
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Frohlick, Susan, *Sexuality, Women, and Tourism: Cross-Border Desires through Contemporary Travel*, London: Routledge, 2013, 222 pages.

*Reviewer: Megan Rivers-Moore
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Tourism, by definition, is fraught with complicated relationships: between tourists and the toured, between more and less successful regions, between nation-states competing for tourism dollars. The search for newness and difference, always defined by a variety of kinds of inequalities, has frequently included travellers who seek out sex and intimacy in the context of “exotic” and usually racialized settings. Susan Frohlick’s new book marks a rich contribution to a growing body of literature on contemporary transnational sexuality. *Sexuality, Women, and Tourism* is a beautifully written ethnography of the transnational sexual and intimate encounters that take place in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, a small town on the country’s southern Caribbean coast that is thoroughly imbricated in global tourism markets and processes. Frohlick offers a thoughtful and nuanced exploration of the experiences of women tourists (both short and long term, as well as some documented and undocumented residents). The book asks us to ponder relevant and important questions about heterosexuality, challenging the ways in which it is so often left unmarked, while simultaneously directing us to think about how it is enacted differently through travel.

One of the many strengths of *Sexuality, Women, and Tourism* is that it focuses not just on the relationships between tourists and local men (which are fascinating) but also on the tourist women’s own sexual subjectivities and the role that international travel plays in shaping specific kinds of gendered heterosexualities. While we may assume that we already know that sexuality is frequently shaped by a search for an exotic other, Frohlick’s powerful research demonstrates the importance of paying close attention to the specificities of place and time. The way exoticism plays out in Puerto Viejo, the contradictory and confusing understandings about race and place that are demonstrated through interview vignettes, aptly illustrates the significant impact that ethnographic inquiry can have. Indeed, Frohlick beautifully captures the particular complexities of Limón province. Defined by tangled transnational flows for much of its history (including various waves of migra-

tion, as well as a shifting dependence from bananas to tourism), Limón is still neglected by the Costa Rican state, treated as other, a space of conveniently colourful multiculturalism but also of violence, poverty and social disorder. Frohlick’s detailed descriptions of the town offer a vivid juxtaposition of surf shops, yoga schools and vegan restaurants with the lack of a high school and even a basic medical clinic. Frohlick’s inclusion of excerpts from her field notes and personal reflections on her own time in Puerto Viejo is very welcome. This is mainly because Frohlick is such a sensitive anthropologist, offering cogent critiques of her research participants’ comments while at the same time remaining largely sympathetic to their attempts to make sense of their lives in Puerto Viejo.

Definitions of what exactly we are talking about when we talk about transnational sexuality, particularly sexuality that has a commercial element, can get decidedly murky. With chapters organized around key themes (desire, sexuality, embodiment, intimacy, difference and erotics), Frohlick does a very commendable job of getting to the heart of complex questions about who is a tourist, who is a local and how one can understand the connections between sex, intimacy, money and tourism. She complicates overly simplistic narratives (still surprisingly common) about sex tourists (or *romance tourists*, the term more often used for women), offering a vision of fascinating, contradictory and infuriating subjects involved in negotiating what are often difficult and confusing relationships. Despite the ongoing (and, I would argue, quite tiresome) debates about whether women can also be sex tourists, if anything, I was struck by just how much the narratives of the women Frohlick met resonate with the interviews with male sex tourists I have read and conducted in my own research. The convoluted interpretations of their experiences, the contradictory analyses, the mixture of worldly suspicion and naive trust, the regular references to exoticized, racialized stereotypes were all there among the tourist women. Reading Frohlick’s book reminded me again just how false the gender binary so often set up when thinking about men and women who travel and engage in transnational sex and intimacy remains. That said, Frohlick also cautions against any simple analysis of these relationships as straightforward sex work, instead arguing that they must be understood in the specific context in which they take place, in all their conceptual complexity.

The tourists’ narratives make for fascinating reading: from arrival stories that emphasize chance and serendipity

to attempts to make sense of differing expectations around intimacy, Frohlick expertly combines rich ethnographic description with her own interpretation of the stories she is told. Frohlick powerfully demonstrates that despite many women's narratives of spontaneity, their experiences are deeply social and cultural and must be understood in relation to a broader set of forces, which include place and context. Frohlick's analysis of these relationships as socially and historically shaped is especially convincing.

Frohlick's book is both theoretically sharp and a pleasure to read. This excellent contribution of our understanding of transnational sexuality and intimacy should be read (and taught) widely by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and those interested in tourism studies, gender studies and Latin American and Caribbean studies.

Fosshagen, Kjetil, ed., *Arab Spring: Uprisings, Powers, Interventions*. Critical Interventions: A Forum for Social Analysis, vol. 14, Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books 2014, 115 p.

*Reviewer: Nayrouz Abu Hatoum
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How can anthropologists write about a present that is constantly under construction? How can anthropology account for events in the *now* that are trajectories of past events, while also accounting for the past colonialism, decolonization, wars or partitions? What do anthropologists offer that could possibly be different from other social scientists? My answer is *definitely* a lot. Anthropological writing could engage with the ways people make and unmake sense of their lives or the way they tell their national story, while seeing their states and communities unfolding in front of their eyes or while witnessing the collective force of braveries emerging after years of suppression.

Arab Spring: Uprisings, Powers, Interventions (2014), volume 14, edited by anthropologist Kjetil Fosshagen of the series *Critical Interventions: A Forum for Social Analysis*, barely succeeds at bringing a new perspective on the revolutions in the Arab world. Since most contributors in this book are anthropologists, elaborate anthropological perspectives and explorations were anticipated, yet missed. However, what the book does succeed at is offering opinion essays, directed at both academic and non-academic audiences, and provoking possible questions for future anthropological research. Expecting immediate results in the Arab world, the essays in the book, as a whole, leave the reader with a slightly negative or suspicious feeling as to the ability of people in the Arab world to bring into being significant socio-political transformations. Although it is true that major structural powers were not radically overthrown, the revolutions in the Arab world have torn down the walls of fear in people's hearts and minds and made it possible to imagine a different future.

Fosshagen suggests a macro political-economy framework for reading the recent transformations in the Middle East and North Africa. He argues in the Introduction that despite the powerful and widespread protests, the "Arab uprisings," like

1848 Europe's Spring of Nations, did not produce radical political or social changes. The Arab uprisings, he claims, at best have pushed the governments to expand individual political rights, mostly among the middle classes. Fosshagen poses two crucial questions that one should keep in mind in relation to the Arab Spring. First, can these revolutions be considered "social revolutions in the historical and political sense, in that they promised and introduced a radically new social order?"; and, second, is there "a structure of social forces underneath the apparent chaos of the Arab Spring uprisings and their aftermath?" (p. 1).

Fosshagen attributes the heaviest weight behind the spark of the revolutions to the neoliberal economic policies that were introduced in the early 1980s, which included land reforms and the privatization of health care, education and industries. Reading Fosshagen's Introduction one learns that the Arab revolutions were mainly caused by economic and political frustrations. One also gets a strong impression that these revolutions failed or barely succeeded, as they were hijacked by (international) liberal forces.

While it is true that radical transformations did not occur over the short time of the past four years, mobilizing and protesting against state forces gave rise to the formation of other social radical spaces of activists who succeeded in addressing a multiplicity of issues that were crucial in imagining change in the midst of all the uncertainties. The best example is the powerful women's mobilization in Cairo against (military) sexual violence toward women (Assaad 2014).

Fosshagen's Introduction fails to locate the Arab world's revolutions in a wider historical context in the region. Such dehistoricization ignores the effects of almost 150 years of European direct and indirect colonization of the Arab world. A book on the current Arab revolutions should, instead of looking at Europe's 1848 Spring of Nations as a historical point of reference, compare today's events to previous historical revolutions in the region, such as decolonization revolts in the first half of the 20th century.

The first two contributions, by Paola Abenante, Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb and Kathryn Spellman-Poots, shed light on the marginalization within academic research of visual and performative art produced during the revolutions. The other four contributions explore the events in the region through a macro political and economic framework.

Abenante's piece focuses on Egypt's Tahrir Square reclamation and the politicization of the public space, specifically through the eyes and work of one street artist. Despite wide critique of the western singling out of the Tahrir Square site as the voice of the Egyptian revolution, which Abenante acknowledges, she nonetheless chose to look at Egypt's revolution through this same prominent urban square. Through the work of one artist, Abenante brings out a prevalent sentiment of Egypt's protestors, particularly that which reflects protestors' ambivalent relation to the state's military.

The chapter by Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb and Kathryn Spellman-Poots is an invitation for anthropologists to further research performativity and visual art in current global protests against neoliberal reforms. The authors suggest a comparative analysis of global protests drawing on the ways each national protest informs the other. What is missing from this invitation is a warning against falling into a comparative research that dehistoricizes local processes: Spain's and Tunisia's