

*In Search of Lost Cities:
Imagined Geographies
and the Allure of the Fake*

Siobhan Lyons

Macquarie University -
Australia

Abstract | Despite audiences being aware of the way in which popular culture frames and invents history, places and people, these representations inevitably impinge on a viewer's initial conception of various global landscapes and features, particularly the nature of an urban environment so often depicted through the lens of popular culture. It has been well established that the disparity between one's expectations and the reality of a city's layout and feel is stark, and that tourists are often confronted with the reality of a city. These episodes of touristic disillusionment stem from a fairly basic departure from romanticised images that circulate throughout the media and popular culture as 'reality', creating phenomena such as the 'Paris Syndrome' in which tourists express despair at a city's realistic environment. In these instances, the imagined city – created by recycled media images and a person's own psychological mapping – gives way to reality, but does not completely diminish. Instead, tourists often seek alternate destinations that substitute or even imitate real cities, fully aware of the staged authenticity of such sites. This paper interrogates how such images of a city are constructed in the first place, and examines the subsequent response of tourists who continuously seek what Umberto Eco calls the 'hyperreal' landscape in place of the real city.

Keywords | imagined city, tourism, hyperreal, authenticity, fake, popular culture

“New York as a character in a mystery would not be the detective, would not be the murderer. It would be the enigmatic suspect who knows the real story but isn’t going to tell it.”
– Donald Westlake

“Arriving at each new city, the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.”
– Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

“New York has gone. No reaction. He’d never seriously believed it existed anyway.”
– Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*

Introduction

Discussing his writing of the novella *Aura*, Mexican author Carlos Fuentes observes: “Paris is a double city; whatever happens there possesses a mirage which seems to reproduce the space of actuality. We soon learn that this is a form of deceit” (Fuentes, 1983: 531). Fuentes’s notion of the “double city” and of deceit aptly applies to the psychological conventions that go into constructing the mind’s eye view of a famous city. It is the mirage of the city that many tourists have become concerned with. And, as with a mirage, it disappears in the face of reality. This is best understood through Edward Said’s (1978) notion of “imagined geographies”, in which we imagine the geographical traits of a city based on what we have garnered through film, television and literature. Fuelled by the variety of romanticised images from popular culture, tourists habitually develop their own imagined cartography of an urban space that indeed becomes somewhat deceitful, as Fuentes would have it. Further, what is intriguing is not only the confrontation and encounter with the real city, but the lost city still imprinted in the imagination that will forever remain undiscovered, and how tourists attempt to recover it.

The ‘lost city’, as I define it, is the imagined city that remains in a tourist’s mind following an encounter with the ‘real city’. The significance of the ‘lost city’ is that it remains in the tourist’s imagination even after the tourist has realised it does not exist, subsiding as a memory of a place that never existed. Hence, the ‘lost city’ is partly defined by this sense of disillusionment and longing that persists long after the tourist’s experience with the ‘real city’ is over.

Following an encounter with a city long-imagined in a tourist’s mind, severe disillusionment has commonly been experienced, as the real city fails to live up to the expectations of its visitors. This is most commonly known as the ‘Paris Syndrome’, which, according to Dean MacCannell, is a nervous breakdown experienced by tourists

when visiting Paris. MacCannell notes that Japanese tourists are particularly susceptible to the Paris Syndrome, since, regardless of how equally modernised the cities are, they are invariably different (MacCannell, 2011: 76). A much more moderate version of this is an acute sense of disappointment, even depression, when finally encountering a city that has previously existed only in one's imagination. But tourists, MacCannell writes, can actually express very little when viewing attractions: "They gawk, comment amongst themselves, and take pictures. There is little opportunity for other expressive behaviour" (MacCannell, 2011: 77). The romanticised moment of clarity so often depicted in films does not always occur, leaving tourists disappointed and confused, and unsure of how to react or feel in the absence of the expected exhilaration of seeing famous historical landmarks.

While not a global phenomenon, this reaction is particularly acute in famous cities that have been heavily featured in popular culture. In this respect, two cities emerge: the real city and the *phantom* city. This process involves the utilisation of already existing visual and literary material to construct a jigsaw of an urban environment, often made up of dissected fragments of mediated representations. This paper explores the creation of imagined or phantom cities, the impact that pervasive popular culture has had in affecting people's conception of an urban environment, and what tourists subsequently do to find their imagined cities.

Imagined Geographies and Hyperreality

Edward Said discusses the concept of "imagined geographies" with respect to Orientalism and the rise of European imperialism in the nineteenth century. For Said, global images and conceptions of the imaginative existence of the Orient were primarily shaped by European perspectives and representations. Said writes that the fable, the stereotype and the polemical confrontation are "the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception and form of the encounter between East and West" (Said, 1978: 58). Said furthermore explains that, philosophically, "the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism" (Said, 1978: 72). For Said, this kind of realism is determined by a word or phrase which is then "considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality" (Said, 1978: 72). Said calls the idea of representation a theatrical one, and sees the Orient as a "theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (Said, 1978: 63). It is from here that one can observe the way in which dominant cultural perspectives are formed around certain peoples, districts and cities. In this respect, however, the dissemination of these images and realities stems predominantly from American media, including American directors, screenwriters and

cinematographers, creating what Erving Goffman (1979) calls “commercial realism”, in which images are used to reshape conceptions of reality, essentially creating a different reality. For Goffman, these images do not look strange to audiences, although they should, exemplifying the extent to which audiences identify more strongly with imitative images and representations.

This concept is more familiar in theorist Umberto Eco’s work. Eco discusses the concept of hyperreality in which “the fake seems real” (Eco, 1987: 55). Using Disneyland as his primary example of a hyperreal landmark, Eco argues that we live in a time when “the copy is authentic” (Eco, 1987: 55), a concept which works as the fundamental thrust of popular urban representation and tourism.

Postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard takes this concept of the real/fake binary to greater heights. In his famous essay, “Simulacra and Simulation”, Baudrillard explains that society has come to prefer the fake to the real. Using Jorge Luis Borges’s fable “On Exactitude in Science”, where an empire creates a map as big as the empire itself before the empire is destroyed, leaving only the map, Baudrillard argues that the people of the empire live in the map, the simulation of reality, while reality itself crumbles. He argues: “It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra – it is the map that engenders the territory and if one must return to [Borges’s] fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map” (Baudrillard, 1994: 1). Like Eco, Baudrillard discusses simulations with respect to Disneyland, stating: “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation” (Baudrillard, 1994: 12).

For Baudrillard and Eco, the issue is not about failing to distinguish between reality and the fake, but more about prioritising the fake over the real, something which contemporary tourism increasingly depends upon. Indeed, the representation of a city relies partly on its separation from reality. In this sense, the act of representation transforms reality into “hyperreality”, thus influencing common (mis)perceptions about a city. This process, moreover, contributes to the allure of the fake, not only the phenomenon of the imagined city, but the subsequent attraction to what is fake, and the attempt to reclaim the ‘lost city’ that remains in the tourist’s imagination following an experience with the real city. In essence, this process does not simply refer to the need or desire to debunk or deconstruct the imagined city, but refers more to the subsequent *pursuit* of the fake, spurred on by the continued existence of the lost city in the traveller’s mind. This is where the link between the lost city and the allure of the

fake becomes most evident; the fake is seen as more accurately corresponding to the lost city in the tourist's imagination.

In studies related to the city, furthermore, a disparity is seen to exist between travellers and tourists; the former is seen as seeking the real, the rugged, and the uncompromised reality of a city, while the latter is seen as seeking the fake, the comfortable, and the sanitised. Daniel Boorstin, in his work *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (1992 [1962]), discredits the tourist as a lover of the fake, believing the tourist to be “too shallow to care that his experiences are inauthentic” (Cohen, 2002). Others, such as Jonathan Culler, have called tourists “unsung armies of semiotics” who are “fanning out in search of signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, [and] traditional English pubs” (Culler, 1981: 130). These ‘typical’ and ‘traditional’ attractions and places, however, do not actually appear on any geographic radar; the ‘typical’ and the ‘traditional’ for a tourist are often characterised by their very inauthenticity.

Phantasmagoria and Phantom Cities

It is chiefly through word-of-mouth and literature that our preconceived notions of a city first start to assemble. Robert Alter's work *Imagined Cities* (2005) deconstructs modernist representations of the city in nineteenth and twentieth century literature. Alter states that the novel functions as a “seismograph of modern urban experience” (Alter, 2005: xi). He describes what he calls phantasmagoria, a process by which the traveller refutes a topographical division of the urban landscape and instead constructs their own through experiential realism. Such a concept evidently exists as a precursor to, or, indeed, alongside psycho-geographical concepts of creating one's own psychological map of a city and refuting already existing ones. Alter writes:

This repeated process in the novel of a limited perception of transitory images, which are no more than shards of an ungraspable whole, points toward an ultimate vision of the city as phantasmagoria. The very concept, it should be noted, goes back to a mechanical invention introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century: an exhibition of optical illusions created chiefly by means of a magic lantern. The actual theatrical apparatus of phantasmagoria provides a strong analogue for later novelistic practice. Phantasmagoria is the exact antithesis of the guidebook representation of the city, in which everything can be mapped out, ordered as a social, architectural, and topographical system. In the solvent of phantasmagoria everything is seen as constant disorienting flux, and the lines of division between perception and hallucination, waking and dreaming, blur (Alter, 2005: 30).

For Guy Debord, psycho-geographical maps are determined by aimlessly drifting through a city without any preconceived destination or route, what he calls *dérive*. Psycho-geography dismisses topographical, economic and architectural formations of

a standard map, or Alter's aforementioned "guidebook representation of a city" (Alter, 2005: 30), and instead emphasises the individual's role in creating their own city, defined by experiential realism. These instances focus on the individual experience and subsequent creation of an internal, emotional city in a constant state of flux, according to the wanderer's emotions. Alter and Debord's readings of the city are useful insofar as they celebrate and encourage the individual's "*insubordination* to habitual influence" (Debord, 2006: 10, author's emphasis), in this case the influence of predetermined and predictable maps and routes. For Debord, all travellers will eventually have their own constructional power, and he argues that there is no correct way to read a map. One's own map is as good as, or better than, a standardised map.

Yet, in a more contemporary instance, the city has been the merciless victim of filmic gentrification, literary romanticisation, and artistic reconfiguration, as images of the city have saturated popular culture, literature and art, leaving the (post)modern traveller with the burden of a postmodern *already-thereness*. In this sense, the experience of a place is always already tainted by preconception, by artwork and films we have seen, and by books we have read, that contribute, more or less modestly, to a preconceived notion of that city.

Consequently, contemporary tourists, who have been exposed to the long established artistic interpretations of a city in film, art, literature, and even music, may be more likely to experience new cities with a sense of *déjà vu*, as they recognise certain aspects of the city from dominating mediated images, but in an altered capacity. The city is always already penetrated and visited – the concept of having seen Paris without ever having been there. In this respect, many contemporary tourists have a habitual influence that may be difficult to resist, and a reality that, despite Alter and Debord's encouragement, is dismissed for what is familiar, known, and easy: hence, the tourist traps.

Following on from Alter's conception of phantasmagoria, theorist Pierre Bayard discusses what he calls "phantom books", the logic of which is useful for discussing tourism in a postmodern context. In his work *How to talk about books you haven't read* (2007), Bayard argues:

The books we talk about, in other words, are not just the actual books that would be uncovered in a complete and objective reading of the human library, but also phantom books that surface where the unrealised possibilities of each book meet our unconscious. These phantom books fuel our day dreams and conversation far more than the real objects that are theoretically their source (Bayard, 2007: 184).

In the same way that Bayard theorises on the nature of “phantom books”, we can theorise on the nature of the “phantom city”, an elusive, imagined city, which is conjured through a combination of speech and culture that precedes and supersedes reality. The source of the illusion itself, as Bayard argues, is understood as inferior to the illusion, much in the same way as Baudrillard’s conception of the territory and the map. In the same way that Alter writes of “shards of an ungraspable whole” (Alter, 2005: 30), Bayard writes that the phantom book “is that mobile and ungraspable object that we call into being, in writing or in speech, when we talk about a book” (Bayard, 2007: 184). Such is the way in which we create the urban environment, the phantom city. The classical notion of a phantom city, or ghost city, refers to those places and cities that have been abandoned, and have subsequently become haunted spaces. In this sense, the phantom city, in the context of this paper, is haunted by its ultimate inexistence, and the futile attempts by tourists to uncover it in alternate locations.

In light of this, Bayard postulates that it may indeed be better not to read a particular book at all in order to keep the phantom book intact. As such, keeping the imagined city intact would undoubtedly involve the tourists avoiding a particular city that they have idealised for the sake of preserving their own unique image as yet untarnished by reality. In contrast to the modernists, then, who developed their own city through direct experience, more contemporary tourists develop their own city through cultural images.

Evidently, avoiding a city does not work as well for the tourism industry and for tourists. The idea of keeping the phantom city intact by avoiding travelling to certain cities is not an appealing alternative. Instead, reactions to seeing the real city vary from satisfaction, where the experience equals the expectation; happiness, where the experience supersedes the expectation; complete disillusionment, where the experience fails to live up to the expectation, to defiance, where tourists obstinately seek alternative, often superficial locations to fulfil their expectations, as I will come to discuss.

Creating Cities

Films and television programs, as well as famous artworks¹, manipulate and romanticise the landscape of a city in various ways and on a much larger performative

¹ While mass mediated images have a significant effect on our perception of places, modernist artwork (as well as seventeenth and eighteenth century European art) is also a notable example of romanticising urban space. The rapid advancement of urban architecture in the twentieth century had a profound impact on Modernist painters. Impressionist paintings of the nineteenth century heavily romanticised urban spaces, while the Futurists in the early

platform than literature. The mass saturation of mediated images of an urban environment somewhat destabilises the emphasis on the individual drifter as creating their *own* city, and instead posits a collective – yet paradoxically individual – city formation based on recycled media images – through advertisements, films, and so on – of New York, London, Paris, or any other city considered famous on a global mediated scale (and therefore vulnerable to mass interpretation) through the wide distribution of American and/or European film and television.

One of the most notable European examples is the French/German produced *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), which remains the highest-grossing French language film released in the United States. Phil Hoad of *The Guardian* argues that “*Amélie*’s American jaunt confirmed this broadening appeal”, and moreover that:

Amélie was at heart an old-school export picture – packaging up iconic French culture (the Sacré-Coeur, Renoir, bistros, crème brûlée) as dutifully as an open-top bus tour. It relied on the tried-and-tested pull of beautifully photographed exotica that made *The Last Emperor* and *Cinema Paradiso* crossover darlings in the 80s (Hoad, 2011).

This romanticisation of the city’s most iconic landmarks throughout the film saw a boost in tourism in Paris in the decade that followed, and *Amélie* still remains one of the most popular tourist-appealing films.

This urban manipulation and/or decoration can also be achieved through the cinematography, the directing, editing, or even through film locations representing entirely different cities altogether. Woody Allen’s metropolitan-situated films are notable for their heightened sense of reality and romanticisation of space, namely in *Manhattan* (1979), *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), and *Midnight in Paris* (2011), each of which idealises features of New York, Barcelona, and Paris respectively, either through the use of black and white and/or golden-hued cinematography, and the purposeful depiction and inclusion of certain areas and landmarks over others. The cinematographer for *Midnight in Paris*, Darius Khondji, has been noted for creating what Allen has called a ‘warm ambience’ for the film. Allen states:

I like it intensely red, intensely warm, because if you go to a restaurant, and you’re there with your wife or your girlfriend, and it’s got red-flecked wallpaper and turn-of-the-century lights, you both look beautiful [...] So it looks nice. It’s very flattering and very lovely. And that’s the fundamental aesthetic for the camera work. The rest is that we try and move the camera, whenever possible, without it being too self-conscious to the viewers [...] That’s the fundamental

twentieth century are also notable for their depiction of the urban environment through speed and technology.

thing: that there's a warm ambience to it all. When I achieve that with a cameraman, then I like to use him again. And then if he's not busy, I always hire him if I can (Allen, 2011).

This warmth, similarly to *Amélie*, along with the romanticised treatment of famous landmarks and areas, serves to heighten the visual attraction of not just the film, but the idea of the city. Blogger Dan North commented on the cinematography of the film, stating: "The whole place has the yellow-gold saturation of other recent Woodies. Cinematographer Darius Khondji comes into his own every time there's a chance to light a scene with candles or the bulbs of a carousel" (North, 2012). Both the camera work and golden filters help to give the film an old-world view that audiences carry with them while simultaneously acknowledging its illusory nature and heightened sense of reality. Allen's romanticised treatment of the historical figures transfers over to his treatment of the city. As del Gizzo writes: "Allen wanted not Hemingway, but the idea of Hemingway as it circulates in popular culture as the confident, he-man of American letters" (del Gizzo, 2013: 7). Similarly, what Allen's movie produces and reflects is not Paris, but the idea of Paris as it also circulates throughout popular culture as the romantic city of lights. Del Gizzo furthermore observes that the film allowed viewers to "indulge in the vicarious thrill of meeting these famous figures" (del Gizzo, 2013: 6), and that "the wild popularity of the film and of the Hemingway character in particular reveals that there is a great deal of cultural affection for that image" (del Gizzo, 2013: 7). Indeed, there is a tendency for people to have more of a cultural affection for the idea or image of a city than the city itself, and Paris exemplifies this cultural attraction *par excellence*. This is because the cultural image of cities garnered through films, literature and/or art has so permeated popular culture that many accept the myth over the real, since 'fake' Paris gets as much publicity as its 'real' counterpart. And although there are those for whom the city more than meets or exceeds their expectations and who are not subject or vulnerable to pop cultural flights of fancy, inevitably many visitors to heavily mediated cities are, however modestly or significantly, susceptible to the kind of idealisation that comes from an over-saturation of media content and literary coverage.

As Brooke L. Blower writes of American tourists visiting Paris: "Americans, many claimed, had journeyed all the way across the ocean to "see Paris", and yet, for all their reliance on visual clues to get them around town, they remained practically blind when it came to discerning the capital's deeper complexities" (Blower, 2011: 85). She furthermore argues that "commentators frequently remarked that Paris was in fact two separate cities: one *étrangère* [a stranger], guided by mindlessness, hedonism, materialism, and *américanisme*, and the other healthy, quiet, sensible French"

(Blower, 2011: 85). Essentially, then, this cultural affection arises out of a seemingly materialistic preference for a familiar, albeit hyper-constructed, Paris.

But it is not just mediated content that promotes these visions of a 'better' Paris, in which the real somehow evades our capture. Indeed, literature propounded the myth of a 'real Paris' long before romanticised Hollywood movies got the chance, and in this instance much of the imagery of Paris was constructed in the minds of readers, an effort which has since been, to a significant extent, alleviated with the Hollywood industry's ability to construct their own visual version of Paris. In his review of American writer and journalist Janet Flanner's *Paris was Yesterday 1925-1939* (1972), published in the *Saturday Review*, Alex Szogyi wrote:

It would be intriguing to try to estimate the number of impressionable Americans whose idea of Paris has come through *The New Yorker's* "Letter from Paris," whose introduction to Paris was made formal through the notions of sophistication and chic, the smart values emanating from the osmosis of Janet Flanner's rich prose. More than a Gertrude Stein or a Sylvia Beach, more than a Scott Fitzgerald or a Hemingway, she has given nearly five decades of Americans the myth of Paris packaged in superbly wrought accounts of life in the city of cultural light (Szogyi, 1972: 56).

These discussions about touristic behaviour often centre on Americans in particular, which should not be surprising given that America is arguably the central hub of media and glamour, also factoring in its role in American modernist expatriate writing in the early twentieth century. Figures such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Ezra Pound brought back their own images of Paris, which, in large part, helped sculpt a vision of Paris many concede has receded into history but remains firmly engrained in contemporary imagination, as though somewhere in Paris today there exists remnants of not just the real, but the real of the past.

Because of this cultural distortion of cities, certain areas of the world are seen as possessing a more authentic resemblance to a tourist's imagined city than the real thing, and this sense of aesthetic appropriateness has been utilised by filmmakers whose films are often set in one location, but filmed in another. This, more than anything, has led to audiences relating to one setting more than another, and may subsequently disrupt their first experience of a particular city.

Famously, Francis Ford Coppola has used specific film locations around the world to represent an entirely different location, such as the Philippines representing Vietnam in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and the Dominican Republic representing Cuba in *The Godfather Part II* (1974). For Angelina Jolie's film *Unbroken* (2014), Sydney's suburb Blacktown was used as the setting for Berlin, while, in *Austin Powers 2: The*

Spy Who Shagged Me (Jay Roach, 1999), when Austin is driving with Felicity along the coast, he remarks: “You know, it’s remarkable how England looks in no way like Southern California”. This is a self-referential comment that relates to the fact that they are filming a scene in Southern California that is meant to be set in England. This moreover demonstrates how audiences are often ignorant of the actual film locations being used, and the difference between the film location and the location in which the film is set.

Glasgow (Scotland) has been used in a number of American films as a location to represent American cities, more recently in the films *World War Z* (Marc Forster, 2013) and *Cloud Atlas* (Tom Tykwer, Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski, 2012). *World War Z*, according to Nicola Balkind, “transformed George Square into an apocalyptic Philadelphia” (Balkind, 2013). She also notes that *Cloud Atlas*

...presented the city centre’s financial district south of Blythswood Square and around Montrose Street as 1970s San Francisco. Its steep hills and unassuming architecture provide the perfect backdrop for the vintage cars and trucks seen idling in nearby car parks along the south-west corner of the city centre (Balkind, 2013).

In this sense, a city such as Glasgow would be seen as looking more like San Francisco than San Francisco itself. While seemingly innocuous, this process of filming in a location separate to where the film is actually set undergirds the aesthetic inconsistencies both in the minds of filmmakers and audiences, who see different locations as being more aesthetically appropriate than the original location itself, which furthermore affects, however significantly, a person’s conception of any given city.

The cliché attributes and monuments that are said to define a city subsequently become the benchmark in representing that city, a fact that has been used in satirical instances. For instance, in the 2011 series finale of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, “Larry vs. Michael J Fox”, Larry David leaves New York for Paris to get out of a social occasion. Although his New York scenes are shot on location throughout the final season, the brief Paris scenes at the end of the final episode are filmed on set, with many of the iconic landmarks and traits of Paris visible in a single shot, with the Eiffel Tower behind Larry, who is walking just outside the Maison Rose along cobblestone steps. As with the in-joke in *Austin Powers*, this tongue-in-cheek portrayal of Paris, featuring the famous landmarks in close proximity, is an apt illustration of the way in which tourists habitually imagine the layout of a particular city before visiting. This particular aspect of imagined geographies is characterised by the imagined close proximity of

famous landmarks, in which the representation of a city makes it seem as though all of the famous landmarks are proximate to each other. In the same way that tourists may imagine Central Park to be in close proximity to Staten Island and the Rockefeller Centre, they may also perceive the Eiffel Tower as being in close proximity to the Sacré Coeur and the Arc de Triomphe, since these are the features that are most often depicted in films set in those cities, with no geographical context to clarify the mapping and formation of the real city.

Counterfeit Cities: An Agreeable Alternative?

In many instances, tourists disillusioned with a real city do not merely come to terms with the disintegration of an imagined city in the face of reality, but find refuge in mock-up cities that have been developed in recent years in order to cater to tourists looking for a fake experience of a particular city that is seen to better represent their initial conceptions of a well-known city.

Although Umberto Eco has called Disneyland the hyperreal landscape incarnate, there are several places around the world that have constructed ‘fake’ cities to appease tourists looking not for authenticity, but for *simulated* authenticity. China provides the greatest touristic indulgence with its fake cities monuments, satisfying tourists with an idealised version of a city. China has its own Venice, which features man-made canals, as well as its own version of Paris, built in the town of Tianducheng (Hangzhou, Zhejiang province), complete with a replica of the Eiffel Tower (among the thirty other Eiffel Tower replicas around the world). Also situated in China, outside of Shanghai, is Thames Town, modelled after an archetypal English town, a place that will eventually house residents. As Brian Lonsway writes, the town is “aesthetically modelled on the style of traditional English architecture” (Lonsway, 2009: 95). Lonsway writes that Thames Town is “one of the nine new towns planned by the Shanghai Municipal Government since 2001 to relieve the pressures of its growing population. Each of these nine new towns is based on the design styles and principles of another country, another time period, or both” (Lonsway, 2009: 95). Thames Town, he elaborates, will eventually house 8000 residents, and includes “an Anglican-styled church, kindergarten, school, health clinic, cultural centre, and supermarket” (Lonsway, 2009: 95). Like Disneyland, locations such as these are a curious blend of both realistic physical structures and blatant inauthenticity in their reference to already-existing cities, indeed, an homage to the original. What makes Thames Town more significant than other fake cities/spaces is that it will actually be a residence, conjuring images of what Britain is ‘supposed’ to look like via popular films and television programs, while being situated in China.

Similarly to Las Vegas and its collection of assorted world monuments, including The Venetian, another man-made Venice, these constructions deliberately heighten the experience of these cities and their monuments in a way that is seen to rival the authentic, non-romanticised experience. In these instances, the fake not only seems real, in Eco's estimation, but becomes preferential to the real for certain tourists, who recognise the trademark characteristics of the fake as opposed to the real, which departs from the mediated experience through film and television. As Gilmore and Pine note, discussing The Venetian, some tourists "prefer the obviously fake Venetian to the seemingly real Venice" (Gilmore and Pine, 2007: 84). Yet, they also note: "People know the places differ not just in degree but in kind. But for those who do see The Venetian as authentic, it's generally because they see it referentially *honouring* Venice, albeit in that unique Las Vegas way, just as Venice today referentially honours the Venice of the past in its own unique way" (Gilmore and Pine, 2007: 84, author's emphasis). Indeed, Stephanie Hom similarly remarks: "Millions of tourists come to Las Vegas to see the fake. From a replica of the Eiffel Tower to one of a medieval castle, the fake is the hallmark of the Vegas experience. To experience the fake is to experience authentic Las Vegas" (Hom, 2015: 161).

The difference, however, between the real city and the idealised fake city is illustrated in the thirteenth episode of season three of *Sex and the City*, titled "Escape from New York". In this episode, Carrie and her friends travel from New York to LA. At the Warner Brothers Studio, after leaving her meeting with Matthew McConaughey, Carrie stumbles onto a film set of New York City, complete with the familiar buildings and street lamps. Carrie sits smoking on the steps of a fake building, a standard but otherwise iconic image of New York with the front steps of the apartment buildings. The scene captures the stereotypical ideal of a city, in comparison to what is seen as the disappointment of the real.

The tourist industry has always appealed to tourists seeking film locations, yet in recent years this trend has intensified as tourists are eager to visit fake places in real settings. The 500px ISO website² features a compilation of 25 fictional places that tourists can visit in real life, including Bilbo Baggins' home in Hobbiton, from *Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001), in Matamata, New Zealand, and the Overlook Hotel from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), whose exterior shots were filmed at the Timberline Lodge in Mount Hood in Oregon. These instances illustrate the extent to which tourists are increasingly eager to engage with fake or simulated sets and areas as

² <https://iso.500px.com/fictional-places-in-real-life/>

opposed to reality, as the fake is seen as comforting and closer to a tourist's expectations, even when the tourist is well aware of this deception.

Siegfried Kracauer argued that this psychological construction of cities is so far removed from reality that tourists may increasingly extricate themselves from reality for the sake of the fake. He states:

This relativising of the exotic goes hand in hand with its banishment from reality—so that sooner or later the romantically inclined will have to agitate for the establishment of fenced-in nature preserves, isolated fairy-tale realms in which people will still be able to hope for experiences that today even Calcutta is hardly able to provide (Kracauer, 1995: 66).

Contemporary tourism, therefore, has become increasingly defined by a sense of willing deception on the tourist's behalf. Disillusioned by romanticised images in films and television, a significant number of tourists have, as Kracauer has noted, opted out of reality for the sake of a more appealing simulated reality where urban environments are concerned. Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* discusses this phenomenon of staged authenticity and intimacy, arguing that tourists "commonly take guided tours of social establishments because they provide easy access to areas of the establishment ordinarily closed to outsiders" (MacCannell, 1999: 98). But MacCannell also notes that "what is being shown to tourists is not the institutional back stage, as Goffman defined this term. Rather, it is a *staged back region*, a kind of living museum for which we have no analytical terms" (MacCannell, 1999: 99).

Thus, it would be appropriate to argue that the industry has experienced a boom in Fake Tourism, where fictional places from films, or fictional mock-ups of real monuments and cities, are being constructed and visited by eager tourists who wish to engage with the fake city which is seen as better able to appeal to their initial visions of a particular city. This is not to say that audiences are completely unaware of, or in fact all disillusioned with, the realities of certain cities – in point of fact, many might find it a novel and enjoyable experience –, but that between the fake and the real, the fake may often prove more popular amongst tourists who have been exposed to and influenced by Americanised visions of global cities.

Post-tourism

In recent years, studies on tourism have witnessed the emergence of the term "post-tourist", to denote a movement away from the pretence of authenticity by which the tourism industry previously abided. In its stead, the post-tourist is aware of this inauthentic experience, acknowledging the physical and psychological comforts of deception. In Smith, Macleod and Robertson's words, the post-tourist is one "who

embraces openly, but with some irony, the increasingly inauthentic, commercialised and simulated experiences offered by the tourism industry” (Smith, Macleod and Robertson, 2010: 129). Moreover, as Michal Albrecht writes in his 2008 work *Fake Plastic Trees: Authenticity in Contemporary Popular Media Culture*:

The notion of the post-tourist allows for the proliferation of levels of reproduction to stand in for an “original”, and allows for the possibility that such an experience can compete with or even eclipse the enjoyment of experiencing the original. Many less adventurous tourists would much rather experience India from the comfort of their hometown than taking an actual trip to the sub-continent. Ethnic dining offers the promise of being able to consume a little piece of the real. However, the post-tourist knows even this is a spurious promise, and he or she instead turns to an embracement of the artifice rather than a condemnation of it (Albrecht, 2008: 163-164).

Moreover, Albrecht notes that the post-tourist “is one who has forsaken the idea of attaining a truly authentic experience through tourism” (Albrecht, 2008: 163-164). John Urry and Jonas Larsen concur with this concept, arguing that post tourists delight in the pleasure of the inauthentic tourist experience, and, more importantly, they are aware “that there is no authentic tourist experience” (Urry and Larsen, 1990: 13). For Albrecht, the post-tourist “does not seek to experience an authentic time or place away from the trappings of modernity through tourism; instead, he or she is simply seeking experiences that are outside of his or her daily life” (Albrecht, 2008: 164).

What these sentiments illustrate is the extent to which the tourist no longer has aspirations of engaging in or experiencing reality. “Post-tourism” thus seems to be less associated with the ideal or promise of reality that traditional tourism often relies on, and focuses more on simulated reality. Importantly, in his discussion of Disneyland, Baudrillard (1994) distinguishes between the real real, the fake real, the real fake, and the fake fake. For this paper, the real real is the real city that fails to live up to the tourist’s expectations, while the fake real is the inauthentic masquerading as real. We can understand the real fake as those destinations deliberately set up as fake. Debbie Lisle discusses the problematic notion of the real, arguing:

The myth of modern tourism is centred on the possibility of encountering authentic difference – seeing the “real” Bali, engaging with the “real” Spaniards, having “real” adventures by getting off the beaten track [...] But as tourism became a truly global industry in the 1990s, that myth of authenticity became more difficult to maintain. As every part of the globe became quickly commodified and re-designed for the enjoyment of global tourists, the “real” soon disappeared into a staged, mediated and “fake” version of itself [...] It is not the case that only intrepid travellers can access the “real” while passive tourists

are content with the “fake” – in the global theme park, there is no difference between the real and the fake, between the authentic and the staged, and indeed, between the tourist and the traveller (Lisle, 2007: 335).

Lisle notes that the only “real” that remains in a global setting is in conflict and war zones, places affiliated with death and violence. In short, she says, “tourists are motivated to see places like Belfast, Beirut and Cambodia because these are the *only places left* where it is possible to experience an unmediated and authentic encounter with “the real” (Lisle, 2007: 335).

In essence, then, narratives of tourism abide by the notion that the ‘real’ did, at some stage, and in some location, exist, whether as a physical location or actual state of mind, usually belonging to the ungraspable past. With the huge expanse of global tourism in the 1990s, coinciding with the proliferation of films set in famous cities, the demand for the ‘real’ followed a rather paradoxical pattern: while some tourists vainly sought to encounter the ‘real’, others acknowledged the futility of such a task, finding their own sense of reality in the fake masquerading as real. Such a development works alongside the notion that, as Urry and Larsen (1990: 13) previously noted, there is no authentic tourist experience. What the fake offers, then, is something more closely related to the fake that is seen within the film, within literature or within art, because it is constructed very much in the same way. For these tourists, the fake better resembles the ‘real city’ as found in popular media and literature, for its appeal to simplicity, predictability, colour, cleanliness, attractiveness, ease, and effortlessness. The allure of the fake has its origins in the media that produced it, whether through a film, book, piece of music or artwork; the hyperreal reality as seen in these artefacts is to be found not in reality but in the fake real, something that the real real just cannot offer.

Although there are those who are unable or, more accurately, unwilling to observe the difference between the cultural representation of a city and the city itself, audiences on the whole appear to be aware of this disparity when travelling; yet, this does not necessarily indicate that they, too, are not affected by the difference when they actually encounter a well-advertised city. Eco and Baudrillard’s starkly postmodern conception of the fake replacing reality notwithstanding, audiences readily acknowledge popular culture’s distortion of reality where the urban environment is concerned. Yet, the fundamental aspect that determines a tourist’s relationship to the real city, and the rise in fake tourism, is more about the vicarious thrill, as del Gizzo (2013) has noted, in indulging in the illusion, in the allure of the fake. Thus, these imagined cities are not sustained in any real sense, except as an innocuous indulgence for tourists who, for the most part, are at least partly aware of these cultural deceptions, of which they are often willing participants.

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