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## Globalising the Tourist Gaze<sup>(1)</sup>

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### Tourism and the Global

In 1990 when I first published *The Tourist Gaze* it was much less clear just 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 many social groups a 'death of distance' (Cairncross, 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: chap 3). The amount of 'traffic' along all these has magnified over this last decade, 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. Microsoft ask: 'where do you want to go today?' and there are many diverse and interdependent ways of getting 'there'.

In particular corporeal travel has taken on immense dimensions and comprises the largest ever movement of people across national borders. 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' from around the globe (see Urry 1995). Core components that now help to perform contemporary global culture 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 patterns of global tourism. This reflexivity is concerned with identifying a particular place's location within the contours of geography, history and culture that swirl the globe, and in particular identifying that place's actual and potential material and semiotic resources. One element in this 'tourism reflexivity' is the institutionalisation of tourism studies, of new monographs, textbooks, exotic conferences, departments and journals (including in the 1990s, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Studies*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Journeys*, *Tourism Geographies*.). There are also many consultancy firms interlinked with local, national and international states, companies, voluntary associations and NGOs. The emergence of this 'tourism industry' is well-captured in the appalling figure of Rupert Sheldrake, an anthropologist of tourism, in David Lodge's *Paradise News* (1991).

This reflexivity is not simply a matter of individuals and their life-possibilities but of sets of systematic, regularised and evaluative procedures that enable each 'place' to monitor, modify and maximise their location within the turbulent global order. Such procedures 'invent', produce, market and circulate, especially through global TV and the internet, new or different or repackaged or niche-dependent places and their corresponding visual images. And the circulating of such images performs further the very idea of the 'globe' (see Franklin, Lury, Stacey, 2000).

Of course not all members of the world community are equal participants within global tourism. Side-by-side with global tourists and travellers within many of those 'empty meeting places' or 'non-places' of modernity such as the airport lounge, the coach station, the railway terminus, the motorway service stations, docks and so on are countless global exiles (MacCannell, 1992; Augé, 1995). Such exiles are fleeing *from* famine, war, torture, persecution and genocide, as economic and social inequalities and consequential displacements of population have magnified in recent years and have forced mobility upon many.

Significantly for the 'tourist gaze' an array of developments are taking 'tourism' from the margins of the global order, and indeed of the academy, to almost the centre of this emergent world of 'liquid modernity'. First, tourism infrastructures have been constructed in what would have been thought of as the unlikeliest of places. While clearly most people across the world are not global tourists *qua* visitors, this does not mean that the places that they live in and the associated images of nature, nation, colonialism, sacrifice, community, heritage and so on, are not powerful constituents of a rapacious global tourism. Some unexpected destinations that are now significantly implicated in the patterns of global tourism, include Alaska, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Antarctica especially in Millennium-year, Changi Jail in Singapore, Nazi Occupation sites in the Channel Islands, Dachau, extinct coal mines, Cuba and especially its 'colonial' and 'American' heritages, Iceland, Mongolia, Mount Everest, northern Ireland, Northern Cyprus under Turkish 'occupation', Pearl Harbour, post-communist Russia, Robben Island in South Africa, Sarajevo's 'massacre trail', outer space, Titanic, Vietnam and so on (see Lennon and Foley 2000, on 'dark tourism'; O'Rourke 1988, on 'holidays in hell'). In certain cases becoming a tourist destination is part of a reflexive process by which societies and places come to 'enter' the global order (or 're-enter' as in the case of Cuba during the 1990s).



Further, there are large increases in the growth of tourists emanating from many very different countries, especially those of the 'orient', that once were places visited and consumed by those *from* the 'west'. Now rising incomes for an Asian middle class (as well as the student study tour and 'backpacker' tourism) have generated a strong desire to see 'for themselves' those places of the 'west' that appear to have defined global culture. Hendry however describes how various theme parks full of exotic features of 'westernness' are now being established *within* various Asian countries (2000). She describes this as *The Orient Strikes Back*, the putting on display of many features of western culture for Asians to wonder at and to exoticise, a kind of reverse-orientalism.

Moreover, many types of work are now found within these circuits of global tourism. It is difficult not to be implicated within, or affected by, one or more of these circuits that increasingly overlap with a more general 'economy of signs' spreading across multiple spaces of consumption (Lash and Urry, 1994). Such forms of work include transportation, hospitality (including sex tourism: Clift and Carter, 1999), travel, design and consultancy; the producing of 'images' of global tourist sites, of global icons (the Eiffel Tower), iconic types (the global beach), and vernacular icons (Balinese dances); the mediatizing and circulating of images through print, TV, news, internet and so on; and the organising through politics and protest campaigns for or against the construction or development of tourist infrastructures.

Also, increasingly roaming the globe are enormously powerful and ubiquitous global brands or logos (see Klein, 2000). Their fluid-like power stems from how the most successful corporations over the last two decades have shifted from the actual manufacture of products to become brand producers, with enormous marketing, design, sponsorship, public relations and advertising expenditures. Such brand companies that include many companies involved in travel and leisure: Nike, Gap, Easyjet, Body Shop, Virgin, Club Med, Starbucks and so on, produce 'concepts' or 'life-styles'. They are: 'liberated from the real-world burdens of stores and product manufacturing, these brands are free to soar, less as the dissemination of goods and services than as collective hallucinations' (Klein, 2000: 22).

There are thus countless ways in which huge numbers of people and places get caught up within the swirling vortex of global tourism. There are not two separate entities, the 'global' and 'tourism' bearing some external connections with each other. Rather they are part and parcel of the same set of complex and interconnected processes. Moreover, such infrastructures, flows of images and people, and the emerging practices of 'tourist reflexivity' should be conceptualised as a 'global hybrid' that *together* enable it to expand and to reproduce itself across the globe. (Urry, 2000: chap 2). This is analogous to the mobilities of other global hybrids, such as the internet, automobility, global finance and so on, that spread across the globe and reshape and re-perform s the 'global'.

## Embodying the Gaze

I have at times referred to travel as *corporeal* travel. This is to emphasise something so obvious that it has often been forgotten, that tourists moving from place to place comprise lumpy, fragile, aged, gendered, racialised bodies (Veijola and Jokinen, 1994). Such bodies encounter other bodies, objects and the physical world multi-sensuously. Tourism always involves *corporeal* movement and forms of pleasure and these must be central in any sociology of diverse tourisms. In that sense the tourist gaze always involves relations between bodies that are themselves in at least intermittent movement.

Bodies moreover perform themselves in-between direct sensation of the 'other' and various sensescapes (Rodaway, 1994). Bodies navigate backwards and forwards between directly sensing the external world as they move bodily in and through it (or lie inertly waiting to be bronzed), and discursively mediated sensescapes that signify social taste and distinction, ideology and meaning. Such sensed and sensing bodies are concerned with various performativities. Bodies are not fixed and given but involves performances especially to fold notions of movement, nature, taste and desire, into and through the body. There are thus complex connections between bodily sensations and socio-cultural 'sensescapes' mediated by discourse and language (see Crouch, 2000, and Macnaghten and Urry, 2000, on embodied leisure-scapes). This can be seen in the case of much of tropical travel such as to the Caribbean where early visitors were able to taste new fruits, to smell the flowers, to feel



the heat of the sun, to immerse one's body in the moist greenery of the rainforest, as well as to see new sights (see Sheller, 2002).

The body senses as it *moves*. It is endowed with kinaesthetics, the sixth sense that informs one what the body is doing in space through the sensations of movement registered in its joints, muscles, tendons and so on. Especially important in that sense of movement, the 'mechanics of space', is that of touch, of the feet on the pavement or the mountain path, the hands on a rock-face or the steering wheel (Gil, 1998: 126; Lewis, 2001). Various objects and mundane technologies facilitate this kinaesthetic sense as they sensuously extend human capacities into and across the external world. There are thus various assemblages of humans, objects, technologies and scripts that contingently produce durability and stability of mobility. Such hybrid assemblages can roam countrysides and cities, remaking landscapes and townscapes through their movement.

One effect of mobile technologies is to change the nature of vision. The 'static' forms of the tourist gaze, such as that from 'the balcony vantage point', focuses on the two-dimensional shape, colours and details of the view that is laid out before one and can be moved around with one's eyes (Pratt, 1992: 222). Such a static gaze is paradigmatically captured through the still camera. By contrast, with what Schivelbusch terms a 'mobility of vision', there are swiftly passing panorama, a sense of multi-dimensional rush and the fluid interconnections of places, peoples and possibilities (1986: 66; similar to the onrushing images encountered on TV and film). There are a variety of *tourist glances*, the capturing of sights in passing from a railway carriage, through the car windscreen, the steamship porthole or the camcorder viewfinder (see Larsen, 2001). As Schivelbusch argues: 'the traveller sees...through the apparatus which moves him through the world. The machine and the motion it creates become integrated into his visual perception; thus he can only see things in motion' (cited Osborne, 2000: 168).

The nineteenth century development of the railway was momentous in the development of this more mobilised gaze. From the railway carriage the landscape came to be viewed as a swiftly passing series of framed panorama, a 'panoramic perception', rather than something that was to be lingered over, sketched or painted or in any way captured (Schivelbusch, 1986). Nietzsche famously noted that: 'everyone is like the traveller who gets to know a land and its people from a railway carriage' (quoted Thrift, 1996: 286). The development of the railroad had particular consequences on the very early development of tourism within the American frontier. Travellers made specific references to how the railroad annihilated space through its exceptional speed that was not fully noticed because of the unusual comfort of the railway carriage. The railway journey produced an enormous sense of vastness, of scale, size and domination of the landscape that the train swept through (Löfgren, 2000: 3).

Similarly the view through the car windscreen has also had significant consequences for the nature of the visual 'glance', enabling the *materiality* of the city or the landscape to be clearly appreciated (Larsen, 2001). Elsewhere I have elaborated some moments in the history of automobility, including in Europe inter-war motoring involving a kind of 'voyage through the life and history of a land' (Urry, 2000: chap 3). The increasingly domesticated middle classes, comfortably and safely located in their Morris Minors: 'began to tour England and take photographs in greater numbers than ever before' (Taylor, J., 1994: 122, and see 136-45, on the 'Kodakisation' of the English landscape). While in post-war US certain landscapes were substantially altered so as to produce a landscape of leisure '*pleasing* to the motorist ... using the land in a way that would "make an attractive *picture* from the Parkway"' (Wilson, 1992: 35; *emph added*). The state turned nature into something 'to be appreciated by the eyes alone' (Wilson, 1992: 37). The view through the car windscreen means that: 'the faster we drive, the flatter the earth looks' (Wilson 1992: 33).

Nevertheless this corporeality of movement does produce intermittent moments of *physical proximity*, to be bodily in the same space as some landscape or townscape, or at a live event or with one's friends, family, colleagues, partner or indeed in the company of desired 'strangers' (all skiers, or all aged 18-30 and 'single', or all bridge players). Much travel results from a powerful 'compulsion to proximity' that makes it seem absolutely 'necessary' (Boden and Molotch, 1994). Much work entails travel because of the importance of connection, of needing to meet, to encourage others, to sustain one's networks. To be there oneself is what



is crucial in most tourism, whether this place occupies a key location within the global tourist industry or is merely somewhere that one has been told about by a friend. Places need to be seen 'for oneself' and experienced directly: to meet at a particular house of one's childhood or visit a particular restaurant or walk along a certain river valley or energetically climb a particular hill or capture a good photograph oneself. Co-presence then involves seeing or touching or hearing or smelling or tasting a particular place (see Urry, 2000: on the multiple senses involved in mobilities).

A further kind of travel occurs where a 'live' event is to be seen, an event programmed to happen at a specific moment. Examples include political, artistic, celebratory and sporting occasions, the last are especially 'live' since the outcome (and even the length) may be unknown. Each of these generates intense moments of co-presence, whether for Princess Diana's funeral, a Madonna concert, a World Expo or the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Each of these cannot be 'missed' and they produce enormous movements of people at very specific moments in 'global cities' in order to 'catch' that particular mega-event 'live' (see Roche, 2000). Roche describes the planned mega-events as 'social spatio-temporal "hubs" and "switches" that ... channel, mix and re-route global flows' (2000: 199). Such events are spatio-temporal moments of global condensation, involving the peculiarly intense 'localisation' of such global events within 'unique places due to the fact that they staged unique events'. These places therefore have the 'power to transform themselves from being mundane places... into being these special "host city" sites' that come to occupy a new distinct niche within global tourism (Roche, 2000: 224).

Such co-presence nearly always involves travel over, and beyond, other places, to get to those visually distinct sites to watch a live event, to climb a particular rock-face, to wander 'lonely as a cloud', to go white-water rafting, to bungee jump and so on. These corporeally defined practices are found in specific, specialised 'leisure spaces', geographically and ontologically distant from work and domestic sites. Indeed part of the attraction of these places, where bodies can be corporeally alive, apparently 'natural' or rejuvenated, is that they are sensuously 'other' to everyday routines and places. Ring interestingly describes how the Alps were developed during the nineteenth century into such a specialised space where the English gentleman could apparently feel properly alive (2000: chaps 4-6).

Such places involve 'adventure', islands of life resulting from intense bodily arousal, from bodies in motion, finding their complex way in time and space (see Lewis, 2001, on the rock-climbing 'adventurer'). Some social practices involve bodily resistance where the body physicalises its relationship with the external world. In the late eighteenth century development of walking as resistance, the 'freedom' of the road and the development of leisurely walking were modest acts of rebellion against established social hierarchy (Jarvis, 1997: chaps 1 and 2 on 'radical walking'). Similarly, extreme 'adventure tourism' in New Zealand demonstrates forms of physical resistance to work and the everyday (see Cloke and Perkins, 1998). The hedonistic desire to acquire a bronzed body developed through resistance to the protestant ethic, women's domesticity and 'rational recreation' (see Ahmed, 2000).

So far I have regarded the body from the viewpoint of the body-viewer or body-mover. But tourism is often about the body-as-seen, displaying, performing and seducing visitors with skill, charm, strength, sexuality and so on. Desmond indeed notes how common live performance and bodily display are within tourism industries (1999). The moving body is often what gets gazed upon, as a 'spectacular corporeality' increasingly characterises global tourism. The performed body in dance has become common, such as Maori war-dances, Balinese dance ceremonies, Brazilian samba and Hula dancing in Hawai'i.

These examples involve what MacCannell terms a 'reconstructed ethnicity' and a 'staged authenticity' (1999, 1973). In the Hula staging for bodily display, particular conceptions of the half-native, half-white female body are made available for visual consumption. Such dances appear to be 'real performances' and their attraction stems from the impression of an unmediated encounter, a genuine performance of an age-old tradition rather than something merely undertaken for the visitor. The performers in such dances become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be.



And in some cases such dances are such powerful signifiers, where the performances have become the dominant signifier of the culture in question. Thus with Maori and Hawai'ian cultures the dance is the culture, swamping all other signifiers and being recognisable across the globe. Desmond outlines the racial and gender history of the making of the female Hula dancer, from the early years of the last century to the current point where 6 million visitors a year are attracted to a naturalistic Eden that is signified by bodily displays of 'natural' female Hula dancers. Such a place-image has come to be globally recognised and endlessly re-circulated (1999: Part 1).

## A Mobile World

The previous section has shown that there are enormously powerful interconnections of 'tourism' and 'culture' in a mobile world (see Rojek and Urry, 1997). Not only do tourists travel but so do objects, cultures and images. Also there appears to be a more general 'mobile culture' stemming from a 'compulsion to mobility'. Kaplan's *Questions of Travel* captures such a culture of mobility (1996). Her extended 'family' was located across various continents. Travel and tourism was for her 'unavoidable, indisputable, and always necessary for family, love and friendship as well as work' (1996: ix). Kaplan was 'born into a *culture* that took the national benefits of travel for granted' as well as presuming that 'US citizens [could] travel anywhere they pleased' (1996: ix). Implicit here is that one is *entitled* to travel since it is an essential part of one's life. Cultures become so mobile that contemporary citizens (not just Americans!) are thought to possess the rights to pass over and into other places and other cultures. Moreover, if household members are forever on the move then distinctions of home and away loses their power. Cultures imply and necessitate diverse and extensive forms of mobility. No other culture though matches the recent Hindu Kumbh Mela Festival in Allahabad in India on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2001. It was probably the largest number of people ever to have travelled to a single place within a short period of time; 30-50 million Hindus from all over the world went to the banks of the Ganges.

Indeed being part of any culture almost always involves travel. Culture-developing-and-sustaining-travel takes a number of different forms. There is travel to the culture's sacred sites, to the location of central written or visual texts, to places where key events took place, to see particularly noteworthy individuals or their documentary record, and to view other cultures so as to reinforce one's own cultural attachments.

The importance of travel to culture and how cultures themselves travel, can be seen from nationality. Central is the nation's narrative of itself. National histories tell a story, of a people passing through history, a story often beginning in the mists of time (Bhabha, 1990). Much of this history of its traditions and icons will have been 'invented' and result as much from forgetting the past as from remembering it (McCrone, 1998: chap 3). Late nineteenth century Europe was a period of remarkable invention of national traditions. For example in France, Bastille Day was invented in 1880, *La Marseillaise* became the national anthem in 1879, July 14<sup>th</sup> was designated the national feast in 1880 and Jeanne d'Arc was only elevated from obscurity by the Catholic Church in the 1870s (McCrone, 1998: 45-6). More generally, the idea of 'France' was extended 'by a process akin to colonisation through communication (roads, railways and above all by the newspapers) so that by the end of nineteenth century popular and elite culture had come together' as a result of diverse mobilities (McCrone, 1998: 46). Key in this was the mass production of public monuments of the nation especially in re-built Paris, monuments that were travelled to, seen, talked about and shared through paintings, photographs, films and the European tourism industry.

This collective participation and the more general nation-inducing role of travel had been initiated with the 1851 Great Exhibition at London's Crystal Palace, the first-ever national tourist event. Although the British population was only 18m, 6m visits were made to the Exhibition, many using the new railways to visit the national capital for the first time. In the second half of the nineteenth century similar mega-events took place across Europe with attendances at some reaching 30m or so (Roche, 2000). While in Australia a Centennial International Exhibition was held in Melbourne in 1888 and it is thought that two-thirds of the Australian population attended (Spillman, 1997: 51). Visitors from home and abroad confirmed Australia's achievements and characteristics. Particularly important in the



genealogy of nationalism have also been the founding of national museums and the development of national artists, architects, musicians, playwrights, novelists, historians and archaeologists (McCrone, 1998: 53-5; Kirshenblatt-Giblett, 1998).

The recent period has moreover seen a global public stage emerging upon which almost all nations have to appear, to compete, to mobilise themselves as spectacle and to attract large numbers of visitors. This placement particularly operates through mega-events such as the Olympics, World Cups and Expos (Harvey 1996). These international events, premised upon mass tourism and cosmopolitanism, means that national identity is increasingly conceived of in terms of a location within, and on, a global stage. It is that staging which facilitates both corporeal and imaginative travel to such mega-events of the global order, especially the 'Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture' (Roche, 2000).

Moreover, for many cultures much travel entails crossing national frontiers. Households in developing countries develop extensive mobility patterns when their incomes increase. The proliferation of 'global diasporas' extends the range, extent and significance of all forms of travel for far-flung families and households. It is said in Trinidad that one can really only be a 'Trini' by going abroad. Around 60 per cent of nuclear families have at least one member living abroad (Miller and Slater, 2000: 12, 36). Ong and Nonini also show the importance of mobility across borders in the case of the massive Chinese diaspora that is thought to contain 25-45 million people (1997). Clifford summarises: 'dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labour migration. Airplanes, telephones, tape cassettes, camcorders, and mobile job markets reduce distances and facilitate two-way traffic, legal and illegal, between the world's places' (1997: 247). Such diasporic travel is also rather open-ended in terms of its temporality. Unlike conventional tourism based upon a clear distinction between 'home' and 'away', the diasporic traveller often has no clear temporal boundaries as one activity tends flows into the next.

## Conclusion

Globalisation has thus ushered in some momentous reconfigurations of the tourist gaze, both for the ever-mobile bodies intermittently pausing, and for the immobilised bodies that meet in some of these 'strange encounters' of the new world order. Such encounters involve exceptional levels of 'non-interaction', or urban anonymity especially within the curious 'walled cities' known as airports (Gottdiener, 2001: 34-5).

There has been a massive shift from a more or less single tourist gaze in the nineteenth century to the proliferation of countless discourses, forms and embodiments of tourist gazes now. In a simple sense we can talk of the globalising of the tourist gaze, as multiple gazes have become core to global culture sweeping up almost everywhere in their awesome wake. There are countless mobilities, physical, imaginative and virtual, voluntary and coerced.

Furthermore there is much less 'tourism' per se that occurs within specific and distinct kinds of time-space; there is the 'end of tourism' within a much general 'economy of signs'. There are increasing similarities between behaviours that are 'home' and 'away' (see Shaw, Agarwal, Bull, 2000: 282). Tourist sites proliferate across the globe as tourism has become massively mediated, while everyday sites of activity get re-designed in 'tourist' mode, as with many themed environments. Mobility is increasingly central to the identities of many young people, to those who are part of diasporas and to many relatively wealthy retired people who can live on the move. And 'tourism reflexivity' leads almost every site – however 'boring' – to be able to develop some niche location within the swirling contours of the emergent global order (see Martin Parr's spectacular collection of *Boring Postcards*, 1999).

## Note

1. This paper is drawn from *The Tourist Gaze: Second Edition* to be published December 2001 (London: Sage).



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