

Toronto Dreaming: Typetravel in an age of Terror

Experiences of a journey to the 2004 APT XV International Conferences

Every night, all the years are passing through me... Was I wrong?

'Cause, when you find out love is blind, then you can't do anything

These are the chances we take

For reasons that we can't explain

Follow your heart every day

Pray to be forgiven.....Jonatha Brooke

Forgiven: Written by *Chris Botti and Paul Joseph Moore* from CD *Chris Botti: Midnight Without You Verve Forecast 314 537 132-2 1997*

Peter Geyer

1. Getting There

Travelling for me these days is mostly on the ground—driving here and there doing what I do. There's the occasional foray into the air to various other Australian places and, even more occasionally, across the sea for conferences.

The APT International Conference in Toronto was a false start in 2003; postponed due to SARS and the first APT gathering of its type outside the boundaries of the United States, something intriguing in itself. Curious to see what the outcome of this would be like and mindful of presentation and other commitments, I headed off before dawn to the airport for around four hours of damp, sometimes winding roads, with an occasional mist drifting across in hollows and elsewhere, driving into the sunrise.

At the airport, there was an unexpected delay in departure, which seemed to be due to late arriving planes from elsewhere. Curiously, Qantas declined to say much at all about it to its customers, until the boarding call, which was quite some time after even the announced rescheduled departure time on screens around the airport. On the way in, I was one of the people randomly selected for a complete external search, including bags and shoes, which was interesting, and pleasing, in these days, to experience.

The plane wasn't all that full, which is always good (for me at any rate, perhaps not for Qantas), particularly when it enabled me to switch to a seat with more legroom, after I was uncomfortably confronted with the new Qantas chair design.

This included a small screen staring at you from close quarters. As the seats are higher at the back to accommodate the technology, it seemed to me that breathing space wasn't what it should be, quite claustrophobic in fact.

I'm not a visual or movie person in any case, so I don't quite understand the priority placed in such devices over general passenger comfort. Perhaps it's about crowd control, or simply a presumption that everyone is the same. We're all supposed to be visual now in any case, I think, although I don't know how that comes about, if at all. Notwithstanding all that, a new perspective was genially arranged and I settled in for the long trip across the Pacific by alternately reading, dozing and writing.

Although my destination was Canada, and I had booked a direct flight to Toronto, I was required to go through US Customs in Los Angeles. This meant collecting and transporting my bag in the conventional way, placing it in the hands of people at the chaotic place where they are redistributed across the airport. I've experienced this a few times and it's something that's always fascinated me in this land of mechanisation and technology.

What was less than fascinating was discovering my direct flight had been cancelled. I can't get past the presumption that if you've booked a flight some months previously, then you should expect it to be there when you arrive. The American system is different, however, and this means groups of people cluster around airline desks where their immediate flying future is determined. Sometimes there are bonuses for switching flights, and although I didn't see that happening this time, I understand there are profits, in terms of free flights for those who are happy to play that system. It's not surprising, therefore, to see the airline staff acting like they're on the stock exchange floor, or bookmakers.

I'm not sure whether this practice is all that cost-effective, but certainly these people work hard, although you need patience in order to get your flights rescheduled and your bags rediscovered. So Americans, otherwise concerned with freedoms of various kinds, will quietly wait for some time in sweaty, crowded and uncomfortable conditions so they can be on their way. It's interesting to watch, and you can have a bit of time to watch it. I also had some difficulties with the machine scanning the bags. My car keys came up as something unexplained and so the bag was completely unpacked to see what was in it.

The serial delays of this sort of travel meant that arrival in Toronto was midnight rather than early evening. Here, I was sent for discussions with Immigration people, I'm not sure why, perhaps I wasn't all that convincing as to why I was coming to Canada. This didn't take long, so I was on my way. There were a couple of drivers touting for business in the airport building, which is apparently illegal, but I eventually got a legitimate driver, who, on arrival, demanded a larger tip from me to cover tax, which was quite a surprise. I didn't meet anyone else like that, so I presume it was an aberration.

2. Being there

In the late morning, I decided to go out and stroll down a street or two and get some local money. My wallet had been stolen in Melbourne two days before I was

scheduled to leave, so I hadn't the usual access to funds via my bank account as that took some days to arrange.

The day was hot and steamy, somewhat like Brisbane with complete cloud cover and accompanying haze as I set off up Yonge Street, the nearest street going into the city itself (the hotel was on the shores of Lake Ontario). An elevated freeway, showing ice damage and repair, and surrounding construction sites separated shore from city.

The street itself was wide and clean, with several buildings the worse for wear as far as maintenance went. These were mostly old and similar in feel to a strip shopping area in an old part of Melbourne or Sydney, although as you went further up the street, modern multi-storey buildings became dominant. There was the occasional beggar, but nothing unsafe or menacing, indeed quite the opposite. Quite by accident, I encountered a modern manifestation of the Hudsons Bay Company, some 300 years old, and wandered in just to experience the store and the idea of connecting with the explorer Henry Hudson in some way. Genuinely exciting for me, if somewhat prosaic in experience. Running out of energy, I loitered for a time in an excellent record store and headed back to the hotel, where I ran into various familiar faces and entered into the sorts of discussions that became the theme for me as far as the conference went.

3. The Conference

Next day, I attended the Multicultural Symposium, which was about training exercises in multicultural settings, and an opportunity to catch up with Cahrley Ginn the organiser and several others I'd met over the years. I was to present an exercise from Lisa Davies, of Adelaide on J-P entitled the Barossa Gourmet weekend. This was a really interesting and insightful day. Particularly interesting was the Finnish presentation, notably a simple exercise for S-N where groups were handed a tea-bag without comment or instruction just to see what would be done with it. A French-Canadian exercise by Danielle Poirier on tooting your own horn, was also discussed extensively. Danielle also provided visual evidence of cultural context being extremely important for type expression, showing a film of a very expressive ISTJ in a festive context.

After the conference itself got under way, my attention was mostly on private or general discussion, whether with Steve Myers on ideas about type, or the more political/economic aspects of type with several providers of MBTI Qualifying Workshops and others in the international scene. There have been several controversies over the years regarding MBTI distribution and course licensing, overlapping with general marketing and copyright issues.

Whilst this has always been volatile, particularly with the contradiction or at least a gap (to me) between business policy and type philosophy, it seems that there are a couple of liminal points that have recently been arrived at for how the MBTI is perceived as business. So we may see some radical changes shortly in approaches to psychological type, particularly instruments in the near future. One never knows, of

course, particularly in this world where policies and practices have fluctuated wildly in the decade or more of my association with it.

There were two personal highlights/experiences for me at the conference: the first being the presence of Peter Myers at my presentation on type as a contemporary theory of personality, and the second being asked to speak briefly at the memorial service for Mary McCaulley, where the other speakers were Gordon Lawrence and Elizabeth Murphy. I thought this was a great honour, and was the major purpose for my attendance, really, to say something about someone who had become a dear friend.

I should mention finally being captured by Liz Hallows for her handscapes project, not only because it was an interesting experience and more public, but pleasantly so, than I initially wanted, but because Liz seemed to be exceptionally pleased that I agreed to blacken my hands in the name of her research.

The Conference was also a highlight for its excellent food, although I still can't understand why a type conference would have tables seating around 12, and no alternatives for the more introverted amongst us. I only got to a table with any ease at the dinner through walking in with Mary McGuinness. The table talk was politics, mostly, with one woman having her university student sons there, one of whom, an intelligent/intense INFP, was into radical political action/defeating George W. Bush. There was lots of discussion about history and politics in Australia and the USA as a consequence, which was immensely enjoyable and juxtaposed by the square dance on offer after the meal.

4. On the way home

The end of the conference saw me wander off to catch a tour of the nearby waters on a sailing ship. The days had become brighter as the conference went on, and so there was blue sky and some breeze. A beautiful day to be out on the water, or anywhere else outside, really. The ship was docked in an entertainment area not far from the hotel, and so various activities were around, most incongruously a rock band that seemed transplanted from 1968 and the American music of that time, although none of the songs came from that era. It didn't seem to fit, anyway, and I wonder why people don't seek to modulate amplifier driven music outdoors, so it can be heard on its merits, and not as a battering ram of sorts.

The sailing ship looked a bit too heavy to be powered by wind alone, and, notwithstanding the energy displayed by the crew in unfurling the sails, a motor quietly burred throughout. A true post-modern moment, I suppose. Notwithstanding all that, it was an enjoyable experience, particularly as there was no accompanying commentary, and the passengers were quietly relaxed.

I left early the next morning for the airport in what I thought was plenty of time, but didn't realise that Toronto airport is not only an entry point into the United States, but

also that it was a long slowly moving queue that got you through. This meant filling out forms on the run, which was a little disconcerting. The Border Patrol person, exceptionally cold and unfriendly sent me over to be checked again and, with the customary doffing of shoes, I was on my way.

At Los Angeles, where there were several hours of waiting before the flight home, I met with a friend from Arizona who I had helped with studies on the MBTI for a pleasant discussion mostly on type and cultures. I'd hoped to meet up with others on the way home, but there were different buildings to go into whether you were flying to Melbourne or Sydney. The Melbourne wait was in a rather tawdry part of the airport, but finally we departed.

At Melbourne, checks of passengers' luggage were more intense than in the past, which is a good thing, and I speak here as an ex-Customs Officer. Interestingly, my bag had been opened somewhere between leaving it in the care of the airline and the carousel at Tullamarine. The lock had been snipped (it was in the bag) and a gift I had been given as a keepsake from Mary McCaulley had been opened. This was a set of sailing ship bookends with a metal base, and I suspect the metal in a box made it look like it might be a bomb, or something like that.

So, having been investigated by just about every possible authority on the way to and from Toronto, I headed off to the long-term car park to connect with a different life. Somewhat curiously, at the airport, I met up with one of my new colleagues at the University of South Australia, where I'm now a part-time PhD student looking at MBTI and what it means and how people like you and me use it. So life goes on...