

6

Gazing on History

The Heritage Industry

Tourist sites can be classified in terms of three dichotomies: whether they are an object of the romantic or collective tourist gaze; whether they are historical or modern; and whether they are presented as authentic or inauthentic (see Chapter 8). Characterising sites in such terms is obviously not straightforward and the third dichotomy, authentic/inauthentic, raises many well-known difficulties. Nevertheless it is useful to summarise the differences between sites by employing these dichotomies.

For example, the Lake District in the north-west of England can be characterised as predominantly the object of the romantic gaze, it is historical and it is apparently authentic (Urry, 1995a). By contrast, Alton Towers leisure park, again in the north-west, is the object of the collective gaze, it is mainly modern and it is predominantly inauthentic. These are fairly straightforward characterisations. But more complex are places like the refurbished 'colonial' Havana in Cuba (see Figure 6.1), the Wigan Pier Heritage Centre in Lancashire or the restored mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, the first industrial town in the USA. These are all examples of the heritage industry, a development that has generated much debate. Although they are the objects of the collective gaze, it is controversial whether such sites are as 'historical' and 'authentic', as claimed. There is also much debate as to the causes of this contemporary fascination with gazing upon the historical or heritage (see Lowenthal, 1985, ch. 1 on 'nostalgia' as a physical affliction dating from the late seventeenth century).

Some indicators of this phenomenon in Britain include the 500,000 listed buildings, the 17,000 protected monuments and the 5,500 conservation areas. A new museum is said to open every fortnight, there are 78 museums devoted to railways and 180 water- and windmills are open to the public (Samuel, 1994: Part II). Of the 1,750 museums in 1987, half had been started since 1971. There are also many heritage centres, 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. A former director of the Science Museum 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).

Some of the most unlikely places have become centres of a heritage-based tourist development. Bradford, which once sent most of its holiday-makers to Morecambe, has now become a major tourist attraction in its own right,

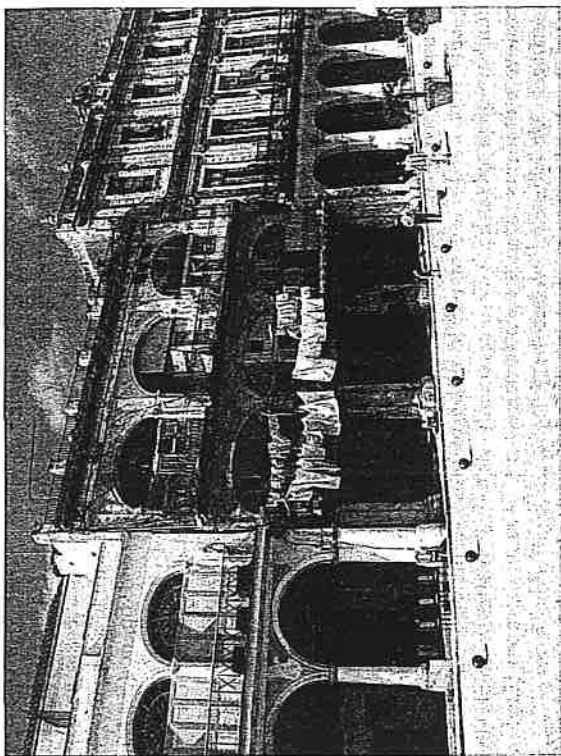


Figure 6.1 The restoration of 'Colonial' Havana, Cuba

with the number of visitors increasing from 1.5 million to 5 million in the early 1990s (Williams, 1998: 186–9). In the Rhondda valley in South Wales a museum and heritage park have been established in the former Lewis Merthyr colliery (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 British Coal had wanted to remove. The broadcaster Michael Wood writes:

'Now that the present seems so full of woe ... the profusion and frankness of our nostalgia ... suggest not merely a sense of loss ... but a general abdication, an actual desertion from the present' (1974: 346).

The seventeenth-century disease of nostalgia seems to have become a contemporary epidemic.

One feature of recent developments has been the increased privatisation of the heritage/museum industry, with 56 per cent of museums opening in the 1980s being in the private sector (Hewison, 1987: 1, ch. 4; Thrift, 1989). Many of these private initiatives have inspired new ways of representing history, through commodifying the past in novel forms.

Very large numbers of people visit museums and heritage sites, although visitors have decreased somewhat in the late 1990s (although the number of sites opening increased). Around 68 million visits a year are made to such museums and galleries (Department of Culture, Media and Sport website).

In any year about one-third of the population in the UK visits an historical building, one third a historic park or garden, slightly less than one-third a museum, a quarter a cathedral, slightly less than one-quarter an ancient monument, and one-fifth an art gallery. This compares with less than a fifth who visit a football match or one-quarter who attend opera (English Heritage – Mori Research website).

The proportion of the service class visiting museum and heritage centres in any year is about three times that of manual workers. About two-thirds of the visitors to such places have white-collar occupations (Myerscough, 1986: 303–4). Visits to such sites vary ethnically, with 'white' people somewhat more likely to visit historic buildings or museums than either 'black' or 'Asian' people who wish to learn about various kinds of heritage experience, not just that of 'England' (English Heritage – Mori Research website). 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. Significant numbers of people who have not recently visited such sites express very positive sentiments towards such heritage work being undertaken (English Heritage – Mori Research website).

Similar developments are taking place in many industrial countries (see Lumley, 1988). 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).

However, various critics of heritage, such as Hewison or Wright, argue that this 'heritage industry' is more extensive in Britain than elsewhere, although the empirical testing of such a hypothesis is fraught with methodological difficulties (Hewison, 1987; Wright, 1985).

Certainly since the late nineteenth century in Britain there has been a tradition of visiting/conserving the countryside, as discussed in the previous chapter. This is reflected in the appreciation both of certain kinds of landscape (including villagescapes) and especially of grand country houses set in attractive rural settings. On the first of these Raban talks of a recent willingness of people to present a particular impression 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 the protection of heritage sites. The tendency to visit grand country houses also remains immensely popular, with 12 million people a year visiting National Trust properties (National Trust website).

There has been a further interest in visiting the countryside, stemming from a widespread interest in the equipment and machinery that was used

in farming, and in the patterns of life developed in agriculture. 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 (see Vidal, 1988).

There has been a remarkable increase in interest in 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 interest 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 in a coalmine or steel works. However, this should not be over-emphasised, since people also appear to find interesting the backbreaking but unheroic household tasks undertaken by women. This fascination with other people's work is bound up with the postmodern breaking down of boundaries, particularly between the front and the 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.

The remarkably rapid de-industrialisation of Britain had two important effects. On the one hand, it 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 probably greater in Britain than elsewhere and was more geographically concentrated in the north of England, South Wales and central Scotland. On the other hand, much of this industry had historically been based in inner-city Victorian premises, large numbers of which became available for alternative uses. Such buildings were either immensely 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, with sandblasted walls, replaced 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. A good example is Wigan; this is well represented in a publicity booklet called *I've never been to Wigan but I know what it's like* (Economic Development, Wigan, undated). The first five pictures in black and white are of back-to-back terraced housing, mines and elderly residents walking along narrow alleyways. But we are then asked if we are sure this is really what Wigan is now like. The following twelve photos, all in colour, demonstrate the contemporary Wigan, which is revealed as possessing countless tourist sites, Wigan Pier, a colourful market and elegant shops, excellent sports facilities, attractive pubs and restaurants, and delightful canalside walkways. Selling Wigan to tourists is part of the process of selling Wigan to potential investors, who are

going to be particularly concerned about the availability of various kinds of services for their employees. Tourism in Wigan is now worth £34 million a year with 170,000 visitors attracted (Guardian Unlimited website).

This was a period in which many smaller enterprises were beginning to grow (see Lash and Urry, 1987: ch. 7). Much emphasis was also placed on small firms in central government policy and in the encouragement provided by local authority economic development programmes. Developing new enterprises in the tourist field, many of which are relatively small, became commonplace in Britain in the 1980s.

With the tendencies to globalisation discussed in Chapters 3 and 8, different countries have come to specialise in different sectors of the holiday market for visitors: Spain for cheaper packaged holidays, Thailand for 'exotic' holidays, Switzerland for skiing and mountaineering holidays, and so on. Britain has 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 emphasis can be seen in the way that overseas visitors tend to remain inland in Britain, rarely visiting either the coast or much of the countryside. Such visitors cannot know about more than a handful of sights worth visiting and, apart from London, these will normally include Oxford, Cambridge, Stratford, York, Edinburgh, and some of the sites of industrial tourism. This location within the global division of tourism has further reinforced the particular strength of the heritage phenomenon in Britain.

The preservation of heritage has been particularly marked in Britain because of the unattractive character of its modern architecture (until the 1990s). The characteristic modern buildings of the post-war period have been undistinguished office blocks and public housing towers, many with concrete as the most visible building material. Such buildings have proved to be remarkably disliked by most people, which has seen modern architecture as 'American'. Yet the contrast with the often striking and elegant north American skyscrapers located in the downtown areas is noticeable. In addition Britain had a very large stock of pre-1914 houses and public buildings suitable for conservation, once the fashion for the modern had begun to dissolve in the early 1970s. An interesting example of this can be seen in the changing attitude towards conservation, particularly of the Regency façades in Cheltenham, which is one of the prime townscapes being strenuously preserved even though much of it had once been scheduled for 'redevelopment' (Cowen, 1990).

So heritage is playing a particularly important role in British tourism, and it is more central to the gaze in Britain than in some other countries. But what is meant by heritage, particularly in relationship to notions of history and authenticity (see Uzzell, 1989)? A lively public debate has been raging in Britain concerned with evaluating the causes and consequences of heritage.

This debate was stimulated by Hewison's book on the heritage industry, which was subtitled *Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1987). He begins with the provocative 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 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. The question is not whether we should or should not preserve the past, but what kind of past we have chosen to preserve. Roy Strong writes that:

We are all aware of problems and troubles, of changes within the structure of society, of the dissolution of old values and standards ... The heritage represents some kind of security, a point of reference, a refuge perhaps, something visible and tangible which ... seems stable and unchanged. Our environmental heritage is a deeply stabilising and unifying element within our society. (quoted in Hewison, 1987: 46-7)

(Incidentally both Marx and Nietzsche might be said to have a similarly critical attitude to 'nostalgia': see Lowenthal, 1985: 65.) Hewison notes something distinctive about some contemporary developments. Much contemporary nostalgia is for the *industrial* past. The first major battle in Britain was fought – and lost – in 1962 over the elegant neoclassical arch at the entrance to Euston station. But this gave rise to a survey of industrial monuments by the Council for British Archaeology and a major conference in 1969. Four years later the Association for Industrial Archaeology was founded 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 closure of the steel works at Consett, just ten miles away. The protection of the past conceals the destruction of the present. There is an absolute 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). Heritage is bogus history.

Obviously there is much value in many of Hewison's comments. One commentator has suggested that Britain will 'soon be appointing a Curator instead of a Prime Minister' (quoted in Lowenthal, 1985: 4). Similarly Tom Wolfe has recently proposed that the entire 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. The theme park would be known as Englandland and contain scaled down replicas of almost all the well-known historic buildings in England (Barnes, 1999).

However, these criticisms of heritage do bear a remarkable similarity to the critique of the so-called mass society thesis. Indeed social scientists may well be prone to a kind of nostalgia, that is, for a Golden Age when the mass of the population were supposedly not taken in by new and more distorting cultural forms (see Staught and Turner, 1988). There has, of course, never been such a period.

Hewison also 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. Indeed the National Trust with nearly 2.7 million members is the largest mass organisation in Britain (as in 2000; and see McCone, Kiely, Morris, 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. Even Covent Garden, which might be critiqued as the ultimate 'heritage playground', only became transformed into a tourist site because of a major conservation campaign conducted by local residents (see Januszczak, 1987; Samuel, 1994).

Likewise the preservation of some derelict coalmines in Wales has resulted from pressure by local groups of miners and their families who have 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 (see ch. 8; Urry, 1996). While the only remaining colliery building in the Rhondda valley, a valley iconic of Welshness where there were once 66 deep mines, is now the Rhondda Heritage Park (Dicks, 2000). This is based in what was the Lewis Merthyr mine. The Heritage Park emerged from extensive local campaigning through the discourse of 'memorialism' and it provides the only significant public memorial in the Rhondda to the once totally dominant mining industry (see Dicks, 2000: chaps 6 and 7). Oral history plays a central role in the memories of the mining community. However, it should be noted that this Heritage Park did involve huge disagreements over its scale and form and the degree to which it should be turned from a memorial into a much broader tourism/heritage project which it is said only weakly captures the voices of the local community.

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 in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus through research on the membership of the National Trust for Scotland, it seems that Scottish heritage is a significant element in the development of cultural nationalism (McCrone, Morris, Kiely, 1995). Heritage is seen by their respondents 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, 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 links nostalgia for the industrial past with the growth of post-modernism. But although they are connected some distinctions should be made. In the 1980s in Chester for example the expansion of a Roman centre ('Diva') would have involved the demolition of a listed Georgian house. Local conservationists sought to save the house as well as preventing the development of a Roman theme park (with Roman coins, Roman food etc.; see Stamp, 1987). Hewison conflates these two issues. But mainly he concentrates his critique on scholarly conservation, museums and heritage centres.

However, these do often employ academic historians to research the background to the site (see Rose, 1978). Hewison's case could have been made much more easily against the Camelot theme park or the proposed Roman theme park in Chester. In the USA there is a similar distinction between the scholarly representation of Lowell as part of a National Park and the construction of Main Street in various Disneyland. Another distinction that might be made is between 'crafts' and 'trades'. The former seems part of the constructed heritage industry, even to the extent that the craftspeople become part of the exhibit. But this kind of construction can be distinguished from various 'trades' and the historical reconstruction of the methods and techniques used, by, say, harness-makers or wheelwrights (see Vidal, 1988). Hewison's critique is more apposite to the former than the latter.

Hewison moreover presumes a rather simple model by which certain meanings, such as nostalgia for times past, come to be unambiguously transferred to the visitor by such heritage sites. 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). Indeed sites are not uniformly read and passively accepted by visitors. Macdonald shows in the case of an exhibition at the Science Museum that visitors frame and interpret the visit in ways not expected or planned by its designers (1995: 21). They connect together exhibits that were not meant to be linked, they read the exhibits as prescriptive when they are not intended to be, and they mostly do not describe the exhibition in ways that the designers had intended (see Shaw, Agarwal, Bull, 2000: 276).

Research at the Albert Dock in Liverpool further showed that people actively use such 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 co-operatively with others in order to

produce their memories. The performativity of reminiscence is by no means an apparently passive process of visual consumption. In some ways, it is similar to the variety of other spatial practices which take place at tourist sites, such as walking, talking, sitting, photographing and so on (see Edensor, 1998).

There is something condescending about Hewison's view that such a presentation of heritage cannot be interpreted in different ways, or that the fact that the experience may be enjoyable means that it cannot also be educational. This is well-shown in the case of New Salem where tourists are neither monolithic and the meaning of the site is not given and fixed (Bruner, 1994: 410–1). Indeed many 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).

The Wigan Pier Centre is, after all, 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 council with the objective of remembering 'heroic labour' (see Figure 6.2). 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 appropriated? It is not through the academic study of 'history' as such (see Lowenthal, 1985: 411). For many people it 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. Overall Lowenthal's judgement on how to regard various kinds of history seems right: 'We must concede the ancients their place ... But their place is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present' including through the 'heritage industry' (1985: 412).

However, what does need emphasising is that heritage history is problematic because of the emphasis upon visualisation. 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 (see Jordanova, 1989).

The following three sections explore certain aspects of heritage in more detail: in relation to its use as part of a local strategy for economic regeneration; in its interconnections with recent trends in design and postmodern architecture; and its role is the development of what I term the postmodern museum.

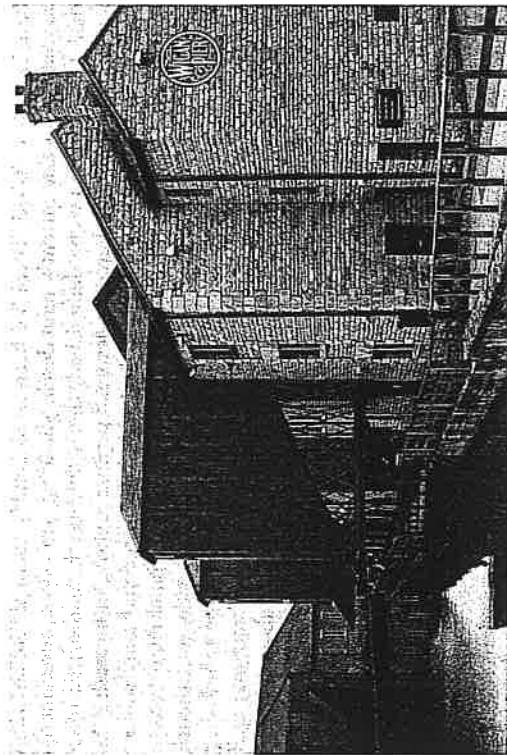


Figure 6.2 The Wigan Pier Heritage Centre, UK

Tourism and the Local State

In the previous discussion of the heritage industry it was noted that there is often considerable local support for conservation. I consider more fully here the relationship between local areas and tourism development. In that relationship there are three key elements. First, there are local people who are often concerned to conserve features of the environment which seem in some ways to stand for or signify the locality in which they live. Second, there are a variety of private sector owners and potential owners of tourist-related services. And third, there is the local state, which is comprised of local authorities as well as the local/regional representatives of various national-level bodies, including tourist boards.

An example illustrating this complexity is the Winter Gardens Theatre in Morecambe. This theatre closed in the late 1970s and will cost a great deal to repair. It is widely agreed that the theatre, built in 1897, is architecturally superb. English Heritage describes it as 'outstanding', while John Earl of the Theatres Trust has characterised it as the Albert Hall of the north. It may be conserved, although this is by no means certain. If it is, there is little doubt that amongst other uses will be the staging of old-time music hall (as well as pop and classical concerts), hence conveying nostalgic memories of a somewhat imprecise golden age of pre-TV entertainment.

Clearly such a refurbishment could be subject to criticism as yet another example of the heritage industry. However, it should be noted that without a great deal of local support for conservation the theatre would already

have been demolished. There has been an extremely energetic action group convinced that this currently semi-derelict building symbolises Morecambe – that if it is allowed to be demolished, that would be the end of the town itself. It is certain that there is widespread popular support for increasing the attractiveness of Morecambe, to make it more congested and more subject to the tourist gaze. Indeed potential tourists to any site cannot contribute to environmental concern: that has to be expressed by local residents. Although the building is privately owned, it is clear that it will only be refurbished with much support from public bodies. The role of the local state may well be crucial. This example demonstrates two important points about contemporary tourist development: the impact of local conservation groups whose heritage-preserving actions will often increase tourism in an area, sometimes as an unintended consequence; and the significant orchestrating role of the local state.

On the first of these, it is important to note how conservation groups vary very considerably between different places. For example, in 1980 while there were 5.1 members of 'amenity societies' per 1,000 population 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 (see Lowe and Goyder, 1983: 28–30 for more detail). Clearly part of the rationale of such groups is to prevent new developments taking place that will harm the supposed 'character' of the locality (in the south-east especially through low-cost housing schemes). 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 fairly broad objectives: not merely to prevent development, but to bring about the refurbishment of existing public buildings and more generally to 'museumify' the village or townscape. Moreover, even if the objectives of the movement have nothing to do with tourism, the effect will almost certainly be to increase the attractiveness of the locality to tourists.

An interesting negative example of this can be seen in New Zealand. Close to the largest city in the South Island, Christchurch, is the port of Lyttelton. As this is located within an extinct volcano, there is a superb natural harbour and scenic backdrop to the port. The town consists of mainly unexceptional low-level buildings but with very attractive facades. To the European it looks a typical town of the inter-war period. What is striking about Lyttelton is how undeveloped it was (in the late 1980s), although potentially it is an excellent tourist site. It does not look quaint, merely old (just like a great deal of contemporary Havana). In Hewison's terms it has not been conserved, only preserved. For it to become an object of the tourist gaze, it needs a conservation movement to ensure that these façades are not demolished; an infusion of new capital to transform some of the façades into 'tourist-friendly' shops and cafés; and a strategic plan by the local authority to co-ordinate activities.

One factor that appears to have strengthened conservation movements in the UK is 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 than previously. 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 attractive to tourists. Thus the preservation of the quaint village or townscape in particular, through middle-class collective action, is almost certain to increase the number of tourists and the resulting degree of congestion experienced by residents. One place where this has been particularly marked is Cheltenham. Because of concerted conservation pressure in the late 1960s the formal development policy was dropped in 1974. Since then a conservation policy has been adopted and there has been wholesale rehabilitation of the Regency housing stock for both housing, office and retailing/leisure developments (see Cowen, 1990).

Before considering the various ways in which local states have responded to such pressures, and more generally how they have in recent years attempted to reconstruct the objects of the tourist gaze, I note some reasons why local states have recently become centrally involved in both developing and promoting tourism.

As many local authorities moved into local economic intervention during a period of rapid de-industrialisation, so it seemed that tourism presented one of the only opportunities available for generating employment. It was also noted that many such authorities have found themselves with a particular legacy, of derelict buildings, such as the Albert Dock in Liverpool, and/or derelict land, such as that which now houses the Lowry arts complex on Salford Quays in Manchester (see Figure 6.3). Converting such derelict property into sites which would have a tourism component has often been almost the only alternative available (see Dicks, 2000, on the Rhondda valley).

Earlier I noted how competitive the tourist market has become, particularly 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 what I call a 'tourism reflexivity'. Such a 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 in the case of Bradford (Williams 1998). In some parts of the south-east of the UK there has been a self-conscious 'post-tourist' strategy, especially with large increases in the number of day-trips (Landry et al., 1989).

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 determine 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). This has led in some of the older resorts, such as those on the Isle of Thanet, to the development of 'municipal Conservatism', a combination of small-scale entrepreneurialism and council intervention (see Buck et al., 1989: 188-9). In the last few years in Britain many Labour councils have enthusiastically embraced local tourist initiatives, having once dismissed tourism as providing only 'candy-floss jobs' (Glasgow would be a prime illustration).

Finally, 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 attract prospective employees and employers and then keep them satisfied. This seems to have happened in Wigan in the 1980s following the establishment of the Wigan Pier Heritage Centre. The chairman of the North-West Tourist Board argues that:

The growth of the tourism industry has a great deal to do with the growth of every other industry or business: the opening up of the regions as fine places to visit means they're better places to live in - and, thus better places to work ... a higher quality of life benefits employees. (quoted in Reynolds, 1988)

It is problematic to assess the economic impact of any particular tourism initiative. This results from the difficulties of assessing the multiplier. If we consider the question of income generation, the impact of the expansion of tourism cannot be assessed simply in terms of how much income is spent by 'tourists' in hotels, camp sites, restaurants, pubs, and so on. It also depends upon what and where the recipients of that income, such as suppliers to the hotel or bar staff in the pubs, spend it, and in turn where those recipients spend it, and so on. There are some further problems in assessing such multipliers for a local economy: the linkages between firms are particularly complex and opaque partly because of the multitude of small enterprises involved; leakages from the economy are often very difficult to assess; there is no clear and agreed-upon definition of just what is a 'tourist' and hence what is tourist expenditure; the definition of the 'local economy' is in any case contentious so that the larger the geographical unit the higher the apparent multiplier. For all these difficulties it does seem that tourist expenditure has a fairly high local multiplier compared with other kinds of expenditure that might occur locally. Most studies in the UK show that something like half of tourism expenditure will remain in the locality, from its direct and indirect effects (see Williams and Shaw, 1988c: 88). However, such income remains highly unequally distributed since tourism areas are notable for their low wage level, even amongst those not employed in the tourism industry as such (see Taylor, 1988, on the wage effects in tourism-rich Blackpool).

Many local states in the UK have undertaken initiatives concerned to reconstruct and re-present whole places as objects of the tourist gaze

(Houston 1986; on the US, see Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989). This has been most marked in the Midlands, the north of England, and Wales; rather less so in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the south-east. A number of local authorities, especially in England, have recently been successful in the tourism field. An interesting example in the north is Hebden Bridge, a small west Yorkshire town (see Waterhouse, R., 1989). Its nadir was in the mid-1960s, when half the native population had left in the previous ten years following the closure of thirty-three clothing works. A strategy came to be formulated to break with the industrial past, to promote Hebden as a place to visit and to convert some of the visitors into new residents. There had been plans for a major development scheme but this was thrown out in 1967. A heritage-led growth strategy was devised instead, a strategy influenced by an early environmental movement in the town and its attraction to artists, designers, musicians and so on. It is now a booming town with a considerable shortage of housing; there are twice as many newcomers as original residents.

Some other places in Britain that have pursued a similar strategy have been assisted by the scheme to establish Tourism Development Action Programmes (TDAPs). These were forms of state-sponsored tourism reflexivity (see chapter 8), involving integrated programmes, lasting between one and three years, which involved research, development and marketing (Davies, 1987). Some places that experienced such a programme were cities; such as Bradford, Tyne and Wear, Lancaster, Gosport and Portsmouth, rural areas such as Exmoor and Kielder Water, and seaside resorts such as Bridlington and Torbay.

The Lancaster TDAP consisted of a partnership between the two relevant local authorities, together with a publicly funded enterprise board and the North-West Tourist Board. The objectives were to develop and implement a marketing strategy, to improve the heritage attractions, to develop links with the countryside and coast, to enhance visitors' experience of Lancaster, and to expand and improve the provision of accommodation. It was clearly recognised that enhancing the tourist potential of Lancaster will simultaneously make the place more attractive to inward investment. In the Position Statement for the programme it was stated that:

In addition to creating new tourism jobs locally, the development of tourism in Lancaster will help to up-grade the local environment and improve facilities which will assist industrial promotion generally. The City's appearance and the range of facilities it offers are critical to the attraction of new companies to Lancaster. (Special Projects Group, Lancaster City Council, 1987: para. 1.20)

It is interesting that this Position Statement is entitled *Lancaster - Heritage City*. It would seem that three conditions are necessary if Lancaster were to construct itself as a heritage city. First, there would have to be a number of attractive and reasonably well-preserved buildings from a range of historical periods. In Lancaster's case these were medieval (a castle), Georgian (the customs house and many townhouses) and Victorian (old mills).

Second, such buildings would have to be used for activities in some ways consistent with the tourist gaze. An interesting example concerns Lancaster Castle, which has a magnificent Norman gate. Most of the castle is currently closed to the public because it is used as a prison. Now although castles often operated historically as prisons (Lancaster Castle indeed has some famous dungeons), there is thought to be something inappropriate about tourists gazing upon a building which still functions as a prison. Hence the castle has not yet fulfilled its potential as a tourist site.

The third condition is that the buildings should in some sense have been significant historically, that they stand for or signify important historical events, people or processes. Thus in the TDAP Position Statement Lancaster is described as:

an ancient settlement steeped in history, with Roman origins, an important medieval past ... Through the Duchy of Lancaster it has close associations with the Monarchy ... The city's many attractions, based on its rich history and fine buildings, together with its royal associations, combine for the promotion and marketing of Lancaster's heritage. (Special Projects Group, Lancaster City Council, 1987: paras 4.3, 4.4)

It is worth considering the use of 'history' in the quotation: that because there has been a 'rich' history the old buildings appear not merely old but historically important; and in turn the buildings signify that the place is 'properly old' – that it is indeed steeped in history. There must therefore be a coherent relationship between the built environment and the presumed atmosphere or character of the place being developed for the tourist gaze.

Another way in which a number of cities have been more successful in constructing a relatively coherent tourist image is through so-called cultural tourism (see Craik 1997). For example, in London in the 1980s, 44 per cent of museum attendance was made up of tourists, compared with 21 per cent outside London. Tourists formed 40 per cent of the audience at London's theatres and concerts. It is calculated that 25 per cent of all tourist spending is arts-related (Myerscough, 1988: ch. 5).

But perhaps the best example of cultural tourism in Britain involved the transformation of Glasgow following its designation as the 'European City of Culture for 1990': 'Glasgow's regeneration has been largely arts-led, with the Mayfest and the opening of the Burrell Collection all helping to change the city's image from a decaying industrial backwater to a dynamic growth area [attractive to tourists]' (quoted in McKellar, 1988: 14).

Two-thirds of visitors consider that there is a wide variety of interesting museums and art galleries to visit in the city. And at least one-third think that there are so many cultural activities available that they wish they were able to stay longer. Fewer than one-fifth consider that Glasgow is the rough and depressing place to visit that once would have been the case (Myerscough, 1988: 88–9). Mysteriously but dramatically, Glasgow has become the kind of place that people now want to visit, to see and to be seen in. It has become a preferred object of the gaze of many tourists. One consequence is that the proportion of service jobs has risen from 68 per cent

to 84 per cent (The Industrial Society website). This transformation of Glasgow as an object of the gaze is the result of economic restructuring, social change, policy intervention and cultural re-evaluation. And part of that transformation has entailed tourism coming to be of central economic and social significance.

Liverpool is another UK city that has successfully capitalised on its rather particular 'popular' cultural heritage. Strongly featured in the *Discover Merseyside* 1988 brochure was the daily 'Beatles Magical History Tour'. The brochure talks of 'Beatleland', which includes the Cavern Walks shopping centre, the John Lennon Memorial Club, the Beatles Shop, Tommy Steele's statue of Eleanor Rigby, and so on. Details are also included of the annual Beatles Convention. Another cultural advantage of Merseyside increasingly featuring in its tourism literature is soccer, something again illustrating how the boundaries between different activities are dissolving through the processes of de-differentiation referred to earlier. Liverpool describes itself as 'The Football Capital of the World' and there are well-organised 'Soccer City Weekend' packages where important objects of the tourist gaze are Goodison Park and Anfield.

Bradford is also an interesting example, since it had no tourist industry until 1980. It was a prime example of an industrial city of dark satanic mills. The setting up of a tourism initiative was self-consciously undertaken when it was realised that Bradford had a number of ingredients likely to appeal to the holiday-maker. These were, apart from plenty of hotel beds, proximity to internationally renowned attractions such as Haworth and the Dales and Moors; a substantially intact industrial heritage of buildings, railways and canals derived from Bradford's status as 'Worstedopolis'; its location within the high-profile county of Yorkshire; and the existence of a large and vigorous Asian culture that had generated a plethora of small enterprises. The city council, moreover, realised that turning Bradford into a tourist mecca was itself a newsworthy item. They received considerable free publicity in the early 1980s. One crucial element in later campaigns has been to market Asian culture as a major visitor attraction. A separate booklet has been produced entitled *Flavours of Asia*. This details many 'Asian' restaurants, the largest Asian store in Europe, various curry tours, a dozen sari centres as well as a brief history of various Asian religions and of the patterns of immigration to Bradford (see Davies, 1987).

One factor in many tourism-developments within cities has been their location on a waterfront site. The model for such waterfront development is the US, beginning with Baltimore's Harborplace, which attracted 29 million visitors a year even by the 1980s. Other examples worldwide include Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace and associated Harborwalk, South Street Seaport in New York, and Sydney's Darling Harbor. The last of these was developed by Sydney property developers, Merlin, who are also involved in Manchester and in the Sheriff's Court Fashion Centre in Glasgow (see Wlsher, 1988). In Britain current waterfront projects include the Albert Dock in Liverpool, Birmingham Canal, Gloucester Docks, and Salford Quays in Manchester,

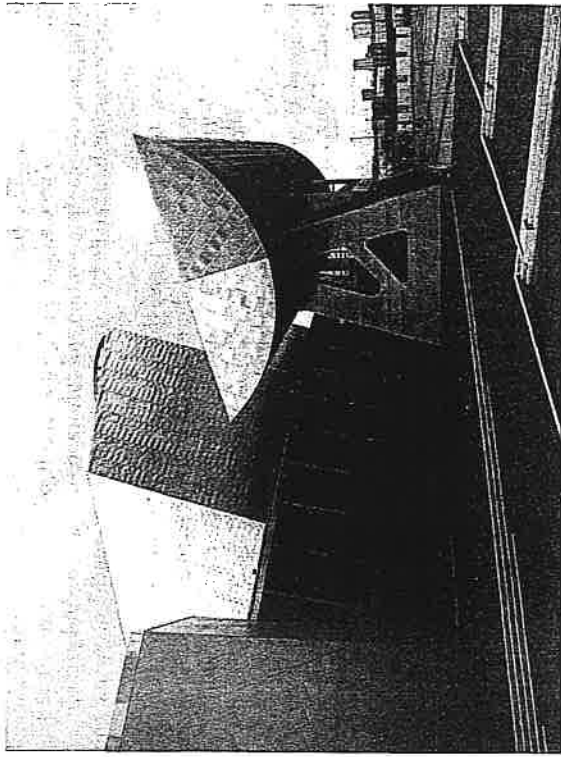


Figure 6.3 The Lowry arts complex, Salford Quays, UK

now housing the Lowry arts complex but once described as the least promising development site in Britain (see Figure 6.3).

The inspiration for development in Britain has arisen from the striking ways in which the downtown areas of American cities have been visually transformed, mainly by private developers but with a fair degree of public coordination. The main features found in the USA are the 'festival marketplace', particularly by the developer James Rouse as in Faneuil Hall in Boston; historical preservation, as in Lowell, Massachusetts; the development of new open spaces or plazas, such as Baltimore; waterfront developments, such as Battery City Park in New York; cultural centres, such as a performing arts centre in Los Angeles; renovation of old hotels, such as the Willard Inter-Continental in Washington DC; refurbished housing, as on Beacon Hill, Boston; and new public transportation systems, even in Los Angeles, the ultimate automobile city (see Fondersmith, 1988; Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989: 210–12; Zukin, 1991).

In the next section I consider in more detail the design and architecture of these various developments. Tourism is about finding certain sorts of place pleasant and interesting to gaze upon, and that necessarily comes up against the design of the buildings and their relationship to 'natural' phenomena. Without the right design no amount of local state involvement will attract tourists. It will be seen that much of the architecture of these developments is in different senses postmodern.

Designing for the Gaze

Given the emphasis on tourist consumption as visual, and the significance of buildings as objects upon which the gaze is directed, it is essential to consider changing patterns and forms that those buildings might take. Moreover, postmodernism cannot be examined without considering the built environment, the sphere which many would say best demonstrates such a cultural paradigm.

I argue, first, that there are a number of postmodern architectures; second, that the impact of these different architectures depends upon whether we are considering private or public buildings; third, that architects and architectural practices are of major importance in shaping the contemporary tourist gaze; fourth, that tourist practices have to be taken much more seriously by commentators on building design; and fifth, that tourists are socially differentiated and hence gaze selectively upon these different architectural styles.

The first point involves considering what is meant by *post* in postmodern. There are three senses: *after* the modern; *return* to the premodern; and *anti* the modern. I briefly summarise the architectural style associated with each of these (see Harris and Lipman, 1986).

After the modern is what one could also term 'consumerist postmodernism'. This takes its cue from Venturi's famous cry to 'learn from Las Vegas' (1972; Jencks, 1977; Frampton, 1988). Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas or Disneyland are the icons of this architecture, which proudly celebrates commercial vulgarity (see Harris and Lipman, 1986: 844–5). Art and life are fused or pastiched in the playful and shameless borrowing of ornamental style (see the massive Trafford Centre, near Manchester, for the 'best' recent British example, including a kind of 'Titanic' food court; see Figure 6.4). Previous elements of high culture are mass-produced, and no longer signify any 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. However, a distinction should be made between the literal consumerism of Las Vegas and the manner in which some postmodern architects have hijacked such styles to construct something of an auratic architecture appealing to the cognoscenti (as in James Stirling's Stuttgart gallery).

Much of the debate about postmodernism has tended to concentrate on significant public buildings, such as Terry Farrell's TV-AM headquarters, Philip Johnson's AT&T building, and James Stirling's Stuttgart gallery. There is less investigation of the impact of such a style on the everyday architecture of particular towns and cities. This is an important issue, since historically most architecture has been partly eclectic, drawing on earlier traditions, such as the Gothic style favoured by the Victorians, or the Egyptian motifs popular with the Art Deco movement (Bagguley, 1990: ch. 5; Lowenthal, 1985: 309–21). The one exception was the modern movement and its perhaps unique rejection of all previous architectural mannerisms. Interestingly, even

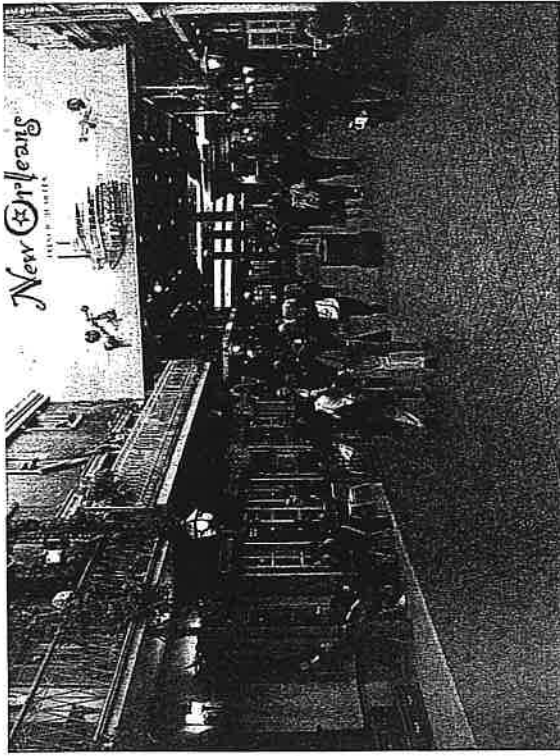


Figure 6.4 'New Orleans' at the Trafford Centre, Manchester, UK

during the heyday of modernism (say 1930–70 in Britain) two other styles were common: red-brick neo-Georgian shopping parades, and neo-Tudor half-timbered suburban housing.

One set of studies has been conducted on the impact of different architectural styles and on the different social forces which generated them (see Freeman, 1986, on the following; for a related study see Larkham, 1986). The architectural history of two towns was investigated: Aylesbury and Wembley. Modern architecture dominated the centres of both towns in the post-war period. This changed in Aylesbury in the early 1970s and in Wembley in the 1980s. Since then most town centre building has been postmodern. Brick has become the predominant building material during the postmodern period; concrete, glass and brick were all common during the modern period. The earlier break with modernism in Aylesbury rather than Wembley appears to have resulted from the nature of the architectural practices involved:

In Aylesbury, local firms, perhaps endowed with a rich historical and architectural heritage, were primary adopters of this style [postmodernism] in the early years. The continuing existence of local initiators and architects may, therefore, have been a reason why the dominance of Modernism with its monolithic designs ended so much sooner in Aylesbury than in Wembley. (Freeman, 1986: 75)

But Freeman treats as postmodern a wide range of different styles: what I earlier have termed 'consumerist postmodernism' and what I will go on to discuss as 'patrician postmodernism' and 'vernacular postmodernism'.

Patrician postmodernism involves a *return* to the premodern. Here what is celebrated is the classical form, the architecture of an elite. 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 individuals 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 want if only their choices were not distorted by modernism. In Britain, Prince Charles in part demonstrates this position, of appearing to speak on behalf of the people who know they do not like modernism and who really want only to gaze on nothing but uninterrupted classical buildings. Roger Scruton's position is somewhat similar (1979). As Wright says: 'While Scruton certainly approaches everyday life, he does so in such a way as to freeze it over. What emerges is an aestheticized, and indeed severely "classical", definition of appropriate everyday life' (1985: 30–1).

It is no accident that it is Krier who was commissioned by the Prince to devise the site plan for the western expansion of Dorchester, a proposal in effect to put Prince Charles' theories into practice. One interesting feature is the rejection of the idea of zoning activities. In Poundbury shops are found in arcades under flats, and workshops are located next to housing.

The British architect best known for the classical tradition is Quinlan Terry who was responsible for the extensive Richmond development, consisting of fifteen separate buildings built in a variety of classical styles. Terry's properties are expensive since they embody large amounts of craft labour on the exteriors, although the interiors are standardly modern. They are to do with 'an elitist and austere *return* to style and a cult of the unique' and yet compared with a modernist towerblock 'Terry's classy and expensive classical buildings may indeed, in a limited ... sense, form a "popular" style of architecture' (Wright, 1985: 31).

Certainly, to the extent to which such contemporary classical buildings mirror in particular the Georgian style, they will be popular objects of the tourist gaze. If there is a single style of house which tourists in Britain want to gaze upon it would appear to be the classical country house (see Hewison, 1987: ch. 3). There is even a handbook instructing people how to furnish and entertain in such Georgian houses, *The Official New Georgians Handbook* (Arley and Robinson, 1985).

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. 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 of the skills

necessary to improve it while at the same time appearing to conserve it. The contemporary renaissance of Bath is just as important an icon of the postmodern (in the return to the premodern sense) as is the latest jokey theme park or shopping mall.

The third variant of postmodern architecture is not simply after the modern, or involving a return to the premodern – it is *against* the modern. It has much in common with 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 phallogocentric set of discourses (see Hebdige, 1986–7: 8–9). It is argued that modernism (like of course 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. There is one variant of the postmodern which involves challenging these dominant discourses: in architecture it can be characterised as vernacular postmodernism. Hebdige well characterises the spatial correlates of this shift. He says that there is: 'not so much a lowering of expectations as a shift towards a total transformation in historical time ... to the piecemeal habitation of finite space – the space in which we live' (1986–7: 12).

Space in vernacular postmodernism is localised, specific, context-dependent, and particularistic – by contrast with modernist space which is absolute, generalised, and independent of context (see Harvey, 1989, more generally here). Leon Krier talks of the need to create 'localities of human dignity' (1984: 87). In Britain one of the clearest examples of this has been the 'community architecture' movement that Prince Charles has fostered. This movement began with the restoration of Black Road in Macclesfield designed by Rod Hackney. The main principle of such a movement is 'that the environment works better if the people who live, work and play in it are actively involved in its creation and maintenance' (Wates and Krevitt, 1987: 18). This involves much emphasis on the process of design rather than on the end product, on reducing the power of the architecture vis-à-vis clients, on channeling resources to local residents and communities, and on restoration, or where new building is involved, ensuring it is appropriate to local historical context (see Hutchinson, 1989, for a critique).

The locality is central to such an architecture. 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 of preservation; and craft, since they were mostly built using otherwise underrated pre-modern techniques and materials (Lowenthal, 1985: 52–63). The best recent example of this in the UK is the

Tate Modern gallery housed in a former power station on the south bank of the Thames – it attracted five million visitors in its first year.

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 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 place and which mark that place off from others. One of the very strong objections to modernism was that it generated uniformity, or placelessness, and was therefore unlikely to generate large numbers of buildings attractive to potential tourists who want to gaze upon the distinct. The only exceptions are found in major cities, such as Richard Rogers' high-tech Pompidou Centre in Paris, which now attracts more visitors than the Louvre, or of course Frank Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao, perhaps the single best-known new building across the globe. Outside the major cities the universalisation of 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 centrally important. Wright talks of the 'abstract and artificial aestheticisation of the ordinary and the old', although it can be noted that 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 that: '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).

So far I 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; earlier I made some comments about the likely role of the state. I have not yet considered the respective influences of architects and developers in the construction of different tourist sites, although in the comparative study of Aylesbury and Wembley the role of locally based architects was important in the former. There is also evidence in the USA that there has been expanding employment of architects in small and medium-sized towns where an expanding middle class has given rise to localities with high incomes, environmental sensitivity and a consciousness of design (see Knox, 1987; Blau, 1988). The same appears to be true of many of the smaller cities in Britain, such as Bath, Chester, Lancaster or York, cities which are or are becoming important tourist sites (see Bagguely et al., 1990).

I conclude with some points about architects, developers and the changing objects of the tourist gaze. Partly influenced by some of these locally based architects, a more participatory and activist-influenced planning developed, 'aimed not only at halting renewal schemes but also at preserving and enhancing the neighborhood lifeworld' (Knox, 1988: 5).

The effectiveness has of course varied enormously and quite often schemes for the desired conservation of an area turn out to have quite different consequences. The renewal of Covent Garden as a result of a planning decision influenced by activists concerned to conserve the buildings has had the consequence of generating an immensely successful tourist site (with resulting congestion, inflated prices and piles of uncollected rubbish). According to Samuel a similar fate will befall Spitalfields in east London. Samuel argues that what is being planned in Spitalfields is an alliance of conservationists and developers working together. One effect of the proposed scheme would turn much of Spitalfields into a tourist site. Samuel writes: 'Conservation here is typically pastiche in which, as in a costume drama, items are treasured for their period effect ... "Georgianised" Spitalfields, with its immaculate brickwork, restored lintels and tasteful interiors ... What meaning does conservation have ... when a building is frozen in historical limbo?' (1987b; but see Samuel, 1987a, 1994).

A sustained attack was mounted in Britain in the 1980s on the systems of planning control that had been established since the war. A crucial circular 22/80 from the Department of the Environment asserted the superiority of developer 'patronage' over the democratic system of planning control. Design was to be left to developers, except in certain areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and so on (see Punter, 1986-7). What came to be established was a two-tier system. Punter summarises the way this met the apparently conflicting objectives of Conservative policy:

to retain those escapist elements of aesthetic control which protect the interests and property values [and we may add the tourist sites] of their supporters – the gentrified Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian suburbs, the picture postcard villages and 'unspoilt' countryside so sought after by long distance commuters ... In crude terms the remainder of the country is to be left to the mercies of the developers. (1986-7: 10)

In the 1980s new flamboyant developers emerged in most western countries. Some have international interests, such as Donald Trump from New York with his postmodern Trump Tower. In Britain a number of more regionally oriented developers emerged, taking advantage of the increased discretion available to developers. The best known is John Hall, responsible for building the enormous Metrocentre in a deregulated enterprise zone in Gateshead in north-east England (see Hattersley, 1989). Hall sees himself as a representative of the region and has drawn on the local culture to underpin his activities. His vision is based on the centrality of family life and on the need to provide families with a centre that integrates leisure and shops; in such a place people will spend prolifically.

But not all these developments will be financially successful. In the USA there has often been overinvestment in shopping malls in Texas and hotels in Atlanta, while Virginia's waterfront development looks like a financial failure. Harvey provocatively asks: 'How many museums, cultural centres, convention and exhibition halls, hotels, marinas, shopping malls, waterfront developments can we stand?' (1988).

The British government know only too well from the experience of the Millennium Dome that planned for visitor numbers often do not materialise (even if it did attract 6.5 million visitors in its one year of operation). Various other millennium opened visitor attractions have failed to attract anything like expected numbers.

Thus I have shown how the universalisation of the tourist gaze is reaping its postmodern harvest in almost every village, town and city in Britain and in many other western countries as well. I now turn to one particular kind of building – the museum.

Postmodern Museums

We have seen a spectacular growth in the number of museums in western countries. This is clearly part of the process by which the past has come to be much more highly valued by comparison with both the present and the future. Also, the past has become particularly valued in the UK because of the way in which international tourism in this country has come to specialise in the construction of historical quaintness. And the attraction of museums increases as people get older – so the 'greying' of the population in the west is also adding to the number and range of museums.

I have strongly argued for the significance of the gaze to tourist activities. This is not to say that all the other senses are insignificant in the tourist experience. But I have tried to establish that there has to be something distinctive to gaze upon, otherwise a particular experience will not function as a tourist experience. There has to be something extraordinary about the gaze.

On the face of it this seems a relatively straightforward thesis. But it is not, because of the complex nature of visual perception. We do not literally 'see' things. Particularly as tourists we see objects constituted as signs. They stand for something else. When we gaze as tourists what we see are various signs or tourist clichés. Some such signs function metaphorically. A pretty English village can be read as representing the continuities and traditions of England from the Middle Ages to the present day. By contrast the use of the term 'fun' in the advertising for a Club-Med holiday is a metaphor for sex. Other signs, such as lovers in Paris, function metonymically. Here what happens is the substitution of some feature or effect or cause of the phenomenon for the phenomenon itself. The ex-miner, now employed at the former colliery to show tourists around, is a metonym for the structural change in the economy from one based on heavy industry to one based on services. The development of the industrial museum in an old mill is a metonymic sign of the development of a post-industrial society.

There have of course been museums open to the public since the early nineteenth century, beginning with the Louvre in Paris, the Prado in Madrid and the Altes Museum in Berlin. And since the *Michelin Guides* first appeared museums have been central to the tourist experience. 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 we should see and sometimes even the order in which they should be seen.

Such museums were based on a very special sense of aura. Horne summarises the typical tourist experience, in which the museum has functioned 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 premised upon the aura of the authentic historical artefact, and particularly upon those which are immensely scarce because of the supposed genius of their creator. Horne argues that what can be especially problematic about museums is their attribution of reverence to objects simply because of their aura of authenticity (1984: 249). But how we gaze within museums has changed in three central ways. The sense of aura that Horne describes has been undermined through the development of what I call the 'postmodern museum'. This involves different modes of representation and signification. What we 'see' in the museum has been transformed.

First, there has been a marked broadening of the objects deemed worthy of being preserved. This stems from a changed conception of history. There has been a decline in the strength of a given and uncontested national history, which the national museums then exemplify. Instead a proliferation of alternative or vernacular histories has developed – social, economic, populist, feminist, ethnic, industrial and so on. There is a pluralisation and indeed a 'contemporary-isation' of history. The British Tourist Authority calculated in the 1980s that there were up to 12,000 museum-type venues in Britain (see Baxter, 1989). Museums are concerned with 'representations' of history, and what has happened is a remarkable increase in the range of histories worthy of being represented. I have already noted some of these, especially the development of rural and industrial museums. It is now almost as though the worse the previous historical experience, the more authentic and appealing the resulting tourist attraction. No longer are people only interested in seeing either great works of art or artefacts from very distant historical periods. People increasingly seem attracted by representations of the 'ordinary', of modest houses and of 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 deemed worthy of being represented in contemporary museums, as are the often mundane artefacts associated with each of these activities (see West, 1988, on Ironbridge Gorge; Bennett, 1988, on Beamish; and Hewison, 1987, on Wigan Pier). There has been a quite stunning fascination with the popular and a tendency to treat all kinds of object, whether it

is the Mona Lisa or the old cake tin of a Lancashire cotton worker, as almost equally interesting. One could summarise this shift as being 'from aura to nostalgia', and it reflects the anti-elitism of postmodernism (see Edgar, 1987).

It should also be noted that all sorts of other phenomena are now preserved in museums, including moving images, radio, television, photographs, cinema, the environment and even the sets of TV soap operas (Lumley, 1988; and see Goodwin, 1989, on the Granada museum).

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 the participation by visitors 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-mediatization of the exhibit. Overall the museum and the various media are increasingly de-differentiated. The publicity for the Tyne and Wear museum well 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)

There are various other changes taking place in museums which are making them much more aware of the diverse publics and of how to 'improve' the experience of visiting museums. In Leicester, for example, some acknowledgement is now made that visitors will come from different ethnic groups and that the museum staff must concern themselves with the various ways in which such visitors may interact with the displays and with the different accounts of histories they present (Hooper-Greenhill, 1988: 228–30). Museum displays are also less auratic. It is now quite common for it to be revealed how a particular exhibit was prepared for exhibition, and in some cases even how it was made to appear 'authentic'. There are various museums where actors play various historical roles and interact with the visitors, even to the extent of participating in various historical sketches. At Beamish, for example, people act out various 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 simply demonstrates the machinery – 'the working non-working industry' (White, 1987: 11). Lumley summarises these changes overall 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).

In addition there is a changed relationship between what is considered a museum and various other social institutions. Those other institutions have now become more like museums. Some shops, for example, 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. 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 Museum of Design 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)

It has also been suggested that 'factory tourism' should be developed, that factories should in effect be viewed as museum-like. Certainly when factories do organise 'open days' they are very successful. The Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria has become a major tourist attraction with 178,000 visitors a year. What is happening is that the factory is becoming more like a museum. Likewise, there has been an extensive 'museumification' of English pubs, many of which have become 'mock Imperial Victorian' and undergone 'ye olde-ing' (see Norman, 1988). Small collections of apparently authentic exhibits are now to be found in many pubs and restaurants.

At the same time, museums have become more like commercial businesses:

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 particular difficulties for museum staff, who should be trying to fashion an identity for museums different from that of commercial enterprises. The problem has arisen because of the growth of tourist and leisure industries (see Morton, 1988). Theme parks, shopping malls and heritage centres have all forced museums to compete, to become much more market-oriented, certainly to run a prominent museum 'shop' and café, but also to mount spectacular displays as in the exceptional historical reconstructions in the new Canadian Museum of Civilization. Heritage centres, such as the Jorvik Viking Centre in York or the Pilgrim's Way in Canterbury, are competitors with existing museums and challenge given notions of authenticity. In such centres there is a curious mixing of the museum and the theatre. Everything is meant to be authentic, even down to the smells, but nothing actually dates from the period, as Macdonald describes in the case of a Gaelic heritage centre (1997). These centres are the product of a York-based company Heritage Projects, whose work is particularly challenging to existing museums that are forced to adapt even further (see Davenport, 1987).

The sovereignty of the consumer and trends in popular taste are colluding to transform the museum's social role. It is much less the embodiment of a single unambiguous high culture from which the overwhelming mass of the population is excluded. Museums have become more accessible, especially to the service and middle classes (see Merriman, 1989; Heinich, 1988, on the

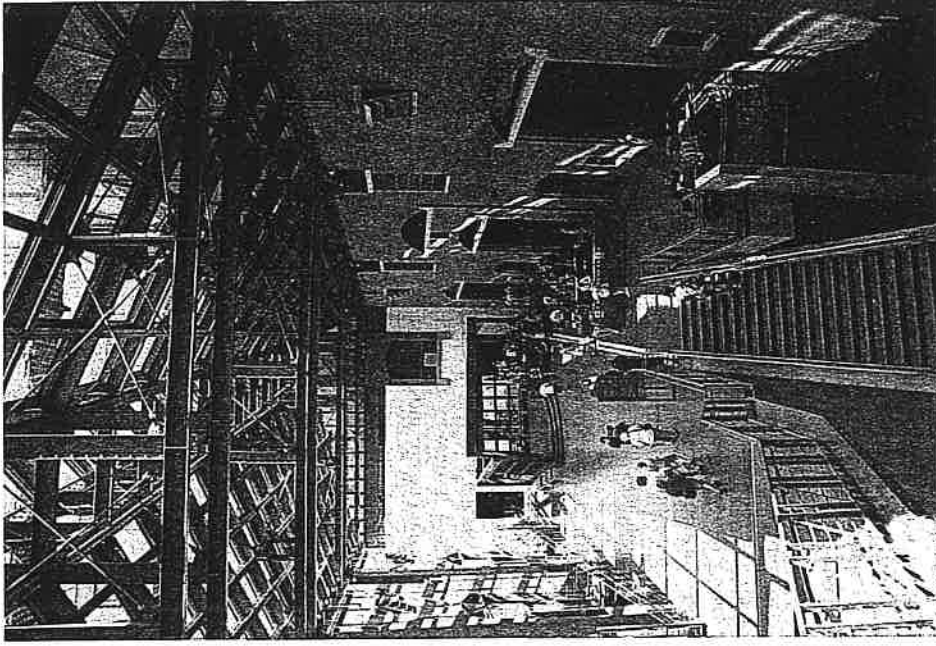


Figure 6.5 Holocaust Museum, Washington DC, USA

Pompidou Centre). In the leisure of such classes, Merriman (1989) suggests, museum visiting, with its previously high cultural associations, enables the acquisition of a certain cultural capital, an acquisition made possible by the increased degree to which people are now able to 'read' museums. This has helped museums to become important in defining good taste, particularly as we saw earlier, the 'heritage' look. A rural version of this is the 'country decor' look, the parameters of which are partly defined in terms of rural museums and the 'charming' manner in which the various quaint rooms

are set out (Thrift, 1989). 'Holocaust' museums, meanwhile involve the prescription of appropriate modes of collective grieving (see Figure 6.5).

Conclusion

Many 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 'non-museum visiting public' by specifically increasing the entertainment elements of display. This is partly achieved by the use of people to demonstrate many of the 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. However, there is an obvious danger of both being *seen* as over-commercial and of actually *being* over-commercial.

The mill has 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, has been imported from other, often derelict, industrial sites. The work on the machinery has involved using 'traditional' techniques that have 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 a variety of 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 plenty of evidence of the ill-health and squalor of much 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 considerably 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.

It is worth considering whether it is now possible to construct a museum or heritage centre preserving just any set of objects. It certainly seems possible. Some apparently unlikely museums are the pencil museum in Keswick, a museum of the chemical industry in Widnes, various Holocaust museums, a dental museum in London, and a shoe museum in Street. However, such museums appear to work because some connections between the past and the present are usually provided by 'place'. Occupation, industry, famous person or event may also sometimes provide such connections.

So museums cannot be created about anything anywhere. But a museum on almost any topic can be created somewhere, though whether we should still call them 'museums' is doubtful. The very term 'museum' stems from a period of high art and auratic culture well before 'heritage' and 'multi-media' had been invented and spread across the globe.

