Introduction

We have analysed various aspects of the tourist gaze and noted that the gaze can take different forms, relating to the kinds of organisation possible of the tourist-related industries that develop to meet such different gazes. In this chapter we consider in detail the complex relationship between two elements involved in the provision of tourist services. On the one hand, there are the practices of tourism, which are highly structured by distinctions of taste. Such practices lead people to want to be in certain places, gazing at particular objects, in the company of specific other types of people. On the other hand, many services are provided and performed for such tourists, mainly under conditions of profit maximisation. And as we saw in the last chapter, huge international industries have developed so that services are provided at a cost which permits large segmented markets to develop and be profitably sustained.

Various contradictions may develop between the practices and the industries that have emerged. Such industries of transport, hotels, property development, catering and entertainment are all concerned with the provision of consumer services and are sometimes known as the ‘hospitality’ industry. Such provision is often highly complex, even to the extent that it is often unclear just what the product is that is being consumed. Furthermore, the tourist gaze is structured by culturally specific notions of what is extraordinary and therefore worth viewing. This means that services provided, which may of course be incidental to the gaze itself, must take a form which does not contradict or undermine the quality of the gaze, and ideally should enhance it. This in turn poses, as we shall see, immense problems of managing such industries, to ensure the service provided by the often relatively poorly paid service workers is appropriate to the almost sacred quality of the visitors’ gaze on some longed-for and remarkable tourist site.

Such tourist-related services have to be provided in, or at least near to, the objects of the tourist gaze; they cannot be provided anywhere. Tourist services develop in particular places and cannot be shifted elsewhere. They normally have a particular ‘spatial fix’. Further, much service production involves close spatial proximity between the producers and the consumers of the services. This results from the nature of many service products provided for tourists, such as a meal, a drink, a ride at the funfair and so on. Such consumer services involve a close connectedness or proximity between producers and consumers who often have to perform to ensure the enacted services are exciting and memorable to the tourists consuming them. In this chapter we discuss how in post-Fordist experience economies such performances of service are crucial for the tourist gaze.

Performing a ‘Service’

With manufactured goods it is normally clear what the product consists of (even though they have both sign and use value). In many service industries this is not so straightforward (Bagguley et al., 1990: ch. 3). Mars and Nicod describe the problem of specifying the boundary of a given service:

‘service’ as we use it, refers to an action or material thing that is more than one might normally expect. In a transport cafe it can mean no more than passing the sauce bottle with a smile. In the Savoy it might mean making prodigious efforts to supply a rare delicacy or indulging a customer’s particular preference or foible. ... The more people actually pay for service, the more exacting will be their demand for better and more individual service. (1984: 28)

Expenditure of labour is central to service work, whether this labour consists of passing the sauce or of
some more extensive and discriminating activity. Tourist-related services are often labour-intensive and hence labour costs are a significant proportion of total costs. Moreover, since in manufacturing technical change can more radically reduce unit costs, services will over time be relatively more expensive. Employers in the various service sectors will seek to monitor and, where possible, minimise costs.

As noted, labour is to varying degrees implicated in the delivery or enactment of many tourist-related services. This occurs as the outcome of a necessarily social and embodied process in which some interaction occurs between one or more producers and one or more consumers. The quality of the social interaction is itself part of the service purchased (Bryman, 2004; Boon, 2007). To buy the service is to buy a particular kind of social experience. Sasser and Arbeit, for example, suggest that: ‘Even if the hamburger is succulent, if the employee is surly, the customer will probably not return’ (1976: 63). Many services are high-contact systems in which there is considerable involvement of customers in the service, as O'Dell shows in the case of spas (2007). As a result it is may be difficult to rationalise the system (Pine, 1987: 64–5).

Services normally necessitate some social interaction between producers and consumers at the point of production. Unless the service can be more or less entirely materialised, then there has to be some geographical or spatial proximity between one or more of the service producers and consumers. Second, a distinction may be made between two classes of employee: those back-stage workers who have minimal contact with the service consumers and those front-stage workers who have high face-to-face contact with tourists (Boon, 2007). The front-stage workers literally work under the tourist gaze. As we will discuss later, such front-stage workers undertake performative work. In the case of the former, employers will seek technical change and the extensive rationalisation of labour; with the latter employees would be recruited and trained on the basis of interpersonal attributes and public relations skills (Pine, 1987: 65).

But there are difficulties in employing such a divisive strategy: there can be unproductive resentment between the two groups, such as between chefs and waiters; the maintenance of the distinction between the groups may be hard to sustain where customers cannot be spatially confined to very restricted areas, as in hotels or spas; and the variability in demand for many services means that a considerable premium is placed on the flexible use of labour, something difficult to organise if there is a strong demarcation between these different groups of employees.

Furthermore, the social composition of the producers, at least those who are serving in the front line, may be part of what is in fact ‘sold’ to the customer. In other words, the ‘service’ partly consists of a process of production which is infused with particular social characteristics, of gender, age, race, educational background and so on. When the individual buys a given service, what is purchased is a particular social composition of the service producers. In some cases what is also bought is the social composition of the other service consumers. Examples of this are especially found in tourism/transport and resorts where people spend considerable periods of time consuming the service in close proximity to others and hence part of what is being bought is the social and bodily characteristics of those other consumers (hence the appeal of Club Class or an up-market cruise).

We now examine the significance of ‘performative labour’ for delivering services. As labour is itself part of the service product, this poses particular issues for management. These are especially significant, the longer the delivery takes, the more intimate the service and the greater the importance of ‘quality’ for consumers. In some cases employees’ speech, appearance and personality are treated as legitimate areas of intervention and control by management.

Gabriel discusses the services provided by a gentlemen's club in London (1988: ch. 4). For its members, the club provides them far more than traditional English meals. It also offers:

- a whole range of intangible products, a place where important contacts can be made, where guests can be offered hospitality, where information can be exchanged, where certain rituals can be pre-
Gabriel goes on to say that the only way of assessing their success is through ‘providing those “intangible” services which cannot be rationalized and incorporated in the catering machinery’ (1988: 141). The staff provide an intangible ambience which could be lost if the catering were rationalised.

Such services require what is called emotional work (Hochschild, 1983), or aesthetic labour (Warhurst et al., 2000) or performative work (Bryman, 2004). What these concepts share is the recognition that servicing is increasingly a performative doing, a bodily performance that needs to please, seduce or entertain, especially visually. These authors all argue that there is a theatre-like character to front-stage service encounters and that ‘good’ service requires managerial scripting and skills of ‘acting’, both by following a script and through improvisation.

In her classic study of airline cabin crew, Hochschild coined the term ‘emotional work’. By this she refers to the products ‘in which the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself, in a way that loving or hating wallpaper is not part of producing wallpaper’ (Hochschild, 1983: 5–6). Drawing upon Goffman’s notion of ‘impression management’, Hochschild argues that service work requires the ‘management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ (1983: 7). What is required of good flight attendants are the emotional skills of showing positive emotions even when faced with rude customers and situations of stress. They need to sound and especially to look happy. This involves smiling in a pleasant, friendly and involved way to consumers. They need to be able manage, suppress and disguise their own feelings behind an ever-present smile. And they must wear that smile gently and effortlessly: ‘for the flight attendant, the smiles are part of her work, a part that requires her to coordinate self and feeling so that the work seems to be effortless’ (Hochschild, 1983: 8). Crucial to many consumer services is this ‘emotional work’ of a public and recognisable sort. In the case of flight attendants specific training brings this about, resulting in a commercialisation of human feeling. Flight attendants are taught how to smile and they are instructed to do so constantly when subject to the gaze of passengers.

Hochschild argues that this emotional work was made more difficult for flight attendants with the intensification of labour on American airlines since neo-liberal deregulation from the mid-1970s onwards: ‘The workers respond to the speed-up with a slowdown: they smile less broadly, with a quick release and no sparkle in the eyes, thus dimming the company’s message to the people. It is a war of smiles’ (1983: 127). Such a decline in quality is exceptionally hard for management to monitor and control, even if they are well aware that attendants are no longer providing the complete service that passengers expect.

Yet among KLM aircrews a more complex picture emerges (Wouters, 1989). What seems to have happened more recently is that the demands made by the company with regard to sex, age, weight, jewellery, make-up, shoes, smile, behaviour and so on have become rather looser, particularly with the increased diversity of contemporary air travellers. Wouters explains this as follows:

an aeroplane now has become a melting-pot, not only of nationalities but also of social classes. Behaviour in contacts between flight attendants and passengers correspondingly had to become less uniform or standardized and more varied and flexible … in each contact there is a need to attune one’s behaviour to the style of emotion management of the individual passenger. (1989: 113)

The ‘choreographed smile’ typifies the ever-smiling ‘smile factories’ of Disney parks (Van Maanen, 1991; Bryman, 2004). The Disney Institute instructs their staff to: ‘Start and end every Guest contact and communication with direct eye contact’; while Walt told staff always ‘to smile’ and ‘turn the cheek to everybody, even the nasty ones’. Or to cite one Disney member of staff: ‘We get daily abuse from costumers but you have to keep on smiling. We’re supposed to make eye contact, greet each and every guest for eight hours. If you don’t you get reprimanded’ (quoted in Bryman, 2004: 108, 109). The smiling body doing emotional work is a docile
unemotional face (at least at face-value). So ‘smiling staff’ are aware of being objects of the gaze of tourists and potentially managers. The leading role of the smile and positive body language more broadly signals the power of the tourist gaze in orchestrating service encounters. In addition, Disney staff are told always to use ‘friendly phrases’, exchange pleasantries with customers and exhibit appropriate behaviour. The ‘smiling body’ is a disciplined, docile body fighting for customer satisfaction within a battle of ‘smile wars’: ‘the power of the smile can only be co-produced with the client; it requires a satisfied customer’ (Veijola and Valtonen, 2007: 19).

In Disney theme parks (and experience economies more broadly) ‘emotional work’ becomes explicitly performative, discursively and spatially organised as if undertaken in a Goffmanesque theatre (see Chapter 8 for discussion of Goffman):

By performative labour, then, I simply mean the rendering of work by managements and employees alike as akin to a theatrical performance. In the Disney Theme parks, the metaphor of the theatrical performance is explicit with references to ‘cast members’, ‘auditioning’, ‘onstage’ and ‘backstage’. (Bryman, 2004: 103)

The language of Disney speaks of guests rather than customers, cast members rather than employees, host(ess) rather than frontline employees, onstage rather than public areas, backstage rather than restricted areas, casting rather than hiring for a job, role rather than job, costume rather than uniform, audition rather than job interview, audience rather than crowd, pre-entertainment area rather than queue, imagination rather than attraction designer and so on (Bryman, 2004: 11). The production side of the tourism economy (and the service economy more broadly) is increasingly theatrical and performative; they resemble real theatres as workers are ‘cast members’ wearing costumes and trained to enact scripts and roles that fit in with a theatrical, themed environment.

Not all such emotional or performative work is fully pre-scripted and repetitive. Even the Disney Institute admits that ‘smiling, greeting, and thanking guests are all well and good, but if these actions are restricted to rote, mechanistic behaviors, their effectiveness is severely limited’ (quoted in Bryman, 2004: 108). The smile needs to appear authentic with the competent service performer smiling personally. This requires that one cares for the ‘corporate brand’, knows how to ‘charm’ through improvisation and enjoys servicing others, and this in part involves accepting that one is ‘inferior’ to the guest and never damaging the face of the guest. They need to exhibit a will to please within what Veijola and Valtonen term a ‘servient economy’ (2007: 17). While service encounters are scripted by power relations, we also need to explore how service workers have to cope with and indeed bend scripts so as to restore some autonomy and critique.

Some emotional work is little scripted by management. Indeed, the emphasis may be more on establishing a more ‘genuine’ emotional relationship between producers and consumers (as in a ‘local’ restaurant) rather than one contrived or artificial (James, 1989). In one restaurant: ‘Staff were constantly encouraged to “cater for” the customers: to smile, exchange pleasantries, and, if there was time, longer conversations’ (Marshall, 1986: 41). The ‘emotional work’ undertaken by tour reps is also little scripted and supervised: ‘Reps were given considerable autonomy. Reps were responsible for scripting their own commentary on the coach from the airport and were only given general guidelines as to what to include in the “welcome meeting”. Supervision at the resort was limited, with only very occasional visits from their immediate manager’ (Guerrrier and Adib, 2003: 1405; Wong and Wang, 2009). And yet, even emotional work conducted without much direct supervision will be scripted by ‘absent’ or invisible cultural codes, norms and etiquettes of behaviour in service encounters between hosts and guests. Service performances can never be ‘for the first time’ because they require rehearsal, imitation of other performances and adjustment to norms and expectations.

Moreover, not all situations can be dealt with in circumscribed fashion. Mars and Nicod note more generally the distinction between routines and emergencies (1984: 34–5). There is a chronic tension between service receivers who regard all sorts of issues as an emergency (such as an overcooked steak) and service produc-
ers who have to learn to deal with such incidents as routine. This tension is most marked in highly prestigious hotels where customers pay for and expect very high levels of personal service and where such problems cannot be treated as purely matters of routine. By contrast, in less prestigious and cheaper hotels staff develop techniques to suggest that everything is under control even if there are ‘normal’ emergencies because of the intensity of work that has to be undertaken.

We have seen that performing tourist work requires skills of wearing a smile lightly, some expressive, theatrical skills, the ability to deal with stress and emergencies, and more or less tacit knowledge of and willingness to follow norms as to appropriate social behaviour. But such skills are seldom sufficient if one lacks what we might term ‘bodily capital’. This refers to the appearance, movement and tone of the ‘servicing body’, which often happens to be female. This ties into Warhurst et al.’s notion of ‘aesthetic labour’, which refers to the skills of looking, conversing and behaving in a manner appropriate upon the specific stage where it is enacted (2000). Often, a nice smile is not enough if the body that gives it is perceived to be too old, overweight, deformed, scruffy, boring, clumsy, ethnic, out of style or speaking in the wrong tone. As Hochschild says in relation to age: “‘Smile-lines’ are not seen as the accumulated evidence of personal character but as an occupational hazard, an undesirable sign of age incurred in the line of duty on a job that devalues age” (1983: 22).

‘Stigmatised bodies’ seldom find a job on the front-stage of the service economy, especially with regard to those jobs (e.g. tour reps and air cabin crew) or businesses (e.g. the trendy bar) that have a certain aura of ‘coolness’ or ‘glamour’ (despite often being low-pay jobs). The tourism and hospitality industry prefer those who live up to their customers’ standards of aesthetically pleasing bodies, both when it comes to appearance and manners. While different leisure and tourism settings obviously hold different notions of appropriate or desirable bodies of aesthetic labour (say, between the posh, old-styled country hotel and the hip urban café), the general trend is a liking for and front-staging of bodies that appear young, beautiful and articulate, while less attractive bodies are kept backstage or excluded if the labour supply allows this.

Many performances are provided by women, youngish people and increasingly foreigners, with both legal and illegal status. Often the actual delivery is provided by relatively low-level workers who are badly paid (at least relatively) and who may have little involvement or engagement with the overall enterprise. And the service encounter is always an asymmetrical power relationship. There is an implicit promise from the subordinate to the superior that they will treat the latter in a dignified fashion and as a respectable person; anything else will be ‘morally’ wrong (Dillard et al., 2000). And since tips and provisions from the sale of optional tours and services are crucial to much service, ‘disrespectfulness’ may be costly. These relatively low-level workers are normally female and implicit in some work relations is the ‘sexual’ servicing of customers or, indeed, management (Adkins, 1995; Baum, 2007; Veijola and Valtonen, 2007). Overlying the interaction, the ‘service’, are assumptions and notions of gender-specific forms of appropriate behaviour and bodily display, often defined by a ‘male gaze’. Both emotional work and aesthetic labour are inscribed with supposedly feminine values of servicing and looking good at the same time.

Desmond, indeed, notes that live performance and bodily display are very common within tourism (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 Hawaii. These examples involve what MacCannell terms a ‘reconstructed ethnicity’ and a ‘staged authenticity’ (1973). In some cases, these dances are such powerful signifiers that performances are the dominant signifier of the culture in question. Thus with Maori and Hawaiian cultures the dance is the culture, swamping all other signifiers and being recognisable across the globe. Desmond has outlined 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 six million visitors a year are attracted to a naturalistic Eden signified by bodily displays of ‘natural’ female Hula dancers, a place-image globally recognised and endlessly re-circulated (Desmond, 1999: Part 1).
Much service work might well be said to be difficult and demanding, under-recognised and relatively under-rewarded. There can be a high emotional price to pay for emotional labour, such as alienation from one's true feelings and identity (Hochschild, 1983; Veijola and Valtonen, 2007). In a study of tour reps, one respondent stated:

We pretend to be cheerful, pleasant, earnest, energetic, and so forth throughout the journey even though those emotions are unfelt in most cases. Furthermore, we also depress our anger, hate, or disgust when facing difficult guys. We are also not allowed to manifest worry or fear even if we are indeed in some serious trouble. I don't want people to lose confidence in my ability (Karen, female, 32 years old, a tour leader for 7 years). (Wong and Wang, 2009: 255)

Yet, this idea that service work is necessarily alienating is too onesided. Reflecting upon his time working as a waiter, Crang argues: ‘it never felt to me as if I was being alienated from my emotions, my manners, or my leisure practices. I always felt that “I” was still there: I genuinely liked people who tipped me; I genuinely wanted to help; I genuinely had fun’ (1994: 698). Other studies indicate that one pleasure of service work is the fluid boundaries between work and leisure (Weaver, 2005: 10). This blurring is particularly evident with regard to tour reps that work in the consumption spaces of tourists and they need to enact fun and to party: ‘the rep will have failed if she or he does seem to be having fun and helping the holidaymaker having fun’ (Guerrier and Adib, 2003: 1402). Moreover, some service work and places of service are considered ‘cool’, while others are ‘uncool’, so they are looked down upon and valued less:

As in other areas of work, it is clear that polarisation is taken place within tourism work, but the criteria of distinction relates to the branding and image of the work rather than to its technical or professional status. ‘Cool’ work is equated with style, fashion and consumer branding (bars, night clubs, boutique hotels, creative venues) while ‘uncool’ includes the work of drudgery in the sector (cleaning, popular service) and also some glamour from the past, airline cabin crew, particularly with some newer, low-cost airlines. (Baum, 2007: 1396)

We argued that for many consumers what is actually consumed as a service is the particular moment of delivery by the relatively low-level service deliverers: the smile on the flight attendant's face, the pleasantness of the manner of the waitress, the sympathy in the eyes of the tour rep and so on. The problem for management is how to ensure that these moments do in fact work out appropriately, while minimising the cost of an undesirably intrusive (and hence resented) system of management/supervision, as well as reducing friction with other more highly paid, often male, workers backstage (see the classic Whyte, 1948).

Jan Carlzon, former President of the Scandinavian airline SAS, terms these ‘moments of truth’ for any organisation (1987). He suggests that in SAS there are something like 50 million moments of truth each year, each of which lasts perhaps 15 seconds when a customer comes into contact with an employee. It is these moments of truth that determine whether or not SAS succeeds or fails. As Goffman once noticed: ‘life may not be much of a gamble, but interaction is’ (1959: 243). Thus any ‘moment of truth’ is a gamble since even the most fleeting misconduct is likely to be noticed and disturbing to the interaction order. Carlzon argues that the importance of such moments means that organisations have to be reorganised, towards service to the customer as the primary objective. As a consequence, the actual service deliverers, the company's 'foot soldiers' who know most about the 'front line' operations, have to be given more responsibility to respond effectively, quickly and courteously to the particular needs of the customer. This in turn means that the efforts of the front-line employees need to be more highly valued. Since they are the providers of the ‘moments of truth’ their motivation and commitment are crucial. Carlzon argues that in such a service-oriented organisation individual decisions should be made at the point of responsibility and not higher up the hierarchy. The service deliverers have themselves to be the ‘managers’ and more consumer-oriented.

One example of this can be seen in the management literature relating to hotels. What makes some visitors return again and again to the same hotel (Greene, 1982)? This has little to do with a hotel's physical features
but rather results from two-way recognition between staff and the hotel's guests. Greene argues that there is nothing more satisfying than walking into a hotel and seeing a familiar face, and then in turn being greeted by name and not by one's room number. He proposes a number of techniques by which hotel staff are reminded of guests’ names so that they can be used at each ‘moment of truth’. This strategy was carried to considerable lengths by the Porterhouse Restaurant Group, which devised a scheme to motivate its staff to identify as many customers as possible by name. Those who could identify 100 or more became members of the ‘100 Club’, those who could identify 250, members of the ‘250 Club’ and so on. One manageress achieved a UK record of being able to recognise an amazing 2,000 visitors (Lunn, 1989).

The importance of remembering and greeting guests by name is also seen in a Goffman-inspired study of impression management at the Ritz-Carlton (Dillard et al., 2000). At this high-class hotel, front-stage staff are taught dramaturgical discipline so that they foster the right impression and follow the moral standards that the hotel strives for. One aspect of this ‘scripting’ is ‘the three steps of service: (a) A warm and sincere greeting. Use the guest name, if and when possible; (b) Anticipation and compliance with guest needs; (c) Fond farewell. Give them a warm good-bye and use their names when possible’ (Dillard et al., 2000: 408). So one ‘moment of truth’ is whether the front-line staff can convey a personal service by greeting the guest by name or remembering their specific needs and preferences: ‘A steak, you can get everywhere. But your table, with your favorite glass of wine, and whatever kind of service it is that you prefer, whether it’s a lot of schmoozing or whether it’s invisible service, these are things that you as a business person in a market segment, are willing to pay for, and find it very difficult to get’ (Dillard et al., 2000: 408). Other ‘moments of truth’ are whether the staff succeeds in complying with the guest's idiosyncratic needs (especially when dramaturgical contingencies arise) and deliver ‘deep enough apologies for disruptive events’.

Four concluding points should be noted about these services. First, the production of many services is context dependent; they depend for their successful production upon aspects of the social and physical setting within which they occur. Examples include the style of furnishings in a travel agent's reflecting an appropriate corporate image, the apparently safe interior of an aeroplane, the antique furniture in the country hotel, the quality of the sound and lighting in an Ibiza club, a historically interesting set of buildings in a resort, the themed environment of many theme parks, amusement parks, restaurants, pubs and shopping malls, and so on. In other words, the delivery of many services is interconnected with aspects of the built environment and especially the nature of design and brand architecture within the experience economy (see Chapter 6). In certain cases the service cannot be received in an inappropriate physical and social context – part of the ‘service’, part of what is consumed, is in effect the context (Urry, 1995a).

Second, there are very considerable variations in the expectations held by different sets of consumers. For instance, Mars and Nicod suggest that in cheaper hotels people expect a fast service but are not particularly bothered about its more general character (1984: 37). In top-quality hotels customers expect a wide range of idiosyncratic requests to be met, and indeed that staff are almost able to anticipate such requests in advance. Mars and Nicod suggest that particular difficulties are caused in middle-ranking establishments where the level and forms of service to be provided are less clear and can be contested. There are considerable differences between the perceived quality of service in different societies.

Third, the quality of many services is contested in contemporary societies. This is for a number of reasons: they meet an increasingly wide range of people's practical and emotional needs; their consumption normally involves spending considerable amounts of time since consumption occurs serially and not simultaneously; the consumers movement has encouraged people to be more critical and inquisitive about the quality of services being received; and consumers are increasingly choosy, eclectic and fickle. Service providers thus have all sorts of difficulties to face when confronted with the essentially contested character of 'services' in contemporary societies.

Fourth, the service product is predominantly intangible. So although there are certain tangible elements, such as the food or journey or drink, the crucial elements are intangible. This is shown in a study of small country
hotels: ‘service is not concerned with the product itself, but with the way in which the product is created and handled, with the manner, knowledge and attitude of the people who deliver it and with the environment in which it is delivered … in general terms quality is manifestly incapable of measurement’ (Callan, 1989: 245).

The service product is thus intangible because part of what are consumed are performances of hospitality affected through performative work, emotional and aesthetic labour. While service performances are taught, learned and regulated, service encounters cannot be completely predetermined and identical. There is always some element of unpredictability and fluidity to each ‘moment of truth’. Cuthill maintains that: ‘Service cultures are fluid and performed. They alter and shift with different customer groups and performances at different times of the day, week, or year, so that although a core service culture is created, it mutates with different performances’ (2007: 68; see O'Dell, 2007, on services in spas).

These general points about services will now be applied to performing one particular type of service central to tourism: namely, eating and drinking.

**Catering for the Customer**

The development of the catering industry has been long and complex. Catering has become publicly available. Restaurants, bars and cafés are part of the public space of contemporary societies. This is in marked contrast to say nineteenth-century London, when the best places to eat were private or semi-private (Mennell, 1985: ch. 6). There were two forms: the private London clubs, which, grew more numerous from the 1820s onwards, and private hotels, where meals were served in the private suites of rooms and there were no ‘public dining rooms’. This changed in the 1880s and 1890s with the opening of many grand hotels, stemming from increased mobility brought about by the railways. The new hotels were no longer private. Their public dining rooms were open at least to the wealthy ‘public’ and rapidly became fashionable. Their exclusiveness now stemmed not from semi-private association with a particular social circle, but more from their expense. Such hotels were no longer solely the preserve of men. They were public, or perhaps semi-public, spaces for wealthy men and women, to see and to be seen in, to enter the public sphere in a particular mannered fashion (Finkelstein, 1989). The new hotels entailed innovative forms of organisation, particularly because the new clientele demanded the faster preparation of meals. The key figure in this rationalisation of the kitchen was Escoffier. Traditionally, the kitchen had been divided into a number of distinct sections, each responsible to a chef and for a particular category of dishes, and in which each chef worked independently of the others. Escoffier, by contrast, organised his kitchen into five sections, based not on the type of dish to be prepared but on the kind of operation to be undertaken (such as the rotisseur who did roasts, grilled and fried dishes, the saucier who made sauces and so on). These different sections were highly interdependent so that any particular dish resulted from the work carried out by chefs working in a number of different sections. The effect of this reform was to break down traditional craft demarcations and generate a new more complex division of labour based upon novel specialisation and a new interdependence of activities (Mennell, 1985: 155–9).

Subsequently, other features of catering work developed. One is that of ad hoc management. Because the level of demand for such services is highly volatile and unpredictable, management has to develop ad hoc ways of responding to varying demands and unanticipated crises. To cope with this unpredictability, managements largely try to avoid collective contracts and favour individual contract-making. Each employee will negotiate separate arrangements with management. What is of most significance to such employees is the total reward system, which includes not only basic pay, but also formalised perks such as accommodation, semi-formalised perks such as tips, and non-formal opportunities for perks and pilferage (Mars and Nicod, 1984). There is also the distinction between core and peripheral workers with the former benefiting most from the informal reward system.

These features derive from the key characteristic of restaurants identified in Whyte’s classic study, namely, the combination of production and service (1948: 17). A restaurant thus differs from a factory, which is a unit
of production, and it differs from a shop, which is a unit of service:

The restaurant operator produces a perishable product for immediate sale within his establishment. Success in such a business requires a delicate adjustment of supply to demand and skilful coordination of production and service. ... This situation puts a premium upon the skilful handling of personnel. ... The restaurant must provide a satisfactory way of life for the people who do the work or else it cannot provide the satisfactions sought by its customers. (Whyte, 1948: 17–18)

There are important implications of how restaurants involve both production and service. Because employees are dealing with a perishable product, the tempo of work is highly variable; it is difficult to generate a rhythm by which to work and it also means that there are immense problems of coordination (Whyte, 1948: 18–19). The restaurant worker has two bosses, the supervisor/employer and the customer. The total reward depends upon satisfactory relationships with both. Moreover, low-status employees, such as waiters and waitresses, are able to demand prompt action from their status superiors, the chefs and cooks. But this is something that often generates resentment and a slowdown to demonstrate status superiority. Mars and Nicod suggest that these conflicts are likely to be less significant in very high-class hotels and restaurants where there is a common commitment to quality and less pressure on time (1984: 43–7), although, based upon his TV work, this is not the case with celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s top restaurants. Whyte discusses various means of overcoming such problems, that is, to preserve communication between the kitchen and the waiters while limiting face-to-face interaction and hence the possibilities of friction.

A further aspect of the catering industry is when staff and customers meet there is a complex intertwining of labour and leisure. Marshall argues that had Whyte: ‘investigated the staff–customer relationship with similar resolve he would have realised that the proximate culture of restaurant employees is only in part that of the “workplace”’ (1986: 34). Marshall explores the contradiction between the poor conditions of work in the restaurant and the lack of resentment about them among the workforce. The pay was bad, the hours worked were exceptionally long and all staff had to demonstrate complete job flexibility. And yet there was little discontent about the work or about the wealth of the owner. There was more or less no unionisation, as with most of the rest of the industry (see Mars and Nicod, 1984: 109). There was also, rather unusually, little turnover of staff.

Marshall presumed that the employer’s paternalism, combined with the material and symbolic significance of the total reward system, were sufficient to explain the apparent loyalty of the workforce. However, through participant observation, Marshall concluded that these ‘employees were convinced that they weren’t really “working” for their pay packets at all’ (1986: 40). The staff rarely used the language of work. They did not say they were going to work, or were going home from work. The business after all involved the provision of leisure. Many of the customers were friends or relatives of the employees and, at least during slack times, the staff were encouraged to talk to and even participate in the leisure activities going on around them. Little attention was paid to punctuality and the staff were given freedom to organise their own routines of work. Moreover, much of the employee’s leisure time was in fact also spent at the restaurant drinking in the bars. Thus many symbolic boundaries between work and leisure did not really operate. The daily round of activities (that is, of what was formally ‘work’ and what was formally ‘leisure’) were more a way of life. Other workplaces may have rather similar features, especially where leisure or tourist-related services are provided (fast-food outlets do not demonstrate such characteristics).

Some features of the work culture and situation of the cook made it unlikely that there will be active trade unionism and class consciousness among cooks and chefs. Chefs and cooks, particularly in private hotels and restaurants, typically have an orientation to the idea of service. There is the dedication to task because of the belief that the work they do is skilled, interesting and offers extensive scope for expressing their craft-like abilities. There are status differences between ‘chefs’ and ‘cooks’ in that the former view themselves as an elite serving an upper-class clientele in ‘high-quality’ establishments. Such status differences with deep historical roots undermine the perception of a homogeneous ‘occupation’. This led to the perception among cooks of a distinct career structure through which they could progress upwards and come to run their own
establishment.

Extensive technical change occurred among chefs and cooks in the 1970s. This was partly because of the introduction of electrical devices which replaced many routine hand operations, but mainly because of the widespread development of ‘convenience foods’. In research in a cook-freeze kitchen, Gabriel shows that it is possible to transform a kitchen into a production line. One employee said: ‘This is not a kitchen, it is a production line, but we don’t get production money’ (Gabriel, 1988: 57). But in relationship to cooking it is often difficult to establish just what skilled work really amounts to since it involves tacit skills not learnt through formal apprenticeships. It involves judgement and intelligence, sensitivity and subjectivity, as now revealed (sometimes in their absence!) on the ubiquitous TV programmes featuring celebrity and other chefs.

In the 1980s and 1990s there was extensive investment in the fast-food industry and what Levitt terms the ‘industrialisation of service’ (1981; Ritzer, 2008, on ‘McDonaldization’). Such ‘industrialised’ food is produced in predictable, calculable, routinised and standardised environments, even where there is franchising. These fast-food companies have developed global networks with few ‘failings’ so that an African McDonald's will be every bit as ‘good’ as an American McDonald's. Such networks of control depend upon allocating a very large proportion of resources to the system, to branding, advertising, quality control, staff training and the internalisation of the corporate image.

McDonald's has generated new ‘food’ products such as Big Macs or the simulated Chicken McNuggets which alter people's eating habits and generate new social habits worldwide, such as eating standardised fast food bought from take-away restaurants. It promotes easy accessibility and flexible consumption at more or less any time (‘grazing’). Fast food has broken down the tyranny of fixed mealtimes and the rigid timetabling of the day, especially while travelling and away from home.

Further, McDonaldization produces new kinds of low-skilled standardised jobs, especially for young people who may themselves be travelling the world via multiple McJobs. The employment effect has been to increase the proportion of the catering workforce under age 21. Working in fast food has been the most common choice of first-time job in Britain. A fast-food manager explained the recruiting policy: ‘We just have to recruit young people because of the pace of work. Older people couldn’t stand the pace … this job, with its clean, dynamic image, appeals to younger people’ (quoted in Gabriel, 1988: 97).

In these restaurants the young staff have to learn how to present themselves in programmed ways to customers. There are stereotyped forms of address, sometimes printed on the back of the menu. Staff must also learn the company smile. A fast-food worker nevertheless explained: ‘It's all artificial. Pretending to offer personal service with a smile when in reality no one means it. We know this, management knows this, even the customers know this, but we keep pretending’ (Ritzer, 2008). Yet, although almost everything in the fast-food business is rule-bound, these rules are often broken in order to meet the demand at particular times of the day and to break the drudgery of work. Management regularly turns a blind eye to the ways in which employees maintain a measure of autonomy and put their mark on work they would otherwise find monotonous.

We have so far assumed that the same processes apply in each country. However, Mennell shows the differences between French and English experiences. There has been a long-standing dominance in England of the job of ‘management’, particularly of large hotels, and a corresponding disdain until recently for the occupations of chef and cook (1985: 195; hence the interesting growth in celebrity chefs). France, by contrast, saw the development of the chef as a professional. The chef-patron enjoyed immensely high status in French society. Mennell suggests that the situation in England facilitated more extensive implementation of de-skilling compared with France.

Crang pursues some of these issues of informality and style in a study of a ‘themed’ restaurant in Cambridge (1994, 1997). He notes how service encounters possess a rather complex performative character. One can think of this workplace as a stage, involving a mix of mental, manual and emotional labour. Staff are chosen
because they possess the right sort of cultural and aesthetic capital, they have to be informal, young, friendly, with the right sort of body and skills to produce appropriate emotional performances during the course of each evening. The self is key here since the performances have to be ‘authentically’ fun-loving, informal and sociable.

Staff demonstrate various ‘social and emotional’ skills as they adjust their performances through cultural readings and interactions with a wide variety of customers. In some ways they have to be amateur social scientists, ‘reading’ each group of diners and predicting the kind of ‘experience’ they are expecting. The restaurant is described by the staff as a place of emotions, they talk of ‘getting in the mood’ at the beginning of the evening, allowing the emotions to flow. The staff, and especially the young female waitressing staff, operate of course under the gaze of customers and are expected to perform in accordance with gender-specific notions (see Adkins, 1995). So Crang shows how waiting work in a dinner-style restaurant is a form of conscious acting that is simultaneously scripted and creative, taking place before the dining audience. Due to a subtle combination of training and detailed in-house scripts for appropriate waitering, on the one hand, and pre-scripted, personal skills of improvising, on the other, a Goffmanesque universe of eagerness to please and friendliness is mostly enacted.

Haldrup and Larsen provide an ethnography of the tourist ‘restaurant scene’ in Alanya in Turkey, a hugely popular destination for Scandinavian package tourists and second-home owners (2010: ch. 6). ‘Tourist restaurants’ are recognisable by large images and multilingual menucards, a mixture of global and Turkish dishes, bright colours, national flags on the tables, international football T-shirts on the walls, international pop-tunes, large outdoor serving areas, international football matches on large TV-screens, insistent Turkish waiters on the street, location on the main streets or tourist sideways and the presence of tourists and no locals. The restaurant scene in Alanya is visibly divided and very few tourists eat where the locals go; eating and drinking tourists rub shoulders only with fellow tourists.

A ‘banal nationalism’ permeates these restaurants in Alanya. Their fronts are covered in national flags and restaurants are named Sunset Copenhagen, Scandinavia and The Viking (‘Vikingen’). Tourists are continually reminded of their citizenship and nationality in such ways as being asked where they are from by waiters who try to lure them into their restaurant. Once the tourist exposes his nationality (say Danish) waiters begin to charm them in Danish and highlighting how the place is popular among Danes, cold Carlsberg beer is served, a forthcoming Danish football match is shown or a Danish football shirt is pointed out on the wall. And once inside the restaurant, one’s national flag is placed at your table. Football jerseys, whether of the national team or Danish clubs, decorate the walls of many bars and restaurants, and they function as markers of national identity. For instance, the restaurant Sunset Copenhagen has the jerseys of rival Danish football clubs on display, while Oscar’s Scandinavian Restaurant, on the other side of the street, is ornamented with the football jerseys of Norwegian teams. Both restaurants advertise on the street that they show Danish and Norwegian matches and have – as with many other restaurants and bars in Alanya – centrally placed TV-screens where they show ‘not-to-be-missed’ football matches and other sports events announced on the street. Thanks to global satellite TV, Danes can follow their local football team abroad.

One interesting finding is that such ‘Scandinavian’ restaurants tend to be owned by and employ Danes of Turkish origin or Turks living in Denmark outside the summer season. It is those restaurants with ‘Danish Turkish’ staff where Danish-ness is especially staged and performed. This highlights the mobilities of tourism staff. With reference to staff, we now examine the ‘flexible’ nature of the hospitality labour force.

‘Flexible’ and ‘Mobile’

Restructuring through the flexible use of labour is something that has characterised many tourist-related services for decades, and the understanding of such services necessitates a careful examination of the changing
gender relations in such industries, since particular kinds of labour flexibility presuppose a certain gendering of the labour force. Atkinson identified four forms of flexibility (1984). First, there is numerical flexibility, where firms vary the level of labour input in response to changes in the level of output. This may involve the use of part-time, temporary, short-term contract and casual workers. Second, there is functional flexibility, which refers to the ability of employers to move employees between different functional tasks according to changes in the work load. Third, there is the strategy of distancing, which involves the displacing of internal employment relations by commercial market relations through subcontracting and similar arrangements. Fourth, there is pay flexibility, whereby employers attempt to reward individual employees who have, for example, become 'multiskilled' and functionally flexible employees. These management strategies have the effect of restructuring employment in firms into ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ workers.

The flexibility thesis was mostly discussed with respect to the 1980s restructuring of manufacturing industry. However, the service industry has for much longer been characterised by forms of flexibility. In tourist-related services we noted the use of pay flexibility, something related to the low levels of unionisation even in large hotels, and the relative absence of industrial disputes (Johnson and Mignot, 1982; Baum, 2007). Furthermore, both functional and numerical flexibility have been clear management goals in the hotel and catering industry from the 1960s onwards.

There is also a distinct gender division in the form and extent of these various flexible working practices (Bagguley, 1991; Baum, 2007). It seems that it was much more common for men to have jobs which involved functional flexibility. The ‘operative positions’, waiting and bar staff, kitchen hands, domestic staff and cleaners, are mainly undertaken by women, with chefs as the main exception. Moreover, it is in these positions that such women employees tend to work part-time, demonstrating ‘numerical flexibility’. Such numerically flexible workers are also usually the least functionally flexible. Most part-time employees (mostly women) do not have the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills and experience to become functionally flexible as full-time employees, who are more likely to be male. Thus the gender of the employee seems to determine which form of flexible working is likely to be experienced.

The development of flexible forms of employment is affected by various factors. The fact that most tourist-related services are provided when the tourist gaze is present over the ‘summer season’ increases the use of temporary, part-time and functionally flexible workers. Baum states that around half of tourism staff in larger UK cities and elsewhere are students (2007: 1390). In many tourist-related services there is an exceptional variety of functions which have to be met – food production, food service, entertainment, accommodation, bars and so on – and this provides many opportunities for task flexibility. The industrial relations climate in these firms needs to be taken into account. Lack of extensive unionisation and employees’ organisations based on occupational groups means there is little formally organised opposition to new working practices.

So far, then, flexible working practices have for some time been a key feature of tourist-related industries. With such staff demonstrating high turnover it may be difficult to sustain adequate skill levels and develop appropriate training programmes. Often companies use ‘numerical flexibility’ instead of developing the multiple skills of their core staff. Indeed, more generally there appears to be a paucity of career paths in tourist-related services except for those in managerial and chef positions. Metcalf summarised the situation for many workers in the hospitality industry: ‘Very few career jobs were identified. … Most jobs were characterised by young recruits, no promotion and high turnover. And leavers went into a variety of unskilled jobs’ (1988: 89).

In addition to gender there are ethnic and mobility dimensions. Many tourism businesses are culturally diverse workplaces comprising many nationalities and people born elsewhere. Especially in major ‘global’ cities but increasingly also peripheral areas, hotels and restaurants make great use of mobile, transient staff (Duncan et al., 2009). For instance, some 25 per cent of the workforce in the Irish tourism and hospitality industry are non-Irish nationals (Baum, 2007). These mobile tourism workers are heterogeneous. On the one hand, there are migrants and refugees that undertake often low-entry but poorly paid back-stage region jobs such as cleaning and catering in hotels and restaurants. They fulfil such jobs since they have few other opportunities.
And to this group we might add the many more or less trafficked women exploited in strip clubs, brothels, lap-dancing clubs, casinos and street corners in most tourist destinations around the world. For instance, in the red-light district of Copenhagen, hip locals, hotels, tourists, porn shops, drug addicts and prostitutes exist side by side. The sex industry, with which the tourism industry is heavily intertwined, is mainly constituted by more or less trafficked women from Eastern Europe and Africa. Trafficking and mobile sex workers are an integral part of the mobilities of hospitality work and tourism more generally. This is one dark affect of the (embodied) tourist gaze, causing pain and danger for many poor young women around the world (Jeffreys, 1999).

On the other hand, a different group of mobile service workers are younger tourists (often ‘backpackers’) that undertake temporary service work as part of their travel experience (Bianchi, 2000; Duncan et al., 2009). And one consequence of such ‘mobilities of hospitality work’ is that the distinctions between host and guest become porous and fluid. More and more often, tourists are served by staff who are guests too (and perhaps gone tomorrow too), so it is not only because of tourists that hotels, restaurants and resorts signify multiculturalism as much as nationality or localness. More generally, the categories of host and guest less frequently hold up in the field. Germann Molz and Gibson summarise how many researchers ‘have challenged the binary opposition between host and guest by refining these categories in more pluralistic and heterogeneous terms’ (2007a: 7; see Bell, 2007).

Conclusion

We have thus examined many aspects of the so-called ‘hospitality industry’. Indeed, we have seen that there are ambiguities and anomalies in the notion of being ‘hospitable’ in a world of mass movement, intense commercialisation and likely exploitation (see Germann Molz and Gibson, 2007b). Hospitality presupposes various kinds of economies, politics and ethics as the tourist gaze extends around the world and draws into its warm embrace countless social relations between hosts and guests. These relations typically indicate strange combinations of hospitality and hostility as the world’s largest industry has utterly industrialised, commercialised and scripted what once we might have valued as the pure act of giving unconditional hospitality to others (see Derrida, 2000, more generally).

While we have examined human performances of service work we end by noting how animals also work under the tourist gaze as part of a broader drift towards a society of spectacle. Zoos have long been tourist attractions. Here animals are literally the mad behind the bars, living on a stage where they are constantly watched, sometimes trained and applauded when performing their ‘natural’ instincts as part of what Franklin (1999) calls the ‘zoological gaze’ and Beardsworth and Bryman (2001) the ‘Disneyization of Zoos’. Desmond shows how animals are required to perform a ‘fiction of themselves as wild’ as part of a theatrical staging: ‘We can be overwhelmed by the scale of powerful jumps by the killer whales, for instance, while forgetting the frame of the show as a show during that moment. The spectacle of bodies in motion stands in for wild-ness and uncontrollability, not subject to the constraints of culture’ (1999: 151; Cloke and Perkins, 2005).

We turn now to examine some broader transformations of tourist cultures which in turn affect the kinds of work that gets undertaken under the gaze.

- tourism
- tourist gaze
- restaurants
- smiling
- hotels
- aesthetic labor
• staff

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