

TOURISM AS A 'MOMENT OF BEING'

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this article is to gather together a number of conceptual or theoretical points drawn from the wider social anthropological discourse on the nature of experience. It advances understandings of the anthropology of experience through the medium of tourism. In turn it also illuminates understandings of the nature of tourism experiences. The article is largely a theoretical piece that is illustrated with details drawn from an ethnographic study of two charter tourism resorts—Palmanova and Magaluf—in Mallorca. Therefore, in an attempt to elucidate more carefully what experience means, it draws on the discussions of 'experience' in the wider anthropological literature, most notably the existential anthropology of Michael Jackson (2005) and *The Anthropology of Experience* (Turner and Bruner 1986), and makes links to the writings of Pierre Bourdieu on the concepts of 'habitus' and 'field', bringing them to bear on the subject of tourism.

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Keywords: experience, *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung*, habitus, identity, Mallorca, tourists

Introduction¹

'Experience' seems to pervade all aspects of our lives: for example, gifts have become 'gift experiences' and some universities in the UK now offer 'Experience Days'.² Such is the apparent permeation of experience into all aspects of life that Pine and Gilmore (1999) make claims for there being "an experience economy" in which experience is the basis for economic development. Tourism is no exception and there are many examples of promotional materials that use 'experience' in their titles; a quick scan of on-line material produced: *Explore Culture and Heritage Experience Breaks*; *A Lakeland Heritage Experience*; *The Scotch Whisky Heritage Experience*; *The Best Tourism Experience Award* and so on. Added to this is the liberal sprinkling of 'experience' in the academic literature on tourism.³ The purpose of this article is to explore the anthropological discourses on of the meanings of experience and to bring them into focus through the lens of the study of a particular tourism setting; in so doing debates about experience will be furthered by providing a hitherto underexplored context for these debates as well as adding to discussions within the tourism studies literature.

The data used to support my discussion is drawn from a nine month period (between 1998–1999) of ethnographic fieldwork in Magaluf and Palmanova on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca.⁴ It involved periods of participant observation, which included taking

part in tourists' activities—bar crawls, island tours, night-time entertainment, sunbathing and so on.⁵ My data collection did not begin with a clearly defined research problem, for as Okely notes “the anthropologist rarely commences research with an hypothesis to test. There are few pre-set, neatly honed questions, although there are multiple questions in the fieldworker's head” (1994: 18). Instead the anthropologist has “foreshadowed problems”, which relate to the reasons why the research has been undertaken (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 24). Thus no formal interviews were conducted with tourists, but rather I engaged in free-flowing conversations which covered a range of topics from aspects of their holidays to wider political concerns. The foreshadowed problems related to ideas connected to understandings of personhood and identity and how these might be articulated in the form of, for example, choices made about food and drink, entertainment and the places in which these would be consumed.

Mallorca is in the north-west Mediterranean off the east coast of the Spanish peninsula. Magaluf and Palmanova are in the municipality of Calvià which is in the south-west of the island. The resorts are predominately ‘British’ in that the majority of tourists visiting the destinations hail from the UK, most as part of a package organised by a British tour operator. The volume of British tourists is such that English appears as the dominant language and there are overt signals and practices of Britishness in the resorts, discussed below. As I have noted elsewhere “for some of the tourists the visual display of signs of Britishness is an attraction” (2005: 263). However, it is also how the tourists feel that is important in that the visual consumption of the symbolic landscape and the literal consumption of ‘British’ food stuffs “give rise to feelings, understanding and thus knowledge of what it means for these tourists to be British” (ibid.). Some other destinations on the island also have their own ‘national’ character. For example Santa Ponça is seen as Irish and Peguara and S’Arenal (the latter located on the opposite shore of the Bay of Palma) are noted as German. It is not that other nationalities do not visit or stay in any of these destinations, it is rather that they simply do not appear in the number that would lend a place to have a particular national ‘flavour’.

Magaluf and Palmanova are in a distinctly bounded space (naturally by the sea and inland by an east-west running road). Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly where the border between the two resorts lies they each have their own distinct characteristics. Magaluf is known as a Club 18–30 style destination with the nickname of ‘Shagaluf’ and Palmanova is considered to be quieter and more family orientated. There are a number of activities in which tourists can take part, often organised by a tour operator. These include day trips ranging from visiting a pearl factory, a leather market, and scenic island tours, as well as organised evening and night outings to shows and bars. Other pastimes include diving, horse riding, paragliding, riding an inflated banana, and visiting amusement arcades. All of these, and more, sit alongside the expected beach holiday pursuits of sunbathing, swimming or playing in the pool or sea. The character of the spaces of the resorts is such as to make them landscapes driven by the promotion and action of various forms of consumption (Andrews 2006).

In the following section I trace the contours of anthropological discussion regarding the meaning and etymology of the word ‘experience’ in the English language, meanwhile drawing attention to the German translation of the word which offers a choice of two terms—*Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. This in turn gives rise to a semantic difference which I shall argue,

later in the article, brings a greater understanding of British tourism in Magaluf and Palmanova. Following this discussion, I specifically link 'experience' to tourism and consider the ways in which experience has been examined within the subject area. From this juncture the discussion melds with the ethnographic detail to explore how the experiences of tourists in the two resorts can be understood from the perspective of an existential anthropology, as a moment of realisation of personhood and identity.

Defining experience

As Robert Desjarlais notes: "to try to write about humans without reference to experience is like trying to think the unthinkable" (1996: 71). Correlatively, as tourism is a distinctly human affair, an understanding of tourism would be incomplete without a consideration of the experience or experiences of the protagonists involved (of which there are many, although here I concentrate specifically on the tourists). It has already been suggested that one of the issues connected to understanding 'tourist experiences' is that the exact meaning of the latter concept has not been subjected to critical examination. The question of definition of the word 'experience' has been alluded to, in a general sense, by Desjarlais when he says that "when it is defined, it involves a generic 'we'" (1996: 71), further arguing that a lack of definition "suggests that it is taken as a fundamental, authentic, and unchanging constant in human life" (1996: 71). Experience, therefore proceeds as a given.

This apparent lack of definition, or the assumed understandings of what it means, may be attributable to how the word appears in English. As Clifford Geertz contends, "individuals no longer learn something or succeed at something but have a learning experience or a success experience" (1986: 374). The implication is that experience is somehow graspable: an objectified, reified reality that can be turned into quantifiable questions of how many people are, for instance, 'sun seekers', or do they use one type of tourist facility over another? In this respect experience is linked to action and behaviour. However, in drawing on the hermeneutical philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, Edward Bruner argues that experience is not the same as behaviour:⁶

Experience (...) is not the equivalent to the more familiar concept of behaviour. The latter implies an outside observer describing someone else's actions (...) it also implies a standardised routine that one simply goes through. An experience is more personal, as it refers to an active self, to a human being who not only engages in but shapes an action. We can have an experience but we cannot have a behaviour. (Bruner 1986: 5)

Experience is not simply in action, but is derived from how the reality of life is received into consciousness and told or expressed. For Dilthey, life has a temporal *flow* which cannot be directly experienced because to do so would involve becoming an external observer to one's own life, thereby placing experience in the past as a memory rather than 'of the moment'. Experience therefore relates to an inner world which finds an outlet in expressions (characterised as rituals, literary texts, performances, objects). For the purpose of this article one important aspect to note about expressions is that they are "periods of heightened activity when a society's presuppositions are most exposed, when core values are expressed, and when symbolism is most apparent" (Bruner 1986: 9–10). The reason why this is a

central concern is, I shall argue, that the British tourism experience (still to be defined) in Magaluf and Palmanova is an expression, in the vein described by Bruner, as it is a time of heightened activity, replete with symbols and signals that enable an articulation of the core values of a particular aspect of 'British' society.

An examination of the etymology of experience shows its roots to be based in the Latin compound verb *experiri* which means to test, trial, attempt, try. The base of the verb 'per' is from *periculum* which relates experience to experimentation: to make an experiment of. One can also have an experience—"to undergo or suffer, to feel" (first recorded usage 1588) (Weekley 1967; Shorter OED 1983). Experience can thus be concerned with actually observed phenomena in order to gain knowledge, or a subjective state in which one has undergone something or been affected by something. Victor Turner (1986: 34–5) finds links between the word experience and the expression or celebration of experience in theatrical works. Indeed, he comments:

I attempted an etymology of the English word for 'experience', deriving it from the Indo-European base *per-*, 'to attempt, venture, risk'—you can see already how its double, 'drama,' from the Greek *dran*, 'to do,' mirrors culturally the 'peril' etymologically implicated in 'experience'.

The link to drama to which Turner alludes is concerned with expression, as dramatic performances are one form of expression. Turner further draws attention to the dichotomy between 'experience' as a passive endurance and acceptance of events and 'an experience' as something that stands out. In relation to tourism this is illustrated by the comments of a female tourist from Essex holidaying with a group of friends, all in their early twenties, who comments: "We're on holiday and want to *experience different things*, not just sit by the pool all the time" (emphasis added). This suggests that the young women are looking for something that will mark their holiday out, that will take them beyond the mundane or everydayness of sitting by the pool which they may have to 'endure' passively. Bruner's argument sets the parameters for the seminal text *The Anthropology of Experience* which endeavours to explore how people experience and express their cultures. However, as Geertz notes in his epilogue to the volume: experience is "the elusive master concept of this collection, one that none of the authors seems altogether happy with and none feels able to really do without" (1986: 374). Bruner and Turner's (1986) volume concentrates on the nature of experience within a dramaturgical context of performance and narrative. Such a framework has continued to provide the contours of the nature of experience, as Gary B. Palmer and William R. Jankowiak suggest: "studies in anthropology have alternately taken performance and experience as their organizing concepts" (1996: 225). Few anthropologists⁷ appear to have examined closely what, when experience is being discussed, is meant by the term, and the reliance on performativity means that we are confined to representation. However, as Thomas J. Csordas observes, "it will not do to identify what we are getting at with a negative term, as something non-representational" (1994: 10).

The English language only provides one word for experience, whereas the German language has two—*Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*—which allows for the expression of the two types of experience: that which stands out and that which is passively endured. According to Jackson (1996) the two words can also represent the idea of living: that is, *Erfahrung* refers to the idea of encounters and *Erlebnis* to the world of senses and emotions, intuition

and movement. The *Erlebnis* is not fixed, rather it is a process in which there are a number of possibilities that arise within or through a particular situation; it is the world of the subjective or of being affected by something. By considering the semantic difference between the German words for experience found in *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* this article seeks to go beyond performance and representation to further anthropological understandings of experience.

According to arguments proposed by Jackson in his work on existential anthropology, experience is entwined with 'being'. As Jackson observes "[b]eing is (...) in continual flux, waxing and waning according to a person's situation" (2005: x). 'Being' or 'to be' in this respect is related to an understanding of a search for oneself or for belonging and how much control one has over one's life-world.⁸ There are times when our sense of being (by which I mean our understanding of selfhood or personhood and therefore identity) is subjected to greater self awareness and reflexivity. Drawing on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1968) Jackson contends that "our humanness is the outcome of a dynamic *relationship* between circumstances over which we have little control—such as phylogenetic predispositions, our upbringing and our social history—and our capacity to *live* those circumstances in a variety of ways" (2005: xi). Thus, to apply this to tourism: tourists' experiences are grounded not just in what happens at the destination but the relationship between the events or circumstances at the destination and the sense of being (how or who one is) that the tourists' take with them, something that is crafted in the home world. At the same time the tourism 'environment', so to speak, provides an opportunity for potentialities of being to arise and become manifest. As Erik Cohen has noted in relation to his category of recreational tourists (into which those present in Magaluf and Palmanova would fit), this mode of tourism "permits a playful outlet to modern man's longing for Reality" (1985: 300). My argument is that the 'act' of tourism in the two resorts allows the performance or enactment of internally held emotions and thoughts which is brought about by a heightened sense of self and group identity and belonging. This occurs because the tourist experience relates to that expression, as discussed above and described by Bruner (1986), as a time when elements of the presuppositions of aspects of society—in this case British—are most exposed, core values expressed, and its symbolism most apparent.

Experiencing tourism

In their attempt to answer the question: "What are the components that constitute the tourist experience?" Shuai Quan and Ning Wang (2004: 297) identify marked differences between social scientific and tourist industry perceptions leading to their proposing two experiential "elements". They label these in terms of the social science perspective "peak experiences" and in terms of the industry "supporting experiences". Their argument is that approaches in the social sciences discuss tourists' experiences as being "in sharp contrast or opposing to the daily experience" (2004: 298). The "supporting experiences" of concern to the tourism operation's perspective refer to the more mundane, everyday activities that are not necessarily unique to tourism, for example eating, sleeping and travelling. Quan and Wang assert, however, that these should be integrated and, via the particular example of food experiences, they develop a structural model that integrates both perspectives.

Thus in this model “a large portion of food consumption in tourism can be seen as the extension of daily dining experience. However, under certain situations, tourists may quest for food experiences that are beyond the boundaries of the routine and familiar” (2004: 302). Such an approach, by examining all aspects of the tourist ‘package’, undoubtedly has its uses from the outlook of tourism operations. It enables a better understanding of what tourists do and desire which might ultimately be fed into managing all aspects of that thing labelled as ‘the tourist experience’. However, like much of the other tourism studies literature cited in the third endnote it does little to illuminate or problematize the question of ‘experience’ itself.

In her essay *The Tourist Moment*, Stephanie Hom Cary (2003) has argued that there is a gap between the representation of tourism experiences and the experiences themselves. In an examination of selected narratives drawn from travel writing and the post-trip memories of tourists she argues that there is a “tourist moment” which is characterised by “self-discovery (...) as a tourist-subject” (2003: 73). This constitutes a moment of ‘self-discovery’ that is at once erased because the tourist is immediately subsumed into the narrative. She claims that “it points toward the impossibility of analyzing ‘the tourist’ as an existential subject, for as journals, postcards, and anecdotes reveal, travel is incessantly narrativized” (ibid.).

This article seeks not only to address the problem of what experience is by exploring two elements in the concept which emerge in the translation of the word from English into German; but also to argue that an existential analysis of tourists is possible by considering the subtle differences between the forms of experience found in the German words *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. The discussion, which is informed by what tourists are doing and saying, is an attempt to elucidate more carefully what experience means. It further demonstrates that tourism allows and creates reflexive and non-reflexive moments based on the nature of selfhood that are embodied and practised to form understandings of self-identity.

The following ethnographic details illustrate the plethora of symbols and heightened sense of activity (Bruner 1986) in the two resorts that make it a suitable lens or vehicle in which to explore the issue of the nature of experience within the context of a tourism setting.

A very British experience

The ‘Britishness’ of the two resorts cannot be emphasised enough. There are overt displays of national identity in the form of literal flag waving, with Union Jacks draped from hotel and apartment balconies, and more banal (Billig 1995) expressions: those everyday non-reflexive actions that feed into and off a sense of self, indicated by, for example, the presence of English language tabloid newspapers and the playing of BBC sitcoms in many of the cafe-bars that the British tourists frequent. Indeed, this is a landscape replete with references to the tourists’ homeworld, with facilities called Eastenders, The Red Lion, The White Horse and so on. Another example in which the Britishness of the resorts is emphasised—albeit contracted to being ‘English’—is in the welcome meetings⁹ which provide further opportunity to emphasise the differences to be found in the resorts and outside of them. For example, at one welcome meeting the female tour operator representative (rep) advised:

“This is an English hotel; although England is a multicultural society, everyone has started their journey in England and everyone speaks English so it is safe to talk to people”. The tourists are further advised that they do not need to be independent because the operator can organize everything. The rep draws attention to one night-time entertainment excursion organised to a cabaret-style show, *Son Amar*: “There’s no need to worry, we’ll all sit together. There are British and American performers. You need to watch out for the French man though because he’ll try to get you on stage.”

In many ways this represents a double-bind in tourism. The idea of ‘getting away from it all’ or a ‘search for difference or authenticity’ is one that has not only been articulated in the tourism literature (MacCannell 1976; Urry 1990) but is also an articulation by the tourists themselves. For example, another member of the group of female tourists in their early twenties from Essex, comments: “At the end of the day you want to do something different.” However, for all intents and purposes the Britishness of the resorts works against the very notion of difference although, as shall become apparent, the degree of difference is something felt by tourists in relation to their sense of self-identity and their ability to express that feeling. What will become clear in later discussion is that whilst the sense of Britishness is seemingly all-pervasive in the resorts, the machinations of the tourism industry work to highlight and create differences for its own ends.

I have already alluded to the symbolism of Britishness present in Magaluf and Palmanova. This landscape derives a greater sense of importance and arouses heightened senses of understandings of self because of the background against which it is painted. By this I mean the articulation of many tourists about a sense of loss of identity felt in the home world of the UK and feelings of ‘being at home’ in Mallorca and finding a greater feeling of freedom. When describing to me motivations for an overseas holiday one male tourist from Yorkshire comments on the obvious association of the weather but adds, “because of British bureaucracy (...) we cannot drink all day”; another male tourist claims, “I want to live life how I want to live it, there are too many rules in the UK”; and yet another male tourist, from Birmingham, explains, in terms of the difference between going into a nightclub in the UK and one in Mallorca: “It is freedom—I couldn’t go into a nightclub in shorts and t-shirt at home, they are too strict in England, here there are no restrictions.” This is one level in which ideas of freedom and control are expressed; another operates at a broader level in relation to the outside forces that are felt to impinge on ideas of identity and control. One such force is that of the European Union whose influence on ‘British ways of life’ is expressed in a news report about the content of sausages under the banner “You can’t call a sausage a sausage anymore” (BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, Friday 27th September 2002) in which it was noted that standards for the meat contents of sausages are set by EU regulations rather than those found in the UK. The relationship between the British and the European Union is often expressed in the British tabloid press as a form of invasion.¹⁰ As Kenneth Lunn has observed: “Great concern is frequently expressed about the loss of British sovereignty which seems implicit in a greater acceptance of European integration” (1996: 84). Such feelings of too much external control, whether that is in the guise of localised policies or those exercised from beyond the local, means that for many they are unable to live their lives how they would wish.

The field of Magaluf and Palmanova

The social environment in which 'being a tourist' or 'being British' takes place is within what might usefully be equated to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field' (*champ*), which he describes as a "structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force (...) Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field" (1993: 6). 'Field' is intimately linked with habitus because, as Bourdieu further asserts, in order to enter and participate in the field "one must possess the habitus which predisposes one to enter that field, that game, and not another" (1993: 8).

To translate this idea to the present discussion, I am arguing that tourism presents itself as a particular field and can be understood as a "social ground that shapes consciousness" (Johnson 1993: 4). However, as Johnson also points out, "social reality is to some extent shaped by the conceptions and representations that individuals make of the social world" (ibid.). Thus field and the individual feed into and off one another. The creation of tourists' experiences within the field of tourism reflects Jean-Didier Urbain's (1989) observation that the "pulling" advertising images aimed at the potential traveller are reflections of the consciousness of the traveller. In other words they appeal to the habitus of the social group or individual at which they are aimed and contribute to the confirmation and development of the life-world (Jackson 1996).

However, what we can say about the holiday-taking style of tourism which is under discussion here, is that it involves a movement between the geographical spaces which constitute the field and that the 'new' geographical space is constructed as, or understood in some ways to be, different from the home-world. The sense of difference is one of which tourists are made aware and is heightened as soon as they arrive on the island. For example, the majority of tourists arriving on a package holiday use the tour operator-provided airport transfer buses in which they are transported to their particular apartment or hotel accompanied by a company representative. The following is derived from a transfer in which I accompanied the rep from the airport to the tourists' various accommodations. Once everyone has boarded the coach at the airport and it has set off, the male rep welcomes them aboard and dispenses the following advice: "Remember to change your watches, they go forward by one hour. We advise you not to drink the water; it is safe but it might taste different."¹¹ Please remember to attend the welcome meeting because even if you have been to the island before your rep will be able to tell you of the new and exciting things you can do."¹² The rep then explains the hotel check-in procedures and everyone is reminded to have their passports ready.

It is at this point of difference that a greater propensity arises for the emergence of different possibilities of being. As Jackson suggests: "Any theory of culture, *habitus* or lifeworld must include some account of those moments in social life when the customary, given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended, and negated. At such moments, crisis transforms the world from an apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of possibilities" (1996: 22). The intention here is to explore the degree to which the habitus of those visiting Palmanova and Magaluf is disrupted and gives rise to possibilities of being that influence the *Erlebnis*, or the world of senses and emotions, intuition and movement: that is, in this scenario, the feelings and senses attached to understandings of the practice of Britishness.

I wish to discuss whether there is an element of *Erlebnis* that arises through or contributes to a disruption of habitus that can illuminate the effervescent expressions of national identity that appear in the resorts. As Turner (1986: 35–36) notes:

Each of us has had certain ‘experiences’ which have been formative and transformative, that is, distinguishable, isolable sequences of external events and internal responses to them (...) being caught up with some mode of what Emile Durkheim called ‘social effervescence’ (...) These experiences that erupt from or disrupt routinized, repetitive behavior begin with shocks of pain or pleasure. Such shocks are evocative: they summon up precedents and likenesses from the conscious or unconscious past (...) What happens next is an anxious need to find meaning in what has disconcerted us, whether by pain or pleasure, and converted mere experience into *an* experience.

In trying to arrive at what is found in these ‘certain experiences’ it proves useful to consider again the work of Jackson in which he argues ‘meaning in life’ might be elucidated. He suggests that it is those moments of human life that cannot be easily grasped and controlled “that are existentially most imperative to us, and are at stake in the critical moments that define our lives, notably love, mutual recognition, respect, dignity and wellbeing” (2005: xxix). Such moments arise in what Jackson calls ‘events’, defined as a situation or occasion when, for example, something is at risk, or something memorable has been lived through. Jackson’s discussion focuses upon events that have arisen in the course of individual’s lives connected to traumatic situations, for example war. It is not the intention here to equate such incidents to the comparatively privileged and luxurious world of tourists; but, rather, to use the basic structure of Jackson’s argument to illuminate the idea of tourism as *Erlebnis*, an event, a moment in which a sense of self-identity is most apparent or as a time that allows an expression of latent thoughts to emerge.

The idea that tourism marks some form of hiatus in the (yearly) life course has been well rehearsed in the study of tourism; for example Graburn’s (1989) seminal text *Tourism as a Sacred Journey* follows Van Gennep’s formulation of *rites de passage* to understand the touristic experience as a leaving of the normative world, to enter a liminal phase of separation and *communitas*, before re-incorporation into the home world as a re-created individual. The ritualistic and episodic role of tourism as a time that allows different forms of behaviour to emerge has been commented upon by, amongst others, James W. Lett Jr. (1983) and Eugenia Wickens (2002). The former refers to the apparently ludic behaviour of tourists in relation to their sexual conduct aboard charter tourism yachts. The latter makes reference to the distinctive roles Wickens identifies tourists adopting in their relations with local people encountered as part of the vacation. The holiday to Magaluf and Palamnova is no less of an event that for some might fit the formulation proposed by Graburn. For example, the occurrence is marked in some cases by careful preparation of clothes—purchasing new outfits, the setting aside of ‘holiday’ clothes—the saving of money to spend during the visit, and the disruption to the normal flow of events in the home world by the encounter with a different physical space and temporal flow, with an eventual re-incorporation into the home world.

The sense of difference is added to by the highlighting of the strangeness and dangers of the setting. I have already alluded to this in the reference to the water identified on the journey between airport and hotel by the tour operator rep on the transport bus. The machinations of the tourism industry, particularly in the form of the welcome meetings,

further highlight issues of danger and safety. Other advice on the dangers of the situation comes in the form of sun safety, avoiding certain attractions because they will be ‘full of Germans’, and being aware of the pickpockets on the local buses. Although the warnings dispensed by tour operator representatives about the latter two are in part directed by commercial concerns that attempt to ensure that the tourists stay within the familiar and ‘safe’ world of the tour operator when parting with their cash, they nevertheless serve to amplify notions of difference and strangeness, which inculcate a sense of self-awareness.

This awareness comes to the fore to the extent that an ice-lolly cannot be eaten or ice cubes used in drinks because they are, in the words of one middle-aged female tourist: “made from their water”. The key here is the possessive ‘their’: it is not just ‘the water’ but the water of the other; it belongs to ‘them’. To ingest the wrong or harmful water would endanger the self not only in the literal, physical, somatic consequences that may arise (for example a stomach upset) but in the form of a symbolic contamination of the self by an incorporation or embodiment of the other. As Mary Douglas (1975, 1984, 1987) has noted, food and drink give insights into the symbolic world and she further asserts “that food is not likely to be polluting at all unless the external boundaries of the social system are under pressure” (1966: 151). In this particular instance we can replace food with water and note that the boundaries to social selfhood are under pressure because they are in a potentially threatening environment. As Quan and Wang observe: “food in tourism, as the extension of the ontological home comfort, constitutes a ‘*psychological island of home*’ for tourists, which helps avoid cultural shocks” (2004: 302).

Jackson (2005), drawing upon the work of D.W. Winnicott (1974), reasons culture is not a given but a ‘common pool’ which individuals and groups both contribute to and draw upon providing they have a use for what they find. Whether to give or withhold from the ‘cultural pool’ is linked to personal life-histories and situations in which, I would suggest, the flow of our actions and dispositions is related to everyday practices, such as, for instance, drinking water. To drink the water in Magaluf becomes a reflexive act that focuses on the relationship between self and other. To withdraw or not from the ‘pool of culture’ is ultimately related to maintaining existence, or *well-being* and the interaction is based on “a constant struggle to sustain and augment our being in relation to the being of others” (Jackson 2005: xiv). In the situation described here the decision not to drink of the local water is arguably based on an awareness and cultural understanding of self in relation to an other of which the latter is symbolised by the water. The culture of the tourist refusing the water is maintained at the point of resistance to the incorporation of the other.

Moments of being

Jackson argues that it is difficult to “grasp intellectually all the variables at play in any action or all the repercussions that follow from it” (2005: xxv), but that there are instances or “moments of being” (an expression he borrows from Virginia Woolf) “when we are afforded glimpses into what is at stake for the actors, and how they experience the social field in which they find themselves” (2005: xxv). He goes on to suggest that many of the most enduring ethnographies are descriptions of single ‘events’ (Malinowski’s kula ring, Geertz’s cock fight, although compounded of more than one event). By looking closely at

events, then, it is possible to illuminate experiences of social being. The difficulty of laying hold cognitively to the myriad elements that make-up social life, and either *Erlebnis* or *Erfahrung*, relates to the idea of the temporal flow of life discussed by Dilthey (Bruner 1986). That is, that in order to grasp that flow then moments would need to be observed, with the mind conscious of itself which would in turn interrupt flow. The self awareness and reflexivity comes to the fore in the interruption of flow by expressions of heightened activity in which awareness of self is most acute.

So, a holiday can be understood as an event, but as Jackson's observation regarding the cock fight suggests, it can also be appreciated as a compound of more than one event. For example, within the vacation there is a flow between its own ordinary-ness and everyday-ness found in the establishment of routines (for example the same spot on the beach everyday, the same time for meals and the choice of the same table and so on) and the greater sense of heightened awareness and activity that arises in specific, focused events.

Thus the intensity of the feelings is further augmented by particular activities. For example, one form of night-time entertainment is *Pirates Adventure*; it is a pantomime, acrobatic style of performance that re-enacts, through a pastiche of pirate characters from British history, conflicts between the British and the French, in which the former are victorious. Direct and implicit reference is also made to the Germans and Spanish.¹³ The audience are on the side of the British and are encouraged by the show's comperes to make fervent displays of their Britishness by, amongst other things, calling the lead 'French' pirate 'you French Bastard' (or, if it is a family show, a 'French poof' or 'pillock'). This "focussed gathering" (Geertz 1973), full of its victory and heroism becomes, to borrow from Geertz, "a [British] reading of [British] experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves" (1973: 424). So, what I am suggesting is that the focussed gathering of this type of holiday in general, and the smaller focussed gatherings of particular events within the holiday, give rise to an effervescent expression of Britishness which is there in the home world, below the surface, but is usually held in check. The disruption to the habitus caused by the holiday allows the latent tendencies to emerge. This understanding takes us back to Bruner's (1986) contention that, in line with Dilthey, life has a temporal flow that cannot be directly experienced but finds expression in "periods of heightened activity (...) when core values are expressed, and when symbolism is most apparent" (1986: 9–10).

Following on from this, if tourism is taken as an event, sets of episodes, or 'moments of being' for those involved in it, not only can we elucidate upon what it means to be involved in tourism as a tourist or as a 'builder' of that experience, it also becomes possible to explore how people "insert themselves into the world" (Arendt 1958, cited in Jackson 2005: xxi) and feed into or live off the 'pool of culture' which is constantly being made and remade by their interactions with different levels of social organisation. Thus, tourism 'environments' offer potentialities. For some the potentiality may be to maintain an existence, to make life worth living, so to speak.

In a tourism scenario such as that found in Palmanova and Magaluf with their emphasis on Britishness and their appeal to the home-world, the idea of the holiday as different or 'the other' becomes itself problematic. This is because it is not an other in the sense of an exotic cultural Other (Said 1985) but it is other in that the holiday allows an articulation of national identity and selfhood that is not present in the home world. I now wish to consider this further by exploring the extent to which tourism and tourists' experiences as

Erlebnis might be thought of as a ‘moment of being’, as a disruption to habitus and the flow of ‘everyday’ life by a time of expression and greater self awareness.

Breaking habitus

It is in consideration of the idea that the habitus of the tourists has been disrupted through their movement from one space to another that we might understand the habitus as being ‘broken’. To reiterate, as Jackson notes:

Any theory of culture, *habitus* or lifeworld must include some account of those moments in social life when the customary, given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended, and negated. At such moments, crisis transforms the world from an apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of possibilities. (1996: 22)

As has already been noted, tourists’ experiences have often been described as a search for difference or the other. However, this is not always the case and for many of the tourists to Palmanova and Magaluf they choose and like their holiday precisely because it is not the exotic other. As one Scottish male tourist in his 30s commented: “I wouldn’t like to go to India on holiday; it is too underdeveloped. I like to come to a place where I know that I can get a fried breakfast.”¹⁴ However, that the holiday to Mallorca represents an other in comparison to the home world and can be understood as different from the UK is acknowledged by a different female tourist in her 70s who announced, “I said to him, ‘can’t we go and live in Spain? I feel more at home here than I do in England.’” This suggests that there is lack of feeling of belonging in the home world, that one cannot be who one is in part, as already suggested, because of the lack of feeling of control and freedom. That Spain (or in this case in particular, Mallorca) offers a feeling of being able to be British or English suggests that it allows the ‘normal’ way of being to be disrupted, thus allowing the habitus to be broken and for potentialities of being to emerge. Indeed, Bourdieu contends that “[d]ispositions do not lead in a determinate way to a determinate action; they are revealed and fulfilled only in appropriate circumstances and in the relationship with a situation” (2000: 149). The ‘appropriate circumstances’ in this particular case refer to the field of action created in the resorts characterised by an effervescent Britishness in which there is a high degree of self-reflexivity and awareness. This is evidenced in the actions of, for example, one male tourist who, upon finding a toy parrot that mimicked the last sound it heard, stood repeating to the bird “I’m British, I’m British”, thereby getting his words echoed back to him.

The notion of change has been also explored by Jackson in the idea of a ‘disrupted habitus’. Using the example of initiation rites of the Kuranko of north-eastern Sierra Leone he notes that during this period men and women enact role reversals, which, he claims are “deeply instilled in the somatic unconscious” (1989: 129). The disruption of the environment brought about by the initiation “lays people open to possibilities of behavior which they embody but ordinarily are not inclined to express (...) it is on the strength of these extraordinary possibilities that people control and recreate their world, their *habitus*” (1989: 129). Thus habitus is ongoing and negotiable, and peoples’ place in the world or

their perception of the world begins with them; the world is how it is lived (Merleau-Ponty 1962). That is, the world or life comes into being through the performances, attitudes, and characters of individuals and groups. If tourism is to be understood in the same vein as a ritual process then it too allows for the possibility of a disrupted habitus to arise, in the way indicated by Jackson.

In the case of Palmanova and Magaluf the tourists encounter a disrupted environment; they are not in their habitus of home. Following Jackson, the tourists are now open to new possibilities of being, or of allowing unconscious dispositions to come to the fore. Underlying the argument proposed here is the idea that whilst the resorts are based upon, and appeal to, a particular type of Britishness, they offer a concentration of a Britishness that is, as indicated by some of the comments of the tourists, felt to be diluted in the home world, thus enabling the tourists to feel more at home, more British in Spain than they do in the UK. The action takes place in a confined space during a specified period of time in which references to Britishness are exaggerated in order to appeal to the desire for familiarity described above. In addition there is a convergence or congregation of generally like-minded people¹⁵, particularly in terms of a national identity (or identities) added to by finding themselves in a strange but yet familiar situation in which there is a heightened sense of awareness of identity. In effect there is an effervescent Britishness which, like a spiritual effervescence (Durkheim 1915), infects the group as a whole, adding to the feelings and heightened awareness of identity which is transmitted back into the situation. Thus one tourist describes how she and her family “wouldn’t normally entertain such people” and notes, “We wouldn’t normally watch an England football game, but we’ve come for the atmosphere because it’s British.” This suggests that the different situation in which these particular tourists find themselves has disrupted the normal flow of their habitus thereby making them more aware of their national identity. This is to the extent that the exuberance associated with a symbol of nation—a national football team, involved in an international game—becomes an activity with which they must engage. Thus the experience of tourism in this context is akin to *Erlebnis*. The identity of Britishness or Englishness which these particular tourists have internalised is finding an outlet in the form of the event or moment in which they are confronted with who they are through the focus of the gathering to watch the football match.

Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to set the scene for a more nuanced understanding of ‘the tourist experience’ than that typically advanced in the tourism studies literature thus far. This is with particular reference to the way in which the word ‘experience’ itself is used. The discussion has moved beyond understanding experience as simply what people do or how they behave. I have drawn heavily upon and outlined the work of those engaged in social anthropological discussions regarding the nature of experience, in particular that of Jackson (1989, 1996, 2005), and Turner and Bruner (1986), to illuminate how the practice of charter tourism might be understood as an opportunity, for the participants, for increased reflexivity and heightened awareness of individual and collective identity within a field (Bourdieu 1993) of action that is characterised by an effervescent form of Britishness.

In drawing upon ethnographic detail I have demonstrated that tourism can be understood as a form of *Erlebnis*, an experience that stands out and thus causes greater awareness of self and others. The experience is marked for a number of reasons: it is change in actual physical space, the machinations of the tourism industry serve to make it attendant with some degree of fear and danger and many of the tourists themselves understand the event as a special or different occasion from their quotidian world. What the language of the tour operators is doing in the examples discussed above is to tap into a wider discourse of perceived threats to self-identity (in this case firmly linked to a national identity) that are played out in issues concerning the UK's relationship with the European Union.¹⁶ One issue from the EU that has arisen is the use of metric weights as opposed to imperial measures. This has been a contentious issue in the UK as the move toward metrification has been seen, by some, as an imposition from Europe and a threat to independence. Lunn, for example, observes that “[g]reat concern is frequently expressed about the loss of British sovereignty which seems implicit in a greater acceptance of European integration” (1996: 84). The language used to describe aspects of the world such as length and weight, is a way of articulating and relating to that world; it informs one's habitus. In short it is bound up with ideas of person and identity. As Bourdieu notes “He [the agent] feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus” (2000: 143). What happens in the changes in how weights and measures are described, for example, is an attack on the habitus, in that the ways people relate to, and are in the world, is made different.¹⁷ For one elderly, female tourist who felt that she had witnessed too many changes “England isn't England anymore”. In short, occurrences like those associated with the issues of metrification serve to threaten one's identity. Tourism becomes intimately linked to a sense of identity, to our ‘being’ which, to reiterate Jackson's point, “is (...) in continual flux, waxing and waning according to a person's situation” (2005: x). The habitus then is constantly being made and re-made within the temporal flow of life that may be punctuated by particular occurrences that cause it to be reaffirmed, protected or developed in some way.

What I am suggesting is that in the focussed gathering and its attendant expression of effervescent Britishness, the holiday ‘event’ (by which I mean that temporal and spatially defined happening that can be understood as a focussed gathering) becomes experience in the vein of *Erlebnis*. In so doing I am moving the discussion of tourists' experiences beyond the confines of observed phenomena and affect based around what actions they take. Rather, I am seeking to place an emphasis upon how being on holiday makes the tourists feel, what understandings it brings about the self and how these are constructed and understood in relation to the other. This can, of course, only be achieved in part by observation of actions and dispositions. However, in thinking about the meanings of these tourism experiences as *Erlebnis* they can be understood as part of the more general processes of the rhythm of ‘being’ or ‘living’ in the world. That is, they are composed of times from non or little reflexivity regarding understandings of selfhood to those moments that pierce that rhythm (of which tourism is but one example) and give rise to a heightened state of self and group awareness. This in turn informs the habitus and ultimately ideas of personhood and identity. Taken in this vein we reach a more complex conceptualisation of what it means to ‘experience’ the ‘tourism experience’. In turn this takes us outside the strictures of experience as performance and representation to that of an “existential immediacy” (Csordas, 1994: 10) as a moment of ‘being-in-the world’.

NOTES

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- ¹ I am indebted to Professor Guili Liebman who first introduced me to the fact that the English word 'experience' translates into two different words in German. I am grateful to Professor Michael Jackson for comments on an earlier draft of this article. Lastly, my thanks go to Dr Les Roberts for comments, suggestions and discussions at the various stages of the production of this article.
- ² For an example see <<http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/ECL/experienceday/index.htm>>
- ³ See Cohen 1979; Mitchell 1983; Wang 1999; Ryan 2002; Bigné et al. 2004; Trauer and Ryan 2004; Stamboulis and Skayannis 2002; Uriely 2005; Wearing 2001; Garrod and Wilson 2003; Singh 2004; McCabe 2002; and Jennings and Nickerson 2005 to name but a few.
- ⁴ This was funded by the then University of North London as part of my Ph.D. bursary.
- ⁵ Although this sounds like fun it presented numerous issues for me as a researcher as I encountered some aspects of *The Shadow Side of Fieldwork* (McLean and Leibing 2007) and the period of fieldwork became one of the more troubling episodes in my life.
- ⁶ I am particularly indebted to the work of Ed Bruner (1984) in the Introduction to *The Anthropology of Experience* for his very accessible overview of Dilthey's main arguments.
- ⁷ Here one might refer to those authors already cited, for example, Desjerlais, Turner and Bruner, Jackson and add Moshe Shokeid (1992). Shokeid outlines a brief discussion regarding two meanings of experience but does not depart radically from that offered by Turner and Bruner (1986) and continues in the vein of examining the concept in relation to ideas of performance.
- ⁸ That is: "that domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habituality, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its biographical particularities, its decisive events and indecisive strategies" (Jackson, 1996: 7–8).
- ⁹ Welcome meetings are when new 'guests' are given a talk by the tour operator rep about the facilities in the resort and also the additional excursions organised by the tour operator to shows, other parts of the island etc. I have explored the way in which welcome meetings are premised primarily on commercial concerns (see Andrews, 2000).
- ¹⁰ For an example see *The Sun* May 15th 2003: 1, 6–7.
- ¹¹ In some advice given to tourists by reps they are advised not to drink the water because it is *not* safe.
- ¹² Again for a fuller account of welcome meetings see Andrews (2000).
- ¹³ These are the same nations of which *The Sun* (2003), reporting on proposed closer ties between the UK and the European Union, referred to the need to "see them all off"—recouring to past military encounters from the Spanish Armada to the Second World War.
- ¹⁴ The significance of the fried breakfast is that it is presented as British and, to follow Barthes (1993), it becomes a signifier of national identity. The statement made by the tourist also accords with Quan and Wang's observation discussed earlier that food in tourism offers an "extension of the ontological home comfort" (2004: 302).
- ¹⁵ This is not to say that there is no social stratification to be identified or that the tourists do not seek to establish their identities in their relationships between self and other tourists. However, the tourists are on the whole white, heterosexual and working class.
- ¹⁶ All of this is entwined with ideas pertaining to a loss of empire, perceived threats from immigrants and asylum seekers and the forces of globalisation more generally.
- ¹⁷ This issue is not peculiar to the British; Hanefors and Selwyn have noted of the Dalecarlian horse that its depiction in a seated position was criticised as "a potent symbol of subservience in contemporary world affairs" (2000: 260).

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