When Travel Meets Tourism: Tracing Discourse in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*

This paper examines a guidebook publisher's travel blog in order to shed light on the tensions between discourses of travel and tourism. Tony Wheeler's Blog is written by the founder of Lonely Planet and is hosted on the company's website. I argue that the "blog" title implies that the text has certain intrinsic qualities, some of which are evident while others are not. I also argue that this text is an online travel narrative that draws on the discourses of travel, tourism, and blogging itself. Travel and tourism are often seen as conflicting, and the traveller-tourist dichotomy has found expression in various travel-related narratives. So Tony Wheeler's Blog becomes a site of negotiation between the discourses of travel and tourism and in so doing takes on certain aspects of the blog while omitting or only imitating others.

Keywords: weblogs; discourse analysis; tourist discourse; travel; Lonely Planet; heteroglossia; picaresque

Uncharted Territory

In his analysis of the Kerry-Edwards campaign blog, Robert Glenn Howard observes that labelling a website a blog creates certain expectations in its audience (2008, p. 313). This argument provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the term "travel blog", particularly as studies of this form, largely in the area of tourism marketing, rarely elaborate on the connotations of the label. This is significant particularly because such analyses often show that both researchers and potential tourists use blogs as a credible source of information (Akehurst, 2009; Carson, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Wenger, 2008). Howard also

notes that the blog becomes a site of negotiation for various conflicting discourses, a concept that may also be applicable to an examination of travel blogs, particularly as travel-related communication has a variety of discourses, ranging from the personal, picaresque style of travel writing to the largely impersonal and even commercial language seen in tourism advertising brochures. Yet, studies of content often pertain to consumer research and destination marketing and overlook the possibility of discursive tensions existing within travel blogs (Bosangit et al., 2009; Crotts et al., 2009; Pühringer & Taylor, 2008; Wenger, 2008).

In order to know what to expect in a travel blog, there needs to be a clear understanding of what it actually is. The researchers cited here define travel blogs in several ways. For example, Pühringer and Taylor (2008, p. 179) state that travel blogs are online diaries consisting of individual entries on travel-related themes, hosted on "provider sites" that are "tourism specific". Meanwhile, Wenger (2008) includes features such as layout and visual elements in her description of what a blog is. Schmalleger and Carson (2008, p. 101) categorize travel blogs on the basis of author or type of web host – travel blog hosting sites, commercial websites of guidebook publishers and travel agencies, tourism organization websites, and personal websites by a single blogger. These studies note the presence of a large number and wide variety of travel blogs and suggest that formal elements and authorship define travel blogs. However, they rarely explore the nature of the discourse contained within.

This article examines a guidebook publisher's travel blog – a hitherto little explored category. *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is written by the founder of Lonely Planet and is hosted on the company's website. I argue that the "blog" title implies that the text has certain intrinsic qualities, some of which are evident while others are not. I also argue that this text is an online travel narrative that draws on the discourses of travel, tourism, and the blog itself.

Travel and tourism are often seen as conflicting, and the traveller-tourist dichotomy has found expression in travel-related narratives (Dunn, 2005; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Fussell, 1980; Holland & Huggan, 1998; O'Reilly, 2005). So *Tony Wheeler's Blog* becomes a site of negotiation between the discourses of travel and tourism and in so doing takes on certain aspects of the blog while omitting or only imitating others.

Bits and Bytes of the Blog

Basing their descriptions on studies of blogs in general, several tourism researchers state that travel blogs are blogs like any other, but with travel as a central theme (Bosangit et al, 2009; Wenger, 2008). For example, Bosangit et al. refer to Herring et al.'s description of blogs (2004) as consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse-chronological order. This suggests that any attempt to understand what a travel blog is must begin with a definition of what a blog is. Bruns and Jacobs (2006, p. 2) define the blog as "the reverse-chronological posting of individual entries that include the capacity to provide hypertext links and often allow comment-based responses from readers". According to Jill Walker Rettberg (2008, p. 17), blogs consist of regularly updated, reverse-chronological posts. She adds that blogs are often topical and personal. A more detailed entry in *Encyclopedia of New Media* mentions "short, regularly updated posts that usually included hypertext links" and "topical entries about daily events, both public and private" (Jones, 2003, p. 33). Lovink's description of blogs, based on the *Wikipedia* entry, also defines blogs as "a frequently updated Web-based chronological publication" containing hyperlinks and commentary (2008, p. 3).

A comparison of the various definitions of blogs suggests that the typical blog consists of regularly updated, reverse-chronological posts that are often topical, offering personal anecdotes or commentary. These entries are accompanied by hyperlinks and are

open to comments or responses by readers. Most of these definitions focus on technical aspects of the blog as a narrative rather than the content. This implies that a blog is defined by its formal elements. It also suggests that any website titled "blog" or "travel blog" must contain these elements, and so therefore, must *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

Bakhtin in the Blog

While these definitions of blogs help to give an idea of what may be expected of a "travel blog", they reveal little about the nature of the discourse contained in such a text. Here, Mikhail Bakthin's theories of heteroglossia and polyphony provide a useful framework for understanding travel blogs. Bakhtin proposes that many discourses may exist in a single text. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), he suggests that language is layered, consisting of discourses drawn from various social groups and settings. The literary language of a novel consists of various speech styles and genres, which form the basis of what Bakhtin terms "heteroglossia". According to Bakhtin (1984), heteroglossia enters a novel by way of polyphony, or the existence of multiple voices. Using the novels of Dostoevsky as an example, he explains that the text has many voices, of the author, narrators, and characters, which are equally perceptible and valid. While heteroglossia refers to the presence of different forms of speech, polyphony explains the presence of multiple "consciousnesses" of author and characters that interact on equal terms (Bakthin, 1984, p. 6).

Bakhtin's theories have been used in the context of hypertext discourse and blogs in particular. For example, multivocality is, according to George Landow (2006), a potential quality of all hypertext, especially blogs. Several academics see blogs as heteroglossic and polyphonic (Andreasen, 2006; Hevern, 2004; Serfaty, 2004a). For Andreasen (2006), blogs become heteroglossic when readers post comments, whereas the same feature also makes a

blog polyphonic for Serfaty (2004a). On the other hand, Hevern (2004) sees blogs as an expression of a polyphonic or multi-voiced self, suggesting that a single author may play different discursive roles in the blog. Such analyses suggest that both authors and readers may contribute to the presence of multiple discourses and voices in the blog, and that the structural elements of the blog support the existence of heteroglossia and polyphony.

Viewing travel blogs from a Bakhtinian perspective may be especially relevant to the recent discursive turn in tourism studies. Although it appears that academic research is firmly entrenched in the study of tourist experience, several recent discourse analyses of travel-related communication have revived the traveller/tourist debate. The rise of mass tourism brought a distinction between the traveller and the tourist, with the former associated with adventure and authenticity and the latter with passivity and commercialism (Hulme & Youngs, 2002, p. 7). This traveler/tourist dichotomy reached its zenith with Paul Fussell's *Abroad* (1980), which praised the authenticity of travel and deplored its replacement by tourism. Fussell's work marked a shift in critical thinking. Giving up travel as a lost cause, academics neglected the travel/tourism dichotomy and turned their attention to the study of the nature of the tourist and tourism as an activity. For example, Dean MacCannell's seminal book *The Tourist* (1976) focuses on the discursive organization or "staging" of the tourist experience at the destination, and ways by which tourists seek authenticity. Others such as Cohen (1972) and Sharpley (2008) categorize the different types of tourists. More recently, researchers have referred to John Urry's "tourist gaze", to analyse the consumption and representation of tourist experiences (Caton and Santos, 2008; Garrod, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Urry, 2002). Narratives such as guidebooks or travel diaries are central to different stages of the tourist experience – before, during, and after the journey (Bruner, 2005). Also, discursive forms such as guidebooks, holiday postcards, in-flight magazines and television travel shows,

have been analysed to show how they produce or organize the practice of tourism (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010).

Yet, there have also been several studies that indicate that the traveler/tourist dichotomy has translated into a travel discourse or a tourist discourse. Travel-related communication has a variety of discourses, ranging from the personal, picaresque style of travel writing to the largely impersonal and even commercial language of tourism advertising brochures (Mewshaw, 2005; Robinson, 2004). Graham Dann (1999) suggests that travel writers consciously employ narrative techniques that "write out" the tourist, thus producing, through discourse, the self as traveller. He also argues that there is a distinct "tourist discourse", authoritative, impersonal, and euphoric, which is used in the promotion of tourism. Interestingly, such tourist discourse is not limited to promotional material alone, and may in fact be present in travel writing as well. Similarly, Camille O'Reilly's study of backpacker narratives (2005) illustrates how specific content and narrative techniques are employed to describe a travel experience, as opposed to a touristic one. A similar case is made by David Dunn (2005) who describes how television travel programme presenters position themselves discursively as traveller or tourist (to their audiences). Evidently, there is a discourse associated with the narration of travel that is distinct from tourist discourse. It is also possible that discourses of both travel and tourism appear in a single text.

Studies such as these suggest that Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia and polyphony may be useful in the examination of travel-related texts. *Tony Wheeler's Blog* brings with its very title the suggestion that it is heteroglossic. As heteroglossic and polyphonic texts, blogs must contain a variety of discourses. As a form of travel-related communication, this blog may well contain discourses of both travel and tourism. Therefore, a closer examination is necessary to identify the different discourses of travel and tourism it may contain and to understand how the tensions between these discourses are negotiated.

Bakhtin (1981, p. 320) also observes that a heteroglossic text will not only contain various discourses, but also "incorporated genres". This may explain how narrative elements normally found in other forms of travel-related communication, such as the guidebook and travel writing appear alongside features generally expected of blogs.

Placing the Post

At first glance, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is the quintessential travel blog, with reverse chronological posts on travel-related themes, accompanied by hyperlinks, photographs, and an author profile. However, a closer analysis reveals that the text wears the shell of a blog, thus providing the reader with what they expect to see, at least on a superficial level. The earliest entry in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is dated 25 March 1994. The date is significant given that the mid-1990s are widely accepted as the period when the earliest blogs were first published (Jones, 2003; Rettberg, 2008; Rosenberg, 2009). The entry itself is prefaced by a note from Wheeler (1994), which begins, "In 1994 I drove coast-to-coast across the USA (and back again) in an ancient Cadillac and posted a daily blog as we went along".

This preface fails to state that the original diary was written for a webzine, a fact only mentioned in the author's book about Lonely Planet where he writes, "Today it would be called a blog" (Wheeler & Wheeler 2006, p. 304). This identification with early blogs is reiterated elsewhere in the blog where he writes, "These days everybody's doing one, but I reckon I did one of the first travel blogs" (Wheeler, 2005). This implies that while it wasn't originally conceived as one, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* uses the "blog" title to associate itself with the larger body of discourse that is the blogosphere.

Also significant is the unexplained absence of entries between July 1994 and February 2005. The title of "blog" implies that the website should have regularly updated posts, but this narrative has a significant gap. It is also difficult to verify when the first post appeared, or determine what happened in the intervening years. In short, the text seems to wear the trappings of a blog with the suggestion that it is as old as the first blogs, and that it was purposely written as a blog.

To Link is to Blog

An analysis of subsequent pages in Wheeler's blog reveals that the text may resemble a blog in appearance, but not necessarily in content. This is particularly true of the links that are listed alongside the entries. Blogs usually provide hyperlinks to other blogs, older entries, or to an email address (Rettberg, 2008; Serfaty, 2004b; Sorapure, 2003). For Sorapure (2003, p. 14) linking, both within the blog and to similar blogs, is an important feature that creates "meaningful connections" and "conceptual transitions". Links to other similar blogs are usually listed in a blogroll. Such linking results in the creation of a network of blogs with topical affinity, what Lovink (2008, p. 252) describes as the "enclave culture of blogs". While it is not clear whether such reciprocal linking is mandatory for a text to be considered a blog, it is generally assumed that these links are the author's choice, and are external. Furthermore, such networking emphasises the social nature of blogging.

Tony Wheeler's Blog does not link to other blogs, nor does it offer an email address. "My Lists", a list of links that appears in a column along the right-hand margin, consists largely of links to older entries. The format, then, is structurally reminiscent of the blogroll, but the "blog" does not participate in the "enclave culture", or permit feedback via an email address. Other links that give the text a blog-like structure include a link to Tony Wheeler's

profile in the top left-hand corner, "Blog Categories" and an invitation to "Subscribe to This Blog". This indicates that the text goes through the motions of being a blog, adopting certain features while discarding others, particularly those that support interactivity with users or other bloggers. So, while the text appears to participate in the "enclave culture", readers expecting to find links to similar blogs will be disappointed.

No Comments, Please

Madeleine Sorapure (2003) observes that most blogs encourage feedback through links and comment boxes. For her, such interactive features point to the social nature of the blog. In fact, blogs are often discussed as social or conversational media, implying that bloggers are part of and engage with a community of authors and readers (Finin et al., 2008; Scoble and Israel, 2006; Sorapure, 2003). Yet, the comment box is noticeably absent in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

That the comments feature is missing is particularly significant, as this is considered a "standard feature of the typical blog" (Rosenberg, 2009, p. 149). Howard (2008) sees the comments section as a "participatory feature" and suggests that readers expect to be allowed to respond, when they see a website titled 'blog'. Indeed, comments enhance a blog's authenticity (Finin et al., 2008; Howard, 2008; Scoble and Israel, 2006; Sorapure, 2003). Such views are endorsed by bloggers such as social media commentator Laurel Papworth (2009), who criticises marketing expert Seth Godin's refusal to allow comments on his blog. This has generated a lengthy debate in her blog's comments section, where a number of respondents insist that comments are a definitive feature of the blog that signal interactivity and engagement.

In *Tony Wheeler's Blog* the absence of the comments feature means that the text falls short of being "standard" or "participatory". Thus, for a text that strives to give the impression that it is a blog, the exclusion of comments, and the corresponding lack of engagement with readers, seems odd. In view of Andreasen and Serfaty's arguments that readers' comments make the blog heteroglossic and polyphonic, it appears that some of these qualities are lost as well. Such flaws in the mask that *Tony Wheeler's Blog* wears are perhaps best understood through a study of the other discourses in the text.

Writing Tourism

The 'silencing' of feedback is a characteristic of tourist discourse, which is essentially monologic, unidirectional, and authoritarian (Dann, 1996, p. 62-67). The language of tourism, according to Dann, treats the addressee as being less experienced, asexual, ageless, and of indistinct socio-economic status. He argues that responses to tourist discourse are as rare as comments from a congregation listening to a sermon. These qualities are antithetical to those associated with blogs.

In its omission of the comments section, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* appears to support the authoritarian voice of tourist discourse. Not only does the lack of feedback ensure that the discourse remains unidirectional, it also effectively prevents the audience from undermining the author's status as an expert. The authoritarian tone creeps into the text of some entries as well, reflecting the language of the guidebook. Take, for example, the first paragraph of an entry on New York:

> It hardly seems the name for a glamorous destination, but in New York in 2009 you
>
> can hardly get more hip than the Meat Packing District. Sandwiched between Chelsea

and Greenwich Village on Manhattan's Lower West Side as the old meat slaughterhouses shifted out they were replaced by fashion (you'll find Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen on West 14th), restaurants and very recently two new attractions – the High Line and the *Standard Hotel* (Wheeler, 2009a).

Another entry titled "Ljubljana" begins in a chatty first-person voice, but suddenly breaks into guidebook style direction: "Leave the square, walk a short distance up Wolfova ulica and you'll find a terracotta figure of a woman…." (Wheeler, 2009d) The authorial voice is absent, but the authoritarian voice of the tour guide is noticeable. Furthermore, such imperative statements directed at an implied "you" emphasise the unidirectional nature of tourist discourse.

Nothing Personal

Another distinguishing feature of tourist discourse is the ambiguity of the author's identity or an indistinct author's voice (Dann, 1996; Robinson, 2004). This is a contrast to the blog, which is often seen as a personal narrative that has the distinctive stamp of its author's voice and personality (Kitzmann, 2003; Rettberg, 2008; Serfaty, 2004b; Sorapure, 2003). It can be argued that in a text titled *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, the identity of the author is quite clear. However, the individual entries themselves often tend to be impersonal, despite the title's suggestion that this is Tony Wheeler's personal narrative. In the New York entry discussed above, the word "I" appears only once in the entire text, and twice in the captions accompanying the photographs.

The "sender identification" that Dann (1996) finds missing in tourist discourse is also absent in most of the accompanying photographs. These tend to resemble postcards rather

than personal travel photographs since they rarely show Wheeler or his wife, who is often his travel companion. Of the eight entries for October 2009, only one has a photograph of the author, taken from a distance. Instead, the photographs are usually of sights that are unique to a travel destination – a capturing of signs, itself a touristic practice (Urry, 2002, p. 129).

It is interesting to note, however, that Tony Wheeler's profile photograph, appearing in the top right-hand corner of every page (as it would in a blog) does introduce a personal touch to each entry. Yet, this is offset by the Lonely Planet logo, placed in the left-hand corner. This is, after all, the brand name of a guidebook publisher, and is associated with the corporation rather than the individual. Guidebooks are tourist paraphernalia, as Butcher (2003, p. 45) notes that Lonely Planet guidebooks have commercialized travel to the point of "turning traveller heaven into tourist hell". Thus, the banner over every webpage becomes a visual representation of the tensions between the personal discourse of the blog and touristic discourse.

A Sense of Euphoria

Tourist photography has certain distinct qualities. Urry (2002, p. 129), for example, notes that tourist photographs are usually idealized, positive images. This view is echoed in Dann's conclusion that most touristic communication is characterised by "euphoria" and generally excludes anything negative (1996, p. 65). This is often true of the images in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*. The photographs for October 2009 are mainly positive, even artistic, images of various tourist destinations and icons such as the London Eye (Wheeler, 2009c). The November entries are filled with photographs of statues in various Slovenian cities. On the whole, such images celebrate the popular and positive sights of a destination.

Also euphoric is the language of some of the entries. "Trieste", for example, describes "the finest town square", "impressive buildings" and "elegant statuary" (Wheeler, 2009f). Such positive descriptions tend to be impersonal. So, the title *Tony Wheeler's Blog* does not necessarily signify a personal text or a personal narrative about Tony Wheeler. In comparison, euphoria is absent in the entry on Ryanair that notes the flaws of its services (Wheeler, 2009e). The entry is almost completely in first-person voice. This implies that the personal tone of blog discourse conflicts with the idealized description of touristic discourse.

A Turn of Phrase

If there is a language of tourism, then there is also a language of travel. The discourse of travel is often influenced by the fact that the traveller is usually defined against the tourist (Galani-Moutafi, 2000, p. 210; Hulme & Youngs, 2002, p. 7; McCabe, 2005, p. 96-100; O'Reilly, 2005, p. 155-157). The traveller is generally perceived as having "discernment, respect and taste," while the tourist is described in negative or derogatory terms (Galani-Moutafi, 2000, p. 210). Writers therefore tend to position themselves as travellers and to this end employ various narrative techniques such as "writing out the tourist", adopting the persona of a solitary traveller and employing devices normally associated with travel writing rather than tourist discourse such as the first person singular voice (Dann, 1999; Galani-Moutafi, 2000).

The slogan "therefore I travel", on the bottom right-hand corner of every page of *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, is a clear statement that the author positions himself as a traveller, and that the text employs travel discourse. It is the author's voice that distinguishes tourist discourse from travel discourse (Robinson, 2004, p. 309). This is made clear in entries such as "Ljubljana". The guidebook-style extract quoted earlier is preceded by this paragraph:

A bus took me to Ljubljana a remarkably pretty little city where I did all the Slovenian tourist things including climbing up (well I took the funicular up, I climbed down) to the castle overlooking Prešernov Trg, the town's main square. (Wheeler, 2009d)

Here then, is the language of travel. Although the author admits to doing "tourist things", the phrase is dismissive of tourist activities, and it is the traveller identity that is emphasised in the solitary, first-person "I". Fellow travellers or tourists are conspicuously absent in the bus, the funicular and at the castle. The impression created is one of independence and solitude. This focus on the self and the conversational tone of this paragraph directly contrasts with the impersonal and imperative voice of tourist discourse employed in subsequent paragraphs of the entry.

Sometimes the change from a travel style to a touristic one or vice versa occurs within a paragraph. For example, "Trieste", which reads almost entirely like a guidebook entry, has a final paragraph that begins in tourist discourse but ends in the language of the solitary traveller:

There are plenty of churches, museums, bits of Roman ruins and a solid old castle to distract you. The imposing Serbian Orthodox Chiesa di Santo Spiridione has colourful mosaics. I was passing through Trieste on my way to a literary festival in the town of Udine (Wheeler, 2009f).

In other instances, an entire entry may read like travel discourse. The "Ryanair" entry is written entirely in the first-person, describing an apparently solitary flight with no mention of fellow travellers. This is Wheeler at his most personal, and for once the guidebook-style advice directed at an anonymous, implied "you" is absent. These variations make for a sort of ebb and flow between the discourses of travel and tourism.

Plotting the Picaresque

Academics often study travel writing in order to identify the specific features of travel discourse (Dann, 1999; Galani-Moutafi, 2000). A definitive trait of travel writing is its picaresque style (Fussell, 1980 p. 207; Holland & Huggan, 1998, p. 8; Mewshaw, 2005, p. 5; Zilcosky, 2008, p. 7). The picaresque narrative usually has travel as a central theme and is described as having a panoramic and episodic structure, a first-person point of view, a solitary protagonist in an ''inconstant world'', many characters, and themes such as an independent traveller who is free of ''the confines of ordinary social life'' (Blaber and Gilman, 1990, p. 9-26; Wicks, 1974, p. 240-249). Some of these traits, such as the solitary traveller persona and first person narration, are already regarded as markers of travel discourse (Dann, 1999).

Picaresque episodes are present in many notable travel narratives that are written in a fragmented style (Burton, 2001 p. 237; Cohen, 1992; Holland and Huggan, 1998 p. 7). This resembles the sequential entries of the blog. Indeed, the blog has been described as having a picaresque structure (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Although blog entries are in reverse chronological order, each of these is usually a closed episode. The panoramic nature of the picaresque narrative also resonates with the blog form. The text of a blog is a work in progress, containing numerous entries, and is in this sense panoramic. In addition to this, the first-person point of view central to picaresque travel writing echoes the personal tone of the blog. Thus, the picaresque qualities of travel discourse resonate with elements of blog discourse.

As a narrative, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is far from complete. With entries spanning over five years and many destinations, it can easily be described as panoramic. In addition to this, each entry reads like a complete episode of the journey. The first-person point of view, as already noted earlier, finds expression either partially or fully in various entries. Thus, the

picaresque elements of travel discourse accentuate aspects of blog discourse and add credibility to the title.

Playing the Traveller

Descriptions of the resilience of the picaresque traveller are also markers of travel discourse. The picaresque hero describes a struggle to survive a "chaotic landscape" (Wicks, 1974, p. 245). Similarly, the real traveller, writes Galani-Moutafi (2000, p. 220), is depicted as someone who "stoically endures uncomfortable and unpleasant experiences". These travel experiences are associated with adventure, independence, exploration and going off the beaten path (McCabe, 2005, p. 97; O'Reilly, 2005, p. 156). Therefore, travel discourse is most emphasised in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* when the author adopts the persona of the traveller who forsakes the mundane to "investigate new travel possibilities or simply to experience something new" (Wheeler, 2008a).

The role of the resilient traveller is played out in different ways in the narrative. At times it is the choice of destination that marks the experience as travel. One such example is a trip to Afghanistan in 2006, filled with long journeys to various locations within a country that the author describes as "definitely unsafe, although nothing like Iraq" (Wheeler, 2006). Sometimes, it is a tale of survival limited to a single paragraph of an entry such as the description of a night out in Haiti:

> Even our new Haiti edition will warn that you shouldn't venture out on the streets after dark. So it's the early hours, there's nobody out on the streets and no transport to be found. Eventually I got some guys to give me a ride to Champs de Mars, the main square, which I thought might have a little more activity, and from there I managed to

get a *moto-taxi*, a motorcycle rider, to take me back to Pétionville…. (Wheeler, 2008b)

Here, travel discourse is set against the warning of authoritarian tourist discourse. There is an element of promotion as well in the mention of the "new Haiti edition". Yet, it is in disregarding the advice of the guidebook and being out after dark that the adventurous and resilient solitary traveller comes to the fore. The independent traveller plans his own journeys, and this too requires resilience, especially in entries such as "Ryanair" and "Ugly Cars – I Rented One" (Wheeler, 2009g) where air travel and car hire become experiences that are fraught with difficulties. Both entries are written in first-person singular, further emphasising the solitary and independent nature of travel.

Once again these examples show that the degree of travel or tourist discourse varies across the entries. While playing the traveller, the author employs travel discourse and this counters instances of touristic language in the narrative. Travel discourse has a two-fold role here. The first-person voice describing travel experiences is a perfect foil for tourist discourse. On the other hand, it also complements blog discourse by bringing in the personal anecdote that is often characteristic of blogs. In other words, travel discourse helps validate the title of "blog".

The Picture of Travel

Although it is possible to trace the discourse of travel in the entries, it is far more difficult to locate it in the accompanying photographs. Most contemporary research on tourist photography is based on John Urry's theory that tourists reproduce symbols of tourism seen in brochures and other travel media, thus creating a "circle of representation" (Caton &

Santos, 2008; Garrod, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Urry, 2002). Jenkins' study of backpackers, who often identify themselves as travellers, concludes that photographs they take are no different from those present in tourist discourse (Jenkins, 2003; O'Reilly, 2005). This not only confirms Urry's theory, but also suggests that in some cases at least there can be no distinction between travel and tourist discourses in photography.

Photographs in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* often validate Urry's theory. The entries on Slovenia contain photographs of statues and heritage monuments. Dilley points out that such images are characteristic of tourist brochures for European destinations (as cited in Jenkins, 2003, p. 313). Similar is the case with photographs of a trip to London in October 2009. In "Big Wheels" (Wheeler, 2009c) a photograph of London Eye, shot from inside the ferris wheel, shows an aerial view of London. It is rather telling that the photograph includes Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament – a popular tourist attraction associated with the destination.

It could perhaps be argued that the angle from which this is shot is unusual, and that it signals the need to break away from the vicious circle of reproducing tourist images to add the personal touch of blog discourse or travel discourse. In fact, Garrod's comparative study of postcards and tourist photographs reveals subtle differences between the two, suggesting this is possible. However, there needs to be more research on the photographic techniques employed by travellers to substantiate this view.

In general, however, the photographs in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* are touristic. A subsequent entry carries a photograph of the iconic London cab (Fig. 1). Here the reflection of tourist discourse is offset by the first-person entry placed directly below the photograph:

Recently I spent '60' for taxis between airport and city in these three cities, US$60 in New York, A$60 (about US$55) in Melbourne and £60 (about US$97) in London. What did I get for my money? (Wheeler, 2009b)
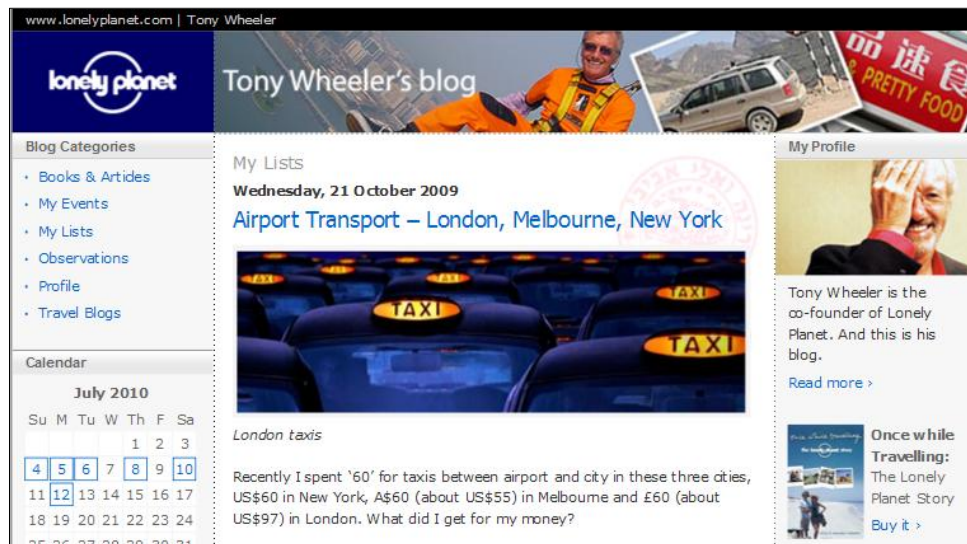

Fig. 1: The photograph of the London taxis heads the blog entry on airport transport.

Thus, visual tourist discourse is set against the personal tone of travel discourse, particularly the voice of a traveller enduring the chaos of inconstant taxi fares.

The choice of image is also interesting. This photograph of the taxis also appears on the bottom half of the cover of the Lonely Planet *London: City Guide* for 2008 (Fig. 2) (Masters et al., 2008). The top half of the guide carries a picture of Big Ben. The guidebook image has been sourced from Getty Images, but no credits appear under the online photograph, which is a cropped version of the same image. The book was published before the entry, suggesting that the photograph may have been deliberately included here for promotional purposes. As the title *Tony Wheeler's Blog* conveys the impression that the text is a personal, original narrative by Tony Wheeler, such content weakens its credibility.
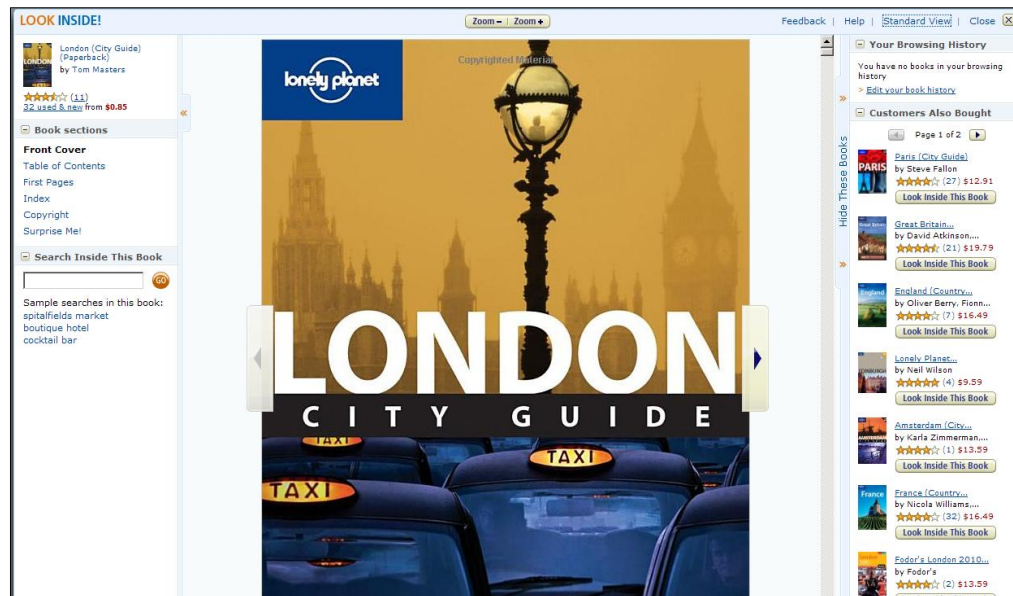
Fig 2. The guidebook cover as seen in the Amazon.com catalogue

The Truth of the Title

In some aspects, the title of "blog" does ring true for *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, for example, in the sense of the blog as a heteroglossic text. The very existence of at least three different speech styles – the personal tone of the blog, the impersonal style of the tourist guidebook, and the picaresque style of travel writing – suggests that the text has some degree of heteroglossia.

To some extent, the text also corresponds with Hevern's view of the blog as an expression of a polyphonic self (2004, p. 332). According to Hevern, self-identity is constructed through the use of multiple voices that occupy various, sometimes oppositional positions. It is possible to identify such conflicting positions in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* in the authoritarian voice of the tour guide, the more personal voice of the traveller, and the voice of the blogger. As these often imbue the text with what Bakhtin (1984, p. 9) would describe as the simultaneous co-existence of a "plurality of unmerged consciousnesses", the narrative often seems polyphonic.

The text certainly fulfils Bakhtin's condition that there should be an "interaction and interdependence" of opposing voices in a polyphonic text (1984, p. 36). The personal and picaresque style of travel discourse offers a distinct contrast to the impersonal language of tourism. Similarly, tourist discourse is often in conflict with personal blog discourse. Meanwhile, travel discourse and blog discourse appear to be interdependent.

The second condition of polyphony is that the "consciousnesses" present in a text must be equally authoritative. For Bakhtin, this does not result in a cancelling out of opposite views, but ensures that there is no monologic resolution in which voice emerges dominant (1984, p. 18-26). It can be argued that such polyphony cannot exist in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* as tourist discourse often cancels out elements of blog discourse. This means the personal voice of the blogger cannot be fully realized as valid or authoritative until the text incorporates more elements of blog discourse. It should be noted, however, that Bakhtin's concept of polyphony was based on completed novels, whereas *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is at present a living text. It is possible that the text will eventually evolve, giving greater independence and validity to the personal voice of blog discourse. It is equally possible that subsequent entries may give precedence to tourist discourse. Therefore, the narrative only has the potential to be polyphonic.

While heteroglossia and polyphony offer a means of understanding the discursive tensions in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, their presence does not validate the title. The term "blog" may in some ways be a true description of the text. Certainly, some features of the narrative give it the appearance of a blog. However, a closer look at the content suggests that the text is a blog in name only. The inherent heteroglossia of *Tony Wheeler's Blog* allows the text to draw on various discourses, but the tensions so produced have undermined its potential to be a complete and genuine blog. This same heteroglossia may, in time, allow the text to incorporate more of the discursive elements of the blog and become true to its title.

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