

Globalization

The Human Consequences

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

Columbia University Press
Publishers Since 1893

New York

Copyright © Zygmunt Bauman 1998

First published in 1998 by Polity Press
in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bauman, Zygmunt.

Globalization : the human consequences / Zygmunt Bauman.
P. cm. — (European perspectives)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-231-11428-1 (cloth)

ISBN 0-231-11429-x (paper)

1. Postmodernism — Social aspects.
 2. Internationalism.
 3. International economic relations.
 4. Freedom of movement.
 5. Social mobility. I. Title. II. Series.
- HM73.B28 1998
303.4—dc21
98-18508

Casebound editions of Columbia University Press books are printed on
acid-free paper.

C 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

P 10 9 8 7 6 5 4



Columbia University Press
New York

the ‘far-away locals’ with murder, epidemic and looting. Given their monstrosity, one cannot but thank God for making them what they are – the *far-away* locals, and pray that they stay that way.

The wish of the hungry to go where food is plentiful is what one would naturally expect from rational human beings; letting them act on their wishes is also what conscience would suggest is the right, moral thing to do. It is because of its undeniable rationality and ethical correctness that the rational and ethically conscious world feels so crestfallen in the face of the prospect of the mass migration of the poor and hungry; it is so difficult, without feeling guilty, to deny the poor and hungry their right to go where food is more plentiful; and it is virtually impossible to advance convincing rational arguments proving that their migration would be, for them, an unreasonable decision to take. The challenge is truly awesome: one needs to deny the others the self-same right to freedom of movement which one eulogizes as the topmost achievement of the globalizing world and the warrant of its growing prosperity . . .

The pictures of inhumanity which rules the lands where prospective migrants reside therefore comes in handy. They strengthen the resolve which lacks the rational and ethical arguments to support it. They help to keep the locals local, while allowing the globals to travel with a clear conscience.

4

Tourists and Vagabonds

Nowadays we are all on the move.

Many of us change places – moving homes or travelling to and from places which are not our homes. Some of us do not need to go out to travel: we can dash or scurry or flit through the Web, netting and mixing on the computer screen messages born in opposite corners of the globe. But most of us are on the move even if physically, bodily, we stay put. When, as is our habit, we are glued to our chairs and zap the cable or satellite channels on and off the TV screen – jumping in and out of foreign spaces with a speed much beyond the capacity of supersonic jets and cosmic rockets, but nowhere staying long enough to be more than visitors, to feel *chez soi*.

In the world we inhabit, distance does not seem to matter much. Sometimes it seems that it exists solely in order to be cancelled; as if space was but a constant invitation to slight it, refute and deny. Space stopped being an obstacle – one needs just a split second to conquer it.

There are no ‘natural borders’ any more, neither are there obvious places to occupy. Wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular (and thus we feel often an overwhelming urge to find – to compose – such a reason). Pascal’s witty adage has turned out to be a prophecy come true: we indeed live in a strange circle

whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere (or, who knows, perhaps the other way round?).

And so spiritually at least we are all travellers. Or, as Michael Benedikt puts it, 'the very significance of geographical location at all scales begins to be questioned. We become nomads – who are always in touch.'¹ But we are on the move also in another, deeper sense, whether or not we take to the roads or leap through the channels, and whether we like doing it or detest it.

The idea of the 'state of rest', of immobility, makes sense only in a world that stays still or could be taken for such; in a place with solid walls, fixed roads and signposts steady enough to have time to rust. One cannot 'stay put' in moving sands. Neither can one stay put in this late-modern or postmodern world of ours – a world with reference points set on wheels and known for their vexing habit of vanishing from view before the instruction they offer has been read out in full, pondered and acted upon. Professor Ricardo Petrella of the Catholic University of Louvain recently summed it up very well: 'Globalization drags economies toward the production of the ephemeral, the volatile (through a massive and universal reduction of the life-span of products and services) and of the precarious (temporary, flexible and part-time jobs).'²

In order to elbow their way through the dense and dark, straggly, 'deregulated' thicket of global competitiveness and into the limelight of public attention – goods, services, and signals must arouse desire, and in order to do so they must seduce their prospective consumers and out-seduce their competitors. But once they have done it they must make room, and quickly, for other objects of desire, lest the global chase of profit and ever greater profit (rebaptized as 'economic growth') shall grind to a halt. Today's industry is geared increasingly to the production of attractions and temptations. And it is in the nature of attractions that they tempt and seduce only as long as they beckon from that far-away which we call the future, while

temptation cannot survive for long the surrender of the tempted – just as desire never survives its satisfaction.

For this chase after new desires, rather than after their satisfaction, there is no obvious finishing line. The very notion of the 'jimmy' must need temporal/spatial dimensions. The effect of 'taking the waiting out of wanting' is taking the wanting out of waiting. Once all delay can in principle be flattened into instantaneity, so that an infinite multitude of time-events can be packed into the time-span of human life, and once all distance seems fit to be compressed into co-presence so that no space-scale is in principle too big for the explorer of new sensations – what possible meaning could the idea of the 'jimmy' carry? And without sense, without a meaningful meaning, there is no way for the magic wheel of temptation and desire ever to run out of momentum. The consequences, for both the high and the lowly, are enormous – as cogently expressed by Jeremy Seabrook:

Poverty cannot be 'cured', for it is not a symptom of the disease of capitalism. Quite the reverse: it is evidence of its robust good health, its spur to even greater accumulation and effort... Even the very richest in the world complain above all about all the things they must forego... Even the most privileged are compelled to bear within themselves the urgency for striving to acquire...³

Being a consumer in a consumer society

Our society is a consumer society.

When we speak of a consumer society, we have in mind something more than the trivial observation that all members of that society consume; all human beings, and, moreover, all living creatures, have been 'consuming' since time immemorial. What we do have in mind is that ours is a 'consumer society' in

a similarly profound and fundamental sense in which the society of our predecessors, modern society in its foundation-laying, industrial phase, used to be a 'producers' society'. That older type of modern society engaged its members primarily as producers and soldiers; the way in which that society shaped its members, the 'norm' which it held up before their eyes and prompted them to observe, was dictated by the duty to play those two roles. The norm which that society held up to its members was the ability and the willingness to play them. But in its present late-modern (Griddens), second-modern (Beck), summodern (Balandier) or postmodern stage, modern society has little need for mass industrial labour and conscript armies; instead, it needs to engage its members in their capacity as consumers. The way present-day society shapes its members is dictated first and foremost by the duty to play the role of the consumer. The norm our society holds up to its members is that of the ability and willingness to play it.

Of course, the difference between living in our society and living in its immediate predecessor is not as radical as abandoning one role and picking up another instead. In neither of its two stages could modern society do without its members producing things to be consumed – and members of both societies do, of course, consume. The difference between the two stages of modernity is one of emphasis and priorities 'only' – but that shift of emphasis does make an enormous difference to virtually every aspect of society, culture and individual life.

The differences are so deep and multiform that they fully justify speaking of our society as of a society of a separate and distinct kind – a consumer society. The consumer of a consumer society is a sharply different creature from consumers in any other societies thus far. If the philosophers, poets and moral preachers among our ancestors pondered the question whether one works in order to live or lives in order to work, the dilemma one hears mullied over most often nowadays is whether one needs to consume in order to live or whether one lives so that

one can consume. That is, if we are still able, and feel the need to, tell apart the living from the consuming.

Ideally, all acquired habits should lie on the shoulders of that new type of consumer just like the ethically inspired vocational and acquisitive passions were hoped to lie, as Max Weber repeated after Baxter, on the shoulders of the Protestant saint: 'like a light cloak, ready to be thrown aside at any moment.'⁴ And the habits are, indeed, continually, daily, and at the first opportunity thrown aside, never given the chance to firm up into the iron bars of a cage (except for one meta-habit, the habit of changing habits'). Ideally, nothing should be embraced by a consumer firmly, nothing should command a commitment, till death do us part, no needs should be seen as fully satisfied, no desires considered ultimate. There ought to be a proviso 'until further notice' attached to any oath of loyalty and any commitment. It is but the volatility, the in-built temporality of all engagements, that truly counts; it counts more than the commitment itself, which is anyway not allowed to outlast the time necessary for consuming the object of desire (or, rather, the time sufficient for the desirability of that object to wane).

That all consumption takes time is in fact the bane of consumer society – and a major worry for the merchandisers of consumer goods. There is a natural resonance between the spectacular career of the 'now', brought about by time-consuming technology, and the logic of consumer-oriented economy. As far as the latter goes, the consumer's satisfaction ought to be *instant*: and this in a double sense. Obviously, consumed goods should satisfy immediately, requiring no learning of skills and no lengthy groundwork; but the satisfaction should also end – 'in no time', that is in the moment the time needed for their consumption is up. And that time ought to be reduced to the bare minimum.

The needed time-reduction is best achieved if consumers cannot hold their attention or focus their desire on any object for long; if they are impatient, impetuous and restive, and above

all easily excitable and equally easily losing interest. The culture of consumer society is mostly about forgetting, not learning. Indeed, when the waiting is taken out of wanting and the wanting out of waiting, the consumption capacity of consumers may be stretched far beyond the limits set by any natural or acquired needs; also, the physical endurance of the objects of desire is no longer required. The traditional relationship between needs and their satisfaction is reversed: the promise and hope of satisfaction precedes the need promised to be satisfied and will be always more intense and alluring than the extant needs.

As a matter of fact, the promise is all the more attractive the less familiar is the need in question; there is a lot of fun in living through an experience one did not know existed, and a good consumer is a fun-loving adventurer. For good consumers it is not the satisfaction of the needs one is tormented by, but the torments of desires never yet sensed or suspected that makes the promise so tempting.

The kind of consumer gestated and incubated inside the society of consumers has been most poignantly described by John Carroll, taking his cue from Nietzsche's caustic yet prophetic caricature of the 'last man' (see Carroll's forthcoming book: *Ego and Soul: a Sociology of the Modern West in the Search of Meaning*):

The ethos of this society proclaims: If you feel bad, eat! . . . The consumerist reflex is melancholic, supposing that malaise takes the form of feeling empty, cold, flat – in need of filling up warm, rich, vital things. Of course it need not be food, as in what made The Beatles 'feel happy inside'. Gorging is the path to salvation – consume and feel good! . . .

There is equally the restlessness, the mania for constant change, movement, difference – to sit still is to die . . . Consumerism is thus the social analogue to the psychopathology of depression, with its twin clashing symptoms of enervation and inability to sleep.

For the consumers in the society of consumers, being on the move – searching, looking for, not-finding-it or more exactly not-finding-it-yet is not a malaise, but the promise of bliss; perhaps it is the bliss itself. Theirs is the kind of travelling hopefully which makes arriving into a curse. (Maurice Blanchot noted that the answer is the bad luck of the question; we may say that the satisfaction is the bad luck of the desire.) Not so much the greed to acquire and possess, nor the gathering of wealth in its material, tangible sense, as the excitement of a new and unprecedented sensation is the name of the consumer game. Consumers are first and foremost gatherers of *sensations*; they are collectors of *things* only in a secondary and derivative sense.

Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen put it in a nutshell: 'desire does not desire satisfaction. To the contrary, desire desires desire.'⁵ The desire of an ideal consumer at any rate. The prospect of the desire fading off and dissipating, the prospect of being left with nothing in sight to resurrect it or with a world with nothing in it to be desired, must be the most sinister of the ideal consumer's horrors (and of the merchandisers of consumer goods' nightmares, of course).

To increase their capacity for consumption, consumers must never be allowed to rest. They need to be kept forever awake and on the alert, constantly exposed to new temptations and so remain in a state of a never winking excitation – and also, indeed, a state of perpetual suspicion and steady disaffection. The baits commanding them to shift attention need to confirm the suspicion while promising the way out of disaffection: 'You reckon'd you seen it all? You ain't seen nothin' yet!'

It is often said that the consumer market seduces its customers. But in order to do so it needs customers who *want* to be seduced (just as to command his labourers, the factory boss needed a crew with the habits of discipline and command-following firmly entrenched). In a properly working consumer

society consumers seek actively to be seduced. Their grandfathers, the producers, lived from one turn of the conveyor belt to an identical next. They themselves, for a change, live from attraction to attraction, from temptation to temptation, from sniffing out one tidbit to searching for another, from swallowing one bait to fishing around for another – each attraction, temptation, tidbit and bait being new, different and more attention-catching than its predecessor.

To act like this is for fully fledged, mature consumers a compulsion, a must; yet that 'must', that internalized pressure, that impossibility of living one's life in any other way, reveals itself to them in the disguise of a free exercise of will. The market might already have selected them as consumers and so taken away their freedom to ignore its blandishments; but on every successive visit to a market-place consumers have every reason to feel that it is they – perhaps even they alone – who are in command. They are the judges, the critics and the choosers. They can, after all, refuse their allegiance to any one of the infinite choices on display. Except the choice of choosing between them, that is – but that choice does not appear to be a choice.

It is this combination of the consumers, constantly greedy for new attractions and fast bored with attractions already had, and of the world transformed in all its dimensions – economic, political, or personal – after the pattern of the consumer market and, like the market, ready to oblige and change its attractions with ever accelerating speed, that wipes out all fixed signposts – steel, concrete, or plotted of authority only – from the individual maps of the world and from the designs of life itineraries. Indeed, travelling hopefully is in the life of the consumer much more pleasurable than to arrive. Arrival has that musty smell of the end of the road, that bitter taste of monotony and stagnation which would put paid to everything which the consumer – the ideal consumer – lives by and for and views as the sense of living. To enjoy the best that this world has to offer, you may

do all sorts of things except one: to declare, after Goethe's Faust: 'O moment, you are beautiful, last forever!'

The consumer is a person on the move and bound to remain so.

Divided we move

One thing which even the most seasoned and discerning masters of the art of choice do not and cannot choose, is the society to be born into – and so we are all in travel, whether we like it or not. We have not been asked about our feelings anyway.

Thrown into a vast open sea with no navigation charts and all the marker buoys sunk and barely visible, we have only two choices left: we may rejoice in the breath-taking vistas of new discoveries – or we may tremble out of fear of drowning. One option not really realistic is to claim sanctuary in a safe harbour; one could bet that what seems to be a tranquil haven today will be soon modernized, and a theme park, amusement promenade or crowded marina will replace the sedate boat sheds. The third option not thus being available, which of the two other options will be chosen or become the lot of the sailor depends in no small measure on the ship's quality and the navigating skills of the sailors. The stronger the ship, the less reason to fear the tides and sea storms. Not all ships are seaworthy, however. And so the larger the expanse of free sailing, the more the sailors' fate tends to be polarized and the deeper the chasm between the poles. A pleasurable adventure for the well-equipped yacht may prove a dangerous trap for a tattered dinghy. In the last account, the difference between the two is that between life and death.

Everybody may be *cast* into the mode of the consumer; everybody may *wish* to be a consumer and indulge in the opportunities which that mode of life holds. But not everybody *can* be a consumer. To desire is not enough; to make the desire truly desirable, and so to draw the pleasure from the desire, one

must have a reasonable hope of getting closer to the desired object. This hope, reasonably entertained by some, is futile for many others. All of us are doomed to the life of choices, but not all of us have the means to be choosers.

Like all other known societies, the postmodern, consumer society is a stratified one. But it is possible to tell one kind of society from another by the dimensions along which it stratifies its members. The dimension along which those 'high up' and 'low down' are plotted in a society of consumers, is their *degree of mobility* – their freedom to choose where to be.

One difference between those 'high up' and those 'low down' is that the first may leave the second behind – but not vice versa. Contemporary cities are sites of an 'apartheid à rebours': those who can afford it, abandon the filth and squalor of the regions that those who cannot afford the move are struck to. In Washington D.C. they have already done it – in Chicago, Cleveland and Baltimore they are close to having done it. In Washington no discrimination is practised on the house market. And yet there is an invisible border stretching along 16th Street in the west and the Potomac river in the north-west, which those left behind are wise never to cross. Most of the adolescents left behind the invisible yet all-too-tangible border never saw downtown Washington with all its splendours, ostentatious elegance and refined pleasures. In their life, that downtown does not exist. There is no talking over the border. The life experiences are so sharply different that it is not clear what the residents of the two sides could talk to each other about were they to meet and stop to converse. As Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked, 'If lions could talk, we would not understand them.'

And another difference. Those 'high up' are satisfied that they travel through life by their heart's desire and pick and choose their destinations according to the joys they offer. Those 'low down' happen time and again to be thrown out from the site they would rather stay in. (In 1975 there were 2 million forced emigrants – refugees – under the care of the High

Commission set by the UN for that purpose. In 1995 there were 27 million of them.) If they do not move, it is often the site that is pulled from under their feet, so it feels like being on the move anyway. If they take to the roads, then their destination, more often than not, is of somebody else's choice; it is seldom enjoyable, and its enjoyability is not what it has been chosen for. They might occupy a highly unprepossessing site which they would gladly leave behind – but they have nowhere else to go, since nowhere else they are likely to be welcomed and allowed to put up a tent.

Progressively, entry visas are phased out all over the globe. But not passport control. The latter is still needed – perhaps more than ever before – to sort out the confusion which the abolition of the visas might have created: to set apart those for whose convenience and whose ease of travel the visas have been abolished, from those who should have stayed put – not meant to travel in the first place. The present-day combination of the annulment of entry visas and the reinforcement of immigration controls has profound symbolic significance. It could be taken as the metaphor for the new, emergent, stratification. It lays bare the fact that it is now the 'access to global mobility' which has been raised to the topmost rank among the stratifying factors. It also reveals the global dimension of all privilege and deprivation, however local. Some of us enjoy the new freedom of movement *sans papiers*. Some others are not allowed to stay put for the same reason.

All people may now be wanderers, in fact or in premonition – but there is an abyss hard to bridge between experiences likely to emerge, respectively, at the top and at the bottom of the freedom scale. The fashionable term 'nomads', applied indiscriminately to all contemporaries of the postmodern era, is grossly misleading, as it glosses over the profound differences which separate the two types of experience and render all similarity between them formal and superficial.

As a matter of fact, the worlds sedimented on the two poles,

at the top and at the bottom of the emergent hierarchy of mobility, differ sharply; they also become increasingly incommunicado to each other. For the first world, the world of the globally mobile, the space has lost its constraining quality and is easily traversed in both its 'real' and 'virtual' renditions. For the second world, the world of the 'locally tied', of those barred from moving and thus bound to bear passively whatever change may be visited on the locality they are tied to, the real space is fast closing up. This is a kind of deprivation which is made yet more painful by the obtrusive media display of the space conquest and of the 'virtual accessibility' of distances that stay stubbornly unreachable in non-virtual reality.

The shrinking of space abolishes the flow of time. The inhabitants of the first world live in a perpetual present, going through a succession of episodes hygienically insulated from their past as well as their future. These people are constantly busy and perpetually 'short of time', since each moment of time is non-extensive – an experience identical with that of time 'full to the brim'. People marooned in the opposite world are crushed under the burden of abundant, redundant and useless time they have nothing to fill with. In their time 'nothing ever happens'. They do not 'control' time – but neither are they controlled by it, unlike their clocking-in, clocking-out ancestors, subject to the faceless rhythm of factory time. They can only kill time, as they are slowly killed by it.

Residents of the first world live in *time*; space does not matter for them, since spanning every distance is instantaneous. It is this experience which Jean Baudrillard 'encapsulated in his image of 'hyperreality', where the virtual and the real are no longer separable, since both share or miss in the same measure that 'objectivity', 'externality' and 'punishing power' which Emile Durkheim listed as the symptoms of all reality. Residents of the second world, on the contrary, live in *space*: heavy, resilient, untouchable, which ties down time and keeps it beyond the residents' control. Their time is void; in their time,

'nothing ever happens'. Only the virtual, TV time has a structure, a 'timeable' – the rest of time is monotonously ticking away; it comes and goes, making no demands and apparently leaving no trace. Its sediments appear all of a sudden, unannounced and uninvited. Immaterial and lightweight, ephemeral, with nothing to fill it with sense and so give it gravity, time has no power over that all-too-real space to which the residents of the second world are confined.

For the inhabitants of the first world – the increasingly cosmopolitan, extraterritorial world of global businessmen, global culture managers or global academics, state borders are levelled down, as they are dismantled for the world's commodities, capital and finances. For the inhabitant of the second world, the walls built of immigration controls, of residence laws and of 'clean streets' and 'zero tolerance' policies, grow taller; the moats separating them from the sites of their desire and of dreamed-of redemption grow deeper, while all bridges, at the first attempt to cross them, prove to be drawbridges. The first travel at will, get much fun from their travel (particularly if travelling first class or using private aircraft), are cajoled or bribed to travel and welcomed with smiles and open arms when they do. The second travel surreptitiously, often illegally, sometimes paying more for the crowded steeage of a sinking unseaworthy boat than others pay for business-class gilded luxuries – and are frowned upon, and, if unlucky, arrested and promptly deported, when they arrive.

Moving through the world vs. the world moving by

The cultural/psychological consequences of polarization are enormous.

Larry Elliott in *The Guardian* of 10 November 1997 quotes Diane Coyle, the author of *The Weightless World*, who expatriates

on the pleasures which the new brave electronic computerized flexible world of high speed and mobility offers her personally: 'For people like me, a well educated and well paid economist and journalist with a degree of entrepreneurial spirit, the new flexibility of the UK labour market has provided wonderful opportunities.' But a few paragraphs later the same author admits that for 'people without suitable qualifications, adequate family resources or enough savings, increased flexibility boils down to being exploited more thoroughly by employers . . .'. Coyle asks that the recent warning of Lester Thurow and Robert Reich about the growing dangers of social chasm growing in the USA between 'a rich elite holed up in guarded compounds' and 'a workless impoverished majority' should not be treated lightly by all those basking in the sunshine of the new British labour flexibility . . .

Agnes Heller recalls meeting, on one of her long-distance flights, a middle-aged woman, an employee of an international trade firm, who spoke five languages and owned three apartments in three different places.

She constantly migrates, and among many places, and always to and fro. She does it alone, not as a member of community, although many people act like her . . . The kind of culture she participates in is not a culture of a certain place; it is the culture of a time. It is a culture of the *absolute present*.

Let's accompany her on her constant trips from Singapore to Hong Kong, London, Stockholm, New Hampshire, Tokyo, Prague and so on. She stays in the same Hilton hotel, eats the same tuna sandwich for lunch, or, if she wishes, eats Chinese food in Paris and French food in Hong Kong. She uses the same type of fax, and telephones, and computers, watches the same films, and discusses the same kind of problems with the same kind of people.

Agnes Heller, herself like many of us an academic globetrotter, finds it easy to empathize with her anonymous companion's

experience. She adds, *pro domo sua*: 'Even foreign universities are not foreign. After one delivers a lecture, one can expect the same questions in Singapore, Tokyo, Paris or Manchester. They are not foreign places, nor are they homes.' Agnes Heller's companion has no home – but neither does she feel homeless. Wherever she is at the moment, she feels at ease. 'For example, she knows where the electric switch is; she knows the menu in advance; she reads the gestures and the allusions; she understands others without further explanation.'⁶

Jeremy Seabrook remembers another woman, Michelle, from a neighbouring council estate:

At fifteen her hair was one day red, the next blonde, then jet-black, then teased into Afro kinks and after that rat-tails, then plaited, and then cropped so that it glistened close to the skull . . . Her lips were scarlet, then purple, then black. Her face was ghost-white and then peach-coloured, then bronze as if it were cast in metal. Pursued by dreams of flight, she left home at sixteen to be with her boyfriend, who was twenty-six . . .

At eighteen she returned to her mother, with two children . . . She sat in the bedroom which she had fled three years earlier; the faded photos of yesterday's pop stars still stared down from the walls. She said she felt a hundred years old. She'd tried all that life could offer. Nothing else was left.⁷

Heller's fellow-passenger lives in an imaginary home she does not need and thus does not mind being imaginary. Seabrook's acquaintance performs imaginary flights from the home she resents for being stultifyingly real. Virtuality of space serves both, but to each offers different services with sharply different results. To Heller's travel companion, it helps to dissolve whatever constraints a real home may impose – to dematerialize space without exposing herself to the discomforts and the anxieties of homelessness. To Seabrook's neighbour, it brings into relief the awesome and abhorrent power of a home turned into prison – it decomposes time. The first experience is lived

through as postmodern freedom. The second may feel rather uncannily like the postmodern version of slavery.

The first experience is, paradigmatically, that of the *tourist* (and it does not matter whether the purpose of the trip is business or pleasure). Tourists become wanderers and put the bitter-sweet dreams of homesickness above the comforts of home – because they want to; either because they consider it the most reasonable life-strategy ‘under the circumstances’, or because they have been seduced by the true or imaginary pleasures of a sensations-gatherer’s life.

Not all wanderers, however, are on the move because they prefer being on the move to staying put and because they want to go where they are going. Many would perhaps go elsewhere or refuse to embark on a life of wandering altogether – were they asked, but they had not been asked in the first place. If they are on the move, it is because ‘staying at home’ in a world made to the measure of the tourist feels like humiliation and a drudgery and in the long run does not seem a feasible proposition anyway. They are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise, by a force of seduction or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist. They see their plight as anything except the manifestation of freedom. These are the *vagabonds*: dark vagrant moons reflecting the shine of bright tourist suns and following placidly the planets’ orbit; the mutants of postmodern evolution, the monster rejects of the brave new species. The vagabonds are the waste of the world which has dedicated itself to tourist services.

The tourists stay or move at their hearts’ desire. They abandon a site when new untried opportunities beckon elsewhere. The vagabonds know that they won’t stay in a place for long, however strongly they wish to, since nowhere they stop are they likely to be welcome. The tourists move because they find the world within their (*global*) reach irresistibly *attractive* – the vagabonds move because they find the world within their

(local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*. The tourists travel because *they want to*; the vagabonds because *they have no other bearable choice*. The vagabonds are, one may say, involuntary tourists; but the notion of ‘involuntary tourist’ is a contradiction in terms. However much the tourist’s strategy may be a necessity in a world marked by shifting walls and mobile roads, freedom of choice is the tourist’s flesh and blood. Take it away, and the attraction, the poetry and, indeed, the livability of the tourist’s life are all but gone.

What is acclaimed today as ‘globalization’ is geared to the tourists’ dreams and desires. Its second effect – a *side-effect*, but an unavoidable one – is the transformation of many others into vagabonds. Vagabonds are travellers refused the right to turn into tourists. They are allowed neither to stay put (there is no site guaranteeing permanence, the end to undesirable mobility) nor search for a better place to be.

Once emancipated from space, capital no longer needs itinerant labour (while its most emancipated, most advanced high-tech avant-garde needs hardly *any* labour, mobile or immobile). And so the pressure to pull down the last remaining barriers to the free movement of money and money-making commodities and information goes hand in hand with the pressure to dig new moats and erect new walls (variously called ‘immigration’ or ‘nationality’ laws) barring the movement of those who are uprooted, spiritually or bodily, as a result.⁸ *Green light for the tourists, red light for the vagabonds*. Enforced localization guards the natural selectivity of the globalizing effects. The widely noted, increasingly worrying polarization of the world and its population is not an external, alien, disturbing, ‘spoke in the wheel’ interference with the process of globalization; it is its effect.

There are no tourists without the vagabonds, and the tourists cannot be let free without tying down the vagabonds . . .

For better or worse – united

The vagabond is the *alter ego* of the tourist. He is also the tourist's most ardent admirer – all the more so for the fact of having no inkling of the real, but not much talked about, inconveniences of the tourist's life. Ask the vagabonds what sort of life they would wish to have, given the chance of free choice – and you will get a pretty accurate description of the tourist's bliss 'as seen on TV'. Vagabonds have no other images of the good life – no alternative utopia, no political agenda of their own. The sole thing they want is to be allowed to be tourists – like the rest of us . . . In a restless world, tourism is the only acceptable, human form of restlessness.

The tourist and the vagabond are both consumers, and late-modern or postmodern consumers are sensation-seekers and collectors of experiences; their relationship to the world is primarily *aesthetic*: they perceive the world as a food for sensibility – a matrix of possible experiences (in the sense of *Erlebnisse*, a state one lives through, not *Erfahrungen*, occurrences that happen to one – the seminal distinction made in German, but sorely missing in English); and they map it according to the experiences occasioned. Both are touched – attracted or repelled – by the promised sensations. They both 'savour' the world, as seasoned museum-goers savour their *tête-à-tête* with a work of art. This attitude-to-the-world unites them, makes them like each other. This is the kind of similarity which enables the vagabonds to empathize with tourists, with their images of tourists at any rate – and to desire a share in their life-style; but a similarity which the tourists try hard to forget – though much to their dismay cannot fully and truly repress.

As Jeremy Seabrook reminds his readers,⁹ the secret of present-day society lies in 'the development of an artificially created and subjective sense of insufficiency' – since 'nothing

could be more menacing' to its foundational principles 'than that the people should declare themselves satisfied with what they have'. What people do have is thus played down, denigrated, dwarfed by the obtrusive and all-too-visible displays of extravagant adventures by the better-off: 'The rich become objects of universal adoration.'

The rich who were put on display as personal heroes for universal adoration and the patterns of universal emulation used once to be the 'self-made men', whose lives epitomized the benign effects of the work ethic and of reason strictly and doggedly adhered to. This is no longer the case. The object of adoration is now wealth itself – wealth as the warrant for a most fanciful and prodigal life-style. It is *what one can do* that matters, not *what is to be done* or *what has been done*. Universally adored in the persons of the rich is their wondrous ability to pick and choose the contents of their lives, places to live in now and then, partners to share those places with – and to change all of them at will and without effort; the fact that they seem never to reach points of no return, that there is no visible end to their reincarnations, that their future looks forever richer in content and more enticing than their past; and, last but not least, that the only thing which seems to matter to them is the range of prospects their wealth seems to throw open. These people seem, indeed, to be guided by the aesthetics of consumption; it is the display of extravagant, even frivolous aesthetic taste, not the obedience to work ethic or dry, abstemious precept of reason, the connoisseurship, not a mere financial success, that lie at the heart of their perceived greatness and founds their right to universal admiration.

'The poor do not inhabit a separate culture from the rich', Seabrook points out, 'they must live in the same world that has been contrived for the benefit of those with money. And their poverty is aggravated by economic growth, just as it is intensified by recession and non-growth.' Indeed, recession spells more poverty and fewer resources; but the growth ushers in a

still more frantic display of consumer wonders and thus augurs a deeper gap yet between the desirable and the realistic.

Both the tourist and the vagabond have been made into consumers, but the vagabond is a *flawed* consumer. The vagabonds are not really able to afford the kind of sophisticated choices in which the consumers are expected to excel; their potential for consumption is as limited as their resources. This fault makes their position in society precarious. They breach the norm and sap the order. They spoil the fun simply by being around, they do not lubricate the wheels of the consumer society, they add nothing to the prosperity of the economy turned into a tourist industry. They are useless, in the sole sense of 'use' one can think of in a society of consumers or society of tourists. And because they are useless, they are also unwanted. Being unwanted, they are natural objects for stigmatizing and scapegoating. But their crime is nothing other than to wish to be like the tourists – while lacking the means to act on their wishes the way the tourists do.

But if the tourists view them as unsavoury, disreputable and offensive, and resent their unsolicited company, it is for deeper reasons than the much publicized 'public costs' of keeping the vagabonds alive. The tourists have a horror of the vagabonds for much the same reason that the vagabonds look up to the tourists as their gurus and idols: in the society of travellers, in the travelling society, tourism and vagrancy are two faces of the same coin. The vagabond, let us repeat, is the *alter ego* of the tourist. The line which divides them is tenuous and not always clearly drawn. One can easily cross it without noticing . . . There is this abominable likeness which makes it so hard to decide at which point the portrait becomes a caricature and the proper and healthy specimen of the species turns into a mutant and a monster.

There are among the tourists some 'regular goers', always on the go and always confident that they go in the right direction and that the going is the right thing to do; these happy tourists are seldom worried by the thought that their escapades may

descend into vagabondage. And there are some hopeless vagabonds, who long ago threw in the towel and abandoned all hope of ever rising to the rank of tourists. But between these two extremes there is a large part, arguably a substantial majority of the society of consumers/travellers, who cannot be quite sure where do they stand at the moment and even less can be sure that their present standing will see the light of the next day. There are so many banana skins on the road, and so many sharp kerbs on which one can stumble. After all, most jobs are temporary, shares may go down as well as up, skills keep being devalued and superseded by new and improved skills, the assets one is proud of and cherishes now become obsolete in no time, exquisite neighbourhoods become shoddy and vulgar, partnerships are formed merely until further notice, values worth pursuing and ends worth investing come and go . . . Just as no life insurance protects the policy owner from death, none of the insurance policies of the tourist's life-style protects against slipping into vagabondage.

And so the vagabond is the tourist's nightmare; the tourist's 'inner demon' which needs to be exorcized, and daily. The sight of the vagabond makes the tourist tremble – not because of *what the vagabond is* but because of *what the tourist may become*. While sweeping the vagabond under the carpet – banning the beggar and the homeless from the street, confining him to a far-away, 'no-go' ghetto, demanding his exile or incarceration – the tourist desperately, though in the last account vainly, seeks the deportation of his own fears. A world without vagabonds will be a world in which Gregor Samsa will never undergo the metamorphosis into an insect, and the tourists will never wake up vagabonds. *A world without vagabonds is the utopia of the society of tourists*. Much of the politics in the society of tourists – like the obsession with 'law and order', the criminalization of poverty, recurrent spongers-bashing etc. – can be explained as an ongoing, stubborn effort to lift social reality, against all odds, to the level of that utopia.

The snag is, though, that the life of tourists would not be half as enjoyable as it is, were there no vagabonds around to show what the alternative to that life, the sole alternative which the society of travellers renders realistic, would be like. Tourist life is not a bed of roses, and the roses most likely to be found there grow on unpleasantly thorny stems. There are many hardships one needs to suffer for the sake of tourist's freedoms: the impossibility of slowing down, uncertainty wrapping every choice, risks attached to every decision being the most prominent, but not the only ones among them. Besides, the joy of choosing tends to lose much of its allure when choose you *must*, and adventure is stripped of a good deal of its attraction once one's whole life becomes a string of adventures. And so there are quite a few things the tourist could complain about. The temptation to seek another, non-tourist way to happiness is never far away. It can be never extinguished, but can only be pushed aside, and then not for long. What makes the tourist life endurable, turns its hardship into minor irritants and allows the temptation to change to be kept on a back shelf, is the self-same sight of the vagabond that makes the tourists shudder.

And so, paradoxically, the tourist's life is all the more bearable, even enjoyable, for being haunted with a uniformly nightmarish alternative of the vagabond's existence. In an equally paradoxical sense, the tourists have vested interest in rendering that alternative as dreadful and execrable as possible. The less appetizing is the vagabond's fate, the more savoury are the tourist's peregrinations. The worse is the plight of the vagabonds, the better it feels to be a tourist. Were there no vagabonds, the tourists would need to invent them ... The world of travellers needs them both, and together – bound to each other in a Gordian knot no one seems to know how to untie and no one seems to have (or to seek) a sword to cut.

And so we go on moving – the tourists and the vagabonds, half-tourists/half-vagabonds that most of us are in this society of consumers/travellers of ours. Our plights are more tightly

intertwined than the touristic preoccupations, as long as they last, allow to admit.

But the two fates and life-experiences that shared plight gestures prompt two sharply different perceptions of the world, of the world's ills, and of the ways to repair the ills – different, yet alike in their failings, in their tendency to gloss over the network of mutual dependency which underlies each of them as well as their opposition.

On the one hand, there is an ideology taking shape in the accounts of the spokesmen for the globals, among whom Jonathan Friedman lists 'intellectuals close to the media; the media intelligentsia itself; in a certain sense, all those who can afford a cosmopolitan identity';¹⁰ or, rather, the tacit assumptions which make that ideology credible simply by the refusal to question it: a sort of assumptions which Pierre Bourdieu described recently as *doxa* – 'an evidence not debated and undebatable'.¹¹

On the other hand, there are the actions of the locals and forcefully localized, or, more exactly, those who try, with growing success, to take into their political sails the winds of wrath blowing from the *glebae adscripti* quarters. The resulting clash does nothing to rectify the schism and everything to deepen it still further, directing political imagination away from the true cause of the plight both sides bewail – though each for ostensibly opposite reasons.

Friedman pokes fun at the language of cosmopolitan chatter – all these *en vogue* terms of 'in-betweenness', 'dis-juncture', 'trans-cendence' etc. which allegedly do more than to articulate the experience of those who have already cut their anchors free, those 'already emancipated' – which would also articulate the experience of the not-yet-emancipated, were it not for the latter's ugly and off-putting tendency to 'boundedness' and 'essentialization'. This language presents privilege, complete with its specific insecurities, as shared 'human nature' or the 'future of us all'. However, Friedman asks, for whom

is such cultural transmigration a reality? In the work of the post-colonial border-crossers, it is always the poet, the artist, the intellectual, who sustains this displacement and objectifies it in the printed word. But who reads the poetry, and what are the other kinds of identification occurring in the lower reaches of social reality? . . . Briefly, hybrids and hybridization theorists are products of a group that self-identifies and/or identifies the world in such terms, not as a result of ethnographic understanding, but as an act of self-definition . . . The global, culturally hybrid, elite sphere is occupied by individuals who share a very different kind of experience of the world, connected to international politics, academia, the media and the arts.

The cultural hybridization of the globals may be a creative, emancipating experience, but cultural disempowerment of the locals seldom is; it is an understandable, yet unfortunate inclination of the first to confuse the two and so to present their own variety of 'false consciousness' as a proof of the mental impairment of the second.

But for those second – the locals by fate rather than choice – the deregulation, dissipation of communal networks and forceful individualization of destiny portend quite different plight and suggest quite different strategies. To quote Friedman once more:

The logics that develops in underclass neighbourhoods is likely to be of a different nature from those that develop among the highly educated world travellers of the culture industries . . . The urban poor, ethnically mixed ghetto is an arena that does not immediately cater to the construction of explicitly new hybrid identities. In periods of global stability and/or expansion, the problems of survival are more closely related to territory and to creating secure life spaces. Class identity, local ghetto identity, tend to prevail . . .

Two worlds, two perceptions of the world, two strategies.

And the paradox: this *postmodern* reality of the deregulated/

privatized/consumerist world, the globalizing/localizing world, finds only a pale, one-sided and grossly distorted reflection in the *postmodernist* narrative. The hybridization and defeat of essentialisms proclaimed by the postmodernist eulogy of the 'globalizing' world are far from conveying the complexity and sharp contradictions tearing that world apart. Postmodernism, one of many possible accounts of postmodern reality, merely articulates a caste-bound experience of the globals – the vociferous, highly audible and influential, yet relatively narrow category of exterritorials and globetrotters. It leaves unaccounted for and unarticulated other experiences, which are also an integral part of the postmodern scene.

Wojciech J. Burszta, the eminent Polish anthropologist, thus reflects on the results of this potentially disastrous breakdown in communication:

Former peripheries clearly go their own way, making light of what the postmodernists tell about them. And they [the postmodernists – Z.B.] are rather helpless, when facing the realities of the militant Islam, the ugliness of Mexico City, hovels or even the black squatting in a gutted South Bronx house. These are huge margins, and one does not know how to deal with them . . .

Under the thin film of global symbols, labels and utilities a caudron of the unknown seethes – in which we are not particularly interested and on which in fact we have little to say.¹²

'Peripheries' in the above quotation are best understood in a generic sense: as are all those infinitely numerous spaces which have been deeply affected by the 'global symbols, labels and utilities' – though not in the fashion anticipated by their globalist eulogists. 'Peripheries' in this sense spread all around the small, spiritually exterritorial yet physically heavily fortified, enclaves of the 'globalized' elite.

The paradox mentioned a moment ago leads to another: the age of 'time/space compression', uninhibited transfer of information and instantaneous communication – is also the age of

an almost complete communication breakdown between the learned elites and the *populus*. The first ('the modernists without modernism', in Friedman's apt expression – that is, without a universalizing project) have nothing to say to the second; nothing that would reverberate in their minds as the echo of their own life experience and life prospects.

5

Global Law, Local Orders

In the United States, says Pierre Bourdieu, referring to the study of French sociologist Loïc Wacquant,

the 'Charitable State', founded on the moralizing conception of poverty, tends to bifurcate into a Social State which assures minimal guarantees of security for the middle classes, and an increasingly repressive state counteracting the effects of violence which results from the increasingly precarious condition of the large mass of the population, notably the black.'

This is but one example – though admittedly a particularly blatant and spectacular one, like most American versions of wider, also global phenomena – of a much more general trend to limit the remnants of the original political initiative still held in the fast weakening hands of the nation-state to the issue of law and order; an issue which inevitably translates in practice as orderly – safe – existence for some, all the awesome and threatening force of the law for the others.

Bourdieu wrote the quoted article, delivered as a lecture in Freiburg in October 1996, as a sort of 'gut reaction' to a statement he read on the plane. The statement in question was made, matter-of-factly, almost perfunctorily, the way one speaks of obvious and banal truths, and without provoking any brow-raising among the audience or the readers, by Hans