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The Da Vinci Node: Networks of Neo-pilgrimage in the European Cosmopolis

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Abstract: The paper explores how the Da Vinci Code, a novel by Dan Brown, and its cinematic adaptation (2006) operate as a 'node' for European capitalist networks of corporeal and virtual travel. Re-examining the convergence, as well as the divergence of patterns and practices of early travel and contemporary tourism, the paper discusses the centrality of technologies of "gazing" upon other cultures and of collecting cultural signs to the global networks of contemporary (digitized or corporeal) travel. It is argued that the film and the novel assist in the interpellation of a new type of traveler, what is termed here a neo-pilgrim. The mobilization of neo-pilgrimage by global tourist networks also indicates a kind of staged cosmopolitanism that originates in conceptions of the cosmopolitan as the epistemological subject of Enlightenment political philosophy. Contrariwise, however, the cosmopolitanism of the Da Vinci Code democratizes the consumption of what used to be regarded as high culture, reserved exclusively for the old, aristocratic, elites of Europe. It will be argued that the novel and the film break away from established codes of authorship in cultural production while debating the emergence of a new service class of professional travelers whose fleeting visits to museums, galleries, luxury hotels and boulevards operate as both unacknowledged touring of commoditised European heritage and an aspect of personal self-betterment and self-education.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Democratisation, Europe, Heritage, Mobility, Neo-pilgrim, Tourist Gaze, Travel

Introduction

IN 2004 CHARIS Atlas Heelan was suggesting to readers of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* (*DVC*) to experience the story "literally, with a literary tour" (Frommer's, 16/12/04). Literacy is a social skill historically tied to the legitimization of hegemonic orders - the priesthood of Middle Ages, the feudal elites of Renaissance, the national elites of Enlightenment. A vehicle of value dissemination, literacy has been the *sine qua non* of a cosmopolitan belonging initially streamlined into modernity's ideological structures: industrialism, capitalism and nationalism (Adorno and Horkheimer 1993). The paradox of literacy, in its print and audiovisual forms, was that it democratized knowledge while becoming complicit to the emergence of political centers (McLuhan 1962; Anderson 1991). We may remember Glücksmann's critical investigations into the ambivalent function of this democratization, especially where the economic value of tourism/leisure looked to cement collective mentalities while ensuring the "healthy" reproduction of a working force controlled by centralized authority (Spode 2009: 70). With the *DVC* phenomenon literacy battles entered a new phase: Brown's novel (2004), an exposition of the quest for the "Holy Grail", intertwined history with fable. The marriage of historical with fabulist elements produced a magical recipe that captured many readers' imagination, guaranteeing the novel's success and

provoking a debate on Christianity. The controversy amplified when in 2006 the novel became a film (dir. Ron Howard) that explicitly criticized the exclusivist vision of religious authority.

The *DVC* tells the story of an investigation by symbologist Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks) and cryptologist Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) around the murder of Louvre curator Jacques Saunière (Jean-Pierre Marielle), Sophie's grandfather. Saunière left a trail of codes, eventually linked by Langdon and Neveu to a heretical theory. According to this theory, Christ and Mary Magdalene had a child, Sara, whose lineage survived with the help of the millenarian cult "Priory of Scion". Chased by the French police and Vatican spies, Neveu and Langdon depart on a journey across Europe to solve the mystery of Magdalene's offspring. An eccentric British researcher, Sir Leigh Teabing (Ian McKellen), deciphers Da Vinci's masterwork *The Last Supper*, guiding Langdon and Neveu through a series of mythical and actual sites to the meaning of "Holy Grail" (the union of Christ with Magdalene) and its potential to reveal Christianity's irreducibly patriarchal past. The plot situates Langdon and Neveu within the cinematic narrative as virtual travelers of two types: connoisseurs of European art and history, and pilgrims of a long-lost religious site (the burial chamber of Magdalene). Langdon and Neveu are collectors, desperately seeking 'signs' of that cultural history and long-lost religion. Readers and especially viewers of the *DVC* are vicariously taken along for a ride as "sign collectors" and as what I shall term *neo-pilgrims* to these interdependent sites. I use neo-pilgrim as an ideal type of cosmopolitan tourist. Cinematic and material projections of this type through capitalist networks (its transformation into the *embodied tourist*) democratize tourist consumption. This democratization is historically linked to the recognition that *Fremdenverkehr* (=stranger trafficking) thrived both on colonization, business travel, and tourist consumption (von Wiese 1930 in Spode 2009: 69). The *DVC neo-pilgrim* endorses a form of democratization owed to contemporary links between creative arts and commerce, with whole sectors within creative industries that were not commercial in the past (e.g. performing arts, broadcasting) having become commercial (Cunningham 2005: 293).

Creating a thriller of religious revisionism, centuries-long conspiracy and the lust for power has been a 'blessing' and a curse for Brown. It transformed the *DVC* into a global phenomenon with over 40 million copy sales since its publications around the world (*Guardian*, 28/03/07; *First Great Western*, 12/06: 51), at least \$200 US million earnings (*Guardian*, 27/02/06) from the book and with \$77 US million in cinema takings only in the first week of its release in North America (Calgary Sun, 08/06/06), unprecedented popularity, especially in China which has claimed the film's world premiere over Cannes (China National, 17/05/06) and with the Vatican forced to appoint an official debunker of its scandalizing content (*The Times*, 15/05/05). The notorious court case against Dan Brown for his alleged copyright infringement relating to *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh (1982), only served to make the novel and the film more popular (CBS News, 13/05/06). When Brown's prequel *Angels and Demons* (*AD*, 2009, dir. Ron Howard) was also transposed from the literary to the pictorial domain, feelings in some religious communities run high. Despite the producers' reassurances to the Church, Dan Brown's name was enough to make sure that the doors of the desired religious locations would remain shut to Howard's crew. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican's secretary of state, said: "Boycotting this film is the least we can do". Franco Zeffirelli, director of *Jesus of Nazareth*, told the *Corriere della Sera*: "Dan Brown is a rascalion. The Vicariate has done well to deny them access" (*Telegraph*, 17/06/08). If *AD* involves only two murders of cardinals, for the Vatican the *DVC* has already "turned the Gospels upside down to poison the faith" and churches into

sets for “mendacious films” (CBS News, 19/06/08). There are two interlinked references to such anathemas: one hints to the significance Brown attributed to Magdalene’s apocryphal texts (alongside her sexuality) for Catholicism –by extension, his suggestion that women were excluded from an allegedly inclusive religious agenda. The second reference gestures towards opening up an exclusive cultural domain, once reserved for connoisseurs of “high culture” and “history proper” to the masses.

The *DVC* became a significant *node* in various intersecting networks. If the book generated significant tourism, inviting visits to some of the key locations of the novel (initially Parisian sites with a lustrous history and cultural ambience) the cinematic adaptation of the novel, which visualized the protagonists’ journey across Europe, produced tourist networks, providing a plethora of possibilities for visits to many other sites mentioned in the book: Louvre’s Mona Lisa, the Pyramid, Saint-Sulpice and the Chartres Cathedral in Paris, Rennes le Château in Aude, The Last Supper and the Sforza Castle in Italy, Rosslyn Chapel in Edinburgh, the Temple Church, Westminster Abbey and Lincoln Cathedral (Westminster in the movie). In 2008 it was *AD*’s turn to create “cinematic tourism”. A guide in one of the cinematic locations bears testimony to the reproduction of this phenomenon when he says that he takes “at least one hundred tourists a week on an ‘Angels and Demons’ tour - and no one objects” (CBS News, 19/06/08). *AD*’s cinematic markers (the Four Rivers in Piazza Navonna) present Europe as a nodal geohistorical point where the Danube in Europe, the Nile in Africa, the Ganges in Asia, and the Plate in South America converge, and the story itself promotes the symbolic destruction of this myth. Here I want to explore how the *DVC*’s intersecting networks and narratives of neo-pilgrimage construct our identity as cosmopolitan travelers, seeing and collecting cultures from above and afar, as possessions from outside.

The phenomenon is not unique to the *DVC* craze, if we take into account the generation of ever-growing connections of film and tourist industries, with films now deliberately produced to induce or revive tourism growth in various parts of the world. *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005) and *King Kong* (2005, dir. Peter Jackson) were attempts to replicate the world-wide cinematic and tourist success of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001, 2002, 2003, dir. Peter Jackson) trilogy and, as such, they marketed New Zealand’s landscape and in turn were marketed as cinematic genres in similar ways to maximize national profits (Tzanelli 2007, ch. 3). *Australia* (2008, dir. Baz Luhrmann), *Mamma Mia!* (2008, dir. Phyllida Lloyd) and *My Life in Ruins* (2009, dir. Donald Petrie) either received support by the nation-states in which they were partly filmed (Australia, Greece) in expectation of economic returns, or the host state is currently trying to exploit any connections between its indigenous culture and history and the movies (Tzanelli 2008). The *DVC* tourist contribution is *constitutive* of its narrative node and the way this node acquired material (capitalist) dimensions only to de-materialize again as a political statement on democratized consumption. This democratization was immediately perceived amongst institutional circles as a sacrilegious act, a move towards the demystification of religious values and sites - a post-Enlightenment triumph of reason over prejudice.

Below I examine how the *DVC* necessitates a Da Vinci node within extensive networks of globalizing relationships. Cosmopolitanism is examined as a facet of “mobility cultures” (transient business, professional pursuits and middle-class tourism that relate education and self-betterment to leisure). This is part of the knowledge economies and mediascapes theorists such as Appadurai or Urry purport to shed light on socio-economic structures that generate agency through flows of ideas, products and human movement. It is part of ‘liquid modernity’

(Bauman 2000) that promotes individualism and entrepreneurial talent as both the apotheosis and the downfall of the postmodern subject. The mediascapes of this essay reside in Internet extensions of the *DVC* node, managed by various independent actors. My primary material involves Internet sites that market *DVC* tourism. Tracking down relevant material involved a snowballing-like technique: I visited the Internet Movie Database, a major on-line database for information on films, a repository of movie critiques as well as international viewers' comments. Such materials sketched the marketing of the film and its political and commercial impact. I translated such observations into relevant keywords that I used to track down holiday and other sites that mobilized the narrative content of the story to generate global online communities of interest (e.g. communities sharing leisure or political interests relating to the film).

Staging Cosmopolitanism: Neo-pilgrimage in Europe

DVC's types of tourism worked as a mould through which *DVC* tourist industries reproduced ideal types of "tourist", subsequently regenerated online and in corporeal forms. The *DVC* industry emerged from the cinematic mobilization of a distinct collection of "signs" (Urry 2002: 3) imaginatively arranged in a new order (Ateljevic 2000: 381). Socially constructed images and experiences of place and culture (Rojek 2000: 54; Shields 1991) are not *directly* the product of tourist industries, but overdetermined by various "non-tourist practices, of film, TV, literature, magazines" (Urry 2002: 3; Taylor 2001) and other consumption processes. There have been many other forms of such travel, as people "travel" elsewhere through memories, texts, guidebooks and brochures, travel writing, photos, postcards, radio and film. In the nineteenth century it was written texts including guidebooks that were crucial for imaginative travel; in the first half of the twentieth century photographs and the radio were central (Sontag 1990); while in the second half of the twentieth century film and TV became the main media for such "travel" (Tzanelli 2007; Beeton 2005). The interconnectedness of these sectors of creative industries confirms how tourism begins with cultural "signification" (Culler 1988; Wang 2000). Hence, the *DVC* signs did not belong to any pre-established order, but their simultaneous de- and re-contextualization generated a new order transferred from Brown's story to the big screen and then to various tourist networks. As MacCannell (1989) has suggested, mediated versions of tourist locations generate "markers" of places in the form of images. Film has this function: it ascribes new meaning to locations, making them desirable destinations through imaginative travel.

My use of metaphors such as "node" suggests interconnections of policies (tourism industries) with practices (writing), enabling me to revisit the "disorganized capitalism" thesis (Lash and Urry 1987): following Marx's (1976) elaboration of labor and value, Harvey terms capital a "value in motion" (1999: 83-84). He examines the ways it circulates in social networks, and how these networks communicate and complement each other. Although this paper concerns travel mobility, it also notes the global mobility of capital and its interdependence with diverse mobilities (Urry 2007: 212). This capital mobility is simultaneously unidirectional and multidirectional: it generates new forms of cultural tourism while presupposing old (travel agencies, hotel chains) and new capitalist networks (Internet). We may talk about *DVC* "economies of sign and space" (Lash and Urry 1994), networks that do not function on the basis of a prefixed relationship - save that most of them are part of European cultural heritage. The *DVC* phenomenon complemented "organized" societal spaces with flexible

structures assembled through flows of cultural signs (Castells 1996; Urry 2003). The communication of these flows was chaotic in that it was not controlled by state apparatuses but ordered with the help of a US-financed film: first, through the reduction of diverse *loci* of European cultural heritage into interchangeable and easily quantifiable “abstract” signs. This was assisted by the mercurial nature of virtual mobility management, which resides in global structuration “scapes”, where even corporeal travel becomes redundant. Second, the *DVC* sign potential was mobilized by various tourist providers to construct a type of “tourist” that promotes the values of an enlarged European cosmopolitanism.

Langdon and Neveu proffer versions of cinematic tourism: devoted to their investigation and consumed by determination to solve the mystery of the Grail, they echo the passion of the grand tourist to be educated and transformed by the corporeal experiences of travel (Brodsky-Porges 1981). Langdon (a Harvard academic) and Neveu (a government agent) immerse in European culture through a painstaking analysis of early modern documentation on science, the Holy scripts and a study of art history in order to fulfill the purpose of their travel. Every time they visit a new location, the camera situates them geographically (with a caption at the bottom of the screen); their visits to cultural sites are often followed by a brief history of that place. Hence, the cinematic technology incorporates travel guide techniques: it equates the movement of the *DVC* protagonists in an imagined European space to narratives of culture and history entrepreneurs such as Thomas Cook used in nineteenth-century guides and today we find in Rough Guides. There is usually a “public discourse” that “frames” visits to places “repeatedly mark[ing] the boundaries of significance and value at tourist sites” (Neumann 1988: 24). Throughout the movie, Langdon and Neveu assume a double identity as middle class professionals and as tourists for a day, exemplifying the modern mobile subject of airflight travel. Standing between the new elites and the new service class of transnational knowledge economies, they represent social change.

As contemporary mobile subjects, Langdon’s and Neveu’s engagement with apocryphal and philosophical aspects of the Christian doctrine helps them to transcend an emotionally neutralized study of European culture, reminiscent of the early phase of the Grand Tour (Towner 1985), and to engage personally with the mystery they investigate. The shift of experiential perspective resembles a rite of passage (van Gennep 1906; Turner 1974), transforming the fictional protagonists into pilgrims of elusive sacred sites. Hence, the *DVC* endorses the idea of the tourist as a “secular pilgrim” (MacCannell 1973) in quest of experiential authenticity (the acquisition of the Holy Grail). The presentation of this quest “culturally legitimates the practice of (sight-seeing) tourism” (Cohen 2003: 101), transforming film viewers-come-tourists into collectors of particular kinds of signs interlinked with each other to demonstrate high cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). It is a new “tour” that the *DVC* describes and legitimates, a “tour” *nonetheless*: the director’s cinematic gaze encourages the subjectivization of viewing experience, which is linked to feminine ways of seeing and interpreting (Mayne 1995; Friedberg 1995). The positioning of protagonists *within the story* however counters this vision, sustaining a *gendered* hierarchy of knowledge constitutive of the history of cosmopolitanism. This hierarchy is pronounced in the cinematic adaptation of *AD* that pairs Langdon with Vittoria Vetra (Ayelet Zurer) – an apparently clever scientist who does little in the movie in terms of saving the world except for serving as a beautiful accessory for the Harvard hero.

The director and the cameraman’s intentions aside, the cinematic tourist experience is not simulated (Baudrillard 1983) in similar ways by all *DVC* tourists, as tourism is a process

which “involves an ongoing (re)construction of praxis and space in shared contexts” (Edensor 2001: 60; Graburn 2001: 151). There are many different performances and places dependent upon the performances that take place within them (Bærenholdt et.al. 2004). Established *DVC* “suggestions” for the consumption (of place and culture) may be challenged on location. The prevalence of “tourist gaze” here does not intend to downplay other sensory experiences (Veijola and Jokinen 1994; Cloke and Perkins 1998; Crouch and Desforges 2003). It is just that I focus instead on the prevalent norms and practices consolidated in the “staging” of the *DVC* tourist experience by networks of international tourist providers, companies, churches and states (e.g. MacCannell 1973).

The “theatrical stage” *DVC* tourist networks promote is linked to their cinematic node whose character is ocular. Marketing practices in the *DVC* and its emerging tourist networks interpellate, call into being, a cosmopolitan subject keen to gaze upon and enjoy European culture and history in a detached fashion. This cosmopolitan tourist is what I call a *neo-pilgrim*, a pilgrim overwhelmed by secularized sublimation, just like Adler’s “anchorite pilgrim” (1992: 408-413) who looks for spiritual purity in the wilderness. Unlike the anchorite pilgrim, the *DVC* neo-pilgrim does not seek solitude to experience the sublime, but welcomes the tourist systems of luxury hotels such as the *Ritz* (a cinematic attraction visually embedded in Langdon’s and Neveu’s tourist trajectory) and of organized tours in the filmed locations. The neo-pilgrim is able to play at his/her pilgrimage, be a pilgrim for a day, and hence is another example of contemporary “post-tourism” (Urry 2002). This interpellation is symmetrical to Langdon’s and Neveu’s cinematic function as fleeting visitors of European heritage markers, which fuses the cosmopolitan *tourist* with the cosmopolitan *expert* to democratize elite consumption.

There are many examples of how the neo-pilgrim is interpellated in the Internet, which is full of virtual tours, such as that offered by GoogleEarth, which allows one to “visit” the filmed places and take the fictional routes of *DVC* characters. The experience of zooming in and looking at satellite aerial photos of these sites transforms one into a “virtual flâneur” (Tzanelli 2006), a type of traveler who experiences a digital space-time compression, enabling them to stay at the heart of global developments while retaining territorial distance and anonymity (e.g. Germann Molz 2004: 171). This virtual flâneurism is promoted by other tour(ist) providers who advertise the *DVC* online: Fodor’s invites cinematic viewers and Brown fans to “travel the roads” taken by the protagonists of the novel, linking the literal to the pictorial/cinematic narrative. The site operates as a secondary node as Fodor’s article is followed by a hyperlink to a variety of terrestrial tours of the key locales. *First Great Western’s* travel magazine takes a step further by linking *DVC*-led tourism to other instances of film-induced tourism in London (December 2006: 26). Films such as *Notting Hill*, *Howard’s End*, *Creep*, *Mission Impossible* and *Match Point* figure in an illustrated article on famous cinematic locations. At the bottom of the page an Internet address is provided for those who would like to visually “map” their travel trajectory. A Traveller’s Guide to London (2006) follows the same practice, while advertising the book and tours for foreign visitors. GotoParis.com, a website that specializes in “discovering France”, offers “designer tours” for *DVC* fans, alongside night clubbing, shopping and “Paris romantic evening” options, making the whole experience an exercise in consuming places that include unexpected religious and cultural sites.

Significantly, various *DVC* tour providers are located in countries such as Denmark where the website Panoramas (2006) hosts photographed images of the cinematic locations, or New

Zealand (Da Vinci Code Tours 2006), a country which, following the success of the cinematic trilogy the *Lord of the Rings*, began to promote its cultural image as the home of Tolkien's "Middle Earth" (Tzanelli 2004). The New Zealand *DVC* tours are accompanied by references to their potential for "self discovery" even though they stand between "fact and fiction" – yet another allusion to simulation. British Tours Ltd (2006) places more emphasis upon London's key locations, combining a presentation of their place in the cinematic and literary narrative with their place in English history, and VisitScotland.com does the same for Edinburgh's religious history and culture. Just like New Zealand's reference to simulation, VisitScotland stresses the hybridity of cinematic discourse, noting how "the art of film editing allows in some cases widely separated locations in Scotland to come together to represent a single place". Rosslyn Chapel is listed as a magical location that figured in as diverse cinematic registers as those of the *DVC* and *Trainspotting* (1996), transforming anonymous communities into recipients of global tourism. The "placelessness" of the Internet is ideal for developing new unexpected collections of "signs" of highly specific and unique places that literally cannot be elsewhere. Whether we choose to see this as a manifestation of "global fluids" (Bauman 2000) of images and ideas or "mediascapes" (Appadurai 1990), such Internet marketing promotes a form of cosmopolitan knowledge that mobilizes specificity in the name of a malleable global culture. Not only is this culture easily accessible to anyone with an Internet connection, it also invites revision: from blogs where users post comments on products and experiences to the Web 2.0 collaborative content generation, Internet users figure less as passive recipients of a globalization from above and more as its creative agents from below (Harrison and Barthel 2009).

It is worth having a look at one such Internet user-turn-entrepreneur who displays the versatility of the service class and a bourgeois-bohemianism that fuses the liberal idealism of the 1960s with the ideology of individualism of the post-1980s era (Brooks 2000; Pieterse 2004). Sacred Earth Journeys (2006) is a website located in Canada that advertises combined tours to Paris, London and Edinburgh. The tour leader is Mark Amaru Pinkham, author of *The Guardians of the Holy Grail*, "Templar Knight" and "co-director of the North American branch of "The International Order of Gnostic Templars" (founded by himself and his wife). He is a devoted traveler to India and other countries and has studied the Hindu scriptures and the Indian Theosophists of India who wrote on the secret history of Earth. His links with Andean esoteric societies and his dedication to the occult (he led an expedition in search of a secret monastery in the Andes *a-la DVC*) led him to establish in 1994 Soluna Tours Sacred Journeys, a commercial company that organizes tours for those seeking "spiritual experiences" by visiting sacred sites in other countries. Pinkham advertises his Scottish ancestry, which allegedly dates back to Prince Henry St. Clair, whose family built Rosslyn Chapel. He promises to deliver a series of lectures on the history mobilized by Brown and in the film "on location", bestowing the tour with the aura of erudition and authority. Pinkham is a neo-Orientalist who appropriates cultural "signs", histories and identities of ancient civilizations to embark on a journey to self-fulfillment, a cosmopolitan adventurer interested in creating personal genealogies for economic returns - but even more interested in their value as social capital.

But the *DVC* brand of social capital primarily rests on Europe's civilizational roots, as the marketing of cultural authenticity is prominent in Paris tours, addressed mainly to American *DVC* tourists. Paris is still considered the cradle of "high culture" on the other side of the Atlantic – a view of European sophistication that dominates Hollywood cinema.

Tour providers call upon the ideal type of neo-pilgrim, suggesting that in this way tourists can “distinguish themselves from the herd” by “making their museum visit the contemplative experience art was intended to provide” (Paris through Expatriate Eyes, 2006; Paris Muse, 2006). Cultural capital can thus be acquired through collecting particular sets of signs, making this sign collector a “traveler” rather than a “tourist” (Buzard 1993). Jeff Steiner’s *Americans in France*, a site that uses the *DVC* to acculturate American visitors in Europe, promotes traditional tour options that involve roaming the Paris sites and enjoying a minibus tour and a cruise to the Seine. The main page however includes hyperlinks to *DVC* products sold on Amazon.com and research around the *DVC* story, the blending of historical records with occult philosophy and “break the code” tourism. The simulation of Langdon’s and Neveu’s attempts to “break the code” figure in most online tour options (*The Oregonian*, 14/05/06), especially those addressed to American tourists. But Jeff Steiner, an American who has lived in France for a long time, prefers to present himself as someone who provides “the ‘straight info, no rose colored glasses and you decide if France is right for you” in “over 4000 pages of personal info about living and travelling in France” (Jeff Steiner 2001-2006), combining the experience of a cultural tourist with the talent of a Grand Tour writer.

The neo-pilgrim is constitutive of formulations of cosmopolitanism. Vertovec and Cohen (2002) have identified six main conceptions of cosmopolitanism: as a socio-cultural condition (Appadurai 1996); as a philosophical or world view as in Beck’s “cosmopolitan manifesto” (2000); as a political project to build transnational institutions (Kaldor 1996); as a political project for recognizing multiple identities (Held 1995); as a mode of orientation to the world (Hannerz 1990); and as a set of competences to make one’s way within other cultures. What is suggested here is that in contemporary societies we come to “know” places but from afar. Air flight is the best expression of the shift in the relationship of place from land to landscape. Air travel affords a view of the earth from above, with places, towns and cities laid out as though they are a form of nature. In Ingold’s terms, air travel generates “map-readers” rather than “wayfinders” (2000). While wayfinders move around within a world, map-readers move across a surface as imagined from above. Air travel colludes in producing and reinforcing the language of abstract mobilities and comparison, an expression of an abstract mode of being-in-the-world and colonizing one might say from above. Through this mode places get transformed into a collection of abstract characteristics in a mobile world, ever easier to be visited, appreciated and compared from above, but not really known from within (Szczepanski, Urry 2006).

This indirect engagement with other cultures echoes the nineteenth-century ethnographer’s translation of experience into abstract, graphically arranged knowledge of the other (Fabian 1983: 106-7). The *DVC* endorses both nineteenth century and contemporary modes of knowing the world, forming continuities between them, especially because some scenes in the film are characterized by a detachment of human agency from visual *diegesis*. To act and to “see”, the political and the cognitive, become artificially separated: high-angle and distance shots of cultural sites may be granting viewers an omniscient perspective, but they also transform landscape into the principal actor of the story. This tension was transferred into the commoditization of the *DVC* which invites “tourists” to re-enact the cinematic adventure but also spend time gazing and enjoying the filmed cultural sites. The marketized tourist imagination is socially arranged and “learned” (Strain 2003: 265): viewing unfamiliar cultures from afar (the airplane, the Internet) provides both a sense of security and the thrills of sanitized adventure. In the staging of tourist consumption the *DVC* ideal type of cosmo-

politan tourist appears to operate in an “aesthetically reflexive” manner, monitoring rather than passively accepting a predetermined place in the social world (Beck et.al. 1994; Lash and Urry 1994: 5-6). Cinematic and actual *DVC* tourists may be seen as participants in a “public sphere” (Habermas 1989) that is “staged” with the help of new media (Thompson 1995). The aesthetic reflexivity of this cosmopolitan tourist resembles the romantic form of the Grand Tour(ist) gaze that emphasized privacy, solitude and spiritual growth through intense engagement with the observed object (Urry 1995: 137), but also the mediated “gaze” of Internet touring, which reinforces this privacy while encouraging communication (Kozinets 1999; Baym 2000).

By drawing attention to the aesthetic experience of visiting cinematic sites, tourist industries promote the creation of interlinks between all these tourist sites that are scattered in the European continent. This is assisted by the European convention to use the idea of culture “in opposition to notions of that which is vulgar, backward, ignorant, or retrogressive” (Jenks 1993: 9; Eagleton 2000: 32). The essence of this tourist clashes with literal meanings of *kosmopolitis* as the subject that inhabits the space of the aesthetic (*kósmos*=beauty). The Kantian *sensus communis*, the moral universe of human solidarity, figures in critical accounts of cosmopolitanism: Kantian “beauty” is supposed to foster social bonding, and its moral principles would go against the individualization of aesthetic experience. Arendt’s critique of the individualization of action, which is not grounded in social co-presence and an agreement with others supported by dialogue (Benhabib 1992), could be read against a critique of the consumerist logic that characterizes modernity (Davies 2008: 56). It has been argued that this social vision corresponds to a neo-liberal, “thin” cosmopolitanism rooted in Enlightenment understandings of the concept related to mobility, travel and “societal pluralization” (Delanty 2006: 31; Stevenson 2002). The *DVC* cosmopolitan tourist of tourist networks is a subject that pursues the visual pleasures of collecting sites/sights, endorsing the values of an empire of capital (Hardt and Negri 2000). And yet, this individualized mode of seeing, thinking and touring the world virtually (online) and actually (air travel) is ingrained in the democratization of tourist consumption.

Undoubtedly such ways of “being in the world” are not accessible to the dispossessed masses of the developing world, where airflight and Internet connection are a luxury at best. The “public sphere” of mediatized cultures (Castells 1996) may be discursively promoting a form of (aesthetic) reflexivity, but it does not resolve social divisions. I do not aspire to reiterate the argument supported by theorists of methodological nationalism that take the nation state as a starting point in reflections on inequality. Globalization and cosmopolitanization do not exist in entirely polarized ways or take place only across national boundaries, but are processes that change national societies from within (Beck 2002: 21; Sassen 2000). The democratized consumption of *DVC* networks both transcended national boundaries and incited a variety of responses *within* states that operated as hosts of *DVC* “signs”. In the case of France, in which cultural heritage is safeguarded by the state and defines national identity, the inscription of the *DVC* myth over established understandings of “high culture” artifacts generated some resentment in French citizens towards cosmopolitan consumers, but also led to the incorporation of some *DVC* signs into local tourist advertising (CBS News, *The Early Show*, 11/04; CBS News, 12/11/04; Times Online, 30/05/06). Take for example a staffer at the Louvre’s information desk under Pei’s glass Pyramid (the alleged tomb of Magdalene), who “has no advice for the daily trickle of curious fans. “After all”, he sniffs, “the book is fiction”” (USA Today, 21/10/04). Such comments reiterate the urgency to draw

clear-cut distinctions between authenticity and “unauthorized” (by those who regard themselves as “legitimate heirs” of a culture) reproduction, the conflict between the unanimously recognized cultural capital of France and the banal artifacts of contemporary cultural industries. But at the same time there are Parisian hotel managers today who are keen to provide their own “critical tours” of the story, thus legitimizing the working of a Da Vinci node and network that provides services to cosmopolitan consumers and tourists. The same ambivalence informs the reactions of some priests to the newly constituted *AD* node: “You never get a priest coming up and yelling at you ‘get out, you heretics’”, a tour guide explains. “Sometimes they might be a little bit edgy because they know it’s ‘Angels and Demons’ - but at the same time I think they are aware that it’s [...] a work of fiction and that it’s bringing people into their churches” (CBS, 19/06/08).

This tension exemplifies Beck’s “cosmopolitan crisis” (2002: 27) that begins with the unexpected appropriation of a revered cultural heritage resting at the heart of “Europe proper” and results in its reinvention for external audiences and hosts alike (Tzanelli 2007: 146-7). It is a crisis that generates debate around the role of literacy and its surrounding hegemonies, which in this case are represented by a Catholic Church that would not admit into European Christianity any pagan or “Oriental” elements (omnipresent in Brown’s novel). We need only couple the comments of Louvre’s staffer with those of life-long parishioner at The Church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, who exclaimed that “it’s all wrong. The description of the artwork, the architecture, the documents in this church [...] secret rituals [...] We never had any secret rituals in the church” (CBS News, 12/11/04). Following the cinematic adaptation of the novel, the agitated parishioner decided to put on the wall next to the obelisk a notice: “Contrary to fanciful allegations in a recent best-selling novel, this is not a vestige of pagan temple. No such temple existed in this place. It was never called a Rose Line. It does not coincide with the meridian.” (Times Online, 30/05/06). This clash between the determination to preserve the “aura” of artwork (Benjamin 1992: 217) and to trade in mechanical reproduction, leads to the emergence of new forms of culture. The *DVC* begins thus to operate as a nodal point for a post-national form of collective identity that does not reside in the Louvre, but at the *centre* of the novel’s narrative, the alleged tomb of Magdalene: the Pyramid. From then on, material and literal references operate in chains of signification to deconstruct exclusivist traditions of literacy.

The cinematic significance of this architectural construction needs unpacking, as its history points to the clash between a broader discourse that prioritizes “facts” and another that opens up the domain of history “proper” to accept “fiction”. I.M. Pei’s intervention in the architectural integrity of a classical project (the Louvre) promoted fusions of France’s classicist-imperialist past with a modernist vision of the world (Heyer 1993: 275-8, 282). His intervention suggested the liberation of territorially bounded, nationally insular *and* Orientalist visions of identity from their history of prejudice. The project of implanting such bold structural forms in a Second Empire survival that entertains universal recognition for its cultural rootedness gestures towards the hybridization of a culture exclusive by definition – for women, immigrants and any form of identity that does not neatly fit into the national “archetype”. Pei’s Pyramids have been a controversial project since their announcement in 1985 as one of President Mitterrand’s most ambitious *grand projets* (Great Buildings Online, 2008). The pluralist vision of the “social” they uphold explains why the *DVC* story inflamed the Church and a political establishment that continues to support its unity with the state. Such revisionism was mediated on the big screen:

The *DVC* rewrites French history “through the projector” the moment Langdon arrives at the Louvre with the suspicion that Magdalene’s resting place is the mythical inverted Pyramid, a discovery that suggests a cinematic resolution that re-ignites the debate upon the politics of Pei’s creation and their mobilization in popular culture (Religion Facts, 2008).

Conclusion

It is said that Wordsworth’s poem *The Brother* signifies the beginning of a time when people stop belonging to a culture and increasingly can only tour it, so as to compare, contrast and collect, to see Venice and die (Buzard 1993: 27). A specialized visual sense characterizes the modern world. As E. M. Forster wrote: “Under cosmopolitanism ... Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle, landscape not land” (1931: 243). The language of abstract characteristics is a language of mobility, the expression of the lifeworld of tourists, conference travelers, business people or environmentalists. In this mobile world abstraction detracts from direct engagement and replaces it with formal agreements – as in packaged neo-pilgrimages of educational nature *minus* European history’s unpleasantries (the mass murders of colonialism, the bigotries of Orientalism, the hatred of Christianity) or glorified stories of repression *minus* authorial antagonisms and corporate policies.

This paper examined one node in this set of mobile processes the book, the film, the virtual and the physical travel interpellated through and by the self-expanding global fluid of the *DVC*. This produced various kinds of position, especially that of the cosmopolitan collector of European cultural signs – a collector originally male and Christian, but now also female, pagan and even Muslim. This move, achieved through the democratization of European Christian history has little to do with the Athenian notion of the cosmopolitan that has been lost, as societies have irreversibly moved from “facts” to “fiction”, “land” to “landscape”, where visitors to places can be cosmopolitans for a day, engaging in forms of reflexive pilgrimage. The film and the novel resurrect genealogies of democracy to operationalize a *DVC* cosmopolitan node that seeks to counter Europe’s classicist roots and Christianity’s ambivalence towards its “pagan” others. The neo-pilgrims of the *DVC* are constructed through various intersecting networks to engage with yet another “sign system” of global tourism. In this case some out-of-way churches and religious sites become for a short while signs of cosmopolitan taste - until the next global fluid sweeps into town and blows them away.

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