

## Poetry and Tourism in a Global Age

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IN THE POEM THAT OPENS Elizabeth Bishop's *Questions of Travel* (1965), "Arrival at Santos," the speaker addresses herself as a "tourist." She wryly glosses the term as someone who has "immodest demands for a different world, / and a better life, and complete comprehension / of both at last, and immediately."<sup>1</sup> Bishop calls into question the tourist's insatiable desire for difference, for transparency, for quick understanding of other cultures; these "immodest demands" differ, we might surmise, from a poet's more tentative and reflective methods of exploration. Yet the poet is self-critically addressing a fictive version of herself, and poetry, too, can involve a quest for alternate worlds. Writing or even reading a poem, we make a temporary departure and return, imaginatively traveling, as the *OED* says of the tourist, "for pleasure or culture."<sup>2</sup> We make a turn with a poem or with a tour, as suggested by the roots of the words "verse" and "tour"—*versus* from *vertere*, to turn, and *tornus*, a circle, or a tool for describing a circle—and we may find our world and ourselves defamiliarized upon return.<sup>3</sup> Ideally, the circuit we travel by poem or vessel unmoors us, destabilizes our preconceptions, renews our sensory engagements, and opens us afresh to ourselves and the world.

Although literary tourism arguably goes back to *The Odyssey*, the word "tourism" initially denoted transnational travel especially of upper-class young men for cultural edification, as in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Grand Tour, and tourism greatly expanded its social, geographic, and literary reach in the twentieth century, as modernity made mass travel ever more affordable. In groundbreaking studies of tourism, Dean MacCannell discusses what he calls the "democratization of tourist desire"—its cutting across social distinctions—and even claims that the tourist is "one of the best models for modern-man-in-general."<sup>4</sup> If so, then how does poetry coincide with tourism and how are they distinct, especially in a global age of accelerated movement across vast spaces, when writers like Bishop all the more frequently double as tourists and tourists as poets? What can we learn about poetry from tourism and about tourism from poetry? Definitive responses to such questions may be impossible, but close analysis of key poems self-consciously entwined

with tourism as their discursive “other” may suggest possible paths toward understanding an important dimension of poetry in our time.<sup>5</sup>

## I

Although few critics have explored the touristic dimensions of modern and contemporary poetry, let alone of poetry criticism and the teaching of poetry, the discourses overlap extensively, if sometimes tensely. Robert von Hallberg, Jeffrey Gray, and Anthony Carrigan have usefully considered world-wandering poets who thematize tourism,<sup>6</sup> but the formal, conceptual, and discursive points of connection between poetry and tourism are worth teasing out further, particularly given that tourism is one of the “most obvious forms of the globalization of culture.”<sup>7</sup> As sociologists John Urry and Jonas Larsen observe, “There are not two separate entities, the ‘global’ and ‘tourism’. . . . Rather they are part and parcel of the same set of complex and interconnected processes.”<sup>8</sup>

If poetry sometimes functions as a kind of tourism, does this condemn it to the superficiality and degradation we often associate with tourism? After all, tourism studies has disclaimed the distinction by Daniel Boorstin and others of the traveler from the tourist—work vs. pleasure, active vs. passive, solitary vs. mass—that might once have been used to salvage poetry; tourism theorists now see such distinctions as part of a larger tendency to use “tourist” as a negative label and to deny one’s own tourism.<sup>9</sup> “Tourists dislike tourists,” remarks MacCannell, and they often “point out only the tawdry side of tourism and the ways it can spoil the human community, while hiding from themselves the essentially touristic nature of their own cultural expeditions” (*T* 10, 164). “Let’s face it, we all are tourists!” exclaims an Iranian student he quotes (*T* 9). Urry and Larsen add that the boundaries between tourism and other social and cultural practices have increasingly dissolved, so that “people are much of the time ‘tourists’ whether they like it or know it,” including poets and their readers (*TG* 97). Even so, all forms of tourism shouldn’t be collapsed into one another. Frequenting multinational all-inclusive resorts that channel most of their profits away from the host site, create only low-wage service jobs, and damage and degrade the natural environment isn’t the same as cultural or ethnographic study abroad, recasting a “foreign” excursion in literary form, or reading or teaching poems, plays, and novels from different parts of the world—though these, too, may ultimately be in a broad sense “touristic.” If we all are tourists and, as MacCannell adds, “we are tour guides,” some forms of touristic activity are more destructive and superficial, others more self-reflexive,

self-critical, and potentially educative (*T191*). Inexplicitly pivoting on his earlier disavowal of distinctions like “tourist” vs. “traveler,” even MacCannell asserts in a later study: “The ultimate ethical test for tourists is whether they can realize the productive potential of their travel desires or whether they allow themselves to become mere ciphers of arrangements made for them.”<sup>10</sup> Poetry also tests one’s abilities to transmit or transform, to copy or remake inherited arrangements.

Perhaps the best-known indictment of tourism, Jamaica Kincaid’s bitter and astute *A Small Place*, could ironically be seen as fostering another kind of tourism, imaginatively transporting readers to Antigua and inviting them to interrogate the harmful effects of their involvement in the tourist industry and indirectly in government corruption. Her attack on airplane-flying, hotel-staying, beach-combing mass tourism presupposes a self-critical literary tourism—readers who, following her in her narrative to Antigua, will be able to reflect on these other, more noxious forms of tourism. After excoriating tourists as ugly and evil, she rhapsodizes over Antigua in a paradoxically touristic evocation of the small place as seemingly unreal in its natural beauty, lines ironically picked up later in an *Essence* magazine piece promoting travel to Antigua: “Antigua is beautiful. Antigua is too beautiful. Sometimes the beauty of it seems unreal. Sometimes the beauty of it seems as if it were stage sets for a play, for no real sunset could look like that; no real seawater could strike that many shades of blue at once”—and so on, with the blue sky, the white cloud, the sunlight, and the darkness of the night.<sup>11</sup> Rebuking the unthinking tourist reader at the beginning of her book, Kincaid nevertheless implicitly carves out a rhetorical space for another kind of tourist experience—historically and politically savvy, literary and self-aware, ironic and imaginatively probing, and open to the cultural differences and awed by the natural beauty she attempts to convey in her lyrical prose.

Indeed, not to allow for such distinctions is to risk abandoning travel beyond one’s backyard and forsaking, too, tourism’s readerly analogue, literature from around the world, confining oneself to a national literature to avoid contamination by tourism. Yet under globalization, even “home” or a “homeland” is a site where “foreign” products, images, and ideas meet, as anthropologists such as James Clifford and Arjun Appadurai have shown.<sup>12</sup> And adherence to a “national literature” also inescapably involves tourism of other times, ethnicities, regions, and classes within the “nation.” Postcolonial and global literary critics sometimes shunt their touristic complicities off on novelists, poets, and dramatists. Graham Huggan offers a smart but broad-brush critique of “the post-colonial exotic,” with its “strategic exoticism” and “staged marginality,”

its “global market-value as a reified object of intellectual tourism.”<sup>13</sup> But instead of criticizing the literature for safely packaging otherness, as if we literary critics were exempt from such charges, perhaps we should take our cue from the literature’s knowing and self-critical response to its own tourism. Even Kincaid writes a travelogue of her tourist experience of walking and gathering seeds in Nepal, *Among Flowers*, thrilled by the natural beauty but also often annoyed by the local porters and Sherpas who accompany her, having become one of those “people from rich countries in the process of experiencing the world as spectacle.”<sup>14</sup>

Poets have often acknowledged in nuanced ways their vexed implication in tourism, even as they have criticized forms of it that are imperialist and damaging. Derek Walcott is the obvious example.<sup>15</sup> He has repeatedly railed against the way Caribbean islands “sell themselves” and against the industry’s commodification of Saint Lucia, particularly tourist developments that have defaced the Pitons, twin volcanic peaks on the island’s southwestern coast. In his Nobel lecture, he describes how “the benign blight that is tourism” is infecting all of the Antilles, and he implicitly sets the cultural depth and historical memory of poetry against it: “But in our tourist brochures the Caribbean is a blue pool into which the republic dangles the extended foot of Florida as inflated rubber islands bob and drinks with umbrellas float towards her on a raft.”<sup>16</sup> Effacing Caribbean history and culture, the tourist brochure represents the islands as timelessly fixed in superficiality and service. So, too, in *Omeros* Walcott places in his Saint Lucian inferno “the traitors // who, in elected office, saw the land as views / for hotels,” permitting horrendous exploitation of the island’s natural beauty.<sup>17</sup> His character Hector dies in a crash after forsaking his fishing canoe for a tourist van, and Helen quits a demeaning job waiting tables at a resort hotel, though she eventually accommodates herself to a different hotel job that allows her to retain her human and cultural dignity. Yet despite his denunciations, Walcott has acknowledged that his extended North American stays and class status have made him somewhat of a tourist in his own country: when I “come down here,” he said, “perhaps literally I’m a Tourist *myself* coming from America.”<sup>18</sup> He glances at himself in *Omeros* in the opening portrait of Philoctete, who “smiles for the tourists, who try taking / his soul with their cameras,” even as the fisherman ruefully reflects on his wound’s poetry-like foldedness and recalcitrance: “‘It have some things’—he smiles—‘worth more than a dollar.’”<sup>19</sup> But of course the poet will tell the story of this wound and reap profits from the sale. Elsewhere in the poem, he criticizes himself for wanting “the poor / to stay in the same light so that I could transfix / them in amber,” for “the hypocrisy / of loving them from hotels.”<sup>20</sup> In this ambivalent semitourism, Walcott is hardly

alone. Robert Chi observes of the Pacific Island writer Albert Wendt, he “has positioned himself as a go-between, becoming a tour guide (both personally and textually) in the cultural ‘interzone.’”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Cathy Park Hong assumes the voice of a polyglot tour guide to a dystopian city in the desert in *Dance Dance Revolution* (2007). And Ara Shirinyan, in a flarf collection of Internet searches in *Your Country Is Great* (2008), both ridicules and revels in touristic clichés about countries around the world, such as these lines from “Andorra Is Great”:

Andorra is great place to do some winter sports,  
they have lovely high mountains  
you to ski or snowboard.  
In the summer time you can go hiking<sup>22</sup>

Such self-ironizing literary tourism, which recognizes its complicity in mass tourism yet also distinguishes itself from some of its forms and effects, provides a more nuanced approach than is to be found in sweeping critiques, in which the tourist is always someone else.

## II

Before returning to postcolonial examples in addition to Walcott, let's examine three well-known North American and English poems that ponder poetry's touristic complicities. These poems were written in successive decades of the mid-twentieth century when tourism grew exponentially as an industry of mass culture, as cheap air transportation became readily available—a trend that continued with an increase worldwide in international tourist trips from about 25 million in 1950 to 880 million in 2010.<sup>23</sup> Bishop explores the syntax and visuality of tourism in “Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance” (1948); John Ashbery, the escapist fantasy and clichés of tourism in “The Instruction Manual” (1956); and Philip Larkin, the erotic idealism of both poetry and tourism in “Sunny Prestatyn” (1964). While increasingly critical of tourism as a discourse and industry, all three poets recognize in tourism something of a twisted mirror of their poetic procedures. We can see in all three works the ways in which postwar poetry grapples with its entanglement in tourism, even as it champions its distinctness.

Bishop famously encapsulates the parataxis of tourism in the line “Everything only connected by ‘and’ and ‘and.’”<sup>24</sup> That is, the tourist turns from this sight to that sight to another, and these experiences are not hierarchically subordinated to one another or to some larger meaning or purpose that integrates them; instead, tourism is built on seriality

in time and space. As an anthropologist remarks in another context, "Tourism produces a syntagmatic narrative strung together by conjunctions."<sup>25</sup> Bishop's line most immediately refers back to how she has just strung together several tourist vignettes in the second verse paragraph of "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," including places she visited as a tourist in global travels from 1936 to 1941, before her sixteen-year stay in Brazil:<sup>26</sup> "And at St. Peter's," "And at Volubilis," "And in the brothels of Marrakesh" (58). The serial "'and' and 'and'" quality of this well-known tourist passage comes more fully into view if we notice a feature of it that has passed unremarked: that it leaps back and forth intercontinentally with every new location, intensifying the sense of perpetual *dislocation*. The "and" or equivalent in each case is transatlantic: Bishop begins in North America, with the Narrows at St. Johns, Newfoundland, and then leaps to Europe, namely St. Peter's in Rome, then jumps back across the Atlantic to Latin America, in Jalisco, Mexico, crosses the Atlantic again to North Africa with the Roman ruins of Volubilis, Morocco, then traverses the Atlantic south to north, to the British Isles, with a stop hosted by an Englishwoman at Dingle harbor in Ireland, and finally returns south to the Maghreb, winding up in Marrakesh and its environs. Bishop might have said everything only connected by "ocean" and "ocean." Her verse paragraph exemplifies what I've described elsewhere as traveling poetry in the compression and rapidity of its geographic movement.<sup>27</sup> Bishop's poem speeds up and intensifies tourism's insatiable roving, and in so doing, she puts on display a structuring drive behind tourism—the propulsive desire for another place, and another, and another.

Some of these tourist experiences distantly echo the first verse paragraph's illustrations of the Holy Land, but they lack any metaphysical principle of order.<sup>28</sup> Whereas the biblical illustrations represented every scene as, in effect, "caught in the coils of an initial letter," tied to the divine Word, and whereas everything seemed subordinate to the controlling godhead—a courtyard engraved "like a diagram," the "birds / suspended on invisible threads above the Site"—the tourist sights have been emptied out of any higher ordering principle (57). Unlike the "'and' and 'and'" syntax that can also be found in the Bible, subsumed to the hypotaxis of a divine meaning and plan, the heterogeneous sights beheld by the secular tourist—more vivid and less predictable than the Bible scenes—have no inherent relation to one another or to a higher meaning. The sightseer is drawn on journeys by the standard tourist attractants: nature's beauty or grandeur in the bleating goats jumping up cliffs at St. Johns or the volcanoes of Mexico; famous religious and architectural monuments, such as St. Peter's Square; nature mixed with

ancient history in the poppies erupting through Roman mosaics at Volubilis; dining experience, including an English tea in Ireland; and sex and sex work—the belly-dancing, pock-marked prostitutes in Marrakesh.

But the last vignette also exposes the potential for existential dread in post-religious travel. As in Bishop's well-known "In the Waiting Room," it is a frightening encounter with foreign otherness—in that poem the "horrifying" breasts of women of non-European origin—that threatens annihilation of the subject.<sup>29</sup> Here, the terrifyingly empty tomb is presumably decorated with Muslim calligraphy in Arabic ("carved solid / with exhortation"), its illegibility to the North American tourist reinforcing the sense of the letter unstuck from a metaphysical ground: she sees the void as opening like a mouth that threatens to devour ("yellowed / as scattered cattle-teeth") (58). But in contrast to the biblical illustration's "Arabs, plotting, probably, / against our Christian Empire," securely boxed into the category of alien others (57), this Arab guide isn't an orientalist stereotype; he is a named person whose ironic gaze the speaker partly shares: "In a smart burnoose Khadour looked on amused" (58). The north/south encounter, of North American poet-tourist with Moroccan tour guide, leads into the poem's final dialectical synthesis.

Bishop doesn't retreat from the vulnerability of secular, unsettlingly cross-cultural travel into the security of a bookish Christian framework that she has already dismissed as musty and predictable, "tired / and a touch familiar" (57). Instead, she attempts to synthesize spiritual insight, stripped of deity and dogma, with the worldly and expansive visuality of travel. In its culminating chiasmus, the poem secularizes the biblical scene of the Nativity, amusingly renamed a "family with pets" (59), and at the same time spiritualizes the sightseeing core of tourism, so that looking becomes an end in itself, a source of wonder: when the imagination suffuses sight, perhaps in both senses of the term as *vision* and *place*, it apprehends "an undisturbed, unbreathing flame" that is partly of its own making (58)—an image that descends from Walter Pater's "hard, gem-like flame."<sup>30</sup>

Why couldn't we have seen  
 this old Nativity while we were at it?  
 —the dark ajar, the rocks breaking with light,  
 an undisturbed, unbreathing flame,  
 colorless, sparkless, freely fed on straw,  
 and, lulled within, a family with pets,  
 —and looked and looked our infant sight away. (58–59)

The final dark-yet-light setting revises and combines the end of the first verse paragraph, in which God had been said to "ignite" the scene (57),

and the end of the second, with its dusty, deathly void. Similarly, the poem's last line tellingly returns to the "'and' and 'and'" repetition, but lifts it to a higher level of imaginative sight, in a line that metaphorically transfers speechlessness (Latin *infans*) from the "infant" Jesus to the poet. Through poetry, the speaker aspires to upgrade sightseeing to an imaginatively luminous experience that both recuperates and exceeds childlike sight. If the poem suggests that travel can be flat and disconcertingly fragmentary, and that religious orthodoxy can be schematic and restrictively totalizing, Bishop situates poetry between tourism and religion, aspiring to combine their strengths—the experiential liveliness of travel and the awe of revelation.

What are the implications of Bishop's poem for poetry's relation to tourism? In the postwar period, tourism and poetry both tend toward a loosely jointed parataxis in their horizontal approaches to the globe. Both have a strongly ocular dimension, enacting an insatiable desire to see more of the world, to seek out sources of wonder, to extend and enliven experience beyond the "tired and . . . familiar." Both enact the desire for, and the serial alienations of, encounters with cultural difference. Both presuppose the possibility of rapid movement from one site to another across large distances. But they aren't identical. Bishop shows off the greater compression of poetry (multiple crossings of the Atlantic in a single verse paragraph), its freedom to traverse different vocabularies from the sacred to the profane, and its heightened self-consciousness about its procedures. She upgrades merely physical vision into awe through imaginatively intensifying similes—"Collegians marched in lines, / . . . like ants," "the dead volcanoes / glistened like Easter lilies," a tomb "yellowed / as scattered cattle-teeth" (58). Activating the mind's eye, the poem also lives in the ear, as when Bishop's line endings subtly hint at the sonic parallelism of rhyme, such as the sequence *lay/volcanoes*, *lilies/Jalisco*, *poppies/eyes* (partly when evoking a jukebox) (58). Nor is the poem's overall structure merely paratactic, since it moves dialectically toward synthesis: while unloosing poetry from religious constraint, Bishop endows its imaginative sight and flame-like intensity with quasi-spiritual potential.

Ashbery commented that her "marvelous" poem, "Over 2,000 Pictures and a Complete Concordance," "epitomizes Miss Bishop's work at its best" and was "possibly her masterpiece," adding that after twenty years, he was "unable to exhaust the meaning and mysteries of its concluding line."<sup>31</sup> The attraction of Bishop's poem for Ashbery should be evident: few poets cruise more rapidly than Ashbery across such a vast array of sights, states, and discourses, with everything connected as if only by "and" and "and." Toward the end of the fantasized tourist excursion

of his “The Instruction Manual,” the speaker exclaims, “How limited, but how complete withal, has been our experience of Guadalajara!,”<sup>32</sup> a formulation akin to Bishop’s diagnosis of the tourist’s wish for a different and better life, and “complete comprehension / of both at last, and immediately.” The desire for completeness, delivered through synecdoche—a person or costume or building that exemplifies Mexican-ness or Brazilianness—characterizes the semiotics of tourism. As Jonathan Culler observes, “The tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself, an instance of a typical cultural practice,” seeking out “signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behavior, exemplary Oriental scenes,” and so forth.<sup>33</sup> But despite its vertical, synecdochic axis, both Bishop and Ashbery emphasize tourism’s horizontal or metonymic sprawl as well. The main conduit of such signs is ocular, and so like Bishop, who writes “I saw” and “looked and looked,” Ashbery repeatedly deploys the verb “see” in “The Instruction Manual”: “City I wanted most to see, and most did not see, in Mexico! / But I fancy I see” (5). As Urry and Larsen argue in *The Tourist Gaze*, “the organising sense in tourism is visual” (TG 18). But whereas Bishop’s tourist voyages back and forth across the ocean to see new places (and secondarily to hear, touch, and taste them), Ashbery’s is an armchair tourist, traveling to Guadalajara as a fantastical escape from the dull labor of writing a “manual on the uses of a new metal,” an effort to forget, as Kincaid says of the tourist, “a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom.”<sup>34</sup> Ashbery’s poetry in itself could be said to suggest armchair tourism as well, unleashing language to travel here and there and everywhere, across discrepant spaces and vocabularies.

Even so, for all the poet’s affinities with the would-be tourist, “The Instruction Manual” also satirizes this daydreaming speaker in particular and tourist discourse in general. If Bishop’s poem salvages touristic looking as the basis for a secular poetic art, Ashbery makes the sight-centered discourse of tourist brochure and travelogue the basis of his poem while affectionately parodying it. Decades after Joyce fabricated the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses* out of the overwrought and sentimental language of so-called ladies’ magazines, and decades before Shirinyan gathered and edited tourist searches in *My Country Is Great*, Ashbery at midcentury cuts up and reassembles clichés, tropes, and topoi of tourist discourse in a way that draws the reader in and yet at the same time flattens the language on the page, that makes us collude with the speaker’s fantasy and yet prompts us to inspect his words and phrases. Witness the creaky use of contrived exclamations—“City of rose-colored flowers!” (5); sentimental formulae—“His dear one, his wife” (5); and set phrases—“holiday mood” (5), “in the American fashion” (5), “sincere eyes” (6). There is, as MacCannell writes of tourist spaces, a front and a

back, the latter the site of a “staged authenticity” (T98–102) revealed by Ashbery’s tour-guide speaker: “Let us take this opportunity,” he entreats, “to tiptoe into one of the side streets,” where an old woman “welcomes us” and talks about her son (6); but since this interior is so predictable and formulaic, we never get beyond the surface. Parodying while indulging tourist oclarity, the poem is like a painting that foregrounds the penetration-resistant flatness of its surface, especially since the most vivid feature of the poem’s tourist discourse is its array of colors. Individually, these help create the illusion of a narrative space, but cumulatively, they draw attention to the poem’s construction of this space, seeming like so much paint as paint on a canvas: the tourist gaze takes in the “rose- and lemon-colored flowers” (5), the flower girls, each “In her rose-and-blue striped dress (Oh! such shades of rose and blue)” (5), a nearby “little white booth where women in green serve you green and yellow fruit” (5), and so on—deep blue clothes, a white hat, a “rose, pink, and white” shawl (5), let alone the racializing language of a lover with an “olive cheek” and a “dark-skinned lad” (6, 7). These latter references participate in the speaker’s orientalist projection of generalized otherness, which seems to (con)fuse spheres of cultural difference—“The band is playing *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov” (5).

Another key feature of the poem’s language is its emphasis on touristic immediacy, established in time and space. Temporally, the poem places us in the moment of unfolding events, as if it were a minute-by-minute report: “The band is playing” (5), “The couples are parading” (5), “Here come the boys!” (6). This immediacy is heightened by the self-authenticating effect of the narrative frame, in which the tourist-narrator suggests his access is occasionally impeded: “I have lost sight of the young fellow with the toothpick. / Wait—there he is—on the other side of the bandstand” (6), and “I try to hear what they are saying” (6). The narrator pretends to have “written, as it were, to the moment,” in Samuel Richardson’s phrase for the epistolary style.<sup>35</sup> Spatially, the poem makes prominent use of deictics, as in a series of lines that begins “There is”—“There is the rich quarter,” “There is the poor quarter,” “There is the market,” “And there is the public library,” and “Look! There is the square we just came from” (7). “There” is a vividly different space, an escape from entrapment in dull necessity, from technical writing as a cog in the capitalist machine.

But by flattening and foregrounding the prefabricated phrases and ideas out of which this seeming dream world is made, the poem calls into question any sharp distinction between the realm of self-divided drudgery and that supposedly other world, the alterity of the “complete” space elsewhere. The poem doesn’t exempt itself from the touristic pro-

cedures that it parodies and illuminates. It is about not writing an instruction manual, and yet it is also itself a kind of instruction manual—for writing poems, making them up out of the bits and pieces of tourism's prefabrications. Here, as in the postmodernist pastiches of Shirinyan's *My Country Is Great*, the poet is like what Maxine Feifer describes as the "post-tourist"—a person who sees tourism as a series of games that can be played, finding as much pleasure in the fake or imagined or Internet-searched experience as in the supposedly authentic thing.<sup>36</sup> Although both Bishop and Ashbery take pointers from tourism, Bishop conceives it ideally as equipment for seeing freshly, without preconceptions, while for Ashbery it is a tissue of preconceptions, like the weave of discourses that his poetry shows us time and again can be deftly rewoven but cannot be escaped. Even though his office worker may want to forget about "the uses of a new metal," the innovative use of new and old metals in transportation technology had been speeding tourists to Mexico in ever greater numbers.<sup>37</sup> With mass tourism rapidly expanding from the 1940s to the 1950s, Ashbery's approach to tourism is more critical than Bishop's, evacuating its "staged authenticity" and flattening its surface/depth divisions, even as it recognizes its complicity in tourism's seriality and voracious desire-for-newness.

Larkin also entwines poetry with tourism to explore interdiscursive commonalities as well as differences. Although his approach to tourism is all the more skeptical, likely reflecting a third postwar decade's increasing wariness of the burgeoning industry, even he uncovers points of intersection. Having originated mass tourism in the nineteenth century, particularly the seaside holiday, Britain witnessed enormous growth in the industry in the late 1950s and the 1960s, a period when the government also formalized its involvement in promoting tourism. At the same time, mass tourism came under increasing scrutiny: international travel organizations started to discuss how to limit tourism's damaging effects, and popular publications began to draw attention to the "negative impacts from tourism."<sup>38</sup> Larkin's "Sunny Prestatyn" responds critically to the mediation and shaping of desire by both tourism and poetry. The poem opens with the language of a tourist ad: "*Come To Sunny Prestatyn / Laughed the girl on the poster.*"<sup>39</sup> While the poem may seem to be incorporating an entirely alien discourse, set off in italics, the command to "Come" has long opened many a lyric poem, filling the double columns of ten pages of *Granger's Index to Poetry*, from "Come all ye" and "Come all you" and "Come hither" to "Come let us," "Come listen," "Come thou," and "Come ye" and "you."<sup>40</sup> The poem's vexed response to the tourist ad shouldn't blind us to the apostrophic rhetoric shared by poem and ad—what Roman Jakobson calls "conative" language oriented toward

the addressee, as in the vocative and the imperative.<sup>41</sup> Some traditional poems beginning “Come” entreat an audience, though Larkin’s poem, in which the fictionalizing frame suspends the command from its normal communicative function, inserts a gap between the ad’s and the poem’s audiences. Other poems beginning “Come” are entreaties to the beloved, and ingredients of the blazon tradition figure in this poem as well—face, eyes, lips, breast. Like such poems, the poster is erotically suggestive: the girl’s body seems sexually joined with the natural and built environment—“a hunk of coast, a / Hotel with palms,” with a play on “hunk” and “palms,” the latter rhymed with “arms.” Like love poetry, tourist advertising is grounded in a grammar of seduction. “Advertising images are structured around, and work through, mobilising and triggering the spectator’s desires and fantasies through ‘spatial fictions,’” as Urry and Larsen observe; commercial tourist photography assumes that “people desire to be seduced and such images are artfully constructed to seduce” (*TG* 176). Both love poetry and tourist advertising engage, stimulate, and even produce desire. In poetry, unlike the tourist ad, the seduction process is typically framed, rerouted from communication between seducer and seduced into a fictionalized seduction process whose seemingly secondary audience, the reader, is often the real one, able to observe and reflect on the erotic address staged in the poem. A love poem is both seductive and meta-seductive. Address, the vocative, eroticized language, parts of the body, seduction—from its beginning, “Sunny Prestatyn” suggests poetry’s discursive intersections with tourism, even as it demonstrates a self-reflexivity that is often stronger in poetry than in tourist advertising.

Larkin takes the framing of love poetry’s eroticism one step further by imagining a fierce resistance to, and interruption of, the touristic seduction process. Discussions of “Sunny Prestatyn” have revolved around whether or not the poet participates in the defacement of, and sexual violence against, the poster girl. Larkin himself remarked that he wanted “to provoke” a reaction of “shock, outrage at the defacement of the poster and what the girl stood for,” seeing the disfigurement as both “funny” and “terrifying.”<sup>42</sup> Joseph Bristow is probably right that the poem “operates in parallel to the graffiti that it also condemns. The poet’s distance from Titch Thomas is both far and near.”<sup>43</sup> One way of clarifying this complicity is to recognize the likeness between the touristic promise of idyllic beauty and the poetic tradition of love poems that the poem also engages. Both intrapoetic and extrapoetic, the act of defacement is directed toward the excessive idealism of both touristic and traditional poetic discourse. This is hardly the only one of Larkin’s poems to take down poetic idealism: “Lozenge of love! Medallion of art!,” he exclaims

of the moon in the poem "Sad Steps," only to pivot on the word "No."<sup>44</sup> In "Sunny Prestatyn," Larkin effectively scrawls graffiti on both poetic and touristic romanticism. The poet's hand may be implicated in the vandalism by the phrase "scored well in" (a marking with parallel lines), the verbs "scrawls" and "Autographed," and the embedding of the word "verse" in the phrase "great transverse tear." But if, in the narrative the poem tells, the vandals act out of rage at false and ridiculously elevated dreams, the poem as poem vandalizes the high poetic tradition. The first stanza's allusion to poetic address, its tight rhyme scheme, and its artful phrasing ("tautened white satin," "breast-lifting arms") set up expectations for a kind of poetic decorum that Larkin flouts by willfully intruding crude and vulgar diction—"slapped up," "snaggle-toothed and boss-eyed," "Huge tits and a fissured crotch," "A tuberous cock and balls." This verse is indeed transverse. In literary historical terms the poem unleashes rebellious energies against a particular kind of lyric idealism, as also against its kin, the language and strategies of tourism.

Incorporating tourist discourse and revealing its likenesses to poetry, Bishop, Ashbery, and Larkin all acknowledge that tourism verges on poetry, poetry on tourism. Bishop shows tourism and modern secular poetry to share a hunger for fresh and nontranscendental vision, suggesting it is possible to upgrade tourism's visuality into an aesthetic principle. She also sees tourism and poetry to be joined by their paratactic seriality, as does the quintessentially "and"-and-"and" poet, Ashbery. But whereas Bishop thinks of tourism as a resource for "infant sight," Ashbery conceives of it as a collection of discursive strategies and clichés. He more sharply satirizes exoticist travelese, though he also acknowledges it as the inescapable fabric of the contemporary manufactured encounter with other places, other cultures, other peoples. Of these three poets, Larkin takes the most aggressive approach to tourism, which is simultaneously a self-critical response to the lyric traditions on which his poetry was weaned. But even he shows up the shared terrain—the beckoning invitation, the seductive use of the female body, the erotic idealism. "The term 'tourist' is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences," writes MacCannell (*T* 94). These poets share in the broad critique of tourism—its empty fragmentation, commodifying clichés, and sexual objectification—but in their metatouristic poems, they concede at the same time that even the poets among us are on the tour bus, often searching for sources of imaginative renewal. In a global age, we can't easily escape tourism; but poetry—alert to its madeness (*poesis*) and its making of its worlds—may be one means by which we can negotiate our linguistic and ethical participation in it.

## III

For postcolonial poets, the intersections between poetry and tourism are still more disconcerting, given the many ways in which tourism economically and culturally extends the ghostly afterlife of imperialism. After the crumbling of British, French, and other European empires, peoples from Northern metropolitan centers returned to the former colonies, bearing cameras and sunscreen instead of guns and Bibles, still exploiting human capital and natural resources on a staggering scale. Tourism is often said to be perhaps the largest industry in the world, accounting for about a tenth of world GDP, and multinational corporations that exacerbate inequities between wealthy and poor countries occupy a large share of this economic sector.<sup>45</sup> Having already glanced at a Caribbean poet, let's turn to an African and an Indian poet and explore their fruitfully vexed engagements with the tourist as antagonist and alter ego.

If you look up the publications of the South African Jewish poet Karen Press and see that one of her books, published by a small South African press, is titled *Echo Location: A Guide to Sea Point for Residents and Visitors* (1998), you might well suspect that, hard up for cash like many poets, she wrote a guidebook to this Cape Town suburb.<sup>46</sup> After all, it was published at a time when, after decades of stagnation in its tourist industry under apartheid, South Africa had hopes for a turnaround.<sup>47</sup> From a look inside the book, you discover instead that Press has collaged signs, news clippings, historical accounts, menus, and other found materials with lyrics and narrative poems into a poetic sequence that excavates the uncomfortable racial, sexual, legal, and personal history of the place—not the usual stuff of tourist guides. Contesting the monologic presentation of place as a visually and gustatorily consumable package, her pseudo-guidebook emphasizes graphically on the page this variety of genres and discourses: some poems look like standard free-verse lyrics, but others are centered on the page in all caps like a plaque (17), arrayed as single, discontinuously numbered lines from a library catalogue, often cut off mid-word (26–27), printed in columns and boxes like pieces in a newspaper or a game (35, 73), or numbered as “Rules Binding on All Owners and Residents” of a building (42–43). These rules include prohibitions on noise, visible laundry, makeshift window coverings, animals, storage, gambling, and garbage, the latter hilariously specified as “rubbish, dirt, cigarette butts or boxes, chocolate papers, food scraps, odd bits of paper etc” (42). A culinary guide to the many different cuisines available in Sea Point runs along the bottom of the page. Linguistically, the poem swerves from its baseline Standard

English into overheard snippets of spoken dialect, Yiddish, Afrikaans, and Xhosa. Disrupting the monologic norms of the “guide to” genre of the book’s title, which blends neutrally informational discourse with the suasive appeal of advertising, the book splinters in an unsettling formal and linguistic variety—visual, sonic, discursive—that frustrates any desire for easy semantic access or place-consuming comprehension.

Press’s “guide” doesn’t market Sea Point as a uniquely desirable location; it uncovers the history of exclusions across several centuries that made it a site of white privilege for “residents and visitors.” Blurring the lines between settlers and tourists, “residents and visitors,” Press suggests that tourists are the latest in a long line of predominantly white European arrivants. In one found poem, “Recreation,” the Dutch governor grants a petition to build a country club in 1766 on the assumption that any non-European claimants to the land are nonpersons (“knowing that it cannot prejudice the interests of others”) (18). In another found poem, drawn from the next century, “A Most Desirable Location,” auctioneers selling neighborhood properties in 1839 brag:

None of the lower classes of the population  
either coloured or white,  
reside within the limits of the Municipality  
except those in service and residing  
with the several proprietors. (40)

Yet another found poem from the twentieth century, “Indecently Hilarious,” recalls the termination of train service to Sea Point in 1929:

Next morning, labourers from Langa and Ndabeni  
arrived at the station, bewildered to find no train  
to take them to their work at Sea Point. (21)

The “residents and visitors” to whom such a titular “guide” would normally be addressed belong to the racial and class groups that aren’t shut out, are assumed to have mobility, and are the opposite of such nonpersons, lower classes, racial others, and laborers. Although “every native of every place is a potential tourist,” as Kincaid puts it, “some natives—most natives in the world—cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives.”<sup>48</sup> “The Wedding Was at Paddavlei” metaphorically evokes the simmering force of these exclusions and repressions. It tells of a Jewish wedding north of Cape Town at which a “groom’s stamping on the glass” breaks open a hole: “The frogs burst through the floorboards,” going “bananas, leaping / onto everything,” possibly “insane

with shock” after a hundred years of “exile” (an ironic allusion to the multiple exiles that brought Jews to South Africa) (87). Although the tourist guide rhetoric of the menu running at the bottom of the page is all about inclusiveness and diversity—the variety of national cuisines to be found in Sea Point—Press plays instead on the ironies of exile and highlights the exclusions on which this “whites only” social space has been founded. Her collaging of historical found texts across several centuries demonstrates how language has functioned at different times to screen out, negate, even dehumanize various people as nonpersons.

Least secure in this milieu are the nannies, maids, and other working people of color whose spatial boundaries are the most easily and routinely violated, as in the poem “Glimpses of Women in Overalls” about an “off duty” nanny:

like children, fearing any moment  
the door bursting open:  
why did you  
where is my  
who said you (52)

To a greater extent than Bishop, Ashbery, or Larkin, Press is painfully alert to the divisions by class and race presupposed by the standard tour “guide” for “residents and visitors.” The implied audience of such guides isn’t a maid or nanny, whose location is seldom in her control and is often subject to violation, as highlighted by the abruptly enjambed and unpunctuated fragments of questions; rather, it’s someone assumed to have relative freedom in choosing where he or she will reside or visit—or burst in.

Unlike the author of a guidebook, written from a seemingly impartial perspective, Press implicates herself in this history of white privilege of Sea Point’s “residents and visitors.” Another of her found poems, “Here We Go Again,” recalls the evacuation of “coloured” and Indian families from Tramway Road by means of “Proclamation 190 of 1957,” during the period of intensified geographic segregation under apartheid (57–58). But white children attending a primary school nearby are ignorant of this violent history of exclusion, “instructed to stay away from Tramway Road / but never told why” (57). In some of her lyric poems about growing up in Sea Point, Press signals the indifference of white teenagers to the social repressions on which their world is based. Cousins returning from a tour of Europe in 1968 wear psychedelic clothes that seem all the more out of place because their purple wool jackets and velvet hats are ludicrously ill-suited to the climate: “It was 30°C and they

looked ready to faint” (22). Press conveys the narrowness of these supposedly world-wise teens, who can’t see past their preoccupations with sex, clothes, money, and beaches. Including herself in this experience of racial privilege, Press writes in first person plural,

We pay for the view,  
enormous sums for the smallest glimpse  
of the border. (95)

The landscape had already been “sliced into parlor views” in the nineteenth century (20), and she is one of the inheritors of this violent expropriation of land. But if the view is an experience of timeless plenitude that requires the repression of history, Press keeps recalling the history that made it possible: “we are all in this place because somewhere else / sadness and money converged” (50), “our uninhabitable past / pulling us back” (95). Toward the start of the sequence, Press, who has also written science textbooks,<sup>49</sup> adduces a lyrically scientific vision of flux and flow against which all the subsequent barriers, exclusions, and slicings seem unnatural: “We hang here, inquisitive carbon-based life forms,” reads the book’s opening quotation, “knowing that every atom of carbon now in our bodies was once in the interior of a star” (10). Against this permeability, the tourist dos and don’ts in “Tips for Visitors,” all meant to shore up boundaries, seem ludicrous: “Carry your keys in a separate pocket,” “Never sit alone in a park,” “Count your change” (60). Press’s *Echo Location* is and isn’t a “guide to Sea Point”: it piggybacks on tourist tips, plaques, menus, and other standard ingredients of tourist discourse, tightly clamping poetry to its sight-locational other. Yet it also exposes the sometimes violent policing of place that makes it available to privileged residents and visitors. The sequence evokes touristic discourses of locality and yet thwarts touristic norms by its disorientingly heterogeneous collage of found and made materials, its recovery of the historical languages of racial exclusion that make a place accessible to some and not others, and its self-implication and self-critique of authorial responsibility. Such self-interruptive paratourism can serve as an ethical and intellectual model—actively rethinking place and travel in historical time, and pushing the reader to do so as well, without either pretending to be exempt from tourism or passively submitting to its consumerist proclivities.

Like Press, Arun Kolatkar wrote a long sequence of poems that both approaches and resists being a guidebook introduction to a place: his *Jejuri* (1976) is named after a temple town some distance from Mumbai, a site of pilgrimage and tourism.<sup>50</sup> As a secular Indian visitor to a pilgrimage

site, Kolatkar represents himself as an insider/outsider, knowledgeable about the site and its associated rituals and sacred objects, yet remaking it through a cubistic array of viewpoints, vocabularies, and forms. As in Press's pseudo-guide, this sequence's perspectivism complicates touristic homogenization and transparency: poems explore Jejuri from the viewpoint of a priest, a devotee, the poet's skeptical brother, a sixteenth-century Bhakti reformer, and ancient mythical characters, as well as a dog and her puppies, a rat, even a dung beetle. The kaleidoscopically multiform sequence also combines the paradoxes and ecstasies, bareness and heterodoxy of Bhakti poetry with Euro-modernist techniques drawn from Dada, Imagism, and Objectivism, occasionally shadowed by the blues.<sup>51</sup> In form and style, the sequence jumps from the epigrammatic to narrative, the descriptive to song, second-person address to third-person narration, concrete spatialized poem to lyric inwardness. The variety of focal and formal perspectives undoes the priority of any, offering instead a playfully plural and idiosyncratic guide that calls attention to its fashioning and multiplicity. A poem in fourteen words, "The Doorstep" wryly plays two angles against one another, as if in a kind of rabbit-duck gestalt illusion: "That's no doorstep," asserts the poem, "It's a pillar on its side" (45). But is it a pillar, as the body of the poem asserts, or a doorstep, as the title asserts? The poem treats such questions as undecidable. It invokes but undoes the norms of what tourism theorists call a "site marker," such as a sign or plaque, constituting a location as a place to be seen.<sup>52</sup> Like the sequence at large, this marker splinters into irreconcilable constructions of a supposedly bounded, tourable, self-identical place.

Irony in the sequence is pervasive and destabilizing not only at the micro level but also at the macro. The strongest structural irony is implicit in the chiasmic crossing of the sequence's two major sections, the first part set in the temple complex, the second in the railway station. Stereoscopically defamiliarizing Jejuri, Kolatkar wryly deploys secularizing language to describe religious temples in the first part and, in the second, religious language to describe the secular train station and natural environment. Like Bishop's poem about her travels, Kolatkar's sequence, exploiting poetry's double-visioned capacities, secularizes the spiritual and spiritualizes the secular. When the tourist arrives at the train station, as if dragging the spiritual language from the temple complex with him, he describes the indicator as "a wooden saint" (69), the mangy station dog as "the spirit of the place . . . // doing penance" (70), the tea stall salesperson as a "novice" who "has taken a vow of silence" and conducts "ablutions" and "ceremonies" (70), the station master as believing in "the doctrine / of the next train" (71), and knowledge of

when the next train is due as requiring sacrificial “slaughter” (72). By contrast, in the first section, it is the stone and bronze materiality of the temples and their contents that the sequence emphasizes. Perhaps the most “spiritual” moment in the temple sequence is an encounter with a butterfly, though without the aid of myths or religious narratives: “There is no story behind it. / It is split like a second. / It hinges around itself.” It exists only in the immediacy of the present, and the moment of its disappearance is registered in a visual and verbal pun:

Just a pinch of yellow,  
it opens before it closes  
and closes before it o

where is it (52–53)

The “o” suspended at line’s and stanza’s end is the “o” of the broken word “open,” the “O” of poetic vocative, the “oh” of astonishment, and the 0 (zero) of absence—all of which are summoned in the playful enjambment and the elided syllable “-pens,” an omission that, while verbally, semantically, and visually enacting openness, silently speaks the poet’s pen.

Sometimes the sequence deliberately courts tourist discourse, but at least in one instance, only to burst out of it. Aware that he has been a kind of tourist in this temple town, the departing speaker self-mockingly slips into touristic enumeration:

You leave the little temple town  
with its sixty three priests inside their sixty three houses  
huddled at the foot of the hill  
with its three hundred pillars, five hundred steps and eighteen arches. (67)

Kolatar parodies tourism’s grounding in the psychology of collection—here, of experiential sites, as elsewhere of material souvenirs, postcards, pictures, videos.<sup>53</sup> Such cataloguing continues until the verse suddenly explodes out of touristic numeracy—explodes itself, language, the page—representing in modernist concrete poetry the harvest dance of a dozen cocks and hens in a field:

up      a<sup>n</sup> d      do<sup>w</sup>      a<sup>n</sup> d      u<sup>p</sup>      &      d  
 &      w<sup>d</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      p<sup>u</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      do<sup>w</sup>      &      u<sup>p</sup>  
 a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      o<sup>w</sup>      &      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      d<sup>o</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>  
 d<sup>o</sup>      &      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      d<sup>w</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      o<sup>w</sup>      n      &  
 n      &      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      d<sup>w</sup>      o<sup>n</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>  
 a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      d<sup>w</sup>      o<sup>n</sup>      a<sup>n</sup>      d      a<sup>n</sup>      d      u<sup>p</sup>

(68)

The movement of words, though mimetic of the birds' jumping, by virtue of spatialization also foregrounds the poetic page itself, in a sudden formal departure from the rest of the sequence. Halfway between the temples that afforded no religious revelation and the railway station that fails secular norms of modern efficiency, the speaker has an ecstatic vision uncontainable by either religious tradition or secular modernity—a vision best suited to poetry.

And there you stand forgetting how silly you must look  
 with a priest on your left shoulder as it were  
 and a station master on your right. (68)

Earlier in the sequence, Kolatkar had tracked by other means another kind of directional movement in his poem "Water Supply." Although we might expect a sequence entitled *Jejuri* to guide us step by step through the temple complex, the semitouristic speaker eschews travel-guide protocols by allowing his attention to be diverted:

a conduit pipe  
 runs with the plinth  
 turns a corner of the house  
 stops dead in its tracks  
 shoots straight up  
 keeps close to the wall  
 doubles back  
 twists around  
 and comes to an abrupt halt  
 a brass mouse with a broken neck (45)

The poem delights in following the twists and turns of a pipe as phenomenologically tracked by the poet's eye, the mobility emphasized by the short lines and lack of punctuation—modernist techniques adapted from William Carlos Williams and Gary Snyder. Focusing on the pipe instead of the historic temple complex, the poem dramatically calls attention to its own verbal energy and formal sinuousness, the pleasure of following the bends in the lines remade as the bends in the pipes: it “turns a corner” sharply with every *versus*, each line launched with another propulsive verb, and the syntax “twists around” until it slams into the metaphor of the pipe as broken-necked mouse. While articulating the site's dilapidation and the speaker's dry-pipe faithlessness, the poem also asks us to read it not as a mere sight marker but as a poem, reveling in its idiosyncratic dynamism in language and form. Far from guiding us step by step through the shrines and their supporting structures, the sequence interrupts tourist transparency and consumption and foregrounds the poetry's linguistic iconoclasm and exuberant Bhakti creativity, its modernist adaptations and multiform perspectivism, its playful redundancy and punning and graphic materiality.

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One way of reading location-affixed poems like Kolatkar's and Press's would be as a sight marker, or more specifically, an “off-sight marker,” akin to a souvenir or postcard, framing a place as significant, as distinct from an “on-sight marker,” such as a sign or plaque (*T* 111). Applying MacCannell's stages of “sight sacralization,” we could say that a poem as marker names the place, frames or elevates it, enshrines it, makes it mechanically reproducible in the form of a printed or digital text, as well as socially reproducible—cities, villages, sights honored by their literary representation (*T* 43–44). Because poems are compressed and memorable, they can be especially effective as mobile markers, which can be read, recited, and circulated. If so, then the poetry critic or teacher—myself included—becomes a specialized tour guide who adds another semiotic layer to this mediation of globally arrayed localities. Each place is irreducibly local, affixed to singular geographic coordinates, set within a global network of interrelations. “Through internationalisation,” remark sociologists Urry and Larsen, “tourist sites can be compared with those located at home and abroad, especially via the internet. . . . All potential objects of the tourist gaze can be located on a scale and compared with each other” (*TG* 55). The tourist apparatus atomistically localizes all sites but at the same time ironically homogenizes them as rough equivalents.

But as I've tried to suggest, it would be a mistake to reduce poems to sight markers of single locales, regions, or nations; to read through their formal corrugations in search of referential transparency and locational authenticity; to assume they harbor the same kind of informational and promotional discourse as tourist guides. We should read such place-making poems not as sight markers but as translocal matrices of production and reference, formally and allusively enmeshed with the marked sight and with places elsewhere. Poems often recognize their touristic complicities—as seen by virtue of their visuality, parataxis, or seductive strategies, in Bishop, Ashbery, and Larkin, or their social privilege and insider/outsider mobility, as in Press and Kolatkar—at the same time that they parody and contravene tourism. Even sight-specifying poems should be read as poems, works, unlike a sight marker or brochure, that frequently splice and splinter reference, that are alert to their formal and verbal histories and to themselves as verbal artifacts that actively remake the world. If a first step toward changing tourism is recognition of our participation in it, poetry and literary studies have—alongside sociology, anthropology, and cultural geography—a role to play in self-critically engaging and rethinking it. Touristic poems are also metatouristic, reflecting on their conditions of possibility.

Uncomfortable though it may be to acknowledge, metatouristic poems help render visible the kinship between cultural tour guides and those of us who read and study literature comparatively, globally, or transnationally. To admit as much may be difficult, as it is for me personally. Whether living in the Middle East or Europe, traveling in Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, I have been pained by the specter of tourists with scant historical or cultural understanding of the worlds they enter, even as I've also often found myself falling short, however assiduous my efforts to learn. As critics and students of literature, we should work to avoid the superficiality of some forms of tourism and certain kinds of world literary study, closely engaging the cultural, formal, social, and linguistic specificities of individual works and their contexts. But the resemblances shouldn't be denied. Like cultural tourists, readers of global poetry make departures and returns in their horizon-widening journeys and periods of stay. Like travel to cultural sites, reading world poetry is usually at least in part a leisure activity, performed, to recur to the *OED*'s phrase for tourism's aims, "for pleasure or culture." Like cultural tourists, readers of critical works and anthologies encounter their field through the mediation and framing of signs, and just as tourism is a collecting activity, so too is anthologizing (etymologically, flower gathering). In our global age, when national frameworks no longer seem sufficiently capacious, we have to admit, if we're interested in transnational ap-

proaches, that poetry and our pedagogical engagement with it aren't innocent of touristic contamination. We should heed the cross-cultural nuances and self-reflective energies of the simultaneously touristic and post-, meta-, extra-, para-, even anti-touristic poems we read. Such works can help teach us, whether we're traveling by page or website, by ship, car, foot, or plane, to encounter global localities with awe and irony, imaginative engagement and peripheral vision, self-critically attentive to our complicity in touristic modes of desiring, looking, collecting, and to how language and history frame, construct, and layer our interconnected worlds.

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## NOTES

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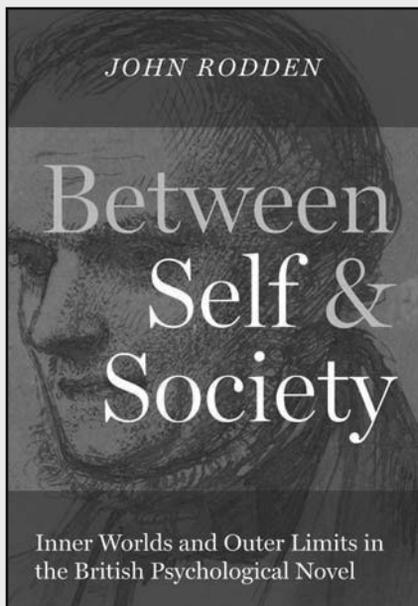
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