

# INTRODUCTION

**Jasbir Kaur Puar**

*I*t has become almost predictable: news of gay and lesbian tourists encountering mishaps, the resistance of locals, the intervention of government and nongovernmental organizations, and church protests. In Cape Town a campaign to draw gay and lesbian tourists has created a furor among Christian groups.<sup>1</sup> In the last four years gay and lesbian cruises have been turned away from Caribbean locations and Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Thailand's Tourism Authority has begun to promote sex-change operations as part of its "health-tourism packages."<sup>3</sup> Scotland recently retracted its planned outreach to gay and lesbian tourists, while the rest of Great Britain's tourist industry is actively courting the "Pink Pound."<sup>4</sup> In an era of globalization during which market forces are said often to override the importance of the nation-state, the state is indeed in an ambiguous position: on the one hand, its legislative efficacy is mediated through global capitalism; on the other, the demand for state intervention in such situations is increasing.

"Queer Tourism: Geographies of Globalization" addresses these conundrums and contradictions in globalization. Though there have been scattered accounts of gay and lesbian tourism, articles on sexuality and tourism, literature on sex and travel (especially as they relate to AIDS), and rich historical materials about same-sex sexuality and travel, this issue of *GLQ* is the first edited collection with such a scope and focus. Tourism, as a form of both past and present globalization, with uneven and unpredictable effects, is one of the most important aspects of the globalization of sexuality and sexual identities. Journals such as the *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Management*, along with numerous scholars, have documented the rapid rise of the tourism industry in the last century. Gay and lesbian tourists account for at least 10 percent of the U.S. travel industry, and that percentage is growing. Yet queer tourism is still one of the least researched or discussed topics in scholarly venues, perhaps because it so obviously intrudes on many of our personal and professional desires for mobility and travel.

*GLQ* 8:1–2

pp. 1–6

Copyright © 2002 by Duke University Press

The purpose of this special issue is thus twofold. The first is to describe, document, and theorize the growth and expansion of gay and lesbian tourism and other emerging forms of queer travel. The second is to make explicit the importance of queer sexualities to globalization, tourism, and economic systems. Studies of globalization range from presenting the “global” as an overarching, homogenizing force, in opposition to a pure, resistant “local,” to theorizing local-global exchange, hybridization, and multidirectional flows.<sup>5</sup> Sexuality as related to tourism, migration, identity formation, and economic labor flows, though it is intrinsic to analyses of globalization, often remains unaddressed in these accounts.<sup>6</sup> Reflected in the following pages are interdisciplinary discussions focused on various materials and channeled through queer and feminist theory, globalization studies, and ethnography: theoretical ruminations, detailed ethnographic descriptions, activist literature, and fictionalized and factual travel accounts, as well as analyses of mainstream gay and lesbian travel writing.

There is no pretense of doing representational justice to the geographic areas where queer tourism is relevant. Rather, different scales of location are offered here—cities, nations, worlds—and situated in both locality and globality. Several articles, such as Venetia Kantsa’s about lesbian tourism to Eresos, on the Greek island of Lesbos, and Kevin Markwell’s about Mardi Gras tourism to Sydney, offer copious and illuminating ethnographic accounts of how global tourism has altered the spatial relations of place and identities in local settings. While Kantsa documents the very physical, geographic changes wrought on the landscape of bodies and places in Eresos, Markwell highlights the relationship of place to temporality—what he calls “temporal containment”—and notes that the potential of Mardi Gras’s transgressive features is greatly diminished by limitations not only of place but of time. This containment is reflected in part by the marginalization of working-class gays and lesbians, of gays and lesbians of color, and of bisexuals, transgendered people, and queers. Michael Luongo’s journalistic account of Rome’s World Pride, an international gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered event that took place in early July 2000 during the Vatican’s Jubilee, similarly lays out in minute specificity the factors involved in producing an activist-tourist event and is suggestive as well of the relationships of place to space making and time. Luongo also participated in, photographed, and wrote about the event as a travel writer. To complicate further the registers of locality and globality, of resistance and complicity, as well as ethnographic method, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes foregrounds the complexities of being a queer tourist in his autoethnography, which combines the fictionalized, experimental travel narrative of a gay Puerto Rican man in Cuba in 1998 with an analytic “Postdata” that con-

textualizes these experiences in a historical, cultural, and sociopolitical framework.

Other contributions pose broader schematic theorizations of the relationships between queer tourism and globalization. In his discussion of the political transformations in Spain that have made gay and lesbian tourism to Madrid possible, Gabriel Giorgi argues that, among the signs of a metropolitan, modern, and wealthy urban center recently exhibited in Madrid, gay identity and culture play a significant role. His analysis shows to what extent gay identity reinscribes borders between metropolis and periphery, and between modernity and its others, contrasting different discourses on gay visibility and global mobility as they are represented by the gay tourist and the illegal immigrant. Drawing together questions of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and queerness, Dereka Rushbrook argues that local changes in “queer space” are related to globalization and to the commodification of space and bodies through tourism. Demonstrating that entrepreneurial state practices invest in and actively stake a claim to a cosmopolitan identity (based on racial and sexual diversity) in order to attract tourists and leading industries, Rushbrook shows how queer spaces are then marketed for and toured by nonqueers.<sup>7</sup>

State practices as they are related to economic processes are also highlighted in Luongo’s discussion of World Pride in Rome, Markwell’s work on Sydney, Lionel Cantú’s piece on queer tourism in Mexico, and my own essay on the gay and lesbian tourism industry. Analyzing ethnographic data to examine queer tourism “south of the border” in relation to state promotion of tourism and the development of gay and lesbian tourism in Mexico, Cantú argues that the effects of this industry on Mexican sexualities entail dimensions of both sexual colonization and liberation. My article details several shifts in the gay and lesbian tourism industry during the last ten years to situate the growing importance of state practices and economic ventures to sexual identities. These shifts include, first, the increase of international travel and, second, a change from “private” industry’s actively marketing to queer consumers to the nation’s “public” spaces’ doing so: regional, city, and national tourism boards create councils, programming, and materials specifically aimed at queer travelers.

Kantsa’s article is one of the first scholarly ethnographic accounts, possibly the only one, to focus exclusively on lesbian tourism. This stark fact reflects the paucity of awareness and research on lesbian and queer women’s tourism. Kantsa discusses spatial transformations on Lesbos, considered the birthplace of the lyric poet Sappho, during the last several decades and examines changes in relations between the island’s predominantly white, Euro-American lesbian visitors and its

residents. Attempting to undermine an opposition between lesbian women and the residents, Kantsa documents the expansion of lesbian tourism in the village of Eresos through close ethnographic readings as well as maps and other visual materials.<sup>8</sup>

Through its framing of lesbian tourism, Kantsa's piece raises many possibilities for future research. The question is not only how we extend our analyses to include lesbian tourism—doing so merely creates lesbians as an additive aside—but what is gendered about how space, mobility, and tourism are conceptualized. The focus on men's travel, to the exclusion of women's, is both a historically entrenched problem and a failure to incorporate gendered analyses into conceptualizations of tourism and travel.

The relationship of queer tourism to neocolonialism also needs to be examined. The press release and other activist materials from the American Friends Service Committee Hawai'i Gay Liberation Program in *The GLQ Archive* highlight the histories of tourism and colonialism in relation to queer tourism. This organization, with established platforms both on gay and lesbian rights and on Hawaiian sovereignty and land rights, actively problematizes tourism, queer and otherwise. It is the only work I know that so insistently challenges the notion that queer tourism, whether related to a "progressive" gay marriage movement in Hawai'i or not, is transgressive and transcends colonial histories of travel.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, the conceptualization of queer tourists and the growth of tourist projects that invoke or involve queer sexualities have important implications for the uneven globalization of queer identities; the formations of queer bodies, spaces, and places; and the modernity and mobility of queer subjects. Through the emerging forms of queer tourist practices elaborated on in the following pages, the pervasive globalization of neoliberal notions of sexualities is bringing increasing numbers of queer bodies into contact with each other. The multiple sites of tourism engaged with here suggest both overlapping and diverging circuits of globalization and illuminate certain conundrums intrinsic to the relationships between globalization and sexuality. What are the relationships between global sexual identities and local sexualities? How are sexual identities shaped by, and how do they in turn shape, economic and cultural globalization? In relation to sexualities, how do nation-states interact with global capitalism? As it becomes increasingly unavoidable to incorporate queer studies and sexuality into globalization studies, this special issue will serve both as a stimulus for future theorization and research on tourism and queer sexualities and as material for teaching and curricular development.

## Notes

My appreciation goes to Carolyn Dinshaw for her careful guidance and editorial assistance. Many thanks also to Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan for encouraging me to begin this project; to Selena Wahng, Aimée Sisco, and Dereka Rushbrook for their input at various stages; and to the other contributors to this issue. Finally, I am indebted to the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies for a 1999–2000 Rockefeller Postdoctoral Fellowship, which supported my research on queer tourism.

1. *PlanetOut.com*, “News from South Africa,” 26 March 2001, [www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com).
2. For extended discussion of the Caribbean and gay and lesbian cruise ships see Jasbir Kaur Puar, “Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities and Trinidad,” in “Globalization and Gender,” special issue of *Signs* 26, no. 4 (2001): 1039–66. In September 2000 an Atlantis cruise was turned away at Kusadasi, Turkey. See *PlanetOut.com*, “Gay Cruise Fiasco in Turkey,” 8 September 2000, [www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com).
3. See Margaret Talbot, “Nip, Tuck, and Frequent-Flier Miles,” *New York Times Magazine*, 6 May 2001, 89.
4. See *PlanetOut.com*, “World Briefs: Opposition Overseas,” 5 February 2001, [www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com).
5. On complicating models of globalization as well as transnationalism see Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: New, 1998); Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990); Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, “Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity,” in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1–33; Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); and Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds., *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). See also Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization, and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: Macmillan, 1991), 19–40; Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” in King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World System*, 41–68; Ulf Hannertz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 237–52; Aihwa Ong, “On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora,” *positions* 1 (1993): 745–78; and Roger Rouse, “Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Migration,” *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 8–23.
6. For a sampling of work foregrounding sexuality in relation to globalization and gender see Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Hennessy, “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture,” *Cultural Critique* 29 (1995): 31–76; Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of*

*Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema, eds., *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Martin F. Manalansan IV, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ* 2 (1995): 425–38; Louisa Schein, "Diaspora Politics, Homeland Erotics, and the Materializing of Memory," *positions* 7 (1999): 697–729; Rosalind C. Morris, "Three Sexes and Four Sexualities: Redressing the Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Thailand," *positions* 2 (1994): 15–43; M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 63–100; Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 5–23; Eithne Luibheid, "Looking like a Lesbian: The Organization of Sexual Monitoring at the United States–Mexican Border," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8 (1998): 477–506; and Dennis Altman, "Global Gaze/Global Gays," *GLQ* 3 (1997): 417–36. See also the following special issues: Yukiko Hanawa, ed., "Circuits of Desire," *positions* 2, no. 1 (1994); Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, eds., "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," *GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999); and Amrita Basu, Caren Kaplan, Inderpal Grewal, and Lisa Rofel, eds., "Gender and Globalization," *Signs* 26, no. 4 (2001).

7. For a related analysis of heterosexual tourists at pride events see Lynda Johnston, "(Other) Bodies and Tourism Studies," *Annals of Tourism Research* 28 (2001): 180–201.
8. For the marketing of Eresos as a lesbian travel destination see [www.lesvos.co.uk/women's\\_week.htm](http://www.lesvos.co.uk/women's_week.htm) and [www.treasure-travel.co.uk/gay.htm](http://www.treasure-travel.co.uk/gay.htm).
9. For a look at the advertising for the first gay travel guide to Hawai'i, *Rainbow Handbook Hawaii*, see [www.rainbowhandbook.com](http://www.rainbowhandbook.com).