

Chapter 2

Museums of Dark Mythologies in the Tourist Place

Oleg E. Afanasiev

Russian State University of Tourism and Service, Russia

Alexandra V. Afanasieva

Oles Honchar Dnepropetrovsk National University, Ukraine

ABSTRACT

The present chapter focuses on the role of museums as producer of dark myths, which means the cultural background that leads visitors to consume “other’s death”. Anthropologically speaking, museums are symbolic instrument that helps understanding traumatic events. For this reason, it is important to deepen the connection between tourism consumption and disasters. Over centuries, positivism trivialized mythology as a fictional story, or rumors proper of primitive cultures; rather, not only myths play a leading role in configuring culture, but also the borders between life and death. Here we propose an alternative fresh methodology to study dark tourism issues in the decades to come.

INTRODUCTION

In our days, allegories and myths are inherently associated and exploited to profit-oriented goals in tourism industry. Without these imagined landscapes, tours, attractiveness and other forms of commoditized territories, as museums, dark-shrines or hot-spot of consumption would have prospered and flourished (MacCannell, 1976). In this respect, in the culture of gazing, museums and tourism seem to be inextricably intertwined (Urry, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011). The same applies for

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dark tourism and consumption of haunted castles, houses or spaces of mass-death (Holloway, 2010; Levitt, 2010; Korstanje, 2011). Many tourists pay fortune to visit bewitched museums to hear the stories of cursed spirit, ghost which materializes in a moment or any others macabre experiences that alluded to massacre of innocent people (Tzanelli, 2016). Visitors of these types of sites not only are in quest of something new, exciting, they look to consume events (enrooted in the pastime) which helps them to interpret their present life (Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Stone 2006; Korstanje & George, 2015). In dark tourism consumption, as Sather Wagstaff puts it, there is a type of new emergent solidarity between tourists and victims which remains unchecked (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011). Many important museums allow to infer interesting forms of communication, attracting a large audience of people who is interested in the problem of death, spirituality and even ghosts. The world famous castles with ghosts that have become the museums now – inhabited by ghosts of Henry VII and his wives Hampton Court in London, the Mikhailovsky Castle with a ghost of Paul I, the Hermitage, the Louvre Museum and many are the evident examples. Today, virtually every museum has its mysterious legends and special secrets, primarily due to the specifics of such institution. Thus, there is the situation, when, along with the rich museum collection the new collection of legends is being established and used in excursion activities.

As this backdrop, one might speculate there is a type of Dark mythology which merits to be studied, an organization of legends, myths, stories around others' death, unjust death, or on-slaughters that current generations should remember. At some extent, dark tourism alludes to a much deeper stage of remembrance in order for next generations to learn from post disasters scenarios (Cohen, 2011; Dalton, 2014). Following this reasoning, a new class of "non-traditional" museums – museums of legends is formed. Here the genre of folklore is beyond the scope of mysticism inherent to any museum and becomes a separate object of tourist interest. While Museums which are based on "dark mythology" - at first glance - are new and interesting phenomena recently surfaced in the modern tourism industry, no less true is that other legendary or epic museums are traditional dispositifs to hold memory in community. For example, "Glade of fairy tales" near Yalta is long well-known iconic attraction of Crimean tourism industry. Although this open-air museum is not positioning itself as a representative of legends, storylines of its exposition are constructed after Russian folk tales based on Slavic legends and myths. Here, among the others, the negative, dark and mystical folk characters of the ancient mythological space of the East European Plain appear affordable to tourists. Whatever the case may be, this chapter explores not only ghost tourism or dark tourism as a new emergent issue, but also the connection of museums into the social imaginary from where dark consumption buttressed.

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