Changing Tourist Cultures

Introduction

We have so far conceptualised the tourist gaze as being distinct from other social activities and occurring at particular places for specific periods of time. This viewpoint was reinforced by analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 of some salient characteristics of tourism. Although it is difficult to demarcate just what is and is not part of that industry, we presume a reasonably tight specification. In Chapter 4, for example, we discussed the specific character of service performances in the hospitality and experience economies. But in this chapter we consider how changes in the nature of especially western societies over the past few decades are undermining such a precise notion. We argue that there has been a reversal of the long-term process of structural differentiation by which relatively distinct social institutions came to specialise in particular tasks or functions. Part of this reversal is that ‘culture’ as an economy of signs is more central in the organisation of present-day societies. There has been a dissolving of the boundaries, not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms, such as tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping and architecture. In addition, mass communications have transformed the tourist gaze which is increasingly bound up with, and is partly indistinguishable from, all sorts of other social and cultural practices. This has the effect, as ‘tourism’ per se declines in specificity, of generalising the tourist gaze – people are much of the time ‘tourists’ whether they like it or know it. The tourist gaze is intrinsically part of contemporary experience but the tourist practices to which it gives rise are experiencing rapid and significant change. Such change cannot be separated from more wide-ranging structural and cultural developments within contemporary societies.

The Modern and the Postmodern

In the 1980s and 1990s it became common to understand some of these shifts through the distinction between modern and postmodern cultures, a distinction we will draw upon in this chapter.

The modern involves ‘structural differentiation’, the separate development of a number of institutional and normative spheres, of the economy, the family, the state, science, morality, and an aesthetic realm. Each of these becomes subject to self-legislation (see Lash, 1990: 8–9). Each sphere develops its own conventions and mode of valuation. Value within the cultural sphere is dependent upon how well a cultural object measures up to the norms appropriate to that sphere. This is ‘horizontal differentiation’.

But a further aspect needs to be considered, ‘vertical differentiation’. As each sphere becomes horizontally separated, so important vertical differentiations also develop. Within the cultural sphere this consists of a number of distinctions: between culture and life, between high and low culture, between scholarly or auratic art and popular pleasures, and between elite and mass forms of consumption. Within building design there is the distinction between ‘architecture’ (which obviously takes many different styles) and various vernacular forms of building. Modernism, then, is to be understood as a process of differentiation, especially as we have seen here, of the differentiation between the various cultural spheres both horizontally and vertically.

Postmodernism, by contrast, involves de-differentiation (Lash, 1990: ch. 1). There are various interconnected aspects. First, there is a breakdown in the distinctiveness of each of these spheres of activities, especially the cultural. Each implodes into the other, and most involve visual spectacle and play. This is seen most clearly in so-called multi-media events but much cultural production, especially via the central role of TV and now the internet, is difficult to categorise and place within any particular sphere.

Further, such cultural spheres are no longer auratic, in Benjamin’s terms (1973). To say that a cultural phe-
nomenon had aura was to say that it was radically separated from the social, it proclaimed its own originality, uniqueness and singularity, and it was based in a discourse of formal organic unity and artistic creativity. Postmodernist culture by contrast is anti-auratic. Such forms do not proclaim their uniqueness but are mechanically, electronically and digitally reproduced and distributed. There is a denial of the separation of the aesthetic from the social and of the contention that art is of a different order from life. The value placed on the unity of the artistic work is challenged through an emphasis on pastiche, collage, allegory and so on. Postmodern cultural forms are not consumed in a state of contemplation (as at the classical concert) but of distraction. Postmodern culture affects the audience via its immediate impact, through what it does for one, through regimes of pleasure and affect, and not through the formal properties of the aesthetic material. And this serves to undermine any strong distinction between a high culture, enjoyed by an elite knowledgeable about the aesthetics of a given sphere (painting, music, literature), and the popular or low culture of the masses. Postmodernism is anti-hierarchical, opposed to such vertical differentiations.

There is also de-differentiation of ‘cultural economy’. One aspect of this is the breakdown of some of the differences between the cultural object and the audience so that there is an active encouragement of audience participation, especially through SMS voting. Examples include the ‘living theatre’, TV game shows or confessional TV where anyone can be famous for 15 minutes (recent examples include Big Brother, X-Factor and Pop Idol). Another aspect is the dissolving of the boundaries between artistic production and the commercial. Developments here include the growth of ‘free’ artistic music videos to sell CDs, of ‘downloads’ and concert tickets, of songs appearing first within advertisements, of major artistic talents employed within the production of adverts, and of the use of ‘art’ to sell products via sponsorship. Commerce and culture are utterly intertwined in the postmodern.

There is also the problematising of the distinction between ‘representations’ and ‘reality’. Signification is increasingly figural or visual and so there is a closer, more intimate, relationship between the representation and the reality than where signification takes place through words or music (without film, TV, video, pop video and so on). Further, an increasing proportion of the referents of signification, the ‘reality’, are themselves representations. Or as Baudrillard famously argued, what we increasingly consume are signs or representations (1983, 1985). Social identities are constructed through the exchange of sign-values. But these are accepted in a spirit of spectacle. People know that the media, for example, are a simulation, and they in turn simulate the media. This world of sign and spectacle is one in which there is no real originality, only what Eco terms ‘travels in hyperreality’ (1986). Everything is a copy, or a text upon a text, where what is fake can often seem more real than the real. This is a depthless world or a ‘new flimsiness of reality’ (Lash, 1990: 15). Lash summarises this argument: ‘modernism conceives of representations as being problematic whereas postmodernism problematises reality’ (1990: 13).

Interestingly, though, many tourist places and practices, even in the past, prefigure some postmodern characteristics. Resorts competed with each other to provide visitors with the grandest ballroom, the longest pier, the highest tower, the most modern amusement park, the most stylish holiday camp, the most spectacular illuminations, the most beautiful gardens, the most elegant promenade and so on. Because of the importance of the visual, of the gaze, tourism has always been concerned with spectacle and with cultural practices which partly implode into each other. Much tourist activity has been thoroughly anti-auratic. It has been based on mechanical and electronic reproduction (beginning with ‘What the butler saw’ machines, through spectacular illuminations, to son et lumière and laser shows); it has been based on popular pleasures, on an anti-elitism with little separation of art from social life; it has typically involved not contemplation but high levels of audience participation; and there has been much emphasis on pastiche, or what others might call kitsch (as in the Hawaiian ballroom at Maplin’s holiday camp on the BBC TV programme Hi-de-Hi!).

What we have been describing are some characteristics of the collective and mediatised gaze. But in previous chapters we also discussed the ‘romantic gaze’, which is much more obviously aural, concerned with the more elitist – and solitary – appreciation of magnificent scenery, an appreciation which requires considerable cultural capital, especially if particular objects also signify literary texts (as with the English Lakeland poets,
for example). The ‘romantic gaze’ can also be said to involve de-differentiation. Historically, the ‘romantic gaze’ developed with the formation of picturesque tourism in late eighteenth-century England. The hybridised picturesque eye of skilled connoisseurship and Claude glasses derived pleasure from landscapes features that possessed resemblance to works of writing and painting. Visitors searched for and valued: ‘that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture’ (Ousby, 1990: 154). North European tourists consumed and pictured places through imported landscape images, and the distinction between nature and art dissolved into a circularity. Landscape became a reduplication of the picture that preceded it. An illustrative example of the conventions of picturesque sightseeing is provided in Thomas West’s guidebook to the Lake District, highly influential in the late eighteenth century:

By this course the lake lies in order more pleasing to the eye, and grateful to the imagination. The change of scenes is from what is pleasing to what is surprising, from the delicate and elegant touches of Claude, to the noble scenes of Poussin, and, from these, to the stupendous, romantic ideas of Salvator Rosa. (Quoted in Andrews, 1989: 159)

West’s much-loved route in the Lake District imitates the Italian landscape paintings of Claude, Poussin and Rosa. In so doing, West engaged in an act of translation, recuperating the specificity of this place to a series of places on the tourist circuit in Europe’ (Duncan, 1999: 155). The landscape of Lake District is the product of mobility. The first visitors ‘discovered’ its sublime nature through ‘imported’ landscape models: it is indissolubly related to other tourist places. The tourist gaze, even the romantic gaze, implies that tourists are folded into a world of texts, images and representational technologies when gazing upon landscapes (see Larsen, 2006b, for a similar study of the making of the Danish island of Bornholm).

Much of what is appreciated is not directly experienced reality but representations, particularly through the medium of photography (Taylor, 1994). What people ‘gaze upon’ are ideal representations of the view in question which they internalise from various mobile representations. And even when they cannot in fact ‘see’ the natural wonder in question, they can still sense it, see it in their mind. And even when the object fails to live up to its representation, it is the latter which will stay in people’s minds, as what they have really ‘seen’ (see Crawshaw and Urry, 1997; and Chapter 7 below).

Thus there is a cultural paradigm of de-differentiation; and various tourist places and practices historically prefigured this paradigm (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of related architectures). Yet there is an important sense in which much tourism has also been partially modernist. This sense is revealed through the term ‘mass tourism’, which is how much tourist activity was structured until recently. We noted in Chapter 3 aspects of this attempt to treat people in the same manner and not to set up differentiations between people who are consumers of the same holiday camp or hotel or restaurant. Central to the modern is the view of the public as a homogeneous mass and that there is a realm of values serving to unify the mass. Within tourism, the idea of the modern is reflected in the attempt to treat people within a socially differentiated site as similar to each other, with common tastes and characteristics, albeit with those being determined by the providers of the service in question. In the next section we consider how one key characteristic of postmodernism, like post-Fordism, is people’s refusal to accept being treated as an undifferentiated mass. Part of postmodernism’s hostility to authority is the opposition felt by many to mass treatment. Rather, people appear to want to be treated in a more differentiated manner and this has given rise to much lifestyle research by the advertising industry, seeking ever more finely distinguished categories of visitor (see Poon, 1993).

We have so far talked of different cultural paradigms without regard to the social forces that underlie them. The weakened collective powers of the working class and the heightened powers of the service and other middle classes have generated a widespread audience for new cultural forms and particularly for what some term ‘post-tourism’.

Our argument here loosely derives from Bourdieu’s classic text Distinction (1984). A number of its features are especially relevant to analysing the impacts of the cultural practices of one class upon another. Bourdieu
brings out that the powers of different social classes (and by implication other social agents) are as much symbolic as economic or political. Such symbolic goods are subject to a distinct economy, a ‘cultural economy’, characterised by competition, monopolisation, inflation and different forms of capital, including especially cultural capital. Different social classes are engaged in a series of struggles with each other, to increase the volume of capital they possess vis-à-vis other classes, and to increase the valuation placed on the particular forms of capital they happen to possess. Each social class possesses a habitus, the system of classification which operates below the level of individual consciousness and which is inscribed within people’s orienting practices, bodily dispositions and tastes and distastes. Classes in competition with each other attempt to impose their own system of classification upon other classes and to exert dominance. In such struggles a central role is played by cultural institutions, especially education and the media. The cultural realm has its own logic, currency and rate of convertibility into economic capital. Cultural capital is not just a matter of abstract theoretical knowledge but of the symbolic competence necessary to appreciate works of ‘art’ or ‘anti-art’ or ‘place’. Differential access to the means of arts consumption is crucial to the reproduction of class and the processes of class and broader social conflict. This differential cultural consumption both results from the class system and is a mechanism by which classes and other social forces seek to establish dominance within a society (Bourdieu, 1984; Devine et al., 2005).

In particular, the service class is significant here. It consists of that set of places within the social division of labour whose occupants do not own capital or land to any substantial degree; is located within a set of interlocking social institutions which collectively ‘service’ capital; enjoys superior work and market situations generally resulting from the existence of well-defined careers, either within or between organisations; and has its entry regulated by the differential possession of educational credentials. These serve to demarcate the service class from more general white-collar workers and generate distinctions of cultural capital and taste (Butler and Savage, 1995; Savage et al., 1992).

The service class is discussed by Bourdieu. In talking of ‘intellectuals’, he contrasts their preference for ‘aesthetic-asceticism’ with the bourgeois preference for sumptuous interiors. This is reflected in liking modernist-style interiors among ‘intellectuals’. Of their leisure patterns, Bourdieu writes: ‘the most ascetic form of the aesthetic disposition and the culturally most legitimate and economically cheapest practices, e.g., museum-going, or, in sport, mountain-climbing or walking, are likely to occur particularly frequently among the fractions (relatively) poorest in economic capital’ (1984: 267). Interestingly, Bourdieu talks of the symbolic subversion by intellectuals of the rituals of the bourgeois order through ‘ostentatious poverty’. This is reflected in the tendency to dress casually when at work, to favour bare wood interiors, and to engage in mountaineering, hiking and walking, which represent their taste for ‘natural, wild nature’ (1984: 220). Intellectuals have a propensity to exhibit the ‘romantic gaze’. The bourgeois, by contrast, is said to prefer ‘organized, signposted cultivated nature’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 220; Savage, Barlow, Dickens and Fielding, 1992; see Munt, 1994, on the tourism implications).

What we have referred to as the service class and other white-collar workers would also include those whose work is predominately symbolic. Much work of both is symbolic – in the media, new media, advertising, design, acting as cultural intermediaries. Such groups have a strong commitment to fashion, to the rapid and playful transformations of style (see Featherstone, 1987: 27; Lash and Urry, 1994). Such groups are not necessarily accepted by the intellectuals and the old cultural-capital establishment. So there is here a challenge to established culture, to high culture, while at the same time the emergence of celebrity intellectuals has demystified traditional sources of cultural capital: ‘This interchange, the alertness of intellectuals to new popular styles and the marketability of “the new”, creates conditions in which styles travel faster, both from the avant-garde to the popular, the popular to the avant-garde, and the popular to the jet-set’ (Featherstone 1987: 27; Savage et al., 1992).

As a result, there comes to be generated a kind of stylistic melting-pot, Eof the old and the new, of the nostalgic and the futuristic, of the ‘natural’ and the ‘artificial’, of the youthful and the mature, of high culture and low, and of modernism and the postmodern. Martin summarises how the growth of these middle-class groups
has upset pre-existing cultural patterns: ‘The contemporary culture market muddles together the elite and the vulgar, yesterday’s shock and today’s joke in one gloriously trivial bricolage. Style is everything and anything can become style’ (1982: 236–7).

Furthermore, Bourdieu argues, these groups also have a quite different approach to pleasure. The old petit bourgeoisie bases its life on a morality of duty, with ‘a fear of pleasure … a relation to the body made up of “reserve”, “modesty” and “restraint”, and associates every satisfaction of the forbidden impulses with guilt’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 367). By contrast, the new middle-classes urge

a morality of pleasure as a duty. This doctrine makes it a failure, a threat to self-esteem, not to ‘have fun’. … Pleasure is not only permitted but demanded, on ethical as much as on scientific grounds. The fear of not getting enough pleasure … is combined with the search for self-expression and ‘bodily expression’ and for communication with others. (1984: 367; see Elliott and Urry, 2010, on pleasure as duty)

This last argument needs some clarification. Capitalist societies are characterised by a strong emphasis upon consumption based upon the romantic ethic. Campbell argues that romanticism has provided that philosophy of ‘recreation’ necessary for a dynamic consumerism in which the search for pleasure is viewed as desirable in and of itself (1987: 201). Romanticism produced the widespread taste for novelty which ensured the ethical support for continuously changing patterns of consumption. Various middle-class groupings are in a transformed situation and have significant effects upon the wider society. These groups demonstrate the central significance of symbolic work; the increase in the importance of the media and of their contemporary role in structuring fashion and taste; the greater freedom and incentive of such groups to devise new cultural patterns; the heightened prestige that accrues for the middle classes not from respectability but from fashion-ability; the greater significance of cultural capital to such groups and the continuous need to augment it; and a reduced functional need to maintain their economic capital intact (Lash and Urry, 1994). Various ‘postmodern’ landscapes of gentrification and inner-city arts-led regeneration show how the design of gentrified areas reflects the cultural capital of such a class (Zukin, 1991).

In all these changes, the media and new media are significant in reducing the importance of separate and distinct systems of information and pleasure. People from different social groups are exposed to more generally available systems of information, and each group can now see representations of the private spaces of other social groups (Meyrowitz, 1985). The media provide an enormously increased circulation of other people's lives, including elite groups and 'celebrities' (see Richards et al., 1999; Rojek, 2004). This institutionalised voyeurism in turn enables many to adopt the styles of other groups, to transgress boundaries between different social groupings as supposedly embodying particular values such as high culture, low culture, artistic, tasteful, tasteless. The media have also undermined what is to be thought of as properly backstage, as what should be kept private and what can be made public (especially with the massive growth of confessional 'reality' TV and social networking sites). What Bourdieu calls the new petit bourgeois live for the moment: ‘untrammeled by constraints and brakes imposed by collective memories and expectations’ (1984: 317). They often feel guilt about being middle class since ‘they see themselves as unclassifiable, ‘excluded’ … anything rather than categorized, assigned to a class, a determinate place in social space … freed from the temporal structures imposed by domestic units, with their own life-cycle, their long-term planning, sometimes over several generations, and their collective defences against the impact of the market’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 370–1).

Martin similarly describes a destructured habitus amongst middle-class youth, especially from the 1960s onwards (1982). This she attributes to an immensely extended liminal zone derived from the decline in parental authority and the extension of the period when one is neither child nor adult. A particularly extended period of liminality develops in the new middle class in that it has a destructured habitus not only in youth but in many occupations, especially the media (Wittel, 2001). Likewise, Jameson analyses the growth of pastiche rather than parody of the original real historical referent. Pastiche fragments time into a series of ‘perpetual presents’ (Jameson, 1985: 118). People's lives in ‘the new era of pastiche and nostalgia’ are experienced as
a succession of discontinuous events (Edgar, 1987). Although the individual blocks may be calculated and rational, the overall pattern is irrational. Spreading out from parts of the middle class is said to be a ‘calculating hedonism’ (Featherstone, 1987). People’s sense of history has been lost since according to Frampton: ‘[W]e live in a paradoxical moment when, while we are perhaps more obsessed with history than ever before, we have, simultaneously, the feeling that a certain historical trajectory, or even for some, history itself, is coming to an end’ (1988: 51). This is explored further in the next chapter when we encounter various debates over themed spaces and the ‘heritage industry’.

This loss of historical sense has also been associated with another characteristic of contemporary media, that people increasingly live in a three-minute culture. TV viewers keep switching from channel to channel unable to concentrate on any topic or theme for longer than a few minutes; the instant search culture of the internet takes this to more of a three-second culture. Cultural conservatives argue that people no longer live their lives through identities imbued with the consciousness that they are the children of their parents who were in turn children of their parents, and so on. Even within generations the fascination with immediate consumption purchased through credit (often now online) rather than saving means that lifelong projects such as marriage become more a succession of marriages, ‘serial monogamy’ or affairs (Lawson and Samson, 1988; Giddens, 1992; Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995; Bauman, 2003).

In the next section we return to tourism and show how these various cultural changes and the development of the service and middle classes profoundly affect tourism.

Mediated Tourism

Indeed it is only through the analysis of wider cultural changes that specific tourist developments can be understood. We begin with some comments on the tastes of the service class and their impact upon seaside resorts.

Such tastes involve the prioritisation of ‘culture’ over a particular construction of ‘nature’ or ‘natural desires’. Bourdieu expresses this well: ‘The nature against which culture is here constructed is nothing other than what is “popular”, “low”, “vulgar”, “common” … a “social promotion” experienced as an ontological promotion, a process of “civilization” … a leap from nature to culture, from the animal to the human’ (1984: 251).

The British seaside resort embodied a particular construction of nature – as uncivilised, tasteless, animalistic, to be counterposed to the civilisation of culture. Such an attitude can be seen even among socialist critics. George Orwell imagined a modern design for Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’ as consisting of a holiday camp where airconditioned caverns were transformed into a series of tea-grottoes in Moorish, Caucasian and Hawaiian styles. The sacred river would be turned into an artificially warmed bathing pool and muzak would be playing in the background ‘to prevent the onset of that dreaded thing – thought’ (quoted in Hebdige, 1988: 51). Likewise, Richard Hoggart set one of his parodies of cheap romantic fiction in what he called the Kosy Holiday Camp where there was a ‘shiny barbarism’, a ‘spiritual dry-rot’ and a ‘Candy Floss World’ (Hebdige, 1988: 52). Having good taste involves looking down on such places and only passing through, to view them as a voyeur would (as an Orwell or a Hoggart), but never to stay. The uncivilised resorts are not to be taken seriously, but can perhaps be played at or with.

At the same time an alternative construction of nature is also part of the service class habitus. There is a pronounced cultural emphasis on certain aspects of the natural. When discussing Bourdieu, it was argued that intellectuals subvert the bourgeois order through minimal luxury, functionalism and an ascetic aesthetics (1984: 287). This pattern is further reflected in an extraordinary range of contemporary cultural symbols and practices: health foods, real ale, real bread, vegetarianism, nouvelle cuisine, traditional, non-western science and medicine, natural childbirth, wool, lace and cotton rather ‘man-made’ fibres, antiques rather than ‘man-made’ reproductions, restored houses/warehouses, jogging, yoga, cycling, mountaineering, and fell-walking.
rather than organised, ‘contrived’ leisure. The middle-class ambivalence to the ‘natural’ is well captured in Campbell's account of how fishing has been affected by the naturalistic myth of the ‘sportsman’ (1989; Macnaghten and Urry, 2000b).

One reflection of the real or natural in tourism has been the ‘Campaign for Real Holidays’ conducted in the late 1980s in a key newspaper of the British service class, the *Independent*. This campaign resulted in the novel travel guide *The Independent Guide to Real Holidays Abroad* (Barrett, 1989a). The author states that it is increasingly difficult to have a ‘real holiday’ because the ‘rise and rise of the package holiday has imposed on travel the same problems that mass production has inflicted on beer, bread, ice cream and many other things’ (Barrett, 1989a: 1). A supposedly real holiday has two main characteristics. First, it involves visiting somewhere well away from where the mass of the population will be visiting. Real holidays thus involve the romantic tourist gaze, which has the effect of incorporating almost everywhere in the world as part of the ‘pleasure periphery’. Second, the real holidaymaker will use small specialist agents/operators to get to their destination. The *Guide* bemoaned the fact that three-quarters of all foreign holidays taken by Britons are sold by five major companies. The *Guide* favours instead the development of smaller companies specialising in particular segments of the ‘traveller market’. It talks of the development of the ‘delicatessen’ travel agent – these are specialist agencies that promote particular operators to ‘a discriminating, independent-minded clientele’ (Barrett, 1989a: 4; 1989b).

The existing companies have not been slow in recognising this trend to ‘real’ holidays, involving the culture of ‘travel’ rather than ‘tourism’, the romantic rather than the collective gaze and small niche suppliers rather than mass production/consumption operators. Thomas Cook tells us that this ‘is not a trip for the tourist but a voyage of discovery for the traveller … there is no packaging. … Thomas Cook treats you not just as an individual but as a VIP. … Thomas Cook provides a service that is both personal and global. This is truly travel à la carte’ (*Thomas Cook Escorted Journeys*, Jan. 1989–Dec. 1989). Accompanying the description of each holiday or travel experience is a reading list of useful books on the particular country. There are various emphases to be noted here: travel rather than tourism, individual choice, avoiding the package holidaymaker, the need to be an educated traveller, and a global operation that permits individual care and attention.

The service-class preference for the ‘real’ or the ‘natural’ can also be seen in the increasing attraction of both visiting the countryside and protecting it. This is not new (Williams, 1973; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). This image of the English countryside, ‘a bucolic vision of an ordered, comforting, peaceful and, above all, differential past’, is a fundamentally constructed one, comprising elements that never existed together (Thrift, 1989: 26). The countryside today is even less like ‘ye Olde English village’, even less like Gray's description of Grasmere in the Lake District: ‘This little unsuspected paradise, where all is peace, rusticity and happy poverty’ (especially given the countryside’s regular harbouring of diseased and factory-farmed animals).

But at the moment when rural life is being transformed because of changes in modern agriculture, so the countryside is an attractive object of the tourist gaze. One reflection of this is the rise in membership of many organisations concerned with simultaneously protecting the countryside and facilitating access to it. The current membership of the National Trust of England and Wales is 3.5 million and the RSPB 1 million. Connected with this has been the proliferation of ‘new traditionalist’ magazines that help to construct ever more redo-lent signs of the fast-disappearing countryside. These include *Country Homes and Interiors*, *Country Living*, *Country Homes* (Thrift, 1989: 28). Thrift argues that it is the service class which ‘seems to be the social group that has taken the countryside and heritage traditions most to heart’ (1989: 31). This class has been leading the push to move into the countryside and, indeed, historically led the campaigns to open up the countryside against the landlord class (see Urry, 1995b, on this class struggle). Thrift talks of the ‘service-class character of places replete with manicured countryside’ (1989: 34; Cloke et al., 1995; Urry, 1995b). This led to the gentrification of run-down rural property, and especially ruined farm buildings, as well as the building of new estates in vernacular or rustic style, such estates being usually described as ‘villages’ (Cloke, Phillips and Thrift, 1995).
In the Scandinavian countries this desire for the countryside has revitalised the ‘coolness’ of summer cottages (Bærenholdt et al., 2004). This will expand as many other people, following the example of the service class, seek to realise the ‘village in their mind’, to develop rural place-based consumption. Furthermore, those with professional-managerial jobs are twice as likely as those with manual jobs to visit, and they are more likely to be frequent visitors (Urry, 1995b: 211–12). However, differences can be identified between those more likely to work in the public sector who engage in ‘natural’ pursuits in the countryside, such as walking, climbing, camping and so on, and those private-sector managers who engage in country pursuits such as shooting, fishing, sailing, or golf (Urry, 1995b: 212–13; Savage et al., 1992). Moreover, there is a relationship here between postmodernism and this current obsession with the countryside. The attractions of the countryside derive in part from the disillusionment with the modern, particularly with the attempt to effect wholesale reconstruction of towns and cities in the post-war period. The countryside is thought to embody some or all of the following: a lack of planning and regimentation, a vernacular quaint architecture, winding lanes and a generally labyrinthine road system, and the virtues of tradition and the lack of social intervention. It hardly needs to be said that rural areas in most countries have in fact been subject to a wide range of modernising processes, especially large-scale agriculture, considerable attempts at land-use planning and extensive private-sector rural development. Moreover, only certain sorts of countryside are attractive to the prospective visitor, particularly those consistent with the idea of ‘landscape’. Cosgrove summarises how

the landscape idea was active within a process of undermining collective appropriation of nature for use. It was locked into an individualist way of seeing … it is a way of seeing which separates subject and object, giving lordship to the eye of a single observer. In this the landscape idea either denies collective experience … or mystifies it in an appeal to transcendental qualities of a particular area. (1984: 262; Schama, 1995)

Thus, ‘landscape’ is a human way of visually forming, through cultivated eyes, skilful techniques and technologies of representing, a physical environment. Hence, ‘a landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings’ (Cosgrove, 1984: 1). ‘Landscape’ is about how humans take control and possession of, and derive pleasures from, ‘nature’. It is a specific way of relating to ‘nature’ that fuses ‘reality’ with images and representations. It is about appearances and the look of places; it de-materialises place.

Landscape implies separation and individual observation (Williams, 1973: 120). Landscape ‘is what the viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a ‘good view’. It is land organised and reduced to the point ‘where the human eye can comprehend its breadth and depth within one frame or short scan’ (Andrews, 1989: 4). In other words, ‘landscape’ is a skilled, learned performance that visually and imaginatively works upon nature that, in turn, is rendered passive and submissive. This landscape vision depends on various objects and mundane technologies, and it undercut ‘simple dichotomies of what is natural and unnatural, what is countryside and what is urban, and what are subjects and what are supposedly objects’ (Macnaghten and Urry, 2000c: 2). While culturally constituted, ‘landscape’ is not without a material reality: it circulates in mobile cultural objects; it is built into the environment; and embodied landscape performances takes place in and have effects upon it. The social construction of landscape ‘entails, at a minimum, the circulation of paper and bodies and manifold other materials’ (Michael, 2000: 50). Landscape representations are travelling objects, at once informational and material: ‘in this sense, landscape representations become dynamic vehicles for the circulation of place through space and time. … Like Latour’s scientific circulating references, landscape-objects allow us to “pack the world in a box” and move about it, contributing to the shaping of the knowledge of the world itself’ (della Dora, 2007: 293, 2009).

Such a ‘rural landscape’ normally has erased from it farm machinery, labourers, tractors, telegraph wires, concrete farm buildings, motorways, derelict land, polluted water, nuclear power stations and dead and diseased animals. What people see is selective, and it is this focused gaze that is central to people’s appropriation. The countryside is there to be gazed upon, and ideally one should not be gazing upon other people, whether
workers or other tourists. Raymond Williams says that ‘a working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation’ (1973: 120). The service class and the ‘romantic gaze’ are leading the way in sustaining this picture of the countryside as ‘landscape’. But it is a gaze which has become more complex and playful, as rural images are central to mainstream popular culture, particularly advertising:

From such a post-modern perspective landscape seems less like a palimpsest whose ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ meanings can somehow be recovered with the correct techniques, theories or ideologies, than a flickering text … whose meaning can be created, extended, altered, elaborated and finally obliterated by the touch of a button. (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988: 8; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998: ch. 6)

There is an alternative approach to that of ‘landscape’, of ‘land’ that is a physical, tangible resource that is ploughed, sown, grazed and built upon by human hands. It involves bodily proximity and physical engagement with, or ‘dwelling within’, the environment (Milton, 1993; Ingold and Kurttila, 2000; this is discussed in Chapter 8). The inter-war period in Britain saw attempts, especially by the northern urban working class, to gain access to wild upland countryside for walking, rambling and cycling, for leisure through land. Central to these campaigns was an element of class struggle, against the landowners who historically restricted access. The most famous access campaign took place at Kinder Scout in the Peak District in 1932. The aim of the organisers, such as Tom Stephenson, ‘were not to see landscape, so much as to experience it physically – to walk it, climb it or cycle through it’ (Cosgrove, 1984: 268). They stepped into the ‘landscape picture’ and engaged bodily, sensuously and expressively with their material affordances, much like contemporary adventure tourism where nature's materiality is experienced through the active, moving, hybridised body. ‘Nature, for many tourist consumers, has evolved from something to look at, to something to leap into, jet boat through, or turn completely upside down: the inverted sublime!’ (Bell and Lyall, 2002: 27)

Samuel argues that for the young ramblers of the north in the 1930s: ‘the countryside was seen as an energizer: their intention was not so much to see the landscape as to experience it, to touch it with all the senses’ (1998: 146). These new multi-sensuous practices ignored the existing farming activities of the countryside. Rather than being regarded as visual enticements, villages in the inter-war period were ‘rural slums, with rising damp, leaky roofs, tiny windows, and squalid interiors’ (Samuel, 1998: 146). Those rambling, climbing, cycling, camping and so on mostly ignored the lives and habitats of the people living and working in that countryside.

To the extent to which contemporary appropriations of the countryside involve treating it as a spectacle, even a ‘theme’, this is a postmodern attitude to be contrasted with an approach emphasising its ‘use’ or dwelling (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). In response to the former, many living in rural areas develop packaged, themed environments whereby relatively sanitised representations of rural life are designed, constructed and presented to visitors:

We seem to find it far easier to schedule areas for preservation as outstanding landscape for those who would passively view their scenery than to delegate authority for their shaping to those who live, work and actively recreate in them. … Such preserved landscapes have in fact become a national commodity, advertised and sold abroad by the travel industry. (Cosgrove, 1984: 269)

The category of tourist is a relatively privileged one in rural areas. To be able to claim such a status it is normally necessary to be white and wealthy enough to own a car, and be able to organise and purchase certain kinds of accommodation (hotel bed, caravan or recognised camp site). It is also necessary, if people are visiting as a group, to use certain kinds of transport, such as coach or train, and not others, such as a convoy of cars or motorbikes, or a hippie convoy of travellers (see Hetherington, 2000b, on new age travellers). It is also necessary to engage in certain kinds of behaviour deemed appropriate and not others (known in Britain as the ‘country code’).
In particular, there has been some development of eco-tourism which stems from a selective repudiation of modern forms of transport, energy and industrial and agricultural production. Particular hostility has been shown to the ‘modernised’ planting of extensive forests of conifers, especially by the Forestry Commission but also by private landlords. Such forests are thought to have deleterious environmental and social consequences: the loss of a distinctive wildlife, including indigenous birds of prey; reduced levels of employment compared with those that would be supported by tourism; and the elimination of the wild, open and ‘romantic’ moors that are of such appeal. Indeed, a greater influence exercised by tourists would probably preserve the open moorlands against modernised planting of more and more rows of conifers (see Shoard, 1987: 223–5; see Macnaghten and Urry, 2000a, on woodland walking). Thus some important features of rural tourism stem from the broader development of environmental politics in the past two to three decades and the resistance to widespread attempts to ‘modernise’ particular areas or localities.

One element briefly mentioned above is that of playfulness. Feifer develops this idea through her notion of ‘post-tourism’ (1985). She highlights three features. The first is that the post-tourist does not have to leave his or her house in order to see many of the typical objects of the tourist gaze, with TV, video and the internet, all sorts of places can be gazed upon, compared, contextualised and gazed upon again. It is possible to imagine oneself ‘really’ there, seeing the sunset, the mountain range or the turquoise-coloured sea. The typical tourist experience is anyway to see named scenes through a frame, such as the hotel window, the car windscreen or the window of the coach. But this can now be experienced in one’s own living room, at the flick of a switch, and it can be repeated time and time again. There is much less of the sense of the authentic, the once-in-a-lifetime gaze, and much more of the endless availability of gazes through a frame at the flick of a switch or a click. The distinctiveness of the ‘tourist gaze’ is lost as such gazes are part of a postmodern popular culture. Consequently, we can speak of the ‘end of tourism’ ‘since people are tourists most of the time, whether they are literally mobile or only experience simulated mobility through the incredible fluidity of multiple signs and electronic images’ (Lash and Urry, 1994: 259). In Chapter 9 we reconsider this in relationship to the risks of climate change and the capacity to travel and consume other places ‘virtually’.

Second, the post-tourist is aware of change and delights in the multitude of choice: ‘Now he [sic] wants to behold something sacred; now something informative, to broaden him, now something beautiful, to lift him and make him finer; and now something just different, because he’s bored’ (Feifer, 1985: 269). The post-tourist is freed from the constraints of ‘high culture’, on the one hand, and the untrammelled pursuit of the ‘pleasure principle’ on the other. He or she can move easily from one to the other and indeed can gain pleasure from the contrasts between the two. The world is a stage and the post-tourist can delight in the multitude of games to be played. When the miniature replica of the Eiffel Tower is purchased, it can be simultaneously enjoyed as a piece of kitsch, an exercise in geometric formalism and as a socially revealing artefact (see Feifer, 1985: 270). There is no need to make a fetish out of the correct interpretation since the post-tourist can enjoy playing at it being all three.

Third, and most important, the post-tourist knows they are a tourist and tourism is a series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experience. The post-tourist thus knows that he or she will have to queue time and time again, that the glossy brochure is a piece of pop culture, that the apparently authentic local entertainment is as socially contrived as the ethnic bar, and that the supposedly quaint and traditional fishing village could not survive without the income from tourism. The post-tourist knows that he [sic] is: ‘not a time-traveller when he goes somewhere historic; not an instant noble savage when he stays on a tropical beach; not an invisible observer when he visits a native compound. Resolutely “realistic”, he cannot evade his condition of outsider’ (Feifer, 1985: 271).

One game played by tourists is being a ‘child’. This is especially clear in guided coach tours. One is told where to go, how long to go for, when one can eat, how long one has to visit the toilet and so on. The group (or class) are also asked inane questions and much of the discourse consists of setting up imaginary hostilities between people visiting from different places. And yet such tours seem much appreciated even by those who understand that they are ‘playing at being a tourist’, and one of the games to be embraced is ‘being a child’.
If post-tourism is important it will affect existing tourist practices. The pleasures of tourism stem from complex processes of both production and consumption. We emphasised the socially constructed character of the tourist gaze, that both production and consumption are socially organised, and that the gaze must be directed to certain objects or features which are extraordinary, which distinguish that site/sight of the gaze from others. Normally there is something about its physical properties which makes it distinct, although these are often both manufactured and have to be learnt. But sometimes it is merely a place's historical or literary associations which make it extraordinary, such as the tunnel in Paris where Princess Diana died, or the vicarage in Haworth, Yorkshire where the Brontës lived.

The development of post-tourism transforms these processes by which the tourist gaze is produced and consumed. Mercer, for instance, notes that popular pleasures ‘require a wholehearted and unselfconscious involvement in a cultural event, form or text’ (1983: 84). Particularly important in tourist pleasures are those that involve the energetic breaking of the mild taboos that operate on various forms of consumption, such as eating or drinking to excess, spending money recklessly, wearing outrageous clothes, keeping wildly different time patterns and so on. As Thompson says: ‘People are encouraged to spend by this disorganisation of the normal, “acceptable” routines of consumption’ (1983: 129). But the post-tourist emphasis on playfulness, variety and self-consciousness makes it harder to find simple pleasures in such mild and socially tolerated rule-breaking. The post-tourist is above all self-conscious, ‘cool’ and role-distanced. Pleasure hence comes to be anticipated and experienced in different ways from before. A number of changes are occurring here.

The universal availability of the predominantly visual media in advanced western societies has resulted in a massive upward shift in the level of what is ‘ordinary’ and hence what people view as ‘extraordinary’. Moreover, to the extent to which it is true that the media have ushered in a ‘three-minute’ culture, so this is also likely to encourage people to switch forms and sites of pleasures. It is almost certain that people will gain relatively less satisfaction from continuing to do what they, or more particularly their family, have always done. Thus, holidays have become less to do with the reinforcing of collective memories and experiences, especially around family and neighborhood, and more to do with immediate pleasure. As a result, people keep demanding new out-of-the-ordinary experiences. It is an interesting question whether it is in fact possible to construct a postmodern tourist site around absolutely any object. Mercer, though, argues that to experience pleasure in this more distanced, playful way makes all pleasures less satisfying. And in particular it makes it much harder to enjoy ‘simple’ pleasures such as those once found in seaside resorts.

Yet ‘post-tourism’, this de-differentiation between the everyday and touristic gazing, does not always substitute desires for seeing places directly and bodily. Another feature is the mediation of experiences and places. Media cultures also create desires for tourism, novel destinations and for new forms of mediated gazing, what in Chapter 1 we called ‘mediatised gazing’. There are complex intersections between these different modes of virtual, imaginative and corporeal travelling that are increasingly de-differentiated from one another. The tourist gaze is increasingly media-mediated. In postmodernity, tourists are constantly folded into a world of texts and images – books, magazines, paintings, postcards, ads, soap operas, movies, video games, music videos and so on – when gazing in and upon places. With the tourist gaze's widespread globalisation most places are ‘on the move’ and ‘connected’ through a circuit of images; faraway places are relentlessly travelling in and through the everyday spaces of those living in the ‘rich North’ of the world (Urry, 2007; Haldrup and Larsen, 2010). It is virtually impossible to visit places which people have not travelled to ‘imaginatively’ at some time. We have all been to New York via NYPD Blue, Spin City, Seinfeld, Friends and Sex in the City, through the eyes of Woody Allen, Spike Lee and Wayne Wang, and not least through the 9/11 terror attacks. Walking the streets of New York trigger memories of countless media-circulated images (Larsen, 2005; Mazierska and Walton, 2006).

Through representational performances, most tourist places have over time been inscribed with specific ‘imaginative geographies’ materialised and mobilised in and through books, brochures, postcards and photo albums. Tourist places are not given or fixed; they can appear and disappear, change meaning and character, and move about according to how they are produced and reproduced in media cultures (Shields, 1990; Cole-
man and Crang, 2002b; Bærenholdt et al., 2004). As literary theorist Edward Said says: ‘people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much that the book acquires greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes’ (1995: 93).

‘Markers’ of tourism seem to be everywhere these days, where the tourist gaze and media gaze highly overlap and reinforce each other, whether people travel corporeally or simply imaginatively through the incredible range of global images that make up everyday media cultures. Major films and soap operas often cause tourist flows where few roamed before the location was made visible upon the silver screen (Tooke and Baker, 1996; Riley et al., 1998; Beeton, 2005; Couldry, 2005; Tzanelli, 2008; Mordue, 2009). There has been an upsurge in ‘media pilgrimage’, according to media scholar Couldry, which ‘is both a real journey across space, and an acting out in space of the constructed “distance” between “ordinary world” and “media world”’ (2005: 72). Such media pilgrimages in search for the reality of a film or soap opera travel in a form of postmodern hyper-reality (Eco, 1986) where model and reality are confused in a world where access to unmediated reality is impossible. Here we have a situation where film landscapes identify with and represent actual landscapes, so that tourism destinations in part become fantasylands or mediaworlds.

As Mordue argues in relation to the contemporary TV programme Heartbeat, which revolves around the life of a country policeman living in Goathland in 1960s Britain: ‘The stage management of Goathland for Heartbeat tourism has meant that its identity as a “traditional” rural village and its media identity as Aidensfield are, visually, completely intertwined. … At virtually every corner of the village center there is some reminder, through a sign or souvenir, that you are in the heart of Heartbeat Country’ (2009: 336). The popularity of this series represents a nostalgia for rural life, and when the programme reached wide popularity annual visitor numbers to the area increased from 200,000 to 1.2 million (Mordue, 2009: 332).

At the same time film studios have become ‘tourist destinations’. Indeed, tourism organizations around the world quickly realised the potential of popular ‘film geographies’ which enables them to invent new destinations or inscribe old destinations with new imaginative geographies or place myths. In 1996, the British Tourist Authority (BTA) launched a Movie Map and a Movie Map Web Site to promote Britain's cinematic geographies as tourist geographies. Their new slogan is ‘vacation on location’ (http://www.visitbritian.com/corporate/links/visitbritian/campaigns.htm; accessed 22.03.10). This movie map reflects ‘that an increasing number of visitors to Britain come in search of the locations featured in their favourite films and TV shows’. One campaign utilised the tremendous global success of Harry Potter as the lens to discover the magic of Britain, its ‘magical and mysterious attractions’ (Edensor, 2002; Larsen, 2005). In their attempt to boost their national brand, Scottish tourist authorities deployed the Hollywood blockbuster movie of Braveheart (Edensor, 2002).

Given that one film reviewer commented that the film Captain Corelli's Mandolin is ‘a fine holiday ad but a rather dull movie’ (Channel 4), it is unsurprising that tour operators tried to sell Kefalonia through its cinematic representation. To cite Thompson: ‘Castaway Kefalonia – the island of Captain Corelli fame’ (quoted Crang and Travlou, 2009: 86).

And the novels The Lord of the Rings were written by the British novelist Tolkien, bearing no specific relation to New Zealand. However, the films are directed by the New Zealander Peter Jackson and shot in New Zealand. This led many tourism providers in New Zealand to capitalise upon its worldwide popularity. Indeed, even though most scenes are a mix of ‘real’ landscapes, film sets and postproduction digital modifications, the official New Zealand tourist organisation branded itself the ‘Home of Middle Earth’. Various companies arranged shorter and longer tours to the major sights of the film although no ‘remnants’ now remain; one can travel with ‘the Lords of the Rings location guidebook’ through this fictional and virtual environment. In this LOTR industry, ‘place’ and ‘culture’ are not exclusively attached to physical loci but also to fictional and virtual environments. According to Tzanelli, ‘virtual tourism’ does not simply re-narrate ‘place’ and ‘culture’ but the fictional, cinematic, narrative itself becomes the destination for the ‘archetypal tourist’ of the LOTR sign industry (2008: ch. 3).
Conclusion

So in this chapter we explored some major shifts in contemporary culture which has been expressed in terms of the move from the modern to the postmodern. We examined especially various de-differentiations between multiple domains, the proliferating middle-class taste wars and many aspects of the mediatising of tourism. Much of this argument was demonstrated in relationship to the attractions and allure of the rural and of the natural. Overall, we saw how ‘culture’ is more significant to tourism as economies are more and more economies of signs. We ended with exploring the notion of the ‘post-tourist’ involving de-differentiation between the everyday and tourism. Generally, we examined how media cultures also create desires for tourist travel, novel destinations and new forms of ‘mediatised gazing’.

The effects upon tourist experiences, though, have been left partly unspecified. So in the next chapter we examine the impacts of these cultural shifts upon places, buildings and design. How are various tourist gazes impacting upon the built form of place, of various old and new buildings and of their design and, indeed, re-design ‘for the gaze’? Signs are not just signs, we might say, since they have many material effects.

- tourism
- tourist gaze
- holiday camps
- pleasure
- cultural capital
- holidays
- middle class

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