



Commemoration or Profit? The Truth Behind Belfast's Titanic Commemoration and Memorialization

Abstract

In this research project, I examine commemorations, media coverage, and commercial films related to the 1912 sinking of the Titanic in Belfast Ireland. More specifically, I argue that museums in Belfast Ireland employ dark tourism and romanticized media coverage to bring in tourism and economic growth to Ireland. I examine the ways that multimedia, celebrations, and museums are used to obscure the commemoration events in order to profit from the historic tragedy. My research highlights the commemoration of the centennial sinking and how these sites serve as a form of commercial profit for places such as Belfast Ireland.



Figure 1. Newenham, Janet. "7 Reasons to Love the Belfast Titanic Quarter." Wild Rover Tours, July 8, 2019. <https://wildrovertours.com/blog/7-reasons-love-titanic-quarter-belfast/>.

Historical Context

Since the sinking of the Titanic there has been numerous amounts of media coverage as well as tourist attractions surrounding this tragedy. One major factor that has surrounded this tragedy is media on the screen including the film by James Cameron Titanic in 1997. This film as well as many other media and tourist attractions have made the sinking of the Titanic a profitable event. In figure 2 it shows "the heart of the ocean" that is a fictional object although everyone connects the Titanic with this object because of the movie Titanic. This is happening in many of Titanic's commemorations where the true history of what happen is being skewed or forgotten because media as well as commemoration leaves out a lot of the truth behind Titanic and they are not commemorating for the right reasons they're commemorating for profit..

Work Cited

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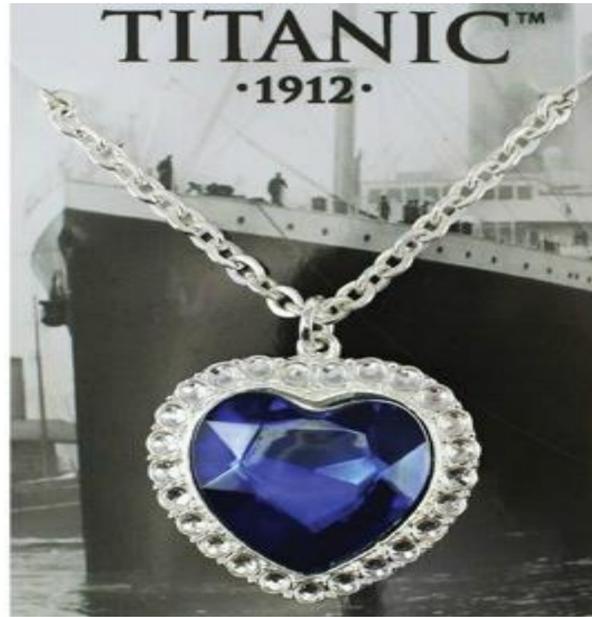
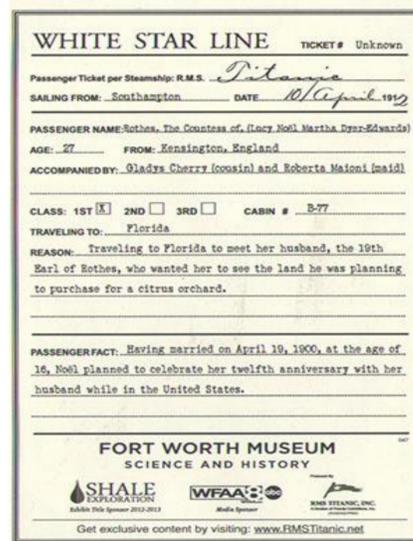


Figure 2. The Zen Cart® Team. Responsive Zen Cart design by Irish Shopper Limited - <https://irishshopper.com>. "RMS Titanic Accessories." The Belfast Titanic Gift

Literature Review

For this research, I synthesized works by scholars who address dark tourism and traumatic events in numerous historical contexts. For example, historian Daniel Botsman shows how some sites emphasize economic success and thus represent an "absence" in terms of histories of "militarization, war, and imperial expansion" relevant to many commemorative sites (2018, p.296). Scholars of public memory also argue that these types of tourist sites bring out a "weakness in public memory of the disaster" (Kasperski 2012, p. 82). These authors all share a similar view that dark tourism creates an environment where competing histories affect how public memory is rewritten or forgotten.



Analysis

The commemorations for the Titanic in Belfast have transformed into a tourist attraction instead a way of remembering the men and women who lost their lives. Belfast has memorialized the Titanic in museums (Fig. 1). Although these museums "teach" about the Titanic, they also use these event and museums for profit. In Belfast, some museums profit through romanticized interpretations of what happened aboard Titanic, most widely known through the film produced by James Cameron. This film has made people believe events that did not really happen on Titanic, including marketable objects such as "the heart of the ocean" jewel, which is now sold throughout many museums around the world. Scholars have thus critiqued the ways in which museums profit from this tragedy.

Museums also profit from marketing the real-life stories of survivors and victims of the Titanic event. For example, some museums distribute "boarding passes" (Fig. 3) of real people aboard the Titanic, assigning the tourists to "the most authentic experience of of what it was like to be a board Titanic." Although the men and women who lost their lives are now being made into a tourism exhibit for profit, some scholars argue that this practice may be viewed as disrespectful to the dead. Another experience that is offered is that many people get married in the Titanic Belfast Museum (Fig. 4). Many people are using the romanticism that was made by the films produced to profit. All of these misinterpretations of the Titanic as well the commemorations and events tend to skew the history of the Titanic and risk erasing meaningful collective memories of survivors and affected communities.

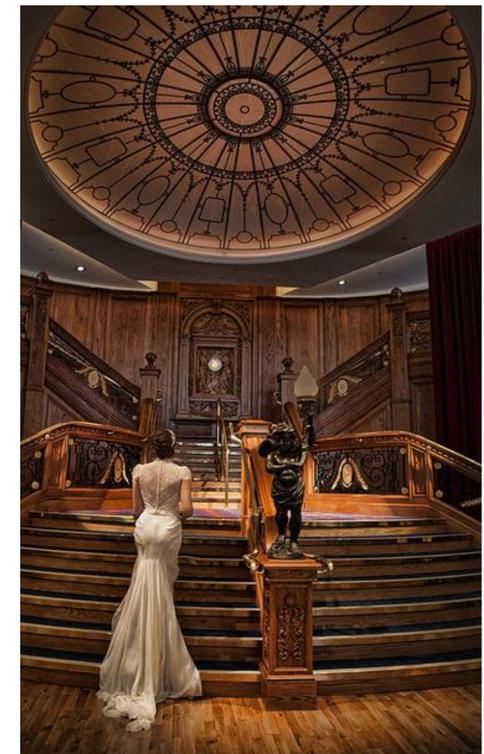


Figure 4. <https://titanicbelfast.com/Weddings/Suites/The-Titanic-Suite.aspx>

Conclusion

This tragic event of the sinking of the Titanic is being commercialized all over the world and especially in Belfast Ireland, Titanic's last port dock before setting sail. Places such as Belfast are using commemoration events in order to monopolize and make money off tragedies, and in doing so are limiting and destroying commemorative memory of the event and skewing the true reason for commemorations.

"Figure 3. The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History: Titanic – The Artifact Exhibition." Ripley's North Texas Explorations, January 22, 2013. <https://ripleyarnoldx.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/titanicience/>.