Places, Buildings and Design

Places

In much tourism writing, the main focus is upon tourists and what they do and why they are motivated to go to certain kinds of place at particular periods of the year. There is a focus upon human subjects. But in this book we are also concerned with the places that are made and remade through the different forms of the gaze of such tourists. Indeed, we are interested in how places are intertwined with people through systems that generate and reproduce performances in and of place (and by comparison with other places). In Performing Tourist Places, we analysed tourist places through the metaphor of the ‘sandcastle’ (Baerenholdt et al., 2004; Coleman and Crang, 2002a; see Chapter 8). A particular physical environment does not in itself produce a tourist place. A pile of appropriately textured sand is nothing until it is turned into a sandcastle. It has to be designed into buildings, sociabilities, family life, friendship and memories. Places emerge as ‘tourist places’ when they are inscribed in circles of anticipation, performance and remembrance. They are economically, politically and culturally produced through networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs and information. And it is out of these complex movements that certain places to play are assembled. Places are not fixed or given or simply bounded. They are 'in play' in relationship to multiple tourist gazes stretching in, through, and over apparently distinct places.

In this chapter we thus de-centre tourist studies away from ‘tourists’ and on to the networks and discourses that enable or perform various places. Places are thus (re)produced through tourist performances that are made possible through networked relationships with other organisations, machines, and especially buildings. Places are in the thick of such ‘touring’ processes and in part consist of anticipated, designed and remembered buildings. We thus consider in this chapter various connections between buildings, their design and the places that tourists may gaze upon.

In the next section we consider the design and architecture of such developments. Tourism is about finding certain sorts of place pleasant and interesting to gaze upon, and it necessarily comes up against the design of the buildings within such places. We begin with issues of design and the redesign of place, and then turn briefly to the designing and using of themes and malls. We then go on to consider questions of heritage and especially the look of heritage buildings. And finally, we examine the changing character of museums and especially the designing and using of postmodern museums.

Designing for the Gaze

Given how much tourist consumption involves the visual, and the significance of buildings as objects upon which the gaze is directed, it is essential to consider changing aesthetic design, patterns, forms and themes that those buildings might take. Here we turn to discussions of the experience economy and staging, Disneyization and especially postmodern buildings, the sphere which many would say best demonstrates such a cultural paradigm.

We argue, first, that there are a number of contemporary architectures. There are after the modern; return to the premodern; and anti the modern. We briefly describe the architectural style associated with each.

After the modern is ‘consumerist postmodernism’. This takes its cue from Venturi’s cry to ‘learn from Las Vegas’ (1972; Jencks, 1977; Frampton, 1988; Ibelings, 1998). Such consumerist postmodernism is the stylistic hallmark of post-Fordism and, more recently, the ‘experience economy’. Luxor Las Vegas, Caesars Palace, Bellagio and The Venetian hotel in Las Vegas or Disneyland are its icons, celebrating commercialism and
postmodern ‘theming’ (Harris and Lipman, 1986: 844–5; Klingmann, 2007: 194–205); see Figure 6.1. Art and life are fused or pastiched in the playful and shameless borrowing of ornamental style (see the Trafford Centre in Figure 6.2 on page 131, or the designs of John Jerde). Previous elements of high culture are mass-produced and no longer signify a single style. This is an architecture of surfaces and appearances, of playfulness and pastiche. It is mannerist – as if all the historical styles and conventions of architecture are there to be endlessly drawn on, juxtaposed and drawn on yet again. The past is an ‘inexhaustible repertoire of forms, “styles” that everyone could re-cycle’ (Ibelings, 1998: 21). The visual spectacle of Las Vegas shows how architecture can be liberated from the deadness of modern architecture’s ‘pure forms’.

Figure 6.1 The Venetian experience, Las Vegas
Figure 6.2 ‘New Orleans’ at the Trafford Centre, Manchester
Las Vegas’ heightened symbolism builds a fictional fantasy landscape. Its architecture of signs and styles appears almost a-spatial, with theming overshadowing function. It is an architecture of narrative content that liberates architecture from its visual silence by turning it into an ‘imaginatory world of appearance’. One lesson learnt from Las Vegas is that pleasure-zone architecture should have a narrative structure with the power to engulf people in an imaginary role (Venturi, 1972: 53). It is a kind of architecture that caters for collective and spectatorial gazes.

This architecture, as in John Jerde’s designed malls, is now crucial to the ‘experience economy’. Klingmann links the experience economy and architecture: ‘[F]or architecture, in the experience economy, the relative success of design lies in the sensaion a consumer derives from it – in the enjoyment it offers and the resulting pleasures it evokes’ (2007: 19). Whereas modern architecture was largely concerned with forms and function, Klingmann argues that design in the ‘experience economy’ focuses on experiences and engenders affective sensations. It is no longer the formal design of a building that determines its quality, but rather its powers of affecting and engaging users, emotionally, bodily and mentally. The key becomes what it does rather than what it is (Klingmann, 2007: 317). Its transitional and performative powers are central. And architects come to think of themselves as choreographers of dynamic themes and situations (Klingmann, 2007: 214).

By contrast, there is the style associated with the return to the premodern. Here, what is celebrated is the classical form, the architecture of an elite and the romantic gaze. Leon Krier summarises its attraction: ‘People never protested against the tradition of classical architecture. … Architecture has reached its highest possible form in the classical principles and orders … [which] have the same inexhaustible capacities as the principles which govern nature and the universe itself’ (1984: 87, 119).
This reconstructed classicism springs from those who believe they have distinct powers of insight, who will be able to return to the aura of the fine building. Architecture here is a self-determining practice, an autonomous discipline able to reproduce the three classical orders. This is linked to the belief that such classicism is really what people would want if only their choices were not distorted by 'modern architecture'.

To the extent to which such contemporary classical buildings mirror the English Georgian style, they will be popular objects of the tourist gaze. If there is a single style of house which tourists at least in Britain want to gaze upon, it is the classical Georgian country house (Hewison, 1987: ch. 3). Much Georgian building is preserved in many towns and cities in Britain. The most striking Georgian townscape is Bath where the housing stock is a positional good (see Chapter 9). One could describe many of the residents as living in a museum and simultaneously surrounded by museums. The city is almost definitive of good taste and a setting in which part of the cultural capital possessed by its residents is the knowledge of such housing and the skills necessary to improve it, while at the same time appearing to conserve it. The renaissance of Bath is just as important an icon of the postmodern (in the return to the premodern sense) as the latest jokey theme park or shopping mall.

The third variant is against the modern. This is found in Frampton's concept of 'critical regionalism' (1988) and Foster's notion of a 'critical postmodernism' (1985a, 1985b). The latter defines the critique of modernism as a Eurocentric and phallocentric set of discourses (see Hebdige, 1986–7: 8–9). It is argued that modernism (like premodern classicism) privileges the metropolitan centre over provincial towns and cities, the developed world over developing countries, the north Atlantic rim over the Pacific rim, western art forms over those from the 'east' and the 'south', men's art over women's art, the professional over the people and so on. This variant involves challenging these dominant discourses, seeing space as localised, specific, context-dependent, and particularistic, by contrast with modernist space which is absolute, generalised, and independent of context (Harvey, 1989).

Leon Krier talks of the need to create 'localities of human dignity' (1984: 87). The locality is central. And there are important resistances in contemporary societies which have made local vernacular architecture particularly popular, at least outside the metropolitan centres. There is the apparent desire of people living in particular places to conserve or to develop buildings, at least in their public spaces, which express the particular locality in which they live. Such old buildings appear to have a number of characteristics: solidity, since they have survived wars, erosions, developers and town planning; continuity, since they provide links between past generations and the present; authority, since they signify that age and tradition are worthy or preservation; and craft, since they were mostly built using otherwise underrated premodern techniques and materials (Lowenthal, 1985: 52–63). A significant London example of this is the Tate Modern gallery housed in a former power station on the south bank of the Thames which attracted five million visitors in its first year of operation.

And because of the globalisation of the tourist gaze, all sorts of places (indeed almost everywhere) have come to construct themselves as objects of the tourist gaze; in other words, not only as centres of production or symbols of power, but as sites of pleasure. Once people visit places outside capital cities and other major centres, what they find pleasurable are buildings which seem appropriate to that place and which mark it off from others. One strong objection to modern architecture was how it generated uniformity or placelessness, and was therefore unlikely to generate many distinct buildings attractive to potential tourists. The main exceptions to this are in major cities, such as Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's high-tech Pompidou Centre in Paris, which now attracts more visitors than the Louvre, or Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, perhaps the single best-known new building across the globe. Outside the major cities the tourist gaze has made most other places enhance difference often through the rediscovery of local vernacular styles that convey particular histories. As Lynch asks, 'what time is this place?' (1973). In other words, places indicate particular times or histories and in that process vernacular postmodernism is important. Wright talks of the 'abstract and artificial aestheticisation of the ordinary and the old', although different places signify very different 'old' times (1985: 230).
Moreover, each such place will be viewed from various perspectives. There will be differences between what visitors and locals ‘see’ in a place, and between the viewpoints of old and new residents. Wright maintains: ‘People live in different worlds even though they share the same locality: there is no single community or quarter. What is pleasantly old for one person is decayed and broken for another’ (1985: 237, italics in original).

So far we have talked about various kinds of architecture and how these do or do not coincide with the likely gazes of both local residents and visitors. We briefly consider the respective influences of architects and developers in developing different tourist sites. In the USA, there has been expanding employment of architects in small- and medium-sized towns where a middle class has given rise to localities with high incomes, environmental sensitivity and a consciousness of design (see Knox, 1987; Blau, 1988). Partly influenced by some of these locally based architects, a more participatory and activist-influenced planning developed in some places, ‘aimed not only at halting renewal schemes but also at preserving and enhancing the neighborhood lifeworld’ (Knox, 1988: 5). The effectiveness has varied and often schemes for the desired conservation of an area turn out to have unexpected consequences. The renewal of Covent Garden in London as a result of a planning decision influenced by activists concerned to conserve the buildings after the ending of its market function generated an immensely successful tourist site (with resulting congestion, inflated prices and piles of uncollected rubbish).

Themed Spaces

We now turn to two specific aspects of contemporary architecture: theming and malls. Theming ‘involves the use of an overarching theme, such as western, to create a holistic and integrated spatial organization’ (Lukas, 2008: 67). It is a process of signification where certain geographical representations and meanings are selectively invented, reworked or borrowed in the material and symbolic design of self-enclosed leisure or tourism spaces (Hollinshead, 2009). We consider aspects of recent theme parks before turning to the themed character of contemporary shopping malls and resort hotels. In this section we further explore similarities between consumerist architecture and Disneyization. We show that much theming revolves around the tourist gaze. Themed environments stimulate primarily the visual sense through spectacular but also predictable and well-known signs. They rest upon hyper-sensuous experiences in which vision are reduced to a limited array of features, are then exaggerated, and finally come to dominate other senses. Offensive smells are eliminated and reduced to a light deodorized breeze. Touristic theming often happens through importing signs of iconic tourist places elsewhere and in other times.

Theming is about importing places and stimulating imaginative travel elsewhere. Themed spaces represent a paradoxical mix of presence and absence, here and there. They are also typified by high capital investment, private ownership, international ‘brands’ and surveillance. They indicate that public space is increasingly privatised, commodified and regulated.

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

Themed attractions in Britain include the Jorvik Centre in York, the Camelot theme park in Lancashire, the
American Adventure in the Peak District, the Oxford Story, the Crusades experience in Winchester (‘history brought to life’) and the Pilgrim's Way in Canterbury. The last is described in the advertising material as ‘a pilgrimage to the past’. However, the sense of history is bizarre since ‘a man on children's television is the model for a dummy who is the adjunct to a non-existent scene in a mediaeval religious poem, none of whose words you hear’ (Faulks, 1988). Another example is in Llandrindod Wells in Wales. Once a year most of the population dresses up in Edwardian costume. But it was suggested that the population could be dressed that way for the entire year. Thus the whole town and its population would be turned into a permanent Edwardian themed town. Already Visby in Sweden, an island in the Baltic, experiences a ‘medieval week’ when everyone dresses up in medieval costume, bringing the medieval ‘theme’ to life. Nowhere is theming more prevalent than in the USA, with some 700 themed attractions across the country even by the mid-1980s (see US examples in Hollinshead, 2009, and below).

Themes are, in Debord’s terms, elements of the ‘society of the spectacle’ (1983). Those developing Jorvik or the Oxford Story attempt to make the experience authentic. In such themed areas the objects observed seem real and absolute through the use of smell as well as visual and aural simulation. The scenes are more real than the original or hyper-real. Or at least the surfaces, as grasped through the immediate senses, are more real. Lowenthal notes that ‘habituation to replicas tends to persuade us that antiquities should look complete and “new”’ (1985: 293). The representations thus approximate more closely to our expectations of reality, of the signs that we carry around waiting to be realised: ‘Disneyland tells us that faked nature corresponds much more to our daydream demands … Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can’ (Eco, 1986: 44; Lukas, 2007, 2008).

This technological ability to create new themes which appear more real than the original has spread far and wide. The symbolic architecture of recent mega-hotels in Las Vegas involves an astonishing level of theming through drawing upon iconic tourist places from elsewhere. Luxor Las Vegas is themed as a postmodern Orientalist simulacra of timeless ‘tourist Egypt’, of iconic monuments, ruins, camels and pyramids. This theming, according to Cass, represents ‘Egypt on steroids’ (2004). ‘Italy’ is also present in Las Vegas. The luxury mega-hotels of Caesars Palace, Bellagio and The Venetian are all themed upon a simulated landscape of typical ‘Italian’ architecture, art and sights (Raento and Flusty, 2006) (see Figure 6.1 on page 121).

Many more or less all-inclusive mega-hotels catering for western tourists in non-western countries such as India, Turkey and Kenya also employ the architectural and performative ‘theming’ of exotic otherness, but within a controlled environment and without the dangers and messy sensuous geographies lurking outside. There is a colonial element to such enclavich spaces in the developing countries that often happen to be former colonies, such as India. Edensor speaks of such luxury ‘camps’ as enclavich places where tourists are cut off from surrounding places. He argues that ‘above all the tourist enclave is designed for gazing’, with exotic interior, evening shows and performing waiters. They are ‘environmental bubbles’ where tourists are shielded from offensive smells, tastes and sites (Edensor, 1998: 51; Edensor and Kothari, 2004). They are familial places where tourists feel at-home-away-from-home. Tourists are surrounded by like-minded tourists, international interior and amenities, western-style food, English-speaking staff and so on.

The theming of enclavich spaces of Mediterranean mass tourism ties into what Billig terms ‘banal nationalism’ (1997). Nationally themed bars and restaurants often outnumber those presenting themselves as locally authentic; thus, tourists can eat and drink foodstuffs from their native country surrounded by tourists of the same nationality as well as by flags and other symbols of their homeland (Jacobsen, 2003; Haldrup and Larsen, 2010). A recent ethnography of Britishness in charter-based tourism in Mallorca shows:

For example, place names are resonant of those found in the UK, with café-bars called The Britannia, The Willows, The Red Lion, and others that make reference to British popular culture – Benny Hill and Eastenders, for instance. Added to this, English is the main language spoken and British sporting fixtures, news and other TV programmes are beamed in by satellite or played from video recordings. Food has a distinctly British flavour, with British bread, milk, bacon and sausages being
a few of the items imported and advertised for sale. (Andrews, 2005: 252; see also West, 2006)

Many shopping malls have now become major tourist attractions in their own right and represent exceptional de-differentiation through theming. Consider the West Edmonton Mall:

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

This mall has been very successful, attracting over nine million visitors a year as early as 1987. It represents a symbolic rejection of the normally understood world geography in which there are cultural centres with Edmonton located upon the world's periphery. What is asserted is a new collective sense of place based on transcending the barriers of distance and of place. The real-space relations of the globe are thus replaced by imaginary-space relations (Shields, 1989: 153).

This has only been possible because of the pervasiveness of tourist signs, of the rapid circulation of photographic and moving images. It is this exchange of signs which makes possible the construction of a pastiche of themes, each of which seems more real than the original, particularly because of the way that shopping malls in general emphasise newness and cleanliness: ‘[I]t is a world where Spanish galleons sail up Main Street past Marks and Spencer to put in at "New Orleans", where everything is tame and happy shoppers mingle with smiling dolphins’ (Shields, 1989: 154).

The Metrocentre in the north-east of England is located in Gateshead, a place that has also been considered peripheral to British and European life. Its themes are ‘Antique Village’; a ‘Roman Forum’, with areas on which to recline Roman-style; and a ‘Mediterranean Village’, with Italian, Greek and Lebanese restaurants lining a windingly quaint Mediterranean street. Shopping here is only part of its appeal, which also concerns leisure and tourism. There is a de-differentiation of the gaze of the shopper and tourist. Within a few minutes’ walk people consume many tourist themes and services, they can stroll, and they can gaze and be gazed upon as though ‘on holiday’.

The Trafford Centre near Manchester looks like a mix of a Classical Roman building and the Taj Mahal. The main entrance is a colonnaded granite and stone open space with sculptures, fountains and decorated benches. Once one is inside the ‘port’, palm trees and an ocean liner invite visitors to go on a ‘great tourist escape’. Of all tourism icons, the palm tree is one of the most connotative, signifying paradise, liminality, ‘Otherness’, extravagant consumption and bodily pleasure (Osborne, 2000: 107). The Trafford ocean liner is no pale imitation of a ‘real’ ocean liner, possessing lifeboats, lifebelts, port holes, a swimming pool and a white surface with reddish-brown spots showing many years at sea! The main deck is a 1600-seater food court where customers are entertained by live-performances, ‘Trafford-TV’ or gazing at fellow cruisers. There is a spectacular sky-effect ceiling that takes visitors from day to night and back again via dusk and dawn by-the-hour.

Visitors can step smoothly into different worlds: China, Italy, New York and New Orleans. In the New Orleans French Quarter, one is welcomed by a statue of four smiling black trumpeters and restaurants with ‘outside’ tables. Laundry is hanging out of the windows and the balconies proliferate with flowers and ornamentation (see Figure 6.2). Once New Orleans is consumed (with no hurricanes in sight!), the journey continues into the shopping streets. Regent Crescent gives the feeling of Ancient Rome and Greece with its neo-classically inspired ornaments, while the Festival Village is themed as a traditional English market.
The Trafford Centre has learnt lessons from Las Vegas and Disney. First, the Centre is virtually nothing but surface effects, images, decorations and ornaments. It is a glossy visual feast: an ecstasy of looking. Second, it quotes vicariously from historical forms. However, classical greatness is here invoked with touches of both nostalgia and humour – as part of a narrative. This is not architecture as art, but as popular storytelling, a story about the world as nothing but the ‘tourist's oyster’ (Bauman, 1993: 241). What such spectacular malls offer are staged environments and themed experiences as much as consumer goods. In this sense, they have re-designed themselves and become some of the main movers of the experience economy. To cite Klingmann: 'Within a generation, shopping malls have gone from functional shopping machines to highly immersive environments where lighting, music, and a careful selection of materials not only displays the merchandise as such but provides the right ambience' (2007: 36). One featured postmodern design was that architecture after the modern 'international style' should be sensitive to context and identity. It should promote difference and heterogeneous landscapes (Ibelings, 1998: 18). Yet there are very few historical references, architectural styles or cultural icons which identify the Trafford Centre with Manchester or actually northwest England.

This highlights how much postmodern theming no longer respects local ‘semiotics’ and styles but has become ‘global’, what Castells calls ‘an architecture of the space of the flows’. It expresses ‘in almost direct terms, the new dominant ideology, the end of ideology: the end of history and suppression of places in spaces of flows. Because if we are at the end of history can we now mix up everything we knew before. Because we do not belong any longer to any place, to any culture, the extreme version of postmodernism imposes codified code-breaking anywhere something is built’ (Castells, 1996: 419).

A further reading of the Trafford Centre is that it is designed to be warm and inclusive. As the public-relations manager says:

We have gone out to create a building that is warm, where you feel protected, feel part of it. It is not somewhere that is contemporary or modern or clinical. The whole building has been built to be a huge stately home. The architectural details go back to neo-classical design that gives a sense of warm feeling ... it has a nice ambience and a nice atmosphere.

This is the ambience that much postmodernist architecture strives to achieve. The public-relations manager reproduces the widespread contempt of modern architect as alienating and soulless. Postmodern architecture is populist compared with the elitism of modern architecture. The Trafford Centre is said to be an 'inclusive' architecture for 'real' people (Jencks, 1977: 8).

Theme parks, malls and resorts represent membership of a community of consumers. To be in attendance at the ‘court of commodities’ is to be recognised as a citizen in contemporary society, as a consumer. However, recent marketing philosophy has been to develop spectacles of ‘diversity and market segmentation’. Developments of this sort also represent the changing nature of public space in contemporary societies. An increasingly central role is being played by privately owned and controlled consumption spaces, as in the Trafford Centre and the refurbished Gum shopping arcades next to Red Square in Moscow. These involve high levels of surveillance where certain types of behaviour, clothing and comportment are expected, such as not sitting on the floor. The entrance and pathways of malls are often ‘policed’ by private security firms (similarly to airports) and ‘undesirables’ such as the homeless are excluded.

Every movement of consumers is the target of the omnipresent, all-recording gaze of the CCTV cameras. Gazers are constantly being gazed upon by hidden cameras. Shopping malls often boast that they are the safest places in Britain to shop while resort hotels protect tourists from supposedly dangerous, filthy and noisy outside worlds. There are some analogies between Bentham's panopticon prison and the visual and electronic surveillance found in these themed spaces. A Foucaultian take on themed spaces would stress that we are 'neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panopticon machine (Foucault, 1979: 217; Hollinshead, 1999). As the public-relations manager of the Trafford Centre says: ‘You can't escape the surveillance’ (Larsen, 2000: 54). Themed spaces are also conspicuous for cleanliness and newness, with no
space for untidy litter, the old, the shabby or the worn (Fiske, 1989: 39–42; Larsen, 2000).

A further setting for themed environments is that of world fairs. These are enormous international tourist attractions. For example, over 500,000 visitors a day attended the 1992 Expo in Seville (Harvey, 1996: 155). More than one hundred countries participated in Expo 2008 in Zaragoza. Some 70–100 million – mainly Chinese – people were expected to visit the 2010 Expo in Shanghai, China over a six-month period. The development and popularity of world fairs are a further example of the de-differentiation of leisure, tourism, shopping, culture, education, eating and so on.

Expos are organised around different national displays (Harvey, 1996: ch. 3). There are many themed environments based on national stereotypes, such as the British pub, American achievement in sport, the German beer garden and South Sea exotic dancing. Such themes are designed to demonstrate national pride in the cultural activities presumed specific to that country. Generally, this pride is revealed either in repackaging aspects of each country's traditions and heritage or in demonstrating the modern technology that each country has achieved.

Involved in such national displays are the mobilities of people, objects, signs and even rooted attractions. The iconic attraction of the tourist gaze in Copenhagen, the Little Mermaid, was plucked from her rock in Copenhagen harbour and then sat in an artificial pond at the centre of the Danish pavilion at the Shanghai Expo. This is not a postmodern copy but the original, travelling to a nation where she is an iconic figure popularised through the novelist Hans Christian Andersen. As the architect of the Danish Pavilion, Bjarke Ingles, said: ‘When the Danish politicians learnt that all of the Chinese actually grew up with the mermaid as part of their education, everybody thought it would be a beautiful gesture to send their mermaid to China for six months.’ On the night of its unveiling, Shanghai's vice-mayor predicted it would become ‘one of the shining stars of the whole Expo Park’ (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8644013.stm; accessed 18.11.10). There is hardly a more spectacular way of branding Denmark to China, a country that soon will generate the most outbound tourists worldwide (see Figure 6.3 and Chapter 9 below).

Figure 6.3 The Little Mermaid in Shanghai Expo 2010
No single hegemonic set of messages is conveyed by Expos and world fairs. They are a kind of micro-version of international tourism. Rather than tourists having to travel worldwide to experience and gaze upon different signs, they are conveniently brought together in one location. Harvey says more generally: ‘it is now possible to experience the world's geography vicariously, as a simulacrum’ (1989: 300). This can be seen from the entertainment provided at such world fairs. At the Vancouver Expo in 1986 there were 43,000 free on-site performances given by 80,000 performers (Ley and Olds, 1988: 203). Although there was high culture, including a presentation from La Scala to an audience of 40,000, most entertainment consisted of folk or popular forms, a postmodern cultural pastiche, rather like the availability of cuisines from across the world now available in cities round the world (Pillsbury, 1990). Most performances were recognisably from a specific country and consisted of the sort of ethnic entertainment that is provided for tourists in each country that they visit. The difference here was that the visitors only had to walk from one tent or display to the next in order to gaze upon another cultural event, signifying yet another nation.

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

Many displays in Expos purport to be educational, and indeed groups of school-age children constitute a major category of visitors. And this is a further feature of the de-differentiation of the cultural spheres. Education and entertainment are becoming merged, a process much assisted by the increasingly central role of the visual and electronic media in both. Indeed, themed spaces are involved in providing ‘edu-tainment’. Holidays are thus not so straightforwardly contrasted with education and learning as in the past. In many ways much tourism is more closely interwoven with learning, returning, in a way, to the Grand Tour. We consider below the increasing popularity of museums, the fascination with the lives of industrial workers in particular and the popularity of hyper-real historical re-creations. We turn to assess the significance of the heritage industry and subsequently of museums to contemporary tourism.

Heritage

There has been much debate as to the causes of the contemporary fascination with gazing upon the historical or what is often seen as heritage. Places like the refurbished ‘colonial’ Havana in Cuba (see Figure 6.4; Lasanky, 2004), the Wigan Pier Heritage Centre (closed in 2007) in Lancashire or the restored mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, the first industrial town in the USA, are all examples of heritage. Some indicators of this phenomenon in Britain include 500,000 listed buildings, 17,000 protected monuments and 5,500 conservation areas. A new museum was said to open every fortnight in the UK, there are 78 museums devoted to railways and 180 watermills and windmills are open to the public (Samuel, 1994: Part II). Of the 1,750 museums in 1987, half were started since 1971. There are many heritage centres in the UK, including Ironbridge Gorge near Telford, the Wigan Pier Heritage Centre, Black Country World near Dudley, the Beamish Open Air Museum near Newcastle and the Jorvik Viking Centre in York. In the Rhondda valley a museum and heritage park were established in the former Lewis Merthyr coalmine (Dicks, 2000). Almost everywhere and everything from the past may be conserved. In Lancashire environmentalists have sought to preserve the largest slag heap in Britain, which the former British Coal had wanted to remove. A former director of the Science Muse-
um has said of this growth in heritage that: ‘You can't project that sort of rate of growth much further before the whole country becomes one big open air museum, and you just join it as you get off at Heathrow’ (quoted in Hewison, 1987: 24). The seventeenth-century disease of nostalgia seems to have become a contemporary epidemic.

Figure 6.4 The restoration of ‘colonial’ Havana

Similarly, Lowenthal says of the USA that ‘the trappings of history now festoon the whole country’ (1985: xv). The number of properties listed in the US National Register of Historic Places rose from 1,200 in 1968 to 37,000 in 1985 (Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989: 201). Likewise most other countries developing their tourism have also sought to recreate the ‘heritage’ of the built environment even if this is of an epoch now denigrated, as strikingly so in Cuba and its ‘colonial architecture’.

Other heritage destinations, now components of global tourism, include various ‘dark tourist’ heritage sites. These include Auschwitz-Birkenau, Nazi-occupation sites in the Channel Islands, Dachau, Robben Island in South Africa, Alcatraz, Sarajevo’s ‘massacre trail’, Ground Zero and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (see Figure 6.5). Such dark tourist sites are heritage sites of death, disaster and depravity (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Strange and Kempla, 2003; Lisle, 2004). And with the collapse of the communist regimes in eastern Europe in 1989, many westerners travel to ‘gaze on communism’, to experience this ‘other’ political, economic and social system and ‘architecture’ that was the antithesis of western capitalism (Hoffman and Musil, 1999; Light, 2001). Such ‘communist heritage tourists’ in search of material signs of a communist past are causing dilemmas. While they are an important source of revenue, tourists longing for a communist past are at odds with the former communist countries’ quest for constructing new post-communist identities (Light, 2001).
Figure 6.5 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC
Many of these recent developments result from the increased privatisation of the heritage/museum industry, with 56 per cent of UK museums opening in the 1980s being in the private sector (Hewison, 1987: 1, ch. 4). Many private initiatives have involved new ways of representing history, through commodifying the past in novel forms often in combination with local activists and enthusiasts. Very large numbers of people visit museums and heritage sites. The proportion of the service class visiting museum and heritage centres is about three times the proportion of manual workers. Visits to such sites vary ethnically, with ‘white’ people more likely to visit historic buildings or museums than either ‘black’ or ‘Asian’ people, who wish to learn about various heritage experience and not just that of ‘England’. However, there is very widespread support for sustaining English heritage sites, with three-quarters of the population believing that their lives are richer for having the opportunity to visit sites of heritage. Nine out of ten people support the use of public funds to preserve heritage.

Raban talks of a willingness of people to present a particular impression of the heritage of village England: ‘nowhere outside Africa … were the tribespeople so willing to dress up in “traditional” costumes and cater for the entertainment of their visitors. … The thing had become a national industry. Year by year, England was being made more picturesquely merrie’ (1986: 194–5). Some of these events are now organised as ‘costume dramas’ by English Heritage, the main body in England concerned with protecting heritage sites. The tendency to visit grand country houses also remains immensely popular, with 12 million people a year visiting National Trust properties. There are over 800 museums containing rural exhibits, some of which have been described as ‘pretend farms’, with wheelwrights, blacksmiths, horse breeders, farriers and so on.

Indeed, there has been a remarkable increase in encountering the real lives of industrial/mining workers. MacCannell points out the irony of these changes: ‘Modern Man [sic] is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighbourhood, the town, the family, which he once called “his own” but, at the same time, he is developing an interest in the “real lives” of others’ (1999: 91). This is particularly marked in the north of Britain, where much heavy industry had been located. It is such industries which are of most interest to visitors, particularly because of the apparently heroic quality of the work, as with a coal mine or steel works. This fascination with other people’s work is bound up with the postmodern breaking down of boundaries, particularly between the front and backstage of people’s lives. Such a development is also part of a postmodern museum culture in which almost anything can become an object of curiosity for visitors (and see next section).

The remarkably rapid de-industrialisation of Britain during the 1980s and 1990s created a profound sense of loss, both of certain kinds of technology (steam engines, blast furnaces, pit workings) and of the social life that had developed around those technologies. The rapidity of such change was especially concentrated in the north of England, South Wales and central Scotland. Moreover, much of this industry had historically been based in inner-city Victorian premises, many of which became available for alternative uses. Such buildings were either attractive in their own right (such as the Albert Dock in Liverpool), or could be refurbished in a suitable heritage style for housing, offices, museums or restaurants. Such a style is normally picturesque, complete with sandblasted walls, replaced ‘authentic-looking’ windows and attractive street furniture. This process of de-industrialisation occurred in Britain at a time when many local authorities were developing more of a strategic role with regard to economic development and saw in tourism a way of generating jobs directly and through more general publicity about their place.

And with globalisation different countries have come to specialise in different sectors of the holiday market. Britain has in part come to specialise in holidays for overseas visitors that emphasise the historical and the quaint (North Americans often refer to Britain as that ‘quaint country’ or that ‘old country’). This location within the global division of tourism has further reinforced the particular strength of heritage in Britain. So heritage is particularly important within British tourism and is more central to the gaze in Britain than in many other places.

But what is meant by heritage, particularly in relationship to notions of history and authenticity (Uzzell, 1989)? A lively debate has been raging concerned with interpreting the causes and consequences of heritage stim-
ulated by Hewison's book subtitled *Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1987). He begins with the comment that, instead of manufacturing goods, Britain is increasingly manufacturing heritage. This has come about because of the perception that Britain is in some kind of terminal decline. And the development of heritage not only involves the reassertion of values which are anti-democratic, but the heightening of decline through a stifling of the culture of the present. A critical culture based on the understanding of history is what is needed, not, Hewison says, a set of heritage fantasies.

Hewison is concerned with analysing the conditions in which nostalgia is generated. He argues that it is felt most strongly at a time of discontent, anxiety or disappointment. And yet the times for which we feel most nostalgia were themselves periods of considerable disturbance. Furthermore, nostalgic memory is quite different from total recall; it is a socially organised construction.

Hewison notes how much contemporary nostalgia is for the industrial past. The Association for Industrial Archaeology was founded in 1973 and by the 1980s industrial museums were developing almost everywhere in the northern half of Britain. Hewison makes much of the contrasts between the development of the industrial museum at Beamish and the devastation brought about by the more or less simultaneous closure of the steel works at Consett, just ten miles away. The protection of the past conceals the destruction of the present. There is a distinction between authentic history (continuing and therefore dangerous) and heritage (past, dead and safe). The latter, in short, conceals social and spatial inequalities, masks a shallow commercialism and consumerism, and may in part at least destroy elements of the buildings or artefacts supposedly being conserved. Hewison argues that: 'If we really are interested in our history, then we may have to preserve it from the conservationists' (1987: 98). The novelist Tom Wolfe proposed that the British population service a national Disneyland for foreign tourists. And a fantasy of this sort can be seen in Julian Barnes' novel *England, England*, with a proposed theme park covering the whole of the Isle of Wight. This would be known as *Englandland* and contain scaled-down replicas of almost all the well-known historic buildings in England (Barnes, 1999).

However, these various criticisms of the heritage industry bear much similarity with the critique of the so-called mass society. Indeed, social scientists may well be prone to a kind of nostalgia, that is, for a Golden Age when the mass of the population was not taken in by new and distorting cultural forms (Stauth and Turner, 1988). There has, of course, never been such a period. Moreover, Hewison ignores the enormously important popular bases of conservation. For example, he sees the [English] National Trust as a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the old upper classes to maintain their stately homes. But this ignores the widespread support for such conservation. The National Trust with 3.5 million members is the largest mass organisation in England (see McCrone et al., 1995, on the Scottish equivalent). Moreover, much of the early conservation movement was plebeian in character – for example, railway preservation, industrial archaeology, steam traction rallies and the like in the 1960s – well before more obvious indicators of economic decline materialised in Britain. As noted, Covent Garden in central London, which might be critiqued as a ‘heritage playground’, only became transformed into a tourist site because of a conservation campaign conducted by local residents (Januszczak, 1987; Samuel, 1994). Likewise the preservation of some derelict coal mines in Wales resulted from pressure by local groups of miners and their families who sought to hold on to aspects of ‘their’ history; indeed, visitors to Big Pit in South Wales, for example, are said to be pleased that it has not been made ‘pretty’ for visitors (Urry, 1996).

Generally, the critics of the heritage industry also fail to link the pressure for conservation with the much broader development of environmental and cultural politics. Thus research on the membership of the National Trust for Scotland shows that Scottish heritage is a significant element in the development of cultural nationalism (McCrone et al., 1995). Heritage is seen as involving a strong sense of lineage and inheritance. It has an identity-conferring status. For most of the respondents, conserving Scottish heritage is a centrally important enthusiasm. McCrone, Morris and Kiely thus write of the membership of the National Trust of Scotland:

There is a rich network of local activity groups, travel outings, and active participation in heritage
conservation through voluntary labour. What is available to life members is a coordinated lifestyle achieved through association … ‘a timeless organisation upholding traditional values’. (1995: 155)

Hewison, moreover, presumes a rather simple model by which certain meanings, such as nostalgia for times past, are unambiguously transferred to visitors by these heritage sites (1987). There is little sense of the complexity by which different visitors can gaze upon the same set of objects and read and perform them in a different ways (see Urry, 1996; Franklin, 2003). Indeed, sites are not uniformly understood and passively accepted by visitors. Macdonald shows in an exhibition at the Science Museum how visitors frame and interpret the visit in ways not expected or planned for by its designers (1995: 21). Such visitors connect together exhibits that were not meant to be linked, they read the exhibits as prescriptive when they are not intended to be, and mostly they do not describe the exhibition in ways that the designers had intended it should be so described (and see Shaw et al., 2000: 276).

Research at the Albert Dock in Liverpool further shows that people actively use sites as bases for reminiscence, ‘as the point of departure for their own memories of a way of life in which economic hardship and exploited labour were offset by a sense of community, neighbourliness and mutuality’ (Mellor, 1991: 100). ‘Reminiscence’ may indeed be a major ‘practice’ at such sites. And reminiscing involves performance – both by those ‘real’ performers who are there to stimulate memories, and by visitors who often have to work cooperatively with others in order to produce their memories. Reminiscencing is not an apparently passive process of individual visual consumption. In some ways, it is similar to various other spatial practices taking place at tourist sites, such as walking, talking, sitting, photographing and so on, generally carried out with others and especially family and friends (see Edensor, 1998; see Chapter 8 on performances).

There is something condescending about Hewison’s view that such a presentation of heritage cannot be interpreted and performed in different ways, or that the fact that the experience may be enjoyable means that it cannot also be educational. This can be seen in the case of New Salem where Abraham Lincoln lived during the 1830s. The meaning of this site is not given and fixed (Bruner, 1994: 410–11). Tourists play with time frames and experiment with alternative realities. They reconstruct their sense of the past even as such sites possess a strong entertainment and playful character. Bruner concludes that: ‘many tourists make associations between what they see at the site and their personal lives’ (1994: 410; and see Chapters 1 and 8 on performance).

Hewison concentrates upon the Wigan Pier Centre (closed in 2007) in north-west England as emblematic of this turning of history into heritage. However, this criticism is partly unfair since the Centre is scholarly and educational; it presents a history of intense popular struggle; it identifies the bosses as partly to blame for mining disasters; it celebrates a non-elite popular culture; and was in part organised by a local council with the objective of remembering past ‘heroic labour’. Compared with most people’s understanding of history it conveys something of the social processes involved in that history, even if it is hard to see how to build on that history in the future. Indeed, it is not at all clear just what understanding of ‘history’ most people have anyway. In the absence of the heritage industry, just how is the past normally understood by people (see Lowenthal, 1985: 411)? For many people history will be acquired at best through reading biographies and historical novels and seeing historical dramas on TV. It is not obvious that the heritage industry’s account is more misleading. However, what is important is that heritage history is problematic because it is visual. Visitors see an array of artefacts, including buildings (either ‘real’ or ‘manufactured’), and they then have to imagine the patterns of life that would have emerged around those seen objects (see Bruner, 1994). This is an ‘artefactual’ history, in which various kinds of social experiences are in effect ignored or trivialised, such as the relations of war, exploitation, hunger, disease, the law and so on, which cannot be seen as such.

Previously we noted that there is often considerable local support for conserving buildings as markers of place. However, conservation groups vary considerably between places. For example, in 1980, while there were 5.1 members of ‘amenity societies’ per 1,000 people in the UK as a whole, the ratio was over 20 per 1,000 in Hampshire and over 10 per 1,000 in most of the counties around London, in Devon, North Yorkshire
and Cumbria (Lowe and Goyder, 1983: 28–30). Clearly, part of the rationale of such groups is to prevent new developments that will harm the supposed ‘character’ of the locality. The role of the service and middle classes in such groups is crucial – and is a major means by which those possessing positional goods, such as a nice house in a nice village, seek to preserve their advantages. However, conservation movements can often have broader objectives: not merely to prevent development, but to bring about the refurbishment of existing public buildings and more generally to conserve and develop key features of the villagescape or townscape. Moreover, even if the objectives of the movement have nothing to do with tourism, the effect will increase the attractiveness of the locality to the tourist gaze.

One factor that strengthened conservation movements in the UK has been the lower rate of geographical mobility of at least the male members of the service class (see Savage, 1988). As a result, such people are likely to develop more of an attachment to place. One can talk therefore of the ‘localisation of the service class’ and this will have its impact, through the forming of amenity groups, on the level of conservation (Bagguley et al., 1989: 151–2). To the extent that such groups are successful, this will make the place more visually attractive to potential visitors. Thus the preservation of the quaint villagescape or townscape through middle-class collective action is almost certain to increase the number of tourists and the resulting congestion then experienced by residents.

Earlier we noted how competitive the tourist market has become, in part as all sorts of places are competing to attract the increasingly selective and discriminating post-tourist. As with many other commodities, the market is much more differentiated and particular places have been forced to develop tourism strategies based upon ‘tourism reflexivity’. Such reflexivity has involved auditing local facilities, developing a plan of action and targeting appropriate marketing for the identified market niche. In some cases this has involved the local state almost initiating a tourist industry from scratch – as with Bradford (Williams, 1998). Local authorities also play an important role because of the structure of ownership in tourist towns. This is often fragmented and it is difficult to get local capital to implement appropriate actions from the viewpoint of the locality as a whole. The council can be often the only agent with the capacity to invest in new infrastructure (such as sea defences, conference centres, harbours), or to provide the sort of facilities which must be found in any such centre (entertainments, museums, swimming pools). Local councils have been willing to engage in promoting tourism because in a period of central government constraint this has been one area where there are sources of funding to initiate projects which may also benefit local residents (especially in the later 1990s through UK lottery funding). Furthermore, such facilities are important since they may also attract prospective employees and employers and then keep them satisfied.

Some of these points about gazing on history can be seen at Quarry Bank Mill at Styal in Cheshire (built by Samuel Greg in 1784). Surrounding the mill are the buildings of an entire factory community, two chapels, a school, shop, houses for mill workers and an apprentice house, all of which have remained physically well preserved. The museum was founded in 1976, described as ‘a museum of the factory system’, aiming to bring to life the role of the workforce, the Greg family and the circumstances which began the industrial revolution in the textile industry. The museum houses a number of displays on textile finishing and water power. Demonstrators, some dressed in appropriate clothing, show visitors how to spin cotton on a spinning jenny, how to hand-weave, how a carding machine operated, the workings of a weaving mule, and the domestic routines involved in cooking, cleaning and washing for the child workforce. Considerable research by professional historians was undertaken to produce both the displays and the large number of supporting documents, given to or sold to visitors (Rose, 1978). Engineers have also been centrally involved in the development of the museum, in order to get the often-derelict machinery reworking.

The mill has produced a range of supporting material for such visitors, including a ‘Resource and Document Pack’. Up to 100 guides are employed in explaining aspects of the mill's workings to such visitors. There are also a number of other educational activities undertaken by the museum. Courses run by the mill include weaving, spinning, patchwork and quilting, embroidery and lace, experimental textiles, fashion and clothing, design for textiles, dyeing and printing and knitting. The mill has made energetic efforts to attract the 'nonmu-
seum visiting public’ by specifically increasing the entertainment elements of display. This is partly achieved by the use of people to demonstrate many processes and to interact in a role-playing way with the visitors. It is also assisted by organising a variety of special events: Mothering Sunday lunches, a tent-making project, St George’s Day celebrations, Spooky tours, Apprentices’ Christmas and so on.

The mill had to grapple with the issue of authenticity. Although the building is ‘genuine’ and has not been particularly cleaned up, the machinery it houses does not stem from the eighteenth century. Some items had been in the mill since the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, while quite a lot of it, including the immense waterwheel, was imported from other, often derelict, industrial sites. The work on the machinery has involved using ‘traditional’ techniques that had to be specially learnt. The mill tries to make explicit what is authentic, although this is not a straightforward exercise since what is thought to be authentic depends upon which particular period is being considered. Also, of course, existing ‘authentic’ factories contain machines from various periods. What Quarry Bank Mill ultimately shows is that there is no simple ‘authentic’ reconstruction of history but that all involve accommodation and reinterpretation.

Finally, the mill does not present an overly romanticised view of working-class life. There is evidence of the ill-health and squalor of industrial work. However, the mill literature also draws considerable attention to the views of contemporaries which suggested that conditions in rural factory communities such as Styal were better than those in the huge industrial cities such as neighbouring Manchester and Salford. Thus there seem to have been lower levels of industrial unrest, although this could also be related to forms of surveillance and control available locally. It was also suggested by the curator that visitors would not return for further visits if an overly depressing account of factory life were presented to visitors. However, Quarry Bank Mill is not a shrine to industrial technology – if anything the textile machinery is likely to be regarded by visitors as noisy, dangerous and dirty.

We now turn to discuss how nations promote heritage tourism and more broadly how heritage tourism and travel to national shrines and buildings are central to cultures, regions and nations. Being part of any culture almost always involves travel. Culture-developing-and-sustaining-travel can take a number of different forms: travel to the culture’s sacred sites; to the location of central written or visual texts; to places where key events took place; to see particularly noteworthy individuals or their documentary record; and to view other cultures so as to reinforce one’s own cultural attachments. This can be seen with Ground Zero. Shortly after the ‘spectacular’ 9/11 terror attacks millions of Americans and people from around the world ventured to New York in record numbers to gaze upon ‘Ground Zero’, to show national and cosmopolitan solidarity with the dead and to confirm the ‘reality’ of the collapse of those Twin Towers that everyone had seen on television. Ground Zero has turned into another tourist attraction full of photographing tourists and of souvenirs (Lisle, 2004).

Indeed, one way that nations present themselves to themselves and to others is through national and international tourism. As Edensor says:

As tourism becomes the world’s largest industry, national tourism strategies seek to compete in this global market by advertising their distinct charms: trying to carve out a unique niche that might attract the ‘golden hordes’. This depends on both advertising generic landscapes and attractions, and promoting particular symbolic sites and events. Part of this imperative to entice tourists and to reward their choice of destination with memorable experiences involves the staging of the nation. (2002: 85)

Central is the nation’s narrative of itself. National histories tell a story, of a people passing through history, a story often beginning in the mists of time (Bhabha, 1990). Much of this history of its traditions and icons has been ‘invented’. Late nineteenth-century Europe was a period of remarkable invention of such national heritage. In France, Jeanne d’Arc was only elevated from obscurity by the Catholic Church in the 1870s (McCrone, 1998: 45–6). La Marseillaise became the national anthem in 1879, Bastille Day was invented in 1880, in which year July 14th was designated for the national feast. More generally, the idea of ‘France’ was extended ‘by a process akin to colonisation through communication (roads, railways and above all by the
newspapers) so that by the end of nineteenth century popular and elite culture had come together’ as a result of diverse mobilities (McCrone, 1998: 46). Key in this was the mass production of public monuments of the nation, especially in rebuilt Paris, monuments that were travelled to, seen, talked about and shared through paintings, photographs, films and the European tourism industry.

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

More generally, since the mid-nineteenth century, travel to see the key sites, texts, exhibitions, buildings, landscapes, restaurants and achievements of a society has developed the cultural sense of nationality. Particularly important in this has been the founding of national museums, the development of a national heritage, artists, architects, musicians, playwrights, novelists, historians and archaeologists (McCrone, 1998: 53–5; Kirschenblatt-Giblett, 1998; and see Chapter 7). Recently a global public stage has emerged upon which almost all nations have to appear, to compete, to mobilise themselves as spectacle and to attract large numbers of visitors. This placement particularly operates through mega-events such as the Olympics, World Cups and Expos (Harvey, 1996). China in the last decade (Beijing Olympics and Shanghai Expo) and Brazil (World Cup and Olympics) in the next are ‘nations’ deploying global tourism events to announce themselves as having truly arrived upon the world’s stage. These international events, premised upon mass tourism and cosmopolitanism, mean that national heritage is increasingly conceived in terms of such a location within, and on, this stage. It is that staging which facilitates travel to mega-events of the global order, especially the ‘Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture’ (Roche, 2000).

But such icons are continuously disputed. The power of national elites was, for example, strongly contested in the intense debates over the 1988 Australian bicentennial (Spillman, 1997: ch. 4). There was forceful Aboriginal opposition to the celebrations of Australian heritage. They termed Australia Day, which was a huge tourist event, ‘Invasion Day’.

And there has been the proliferation of diverse, often localised, indigenous sociations seeking to save ‘their particular history and heritage’. In Britain, Samuel documented the new democratic, familial, workerist, feminist, consumerist and domestic heritages that various sociations have saved, laid out for display, and sought to bring visitors in to see, touch, hear and remember (1994; see Macdonald, 1997, on Aros Gaelic heritage centre on the Isle of Skye). And as we have seen, former Welsh coal-mining communities show the importance of ‘experience’ sites of vernacular heritage. There are various ‘alternative heritage’ tours – such as the Black Atlantic tour that visits sites connected to the transatlantic slave trade. Thus, the role of heritage and history has become a major issue. Questions of heritage makes ‘history’ central to the nature of given cultures and demonstrates how heritage cannot be divorced from the various ‘techniques of remembering’, many involving tourist sites, festivals, events and so on (see Arellano, 2004).

The previously run-down area of El Raval in Barcelona has been transformed but in ways perceived to be partly detrimental to the people who have lived there for long periods. There are profoundly contested sencescapes, significant taste and place wars (Degen, 2008). Degen describes shifts in this area of bohemianism and permissiveness that operated in opposition to bourgeois Barcelona. She describes how if one had visited El Raval in the 1980s, one would avoid prolonged eye contact with most inhabitants who were on the margins of society, the poor, old, prostitutes and drug addicts. Breathing in the stale air, one would wander through a scattering of family-run grocery shops and workshops. El Raval evolved into a series of neighborhoods whose sencescapes reflected decay, it was a place of loss, a kind of third-world city which reflected more generally
how Catalan Barcelona was neglected through the Franco period (Degen, 2008: 139). But with the democ-
ratisation of Spain in 1976, the reinstating of Barcelona as the Catalan capital in 1989, and its nomination in
1986 as host city for the 1992 Olympics this changed. Degen discusses the significance of the resulting 1992
Olympic Games in transforming and reimagining Barcelona:

Although there were many heroic performances, it was unanimously agreed that a major winner of
the Olympics was the city of Barcelona itself, the Game not only beamed its metamorphosed urban
landscape (which often featured as a background to sporting events) into the world's gaze, but al-
so re-asserted its Catalan pride and identity. The 1992 Olympic Games catapulted Barcelona onto
a global stage and into the heart of the world's urban tourism networks. In less than 5 years the
city had been transformed from a run-down industrial metropolis into one of Europe's most desired

New ‘Museums’

And in much of the heritage-isation of place there has been almost everywhere a spectacular growth in the
number of museums. This is part of the process by which the past came to be more highly valued by com-
parison with the present and future. And the attraction of museums increases as people get older – so the
‘greying’ of the world's population adds to the number and range of museums.

Museums open to the public developed in the early nineteenth century, beginning with the Louvre in Paris,
the Prado in Madrid and the Altes Museum in Berlin. Especially since the Michelin Guides first appeared,
museums have been central to the tourist experience, especially for tourists with high ‘cultural capital’. Horne
describes the contemporary tourist as a modern pilgrim, carrying guidebooks as devotional texts (1984). What
matters, he says, is what people are told they are seeing. The fame of the object becomes its meaning. There
is thus a ceremonial agenda, in which it is established what should be seen and even the order in which the
gazing should take place. Museums were based upon a special sense of aura. Horne summarises the typical
tourist experience, in which the museum functions as a metaphor for the power of the state, the learning of
the scholar and the genius of the artist:

Tourists with little or no knowledge of painting are expected to pay their respects solely to the fame,
costliness and authenticity of these sacred objects, remote in their frames. As ‘works of art’ from
which tourists must keep their distance, the value of paintings can depend not on their nature, but
on their authenticated scarcity. The gap between ‘art’ and the tourist's own environment is thereby
maintained. (1984: 16)

Museums have thus been based upon the aura of authentic historical artefacts and particularly those that are
scarce because of the supposed genius of their unique creator (Michelangelo) or their culture (the Greek).

However, we argue that how people gaze within museums has significantly changed. The sense of aura has
been undermined through the ‘postmodern museum’, involving different modes of vision and use. First, there
has been a marked broadening of the objects deemed worthy of being preserved. As seen in the previous
section, there is a changed conception of history with a decline in the strength of a given, uncontested national
history, which national museums exemplify. Instead, many alternative or vernacular histories have developed
– social, economic, populist, feminist, ethnic, industrial and so on. There is a pluralisation and indeed a ‘con-
temporary-isation’ of history. The British Tourist Authority calculated that even in the 1980s there were up to
12,000 museum-type venues in Britain. Museums are concerned with ‘representations’ of history, and there
has been a remarkable increase in the range of histories that are thought worthy of being represented. We
have already noted some of these, especially rural and industrial museums. It is almost as though the worse
the previous historical experience the more authentic and appealing the resulting attraction. No longer are vis-
itors only interested in seeing great works of art or artefacts from very distant historical periods. People seem
attracted by representations of the ‘ordinary’, of modest houses and mundane forms of work. Glass-blowing, engine driving, shop working, candle-making, cotton spinning, salt-making, cobbling, chemical manufacture, holiday-making, lace-making, domestic chores, coalmining and so on are all worthy of being represented and viewed in contemporary museums. There is a fascination with the ‘mundane’ and popular and a tendency to treat all kinds of object, whether the Mona Lisa or the old cake tin of a Lancashire cotton worker, as almost equally interesting. One can summarise this shift as being ‘from aura to nostalgia’, reflecting the anti-elitism of postmodernism (Edgar, 1987). Also all sorts of material are now preserved in museums, including moving images, radio, television, photographs, cinema, the environment and even the sets of TV soap operas (Lumley, 1988).

There has also been a marked change in the nature of museums themselves. No longer are visitors expected to stand in awe of the exhibits. More emphasis is being placed on visitors participating in the exhibits themselves. ‘Living’ museums replace ‘dead’ museums, open-air museums replace those under cover, sound replaces hushed silence, visitors are not separated from the exhibits by glass and there is a multi-mediatisation of the exhibit. Overall, the museum and various media are increasingly de-differentiated. The publicity for what was once called the Tyne & Wear museum expressed this trend towards participation: ‘In our museum, the emphasis is on action, participation and fun. Out are the endless old-fashioned glass cases you pored over in hushed silence. In are professionally designed displays, working models to play with, complete period room settings to browse through and sound effects to complete the picture’ (quoted in White, 1987: 10). Another example is The Farmers’ Museum in Cooperstown in New York. This reconstructed heritage village stages the life of a simple farming community. Here ‘rather than being expected to diligently absorb facts and figures, visitors are invited to engage in what would have a typical daily routine of the period. … Each person becomes an actor in a staged drama and actively participates, with all of his or her senses involved, on a simulation of historical events’ (Klingmann, 2007: 40).

A further example is the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark, which is a Michelin 3-star attraction (the highest possible). While the ships are displayed within an emblematic modern architectural space typified by simplicity, spatial order and lightness, an adjacent space affords spectacular sightseeing and joyful ‘sightdoing’. Newly constructed replicas of fully equipped Viking ships invite tourists to step on board as fully clad Vikings. While intended for children and young families with the objects appearing as ‘second-rate copies’, many adults spend much time and take many pictures in this Viking experience. Almost everyone inspects the wood and the sails, sits in and walks around boats, hold objects in their hands and play with the various weapons. Many adults dress up in Viking costumes (Bærenholdt and Haldrup, 2004; Larsen, 2004b).

Museums are also becoming more aware of diverse publics and how to ‘improve’ the varied experiences of museum visiting. There is acknowledgement that visitors will come from different ethnic/ national groups and museum staff must concern themselves with various ways in which visitors may interact with displays and different histories they present (Hooper-Greenhill, 1988: 228–30; Bærenholdt and Haldrup, 2004).

Museum displays are also less auratic. It is now common for it to be revealed how a particular exhibit was prepared for exhibition, and in some cases how it was made to appear ‘authentic’. In various museums, actors play historical roles and interact with visitors, participating in historical sketches. At Beamish, people act out roles in the different shops, while at Wigan Pier visitors are encouraged to experience a simulated school lesson. Elsewhere ex-miners describe mining work to visitors, and people run machinery which does not actually produce anything but demonstrates the machinery, ‘the working non-working industry’ (White, 1987: 11). Lumley summarises these changes by arguing that they involve replacing the notion that the museum is a collection for scholarly use with the idea that it is a means of communication (1988: 15). There is the shift from ‘legislator’ to ‘interpreter’, as Bauman expresses it (1987). And this applies even to the visually impaired. The museum is still a place of visually seeing and collecting, and yet the visually impaired expect to find ways in which they can encounter museums non-Visually, especially through using the tactile sense to touch the objects (Hetherington, 2000a).
In addition, there is a changed relationship between what is considered a museum and other social institutions. Some institutions have become more like museums. Shops, for example, can now look like museums with elaborate displays of high-quality goods where people will be attracted into the shop in order to wander and to gaze. One example is the Prada store Epicenter in New York designed by celebrity architect Rem Koolhaas (see Klingmann, 2007: 126–7). In places like the Albert Dock in Liverpool, which contains the Tate Gallery of the North, a maritime museum and many stylish shops, it is difficult to see quite what is distinctive about the shops as such since people seem to regard their contents as ‘exhibits’. Stephen Bayley, from the London Design Museum, remarked:

the old nineteenth century museum was somewhat like a shop … a place where you go and look at values and ideas, and I think shopping really is becoming one of the great cultural experiences of the late twentieth century. … The two things are merging. So you have museums becoming more commercial, shops becoming more intelligent and more cultural. (Quoted in Hewison, 1987: 139)

Museums have simultaneously become more like commercial businesses in which visitors treat their experiences as ‘a matter for consumption – something akin to shopping and tourism’ (Macdonald, 1995: 25). This has the consequence that ‘the enterprise and flair of the High St is diffusing in the world of museums. … Packaging means establishing a corporate identity. … Shopping is not just making a purchase, it is about the whole experience, including the ambience of the shop, the style of the staff’ (Pemberton, quoted in Lumley, 1988: 20). This poses difficulties for museum staff trying to fashion museums as different from commercial enterprise. The growth of theme parks, shopping malls and heritage centres have forced museums to compete and become more market-oriented, certainly to run a prominent museum ‘shop’ and café’, but also to mount spectacular displays, as in the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Heritage centres, such as the Jorvik Viking Centre in York or the Pilgrim’s Way in Canterbury, compete with existing museums and challenge given notions of authenticity. In such centres there is a curious mixing of the museum and theatre. Everything is meant to be authentic, even down to the smells, but nothing actually dates from the period, as Macdonald also describes in Aros, a Gaelic heritage centre on the Isle of Skye (1997).

Part of this evolving process involves the emergence of ‘museum brands’. Several decades after the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (designed by Frank Lloyd Wright) was established in 1937 in New York, Guggenheim has become the leading global museum brand with spectacular franchised branches in Venice, New York, Berlin, Bilbao and Abu Dhabi (opening 2011; Ostling, 2007). The latter two are designed by celebrity architect Frank Gehry, who is himself a global brand. His extravagant Guggenheim Museum played a crucial role in re-imagining Bilbao (Ockman, 2004; Klingmann, 2007; Ostling, 2007). Architect and critic Giovannini highlights the significance of the Bilbao Guggenheim:

The history of Bilbao, Spain, stretches back to medieval times, but it wasn't until Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, with its façade of flowing titanium ribbons, that the Basque port on the Atlantic became internationally famous. The fame, however, was just not a serendipitous by-product of a startlingly original design, but the result of conscious move on the part of city fathers to reposition Bilbao on the world stage. The rust belt city, Spain's Pittsburgh, needed a postcard image comparable to the Eiffel Tower and the Sydney Opera House to symbolize its emergence as a player on the cheeseboard of a united Europe and a globalized economy. It needed a monument. One building and $110 million later, Bilbao is now a contender as a world-class city, and many of the world's second-and third-tier cities have called Mr Gehry's office, hoping for a comparable Cinderella transformation. (Quoted in Klingmann, 2007: 238)

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was an instant success. Within its first year of opening, 1.3 million visitors had paid for its building costs and the city was energised by economic growth and a new social visibility (Ostling, 2007).

Thus the sovereignty of consumers and trends in popular taste are transforming the museum’s social role. It is
less the embodiment of a single high culture from which most of the population are excluded. Museums in the 1980s and 1990s became more accessible, especially to the service and middle classes (Merriman, 1989). In Britain, Liverpool is interesting in how it capitalised on its particular 'popular' cultural heritage and through its designation as one of the European Cities of Culture. Liverpool was home to the Beatles and advertises its 'brand' as 'Beatleland' (with its airport being the Liverpool John Lennon Airport). Strongly featured in its tourism profile is the daily 'Beatles Magical History Tour'. Museum visiting, with its previously high-cultural associations, now enables the acquisition of cultural capital made possible by people 'reading' and enjoying many different sorts of 'museums'.

Conclusion

Buildings, designed themes and diverse heritages are thus central to the tourist gaze. We have stressed that many tourist sights and resorts are designed as themed, with enclavic spaces stimulating primarily the visual sense. Such themed spaces can be contrasted analytically with what Edensor calls 'heterogeneous' tourism space, where tourists (especially backpackers) and locals share the same spaces, rub shoulders and the sensescape is more multi-sensuous and unpredictable (1998). And yet even in such heterogeneous tourist places ‘theming’ and ‘banal nationalism’ are often prevalent.

In this chapter we have de-centred tourist studies away from ‘tourists’ and onto the networks and discourses that enable or perform various places, especially as themed or as heritage. Places are thus (re)produced through performances made possible through networked relationships between organisations, machines and especially buildings. Places are in the thick of such ‘touring’ processes and in part consist of anticipated, designed and remembered buildings.

We explore places and buildings further in the next chapter through analysing the significance of photographing buildings which stand for place. Indeed, many such contemporary and refurbished heritage buildings are designed to be captured photographically and for those photographic gazes to be then globally circulated within mainstream media, new media and Web 2.0.

- tourism
- museums
- tourist gaze
- heritage
- architecture
- malls
- nostalgia

http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446251904.n6