

Medieval Imaginaries in Tourism, Heritage and the Media, by J. Frost & W. Frost, Routledge, Abingdon (2022). 262 pp., (Hbk.), £120.00, ISBN: 9780367132774

Book Review

Medieval Imaginaries in Tourism, Heritage and the Media, by Jennifer Frost and Warwick Frost, is a new edition to the 'Routledge Cultural Heritage and Tourism Series'. Presented in 12 chapters, this book provides a detailed review of the 'continuing fascination for the medieval' and the numerous outlets in which the medieval has survived. With a particular focus on media and tourism activities, this book demonstrates how the medieval world has been interpreted, reimagined, packaged, and experienced throughout history.

This book opens with a reflective commentary in Chapter 1 on Dubrovnik and its contemporary use as an archetype of the medieval world. This sets the groundwork for what is to come in the subsequent chapters. From here, the authors address general understandings of the medieval before defining imaginaries as meaning and understandings shaped by cultural production and outlets such as film, television, literature, and tourism activities. Drawing on these understandings, the book's aim, which is successfully achieved, is presented – to address the relationship between medieval imaginaries and tourism consumption practices.

Although not set within themed sections, the chapters transition from one topic to the next in a smooth and efficient manner. Commencing with the tourist gaze, Chapter 2 provides an overview of all things medieval that society has become preoccupied with. From pageantry and art to warfare and chivalry, the authors expose the public's fascination with the medieval stemming back to the early 19th century. This ongoing fascination is argued to be a response to the deep-seated social issues developed from changes created by modernity and globalization. As progress and innovation took hold of the world in the early 19th century, society yearned for simpler times and looked backwards to the past for an escape from reality. However, as the authors point out, what society coveted was an idealised, benevolent version of the medieval world – a version that, albeit adapted, continues to frame perceptions of the medieval world in the current times.

In what appears to be an order of what society might find important in terms of medieval topics, Chapters 3 – 9 move from kingship to princesses to knights and chivalry, before addressing castles, cathedrals and iconic heroes and myths. Within these pages, the authors address an array of cultural productions and outlets that have shaped society's long-standing ideas and imaginations about the medieval world. Extending these discussions are examples of tourism activities that lean into the imaginaries to capitalise on society's fascinations. Some of these examples contribute to the ongoing discourse within research concerning authenticity in heritage spaces and the promotion and consequences of film-induced tourism. Yet, the authors' provision of actual historical accounts help to create a balance between history and the romanticised version constructed over time.

The latter half of this book is largely focused on the 'Other' within the medieval world, which is an ambitious attempt to do in just two chapters. While the authors do explain in Chapter 1 that the book is largely a Western-centric analysis of the medieval fascination, Chapter 10 clearly outlines an array of topics that could have been explored more deeply had there have been an opportunity for more chapters. Concluding this book, the authors address other topics that help to frame medieval imaginaries, including the anti-hero, children, and ordinary men and women – those without status. However, like Chapter 10, the topics presented in Chapter 12 are worthy of lengthier discussions, in addition to other topics such as food and drink, animals, and holiday celebrations. Even topics such as death, disease, burial practices,

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and public executions could be explored given their proliferating presence within new media and tourism attractions. However, it is appreciated that the authors acknowledge the limitations created by having a set number of pages and chapters, particularly as the medieval world and our understanding and use of it is undoubtedly a colossal topic.

This book provides unique insights into how and why society understands and consumes the medieval world in the way it does. Perhaps most intriguing is how tourism activities reinforce these medieval imaginaries, and in some cases, exacerbate the blurring between fiction and reality. These discussions extend current research relating to negotiated authenticity and edutainment interpretation within heritage spaces. While some of the examples used throughout are perhaps outdated for younger readers, this book is recommended to academics and practitioners dealing with media-induced heritage tourism, and more specifically those interested or involved with medieval history. To conclude, a second contribution on this subject matter relating to the additional topics mentioned would be welcomed.

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