

## **Creating the “Tourist Gaze”: How a Professional Writer Creates a “Landscape of Imagination”**

David Weir, Ceram Sophia Antipolis, France and Lancaster University, England

For most tourists, their expectations of the journeys they will make and their mental models of the places they will visit do not come from tourist board brochures or factual data sheets. They are more likely to be inspired by the writers they have read and the depictions in verbal and visual media that create images. These tourists are pre-programmed for “the tourist gaze”. But there has been rather little research on how precisely these images and expectations are created. This paper reviews the ways in which a popular novelist creates a “virtual destination” to adumbrate a landscape which is based on real elements of land, terrain, physical features and plausible personalities, but is nonetheless an artful construction. But these virtual destinations are compelling frameworks for social action in that they imply specific values and meanings. In the case of Nevil Shute, the most popular writer of fiction in the English language during his lifetime, these craft elements relate to a framework of knowledge drawn essentially from his skills as an engineer but also realized within the classical Marxian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis. In these works the author, who, like his contemporary Antoine de St Exupery, was an accomplished aviator as well as author, creates a world of imagination, redolent with symbolic meanings, based on real places in the cities, towns and countryside and crystallizing motives for action and reasons for travel. The paper develops the analysis published in “Nevil Shute and the landscape of England”, in “Literary Tourism” ed.HC Andersen and M. Robinson:Continuum:2002, and “Creating Virtual Destinations”:Dubrovnik Conference:2002