Postcard narratives: A case of Vichy in France

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ABSTRACT

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This research explores the viewing of Vichy postcards made for local tourism. Drawing on this retrospection, the author proposes a narrative anthropological method for the study of postcards of Vichy, France. Primary to the elaboration is an argument for the shaping of the history of a variety of characters and words when analyzing the lived locale in every way. When viewing postcards about visual biases and surviving memories, a historical timeline activates aesthetic and art logic in observing the natural attitudes of those journeys. The research concludes with a description of narrative strategies in the teaching of European culture, centered on a unique narrative perspective which the author calls a “real traveler” strategy.

1. Introduction

Viewing postcards as being narratives of a traveler's experience is a way to get to know a place (Markwick, 2001; Mayes, 2010). When one is viewing a series of postcards, what they depict the figures, the craftsmen, the groups, and the monuments represent noteworthy spheres of human activity. Although viewers of the postcards can view them as being merely visually authentic, professional photographers still choose a true phase of appearances from the pure image of historic tracking even the pictures were taken are monochromatic (Albers & James, 1985). Indeed, postcards can convey a sense of history. Some researchers (Harris, 1995; Lynn, 2007; Wiryomartono, 2009) have discussed postcards from historical viewpoints when the postcards captured moments from the past. Ranging from the historical image itself to their own examination of the postcards, Albers and James (1988) emphasize traditional depictions of American Indians wearing chieftain's headdresses made of feathers; images of Indian women's life and images of the land; and photos with highly-distorted imagery photo from North Africa are subjects intended to appeal to a public audience of travelers, soldiers, and colonists. Likewise, the nude face of native women in Australia is tagged as portraying female sexuality. Depictions of Mexicans who are engaged in agriculture stress the image of their being assiduous and frugal, and the “peasant’s role” image of Mexicans, and the image of the Hawaiian harvest portrayed specific figures struggling with ideologies of ethnic motifs. Mellinger (1994) also depicted portrayals of the racist images of African Americans suffering toils and surviving in an agrarian environment without comfort as being a reflection of whites. Rosenspan (2001) captured the image of his friend, Bob, smiling in front of the Eiffel Tower in France, the Acropolis in Greece, and the Taj Mahal in India; with the happy smile serving to remind him of the best moments of his travels. Rogan (2005) notes that all postcards provide colorful images full of picture carriers which underline the aesthetics of reproduction techniques. The image on the postcard provides not only a practical way of seeing the sights but also an unforgettable experience that of gazing on them.

Past research has identified four perceptions related to images on postcards. First is the impression of there being relaxing sightseeing tours for the duration of the stay; second is the fascination with images of cities in different parts of the world; third is the emotionally-moving nature of natural landscape imagery (depending on how the visual topography looks to the reader), and fourth is historical-figure imagery. Kanematsu (2013) and Markwick (2001) both note that the islands’ postcard images are constructed with regards to consumers’ perspectives on the harmoniousness of local people, and are portrayed as being authentic representations of that harmoniousness; and it associates more traditional and natural settings with epicurean spectacles, and validates visitors’ being held enraptured by their coming. Milman (2012) offers photographs of nineteen pictures illustrating German Berlin such as Berlin food, tourist attractions, features of Berlin, Berlin texts, Berlin’s role in the Cold War, and Berlin iconography on the postcards as a way to highlight and enhance Berlin’s successful image. Such images on the postcards for example, Cohen (2007) strongly describe the character of Santa Claus, which serves as a reflection of Thailand images from the aspects of a Bangkok traffic jam, to the disappearance of traditional costumes, to tourists not being able to find their way in the urban confusion of Bangkok, to classical Thai dance being hard to preserve, to elderly male tourists flirting with lovely Thai girls, and to there being an innuendo role for Santa Claus. The illustration of the images is often shot using drawing repertoire in the Baker (2014) study, which conveys the engineering of the mountain train for...
onboard passengers and which raises the age of railway construction. Hunter (2013) discussed the existence of Mao Zedong’s value for people as a visual semiotic and cultism representation. These studies are forcibly choosing more clear images by photographing and portraying scenes as a way to promote tourism. Therefore, promoting popular images by looking at postcards, for instance, promoting health benefits associated with a famous brand name is necessary for a place itself.

Postcards are essential than superficial images and values. We argue that postcards that can be sold to make a profit. For urban tourism branding (Rabbiosi, 2015), a more commercial image of the city is submerged by consumer capitalism. This paper is instead more concerned on the case of Vichy in central France, a town that is well recognized since its famous spas, which is associated with positive health benefits, carry the image of healthiness based on natural spring water which can help settle restless stomachs. This paper questions the necessity of health eyeshot before interpreting the branding image of Vichy on postcards. First, postcards are a holistic understanding of the sets of images that can be seen as picturesque while stimulating the visual scene. Second, we argue that postcards are invisible objects that exist in one’s frame of mind (on the picture side) and fall into the realm of deeply subjective prejudice. Third, postcards are formed with a dynamic series of sensibilities, even when the appearance of words completely printed on the postcards; and can be specifically seen as being a cue which increases the perceived awareness of the sight in the manipulation of imagery. Finally, a more powerful postcard holds a permanent place in popularity by anchoring a clear, healthy, and clean image of the place.

Once genuine postcards favor the emergence of a popular culture dominated by consumption and style, the increasing fragmentation of self-identity has resulted from the refusal to include other people in the landscapes (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). The majority assess whether or not a self-image has become a well-established identity, which gave people a conspicuous consumption of their position and a coherent sense of themselves. It is argued that the focal point for the image of individualism has been seen in the form of estheticism. More attention could be placed on why the characters of realistic settings would appear to be well suited for such a setting. This relies upon a strong implication that the protagonist is shaped in moving images in the form of a series of impressions deeply embedded in attractions. Each card, featuring each event in a story, takes place in a continuum, showing the reader the action as it happens such as the diversionary tale, typically consisting of only one or several stories includes action sequences and allows for more time to be devoted to the viewing of each episode. And since the old tales, in which understanding why something should have happened is often complex, Strinati (2000) analyses this hidden meaning, stating that:

“The argument is that images are increasingly consumed for their own sake rather than for their utility, or for any deeper meanings or values they may possess. They are consumed precisely because they are images and allow questions of meaning, utility, and value to be disregarded. People increasingly consumed goods and images not for their usefulness, as might once have been the case with consumer goods, not for any profound value they may possess, as might once have been the case with cultural objects such as works of art. In this process, it is the style, not the substance of consumption which ‘matters’” (p. 234).

Even if we were to assume that visual symbology is indeed a function of the postcards, the narratives of the iconography are rarely discarded as mundane from the premise of self-construction depends on the initial angle of vision (della Dora, 2009; Rowley, 2008). Indeed, visual materials should not assume that the reproduction of reality (and the truth) has reached a degree of elaboration marked by the typical symbolic stereotype (and usually defined by a clear-cut ending). It carries the visual sense that it is not a fragmented image but rather is one characterized as being beneficial for journeys with strong historical and cultural associations, natural sources, facilities for pleasure and entertainment, and recreational sites. According to Mikunda (2004), today’s “hot” and “cool” spaces can be found everywhere in hotels, restaurants, bars, and shower rooms. There is no doubt that such “popular places” have been the subject of academic interest (Garrod, 2008; Gylímothy & Mykletun, 2004; Hayward, 2012; Henderson, 2000; Jansen-Verbeke, Vandenburgoucke, & Tielen, 2005; Nelson, 2007; Pearce, 1999; Stedman, Beckley, Wallace, & Ambard, 2004).

An important such place is Vichy—one of the best-known spa centers in France (and, arguably, in the world). Vichy shares with many other such tourist destinations a long history as a mineral bath health resort and a gathering place for a socially exclusive clientele (Gordon, 2012). It may, in fact, support the longevity of the place and people visited, by relieving some of the pressure. Wilk (2006) noted, that the power of water to connect people to the power of nature was transmitted through the contagious magic of baptism, libation, bathing, and drinking, both in pagan and in Christian traditions. He sees water as being a “substance of the natural world becoming simply another of branding poly” (Wilk, 2006, p. 320). And since the function of water is different from what we drink, it is symbolic, an attractive substance to be connected with a belief or a religion. Consequently, liquid water gradually started to change.

Some of the popular geographies which have emerged are based on environmental materials. These include the Alps, Maar, landing beaches, glaciers, ski resorts, the Aven Armand cave, and roads that have enough imagery in a single setting to attract tourists. For example, García-Álvarez and Marías-Martínez (2013) showed that the natural landscapes readily associated with romantic aesthetics such as mountain chains or volcanoes in the form of historical and artistic nature—represent a colorfully dynamic image of adventure. The Spanish provinces such as Gran Canaria, Málaga, and Cádiz—incorporate landscape elements not only as a resource or as a means to attract the attention of tourists, but also as samples of heritage (García-Álvarez & Marías-Martínez, 2013, p. 96).

2. Postcard narratives

Not only have postcards been used to describe the presence of landscapes and physical images when viewing them (della Dora, 2009), but also they have been used to describe a moment-in-space-and-time representation of things’ depth; involvement in perceiving different levels of engagements; and embodied, sensuous interactions with the subject. The atmosphere in these surroundings was unspeakable and feel of capturing the grand sight over the actual trip, one could stop at any point, pause a moment at this scene. There is a strong feeling of atmosphere, as stated by Lombardo (2003):

“The overwhelming presence of the visual calls for a type of experience where physical sensation, and the immediate feelings connected with it, is constantly solicited. The richness of the visual is boundless: The gaze dominates every human activity” (p. 174).

Each postcard is embedded in one’s mind when the person is involved. My father, who loves postcards, knows the European historical events in order to prove an exaltation of the journey which can be long sustained. His name is Terrence Yu. Sometimes, he picks the French postcards to focus on the aesthetic image of art history. Indeed, postcards can be seen as being a memory that allows him to see everything from its scenes in the manner of his historical understanding. He is interested in war history, war documentaries, Louis XIV, Légion Étrangère, Napoleon, classical French novels, and Vincent van Gogh’s paintings. When he studied in France (where he learned French and English), he became an expert in teaching and writing and developed a love of Europe. He also reads Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s books, sharing his deepest discoveries and new things learned, catching someone acknowledging his views, and collecting postcards, as well as sports.

French postcards are linked with Terrence’s history in 1990 while on
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