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# Nationalized Nature on Picture Postcards: Subtexts of Tourism from an Environmental Perspective*

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## Introduction

Despite a rhetoric claiming a lack of research on the subject, the role of images and even of postcard imagery in tourism has been analyzed in some detail[1], and so has the role of tourism in nationalism.[2] Zimmer has discussed the role of landscape in national identity using examples from the Alps, and Cusack has looked at the national significance of heritage in a study on Ireland.[3]

Sadly, the anglophone literature on the subject completely ignores relevant works written in German or even published bilingually.[4]

The connection between tourism imagery and nationalism is a

[1] E.g. for images of nature, A.G. Stamou, St. Paraskevopoulos, "Images of Nature by Tourism and Environmentalist Discourses in Visitors Books: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ecotourism", in *Discourse & Society,* 15, 1, 2004, pp. 105-129; for images of people, see, e.g., L.Z. Sigel, "Filth In The Wrong People's Hands: Postcards And The Expansion Of Pornography In Britain And The Atlantic World, 1880-1914", in *Journal of Social History,* 33, 4, 2000, pp. 859-885; V. Nelson, "Representation and images of people, place and nature in Grenada's tourism", in *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography,* 87, 2, 2005, pp. 131-143, as well as K. Olsen, "Making Differences in a Changing World: The Norwegian Sámi in the Tourist Industry", in *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism,* 6, 1, 2006, pp. 37-53; E. Edwards, "Postcards: Greetings from another world", in *The Tourist Image*, T. Selwyn (ed.), John Wiley and Sons, Chichester 1996, pp. 197-222; G. Waitt, L. Head, "Postcards and Frontier Mythologies. Sustaining 'views' of the Kimberley as 'timeless'", in *Environment and Planning D*, 20, 2002, pp. 319-344; A. Pritchard, N. Morgan, "Mythic Geographies of Representation and Identity: Contemporary Postcards of Wales", in *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change,* 1, 2, 2003, pp. 111–130.

[2] M. Pretes, "Tourism and nationalism", in *Annals of Tourism Research,* 30, 1, 2003, pp. 125-142.

[3] O. Zimmer, "In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40, 4, 1998, pp. 637-665; T. Cusack, "A 'Countryside Bright with Cosy Homesteads': Irish Nationalism and the Cottage Landscape", in *National Identities,* 3, 3, 2001, pp. 221-238.

[4] See, e.g., A. Holzer, *Die Bewaffnung des Auges. Die Drei Zinnen oder Eine kleine Geschichte vom Blick auf das Gebirge,* Turia + Kant, Vienna 1996, 2nd ed. 1997, for a study of mountain postcards and how they helped shape the perception of the "right" way to look at mountains; O. May, *Deutsch sein heißt treu sein: Ansichtskarten als Spiegel von Mentalität und Untertanenerziehung in der wilhelminischen Ära (1888-1918)* (=Untersuchungen zu Kultur und Bildung 1), Lax, Hildesheim 1998, for a study of the contribution of postcards to Wilheminian politics; S. Linhart, *"Niedliche Japaner" oder "gelbe Gefahr"?: westliche Kriegspostkarten 1900-1945. "Dainty Japanese" or "Yellow Peril"? Western War Postcards from 1900-1945*, Lit, Vienna 2005.

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new triangulation in this already well-charted terrain, in particular if emphasis is put on the role of "Nature". As I have argued previously, postcard images stand on the verge between dream and reality.[5] This liminal position makes them particularly well suited for an investigation of the discourse of nationalism in tourism. In this paper, tourism and the role of images in tourism will be presented briefly, followed by an introduction to picture postcards as a medium. A brief discussion of nationalism as a cultural practice follows. Combining these three strands, the role of tourist postcards for nationalism will be investigated by analyzing images. I will argue that tourism plays a central role in linking nature and the nation, reinforcing and lending credibility to the unifying project of nationalism. I will also draw conclusions as to sustainable tourism and its images.

## Tourism and its imagery

The transition from a culture dominated by the printed word to one dominated by moving images[6] parallels the rise of tourism as a global industry worth billions of dollars. Tourism in the world accounts for 11.7 % of the GDP, 8% of exports, and 8% of all employees (numbers for 2000).[7]

Images are crucial to the tourist economy. Destination marketing is a highly professional sub-sector of this economy. Marketing works by creating distinct images that cater to the target groups' interests. Many images share a certain mythical or timeless quality, be it those used in urban heritage tourism[8], or rural cottage imagery.[9]

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[5] V. Winiwarter, "Buying a Dream Come True", in *Rethinking History*, 5, 3, 2001, pp. 451-454.

[6] M. Stephens, *The rise of the image the fall of the word*, Oxford University Press, New York 1998.

[7] J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, Sage, Bristol, London, 1990, 2nd ed. 2002, p. 5; for a recent state-of-the-art history of tourism see e.g. H. Berghoff, B. Korte, R. Schneider, C. Harvie (eds), *The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000*. Palgrave, Basingstoke 2003.

[8] C. Vesey, F. Dimanche, "From Storyville to Bourbon Street: Vice, Nostalgia and Tourism", in *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change,* 1, 1, 2003, pp. 54-70.

[9] Cusack, "Irish Nationalism" cit.

While promotional material creates imagery for the prospective tourist prior to the holiday, picture postcards are part and parcel of the tourist experience. They are created not so much to promote a destination, but as part of the destination's appeal, as an important consumer good that must be available at every tourist location. Picture postcards are sent by tourists to significant others at home, to let them know about the success of the tourist experience, and are valued as such. Displays of cards on office boards and in shoeboxes among the possessions of people moving testify to their value for the receiver.

Tourism is, as Christoph Hennig has argued, the last remnant of a popular culture of deviation from the norm, and has to be understood as a functional equivalent of the Roman Saturnalia and the Early Modern Carnival.[10] Tourists are in a liminal position, on the verge of reality, and they need to communicate the success of this borderline experience back home. Postcards provide a link between the social system the tourist finds himself in and his social system at home, making a statement about success and claiming status; the choice of cards is addressee-specific and by no means coincidental.

Postcards are a visual instruction manual for the consumption of sights. Since these are created for and by tourism, they undergo a process of fragmentation with regard to both space (see fig. 1) and time, as cards always depict sights in the right season. Nowadays, with target group-specific marketing in every part of the tourist universe, a variety of postcards catering to different groups is available. From the cheap "buy 10 pay 8" option to the artsy card, from humorous to classy, every tourist can buy a visual trope befitting his communication needs.

Tourism is not just a theme in postcards; they make up the very essence of the "tourist gaze", a phrase coined by John Urry. The gaze – a concept borrowed from Foucault, who used it to describe the clinical approach of doctors – is, Urry argues, the essence of the tourist experience, which is fundamentally visual. The tourist gaze is "that peculiar combining together of the means of collective travel, the desire for

[10] C. Hennig, *Reiselust. Touristen, Tourismus und Urlaubskultur,* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1997.

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**Figure 1. Postcard from London, late 1990s. The sights are cut out from their surrounding matrix and offered as a guideline to the "typical", ticking off sights in the most obvious way (author's collection)**
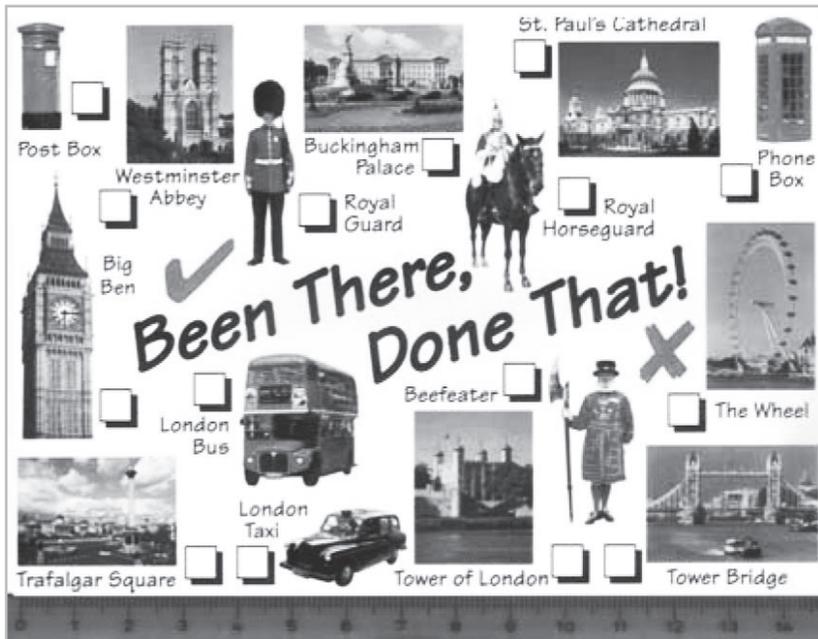


travel and the techniques of photographic reproduction, [which] becomes a core component of western modernity".[11] According to Urry, there are several types of this gaze. He distinguishes a romantic gaze based on solitude, where uninhabited "Nature" plays a particularly significant role, from the collective gaze, which is based on seeing and being seen, as in the lively downtowns of major tourist destinations. He further distinguishes an anthropological, an environmental, and a mediatized gaze.[12] Despite his reference to nationalism as a component of the image of the stateless nation of Scotland, he does not identify a nationalist gaze. It is here that I shall take his analysis one

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[11] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* cit., p. 148.
[12] Ibid., pp. 149 ff.

step further. Before doing this, however, I will take a closer look at postcards as a medium.

## A short introduction to postcards

Research using picture postcards confronts several methodological challenges. As Marie-Monique Huss has pointed out, there is no way of determining the full range of postcards in existence at a given place or time, nor can the output of a particular publisher be determined quantitatively. Postcard catalogues, both printed and online, are biased, as they only list collectibles, rare specimens, or show images of special interest to collectors. Catalogues decontextualize samples which might have some representative value, as they usually do not offer collections from one source (one receiver's collected postcards), but group the cards thematically or by value. Huss has looked at copyright records and found that 5,000-10,000 wartime postcards were printed in France in 1914, while by 1915 their number was soaring in the 100,000s. These figures give an overall feeling for the importance of the medium and the effect the war had on postcard sales, but are of limited value for an overall picture. Publishers' records are seldom available and, as there are many publishers, even in-depth research on one would not help much. Dating is not always easy, either.[13]

For an example of a "typical" collection of postcards received by one person, I have used the collection of a piano teacher from Wels in Austria.[14] For cards more recent than 40-50 years ago, no collector's aids are available. Some years ago, comparative research into the postcard production of two Austrian resorts was carried out with recourse to a database containing systematic descriptions of more than 500 postcards, but only parts of this study have been pub-

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[13] M.M. Huss, "Pronatalism and the popular ideology of the child in wartime France: the evidence of the picture postcard", in R. Wall, J. Winter (eds), *The Upheaval of War, Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp 329-367.

[14] M. Wimmer, V. Winiwarter, "Nach Wels geschickt. Ansichtskarten: Stadt und Adressierung", in: *dérive - Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung*, 11, 2003, pp. 17-20.

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lished.[15] The evidence presented hereafter is drawn both from online catalogues and the author's personal collection (ca. 5000 postcards), which mainly includes postcards from the 1970s onwards. The examples chosen as images for this paper were selected to reflect typical depictions rather than unusual ones. I also took account of analyses of pictorial techniques carried out on the images recorded in the above-mentioned database.

A caricature card from 1840, believed to be the oldest extant picture postcard, was sold at auction in 2002 for 31,750 pounds, roughly 45,000 US dollars. Postcards from the 1860s can be found in Germany, Austria, and the USA.[16]

The postcard was officially introduced in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1869 to facilitate communication among the poorer classes. Prior to the availability of telephones, postcards were widely employed to exchange messages on everyday matters.[17] They were hailed as a "triumph of democracy".[18] At a time when mail was delivered up to three times daily, they were effective and fast. Postcards were initially called "correspondence cards". One wrote the message on the front, the back being for postal use only. The introduction of a picture on the front, a vignette leaving space for the text, made them more interesting as greeting cards and allowed them to become geographically distinct. An example from Austria is given in fig. 2. When the part reserved for the post office was reduced to just part of the back of the card, the picture could become larger, as the message could continue on the back. This paved the way for the picture on the postcard becoming a medium by itself.

Early postcards were used to communicate "news". Postcards were

[15] V. Winiwarter, "Landschaft auf Vierfarbkarton: Betrachtungen zur kulturellen Konstruktion des Blickens", in *ZOLLtexte. Zeitung österreichischer LandschaftsplanerInnEn und LandschaftsökologInnEn*, 10, 35, 2000, pp. 48-53.

[16] Stamps of India Newsletter 56, March 14th, 2002, pp. 6 ff. http://www.stampsofindia.com/newsite/download/056.pdf, last viewed 2007-04-11.

[17] F. Steinwandtner, 2006: *Die Korrespondenzkarte*. Bezirksmuseum Hietzing, http://www.a1133.at/index.php?menu=geschichte&inc=fakten/korrespondenzkarte/bericht, last viewed 2007-04-01.

[18] G. Fanelli, E. Godoli, *Art Nouveau Postcards,* Rizzoli, New York 1987, p. 9.
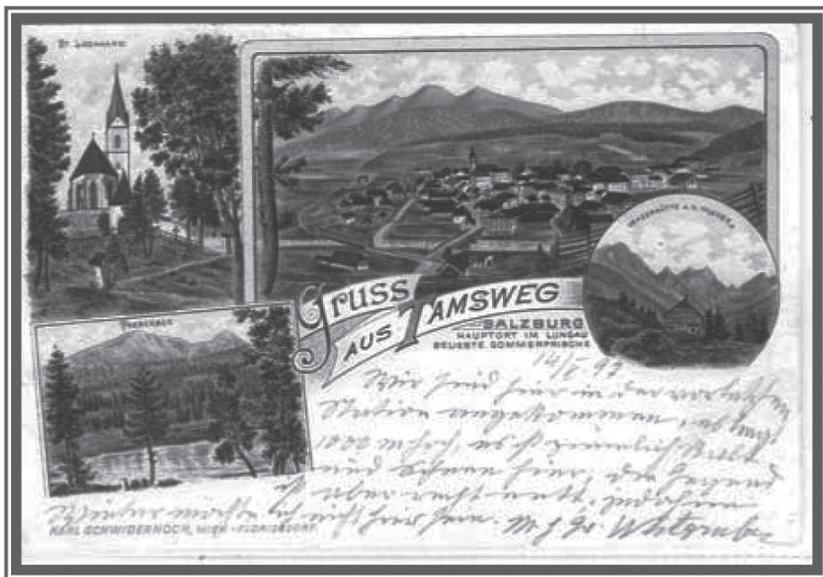
produced, for example, on the occasion of the first Zeppelin flight
above a particular place, as well as to commemorate various natural
disasters, including floods, fires, storms, and volcanic eruptions.[19]

With the advent of mass tourism, the use of postcards changed.
Their evolution by then was largely governed by the internal logic
of tourism. Today, picture postcards are a mass medium devoted to
the construction of visual tropes. They create and maintain fictions
of places. The "nation" plays a central role in this creation, both as

[19] The current online catalogues of major German postcard sellers (such as e.g.
http://www.ak-ansichtskarten.de/ak/index.php or http://shop.meixner.de/) have
moderately priced (hence, abundant) pictures of all these types of catastrophes on
sale, most cards are older than the 1930s.

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an ideal and as a very real source of economic revenue. The postcard is a paramount example of the way the distribution mechanisms of modern mass industry work. It co-created these mechanisms and was one of the industry's main pictorial representations. Postcards followed cultural trends, trends of tourism were created and sustained and followed by the cards. Tom Phillips has illustrated the development of one important theme, transportation, and the cultural changes of many others in his illustrated survey of 20th-century postcards, which can serve as an inventory of the genre.[20]

Tourism is a part of the international trade balance and thus important for national economies. Domestic tourism also brings significant revenue and much-needed jobs to otherwise peripheral regions. Postcards are part of this business. Their production is undergoing a process of centralization similar to that observable in other small-scale businesses. This process influences the choice of themes depicted on postcards. Nowadays, less cards are made specifically for a place. The trend is to cards that can stand for a whole region, as these can be sold at more places and promise higher revenue. Analyzing tropes, one must take into account that available cards are also the result of changes in producer structures.

The other major influence on cards is the structure of the buyer's community. Apparently, for large locations such as Vienna, cards are more and more targeted for distinct groups of buyers, reflecting the targeted marketing characteristic of today's tourism industry. The first consumers of picture postcards were local lower-class people. Tourists were a new user group, which grew over time, eventually becoming the main one.

In Europe, as in Japan, war was important for the postcard as a mass medium. Hundreds of thousands of "Feldpostkarten" were sent home by field post from battlefields. Many were picture postcards. Picture postcards had already been used previously to communicate "news", such as destruction by floods or fires. Wartime postcards also showed destruction as (good or bad) news (fig. 3). Such an aesthetic

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[20] T. Phillips, *The Postcard Century: Cards and Their Messages, 1900-2000*, Thames & Hudson, London 2000.

La Guerre 1914-15        426   YPRES (Belgique) — Le carillon du Beffroi
L. C. H. Paris                  YPRES (Belgium) — The Belfroy of the steeple
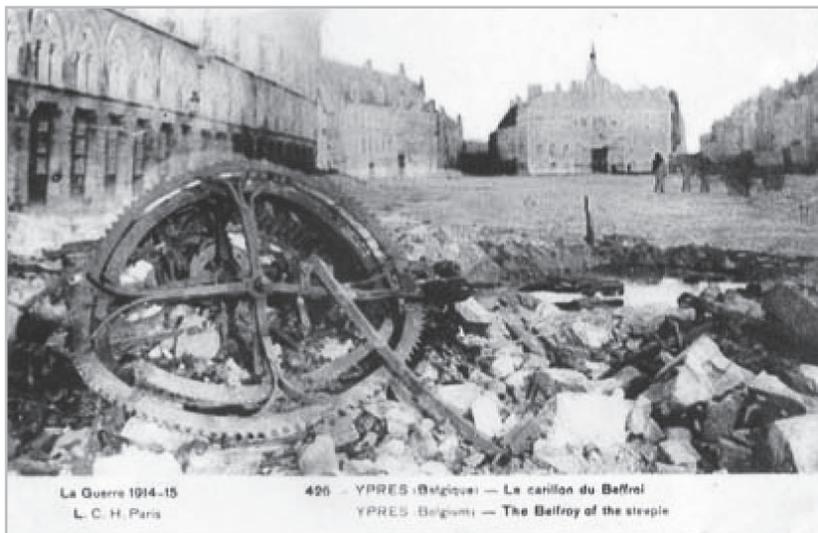
of destruction is alive and well, as postcards of Sarajevo made for the UN peace force show (figs. 4 and 5). But not all war postcards were of battlefields or destroyed villages. Foreign postcards from the Russo-Japanese war show how tourist tropes were used to serve the nationalist cause of the war. A host of cultural clichés, testifying to a sentimental and at the same time patronizing attitude towards a Japan presented as "unchanging", are reflected in some of the English cards produced in connection with the war: Shinto gateways, temple roofs, stone lanterns, cherry blossoms, shapely pines, a blood-red sun, Mt. Fuji, a rickshaw, parasols, girls in long-sleeved holiday kimonos, doll-like children and young women, all possible tropes of Japan are combined in those cards.[21]

Nowadays, depictions of place claim less authenticity and are more

[21] J. W. Dower, "*Yellow Promise/Yellow Peril. Foreign Postcards of the Russo-Jap-*

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**Figures 4-5. Cards made for the UN peace force in Yugoslavia in the wake of the destruction of Sarajewo. The backside of the destroyed tower of a mosque reads: L'APOCALYPSE AU CENTRE DE'L EUROPE SHORTLY BEFORE YEAR 2000; PEACE STABILIZATION FORCE, REPRINT FOR SFOR. © PHOTO EDITION PEUCEL (author's collection)**
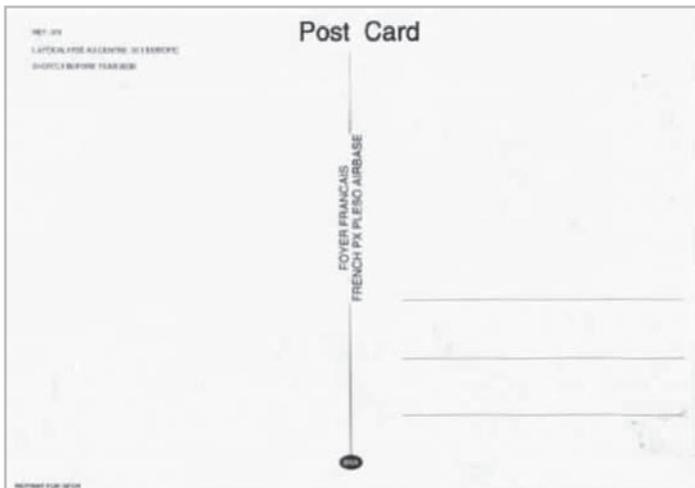
dramatized or emotionalized. Tourists have no need to buy cards for their visual memory, because cameras and mobile phones allow the depiction of almost anything anytime. Tourists draw a distinction between the self-created images and the ones they buy, a theme researched by Jonas Larsen, who sees tourist photography as a performance in which new realities are created. Larsen argues that photography is a technology of world-making, that it is about *producing* rather than *consuming* geographies and identities.[22] The tourist gaze identified by Urry can be understood as a much more performative activity than the notion of "visual consumption" suggests. Larsen's interviews of tourists reveal the difference between card and photo: "Well, we've learned never to take photographs without people in them because it's bloody boring to see a ruin without any people you know. […] So we choose some motifs that we think are beautiful or have a nice view, but we make sure that the boys or one of us are in it to make it a little personal, so that it isn't just a postcard, because then we could just have bought it down in the shop, right?"[23] As with all new media, new ones blend into the usage patterns of already existing ones, creating new niches for older media such as in this case, the postcard, which can become less of a naturalistic depiction.

## Nationalism as cultural practice

There is an abundant literature on nationalism, so here I will make no attempt at an overview.[24] As Annelies Moors has summarized,

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anese War (1904-5)", Massachusetts Institute of Technology Visualizing Cultures Exhibit Images from the Leonard A. Lauder Collection of Japanese Postcards at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 2005. http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/yellow_promise_yellow_peril/index.html, last viewed 2007-04-11.

[22] J. Larsen, "Families seen Photographing: Performativity of Tourist Photography", in *Space and Culture* 8, pp. 416-434, here p. 422.

[23] Ibid., p. 428.

[24] For an analytical approach including a review of the relevant research see e.g. M. Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 44, 4, 2002, pp. 770-799.

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cultural politics are central to the nationalist project.[25] Notions of time and space have an important role in the construction of national identity, and the nation's nature provides the backdrop, at the very least, to this construction, and often plays an active part in it. National monuments are more often than not cultural artifacts, but they are depicted as part of a display that encompasses natural surroundings. Natural monuments, often exploited touristically, are another way to make nature a part of a nation's cultural inventory, with national lists and maps creating a monumental geography of singled-out natural features. While some research is centered on a critique of nationalism, such as Danilo Kis', who characterizes the nationalist as a negative figure, defined more by a hatred against the other than by a positive evaluation of oneself[26], analytical approaches emphasize the social construction of the nation. The analysis of nationalism usually goes beyond the question of the character of the nationalist to look at cultural politics. National identity needs narratives, stories on the boundary between history and myth, to develop and perpetuate.[27] I argue – using picture postcards as sources – that the tourist gaze and the postcards that embody it serve as an important and completely overlooked visual narrative for nationalism. Subsequently I show that "Nature" plays a particular and important role in the construction of national identity, allowing a sub-current of nationalism to persist despite growing political unification in Europe.

Oliver Zimmer, who has studied Swiss nationalism, distinguishes a phase of "nationalisation of nature", from the late 18th century to 1870, and a subsequent phase of "naturalization of the nation", from 1870 to the end of World War II.[28] Zimmer's insightful essay actually touches on the issue of the role of tourism only briefly. His

[25] A. Moors, "Embodying the Nation: Maha Saca's Post-Intifada Postcards", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 23, 5, 2000, pp. 871-887, here p. 871.

[26] D. Kis, "On Nationalism. Theatre, Nationalism, and Disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia", in *Performing Arts Journal,* 53, 18, 2, 1996, pp. 13-16, here p. 13.

[27] J. Hearn, "Narrative, Agency, and Mood: On the Social Construction of National History in Scotland", *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 44, 4, 2002, pp. 745-769.

[28] Zimmer, "Search of Natural Identity" cit., p. 683.

emphasis is on development over time. He refers to the "broad consensus that between 1933 and 1939 Switzerland witnessed a growth of nationalist activity – manifested especially in the mushrooming of right-wing movements of national renewal from the spring of 1933, in the government's 1938 White Paper on cultural policy and in the National Exhibition in Zürich the following year".[29] While mapping the tourist image production of this period against the background of political trends would certainly be a worthwhile endeavor, it is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Imagery plays an important part in nationalism, and not just in Switzerland. In discussing the art historian and curator Kenneth Silver's work on the French Riviera, Aruna D'Souza shows the link between the historical development of image production and politics. From the 1920s onwards, a new cult of the natural guided vacationers' notions of leisure. Mythic constructions of place – in this case the French Mediterranean coast – were woven into various nationalistic discourses. D'Souza links art production and politics and shows their combined result on choices of motifs: "The creation of any sort of classicizing, Mediterranean mythos – Picasso's included – cannot be considered outside the political and cultural 'retour à l'ordre' of the interwar period, and Dubuffet's primitivism, likewise, has complicated links to French attempts to come to terms with its wartime complicities".[30] As Richard Rosa has shown for Puerto Rico from the 1930s onwards, tourism can also serve as the referential system grounding former colonies' cultural nationalism.[31]

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[29] O. Zimmer, "'A Unique Fusion of the Natural and the Man-made': The Trajectory of Swiss Nationalism, 1933–39", in *Journal of Contemporary History,* 39, 1, 2004, pp. 5-24, here p. 7.

[30] A. D'Souza, "Riviera Dreamin' - Tourist Artist Helped Create Image of French Riviera", in *Art in America*, July 2001. FindArticles.com. 19 Feb. 2007. http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_7_89/ai_76332999 .

[31] R. Rosa, "Business as Pleasure. Culture, Tourism and Nation in Puerto Rico in the 1930s", in *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 2, 3, 2001, pp. 449-488.

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## The tourist postcard
## as part of the nationalist project

At the time the picture postcard was invented, Europe witnessed an upsurge of nationalism, and while expatriated reformers and nationalists engaged in conversation about their common cause in their London exile, it became a political necessity to invest in difference and heritage alike. Heritage became the locus where tourism and nationalism converged. Tricia Cusack has shown this for Ireland: "The new Irish state, like other nations, invoked "folk roots", returning to a pre-colonial golden age located in the rural west. [...] An ancient and authentic west was evoked in travel writing, and especially in paintings of the Irish cottage landscape. National identity was not only embodied in but maintained through cottage landscape imagery". Postcards are one of the barely noticed signs used for the daily in-



THE END OF THE "BABY-KILLER."
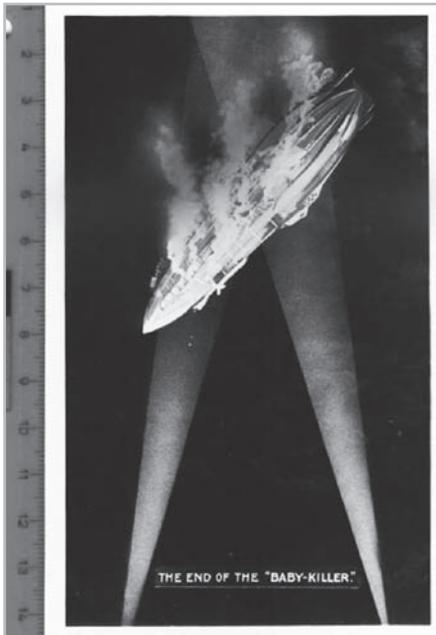
Figure 6. An English postcard from WWI showing the successful shooting down of a (German) Zeppelin (author's collection)
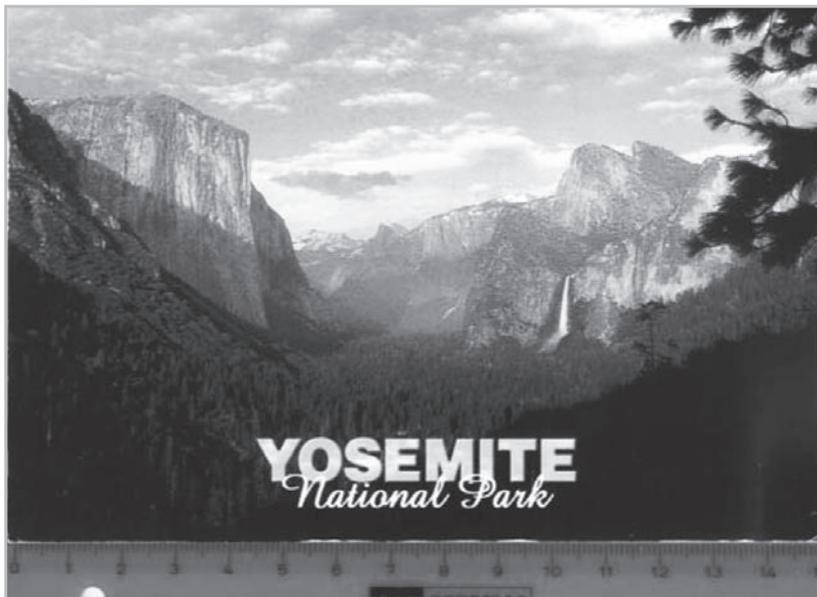
culcation of nationhood, part and parcel of the visual semantics of nationalism. Michael Billig calls this banal nationalism: "the term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or "flagged", in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition".[32]

The idea of nation is communicated to tourists, whether domestic or foreign. The tourist gaze includes the observing of others buying and writing postcards. Domestic tourism offers the possibility to reinforce the case for nationalism, enhancing the travelers' self-image with

[32] Cusack, "Irish Nationalism" cit., p. 211, quoting M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* Sage, London 1995, p. 6.

**Figure 8. Nationalism and nature on postcards. 8a View of Innsbruck as a dramatic example of the romantic gaze of nationalism. Geographically, the card shows rays of the swastika-sun in the north, towards Germany, the center of Nazism. The card was sent in 1938. 8 b This 1980s postcard from a small Austrian ski resort shows the collective nationalist gaze, with national colors, emblems, and the display of tourist usability. 8 c and d : Two ways of nationalizing nature, postcards from Switzerland. 8 e A series of three cards from Finland shows how the contours of the country are used to display a national nature. 8 f and g Two examples of Scottish representations of folklore and a nationalized nature, with the nationalist (Gaelic) Highland imagery standing for all of Scotland. Cards from the 1990s (All images from author's collection)**



a

**b**

Gruss aus Luzern

**c**

Swiss Folklore

**d**

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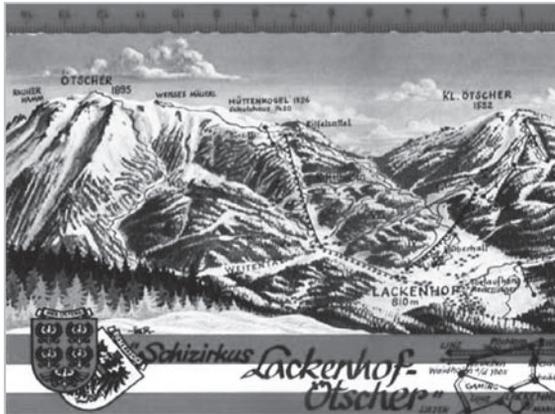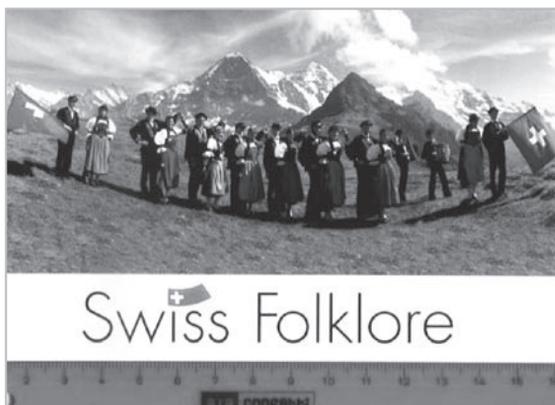
e
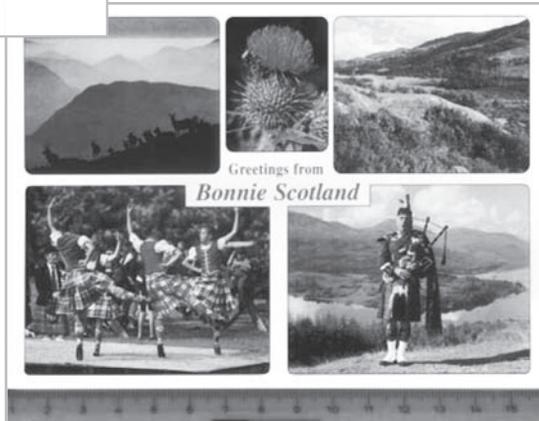


f



g

a pictorial inventory of nationalist tropes. Such cards have existed for a long time. They display national symbols or show important events in the history of a nation (see fig. 8, especially e, f, and g). Wartime postcards depict the nation's viewpoint more openly than others (see fig. 6), but the subtler messages are just as important. Let me also point out the very obvious fact that the expression "national park" signifies that nature is put in the service of the nation's higher honor (fig. 7 for an example from the United States).

The closeness of tourism and nationalism is central to my argument. Both depend on distinctiveness, uniqueness, differences in value, and, above all, the link between a specific territory and all these qualities. Sites that are symbolically laden materializations of the nation are very commonly also tourist sights. Thus, tourism can serve to reinforce nationalism. The otherness of the tourist is used to make claims about one's own identity. Michael Pretes has shown this for Mount Rushmore and other sites in South Dakota.[33] Nationalism can be explicit, as in certain cards from Scotland, but becomes apparent only upon closer study in cards from the former Yugoslavia. Innocent-looking depictions of Slovenian beaches tell of the hard-won victory of Slovenia to gain access to the Adriatic. A snapshot from the period when Herzegovina hoped to become an independent state, with its potential capital depicted in blood-red color, is another striking example. In the post-Yugoslavian world, the change of typeface for places like Banja Luka, which are now given in Cyrillic letters, is yet another small change carrying an important nationalist message.[34]

The historical development of tourism as a particular form of traveling and a set of activities embedded in that traveling, mainly falling under the heading "sightseeing", parallels the development of nationalism. Particular types of landscapes are chosen to illustrate the nature of a given nation. This choice is not arbitrary but reflects two things: firstly, cards reflect the particulars of the nationalist story behind the pictures, as in the case of the Scottish Highlands, which

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[33] Pretes, "Tourism and Nationalism" cit.
[34] The examples referred to come from the author's collection. They cannot be depicted here for lack of space.

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serve as tropes for Scotland in its entirety because of their Gaelic, non-British connotations; secondly, they reflect what is considered to be marketable tourist imagery. Given that tourism is based on the timeless, mythical quality also inherent in nationalism, both reflections more often than not will reinforce one another. Good nationalist imagery often makes good touristic imagery.

## Nature's role in the nationalist gaze

Postcards cater to different needs and many, if not most of them, are not outspoken nationalist propaganda. They are visual statements laden with symbolism, and part of this symbolism is national in character. While artifacts such as national monuments play an important role in them, postcards do help to create national natures, and in this process nature is appropriated to the nationalist project. As in the above mentioned "National Park", the nationalist connotation of nature has become almost invisible in many instances, and yet it is powerful. From Switzerland to Finland, from Austria to Croatia, cards show not only how national natures are created by using coats of arms, flags, contours of nations, folkloristic displays and the like; they also show that nature is an important part of this staging (fig. 8). The visual tropes on postcards create nationalized fictions of place.[35] They also naturalize the people in these places whenever these people are put into the landscape as part of a folkloristic display.[36] Figures 8 d, f and g are examples of such a display. Mosaic cards, cards in which the picture is split into several independent motifs, allow the combination of all important national sights into one meta-image (see fig. 8, f and g, but also figs. 1 and 2). Natural

[35] For tourism in Scotland and the nationalized fictions of place involved, see A. Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays: A History of Tourism in Scotland, 1780-1939,* Tuckwell, Edinburgh 2003; for a detailed regional study on tourism and landscape, see also R. A. Lambert, *Contested Mountains: Nature, Development and Environment in the Cairngorms Region of Scotland, 1880-1980,* White Horse Press, Isle of Harris 2001.

[36] See the references in footnote 2.

and cultural monuments are depicted side by side, combined into a national image, as in typical postcards from the fifty US states, which will display a map, the state flower, the state bird, and other natural symbols of the state, but also, usually, typical monuments.

## Concluding remarks

In image production for tourists, nature, I argue, is nationalized and nations are created as natural[37], but apart from the notability of the fact, does this bear larger significance for environmental historians? I would like to suggest two ways in which the interplay between nation and nature is indeed relevant. Nationalism – which, according to Billig[38], is endemic – is reinforced by image production for tourism.

Images should rank higher on the research agenda of those studying environmental politics. A hypothesis would be that it is difficult to reach consensus on international environmental affairs for two reasons. Whereas national environmental politics is considered to be a secondary policy matter, which however does have some bearing, although limited, on political decision making, international environmental politics is a weak political matter, and therefore (perhaps with the sole exception of symbolic politics in the aftermath of the publication of the latest IPCC report on anthropogenic climate change) not high on politicians' agenda.[39] In addition, each nation, reinforced by a seemingly never-ending array of images, has its own nature to protect, both at the economic level of tourism and as part of the *mentalité*, the mental framework within which we all operate.

Taking John Urry's idea of the "gaze" one step further, I propose to distinguish a "nationalist gaze". This comes both in a romantic and a collective form. Romantic national allusions present ethereal, sub-

[37] For Switzerland see Zimmer, "A Unique Fusion" cit.

[38] See footnote 33.

[39] For a discussion on how the so-called secondary policy issue of national environmental matters can influence the behaviour of governors in the US, see J. A List, D. M. Sturm, "How Elections Matter: Theory and Evidence from Environmental Policy", in *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 121, 4, 2006, pp. 1249-1281.

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lime "Natures" and make them into "emplacements" of the nation. Yosemite and other national parks, snow-covered Alpine peaks in Switzerland, and Mt. Fuji are examples of such a gaze (see fig. 7). The sublime is always elitist, as it requires undisturbed, concentrated reverence in viewing. Also, sublime nature is a scenery, and should by all means remain constant for tourist purposes, as icons must not change. Natural processes, from erosion to the growth of forests, disturb the fixed nature of the sublime object. As all nature is always changing, protecting the sublime as an immutable image actually means to work against nature. The romantic nationalist gaze can easily be exploited for tourism, as it lends itself to sight creation and iconization.

The collective nationalist gaze uses a combination of symbols like coats of arms, state flowers, and folkloristic natives to make a statement about collective culture and the distinctive, "typical" nature of a nation, as examples from Switzerland and Scotland bear out (see fig. 8 c, d, f, g). Many of those symbols lack the specificity Mt. Fuji has, so in order to distinguish, e.g., between Alpine lakes and peaks in different countries, flags, country names and the like are printed on the cards (fig. 8 c and d). There are differences in motifs, too. From the 1970s onwards, views of the Austrian Alps were combined with Alpine flowers, whereas those of the Swiss Alps were most often combined with cows. Such distinctions are created and maintained, as motifs that have become associated with one place are repeated over and over with only slight variations. The collective nationalist gaze puts people into the image. Tourist imagery in this form often suggests ways of using the landscape, as do the ski routes printed in red ink on the white slopes of ski resorts (see fig. 8 b). Nature is not displayed for its intrinsic value, but rather in terms of its use value to humans. For some locations, both types of image are available in postcards, catering to different target groups.

To put it in other terms, we can discern two dominant visual narratives for nationalism, in which nature is appropriated in different and deep ways. Postcards play a role in the commodification of nature, in the human appropriation of nature through tourism.[40]

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[40] Tourism involves the commodification of cultural, historical, and environ-

Both forms of appropriation are reinforcing the detachment of mass tourists from the reality of place. This brings me to my second conclusion. Picture postcards depict imagined landscapes, imagined natures. A series of cards with Alpine flowers has been shown to have been used for places where these flowers would by no means grow.[41] Would one miss them in reality? There is reason to doubt that. Postcard nature is in many ways better than the real one out there. Postcards supply proof of the fulfillment of the tourist dream, because they echo the promotional material on which the destination decision had been based, a hermeneutic cycle described by Urry: "What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photography images, which have already been seen in tour company brochures or on TV programs. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travelers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen before they set off".[42] Postcards endlessly reproducing the same sights can become a means of estrangement despite the fact that they depict nature as part of the nation or, rather, because they do. Sustainable tourism cannot limit itself to the measurable effects of tourist activity; it also needs new images, new visual tropes, images of a globally cared-for nature. A new form of "sustainable gaze" has to be developed, although this might require more than just new postcards.

As a way for environmental historians to engage with the public, postcards have much to offer. They are ubiquitous, cheap, and important. Looking at the visual tropes of the past, asking the question of how nature is appropriated in them, could be used in educational as well as promotional materials to contribute to more sustainable ways of traveling.

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mental features, as Moya Kneafsey has pointed out: M. Kneafsey, "Tourism, Place Identities and Social Relations in the European Rural Periphery", in *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 7, 1, 2000, pp. 35-50, here p. 36.

[41] V. Winiwarter, "Alpenblumengrüße", in *Wo i leb... Kulturlandschaften in Österreich*, Oberösterreichische Umweltakademie (ed.), H. Urban, F. M. Grünweis, C. Smoliner (Red.), (= Stadtmuseum Linz - Nordico, Katalog Nr. 67) Linz 1997, pp. 87-94.

[42] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* cit., p. 129.

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