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Seeing and Theming

Introduction

I have shown some of the connections between tourist practices and many other social phenomena. These are complex, partly because of the diverse nature of tourism and partly because other social phenomena increasingly involve elements of the tourist gaze. There is a generalisation of the tourist gaze in postmodern cultures – a generalisation which often takes the form of a vernacular, heritage and themed reshaping of much of the urban and rural landscape.

None of the theories outlined in Chapter 1 are in themselves adequate to grasp the 'essence' of tourism, which is multi-faceted and particularly bound up with many other social and cultural elements. It is inappropriate to think that it is possible to devise 'the theory of tourist behaviour'. Instead what is required is a range of concepts and arguments which capture both what is specific to tourism and what is common to tourist and certain non-tourist social practices. Central to much tourism is some notion of departure, particularly that there are distinct contrasts between what people routinely see and experience and what is extraordinary, the extraordinary sometimes taking the form of a liminal zone. The following are relevant to understanding the changing sociology of the tourist gaze: the social tone of different places; the globalisation of the tourist gaze; the processes of consuming tourist services; tourist meanings and signs; modernism and postmodernism; history, heritage and the vernacular; and post-tourism and play. Different gazes and hence different tourist practices are authorised in terms of a variety of discourses (see Chapter 8).

In this chapter I consider in more detail two aspects of the tourist gaze notion. First, I examine what is meant by the idea of seeing and in turn being seen, especially via the medium of photography. And I reconsider the simulated character of the contemporary cultural experience, so-called 'hyper-reality' and the construction of 'themed' environments waiting to be viewed by the omnivorous visual consumer.

Seeing and being seen

Mass tourism is a characteristic of modern societies. It could only develop when a variety of economic, urban, infrastructural and attitudinal changes had transformed the social experiences of large sections of the population of European societies during the course of the nineteenth century. The way

these changes worked themselves out in Britain were illustrated by analysing the causes and consequences of the growth of a new urban form, the sea-side resort.

But there is one aspect of nineteenth-century developments that I have not yet described in any detail. This concerns the emergence of relatively novel modes of visual perception which became part of the modern experience of living and visiting new urban centres, particularly the grand capital cities. Here I shall show the nature of this new mode of visual perception, the connections between it and the growth of the tourist gaze, and the centrality of photography to these processes. The immensely expanding popularity of photography in the later nineteenth century indicates the importance of these new forms of visual perception, and their role in structuring the tourist gaze that was emerging in this period. This new mode of visual experience has been eloquently characterised by Berman, who sees in the rebuilding of Paris during the Second Empire in the mid-nineteenth century the construction of the conditions for the quintessentially modern experience (see Berman, 1983: section 3). It is also one of the most celebrated of tourist gazes.

For Berman what is of central importance to Paris in this period is the reconstruction of urban space which permits new ways of seeing and being seen. This was engendered by the massive rebuilding of Paris by Haussmann, who blasted a vast network of new boulevards through the heart of the old medieval city. The rebuilding of Paris displaced 350,000 people; by 1870 one-fifth of the streets of central Paris were Haussmann's creation; and at the height of the reconstruction one in five of all workers in the capital was employed in construction (see Clark, 1984: 37).

The boulevards were central to this planned reconstruction – they were like arteries in a massive circulatory system, and were planned partly at least to facilitate rapid troop movements. However, they also restructured what could be seen or gazed upon. Haussmann's plan entailed the building of markets, bridges, parks, the Opera and other cultural palaces, with many located at the end of the various boulevards. Such boulevards came to structure the gaze, both of Parisians and later of visitors. For the first time in a major city people could see well into the distance and indeed see where they were going and where they had come from. Great sweeping vistas were designed so that each walk led to a dramatic climax. As Berman says:

All these qualities helped to make Paris a uniquely enticing spectacle, a visual and sensual feast ... after centuries of life as a cluster of isolated cells, Paris was becoming a unified physical and human space (1983: 151).

Certain of these spectacular views have come to be signifiers of the entity 'Paris' (as opposed to the individual districts).

These boulevards brought enormous numbers of people together in ways that were relatively novel. The street level was lined with many small businesses, shops and especially cafés. The last of these have come to be known all over the world as signs of *la vie Parisienne*, particularly as generations of

painters, writers and photographers have represented the patterns of life in and around them, beginning with the Impressionists in the 1860s (see Berman, 1983: 151; Clark, 1984).

In particular Berman talks of the way in which the boulevards and cafés created a new kind of space, especially one where lovers could be 'private in public', intimately together without being physically alone (1983: 152). Lovers caught up in the extraordinary movement of modern Paris in the 1860s and 1870s could experience their emotional commitment particularly intensely. It was the traffic of people and horses that transformed social experience in this modern urban area. Urban life was both exceptionally rich and full of possibilities; and at the same time it was dangerous and frightening. As Baudelaire wrote: 'I was crossing the boulevard, in a great hurry, in the midst of a moving chaos, with death galloping at me from every side' (quoted Berman, 1983: 159).

To be private in the midst of such danger and chaos created the perfect romantic setting of modern times; and millions of visitors have attempted to re-experience that particular quality among the boulevards and cafés of Paris.

This romantic experience could be felt especially intensely in front of the endless parades of strangers moving up and down the boulevards – it was those strangers they gazed upon and who in turn gazed at them. Part then of the gaze in the new modern city of Paris was of the multitude of passers-by, who both enhanced the lovers' vision of themselves and in turn provided an endlessly fascinating source of curiosity.

They could weave veils of fantasy around the multitude of passers-by: who were these people, where did they come from and where were they going, what did they want, whom did they love? The more they saw of others and showed themselves to others – the more they participated in the extended 'family of eyes' – the richer became their vision of themselves. (Berman, 1983: 152)

Hausmann's reconstruction of Paris was not of course without its intense critics (see Clark, 1984: 41–50). It was very forcibly pointed out that demolishing the old *quartiers* meant that much of the working class was forced out of the centre of Paris, particularly because of the exceptionally high rents charged in the lavish apartment blocks that lined the new boulevards. Reconstruction therefore led to rapid residential segregation and to the worst signs of deprivation and squalor being removed from the gaze of richer Parisians and, later in the century, of visitors. Second, Paris was said to be increasingly a city of vice, vulgarity and display – ostentation not luxury, frippery not fashion, consumption not trade (see Clark, 1984: 46–7). It was a city of uncertainty in which there were too many surfaces, too few boundaries. It was the city of the *flâneur* or stroller. The anonymity of the crowd provided an asylum for those on the margins of society who were able to move about unnoticed, observing and being observed, but never really interacting with those encountered. The *flâneur* was the modern hero, able to travel, to arrive, to gaze, to move on, to be anonymous, to be in a liminal zone (see Benjamin, 1973; Wolff, 1985; Tester, 1994).

The *flâneur* was invariably male and this rendered invisible the different ways in which women were both more restricted to the private sphere and at the same time were coming to colonise other emerging public spheres in the late nineteenth century, especially the department store (see Wolff, 1985, 1993). The strolling *flâneur* was a forerunner of the twentieth-century tourist and in particular of the activity which has in a way become emblematic of the tourist: the democratised taking of photographs – of being seen and recorded, and of seeing others and recording them.

Susan Sontag explicitly makes this link between the *flâneur* and photography. The latter:

first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur* ... The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the *flâneur* finds the world 'picturesque'. (1979: 55)

While the middle-class *flâneur* was attracted to the city's dark seamy corners, the twentieth-century photographer is attracted everywhere, to every possible object, event and person. And at the same time the photographer is also observed and photographed. One is both see-er and seen. To be a photographer in the twentieth century, and that is so much part of travel and tourism, is also to be viewed and photographed.

There has been an enormous proliferation of photographic images since the invention of photography in 1839. Over that century and a half there has been an utter insatiability of the photographing eye, an insatiability that teaches new ways of looking at the world and new forms of authority for doing so. Photography currently results in the overloading of the visual environment, with apparently sixty billion pictures being taken each year (Crang, 1999; 243). It is moreover a socially constructed way of seeing and recording with a number of key characteristics that I now outline and develop (Sontag, 1979; Berger, 1972; Barthes, 1981; Albers and James, 1988; Osborne, 2000):

- 1 To photograph is in some way to appropriate the object being photographed. It is a power/knowledge relationship. To have visual knowledge of an object is in part to have power, even if only momentarily, over it. Photography tames the object of the gaze, the most striking examples being of exotic cultures. In the US the railway companies did much to create 'Indian' attractions to be photographed, carefully selecting those tribes with a particularly 'picturesque and ancient' appearance (see Albers and James, 1988: 151).
- 2 Photography *seems* to be a means of transcribing reality. The images produced appear to be not statements about the world but pieces of it, or even miniature slices of reality. A photograph thus seems to furnish evidence that something did indeed happen – that someone really was there or that the mountain actually was that large. It is thought that the camera does not lie.

- 3 Yet in fact photographs are the outcome of an active signifying practice in which those taking the photo select, structure and shape what is going to be taken. In particular there is the attempt to construct idealised images which beautify the object being photographed. Sontag summarises: 'the aestheticizing tendency of photography is such that the medium which conveys distress ends by neutralizing it' (1979: 109).
Elsewhere I show how professional photographers actively construct aestheticised images of the Lake District devoid of cars, people, bad weather, litter and so on (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997).
- 4 The power of the photograph thus stems from its ability to pass itself off as a miniaturisation of the real, without revealing either its constructed nature or its ideological content (but see Martin Parr's photographs in *Small World*, 1995; and see Taylor, 1994).
- 5 As everyone becomes a photographer so everyone also becomes an amateur semiotician. One learns that a thatched cottage with roses round the door represents 'ye olde England'; or that waves crashing on to rocks signifies 'wild, untamed nature'; or, especially, that a person with a camera draped around his/her neck is clearly a 'tourist'.
- 6 Photography involves the democratisation of all forms of human experience, both by turning everything into photographic images and by enabling anyone to photograph them, especially with the development of throwaway cameras. Photography is then part of the process of post-modernisation. Each thing or person photographed becomes equivalent to the other, equally interesting or uninteresting. Barthes notes that photography began with photographs of the notable and has ended up making notable whatever is photographed (1981: 34, and see Sontag, 1979: 111). Photography is a promiscuous way of seeing which cannot be limited to an elite, as art. Sontag talks of photography's 'zeal for debunking the high culture of the past ... its conscientious courting of vulgarity ... its skill in reconciling avant-garde ambitions with the rewards of commercialism ... its transformation of art into cultural document' (1979: 131).
- 7 Photography gives shape to travel. It is the reason for stopping, to take (snap) a photograph, and then to move on. Photography involves obligations. People feel that they must not miss seeing particular scenes since otherwise the photo-opportunities will be missed. Tourist agencies spend much time indicating where photographs should be taken (so-called viewing points). Indeed much tourism becomes in effect a search for the photogenic; travel is a strategy for the accumulation of photographs and hence for the commodification and privatisation of personal and especially of family memories (West, 2000: 9). This seems particularly to appeal to those cultures with a very strong work ethic. Japanese, Americans and Germans all seem to 'have' to take photographs and then to remember through these photographs – it is a kind of leisure equivalent of the distorting obligations of a strong workplace culture (see Sontag, 1979).

- 8 Involved in much tourism is a hermeneutic circle. What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photographic images, which have already been seen in tour company brochures or on TV programmes (see Selwyn, 1996). While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen before they set off.

Mass photography has thus been enormously significant in democratising various kinds of mobilities, making notable whatever gets photographed rather than what elites might have specified. And photography gives shape to travel so that journeys consist of one 'good view' to capture on film, to a series of others. The objects and technologies of cameras and films have constituted the very nature of travel, as sites turn into sights, they have constructed what is worth going to 'sightsee' and what images and memories should be brought back (West, 2000; Osborne, 2000). The camera effects this by turning nature and society into graspable objects (just as photography turns women into materialised objects on a page or video):

the snapshot transforms the resistant aspect of nature into something familiar and intimate, something we can hold in our hands and memories. In this way, the camera allows us some control over the visual environments of our culture (Wilson, 1992: 122).

Nature, other environments and humans are transformed into objects that are passed from person to person. They are put on walls to decorate a house, they structure reminiscences and they create images of place (Spence and Holland, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Photographs are subjective and objective, both personal *and* apparently accounting for how things really are. Indeed the photographic tourist gaze produces an aesthetics that excludes as much as it includes. It is unusual to see postcards or tourist photographs containing 'landscapes' of waste, disease, dead animals, poverty, sewage and despoilation (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997; but see Taylor, 1994; Parr, 1995). West also notes how Kodak's advertising 'purged domestic photography of all traces of sorrow and death' (2000: 1; see Hutnyk, 1996, on 'photogenic Calcutta').

Landscapes and townscapes typically involve the notion of 'mastery'. The photographer, and then the viewer, is seen to be above, and dominating, a static and subordinate landscape lying out inert and inviting inspection. Such photographic practices demonstrate how the environment is to be viewed, dominated by humans and subject to their possessive mastery (Taylor, 1994: 38–9).

Photography has therefore been crucial in the development of tourism; they are not separate processes but each derives from and enhances the other, an 'ensemble' according to Osborne (2000). If photography had not been 'invented' around 1840 and then enormously developed through the cheap Kodak camera then contemporary tourist gazes would have been wholly different (see West, 2000). One early example of the impact of the ensemble of photography and tourism is late nineteenth century Egypt. Gregory has

described the processes of 'Kodakisation' (1999; and see West, 2000). Egypt became scripted as a place of constructed visibility, with multiple, enframèd theatrical scenes set up for the edification, entertainment and visual consumption of 'European' visitors. Cairo became 'no more than a Winter Suburb of London' (Löfgren, 2000: 162). This had the effect of producing what could be described as a 'new Egypt' available for visually consuming visitors.

Such an Egypt consisted of the Suez Canal, of 'Paris-on-the-Nile', of Thomas Cook and Sons, of a cleaned-up 'ancient Egypt', of the exotic oriental 'other' and of convenient vantage-points and viewing platforms for the tourist gaze (see Brendon, 1991: 118, more generally on how Cook's tourists were 'pervading the whole earth'). Analogously West argues that in the US a single corporation (Kodak) had enormous effects; it 'taught modern Americans how to see, to remember, how to love' (2000: xv).

Indeed without photography there would not be the contemporary global tourism industry. Osborne describes: 'the ultimate inseparability of the medium [of photography] from tourism's general culture and economy and from the varieties of modern culture of which they are constitutive' (2000: 70).

Themes and Malls

In this section I discuss one aspect of the gaze, how a variety of environments are produced, marketed, circulated and consumed. I consider aspects of recent theme parks before turning to the themed character of contemporary retailing, noting especially the ubiquitous shopping mall.

First, there is an increasingly pervasive tendency to divide up countries in terms of new spatial divisions with new place names. In the north of England there is 'Last of the Summer Wine Country', 'Emmerdale Farm Country', 'James Herriot Country', 'Robin Hood Country', 'Catherine Cookson Country', 'Brontë Country' and so on. Space is divided up in terms of signs that signify particular themes – but not themes that necessarily relate to actual historical or geographical processes. A similar process can be seen in Canada where the theme of 'Maritimicity' developed since the 1920s as a result of the provincial state and private capital seeking to develop modern tourism in Nova Scotia. McKay describes it as 'a peculiar petit-bourgeois rhetoric of lobster pots, grizzled fishermen, wharves and schooners ... a Golden Age mythology in a region that has become economically dependent on tourism' (1988: 30). In particular Peggy's Cove has over the years become a purer and purer simulacrum, a copy of a prosperous and tranquil fishing village that never existed.

Even stranger is the case of the Granada Studios in Manchester. Part of the display consists of a mock-up of certain sets from the soap opera *Coronation Street*, including the Rover's Return public house. This is very popular with visitors, who are keen to photograph it. But as one commentator noted: 'when we develop our photos of that Rover's Return scenario we will consume a representation of a representation of a representation' (Goodwin, 1989). This

set is part of the 'Coronation Street Experience' in which the Rover's Return pub is given a fictional history, starting in 1902.

Other themed attractions in Britain include the Jorvik Centre in York, the Camelot theme park in Lancashire, the American Adventure in the Peak District, the Oxford Story, the Crusades experience in Winchester ('history brought to life'), and the Pilgrim's Way in Canterbury. The last is described in the advertising material as 'a pilgrimage to the past'. However, the sense of history is bizarre since:

a man on children's television is the model for a dummy who is the adjunct to a non-existent scene in a mediaeval religious poem, none of whose words you hear (Faulks, 1988).

Another distinctive example is to be found in Llandrindod Wells in Wales. Once a year most of the population dress up in Edwardian costume, but it has recently been suggested that the population could be dressed that way *for the entire year*. Thus the whole town and its population would be turned into a permanent Edwardian themed town. Already Visby in Sweden, an island in the Baltic, experiences a 'medieval week' when everyone dresses up in medieval costume, bringing the medieval 'theme' to life.

Themes are, in Debord's terms, elements of the 'society of the spectacle' (1983) or what Eco describes as 'travels in hyper-reality' (1986). In such themed areas the objects observed must seem real and absolutely authentic. Those responsible for Jorvik or the Oxford Story have attempted to make the experience authentic, through the use of smells as well as visual and aural simulation. The scenes are in a sense more real than the original, hyper-real. Or at least the surfaces, as grasped through the immediate senses, are more real. Lowenthal notes that 'habituation to replicas tends to persuade us that antiquities should look complete and "new"' (1985: 293). The representations thus approximate more closely to our expectations of reality, of the signs that we carry around waiting to be instantiated: 'Disneyland tells us that faked nature corresponds much more to our daydream demands ... Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can' (Eco, 1986: 44).

This theming was taken to the extreme in New Zealand. A popular nineteenth-century tourist attraction was a set of pink and white terraces rising up above Lake Rotomahana. These were destroyed by volcanic eruptions in 1886 although photographs of them have remained popular ever since. They are a well-known attraction even if they have not existed for a century. Now, however, the physical attraction has been recreated by running geothermal water over artificially built terraces in a different location, but one close to existing tourist facilities. This set of what might be called 'themed' terraces will look more authentic than the original which is only known about because of the hundred-year-old photographic images.

This technological ability to create new themes which appear more real than the original has now spread from tourist attractions *per se*, beginning

with Disneyland, to shopping centres or malls. Many malls are now extraordinary tourist attractions in their own right and represent an exceptional degree of cultural de-differentiation, as discussed in Chapter 5. Consider the following publicity material for the West Edmonton Mall (see Figure 7.1):

Imagine visiting Disneyland, Malibu Beach, Bourbon Street, the San Diego Zoo, Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills and Australia's Great Barrier Reef ... in one weekend – and under one roof ... Billed as the world's largest shopping complex of its kind, the Mall covers 110 acres and features 828 stores, 110 restaurants, 19 theatres ... a five-acre water park with a glass dome that is over 19 storeys high ... Contemplate the Mall's indoor lake complete with four submarines from which you can view sharks, octopi, tropical marine life, and a replica of the Great Barrier Reef ... Fantasyland Hotel has given its rooms a variety of themes: one floor holds Classical Roman rooms, another *1001 Nights* Arabian rooms, another, Polynesian rooms ... (Travel Alberta, undated)

The mall has been very successful: as early as 1987 attracting over nine million visitors, making it the third most popular tourist attraction in north America after two Disney parks. The Mall represents a symbolic rejection of the normally understood world geography in which there are distant centres with Edmonton on the periphery. What is being asserted is a new collective sense of place based on transcending the geographical barrier of distance and of place. The real-space relations of the globe are thus replaced by imaginary-space relations (Shields, 1989: 153).

This has only been possible because of the pervasiveness of tourist signs, of the rapid circulation of photographic images. It is this exchange of signs which makes possible the construction of a pastiche of themes, each of which seems more real than the original, particularly because of the way that shopping malls in general emphasise newness and cleanliness: 'It is a world where Spanish galleons sail up Main Street past Marks and Spencer to put in at 'New Orleans', where everything is tame and happy shoppers mingle with smiling dolphins' (Shields, 1989: 154).

The closest to this in Britain are the Trafford Centre near Manchester and the Metrocentre in the north east. The latter was located in a place normally considered peripheral to British and European life. It was constructed on derelict land and contains three miles of shopping malls with 300 shops, 40 restaurants, a 10-screen cinema, a bowling alley, an enormous fantasy kingdom of fairground rides and entertainments, a crèche, and three themed areas. These themes are 'Antique Village', with a phoney waterwheel and plastic ducks on the village pond; a 'Roman Forum', with areas on which to recline Roman-style; and a 'Mediterranean Village', with Italian, Greek and Lebanese restaurants lining a windingly quaint Mediterranean street. Shopping is clearly here only part of the appeal of the mall, which is as much concerned with leisure and tourism. Within a few minutes' walk one can consume a range of tourist themes, can stroll gazing and being gazed upon as though 'on holiday', and can experience an enormous range of entertainment services.



Figure 7.1 West Edmonton Shopping Mall, Canada

Malls represent membership of a community of consumers. To be in attendance at the 'court of commodities' is to assert one's existence and to be recognised as a citizen in contemporary society, that is, as a consumer. However, the recent marketing philosophy has been to develop spectacles of 'diversity and market segmentation', although this is less clear in the case of mass middle-class malls such as the Metrocentre. The development of such differentiation in particular centres is because the display of difference will increase a centre's tourist appeal to many others within the same market 'segment' from elsewhere. For example, Trump Tower in New York was the ultimate 1980s upper-middle-class white shopping mall (see Figure 7.2 for the Russian equivalent).



Figure 7.2 Gum Shopping Arcades, Moscow, Russian Federation

Developments of this sort also represent the changing nature of public space in contemporary societies. An increasingly central role is being played by privately owned and controlled consumption spaces. These involve high levels of surveillance where certain types of behaviour, clothing and comportment are expected, such as not sitting on the floor. The entrance and pathways of malls are 'policed' and 'undesirable' categories of the population, such as the homeless, can be excluded. The Metrocentre boasts that it is safest place in Britain to shop. There are some analogies between Bentham's panopticon prison and the visual and electronic surveillance found in these

malls. They are also conspicuous for cleanliness and newness, with no space for untidy litter, the old, the shabby or the worn. Malls have to exude up-to-dateness and fashionability which is why they have to be regularly refurbished (see Fiske, 1989: 39–42).

Malls attract their share of 'post-shoppers', people who play at being consumers in complex, self-conscious mockery. Users should not be seen simply as victims of consumerism, as 'credit card junkies', but also as being able to assert their independence from the mall developers. This is achieved by a kind of tourist *flânerie*, by continuing to stroll, to gaze, and to be gazed upon: 'Their wandering footsteps, the modes of their crowd practice constitute that certain urban ambiance: a continuous reassertion of the rights and freedoms of the marketplace, the *communitas* of the carnival' (Shields, 1989: 161).

In an Australian study Pressdee showed that in spite of the control mechanisms in such malls 80 per cent of unemployed young people visited them at least once a week, and that more or less 100 per cent of young unemployed women were regular visitors (1986). Late-night shopping on Thursday was when young people with little intention to buy invaded the mall. The youths consumed images and space instead of commodities. Fiske talks of:

a kind of sensuous consumption that did not create profits. The positive pleasure of parading up and down, of offending 'real' consumers and the gents of law and order, of asserting their difference within, and different use of, the cathedral of consumerism became an oppositional cultural practice. (1989: 17)

Fiske also points out the central importance of shops as public, or at least semi-public, spaces particularly attractive to women (1989). I noted earlier the importance of the nineteenth-century development of the department store in this respect, that it was both respectable and safe for unattached women. Zola described the department store as 'a temple to women, making a legion of shop assistants burn incense before her' (quoted in Pevsner, 1970: 269). The mall is somewhat similar, and indeed shopping is a sphere of social activity in which women are empowered. It links together the public and the domestic and involves activity in which women are permitted to demonstrate competence.

Finally, one should note a further setting for themed environments which have become particularly popular in the last decades, world fairs, which have developed into enormous international tourist attractions. For example, over 500,000 visitors a day attended the 1992 Expo in Seville (Harvey, P, 1996: 155). The development and popularity of these world fairs represent the growing intrusion of leisure, tourism and the aesthetic into the urban landscape. They provide further examples of the de-differentiation of leisure, tourism, shopping, culture, education, eating, and so on.

Expo's are organised around different national displays (Harvey, P, 1996: Chapter 3). There are many themed environments based on different national stereotypes, such as the British pub, American achievement in sport, the German beer garden and South Sea Islands exotic dancing. Such themes are designed to demonstrate national pride in the cultural activities presumed

specific to that country. Generally this pride was demonstrated either in repackaging aspects of that country's traditions and heritage or in demonstrating the high level of modern technology achieved.

As with the Vancouver Expo, no single hegemonic set of messages was conveyed by the fair. Indeed they are such postmodern phenomena that this would be difficult to achieve. Such fairs are, if anything, a kind of micro-version of international tourism. Rather than tourists having to travel world-wide to experience and gaze upon these different signs, they are conveniently brought together in one location, simply on a larger scale than the West Edmonton mall. Harvey says more generally: 'it is now possible to experience the world's geography vicariously, as a simulacrum' (1989: 300). This can be seen from the entertainment provided at such world fairs. At Vancouver there were 43,000 free on-site performances given by an incredible 80,000 performers (Ley and Olds, 1988: 203). Although there was high culture, including a presentation from *La Scala* to an audience of 40,000, most entertainment consisted of folk or popular forms, all in all a post-modern cultural pastiche, rather like the availability of cuisines from around the world available in most major American cities (Pillsbury, 1990). Most performances were recognisably from a specific country and consisted of the sort of ethnic entertainment that is provided for tourists in each country that they visit. The difference here was that the visitors only had to walk from one tent or display to the next in order to gaze upon another cultural event signifying yet another nation.

The Universal Exhibition at Seville in 1992 offers a further prism into these processes. Such exhibitions operate as a technology of nationhood, providing narrative possibilities for the imagining of national cultures and indeed the national 'brand' (Harvey, P, 1996: ch. 3). Through powerful images, symbols and icons, nation-states are represented as repositories of stability, continuity, uniqueness and harmony. However, Seville was also a place of international capital, funding various national displays, the Expo as a whole and their own exhibition spaces, especially with communicational and informational advances that transcend national borders. In these displays the emphasis is placed upon consumer desire, individual choice, cosmopolitanism and the freedom of the market to cross national borders (the tourist crossing of borders is also to be found in collecting stamps in the Exhibition Passport). Universal Exhibitions are places to celebrate global scapes and flows and of the companies that mobilise such mobilities; while nations are principally there as spectacle and sign in the branding processes that such Expos construct and celebrate (see McCrone, Morris, Kelly, 1995, on Scotland the brand).

Many of the displays in Expos purport to be educational, and indeed groups of school-age children constitute a major category of visitors. And this is a further feature of the de-differentiation of the cultural spheres. Education and entertainment are becoming merged, a process very much assisted by the increasingly central role of the visual and electronic media in both. Indeed theme parks are involved in providing 'edu-tainment', something most clearly seen at London's Millennium Dome.

Holidays are thus not so straightforwardly contrasted with education and learning as in the past. In many ways much tourism is more closely interwoven with learning, returning in a way to the Grand Tour. I have already noted the increasing popularity of museums, the fascination with the lives of industrial workers in particular, and the popularity of hyper-real historical re-creations. Some developments are the increased desire to learn a new sport on holiday (skiing, bungee jumping, watersports, hang-gliding); the development of arts and cultural tourism; the heightened attraction of unusual industrial sites, such as Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant and the substantial increase in educational holidays (in schools, universities and hotels). Many hotel groups now offer a wide range of educational breaks at various themed hotels. Amongst the subjects studied on various themed weekends are arts and antiques, bridge, watercolour painting, archery, clay pigeon shooting, fly fishing, golf and pony-trekking.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have elaborated two aspects of the gaze, its connection with the practices of photography and its themed nature. Both these aspects propel contemporary tourism into a more general economy of signs.

In conclusion I note some ways in which tourism experiences are divided by class, gender and ethnicity. In earlier discussions I emphasised the importance of social class divisions in structuring how tourist developments occurred in different ways in different places. These effects include the respective social tone of different resorts and the patterns of landholding; the importance of the aristocratic connection in constructing the fashionability of certain places; the growth of the middle-class family holiday and the development of the bungalow as a specialised building form by the seaside; the importance of the 'romantic gaze' and its role in constructing nature as an absolutely central positional good; the character of the 'collective' gaze and the role of others like oneself in constituting the attraction of certain places; and the enhanced cultural capital of the service class and its impact in heightening the appeal of rural and industrial heritage, and of postmodernism.

But seeing and theming are also inflected by divisions of gender and ethnicity. These interconnections are important in forming the preferences that different social groupings develop about where to visit and in structuring the effects of such visits upon host populations and the fashionability of different sites. There are two key issues here: the social composition of fellow tourists and the social composition of those living in the places visited. These are important because most tourist practices involve movement into and through various sorts of public space – such as theme parks, shopping malls, beaches, restaurants, hotels, pump rooms, promenades, airports, swimming pools and squares. In such spaces people both gaze at and are gazed upon by others (and are photographed and photograph others). Complex preferences

have come to develop for the range of appropriate others that different social groups expect to look at and photograph in different places; and in turn different expectations are held by different social groups about who are appropriate others to gaze at oneself. Part of what is involved in tourism is the purchase of a particular themed experience, and this depends upon a specific composition of the others with whom that experience is being shared.

I noted in Chapter 3 the development of sex-tourism in certain south-east Asian societies as well as in major cities throughout the world and in various Caribbean and African societies. In south-east Asia the combination of gender and ethnic subordination had colluded to construct young Asian women as objects of a tourist/sexual gaze for male visitors from other societies – visitors who are ethnically dominant. The resulting tourist patterns cannot be analysed separately from relations of gender and racial subordination (see Hall, 1994; Kinnaird and Hall, 1994). The importance of gender inequalities can be seen in another way. In almost all societies men have enjoyed a higher standard of living than women. In Britain this has resulted from a privileged treatment in the household's distribution of food, heat and other material resources; and from the ability to escape the home to spend large amounts of leisure time in the 'masculine republic' of the pub (see Hart, 1989). To the extent to which contemporary leisure patterns are more 'privatised' and shared within the household, this may involve a reduced inequality of both household income and leisure time.

This relates in an important way to the development of holidays. Until the nineteenth century access to travel was largely the preserve of men. But this changed with the development of 'Victorian lady travellers', some of whom visited countries that were at the time considered 'uncivilised' and 'uncharted' especially for women (see Enloe, 1989: ch. 2). Other women took advantage of Cook's tours. As one woman wrote: 'We would venture anywhere with such a guide and guardian as Mr Cook' (quoted in Enloe, 1989: 29). From then onwards access to holidays has not been so unequally distributed as has access to some other forms of leisure. Couples normally undertook working-class holidays to English seaside resorts. Moreover, the fact that such holidays developed first in industrial Lancashire was partly the result of high levels of female employment in the cotton textile industry, especially in weaving. This meant that household earnings were higher than in other areas and women had more say over its distribution.

The early forms of mass tourism were based around the heterosexual couple; during the course of the nineteenth century the holiday unit had increasingly come to be made up of such a couple plus their children (and as recorded in innumerable photographs). And by the inter-war period the family holiday had become child-centred. This was given a significant boost by the development of the holiday camp in the 1930s in which child-based activities were central. Their development was of benefit to women since it meant that much childcare was undertaken by paid workers. The more recent growth of self-catering has moved in the opposite direction with only a minority of holidays in Britain now in serviced accommodation.

It is important to note how holiday-making discourses are predominantly heterosexual, involving pictures of actual couples, with or without children, or potential couples. In brochures produced by tour operators there are three predominant images. These are the 'family holiday', that is a couple with two or three healthy school-age children; the 'romantic holiday', that is a heterosexual couple on their own gazing at the sunset (indeed the sunset is a signifier for romance); and the 'fun holiday', that is same-sex groups each looking for other-sex partners for 'fun'. There is also, as we have noted, the 'sex holiday' for men. It is well known that social groups that do not fall into any of these particular visual categories are poorly served by the tourist industry. Many criticisms have been made of how difficult holiday-making is for single people, single-parent families, homosexual couples or groups, and those who are disabled (although the growth of gay tourism, to Amsterdam or San Francisco, has been a marked feature of the 1990s, with gay themed bars for example).

Another social category often excluded from conventional holiday-making are black Britons. The advertising material produced by holiday companies shows that tourists are white; there are few black faces amongst the holiday-makers. Indeed if there are any non-white faces in the photographs it would be presumed that they are the 'exotic natives' being gazed upon. The same process would seem to occur in those areas in Britain that attract large numbers of foreign tourists. If black or Asian people are seen there it would be presumed that they were visitors from overseas, or perhaps service workers, but not British residents themselves on holiday. The countryside is particularly constructed as 'white', as Taylor shows with regard to typically dominant photographic images (1994).

An interesting question is the degree to which members of ethnic minorities do undertake western-type holidays. Aspects of the western holiday, in which one travels elsewhere because of the sun, hotel or scenery, form a cultural practice that will seem rather idiosyncratic at least to some recent migrants to Britain (see Ahmed, 2000, on the ambiguities of the sun tan). Some migrants at least would consider that travel should have a more serious purpose than this: to look for work, to join the rest of one's family, to visit relatives, or to participate in diasporic travel.

Many tourist developments are likely to exclude many ethnic groups, such as the heritage industry discussed in the previous chapter. It was noted that white faces overwhelmingly populate such a heritage. Ethnic groups are important in the British tourist industry, though, and in some respects play a key role. They are employed in those enterprises concerned with servicing visitors, especially in the major cities (10 per cent of the restaurant workforce is non-white compared with five per cent in the workforce as a whole: Department of Culture, Media and Sport website).

Furthermore, in recent years certain ethnic groups have come to be constructed as part of the 'attraction' or 'theme' of some places. This is most common in the case of Asian groups. In Manchester this has occurred around its collection of Chinese restaurants in a small area, and resulted from the

internationalisation of British culinary taste in the post-war period (see Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989: 199–201). By the 1980s city planners were committed to a new vision of 'Chinatown', reconstructed and conserved as a now desirable object of the tourist gaze (see Anderson, 1988, on Vancouver).

Further analysis of this would need to explore the social effects for those of Asian origin of becoming constructed as an exotic object and whether this distorts patterns of economic and political development. It would also be interesting to consider the effects on the white population of coming to view those of Asian origin as not so much threatening or even inferior but as exotic, as curiously different and possessing a rich and in part attractive culture. Such debates are developing in the context of many cultures taken to be exotically different, as such cultures become 'themed', 'photographed' and displayed around the world.

8

Globalising the Gaze

Tourism and the Global

In 1990 when *The Tourist Gaze* was first published it was unclear how significant the processes we now call 'globalisation' were to become. Indeed the internet had only just been invented and there was no indication how it would transform countless aspects of social life, being taken up more rapidly than any previous technology. And no sooner than the internet had begun to impact, than another 'mobile technology', the mobile phone, transformed communications practices on the move. Overall the 1990s have seen remarkable 'time-space compression' as people across the globe have been brought closer through various technologically-assisted developments. There is increasingly for some social groups what Cairncross terms the 'death of distance' (1997), while Bauman describes the shift from a solid, fixed modernity to a much more fluid and speeded-up 'liquid modernity' (2000).

And part of this sense of compression of space has stemmed from the rapid flows of travellers and tourists physically moving from place to place, and especially from hub airport to hub airport. Elsewhere I distinguish between virtual travel through the internet, imaginative travel through phone, radio and TV, and corporeal travel along the infrastructures of the global travel industry (Urry, 2000: ch. 3). The amount of 'traffic' along all these has magnified over this last decade and there is no evidence that virtual and imaginative travel is replacing corporeal travel, but there are complex intersections between these different modes of travel that are increasingly de-differentiated from one another. As Microsoft ask: 'where do you want to go today?'; and there are diverse and interdependent ways of getting 'there'.

What I thus call corporeal travel has thus taken on immense dimensions and comprises the largest ever movement of people across national borders (see Chapter 1). Because of these liquidities the relations between almost all societies across the globe are mediated by flows of tourists, as place after place is reconfigured as a recipient of such flows. There is an omnivorous producing and 'consuming [of] places' around the globe (see Urry 1995). Core components of contemporary global culture now include the hotel buffet, the pool, the cocktail, the beach (Lencek and Bosker, 1998), the airport lounge (Gottdiener, 2001) and the bronzed tan (Ahmed, 2000).

This omnivorousness presupposes the growth of 'tourism reflexivity', the set of disciplines, procedures and criteria that enable each (and every?) place to monitor, evaluate and develop its tourism potential within the emerging