Travelling Paradigms: Marxism, Poststructuralism and the Uses of Theory

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Abstract: As tourism is extending commoditization into every corner of the globe, poststructuralist approaches to the anthropology of tourism tend to focus on consumption, the ironies of cultural hybridization, and the instability or "virtuality" of identity and authenticity. While useful in the representation of highly particularized intersections of discourse and desiring bodies, poststructuralist discourses may tend to dematerialize political and economic processes with significant impacts on communities subjected to the tourist gaze. Using the author's fieldwork on the tourism industry in Dharamsala, India for context, this paper argues that by reemphasizing a focus on material production and class relations, and by transcending discourses of authenticity and virtuality through Marxist conceptions of alienation, an "engaged anthropology" of tourism can more usefully link the ironies of postmodern consumption with the inequalities that continue to be structured through capitalist production.

Keywords: tourism, poststructuralist approaches, Marxism, consumption, material production, India

Résumé : Alors que le tourisme répand l'édification de biens matériels en fétiche aux quatre coins du globe, les approches post-structuralistes de l'anthropologie du tourisme ont tendance à focaliser sur la consommation, l'ironie de l'hybridité culturelle et le caractère instable ou virtuel de l'identité et de l'authenticité. S'il est vrai qu'ils sont utiles pour représenter l'intersection de discours et de désirs grandement particularisés, les discours post-structuralistes ont cependant tendance à dématérialiser des processus politiques et économiques. Ces processus entraînent des conséquences considérables pour les communautés soumises au regard des touristes. Les recherches de l'auteur sur l'industrie du tourisme à Dharamsala, en Inde, servent de base à cet article qui soutient qu'en remettant l'accent sur la production matérielle et les rapports entre les classes sociales ainsi qu'en transcendant les discours d'authenticité et de virtualité à l'aide des conceptions marxistes de l'aliénation, une «anthropologie engagée» du tourisme a le potentiel de créer efficacement des liens entre l'ironie de la consommation post-moderne et les inégalités continuellement engendrées par la production capitaliste.

Mots-clés : tourisme, approaches post-structuralistes, Marxisme, consummation, production matérielle, Inde

I was sitting in the Shangri-La cafe in Dharamsala, India, drinking a beer and reading a much-valued *Newsweek* when I spotted the Boeing advertisement. "Travel," it commanded. "Flight turns the world into a single marketplace" (*Newsweek International* 1993: 26-27). Because I was in Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile, studying the impacts of ethnic and spiritual tourism on Tibetan crafts, the ad struck me immediately. A tasteful two-page spread in reds and browns displayed exotic goods, each evoking some distant locale, artfully arranged around a tattered Union Jack, a nostalgic icon of an imagined, benign colonialism that resonates with many travellers from the imperial nations.

"Ethnic tourism" in postcolonial states is a strange new form of economic imperialism, one in which finished goods and memories are carried from periphery to center, where many are hungry for hand-made, "authentic" crafts and experiences that, unlike mass manufactured goods or imagery, escape commodity status in the minds of many consumers (Kopytoff 1986; Nash 1993; Waterbury 1989). In the words of Boeing: "ordinary citizens now have easier access to the world's goods than did the kings of old" (*Newsweek International* 1993: 26-27).

Tourism in the new millennium penetrates every corner of the globe, entering once restricted sacred realms in search of ever more unique goods and experiences. Anthropologists in even the most remote field sites often find themselves preceded by "adventure travellers," and indigenous communities sometimes treat anthropologists as another species of customer (Brewer 1984). In the face of continuing poverty and the transfer of capital to the wealthy nations, many communities are attempting to cash in on this explosion of world travel, transforming domestically produced crafts into factory manufactured souvenirs, and sacred objects, ritual performances, and even their bodies into marketable commodities. Household and sweatshop craft production is growing and rates of exploitation increasing as communities subject to the

"tourist gaze" (Urry 1990) are integrated into an unevenly developed global economy (Nash 1984; 1993; Tice 1995).

Since my original research was conducted (1992-94), there has been a boom in academic literature on tourism, and a proliferation of approaches in conjunction with an increased delineation of the diversity of "tourism." Some of the literature, such as the work of June Nash (1993) Lynn Stephen (1993), and Karin Tice (1995), closely examines the material production of crafts and their circulation in transnational markets, with local consequences for class, gender and ethnic stratification. Another literature is highly "theoretical," such as Clifford's *Routes* (1997), Adams's *Tigers of the Snow and Other Virtual Sherpas* (1996), and the edited volumes *Touring Cultures* (Rojek and Urry, eds. 1997) and *Travellers' Tales* (Robertson et al; eds. 1994). They share "poststructuralist" influences: self-reflexive, suspicious of any monolithic theories or conclusions about tourism, and the incredulity to metanarratives that Lyotard highlighted as the postmodern condition (1985). "Unlike the polemic, authoritative, and homogenizing discourse of modern tourism, the discourse of postmodern tourism consists of compromising statements and stresses the multiplicity of tourist experiences" (Uriely 1997: 983-984). In this paper I will refer to postructuralism as a diverse array of theoretical strategies that deconstruct "modernist" universalisms, essentialisms and foundationalist epistemologies, highlighting "difference" and the slippage of signifiers. "Postmodernism" will denote a cultural condition of instability and hybridity under a regime of globalized capitalism characterized by "flexible accumulation"(Harvey 1989). Many writers cited here, however, do not make such a distinction, and it is debatable that there has been any radical shift in the evolution of capitalism. Some recent anthropological literature deploys the terminology of travel and the Internet as general metaphors for postmodern disjuncture and displacement. "Modernist" critiques of the destruction of "authenticity" have been displaced by more pluralistic, dialogic approaches influenced by both Bakhtin and Baudrillard, e.g., Vincanne Adams (1996), who posits "virtual" identities constructed in dialogue with the "purchasing observer." Admittedly "local" in aim, this discourse, like all discourses, is always already partial; it tends to foreground consumption, bringing particular intersections of discourses and desiring bodies into high resolution. As Gottdiener writes, a focus on consumption means that "other things are ignored," and a "different kind of partial truth emerges that creates the same single-minded blindness as did the putative predecessors who allegedly ignored consumption in favour of the work world of production" (2000: x).

While acknowledging the theoretical contributions of poststructuralism (as well its productivity for publishing), I will argue that an "engaged anthropology"—one that aims to facilitate collective political agency in the face of local and global oppressions, exploitation, and environmental degradation—must also remain loyal to the disciplinary traditions that sustain our unique contribution, *our difference* from feminist, media and cultural studies. In representing tourism, we must re-emphasize participant-observation, ethnographic realism, and accessible prose, or our increasingly abstract discourse may deserve the fate it seems headed towards—burial in an avalanche of popular travel literature. I propose we move away from the endless possibilities for deconstruction, and more thoroughly wed our "readings" of social phenomena to economic processes through a revival of Marxist conceptions of *alienation.* Following Miller's neo-Hegelian conception of culture as "self-objectification" (1987), tourism can be analyzed in terms of the various projects through which both "hosts" and "guests" construct themselves through the consumption of Others, always linked to and having consequences for material practices of production. Consumption and production are thus seen as two sides of a dialectical coin (Gottdiener 2000). I will argue that in contrast to discourses of authenticity or virtuality, *alienation* more sharply brings into focus how the possibilities for self-objectification are stratified not only by cultural "difference," but by class and capitalism.

Influenced by philosophical pragmatism (James 1995 [1907]; Rorty 1982) and Marx's grounding of theory in practice in the *Theses on Feuerbach* (McLellan 2000: 171-174), I am not claiming for "materialism" any status as a final vocabulary, nor for class as the master key to all social relations. I am merely asserting that such an approach provides a more useful lens for an engaged anthropology, facilitating global comparisons and policy recommendations amidst the proliferation of discourses surrounding postmodern tourism. Alienation is "not merely a (descriptive) concept; it is also an appeal, or call for a revolutionary change of the world (de-alienation)" (Petrovic´ 1983: 10).

Until another paradigm emerges that can unify progressive theory and practice, the rich conceptual toolkit of the Marxist tradition, with its focus on labour and its faith in internationalism, is vital in generating empowering and systemic critiques of the forces of inequitable globalization—such as tourism—that highlight the mutual interests of disparate working peoples around the world, both hosts and guests.

Doing and Teaching Theory

The Boeing advertisement made me laugh out loud, but also tempted me. My research attempted to use a relatively narrow focus on the production of Tibetan exile crafts and commoditized ritual objects as an entry into a broader description of the tourism economy and shifts in ethnic, class, and gender politics. Following Appadurai and Kopytoff (1986), I aimed to construct "biographies" of particular artifacts, linking these to more global economic processes as found in the work of June Nash (1981, 1984, 1993). However, the causal forces and impacts of tourism on craft production are extremely diverse and far-reaching, weaving together a complex dialectic of cultural consumption and material production. Perhaps the advertisement provided an easy target of discursive deconstruction and an entrée into a deeper consideration of consumption. In short, this was an opportunity to *do theory,* something a number of reviewers had indicated was relatively lacking from my grant proposals and manuscripts, which were characterized as simplistically "materialist."

I left for the field in 1992 with an admittedly inadequate understanding of the vital contributions poststructuralism offers to the analysis of power (particularly as it circulates through discourses, including discourses of "resistance") and my own positioning in both the academy and vis-à-vis my research subjects. It was through teaching undergraduates about "race," ethnicity, and gender years later that I discovered the usefulness of the work of Derrida, Foucault, and Stuart Hall in demolishing commonly held essentialisms, and encouraging critical analysis of all manner of cultural representation (including my own lectures). I required my students to construct biographies of their favourite commodities. I found them fascinated by the multiple meanings latent in consumption, and pushed them to compose self-reflective essays. But I also found that if I emphasized deconstruction and difference—leaving students with destabilized notions of identity, culture, and truth—they frequently despaired of finding grounds for uniting with any "Other" to work on solutions to global problems. I must concur with Hennessy that "frequently learning about human diversity means celebrating or appreciating 'difference' rather than acquiring the critical frameworks to understand how and why social differences are reproduced" (Hennessy 1993: 11). Focussing on the micro-circulation of power in particular contexts sometimes "eclipses any sort of causal explanation of the relationship between language and all the rest" (ibid: 41).

While perhaps not as "sexy" as examining consumption or local exotica, focussing on production, on structures of "surplus extraction" and class, can powerfully reveal to students the linkages between the local and the global, opening up causal connections and avenues for political intervention. For all its purported universalism, Eurocentric arrogance, and reduction of culture, gender, and ethnicity to the category of class, I have found the *Communist Manifesto,* with its call for international labour solidarity and vision of global citizenry, more relevant in my teaching than ever. Marx and Engels predicted that capital would "nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere," creating "a world after its own image" (1998 [1848]: 39-40). Over 150 years ago, they saw that "in place of old wants satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes" (ibid: 39). The "exploitation of the world market" would lead to a "cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country" (ibid). These passages remind students of the transnational character of their own consumerism, and that globalization is not really so new a phenomenon. The assertion that capitalism has "drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood" (ibid) leads naturally to discussions of multinational corporations, of downsizing at home and outsourcing abroad, of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. When students discover that working conditions in the sweatshops producing their jeans rival the brutality of Marx's time, when they see that wages in Northern California are tied to those in Mexico, and that rising tuition and shrinking course offerings are tied to both political and corporate discourse as well as regressive tax structures, they begin to discover mutual interests with working peoples across differences of culture, ethnicity and gender.

Fieldwork in Dharamsala: Cultural Production and Consumption

In my own work on Tibetan refugees and tourism, I am impelled to analyze Tibetan cultural production and consumption as dialectical processes. Tibetan arts and religion have become entangled with the desires of new tourist, spiritual, and academic consumers who themselves become producers of a reified Tibetan culture. Dharamsala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, is host to the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration, and a Tibetan refugee community of some 5000. Exiles in Dharamsala engage in co-operative and private enterprises including hotel and restaurant services, petty trade, handicraft production and religious instruction. My research aimed to describe the lives and practices of Tibetan and Indian artisans and merchants, groups relatively neglected in prior research that largely emphasized the transmission

of identity or Buddhist philosophy and practice. I also aimed to integrate an account of the "host" or producing population—the ethnic "Other" that is the usual focus of anthropological monographs—with an equally detailed and differentiated account of the "guests," the consuming travellers often stereotyped in both popular and academic literature. Over the course of my fieldwork I conducted interviews with seventy Tibetan and Indian artisans, merchants, hoteliers, lay and religious consumers of handicrafts, and government and monastic officials. I also interviewed 60 travellers and long-term foreign residents in Dharamsala, including a number of religious scholars, art historians, and anthropologists, and solicited responses to a questionnaire from 33 travellers.

In line with more recent emphasis on the diversity of tourisms—such that the very category "tourism" must itself be interrogated (Rojek and Urry 1997)—I tried to be careful to differentiate between types of foreign consumers. I found Cohen's (1979) five (essentially psychological) types of traveller—Recreational, Diversionary, Experiential, Experimental, and Existential—useful for thinking about motivations for travel and demands for "authenticity" in crafts. However, I also found that motivation did not predict consumption patterns in any simple way. Demands for authenticity vary not only between and within categories of consumers, but between different types of goods and cultural productions. In Cohen's terms, many travellers locate an "elective centre" of spirituality in Tibetan culture. Yet despite his generalization that "authenticity" is most important for these consumers, many spiritual seekers in Dharamsala are quite aware of and satisfied with invented traditions and hybrid crafts, and are in fact often themselves a source of innovation. A consumer may demand authenticity of spiritual teachings, but not of crafts. Consumers who commission *thangka* (sacred Buddhist paintings) or butter lamps produced by individual artisans according to strict canons, may also buy cheaper ready-made goods and hybridized souvenirs.

I ended up defining categories of travellers based on behavioural or "etic" criteria—what are they (primarily) doing here?—rather than on presumed motivations. (I consider etics to be, ultimately, the useful emics of the observer). I was fortunate that my etic categories very neatly paralleled emic self-characterizations:

Tourists and Travellers—those who visit Dharamsala, for brief or longer periods respectively, without engaging in extended work or study.
Volunteers ("Do Gooders" or "Idealists")—those working for Tibetan exile institutions.
Dharmas (or "Seekers")—those engaged in sustained Buddhist studies and/or practice.
Researchers (also labelled "Geeks," "Spies," and by one "post-tourist," "Anthropological Terrorists")—those conducting academic or journalistic research.

A simpler categorization might be made between "Doers" and "Seers"; between those passing through Dharamsala and those staying to work or study with the Tibetans. One American (self-described researcher) divided foreigners into "those who stay to really learn about the culture" and "those who just come through to see and don't learn much." Another woman contrasted "those who study" and "those who don't." I make no special analytic claims for any such categorizations other than that they provided a crude tool to distinguish major varieties of what I called "projects of self-construction" through travel, highlighting their cultural, political and economic impacts in Dharamsala.

While useful heuristically, "membership" in the categories was quite fluid. Some travellers, for example, had returned with degrees and grants to study various aspects of Tibetan culture, while other travellers were social scientists on holiday. The class backgrounds of these travellers, while almost universally self-defined as "middle class," if defined in Marxist terms as structural position in relations of production, were quite diverse. Most, but not all, were in some sort of liminal state—in between jobs, just graduated from school or about to return, or seeking some new life pathway. Ultimately, one could particularize the varieties of motivation and behaviour right down to the level of each individual at a specific time and space.

But despite this diversity, the political and economic impacts of their presence could be generalized. While many in the three "Doer" categories vehemently denied they were "tourists," (in fact, no one described themselves with that term—the tourist is always the other person), I found that many of their interactions with the locals paralleled that of other travellers, and they consumed much the same services and commodities. In fact, despite a commonly held status hierarchy privileging travellers over tourists, Doers over Seers, some Tibetans preferred those merely passing through town, spending and donating money, to the sometimes (temporarily) impoverished Doers who became involved in Tibetan cultural production, and began making criticisms and demands.

In Dharamsala, I found that the cultural and economic alienation of craft producers often had little to do with how various consumers understood objects. Handi-

crafts may be appealing in part because of their apparent status as products of non-alienated labour, allowing consumers to imbue them with personal meanings—to "singularize" them (Kopytoff 1986)—more readily than mass produced goods through often imaginary and idealized histories of their production and exchange. Miller suggests that with such types of object "production becomes reified as having a separate connotation and it is not the actual process of manufacture which is important, but the ability of the object to stand for a particular type of production and its attendant social relations." An object may "proclaim one technological origin while actually deriving from another" (Miller 1987: 115). With tourist arts, objects rapidly produced by piece workers with little control over cultural motifs may masquerade as the products of artistic care, and invented traditions may signify timeless essences. Like the written sign that escapes authorial control, material signs too escape the control of their producers; the plasticity of motifs and meanings facilitate the passage of tourist arts across geographic and cultural boundaries. Souvenirs may also stand for a singularized type of exchange, as bargaining over a commodity—a new experience for many travellers—is remembered an intimate encounter with the Other. For many consumers, Tibetan handicrafts in particular connote more than "authentic" ethnic goods. The purchase of a *thangka* was often considered both a spiritual and political act, involving patron and artist in the protection of Tibetan spiritual culture from the onslaughts of the secular Chinese state. For many travellers, this local drama is but a particular instance of a global struggle to preserve, resurrect, or invent ancient wisdom, folk traditions, and human-scale production in a rationalized, disenchanted world from which they feel alienated. But attempts by the consumer to transcend commodity fetishism do not necessarily end the alienation of the producer (McGuckin 1997).

I was truly surprised by the extent to which both moving travel and located work and study could lead to deep involvement in Tibetan cultural production. Through the consumption of local knowledge, researchers produced texts and films through which the world comes to know Tibetans, and through which the Tibetans, at least in part, come to see themselves. There were at least 12 other anthropologists in Dharamsala during the period I conducted my fieldwork, and a few used their expertise to become guides. The often-stated aim of "preserving Tibetan culture" reifies it into an essentialized, exchangeable, and researchable commodity. New foreign consumers appropriate this reified Tibetan culture for their own diverse projects of recreation, spirituality, entrepreneurialism and research.

Tibetans are both agents and subjects of these projects. While the refugees and their supporters advertise an urgent need for the salvation of authenticity, craft production, artistic forms, and even religious teachings are sometimes radically altered for the tourist and export markets. A growing interest in Buddhism in the West has led several Tibetan monastic sects to establish businesses and meditation centers worldwide. Foreign sympathizers and entrepreneurs initiate many enterprises, and a few Tibetan souvenirs are actually designed and manufactured by non-Tibetans. Ethnic crafts need have little continuity with any artistic traditions to function as signs of authenticity on the market. In the global handicrafts trade, certain motifs function as signifiers (trademarks?) of Tibetan identity even as they are grafted onto foreign objects and thrown into surreal combination with other goods. Ritual daggers become letter openers for New Agers (Kleiger 1996). Tibetan Buddhist icons are stitched by Indian labourers onto woven backpacks otherwise indistinguishable from those for sale in the crafts markets of Cuzco or the East Village. The transnational market celebrates and profits from difference just as it obliterates it. Here I am presented with a wonderful opportunity to *do theory.*

The commoditization of Tibetan culture is certainly fascinating in its often-humorous confabulations, and Shangri La debunking now rivals Shangri-La fantasizing as an intellectual industry. However, despite the continuing critique of essentialisms by academics like me indigenous peoples themselves often hold fast to them, a lesson I painfully learned when my criticism of the Shangri-La myth was met with considerable hostility by some in the Tibetan exile community. While some intellectuals are themselves contemptuous of foreign projections (Norbu 1989; Shakya 1992), which they believe trivialize their culture and political struggle, they are simultaneously alienated from and seek ownership over both myth and its deconstruction. If the postmodern condition entails a hyperactive transnational circulation of things and meanings such that cultural boundaries, identity, and authenticity are increasingly impossible to define, this has by no means entailed an end to quests to construct and solidify a self, a status, a community, and to stake its claims. Representations of an idealized past and assertions of cultural univocality are means by which the Tibetan diaspora claims political rights and authority over Tibetan cultural production. My concern to highlight class, gender, and regional conflicts within an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) were not much help in that project. Shangri-La functions as a fantasy, a trademark, a hope and a protest simultaneously.

The romantic and essentialist notions that underlay many "modernist" critiques of tourism and authenticity have been largely abandoned, but that is only half the chore. We must follow with detailed analyses of how the very concepts we have deconstructed are still deployed by hosts and guests, and perhaps more significantly, how these discourses support a tourism industry brimming with exploitation and foreign dominance, as well as resistance. Poststructuralism taught me that culture is always already dialogic, contested, and hybridized, and I can no longer think about authenticity as the re-production of static goods, motifs, or practices. Marxism leads me to think instead about *alienation*, about the practical conditions of cultural production, exchange, and consumption that promote or impede individual and community self-objectification (see also Miller 1987; Tomlinson 1991).

Handicraft Capitalism

The impacts of tourism are complex and contradictory, and must be specified for each locale, and each type of cultural production. Yet these particularities can be compared across cases and linked to global structural forces. I found that tourism in Dharamsala led not to a uniform commoditization or "degradation" of the arts, but rather to a multiplicity of productive structures and a diversification of artistic forms and meanings, as well as struggles within and outside the community over the direction of cultural production. The case of Tibetan handicrafts—where co-ops and domestic production often occurs side by side with sweatshops—might seem to support the notion that unilineal theories of capitalist development are misleading (Cook and Binford 1986; Nash 1981, 1984, 1993). But while non-capitalist relations of craft production persist, they remain inextricably tied to an overall capitalist market (Tice 1995) and can be compared across cases.

Dependency on external markets increases competition, speeds up production, and often cheapens products, reducing artisans to piece-workers (Nash 1993; McGuckin 1996b; 1997). Design is often modified not only to cater to foreign tastes, but also to facilitate standardized manufacture. I found that a dual productive structure had developed in Dharamsala, with higher quality, lower volume production of sacred objects, such as *thangka* (Buddhist paintings) on the one hand—what Graburn (1984) called "traditional embedded" goods—and lower quality, higher volume "souvenir novelty" goods like carpets on the other. At the sacred end the spectrum, artisans are most commonly Tibetan males, while at the secular end artisans are often poor women and even non-Tibetans who often cannot afford to buy the goods they produce (McGuckin 1996b; 1997). Social, political, and religious projects have meshed with the pursuit of profit and with class, ethnic, and gender relations to generate a shifting variety of productive structures—domestic, co-operative, capitalist—and varying degrees of economic profit and exploitation, cultural inventiveness and alienation.

For handicraft production in Dharamsala, the most significant differences between consumers are their possession of time and money. Low budget and short-term travellers provide much of the market for ready made, inexpensive, mass manufactured goods. Large objects weigh them down, and they are likely to buy only those goods they can carry or wear, such as clothing or jewellery. Designs may be quite innovative, targeted directly at the tastes of external consumers. Profits then flow primarily to capitalists and vendors, and artisans are alienated both from the artistic form of the goods (which one craft worker said "looked like shit"), and from returns on their labour. However, the low budget market also provides opportunities for merchants with little capital to sell petty goods in competition with the larger producers and vendors. Finding meaning in a deeper experience of one locale, longer-term travellers and Volunteers, Dharmas and Researchers are more likely to buy relatively expensive commissioned goods, manufactured more closely in accord with Buddhist iconographical canons. For may consumers, however, artistic or technical "authenticity" is not as significant as whether the producers are Tibetan and benefit from the exchange. Money from commissioned goods flows more directly to the producer, and innovations may be introduced by the artisan or the consumer, rather than indirectly through the vendor.

The small scale of craft production sites, the aim of the Dalai Lama's Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) to employ unskilled refugees, and the desire to preserve artisan traditions limits the speed and capacity of many enterprises. Social and political interests also limit the accumulation of surplus value available for reinvestment. On the one hand, gossip and pressures for conformity serve as levelling mechanisms sometimes discouraging individual accumulation and display of wealth. On the other, the costs of the Tibetan administration and its provision of jobs and training, medical and social support, and education drain much of the profits generated by the CTA's co-operatives. These entitlements allow artisans to survive on less than a living wage, to the benefit of private employers.

Most entrepreneurs in Dharamsala are properly categorized as merchants rather than capitalists. These merchants may take advantage of extremely favourable exchange rates, selling goods in Europe or the United States for many times the South Asian price of production.

A number of merchants become petty capitalists, providing looms and wool for production carried out in weavers' homes. Some Tibetans pay Indian women low rates to knit sweaters and other woollen goods for resale to travellers. However, private industry remains relatively small, limited by the CTA's absorption of unskilled labour, and its dominance of the local market. Those aiming to really enrich themselves must expand their businesses with the aid of kin networks and foreign "sponsors" to Delhi, Nepal, and even to Tibet, where there are new opportunities for trade. The new Tibetan petty bourgeoisie is doing better than much of the surrounding Indian population, and ethnic tensions have intensified in the last decade. While some refugees in Dharamsala employ Indian children as domestic servants and restaurant workers, child labour in the carpet industry is minimal. Were children employed in the Dharamsala co-operatives, there would likely be an outcry from the tourists, students and volunteers that form a large part of the market.

The Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal, a secondary field site for my research, is less constrained. Its growth benefiting from an explosion of tourism in the Kathmandu valley, by the 1990s the carpet industry was Nepal's leading source of foreign exchange. It employed thousands of women and children driven into the factories at substandard wages by unequal land distribution and environmental degradation in the countryside. Labourers are sometimes physically and sexually abused, working conditions in the carpet factories are hazardous, and carpet production often pollutes rivers and streams with caustic dyes and solvents. Unfortunately, the small size of the factories, the young and shifting work force, and a deceptive subcontracting system make the industry difficult to regulate. In the last decade the anti-sweatshop and Fair Trade movements have raised awareness of child labour and brutal conditions in the global carpet, garment and shoe industries. In part due to this activism, the Tibetan carpet industry took a major downturn in the late 1990s, and many exporters now guarantee they do not employ children.

Clearly, even postmodern consumption may entail some rather traditional forms of production and nasty modes of exploitation. While broad generalizations regarding cultural and economic commoditization, alienation, and victimization may be misleading, global comparisons can be profitable. The dynamics of Tibetan craft production in India and Nepal, for example, are similar to those of Kuna craft production in Panama as described by Karin Tice, who concludes that "the commercialization of crafts can, but does not have to, lead to the alienation of producers from their craft," and may, "enrich and benefit both producer and buyer" (Tice 1995: 188).

Tourism is always intertwined with political interests and discourse, and the opportunities and brutalities that tourism provides are structured along interpenetrating axes of "difference," of age, gender, ethnicity and nation. It is simply impossible to get a politically useful handle on these differences and discourses, or on the practical impacts of travellers' diverse motivations and definitions of authenticity, without closely considering production and class relations. A reversal of the Marxist primacy of production, by emphasizing consumption and discourse, is sometimes nearly silent about the material consequences of tourism. An emphasis on the local and particular in the name of avoiding "totalization" may discourage comparison across cases and linkage to global systems, providing little guidance for producing communities to limit, shape, and profit from their own commoditization. It is not a matter of the "truth" of various paradigms, rather one of emphasis and use. It seems to me that my primary responsibility in representing, for example, the Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal—with all its ironies—is to those Nepali children still labouring in suffocating carpet factories, sometimes shackled to the looms.

Travels in Discourse

> "To examine travel is to examine theory." (Arshi et al. 1994)

Tourism might be the type case of postmodern cultural production. It was a "post-Fordist" industry before the term was coined—consumer driven, largely non-industrial, highly mobile, volatile, and structured into a two-tiered hierarchy wherein a few monopolies and entrepreneurs employ masses of low-paid service workers. There is tremendous investment in advertising and impression management. The often surreal and humorous nature of tourism lends itself to ethnographic experimentation, to considerations of desiring bodies and inventions of tradition, to deconstruction of discourses of authenticity and the primitive.

The peculiarities of tourism led Crick (1985) to advise us to take a more "ludic" approach, and Georges van den Abbeele went so far as to claim that "Discourse on travel can only produce a meta- or theoretical discourse....It is radically impossible to talk about travel in empirical terms" (van den Abbeele 1980: 12). More recently, in an essay on "post-tourism," Ritzer and Liska conclude that there are "no grand conclusions to be made" as there is " no 'truth' to be uncovered about the contemporary world of tourism." Social scientists must be modest in their aims, they aver, because if "the post-modern perspective has done nothing else, it has alerted us to the dangers,

even the terrorism, associated with grand narratives" (1997: 109).

Dean MacCannell's influential *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1989 [1976]) was the first analysis of tourism fully deploying social theory (in this case, structuralism and semiotics). MacCannell called for a "sociology of leisure," arguing that "the tourist is one of the best models for modern-man-in-general" (1989 [1976]: 1). He read in the "system" of attractions "an unplanned typology of structure that provides direct access to the modern consciousness" (ibid: 4). MacCannell further claimed that an analysis of mass leisure has become more salient than that of productive relations, and that modern social identities are primarily constructed in consumption rather than work. Thus, he suggested, social analysis cannot make sense of modernity by studying class, status, power and "related sociological antiquities" (ibid: 35). "Work becomes the site of touristic interest," and sightseeing constructs a false impression of a unified and direct relation between the self and a fragmented social totality. "Sightseeing," he wrote, " is a kind of ritual played to the differentiations of society" (ibid: 13). With his most brilliant concept, "staged authenticity," MacCannell highlighted the disappearance of the very attribute tourism both promotes and demolishes.

Despite MacCannell's claim of having carried out an ethnography of tourists, there is little empirical description of their practices. Rojek criticizes "modernist" structuralism of the sort practised by MacCannell as too monolithic for representing the diversity of tourism. While modernist texts "stressed the exploitation and artificiality of tourist experience," postmodernism "sees tourist experience as fragmented, plural, and without a dominant overarching belief in absolute value (e.g., absolute authenticity or absolute inauthenticity)" (Rojek 2000: 53). Although MacCannell can be faulted for his sweeping generalities and abstractions, his work has proved very influential and productive, providing useful hypotheses for the kind of empirical research MacCannell had not himself provided (e.g., *Coping with Tourists,* Boissevain, ed. 1996).

Another modernism—Marxism—has been faulted for offering the kind of grand generalizations always under suspicion in our particularizing discipline. Marx and Engels were prone to claims to a scientific objectivity inadmissible in the postmodern academy. In the case of tourism, Marxists have been accused of fetishizing production to the neglect of the imagery and consumption central to the industry. Although in the *Grundrisse* Marx wrote that production, distribution, and consumption "form a perfect connection," he privileged production as the causal variable. "Production," he wrote, "creates the consumer" (Marx 1971 [1858]: 24-26). Baudrillard argued that Marx's privileging of work as the site of self- realization and the creation of value mirrors the instrumental rationality of the bourgeois world-view—"Man" is economic man, and value is reduced to "the sign of utility" (Baudrillard 1975).

Indeed, the labour theory of value has not proved very useful for deciphering the economics of imagery. MacCannell (1989) argues that the value of tourist commodities is not determined by their direct labour, rather by the experience they produce (or, I would add, promise). But as Hardt and Negri assert: "Even if in postmodern capitalism there is no longer a fixed scale that measures value, value nevertheless is powerful and ubiquitous. This fact is demonstrated first of all by the persistence of exploitation, and second by the fact that productive innovation and the creation of wealth continue tirelessly" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 356).

In many current studies of tourism, although producing "hosts" may be the focus of ethnography (partially a result of the requirements for academic career building—indigenous artisans are more "Other" than Western workers on holiday) there tends to be a reversal of the Marxist priority of production over consumption, and sober considerations of rates of exploitation are displaced by more playful representations of hybridization and simulation. Vincanne Adams suggests "a way to move beyond the discourse of authenticity...[is] that we look instead for a discourse through which cultural differences are always reflective of desires of the purchasing observer" (Adams 1996: 73).

If the postmodern condition generates in consumers nostalgia for the real, for "authentic roots," capital is ready to manufacture simulations to meet the demand. Umberto Eco titled his road trip through the roadside attractions and theme parks of the western U.S. *Travels in Hyperreality.* He read the cheesy dioramas and wax museums he encountered as attempts to simulate a history that has already disappeared. Simulations are constructed which are more elaborate than the original. More real than the real, they are "Hyper-real" (Eco 1986). Unfortunately, semiotic readings of tourism may lend themselves too easily to breezy accounts that reproduce some very old-fashioned stereotypes, offering us only the simulacra of politics. Baudrillard's depiction of the United States in his book *America* (1988), like Eco's, is a fleeting, shallow, and nearly depoliticized vision glimpsed through the windshield of an automobile. These texts tell us very little about the complexity and material conflicts of American life, and provide a poor example for *ethnography,* let

alone any useful guide to active intervention in political arenas. They do more to reveal that Eco and Baudrillard, as Bruner (1994) points out, unwittingly reproduce an essentialist original/copy dichotomy (for them, the original is Europe). More recent accounts of "Disneyization" and "MacDonaldization" (Ritzer and Liska 1997; Ritzer and Ovadia 2000), while greatly influenced by Baudrillard, are more nuanced and careful to avoid overgeneralizations, noting both homogenization and diversification in tourism industries. Still, they are most useful in thinking about "new forms of consumption" (Gottdiener 2000), and full-length ethnographies are still needed of the working conditions of actual theme park employees, who labour not only under the tourist gaze, but under the gaze of security teams deployed by corporations offering a hug from Goofy in place of a living wage.

Like the semioticians, some contemporary theorists of tourism essentially *read* social phenomena, centering on an abstracted Discourse that de-emphasizes descriptions of the actual speech acts and behaviours of hosts and guests. I remember vividly a provocative and creative paper presented in the "Consuming Identities" panel at the American Anthropological Association conference in 1991. In the paper, later published as "The Body and Tourism" (1994), Jokinen and Viejola enacted a tour of tourism theory. The two took snapshots of the audience of academics as they recounted a fictional trip to Spain, eavesdropping on conversations between theorists like MacCannell and John Urry on the plane, at the beach, in the disco. Even our most abstract theorizing, they noted, is a gesture of the body. Indeed so, but I could not help noticing that there was little mention of the *labouring bodies* that made their leisurely narrative possible. What of the waiters who brought them cocktails as they considered Judith Butler and Foucault?

In the collection *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (Robertson et al. 1996) various contributors rehearse decentered identities, transgression, alterity, and mimesis, but we seldom hear the voices of any actual travellers, save for the odd reading of an 18th-century diary. Instead, travel serves as a metaphor for the disjunctures of the postmodern era, and travellers become a species of "nomad" along with diasporas, for whom, notes Clifford, "decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of return" (1994: 306). I must observe that Tibetan exiles, while certainly relying on lateral transnational economic networks, advertise and promote their interests precisely around a teleology of return. Their perception of failure has more to do with the military power of the People's Republic of China than with any postmodern ontology of displacement. While "metaphors of travel" may usefully "destabilize fixed and ethnocentric categories of culture" (Rojek and Urry 1997: 10), they can also, as Caren Kaplan argues, obscure differences in power between and within global communities (Kaplan 1996). I am not sure we know enough yet about what travellers actually do and think to appropriate them very usefully as general metaphors for the current era.

Another set of metaphors has been appropriated from cyberspace. As international tourism is expanding and drawing ever more consumers into an asymmetric transnational market of hybridized goods and meanings, Rojek has written of "indexing" and "dragging" experiences as one does with computer files (1997). Other writers have posited the construction of "virtual" identities. Dean MacCannell had earlier distinguished between the "constructed ethnicity" of the colonial era—a dynamic product of resistance—and the "re-constructed ethnicity" of tourism, in which identity is performed for the consumption of others (MacCannell 1992 [1984]). The end result of tourism, he claimed, is the "staged authenticity" of "ex-primitives" and the final victory of "white cultural totalization" (ibid: 167). Poststructuralist work on tourism has largely abandoned such critique of lost authenticity as dependent on essentialist and static notions of identity and culture. In Vincanne Adams's *Tigers of the Snow and Other Virtual Sherpas* (1996) the reader is advised to avoid thinking of Sherpa identity as anything *sui generis*. In dialogue with tourists, mountaineers, and anthropologists, Sherpas have become "virtual" through "the imitation of what is taken to be one's 'natural' self by way of the Other" (1996: 17).

I read Adams just as I was wrestling with similar issues, and struggling to finish my dissertation at long last. I admit to some jealousy at her brilliance and theoretical sophistication, and to a feeling of being scooped. But I also wondered just who was virtual. It appeared to me that Western travellers, journalists, seekers, and even anthropologists in Dharamsala were far more virtual than Tibetan refugees. Certainly, much Tibetan cultural production caters to Western consumers (although the exiles generally take on more attributes of "the West" than they "perform" Tibetan identity). Interviews I conducted with travellers revealed that many actually seek hardship in the Third World, the global bargain basement for experience. For these *bricoleurs* of Eastern spiritual traditions, a difficult bus ride, a filthy hotel, or a bout of amoebic dysentery offer some sort of "real experience," an escape from the comforts—virtuality?—of First World life.

Many of Adams' assertions about ethnic identity are well taken, but hardly new despite the sometimes-obfus-

cating deployment of the vocabulary of seduction and mimesis. That identity is constructed through dialogue and conflict with the Other is an old insight, systematically applied to ethnicity as least since Barth (1969). "Virtuality" seems to imply, though Adams surely does not intend this, the existence of something non-virtual. Unless we posit that there is anywhere, anytime some essential Self or Culture—some stable "Being"—we must regard projects of self-objectification as "Becoming;" always already dialectical, historical, and structured through practices of both consumption and production.

Cultural productions are indeed mirrors in which ethnicities are envisioned. It has always been so, but tourism certainly multiplies the mirrors, refracting the desiring gazes of ever more far-flung consumers. Perhaps virtuality signifies that the dialogues through which identity is formed have widened tremendously, and are engaged through new electronic media. There is new intensification of capitalist "space-time compression," commoditization, and the reproduction of images (Harvey 1989). But this need not leave us, as Christopher Norris (1990) wrote, "lost in the funhouse," satisfied to endlessly represent representation. Without falling back on essentialist conceptions of authenticity we can still usefully distinguish between Tibetan monks raising funds through performances of modified sacred dances, and Nepali children labouring to produce Tibetan carpets catering to foreign tastes. One might argue that the "postmodern condition" demands a new vocabulary, but distinguishing new eras and inventing new jargons is not very significant outside of academia. The language of virtuality, far from or providing truly original insights into the creation and recycling of cultural motifs, merely updates and re-jargons ideological issues treated with clarity and force by Hobsbawm and Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), and much earlier by Marx in the opening passages of *The 18th Brumaire.* In contrast to discourses of virtuality and nomadology, the virtue of MacCannell's "modernist" definitions of constructed and reconstructed ethnicity, like Ahmad's distinction between expatriation (through choice and opportunity) and exile (through coercion) (Ahmad 1994), is that they highlight *politics* and differences in *power.*

The significant concerns for an engaged anthropology are not so much with virtuality or authenticity, but with alienation, with exploitation and self-determination at sites of both production and holiday frolics. It is increasingly difficult, at any rate, to decide just what is "our" culture and "theirs." Tibetans or Sherpas or Mayans, like North Americans or Europeans, are part of a transnational system both constructed from below and determined from above. Madonna T-shirts are really not much more mine than theirs, except so far as I am relatively privileged by the economic and political structures that allow Madonna and the media conglomerates to profit from us all. We must be careful not to prematurely celebrate the possibilities of resistance in grassroots appropriations of commodities and commoditized identities, since control over globalized production is, as Marx predicted, ever more concentrated. Time-Warner and other publishers of innumerable coffee table books on Tibet, the Hilton chain, and Disney have truly become world powers. The terminology of virtuality too easily elides political-economic asymmetries, lending instead to descriptions of the ironies of cultural hybridization, the postmodern mirror image of static authenticity (minus the politics).

Don't Ask for the Meaning (or its Deconstruction) Ask for the Use

Richard Rorty writes in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (1996) that philosophy outruns politics rather quickly, and starts playing with itself. I suspect that in the anthropology of tourism, deconstruction has outrun ethnography and started playing with itself. I concur with Rorty (and Marx) that it makes no sense to claim that any text is "inadequately theorized" outside of theory's use as a tool to grapple with particular problems—outside of *practice.* We must consider what poststructuralist approaches are best suited for, which problems they highlight, and what additional tools might help interrogate the arenas of which discursive analysis is sometimes silent.

We must recognize the diversity of both Marxisms and poststructuralisms, and acknowledge the rich cross-fertilizations they have provided (particularly in feminist literature). Hennessy, borrowing from Teresa Hebert, distinguishes between "ludic postmodernism," which "signals an emphasis on the mechanics of signification, with language as a system of differences," and "resistance postmodernism," which is "concerned with the politics of the production and maintenance of subjectivities, that is, with language as a social practice (1993: 3). "Emphasis on the slippage of signifiers in many postmodern theories of subjectivity," she continues, often merely celebrates a fragmented, dispersed and textualized subject" (ibid: 5). "Resistance postmodernism," on the other hand, "insists that social totalities like patriarchy and racism *do* continue to structure our lives" (ibid: 3). In my analysis of Tibetan exile cultural production I must also attend to "totalities" of class and productive relations.

At a general level, poststructuralist interventions in our discipline are a vital part of a (relatively) newfound anthropological reflexivity; we certainly can never go

back to a stance of scientific objectivity, never again consider any concept the master key to unlocking "the truth" about a social formation. Yet, even should we recognize the limitations and internal contradictions of all narration, an engaged anthropology must continue to narrate. "If we could do away with all grand narratives," asks Kaplan, "...what kind of micro-isolation of infinite particularity might we find ourselves in? We will always need theories and accounts of social relationships" (Kaplan 1996: 19).

Ludic poststructuralism is very good for highlighting the ironies everywhere in tourism, in describing the mirroring of desire between hosts and guests. We have become very adept at deconstructing the Orientalism of scholars, colonial elites, travel literature and advertising, but still have far to go in generating empirical accounts of the everyday Orientalism of tourists and its impacts on material production and class relations, a far more significant problem than academic discourse for peoples subjected to the tourist gaze. By "treating all tourist sites with an ironic, playful, deconstructive attitude, postmodernism is unable to generate the necessary moral distinctions between tourist cultures" (Rojek 2000: 60). Deconstruction is necessary, but never sufficient. If we examine current corporate discourse and practice, particularly in the tourism industry, we might find that theorists who "advocate a politics of difference, fluidity, and hybridity in order to challenge the binaries and essentialism of modern sovereignty have been outflanked by the strategies of power. Power has evacuated the bastion they are attacking and circled around to their rear to join them in the assault in the name of difference. These theorists thus find themselves pushing against an open door" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 138).

Because the fantasies of consumers have direct impacts on the lives of producers, because producers shape the goods and services demanded by consumers, and because tourist goods and experiences are negotiated both through the exchange of desiring gazes and cold hard cash, the anthropology of tourism must grapple simultaneously with production and consumption, with both symbolic and economic exchanges. If we follow Adams's lead and analyze capitalism largely as a cultural construction—Production as Seduction—we may end up with a virtual politics that minimizes the empirical realities of extra-discursive exploitation. Tourism is surely shot through with seduction, but "if these sign worlds also entertain and give pleasure, that is simply Late Capitalism's way of making money" (Gottdiener 2000: 29). The surfaces valorized by Baudrillard are ultimately somebody's productions, and under the regime of capitalism, its economic benefits are inequitably distributed. The virtue of "the class perspective" is that it "highlights the role of inequality and exploitation in tourist experience and tourist cultures" (Rojek 2000: 57). Research relevant for public policy may not really need to *do theory* after all (e.g., Polly Pattullo's *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*, 1996).

If we are to acknowledge the hybridities, instabilities, and ironies of tourism and globalization, but highlight the stubborn economic asymmetries that continue, we can largely abandon the somewhat metaphysical discourses of authenticity and virtuality, and revive the politicized language of *alienation.* We might follow Daniel Miller's reconstruction of Hegelian and Marxist conceptions of culture as *objectification,* and pragmatically determine the political and economic conditions that empower individuals and communities to autonomously construct their worlds (Miller 1987; Tomlinson 1991).

In contrast to virtuality or authenticity, alienation refers to political and economic processes as clearly as cultural and psychological ones. Its various connotations are superbly suited to the study of tourism and ethnic identity, signifying estrangement, belonging to another place, feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness, as well as the transference of political and economic control. It is a rather uninteresting question at this point whether Tibetan exile crafts are authentic, and asserting they represent some "virtual" culture does not help much. Instead, an engaged anthropology can focus on how artisans are at once alienated from material *and* cultural capital, and how they might gain control over both. We need to recognize that "certain groups retain control over the very means of objectification, while others are forced to attempt to objectify themselves through forms which are produced in the image of other people's interests" (Miller 1987: 45). The task is to discover how tourism under the regime of global capitalism stratifies these possibilities. We must be careful not to exaggerate the power of the "purchasing observer" such that "they" are considered an effect of "us." Both "hosts" and "guests" are entangled in global political and economic processes beyond their control. As Bruner writes, the "practices and behavior of the tourist and the native are defined for them by the dominant story" (1991: 240).

An engaged anthropology, fully leavened with the contributions of poststructuralism, must generate "fine-grained descriptions of historical rupture...actual expressions of the 'valorization of surfaces,' and concrete examples of the 'simulacrum'" (MacCannell1992: 289). We must add to such ethnographies comprehensive and comprehensible linkages to global economic analysis. It is not quite sufficient to assert with Errington and Gewertz

that the anthropology of tourism "needs not a heightened sense of the ludic [playful] but of the political" (1989: 39). What is needed is a clearer description of how the ludic *is* political.

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