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Narratives of place and self

Differing experiences of package

coach tours in New Zealand

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abstract This article addresses narratives of place and self as they are constructed in the context of package tours. Based on participant observation and interview research conducted on two eight-day coach tours aimed at different age groups, the discussion explores the self-performances of tourists while participating in sightseeing tours in New Zealand. The research showed that the narratives that tour participants either brought with them or generated in interaction while on tour were based on a complex set of meanings regarding place and self. For the older tour group, visiting New Zealand brought some closure to aspects of their lives that had been unresolved, but their experiences also served to heighten their sense of nearing mortality. For the other group, visiting New Zealand on this particular group tour aimed at young people was an opening to new aspects of their identity. This research thus challenges previous conceptualizations of package coach tourism which have not allowed for the multiple ways in which touring experiences serve to write not only touring selves but also toured places.

keywords *coach tours; narrative; New Zealand; performance; place; self*

Introduction

This article explores narratives of place and self as they are constructed in the context of package tours of New Zealand. Much of the research into coach tours thus far has taken a consumer behaviour approach to look at tour members' motivations, expectations and satisfaction levels. Such studies have concluded that the key motivation for people to undertake coach tours is to see and acquire knowledge of the place they are touring (Geva and Goldman, 1989; Dunn-Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991; Duke and Persia, 1996). Some studies have also considered the social interaction motivation for taking guided group tours, but they too have understood this social element as being only supplementary to seeing and learning about the tour environment (Quiroga, 1990; Duke and Persia, 1996; Oliver, 2000). It is assumed in these studies that the main purpose

of tours is to see as many of the iconic sights of a destination as possible within a short period of time (Quiroga, 1990; Baloglu and Shoemaker, 2001), particularly in the case of long-haul visitors to a destination (Enoch, 1996).

An analysis of the socio-cultural contents of package tours, undertaken by Enoch (1996), found certain characteristics that are common to all package tours. These characteristics are: that they are a rational and effective way of visiting the largest number of sites in a limited time; that they are usually less expensive than an equivalent individual trip; that the tourist purchases a pre-designed itinerary; and that the package tour is not flexible – that once chosen, the tour has to progress exactly according to plan. As Enoch states, ‘the client cannot alter the package en route; indeed it is the contractual duty of the tour operator to ensure that the tourist receives everything exactly as it was promised in the printed material describing the tour’ (p. 601).

It is this point regarding the inflexibility of tours that forms the basis of critiques of package tours. Because of the tempo and rigidity of the guided tour, it has been argued that the package tourist has to make a total ‘commitment to the overall structure and to role-consistency’ (Schmidt, 1979: 446). This idea extends to the argument that, because of the nature of the package tour, package tourists operate in an environmental bubble and never actually interact with, and hence really visit, the places they travel to (Boorstin, 1964; Cohen, 1972; Ritzer, 1993). As well as existing in the academic literature on tourism, this position also has a strong presence in New Zealand’s tourism industry, with Tourism New Zealand, the main tourism promotional body, currently directing an explicit marketing campaign towards what it calls the ‘Interactive Traveller’. It is argued that this type of traveller, the one who travels independently of packaged coach tours, is the one who really interacts with New Zealand the place.

Two alternative formulations thus exist concerning packaged sightseeing tours. One is that the main purpose of guided tours is to allow the visitor to see and learn about as much of the visited place as possible within a limited amount of time. The other is that the structure and inflexibility of the packaged coach tour is limiting to the tourist experience of place and renders the tourist passive to the ‘environmental bubble’ of the tour itself. It is this dichotomous nature of the literature, and of the tourism industry itself, that is considered in this article to be insufficient in that it does not allow for the multiple narratives of place and self that might possibly be enacted by tourists themselves while on tour. Moreover, the focus in these conceptualizations is on whether or not packaged coach tourists achieve a ‘full’ experience of the places they visit. In this, both the touring self and toured places are viewed as fixed, rather than as contingent upon the expectations and performances of those touring.

Indeed, recent theorizations of the place–experience–self dynamic have instead taken our understanding of experiences and meanings of toured landscapes as depending largely on our understanding of the subject positions and identity formations of both the toured and the touring self (Cartier, 2005). As

such, toured places and touring selves become dynamic, contested and multiple, and tourist experiences are complex and unstable: 'tourist places and performances are about admitting the incompleteness of experiences and places' (Coleman and Crang, 2002: 10). Not only are tourist places 'stages' for the enactment of tourist performances (Edensor, 2001), but tourist performances in turn serve to continuously (re)construct tourist places.

Moreover, as Whiting and Whiting (2004) remind us, tourist places are also transitional zones which permit new aspects of the touring self to be performed. This is because travelling to tourist places allows the traveller to achieve a sense of physical and psychological distance from routine and the familiar. Similarly, Neumann (1992) has talked about journeys as being opportunities to 'embody different dimensions of existence through self-presentation' (p. 180), in that they allow the tourist to acquire experiences that become the basis for self-discovery and transformation. For Neumann the self-making aspect of tourist places is due to tourist sites being places where people must creatively make meanings in order to situate themselves in relation to the public spectacle others have made: in tourist performances 'the tourist site and the individual are integrated through narratives that mutually inform and energize each other' (p. 180). Edensor (1998), too, argues that narration is a form of performance which is especially pertinent to tourism, since tourists perform specific narratives of self at symbolic places in order to situate themselves in relation to the symbolic qualities associated with the site.

Much of the research that has thus far highlighted the multiplicity, incompleteness and constitutive aspects of tourist experiences has, however, focused on individual travellers or backpackers (for example, Neumann, 1992; Elsrud, 2001; Uriely et al., 2002; Tucker, 2003; Noy, 2004; Shaffer, 2004; Whiting and Whiting, 2004). It is perhaps assumed that these tourists are more capable and indeed more in search of the sort of inward and outward journeys that contribute to the ongoing production of self. As noted earlier, the structure and inflexibility of more 'packaged' modes of touring are generally considered to be limiting to tourist experience and not permitting of multiple narrative performances. This article thus turns the focus more closely on this particular touring context by exploring the self-performances of tourists while participating in sightseeing coach tours of New Zealand. The discussion is based on research involving participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted on two eight-day packaged sightseeing tours of New Zealand's South Island.

The two tours studied were operated by companies explicitly aimed at different tourist age groups; one aimed at the 18–35 age group and the other at the over 55s. The tours both had similar routes and nodes, following the main South Island tourism circuit around the mostly 'natural' iconic sites (Forer and Pearce, 1984; Becken, 2005). The tour aimed at the younger group had 42 passengers with approximately a third each coming from Australia, North America and northern Europe (who were mostly from the UK). There were also two people from South Africa and one from South Korea in the group. They ranged

in age from 19 to 37 years, but the majority were in their mid- to late-20s. Thirty-one out of the 42 passengers had come on the tour by themselves, and the remainder had come on tour with friends, their partner or a sibling. The 25 participants in the tour aimed at the elderly group were all British. Approximately two-thirds had come with their spouse and the remainder as single participants.

The research took an ethnographic approach in order to allow for an in-depth investigation both of the ways in which tourists perform place and self on tour and of the narratives constructed to organize and add meaning to their experiences. In this I take, like Elsrud (2001), tourist acts or performances and tourists' tales of their touring to be 'meaningful symbols with which the travellers make statements about their identities' (p. 598). By observing on-tour performances and also collecting performances of tour narratives through interviews, the research was aimed at gaining an understanding of the narratives that tourists on tour construct and enact in order to assign meaning and significance to their experiences of touring New Zealand. It was intended that such an understanding of these narratives would, as Neumann (1992) states, 'reveal how culture and identity become incorporated through travel, the kind of selves people find and lose while away from home, how identities are made as people confront others, and the peculiar and paradoxical ways that everyday life reappears as people seek to escape in their journeys' (p. 178).

For the research I undertook overt participant observation on two eight-day tours of the South Island by becoming a paying passenger and joining the tours at their South Island departure points at a Christchurch hotel. Both of the tours had already spent approximately 10 days touring the North Island. Letting my fellow passengers know of my research intentions allowed me to have pointed conversations with people throughout the tour, but being a fellow passenger allowed me also to interact with and observe the tourists' performances as well as the tour managers'/driver-guides' performances *in situ*. I took notes constantly throughout the tour, writing down as much as possible of the on-tour commentary, and also what tour participants said and did. I also, during the last two days of the tours, conducted audio-recorded interviews with as many passengers as would volunteer about their reasons for coming on the tour and their experiences on the tour. I also interviewed the tour managers. The interviews and on-tour field notes were then transcribed and analysed by looking for recurring themes and sets of meaning.

Tourists' narratives of place and self

18–35s tour

In interviews, the stated motivation and experience of the young tourists taking the tour was a complex mix of multiple narratives. Some of those interviewed mentioned the beautiful scenery of New Zealand as a reason for coming, while

others did not identify any particular attributes associated with New Zealand – the place – apart from it being ‘a place people just want to come to’. Some did refer to the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the way that it promoted for them a romantic vision of the ‘spectacular mountain views’ and ‘very unspoiled natural beauty’. When describing their touring experience, some commented on how well organized the tour was and how they had managed to see so much in a limited amount of time. Some also mentioned that they had learned a lot during the commentary from the knowledgeable tour manager. Their touring narratives thus often echoed the ideas put forward in the literature on packaged tours, described earlier, that the purpose of tours is to see as much of the visited destination as possible. One interviewee said, ‘You don’t want to stay in one place. The whole point is to go and see the whole thing . . . I’m sorry New Zealand, but you are a long way from everywhere, and when you come that far, you’re going to make damn well sure you’re gonna say you’ve done the whole lot’. There is a slight shift in emphasis here, however, from the tour enabling the tourist to ‘see the whole thing’ to enabling the tourist to be in a position to ‘say’ that they have done the whole lot. We are reminded again here that ‘journeys become the opportunity to acquire experiences that become the basis for the production of identity and are revealed through the narratives that emerge from travel experiences’ (Neumann, 1992: 179).

Just as has been discussed in association with backpacker and other ‘adventure’ travel (Elsrud, 2001; Uriely et al., 2002; Noy, 2004; Whiting and Whiting, 2004), the coach touring experience, rather than being focused on place *per se*, represents a complex and fragile reconstitution of self. For instance, this young group were able to enhance their sense of self through partaking in adrenalin-rush activities during the tour. This was in line with the narrative of New Zealand as an invigorating destination which offers adrenalin-rush activities amidst spectacular natural scenery (Cloke and Perkins, 1998; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2002). Most of the people on the tour took part in at least one of the ‘extreme’ activities on offer such as parachuting or bungee jumping. These activities would clearly serve as social identity enhancers both within the tour group and after these young people returned home.

Other aspects of being on tour, however, were considered by some tour participants to negatively constitute self: ‘Frankly, I’m embarrassed of it some places we go to being part of a tour because, it’s just like I feel like I’m cheapening the experience’. For this person, this particular way of performing tourism was compromising of his relationship with place and thus compromising of self. The same interviewee continued:

I’ve never taken a tour before . . . I’m much more an independent backpacker, and um, what I’d heard from friends who had been through New Zealand, is it’s not very easy to get from place to place . . . I hadn’t even considered a tour until I talked to a friend of mine who’d come here, taken this exact same tour and she raved about it, um, and it took actually some convincing because I was kind of dead set against the tour lifestyle.

This account by a man from the USA expresses the idea that he is usually above taking a tour because he does not require the management and organization by others that a tour entails. A British man conveyed a similar idea:

I'd never done a coach tour before and I've now realized . . . that a coach tour has to appeal to the lowest common denominator. And in that sense I also didn't appreciate that coach tours are perhaps, um, appealing to those who aren't able to organize themselves very well, and actually like to be, ah cosseted along the way, and indeed some of them are so much so, that they don't actually have to think at all. So, I'm having a . . . sort of mental tension as to whether coach tours are for me, because I can organize myself. But it was the only way, within two weeks, it was the only feasible way by myself to get to see the country.

These comments were from people who were at the older end of the age bracket of the tour. Unlike many of the younger members of the group, they were already experienced in independent overseas travel, and thus describe being somewhat caught out by friends' ill-advice to undertake a coach tour. Interestingly, these people were the first members of this tour group to come forward and volunteer themselves for an interview, suggesting that they perhaps saw the interview as an opportunity to engage with an anti-tourist discourse (Buzard, 1993; Munt, 1994; Elsrud, 2001; Tucker, 2003) and thereby perform a non-tourist identity. By explaining and excusing their participation in the tour, they were able to address the tensions experienced between the multiple possibilities for their touring selves.

The most common narrative presented in interviews with the young group, however, showed that coming on this particular tour – with a group of 40 other people at a similar life stage – clearly developed and enhanced these young persons' sense of 'social self'. The main emphasis in the tourists' accounts of the trip was on the point that they had come on tour with this particular tour company and were with this particular group of people. A young English woman explained, 'It sort of seemed like a good idea to spend X amount to spend two weeks with a group of people, so it's the getting to know people factor, whilst having fun, and visiting lots of places on the way'. Similarly, when asked why he came on the tour, an Australian man answered, 'Um, just the social side of it, and meeting new people side of it, you know, just, it would be more fun than doing it on my own. That is without doubt. And I'm not aware of any other companies that do it so . . . that's why I chose them, yeah'. Another Australian said that he had done two tours with this tour company before, one in the UK and the other in eastern Europe, and had met some of his best friends on those tours. This was his third tour with the company and he said that he would definitely do another one in the future, but he did not know where. His comment suggests that the tour experience provided by this particular company is more important than the experiences he had *of* the particular place(s) being toured. The tour destinations thus become places which simply provide the stage for these group performances to occur.

The experience provided by this particular company is that of an intense social cohesion with a group of similar aged people. An Australian brother and sister interviewed commented on how well the tour manager(s) helped the group to gel together: 'They get everyone involved with everything, which is good. Everyone pretty much interacts with everyone...so, yeah, I was pretty impressed'. An American man also commented that a lot of the activities they had done on the tour were things you would tend to do in groups anyway, so it was good to be travelling in a ready-made group to do everything with. Besides the practicalities of being on a group tour, the sense of social cohesion among the group became very strong and being a member of the group a key part of the tour experience. The younger British woman initially purchased only the North Island section of the tour and was planning to travel on her own in the South Island. However, when the tour reached Christchurch, the point where she would depart on her own, she decided to continue with the group for the South Island tour:

It's because like, where you guys were going to be going I wanted to go anyway, and I had really enjoyed the group and, I just think it's a shame to leave after a week. I mean it probably works out slightly cheaper that I went and did it with the group. It's more fun, when you're with it, and you've been together for a week and, so I thought 'why not'. And carried on for the extra week, and I'm glad I have.

While adding the justifications of cost and that the tour was going where she wanted to go anyway, this woman's main reason for staying on the tour for the second week was that she did not want to leave the group. Her membership of the group took priority. This, together with the Australian man's comment that he had met some of his best friends 'through this tour company', clearly highlights the way that the strong social cohesion of the tour group contributes to these young persons' sense of who they are.

Being part of the group was integral to the way in which these tourists performed touring New Zealand. On the morning that the tour of the South Island started, we departed the Christchurch hotel and were driven to Cathedral Square in the centre of Christchurch for one and a half hours of free time in the city. There were a few new people who had just joined the tour (myself being one of them), but about 30 people had already toured the North Island together for the previous week. It was immediately apparent how strong the group bond was because, rather than exploring the city in any way, all of the people who had been on the North Island tour spent the one and a half hours hanging around, drinking take-away coffees and chatting in one area of the Square. 'Exploring' the city beyond the square would inevitably involve splitting from the group, and so the best way for them to perform tourism in the city *as a group* was to stay in one spot and wait to get back into the coach where they would again feel safely contained with no risk of the group splitting.

Once back on the coach and heading out of Christchurch towards the Southern Alps, the 'day song' was put on the coach stereo system and (almost)

everyone got up and danced in the aisle. A little later the tour manager invited the new people joining the group to come to the front of the coach and introduce themselves. As well as giving brief biographical details, they each had to tell of their most embarrassing moment ever, and each also had to state whether or not they were looking for 'action' (implied sexual action) on the tour. The tour proceeded during the following days in a similar way. On the coach, there was frequent dancing in the aisle, watching videos, Battle-of-the-Sexes competitions, and 'in-group' jokes performed, such as asking the trainee tour manager on board increasingly ridiculous questions.

Activities inside the coach very much depended on what was occurring outside of the coach, however. For instance, at certain times when the tour manager was asked if we could watch a movie on the coach, she would not allow it because we had to look at the scenery on that particular route instead. This highlights the interesting power dynamics occurring between the tour management and the tour participants on this tour, and these are discussed in depth elsewhere (Tucker, forthcoming). It also shows how the coach becomes a complex mix of events occurring simultaneously both inside and outside. As Oliver (2000) points out, 'the environment of the coach tour is complex, presenting internal and external space, which coexist and rapidly change' (p. 323). On this tour, what we were passing outside significantly influenced tourist performances inside the coach, so that when we were passing what were considered to be scenically 'boring' areas, such as the Canterbury plains and the rural farmlands of Southland, the internal space of the coach became the focus of attention and performances were centred on group dynamics.

In contrast, when the coach was driving through particularly scenic landscapes, the tourists' performances were turned to appreciation of place. At these times the tour manager refused to put movies on, and she also instructed the group, even those who were hung-over, not to sleep. In order to actually prevent them from sleeping the tour manager would give a continuous commentary through the microphone on passing flora and fauna, or Maori mythology in connection with particular landscapes (one of her areas of expertise), so that the group had little option but to listen to her and gaze through the window at the landscape outside. Because of the volume of the commentary, it was difficult during these periods to conduct another, separate conversation, or even to read, although newly formed couples did continue to cuddle into each other in their seats and 'unruly' cliques at the back of the bus continued to fool around and giggle.

Throughout the tour, a lot of concern was given to where people sat on the coach, about who sat next to whom and who was in the back section of the coach where the main 'in' clique that had formed usually sat. At the places where we stopped for lunch or for short sightseeing periods, there was very little wandering away from the group to explore, again showing that the group remained dominant. Similarly, in the overnight stop places, people generally stayed together drinking in the hotel bar and, during the 'free time' in

Queenstown, there was a lot of concern about what each other was doing and obvious fear of missing out on being where the main hub of the group was. All of these performances were, of course, similar to the ones these young people might perform in their everyday lives at home: forming friendships and cliques, flirting, watching videos/TV, getting drunk, disco-dancing and sleeping. Neumann (1992), too, has noted how it is that 'elements of the everyday world often reappear as a basis for the value and meaning of travel' (p. 194). Indeed, for this young group, the internal space of the coach even resembled that of the classroom, with the unruly cliques sitting in the back rows and defying the tour manager/teacher who always stayed at the front.

We must remember, however, that the seduction of tourist places is always based on *difference* (Oakes, 2005), and so the fact that these young people chose to carry out these everyday activities in a place away from home is of course significant. The particular way that this place far away from home is constructed on this tour is exemplified most clearly in the answer one of the youngest in the group gave when asked why she had wanted to visit New Zealand: 'It's a cool place to go'. The point that this young woman was English fits with other British and North American tour members who emphasized New Zealand's geographical position as being about as far as they could travel from home. New Zealand is thus positioned as a 'cool', identity-enhancing place to travel to. As Whiting and Whiting (2004) note, also, touring places which are physically and psychologically distant allows tourists the freedom to perform 'other' identities and reveal new aspects of self. For this young group, then, the tour in this distant place was an opportunity to enhance the self through meeting new people, socializing, having fun, and possibly having sexual relationship(s). Rather than emphasizing any particular elements of the destination, these tourists' performances emphasized the opening to and formation of new aspects of self.

55-plus tour

For the older group, New Zealand as the place of the tour was more apparent than it was for the younger group. In their interview transcripts, New Zealand the place was woven in various ways into their life story, and they talked about the meaning that the place held within their life story. One couple, for example, spoke about how their daughter, who recently died, had visited New Zealand years before: 'Twenty-one years ago she came. She kept a fantastic diary, which we didn't know about really until she died, but then once we decided we were going to come here, it's um . . .'. Another woman spoke about the connection that her deceased father had with New Zealand:

Well, I, I've always known about New Zealand because my father, many years ago, was in the navy and he used to sail in here . . . and all the farming and sheep shearing and things like that, and of course they decided that, they said to him now you're retiring on your next leave so he said yes I am, and they offered him the job here. Which would have been very nice, but ah, I had a grandma that lost her husband in the mines when she was quite young. In those days you always used to look after your,

your mother, or your father, see? So when Dad came home on leave, I'm still not born, he asked my Gran whether they would emigrate. Well of course Granny wouldn't. So he used to say to me, you, if it wasn't for Granny saying no, you would have been born in New Zealand. And I've often thought about New Zealand and then, oh a few weeks before we came, Margaret said to me, ah would you share a room with me Barbara to go to New Zealand, and of course it triggered in my mind, I thought, well Daddy I'll get there in the end. I'm 77 but I got there!

Other people had relatives who had emigrated to New Zealand and they themselves had thought about doing the same:

I've got a nephew who lives here but he's only lived here a few years. So, a bit of it was to come and see him which, I shall see him on the way home, but I wanted to see the country, because my husband actually wanted to emigrate here years ago. And he got all the forms and I wouldn't go because of Mum and Dad but I, which is I think, it's difficult, it's difficult. But I just wanted to see.

All of these stories reveal the meaning that New Zealand holds within the life stories of these tour participants. By eventually travelling there, they were achieving some closure to certain aspects of their lives that had remained unresolved. For them, New Zealand is constructed as a place they 'have to see before they die', and so their travelling the long journey to and touring the country connects with their sense of nearing mortality. As one woman said, 'So you know I felt that I would be missing out if I didn't you know try, um, I've been thinking about it for quite a while, I just didn't bite the bullet until last year when I, I, I've got to do something, if I wait too long it'll be too late'. Similarly, another couple, who had the added incentive of being able to visit a son living in Auckland, said, 'Well, we did think that perhaps, due to what future circumstances might be, um health and monetary, whatever, we may not be able to make it again, so we want to make as much use of our time as possible and see as much as we could'.

The knowledge that this would be their only opportunity to visit New Zealand was thus highly significant in the seductions of this place for them (Cartier, 2005), and thus their performances of place. They felt compelled not only to 'make as much use of their time there as possible', but also to 'enjoy every day': 'We've seen some beautiful parts of the country, haven't we, just lovely, and I think this is, this is super. I think New Zealand, that is something special that we've seen, and because we'll never see it again being old, we have enjoyed every day and just can't fault it'.

The sense of nearing mortality these elderly tourists had connected directly with their appreciation of and experience of place. The awareness that they would never see this place again became most intense during the spectacularly scenic drive into Milford Sound which was portrayed as the pinnacle of the tour. Along this route most people stopped chatting and everyone gazed out of the coach window apparently deep in thought. Unlike the younger group described earlier, this group did not require the on-tour commentary to keep

them focused on scenery outside the coach. On their own volition, they appeared to enter deep into their own personal world. The atmosphere on the coach was quiet and intense and the tour manager told me that one of his colleagues at this point of the tour often starts off some of the tourists crying by playing 'What a Wonderful World' on the stereo. Such experiences of place bring a heightened awareness to elderly tourists that they will be leaving this 'wonderful world' all too soon. Not only, then, does the self serve to write their performances of heightened appreciation of place, but their experience of place in turn serves to re-emphasize and heighten their sense of mortal self.

Simultaneous to this uncomfortable place-self experience, however, these tourists described finding solace in the experience of 'New Zealand as pastoral paradise'. For example, the couple who had come to meet the friends of their late daughter said,

It's been, you know, refreshing to come to New Zealand and to find out how friendly people are. I haven't seen any aggro or unpleasantness . . . There's not as much of it as England has . . . it's not only in the big cities at home, it's everywhere. And it's nice to be here and, it's reassuring . . . And the way of life, I mean, we couldn't come out here to live because it's too far away from family, and at our age, that's important, family. But it's very attracting . . . It's gentler . . . a more natural way of life.

This account reveals a view of home (the UK) as a place troubled by violence. Other similar accounts portrayed the UK as polluted and over-crowded. Even those from rural parts of the UK had recently experienced the foot and mouth outbreak and so there was a feeling that the patches of rural paradise that had existed in England were recently ruined. By performing this narrative of New Zealand as pastoral paradise compared with home, these elderly tour participants were able to use their visit to New Zealand to help them feel okay again about the world, that not all was lost. Just as Neumann (1992) has argued that the travelled 'physical landscape intersects with the landscape of the mind' (p. 199), Richards (1994), too, has noted that a person's feeling 'at one with the land' is connected to their feeling 'at home with oneself' (pp. 52-3). Although these elderly British tourists had travelled a long distance from home to conduct this tour, New Zealand was constituted as a place which is also home, a place they could feel at one with and thus a place where they could feel at home with the self.

The drawing connection and comparison of New Zealand with home was a key aspect of these elderly tourists' performances on tour. They photographed the London double-decker bus that circulates the small Otago town of Arrowtown, and remarks were frequently made such as 'It's just like the rolling countryside of Sussex' and 'This is very wet, very wet. It's like South Wales, very wet and very green'. There were frequent comments made en route about how tidy the countryside was kept compared with the countryside in the UK, and when we were on the Trans Alpine Express train journey and receiving a friendly and personal commentary from the conductor, the comment was made

that 'you don't get that on English trains'. New Zealand was experienced as 'like home' but better than home, and this provoked the tourists to constantly imagine living in New Zealand. At one point, as we drove around the country roads of the Central Otago region admiring the smart rural homes and vineyards set among the autumn colours, the driver said, 'So are we all going to emigrate to New Zealand then? Are we going to retire here?' There was a chorused reply of 'Yes!'

The idea of emigrating to New Zealand linked also with the colonial/settler narrative that was not only a basis for the on-tour commentary, but was also enacted on the tour. The driver's commentary followed this narrative with an interpretation about the construction of mountain passes and viaducts, which key colonial figures they were named after, and description of the hardship experienced by those early European settlers. Certain tour activities also followed the colonial narrative, such as an evening trip to a colonial homestead for dinner, and a boat ride including a sing-along around the grand piano upon a 'vintage steamship'. These activities, again, were elements of the tour experience in which 'home' reappeared. They were also activities that brought the whole group together, perhaps providing a sense of community that was otherwise experienced as lost. As Richards (1994) argues, the readiness with which tourists often engage socially with fellow tourists marks a nostalgic reference to a sense of lost or desired community. Indeed, although creation of social relationships did not appear with the elderly group to be as central as it was with the younger tour group, there were still friendships formed and there was a strong sense of camaraderie on the coach.

Some of the optional tour activities that these elderly people participated in, also, were in line with the narrative of New Zealand as an 'adventure' place. For some, partaking in such activities, including getting 'soaking wet up to me knickers' in a jet-boat ride, (re)produced an adventurous self. Others pointed out that a four-wheel drive *Lord of the Rings* tour would allow them to connect better with their *Lord of the Rings*-keen grandchildren when they returned home. For another, the compulsion to 'do everything' was in the awareness, again, that the distance travelled to New Zealand and the life stage she was at would mean her never having the opportunity again. The highlight for her had been a whale-watching helicopter ride:

To see that, 400 dolphins swimming around and two sperm whales, well, how many people have seen that? . . . I've gone for everything. Worry about paying for it when you get home. But I think, when you come across the whole other side of the world, you've got to do it, do what's going, because you won't get the chance again. You may not get the chance again. It's no good going home saying, 'Oh I wish I'd done this and I wish I'd done that'.

While there was no expression in these elderly tourists' interviews of the 'tour as limiting experience' position, as there was with some of the younger group, there were many 'post-tourist' (Feifer, 1985) performances among the older

tourists that showed a mocking awareness of themselves in their tourist role. On the coach, an in-group joke formed whereby the driver would ask through the microphone, particularly as we drove past spectacular scenery, 'What do you think of it so far?', and everyone would chorus back, 'Rubbish!' When the coach stopped at a photo stop or an 'ice-cream stop' everyone got out to perform accordingly, but they did so knowingly and frequently with a self-mocking comment about how they always followed the tour manager's suggestions. They also performed a comic parodying of the tourist role by taking 'silly' photos of each other, such as standing next to a fibreglass penguin and a stuffed possum in a visitor information centre. For one person, this acknowledgement of 'being a tourist' was even linked to the notion discussed earlier that this was their only chance ever to come to New Zealand: 'I think I'm, the age I am, I might not come back so, you know, I only want to skim the surface and, obviously I'm interested in, in the economics and all that, but to a point that I wouldn't want to go into that too deeply because I'm just here as a tourist'.

Conclusion

To date, little research has sought to understand the coach tourists' actual engagement with their destination (Oliver, 2003), or moreover, the meaning of the destination and the tour for those involved. This article was aimed towards gaining an understanding of this meaning by exploring the narratives of place and self as they are constructed and enacted in the context of package tours of New Zealand's South Island. Rather than taking touring selves and toured places to be fixed, as is generally suggested in the literature on package tours, this discussion has shown how touring is both multiple and constitutive, with different meanings of the tour experience being continually constructed as the tour takes place.

For the young tour group in this research, the tour was an opportunity to enhance the self through meeting new people, socializing, having fun, and possibly having sexual relationship(s). The social experiences had within the tour group appeared to outweigh the importance of the toured place. At times their behaviour, such as sleeping off hang-overs and watching videos with the curtains closed on the coach, was an active shutting-out and rejection of the landscape outside. The fact that such activities only took place as the coach drove past 'boring' stretches of landscape, however, showed that even these 'non-places' were still highly formative places in that they allowed space and time for focus to be turned inside the coach and onto everyday activities. Rather than the focus being on *difference* of landscape or people, New Zealand marked a symbolic space in which to enact new social and self-producing performances. As Neumann (1992) has pointed out, tourist places are 'sites of existential performances, places where people can embody different dimensions of existence through self-presentation' (p. 180). For the European and American members of this group, in particular, New Zealand is a distant place and therefore a 'cool'

place, representing a space where they can be free to experiment with different performances of self and thus expand self in new ways.

For the older group, New Zealand the place, was already woven in various ways into their life story so that touring New Zealand served both to confirm their self-identity and to bring some aspect of closure to their self-narrative. New Zealand was constructed as a place they 'had to see before they die' so that, in finally going there, their experience (re)affirmed their sense of nearing mortality. This sense of nearing mortality in turn affected their performances of place in New Zealand in various ways. They were compelled to make the most of their time there, to do everything, and to enjoy every day. At times, also, their experience of place became an intensely emotional connection with 'the world' that they were made aware they would soon be leaving. Simultaneously, however, performing the narrative of New Zealand as pastoral paradise allowed them to feel okay again about the world (before it is time to leave that world), to feel at home in the world and thus to feel at home with the self.

For both age groups, the narrative production upon which their touring was based had the role of self, rather than the role of place *per se*, at the centre. However, New Zealand as the place of the tour was still both marker and maker in the ongoing production of these tourist selves. For the younger group, seductiveness of place (Cartier, 2005) on this tour was in that New Zealand represented a distant space in which multiple new selves could be performed. For the older group, New Zealand's seductiveness was in the place it held in their life stories and in the possibilities it provided to perform aspects of closure in their self-narratives. A key narrative adding significance to this tour experience, also, was that this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to experience New Zealand, and so this experience served to heighten their sense of mortal self.

The dichotomous nature of the literature on package tourism, as well as the tourism industry, has thus been challenged by this research, by showing that the actual narratives that tour participants either brought with them or that were generated in interaction during the tour were based on a complex set of meanings regarding place and self. Although the tour participant is tied to the programme of the tour and always moved along quickly with the fast pace of the tour, the tour can still provide 'the capacity for mirroring the inner and the outer dimensions that makes possible the inward voyage' (Neumann, 1992: 179). So, even within the apparent rigidity of the package tour context, the spaces of tourism are spaces where people and places are in process, since the tourist always brings multiple narratives to ascribe meaning to their tour experience.

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