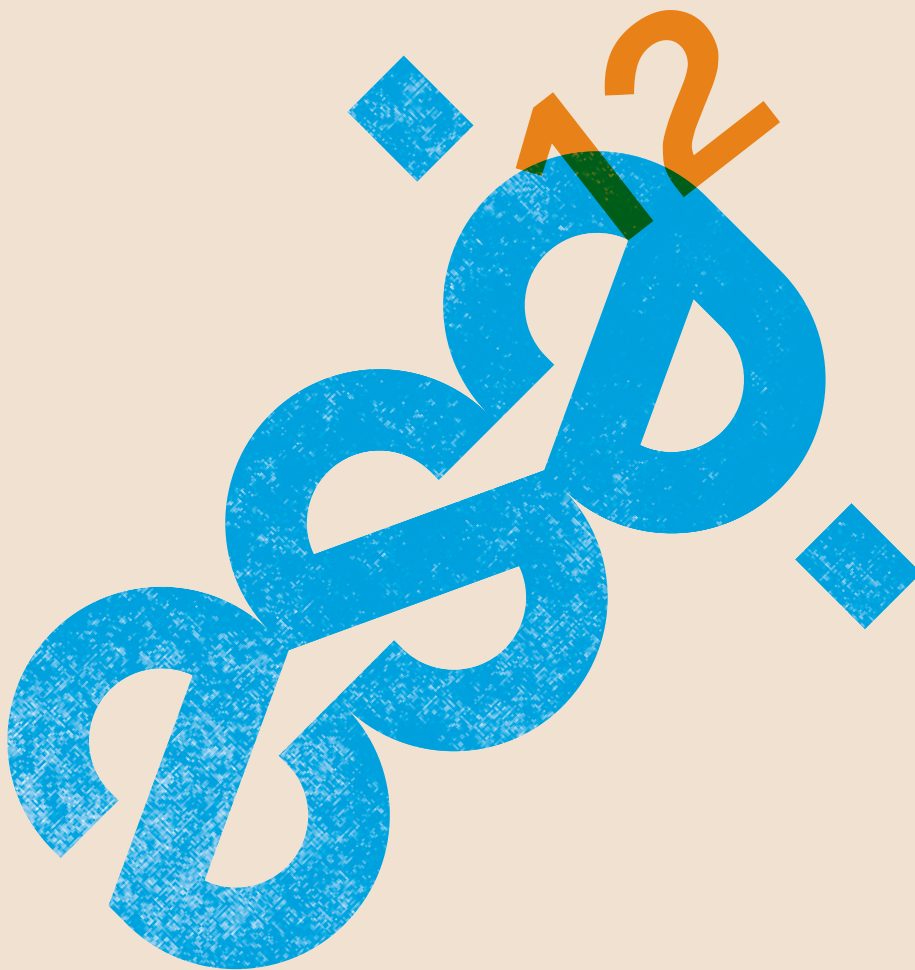
Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 12, 2020

Edited by Vítor Moura and Connell Vaughan



Published by

Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics
Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch
Internet: http://proceedings.eurosa.org
Email: proceedings@eurosa.org
ISSN: 1664 – 5278

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The European Society for Aesthetics

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Design by Fernando Infante Del Rosal

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European Society for Aesthetics

The Aesthetic Paradox of Tourism

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ABSTRACT. Everyday Aesthetics is known to be beset by a dilemma: how is it possible to reconcile the detached attitude that typically characterizes aesthetic appreciation with the nature of everyday routine? In this paper, the dilemma is addressed by considering cultural tourism as a paradigmatic case of aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary. By examining the aesthetic motivations that animate cultural tourism, the study shows that, while seeking authenticity in the 'un-touristed', tourists remain trapped in their own, detached, 'tourist gaze'. The analogy between the dilemma of everyday aesthetics and the aesthetic paradox of tourism allows for the application to the latter of the strategies that have been put forward to solve the former. What emerges is that, whereas approaches that rely on aesthetic detachment reproduce the dilemma, those that insist on the aesthetic value of the ordinary 'as such' offer tourists a way out of the paradox. Nonetheless, effective as they seem in mitigating the risk of frustration that may derive from touristic activities, these approaches appear to reduce the aesthetic to an extremely thin notion, thereby weakening their own theoretical strength.

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1. Introduction

Millions of Japanese tourists visit Paris every year. On average, twenty of them are so disconcerted by the gap between reality and their idealized image of the city, that they fall prey to the so-called *Paris syndrome*, a condition characterized by psychiatric symptoms including delusional states, derealization, depersonalization and anxiety (Viala et al., 2004). Interestingly, subjects suffering from the syndrome are mainly travelers concerned with the aesthetic aspect of their journey.[3]

Psychopathology aside, the gap between expectations and reality is a common experience for tourists. Why? And what does this imply from the point of view of philosophical aesthetics? While disappointment may partly result from tourists' preemptive idealization of the place they are visiting, there seems to be a more structural reason at the root of this negative experience, one related to the intrinsic logic of tourism as an aesthetic practice. Marrying insights from tourism studies with everyday aesthetics, we will focus on cultural tourism as a paradigmatic attempt to get to an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary.

2. The Dilemma of Everyday Aesthetics

In recent years, everyday aesthetics has experienced a blossoming

3 The impact of this disease should not be overestimated. According to Viala et al. (2004) most patients affected by the Paris Syndrome had been previously treated for psychiatric disorders or at least were psychologically vulnerable. It is nevertheless interesting to notice that in the examined cases, crises were triggered by the encounter with a foreign place that had been charged by patients with aesthetic expectations.

in the United States and is currently gaining momentum in many European countries (see: Leddy, 1995; Light & Smith, 2005; Levanto et al., 2005; Saito, 2007, Melchionne, 2013; Matteucci, 2017; Di Stefano, 2017). Most authors agree that one main aim of everyday aesthetics is to widen the unduly limited scope of traditional Western aesthetics beyond the realms of fine arts and nature so as to include phenomena that constitute people's daily life (Saito, 2019). To this extent, the subject matter of everyday aesthetics seem to be those objects, events, and activities that are common, ordinary, and mundane.

One major concern for everyday aestheticians is that if 'everydayness' is characterized in terms of~~,~~ commonplace, familiar and routine practices, it is unclear how we can have an aesthetic appreciation of it in the first place. This amounts to what has been called the fundamental *dilemma* (Carlson, 2014, p. 48; Saito, 2017, p. 44) of everyday aesthetics. The dilemma originates from the fact that there seems to be an inherent tension between our common understanding of aesthetic appreciation and the experience we make of everyday life. While aesthetic appreciation traditionally implies the appreciation of an object that is experienced in a detached and disinterested way, we experience everyday life objects and activities with practical considerations in mind that conceal their aesthetic potentials. This creates a conflict, for "the aesthetic pulls in one direction, and everyday life in another" (Carlson, 2014, p. 49).

Despite the variety of the strategies put forward in the literature

to overcome this difficulty, a distinction seems to emerge around two main approaches. Either having an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary implies a process of distancing, detachment, or estrangement from everyday life; or it requires an attempt to aesthetically appreciate the ordinary as such.

In the former approach, the ordinary can only be aesthetically appreciated through a process of 'defamiliarization' (Saito, 2007; 2017; 2019), which makes it appear extra-ordinary and worthy of aesthetic interest. According to Allen Carlson (2014), defamiliarization may come in three main forms. The first is a version of classic formalism, and consists in the process of seizing aesthetically appreciable features in the formal aspects of things which are considered devoid of aesthetic value, such as everyday objects.[4] The second involves a sort of "artification"[5], that is, a mechanism through which everyday objects and situations are shaped into something 'art-like' (Naukkarinen, 2012). The third amounts to a process of "aestheticization" of the everyday, through the adoption of an aesthetic attitude that "casts an aura" on the object of experience (Leddy, 2012). What is taken to be aesthetically uninteresting is 'manipulated' so as to acquire an aesthetic appeal.

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4 Carlson mutuates this conception from art critics like Clive Bell and Roger Fry who defended formalism at the beginning of the 20th century.

5 Introduced by anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake (2001), and developed by sociologists Roberta Shapiro and Nathalie Heinich (2012), the concept of artification has entered the aesthetic debate thanks to Ossi Naukkarinen, who defined it as "situations and processes in which something that is not regarded as art in the traditional sense of the word is changed into something art-like or into something that takes influences from artistic ways of thinking and acting" (Naukkarinen, 2012).

Differences notwithstanding, on all these accounts of defamiliarization everyday life is regarded as so familiar and routine-like that it forms a frameless background. In order for this background to count as a proper object for aesthetics, it needs to be rendered out-of-the-ordinary, unfamiliar, or strange: it needs to be put in a frame. The underlying intuition is that one can discover a surprisingly rich aesthetic dimension in the otherwise mundane parts of our daily life if one isolates them from their ordinary context and sheds a different light on them. In John Dewey's terms (1934), this implies making the anesthetic flow of our everydayness become 'an experience' endowed with pervasive character and a cohesive internal structure, and able to unearth latent aesthetic values in the most ordinary and routine. As it has been noticed, however, by over-emphasizing defamiliarization (be it achieved by means of formalism, artification, or aestheticization) this strategy eventually leads to losing the very "everyday-ness" of everyday experience (Saito, 2017a; 2019; Haapala, 2005; Irvin, 2008; Forsey, 2014).

Out of this concern, the second approach maintains that the main aim of everyday aesthetics should be the aesthetic grasping of the ordinary 'as such'. An option in this regard is to start considering qualities such as the familiar and the ordinary as aesthetically appreciable per se. Arto Haapala (2005, p. 50), for example, has argued that familiar places "give us pleasure through a kind of comforting stability, through the feeling of being at home and taking pleasure in carrying out normal routines in a setting that is 'safe'".

Alternatively, one can point out how aesthetic experiences, judgments, and values are intertwined with other experiences, judgments, and values that are central to people's daily lives. One can focus on the pleasure gained by the appropriate functioning of commonplace tools, thereby considering the intersection of aesthetic and practical concerns (Forsey 2014), or dwell on the role played by the knowledge one has of a familiar object's function for its aesthetic appreciation (Carlson, 2014). In addition to these proposals and countering Dewey's description of everyday routine as anesthetic, Yuriko Saito has remarked that an important part of everyday aesthetics' endeavor is to pay mindful attention to all neglected features of the ordinary. Assuming a mindful attitude, she claims, can make one uncover aesthetic qualities even in those apparently humdrum aspects of our daily grind (Saito, 2017; 2019). This account, however, is not immune from criticisms either. Difficulties arise when trying to explain what is distinctly aesthetic in pleasures provided by comfort, stability, and functionality (Dowling, 2010; Matteucci, 2017).

Perhaps expectedly, there is no agreement among scholars as to which of these approaches is more effective in solving the dilemma. In the remainder of this paper, we will lean on the case of tourism to shed some new light on this debate. Despite its pervasiveness as a cultural and social practice, tourism has obtained only little attention on the part of scholars in everyday aesthetics (and

in philosophy more generally).[6] As we will show in the next section, tourism in general and 'cultural tourism' in particular may constitute a revealing example for assessing the solidity of the field, especially as regards the above-mentioned dilemma.[7]

3. Characterizing Touristic Experience

A widespread and well-established practice, tourism embraces many distinct cultural activities, social relations, and economic interests. Based on what tourists gaze upon, it is possible to distinguish various categories of tourism (Cohen, 1979; Urry, 2002). For example, although most tourists are motivated by an intent to see unique artistic or historical objects such as monuments, many also show an interest in ordinary aspects of social life being undertaken by people in unusual contexts (Urry, 2002, p. 13). The former type of tourism corresponds to what has been termed 'art tourism' (Franklin, 2018) mainly aimed at seeing art somewhere else. The second, which is generally referred to as 'cultural tourism' (Hughes, 1996, 2002; Stylianou-Lambert, 2011), is concerned with experiencing lifestyles, habits, and cultural and social mechanisms as they unfold in the daily

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6 Relevant exceptions are Tribe (2008, 2009); and Todd (2012). One problem may be that tourism has few defenders, constitutes an embarrassment, and seems such an easy target for those who attack modern culture. (Culler, 1981, p. 1).

7 This is surprising, for everyday aestheticians have considered an astonishing variety of phenomena. including laundry (Saito, 2017), cooking and commuting (Highmore, 2004); weather (Saito, 2005; Diaconu, 2013); fashion and clothing (Schor, 2002; Iannilli, 2017), design (Norman, 2004; Shove et al., 2007); vacuum cleaning (Tuan, 1993); scratching an itch (Irvin, 2008); gardening (Carlson, 1997; Ross, 1998; Parsons, 2008; Brady et al., 2018), landscaping, architecture, and design (Stecker, 1999; Carlson, 2000; Forsey, 2013; Svabo and Ekelund, 2015; Parsons, 2016; van Etteger et al., 2016).

routine of human environments other than one own's. Despite being a heterogeneous field with different characteristics and needs (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011, p. 405), cultural tourism shows a general orientation of tourists to appreciating at firsthand the cultural and social specificity of their destination.

How does cultural tourism impact on discussions in everyday aesthetics? Answering this question implies clarifying in the first place the extent to which cultural tourism can be treated as an aesthetic practice and, secondly, how it relates to an aesthetic appreciation of the 'everydayness' of a certain place. In what follows, we will address each of these concerns in turn.

3.1 The Search for Aesthetic Pleasure

In the tourism literature, it is commonly held that one first motivation for cultural tourism is the fulfilment of pleasurable experiences (Hughes, 1996; Richards, 2013). Yet, the type of expectations animating the practice are not only relaxation, recreation, or entertainment. As studies testify, tourism is often and primarily driven by aesthetic considerations, giving rise to some forms of *aesthetic pleasure* (Todd, 2009; 2012; Maitland and Smith, 2012; Kirillova et. al, 2014).

A crucial notion in this regard was introduced by sociologist John Urry (2002) in his seminal examination of tourism as a social practice, which holds together anthropological, economical, and philosophical issues. Drawing an analogy with Michel Foucault's

concept of 'the gaze', Urry developed the idea of the *tourist gaze*, the attitude adopted by tourists towards the environment, the objects, the people and the events that they encounter during their travel. As an attitude, the tourist gaze is for Urry neither a 'natural' nor a modern phenomenon, but one which emerged under specific historical circumstances in Western culture. In particular, Urry traces its roots back to earlier configurations of travel such as the 'Grand Tour'— the travel through Europe which was considered, from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, an essential part of upper-class education. The tourist gaze, however, only fully formed as a result of the exponential growth of personal travel in the second part of the twentieth century (Urry, 2002, pp. 4—5).

From a theoretical point of view, the tourist gaze can be described as a way of perceiving or relating to places which cuts them off from the 'real world' and emphasizes the exotic aspects of the tourist experience (Harrison, 2013, p. 107). Assuming the tourist gaze implies for Urry (2002, pp. 1–2) to "look at the environment with interest and curiosity [...]" and "engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane". As it has been noticed (Howard, 2016, p. 34) this adoption of a peculiar 'detached' attitude relates Urry's tourist gaze to the notion of 'aesthetic gaze'. Developed during the late Renaissance, Enlightenment and Romantic eras, the aesthetic gaze defines the "disinterested interest" that characterizes, in Kant's terms, aesthetic experience (Scruton, 2007, pp. 28–43). Interestingly, on Roger Scruton's view, the 'visitor'

provides the paradigmatic case of aesthetic gaze in that her interest in the experienced object satisfies "no bodily appetite or need" nor it is aimed at any useful information. "The interest", he writes (2007, p. 36), "is disinterested – an interest in the landscape for its own sake, for the very thing that it is (or rather, for the very thing that it appears)".

When it comes to touristic experiences, this aesthetic detachment seems to be enhanced by the physical distance of the visitor from her own home. Because tourism entails traveling a certain distance, the targeted environment is perceived as new or less familiar to tourists than the usual environment (Kirillova & Lehto, 2015, p. 3). The impression of novelty facilitates the modes of aesthetic appreciation by enabling a process of estrangement or the "casting an aura" (Leddy, 2012, p. 127) on what is experienced; which makes having 'an experience'—in Dewey's terms—possible.

Another way of referring to this process is what Haapala (2005) calls 'strangeness', i.e., the basic experience we undergo when finding ourselves in a new environment, for example when we visit a foreign city for the first time. Experiencing strangeness, according to Haapala, leads to an intensification of sensual perception resulting in a better appreciation of the environment's aesthetic features: "When we face something unfamiliar, we pay special attention to it. We observe the thing, we try to categorize it, we may think as to what to do with the object, whether it is of any use for us or not. We are also particularly attentive to its aesthetic potentiality" (Haapala, 2005, p.

44). Strangeness involves the adoption of what Haapala terms the "outsider's gaze", an attitude that—owing to a lack of practical interests—makes us sensitive to details and features we ignore in our familiar environment.[8]

3.2. The Search for Authenticity in the Everyday

As seen, an important reason why people practice cultural tourism is tourists' attempt to derive aesthetic pleasures from experiencing everyday situations in the selected destination. But how should this attempt be characterized? Looking more closely at tourists' habits and aims, it seems that not only do tourists want to live pleasant experiences. They also expect these experiences to lack those qualities explicitly intended for tourist satisfaction. As remarked by Cain Todd (2013, p. 72), cultural tourism is motivated by a desire to experience people and places "more or less unaffected by the various influences that govern the tourist's everyday reality". This corresponds to what he calls the 'un-touristed'.[9] Thus, on the one hand, tourists strive to find themselves immersed in that special place they have only seen in movies or in the glossy pages of travel magazines. On the other hand, what they perceive as most important is that this experience be a *firsthand* experience. They aim to be

8 The need to crystallize the experience by means of pictures and videos attests the role of tourists as aesthetic beholders: "People linger over [the tourist gaze] which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured" (Urry, 2002, p. 3).

9 An evidence of this is that part of what it means to be a tourist is to dislike tourists based on degree of "touristness" of the place visited, the attitude adopted, the look exhibited (Culler, 1981).

present in, interact with, feel connected to and grasp the 'true essence' of the visited place.

The being real and unspoiled of a place represents indeed a crucial value when it comes to assess a touristic experience (Kirillova and Lehto, 2015, p. 12). Interestingly for the sake of our study, the search for the un-touristed gives rise to a particular fascination with the 'lives of others'. Tourists desire to share in the 'real life' of the places visited, even to get in with the natives or at least to see how life "as it really is lived" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 94) is reflected in the appearance of those places. They long for insights in the intimate backstage everyday of the locals: "Being 'one of them', or at one with 'them' (*ibid.*). Such an interest is not limited to contemporary people and cultures but rather spans time, crosses social classes, and embraces the routine of distant eras. Tourists are often fuelled by a wish to travel back in time (Taylor, 1994; MacCannell, 2001; Larsen, 2008) towards idyllic townscapes, where time moves slowly if at all (Waitt and Head, 2002). Ordinary life becomes therefore the object of an aesthetic endeavor that can be accomplished only as long as routines, habits, and daily activities present themselves as genuine and indifferent to the curious gaze of the tourist. In short, tourism, as a social practice, amounts to a quest for *authenticity* (Boorstin, 1961; Cohen, 1972, 1979; MacCannell, 1973; Rojek, 1995; Ritzer, 1998; Wang, 1999; Urry, 2002; Reisinger and Steiner, 2006).

While it seems relatively easy to understand if an object such as a painting is authentic based on some undisputed data or historical

evidence, the meaning of authenticity is much blurrier when cultural items such as rituals, festivals, cuisine, housing, traditions and other social habits are concerned. However, in Jonathan Culler's words (1981, p. 5) "The distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic, the natural and the touristy, is a powerful semiotic operator within tourism". In tourism advertising, for example, not only are we confronted with the classical motifs of 'the *typical* medieval house', 'the *very* place where Napoleon slept', but also with common refrains about locations that are 'off the beaten track', 'off the tourist circuit', 'unspoiled', 'patronized by the locals'.

Stressing the relevance of the notion of authenticity in the tourism discourse, MacCannell (1999, p. 49), for example, has gone so far as to define tourism "a modern version of the universal human concern with the sacred". The tourist, he argues, is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in other 'times' and other 'places' (MacCannell 1999, pp. 42–48. See also Turner and Turner, 1978). Like ancient pilgrims, tourists are led in their quest by the search of *signs* of authenticity, genuineness, and unspoiledness. As a place is 'reified', the tourist's gaze searches for a label that makes an element stand out and renders it worthy of observation and reproduction (Cortese & De Nicolai, 2019, p. 173). Tour organizers also use signs and markers of authenticity—souvenirs, postcards, statues, pictures—to influence how tourists think and feel with respect to the visited places (MacCannell, 1999, p. 110).[10] Markers

10 The notion of 'marker' stands for any kind of sign (signboards, touristic signals,

of authenticity provide the frame for what is worth gazing upon, so that authenticity ends up consisting in what *appears* or *looks* authentic (Culler, 1981, p. 5). As happens paradigmatically in the case of the aesthetic gaze, the interest is visual, concerned with appearances as "signs of themselves" (Scruton, 2007, p. 36).

This has led some to conclude that tourists' interest in authenticity may in fact be contradictory (Handler and Linnekin, 1984; Spooner, 1986; Cohen, 1988; Bruner, 1989, 1994; Wood, 1993; Taylor, 2001). Whatever it is that the tourist is going to see, it is no longer 'authentic' just because the tourists are there (Turner, 1994). In Culler's words:

> The paradox, the dilemma of authenticity, is that to be experienced as authentic it must be marked as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself, and hence lacks the authenticity of what is truly unspoiled, untouched by mediating cultural codes [...] The authentic sight requires markers, but our notion of the authentic is the unmarked. (Culler, 1981, p. 8)

Authenticity in tourism is thus 'staged' (MacCannell, 1973) or 'pretended', inasmuch as the toured object is designed and set up to be recognized and labeled as genuine or real.

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pamphlets) that constitutes a touristic attraction by giving information about it, representing it, making it recognizable. We can adopt the expression 'symbolic authenticity' (Culler, 1981) to refer to tourists' willingness to perceive toured objects as being *symbols* of authenticity, and not originals or real in themselves.

4. Tourism and Everyday Aesthetics

There is, however, a further and more structural contradiction undermining cultural tourism, one that does not simply call into question the way tourism is organized and marketed as a social and economic practice, but one that also challenges its value as an aesthetic practice. Cultural tourism can indeed be conceived of as a paradigm of the aesthetic interest for the ordinary, which is spotlighted, framed, and enjoyed for the sake of its specific appearances. In this sense, tourism's internal contradiction may turn out to have implications for the broader philosophical debate in everyday aesthetics.

4.1 The Aesthetic Paradox of Tourism

The tension originates from the two distinct yet intertwined drives that animate cultural tourism. On the one hand, tourists aim to draw aesthetic pleasure from observing how daily life and its routines enroll in the selected tourist destination. Importantly, they do so via the adoption of what we have called the 'tourist gaze', a special kind of aesthetic gaze that leads the subject to a process of aesthetic detachment, estrangement or defamiliarization from what she observes. On the other hand, tourists also show to have an interest that what they see be unspoiled, unaltered, untouristised. For this purpose, they direct their attention towards visible signs that can attest its authenticity.

Although being equally relevant to the tourist experience, these

two drives are mutually in conflict. When tourists gaze aesthetically upon someone else's everyday life, they look for contexts and practices that are not conceived to be gazed upon but are lived in or performed by the locals for functional purposes. What are just practicalities for the inhabitants of Paris, are contemplated by tourists with an aesthetic eye that heightens the "aesthetic potential" of the experience (Haapala, 2005, pp. 43–44).

Here comes the paradox, though, since it is unclear whether one can attain the authentic nature of activities that are not intrinsically aesthetic by adopting and keeping an aesthetic attitude. Observing the everydayness of a place via the tourist gaze means to detach oneself from it, but this precludes the immersive process that allows one to grasp the place's authentic (everyday) nature—which again is not aesthetic but rather primarily oriented towards the satisfaction of practical and functional needs. This creates a friction, for it seems that in the very moment in which everydayness becomes the object of the tourist's appreciation, either the ordinariness of the experience gets lost, or its aesthetic potential. Since tourists cannot escape their tourist gaze (Todd, 2013, p. 72), they find themselves in the paradoxical situation of wanting what by definition they cannot have, exactly because they are tourists, i.e., grasping the authentic nature of the ordinary while appreciating it aesthetically.

These considerations allow us to shed light on the Paris Syndrome, by which we began our study. Clearly, the syndrome depends at least in part on the gap between tourists' preemptive

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expectations and the reality of the place they are visiting.[11] But more radically, common occurrence of a sense of dissatisfaction or discomfort in tourists can be explained by reference to the tension arising between the two opposing and self-defeating demands that drive cultural tourism. Like the anthropologist (Malinowski, 1922), the tourist is trapped into a paradoxical situation. Either she manages to have an aesthetic appreciation of what she experiences—at the expense of grasping its authenticity—or, to grasp authenticity, she fails in her attempt to have an aesthetic appreciation of it. Consequently, unpleasant feelings of deception, betrayal or disappointment may follow.

4.2 Implications for Everyday Aesthetics

The paradox of tourism stems thus from a combination between a notion of tourist gaze that entails some form of disinterested aesthetic detachment, and the need to appreciate authentic features of a place's ordinary routine. To this extent, it seems to share the same premises of what has been called the 'dilemma of everyday aesthetics'. This gives us ground to exploit cultural tourism as a sort of test-bench to prove the validity of the strategies that have been proposed to solve the dilemma.

To recall, the first strategy, as proposed by author such as

11 As Urry notes, touristic destinations are chosen "because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures […]. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze" (Urry, 2002, p. 3).

Leddy (2012) and Naukkarinen (2012) resorts to so-called defamiliarization as what allows one to have an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary. Processes of distancing and "casting an aura", that are meant to make us appreciate what we overlook as humdrum routine, are in place in cultural tourism. As the tourist turns sipping a *café noisette* on a *boulevard* into an aesthetic phenomenon, so the everyday appreciator "manipulates" a quotidian activity, e.g., vacuum cleaning, in order to make it the object of aesthetic appreciation. These processes of aestheticization, however, are at the origin of the paradox. As a matter of fact, activities such as having breakfast and vacuum cleaning owe their nature to their being functional to the aims of survival, hygiene and, more generally, wellbeing. Although pursuing these aims can bring about pleasures of various kinds, aesthetic pleasure is not what identifies them in the first place. What makes these things what they are, is that they are not devised for aesthetic appreciation. This explains why their aestheticization leads to a betrayal of their authentic nature. Arguably, the potential frustration that the tourist thereby faces mirrors the failure of this strategy to overcome the dilemma of everyday aesthetics. When the ordinary is gazed through an aesthetic filter, it lends itself to aesthetic appreciation only as long as its inherent ordinariness fades into the background.

In contrast with this attempt to make the ordinary extraordinary, the alternative strategy requires that one tries and appreciates the ordinary as such, instead of putting an aesthetic frame on it. On this

second account, all those perceivable qualities of everyday life that are part of our experience can count as aesthetic properties. Not only beauty and sublimity, but also functionality, comfort, safety, and familiarity (Haapala, 2005; Carlson, 2014); not only traditionally positive, 'honorific' values, but also negative qualities such as dreariness, tediousness or monotony may be considered aesthetically significant (Saito, 2007, pp. 26—27). All what is needed to grasp their aesthetic potential is that one devotes specific attention to them. Attentiveness is indeed what discloses the potential aesthetic value of things: the prerequisite of any kind of aesthetic experience (Saito, 2007, p. 56). Aesthetically appreciating the ordinary qua ordinary amounts thus to adopting an attentive, mindful attitude towards one's surroundings—be it perceptual (Saito, 2007), affective (Haapala, 2005) or cognitive (Carlson, 2014)—so as to seize what is aesthetically valuable in there without distorting their everyday nature.

Applied to the case-study of cultural tourism, this strategy implies that the tourist gaze be reconfigured as a mindful relation to the toured place or cultural habit, rather than a form of aesthetic detachment. Interestingly, this goes in the direction of softening the exceptionality of the tourist gaze compared to the look we devote to our everyday routine. If the tourist gaze is reduced to a conscious attitude towards what one encounters, and if such conscious attitude can be directed towards one's own everyday life, then being a tourist might not be radically different from being able to appreciate one's

own familiar environment. As Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert (2011, pp. 407–408) writes: "Multiple layers of 'gazes', which can be used both at home and away, might be in effect at any time".[12]

Reshaping her own tourist gaze, the visitor is offered an opportunity to grasp and enjoy a wide variety of aspects of the visited resorts, including those that are often hidden by standard marketing advertisement. A more conscious attitude gives tourists a chance to appreciate every aspect of the visited place's quotidian life in a way that is ideally as close as possible to that of the locals. Similarly to what they may achieve 'at home' by disengaging "the autopilot" of the everyday (Saito, 2017, p. 24), tourists may therefore become more receptive to anything the place and its inhabitants may show them. Thus, unlike strategies based on defamiliarization—which keep on reproducing the paradox of tourism—this second account can offer us a therapeutic prescription to reduce tourism's disappointing effects such as the Paris Syndrome.

Promising as it seems to be in increasing people's wellbeing while travelling, however, this approach turns out to be more like a loophole than a real solution for the paradox of tourism. Indeed, the strategy works because it makes no difference between the various

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12 Challenging Urry's opposition between the ordinariness of everyday life and the extraordinariness of tourism, many recent studies have pointed out that this sharp dichotomy has been artificially construed for research purposes, but it proves to be unfaithful to the reality of contemporary tourism (Uriely, 2005; Bærenholdt et al., 2007; Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). An attenuation of the distinction between the way we look at our daily lives and the way we explore touristic destinations is also advocated by Alain de Botton, who urges the extension of a curious gaze to our everyday, familiar surroundings (de Botton 2002, p. 243).

objects to which one's attention is directed, on the premise that all objects, places, activities, and context can be equally worthy of attention. The underpinning idea is that the difference between one's experience as a tourist and one's experience at home can be minimized to a point where it becomes irrelevant to distinguish between being an outsider and being a local. In this sense, if adopting mindfulness weakens the power of the paradox, it is just because it undermines the notion of tourist altogether.

This has implications for the dilemma of everyday aesthetics. For sure, mindfulness allows us, both as tourists and in our everyday life routines, to become more sensitive to previously neglected aspects of our everydayness. When home, it may equip us to better appreciate our own familiar milieu and to enjoy the practicalities of our everyday life. As tourists, it may lead us to immerse ourselves into the quotidianity of the visited place, thus satisfying our 'quest for authenticity'. What remains unexplained, though, is why the value of these mindful experiences of the ordinary as such— positive as they may be for our overall wellbeing—should be regarded as *aesthetic* in a proper sense of the term. Indeed, although adopting a more attentive attitude towards quotidian life can be satisfactory in many possible ways, it must be specified how these ways should be regarded as aesthetic in the first place. To what extent can the outcome of our attention count as an aesthetic experience? And what ensures that once we have placed the humdrum aspects of everyday life "within the reach of our attention radar" (Saito, 2017, p. 24), they

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will appear significant to us from a specific aesthetic point of view and not, as it may be the case, from a different cognitive, epistemological, social, biological, perspective?

While in the case of cultural tourism this second strategy works by blurring the difference between the tourist and the inhabitant, the outsider and the local, thus undermining the notion of tourism from within, when it comes to the issue of everyday aesthetics, it blends together different values, interests and pleasures, and reduces them all to an undefined notion of aesthetic appreciation. Therefore, although it perhaps puts us in a better position to appreciate the ordinary as such, it does so at the expense of making the aesthetic a fuzzy concept.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that cultural tourism, considered as an aesthetic practice, is intrinsically paradoxical. Though motivated by the fulfilment of aesthetic expectations through the aesthetic detachment that characterizes the 'tourist gaze', cultural tourism is also driven by a quest for authenticity via the immersion in the everyday routines of the visited places. These two desiderata, however, prove to be mutually irreconcilable. As the extreme case of the Paris Syndrome attests, this tension can generate more or less profound forms of disappointment. Treated as a paradigmatic case of aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary, cultural tourism provides a powerful tool for illuminating what has been acknowledged as the

dilemma of everyday aesthetics. Whereas strategies that rely on defamiliarization fall prey of the dilemma anew, those that stress the aesthetic value of the ordinary ‘as such’ manage to reduce the risk of disappointment. Nonetheless, by minimizing the distinction between the tourist and the local, these latter approaches work round the paradox instead of solving it, leaving us with a residual notion of what is ‘aesthetic’. Viewed through the lens of cultural tourism, neither the first nor the second kind of strategies can resolve the dilemma of everyday aesthetics. The aesthetics of the everyday may appear therefore like a promise that can hardly be kept: having an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary while grasping its authentic, ordinary nature.

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