda for a few pesos down." These lyrics were made famous by Guy



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Lombardo and His Royal Canadians, describing *la bella época*, when jet-setting to Latin America in order to exploit favorable exchange rates and property values was high fashion. This is the cosmopolitan getaway to exotic locales such as Managua, Havana, and Rio de Janeiro and as stated above, to the destinations of Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. Here, though, the Road leads not to Dorothy Lamour (although the song also references sexual intimacy with an exotic señorita) but to the exacerbation of poverty through the misguided policy of tourism-based economic dependence. Reyes's use of this musical frame to evoke the spirit of the Golden Years is especially adept, as current structures of tourism-dependent economic development in Nicaragua again produce favorable property valuations and tax shelters, bringing forth a new, global *bella época*.

For Reyes, then, the days of the banana republic are alive and well. In this state of affairs, robber-barons and industrialists, power brokers and soldiers of fortune profit from native workers who are locked in a highly determined monopolistic local economy based on political foreign relations and international markets. Instead of bananas, though, Reyes speaks of banana daiquiris on pristine beaches and banana-wrapped tamales spoon-fed to elites by way of the local economy—dependent on tourism and the all-inclusive, internet-purchased vacation package. The imagery is of the simulated, the surreal, of Disneyland, but with an intellectual gaze at the locals as outsiders staring through the gates of the gated resort communities.

Colonialism, imperialism, militarism, neo-colonialism, cosmopolitanism, and now tourism all claim, as lineage and genealogy, common intended and unintended consequences. Now through the euphemistic if not opaque terminology of structural adjustment, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—themselves a concerted effort to reduce poverty—are squared directly into the winds of a global tack on a sailboat we could name the SS Tourist Exploitation or the SS ClubMed Impoverishment.

As the private sector scrambles to latch onto the myriad forms of tax benefits for which tourism projects qualify, the laborers scramble to claim coveted menial positions in high-end resorts, where worker rights and human rights are left to the aimless blade of a free market economy and a substantial and motivated reserve army of the unemployed, precariously surviving and absolutely impoverished. As Reyes points out, this economic cocktail of the all-inclusive beachfront results in one of the most remarkable wealth disparities in the world in Nicaragua.

Metaphorically, the separation between those who enjoy the wealth and development of tourism from those who do not is the same separation found at the gated beaches of the resorts; these are the same resorts to which

access by the locals is forbidden. In the final analysis, the phenomenon found in Nicaragua is the same phenomenon found throughout the world. In 1968, Lefebvre would coin the now famous and useful theoretical frame of the rights to the city. Here, as in 1968, differential rights to access and determine the full space of the city are yet again evident. As tourism continues to exacerbate preexisting social, cultural, and economic disparities, the metaphorical exclusive beaches of will continue to serve as a not-so-subtle reminder of the continuing differential rights to the city, of which anthropological tourism is part and parcel.

Rebecca Forgash

The work of Forgash is a resounding circumstance in which to discuss the peculiar relationship between academia and tourism. Forgash's commentary is as personal and existential as it gets in an academic world where the illusion of objective, detached professionalism is implied, assumed and privileged. The recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan caused a temporary cancellation of Forgash's study abroad program and forced a change in the frame of analysis. Her article is a novel intertextual echoing of 9/11 and analytical framework for the disruption of anthropological tourism. While addressing the broader implications of so-called "dark-tourism" (tourism based on Catastrophe such as visiting Auschwitz or Ground Zero in New York) in the context of Tohoku, we are allowed to peer into the tourist industry as partial victim and partial savior of economy in Tohoku. As with all Dreamworld imagery, the earthquake quickly took a term of catastrophic endearment—the soon-to-be nostalgic term "3.11". This was promptly followed by initiatives such as "Volunteer Japan", evoking the Catastrophe of "9/11" where U.S. citizens fantasized of their own innocent victimization and acted upon a new sense of civic solidarity. When President George Bush proclaimed that the U.S. citizenry should live life as usual (seemingly implying that they should fantasize about secure tourism); that they should travel and continue being tourists, not just abroad, but domestically, in the same cities that were likely targets for future attacks, he unwittingly became the ghost in the rear-view mirror and the unlikely echo-link between "3.11" and "9/11."

With a razor sharp eye on class-based vulnerability, Forgash elegantly lifts the veil of ideological fantasy and exposes the hidden, but very real social catastrophe behind the illusion of an uncontrollable natural catastrophe. Indeed, the (natural) earthquake was followed by a (natural) tsunami. However, these events were followed by a very (social) radioactive fallout and very (social) differences in survival and post-disaster outcomes—so why not a very (social) recovery through tourism? Why not let the fantasy



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of tourism and the consumption of the dreamworld of *furusato* (the nostalgic and authentic feeling of home), turn the fantasy of recovery (the dark tourist's need for an authentic experience) into a real recovery?

Forgash closes the reader's eyes to the streaming-live video from which vicarious global consciousness emerges, where global audiences still damp from the downpour of 9/11 imagery, make 3.11 possible. The distant, the close, and the fantastic become real. From multiple and changing positions, the real event is twisted into the semi-real and fictional, and finally the multiple meanings of the event are click-communicated via Twitter, Facebook, and the collective fantasy of shared concern and humanity is reified. Like the dancing, blurry camera footage of an I-journalist, we are taken to the moment, still smoldering, still flaming, with people and interests scrambling to make sense of it or to make money from it. This is the beginning of the academia-tourist matrix of global charity and dark-tourist travel.

Checking Out, Bags In-Hand

The anthropological tourist—the first responder to “3.11”, becoming tangled like a ball of snakes in the transitory unity of humankind—momentously crystallizes towards annihilation, as he always does, surrounding the Catastrophe with Dreamworlds. Akin to the *furusato*-like serenity of Sorensen's Viking Village, our two heroines (Bing and Bob, Art and Enrique) on the Road to Peru, or Reyes, who returns to the pristine and private beaches of her family's Nicaragua, the *bella época*—with its consumption of fantasy through anthropological tourism—comes full circle. As we see in this set of articles, tourism—as it links to globalization, transnationalism, the global politics of economic development, and academic notions of global consciousness—is ripe with the possibilities of expanded discourses for future academic consumption. Of course.

So enjoy these articles by the tremendously talented authors featured—understand both what they share and how they are distinct. They are each shiny pamphlets selling five-diamond resorts placed side-by-side down a bright white beach to the vanishing point of Dreamworlds remembered and Catastrophes forgotten. And why not? You may have already unknowingly paid the admission into this all-inclusive (read: no way out), global resort of academia, anthropology and tourism—that of anthropological tourism.

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