



THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM
YUCATAN, MEXICO, 2003

TOURIST GAZE

AUTHOR—PHOTOGRAPHER PETER DAVIS POINTS HIS CAMERA AT THE
CAMERA-TOTING TOURIST

AS a tourist I frame and document my own gaze. But I also like to document the gaze of other tourists. Last year in Turkey, at the tomb of Rumi, I photographed a Japanese tourist photographing her friend mimicking the Sufi dance of the dervishes. This was wonderfully revealing. It showed tourists seeking to be like the object of their own gaze. In her book *The Darkroom—Photography and the Theatre of Desire* (2003), Anne Marsh tells us that photography is an expression of an ancient desire ‘to be present in another form, in another time and place’. When we tourists point our cameras we are doing more than just capturing a moment in time. We are transforming this moment—and thereby in some sense ourselves—into a visual memory.

We bring a language to our pictures with our showing and our telling. John Berger in *Another Way of Telling* (1995) suggests a photograph is a quotation *from* rather than an interpretation *of* an appearance. But when these frozen frames of our gaze are shown on a digital camera screen, inserted into an album, projected at a function or e-mailed around the globe, they become part of—provide a visual vocabulary and grammar for—a much broader narrative or series of narratives, based on interpretation. They become, in other words, an extrapolated story, or a potentially endless succession of stories and reconstructions of reality. As Susan Sontag claims in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), a photograph has its own career, ‘blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it’.



JAPANESE TOURIST PHOTOGRAPHING HER FRIEND MIMICKING THE
DANCE OF THE DERVISHES, TOMB OF RUMI, KONYA,
TURKEY, 2002



GRAVE OF JIM MORRISON, PÈRE LACHAISE CEMETERY,
PARIS, 1993



LILIANA JUAREZ MAKES HER LIVING TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS OF MEXICAN TOURISTS AGAINST A LIFE-SIZED CARDBOARD FIGURE OF THE POPE, MEXICO CITY, 2002



SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT, KERALA, INDIA, 2000



TRAVELLER REVEALING TO VILLAGE CHILDREN PICTURES HE TOOK
OF THEM JUST SECONDS EARLIER,
PNG HIGHLANDS, 2001



YOUNG AUSTRALIANS TAKE TURNS TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED IN A
PLACE THAT MARKS THE LOSS OF THEIR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD,
ANZAC COVE, GALLIPOLI, TURKEY, 2002

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