

Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia

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In 1689 a Japanese poet travels to the deep north. Describing a tour of the island, he is nevertheless no tourist. His journey is in part a religious pilgrimage, in part the commemoration of localities celebrated by earlier poets, and in part an allegory of a passage into death.

The religious dimension of his journey is clear. Basho speaks of being constrained to silence about certain things he has seen because of the rules he must obey as a pilgrim. Before their departure, his companion Sora changes his name, takes the tonsure, and puts on the black robes of an itinerant priest. And the shrines that Basho visits are at once poetic and religious sites, and often sites of natural beauty as well. Their auratic value, and their deep linkage to the past, is made up of one or more of three elements: a name (which may encapsulate a story, or a reference to a divinity); a legend (which endows it with a history); and poetic thematization. Places are sanctified, in a way that is neither simply religious nor simply aesthetic, by the poems that have been written about them, some of which are of such antiquity that they have taken on the anonymity of custom. Indeed, poetic theme and local tradition may have become inseparable, as at the shrine of Muro-no-yashima, where "it was the custom. . . . for poets to sing of the rising smoke, and for ordinary people not to eat *konoshiro*, a speckled fish, which has a vile smell when burnt."¹ The poems that Basho writes in response are a form of homage: to the past poet, and to the place in its local particularity. They are texts to be read, but also material objects (strips of silk) left hanging in dedication at the site. Time and distance are abolished in the continuity between this gift described in the narrative and the poem that we read on the page.

Yet, in another sense, Basho's voyage is precisely a model of contemporary tourism—not in the sense of the banal anthropological analysis of tourism as

1. Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 99; further references are given in the text.

sacred quest, a timeless repetition of the archetype of the voyage,² but in the sense that Basho sets up a relationship between the tourist sight and the form of knowledge appropriate to it which continues to hold true beyond the religious and customary framework of Basho's world.³ Consider this passage:

My heart leaped with joy when I saw the celebrated pine tree of Takekuma, its twin trunks shaped exactly as described by the ancient poets. I was immediately reminded of the Priest Noin who had grieved to find upon his second visit this same tree cut and thrown into the River Natori as bridge-piles by the newly appointed governor of the province. This tree had been planted, cut, and replanted several times in the past, but just when I came to see it myself it was in its original shape after a lapse of perhaps a thousand years, the most beautiful shape one could possibly think of for a pine tree. The Poet Kyohaku wrote as follows at the time of my departure to express his good wishes for my journey.

Don't forget to show my master
The famous pine of Takekuma,
Late cherry blossoms
Of the far north.

The following poem I wrote was, therefore, a reply.

Three months after we saw
Cherry blossoms together
I came to see the glorious
Twin trunks of the pine. (p. 111)

The writings of the ancient poets establish the formal essence of the tree, and all later seeing is governed by the possibility of conformity to this pattern. Just as the tourist guidebook stipulates an ideal core of interest in the sight, so the authority of a poetic tradition that constantly refashions the essence of the tree, its normative beauty (it is necessarily in "the most beautiful shape one could possibly think of for a pine tree" because it is nothing other than the embodied idea of the pine tree), constrains the visitor to a recognition of essence. In this case, the felicity of timing consists in the chance restoration of a conformity between the particular, more or less contingent shape of the tree and

2. Cf. Nelson H. Graburn, "Tourism: The Sacred Journey," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), pp. 17-31; Catherine Joanne Schmidt, *Tourism: Sacred Sites, Secular Seers*, Ph.D. dissertation, SUNY Stony Brook (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1985).

3. It is therefore only partly ironic that "Basho's tricentenary has brought a Japanese tourist boom, men, women and children following in his steps by *shinkansen* (bullet train)." Ihab Hassan, "Alterity? Three Japanese Examples," *Meanjin* 49 (Spring 1990), p. 416.

its ideal form. The poem by Kyohaku provides a second modeling of the form for Basho, and his own poem confirms (like the tourist's photograph) not an empirical act of seeing but the congruence of the sight with the idea of the sight.

The poetic record thus promulgates a form of knowledge that can be recognized in and has a greater force than the appearances of the world. What the traveler sees is what is already given by the pattern. Basho knows, for example, that the hills of Asaka are famous for a certain species of iris, although no one he speaks to has ever heard of it. And he will travel to see "the miraculous beauty of Kisagata" (p. 128) or "the famous wisteria vines of Tako" (p. 132): tourist essences that precede his experience of them. At times we can see directly the process by which knowledge of place precedes and informs experience. Staying at an inn on the islands of Matsushima, and driven by excitement, "I finally took out my notebook from my bag and read the poems given me by my friends at the time of my departure—a Chinese poem by Sodo, a *waka* by Hara Anteki, *haiku* by Sampu and Dakushi, all about the islands of Matsushima" (p. 117). At other times the relation between pattern and sight is reversed so that the former seems to derive from rather than to generate the latter. Weeping in front of two tombstones in a cemetery, "I felt as if I were in the presence of the Weeping Tombstone of China" (p. 109). In a fishing village, "the voices of the fishermen dividing the catch of the day made me even more lonely, for I was immediately reminded of an old poem which pitied them for their precarious lives on the sea" (p. 114).

It is just such a semiotic structure that Jonathan Culler describes when he argues that, for the tourist gaze, things are read as signs of themselves. A place, a gesture, a use of language are understood not as given bits of the real but as suffused with ideality, giving on to the *type* of the beautiful, the extraordinary, or the culturally authentic. Their reality is figural rather than literal. Hence the structural role of disappointment in the tourist experience,⁴ since access to the type can always be frustrated. For our time, at least, we must add that, despite the structural similarities, this ideality has a quite different force and function: lacking any transcendental anchorage, it is instead an effect of the density of representations covering our world and of the technological conditions of this density.

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Early in *White Noise* Jack and Murray visit the most photographed barn in America. They pass five signs advertising it before reaching the site, and when they arrive they find forty cars and a tour bus in the carpark and a number of

4. Schmidt, *Tourism*, p. 59.

people taking pictures. Murray delivers a commentary: "No one sees the barn," he says;

Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn. . . . We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura. . . . We've agreed to be part of a collective perception. This literally colors our vision. A religious experience in a way, like all tourism. . . . They are taking pictures of taking pictures. . . . What was the barn like before it was photographed? . . . What did it look like, how was it different from other barns, how was it similar to other barns? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs, seen the people snapping the pictures. We can't get outside the aura. We're part of the aura. We're here, we're now.⁵

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The form of typicality characteristic of modernity has two features: it is constructed in representations that are then lived as real; and it is so detailed that it is not opposed to the particular. The name often given to it is the simulacrum.

For Plato, the simulacrum is the copy of a copy. Violating an ethics of imitation, its untruth is defined by its distance from the original and by its exposure of the scandal that an imitation can in its turn function as a reality to be copied (and so on endlessly).

The most influential contemporary account of the simulacrum and the chain of simulations is that of Jean Baudrillard. His is a melancholy vision of the emptying out of meaning (that is, of originals, of stable referents) from a world that is henceforth made up of closed and self-referring systems of semiotic exchange. In a state of what he calls hyperreality, the real becomes indefinitely reproducible, an effect, merely, of the codes that continue to generate it. From the very beginning Baudrillard has been hostile to the scandalous opacity of systems of mediation. His is a historical vision: there was a referent; it has been lost; and this loss is, as in Plato, the equivalent of a moral fall.⁶

By contrast, the account that Deleuze gives of the simulacrum in *Différence et Répétition*, while retaining the formal structure of the Platonic model, cuts it off from its ties to a lost original and cuts it off, too, from all its Baudrillardian melancholy. The world we inhabit is one in which identity is simulated in the play of difference and repetition, but this simulation carries no sense of loss. Instead, freeing ourselves of the Platonic ontology means denying the priority

5. Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), pp. 12–13.

6. Jean Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); translated in part as *Simulations* by Paul Foss et al., Foreign Agents Series (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983).

of an original over the copy, of a model over the image. It means glorifying the reign of simulacra, and affirming that any original is itself already a copy, divided in its very origin. The simulacrum "is that system in which the different is related to the different through difference itself."⁷

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Discourse on tourism, both academic and profane, can be described in terms of a series of three more or less standard moves. The first, and least interesting, consists in the criticism of tourism as inauthentic activity.⁸ Here the tourist, understood as a *faux voyageur*,⁹ is contrasted with the heroic figure of the traveler and accused of a lack of interest in the culturally authentic—a category constructed both by analogy and by direct reference to high aesthetic culture. The vocabulary is that of the critique of "mass" culture: in Daniel Boorstin's essay "From Traveler to Tourist: The Lost Art of Travel," the key adjectives—"plastic," "contrived," "prefabricated," "cheap," "jerry-built," "ersatz," "imitation," "sanitized," "synthetic," "artificial," "antiseptic," "homogeneous," "factitious," "pseudo"—enunciate a characteristic postwar fantasy about the masses and mass production, and express, in the process, a deep anxiety about those democratic (and "American") values which he claims to espouse.¹⁰ But it is possible to read the opposition of tourist to traveler outside of this cultural imaginary. In the first place, the figure of the traveler, insofar as it has a reality, is not alien to the tourism industry but functional to it, both as precursor (the hippies who opened up much of the Third World to tourism, for example; there is a close analogy here with the phenomenon of gentrification)¹¹ and as exemplar. And in the second place, the constant recurrence of the opposition suggests that "these are not so much two historical categories as the terms of an opposition integral to tourism,"¹² in that they carry a desire and a self-contempt that drive the industry at the most fundamental level.

The second move in the narrative of tourism is a much more complicated and ambivalent one. Associated in particular with the work of Dean MacCannell, it seeks to value tourism positively by characterizing it as a quest for, rather than a turn from, that authentic experience of the world available to the pre-

7. Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Françaises, 1968), p. 355.

8. Cf. Donald L. Redfoot, "Touristic Authenticity, Touristic Angst, and Modern Reality," *Qualitative Sociology* 7 (Winter 1984), p. 292.

9. Jean-Didier Urbain, "Sémiotiques comparées du touriste et du voyageur," *Semiotica*, vol. 58, no. 3/4 (1986), p. 269.

10. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

11. Cf. John Turner and Louise Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975), p. 255.

12. Jonathan Culler, "Semiotics of Tourism," *The American Journal of Semiotics*, vol. 1, no. 1/2 (1981), p. 130.

industrial traveler. In this reversal, however, the category of the authentic loses its immediacy, its unproblematic givenness; increasingly its place is taken by those semiotic mediations that, while seeming to give on to a reality other than themselves, come to defer, perhaps endlessly the vanishing horizon of authenticity. MacCannell, drawing on Goffman's distinction between the presentable "front" and the concealed (and *therefore* more genuine) "back" regions of a culture or a place, writes of this paradox:

It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation. In tourist settings, especially in modern society, it may be necessary to discount the importance, and even the existence, of front and back regions except as ideal poles of touristic experience.¹³

The paradox is not just that the distinction between front and back disappears, as does the slightly different one between representation and reality, but that the construction of a more "real" reality is nevertheless entirely dependent upon it. The force of the practical distinction between front and back is to draw upon (and reinforce) those categories that associate truth with concealment, secrecy, and intimacy, and untruth with surfaces and visibility, in support of particular effects of truth and untruth. This has direct consequences both for the organization of everyday life and for the commercial viability of particular tourist sites. Analytically, however, the distinction is purely illusory. MacCannell thus elaborates something like Baudrillard's theory of a historical regime of simulation in which the difference between original and copy falls away, and indeed where the very existence of an "original" is a function of the copy.¹⁴ At the same time, MacCannell retains a commitment to the categories of the authentic and the real, which, as in Baudrillard's work, are postulated historically (and nostalgically) as lost domains of experience or referentiality.

13. Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79, no. 3 (1974), p. 597.

14. MacCannell argues against Walter Benjamin that "the work becomes 'authentic' only after the first copy of it is produced. The reproductions *are* the aura, and ritual, far from being a point of origin, *derives* from the relationship between the original object and its socially constructed importance" (Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* [London: Macmillan, 1976], p. 48). In fact, Benjamin makes just this point in a footnote to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": "Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity. To develop such differentiations was an important function of the trade in works of art. . . . At the time of its origin a medieval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be 'authentic.' It became 'authentic' only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken, 1965], p. 243, n. 2). There is, however, some ambiguity in this essay about the effects of reproducibility, and we can perhaps hold against Benjamin his having failed to foresee the extent to which technologies of reproduction were used in the twentieth century to construct effects of aura. Hollywood movies are the obvious example.

One of the ways in which this historicization works is through a reading of tourism as an allegory (or an "ethnography")¹⁵ of modernity—where tourism and modernity are understood as facts of experience or consciousness rather than as socioeconomic institutions.¹⁶ MacCannell's vocabulary is at once resolutely idealist and resolutely sociologicistic. Modernity is equivalent to a process of structural differentiation, and what has been lost in this process is the structural solidarity characteristic of traditional societies. Tourism reflects this differentiation, but at the same time—and paralleling "concerns for the sacred in primitive society"¹⁷—it represents a quest for an authentic domain of being. It is thus a marker of the spiritual self-reflexivity of modernity and directly parallel to the self-consciousness of intellectuals about their own alienation.¹⁸ In these terms,

postindustrial or *modern society* is the coming to consciousness of industrial society, the result of industrial society's turning in on itself, searching for its own strengths and weaknesses and elaborating itself internally. The growth of tourism is the central index of modernization so defined.¹⁹

The historical dimension of this vision of the modern consists in its diachronic opposition to an organicist category of the premodern or traditional. It is closely bound up with the construction of a cultural Other—a mythology of "the primitive, the folk, the peasant, and the working class," who "speak without self-consciousness, without criticism, and without affectation,"²⁰ but also of the feudal and postfeudal aristocracy and its high culture. The Other of modernity—which corresponds to particular tourist objects and experiences—is defined by an absence of *design*—of calculation or of interested self-awareness. It must therefore exist outside the circuit of commodity relations and exchange values (although it is only accessible through this circuit, one form of the basic contradiction of the tourist experience). Erik Cohen cites the criteria used by curators and ethnographers to determine the authenticity of African art: an object counts as authentic only if it has not been made for acquisition by members of another culture, if it has been "hand made" according to traditional criteria and from "natural" materials, and if it has not been intended for sale. This is to say that "'authenticity' is an eminently modern value, whose emergence

15. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 4.

16. "The deep structure of modernity is a totalizing idea, a modern mentality that sets modern society in opposition both to its own past and to those societies of the present that are premodern or un(der)developed." *The Tourist*, p. 8.

17. MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity," pp. 589–90.

18. Cf. Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1988), p. 376.

19. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 182.

20. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 16.

is closely related to the impact of modernity upon the unity of social existence"²¹; or, more precisely, to a definition of modernity as the converse and the historical loss of such a unity. The otherness of traditional or exotic cultures has to do with their having escaped the contamination of this fallen world: having escaped the condition of *information* (in Benjamin's sense), being unaware of their own relativity, avoiding absorption into the embrace of touristic self-consciousness. The charm of displays of preindustrial implements and artifacts in old houses and museums thus resides in their proclamation of the immediacy of use value: they are rough, differentiated, lacking the homogeneity of the commodity. This pair of black, roughly pitted scissors, this harvesting fork which still resembles the branches it was carved from, this leather harness, cut by hand from the hide—each is part of the long slow death of peasant culture of which our time is witnessing the end.

The third move in the theorization of tourism follows from the internal condition of paradox progressively revealed in the playing out of the second. On one plane this is a hermeneutic problem: how can I come to terms with that which is Other without reducing it to the terms of my own understanding? In semiotic terms, this is a problem of the constitutive role of representation for the object: "The paradox, the dilemma of authenticity, is that to be experienced as authentic it must be marked as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself and hence not authentic in the sense of unspoiled."²² This paradox then gives rise to a series of others. One has to do with the inseparability of the object from its semiotic status—that is, with the fact that any valued object is, minimally, a sign of itself, and hence—as with Basho's "famous" sites—*resembles itself*. MacCannell thus quotes a guidebook note that emphasizes the possibility of seeing objects "as if they are pictures, maps or panoramas of themselves,"²³ and John Turner and Louise Ash speak of the way every detail of a cultural monument "is so familiar from professional and amateur photography that it seems to be a genuine, life-size reproduction of the original."²⁴ From this follows the further paradox of the sheer impossibility of constructing otherness, since, as MacCannell argues, "every nicely motivated effort to preserve nature, primitives and the past, and to represent them authentically contributes to an opposite tendency—the present is made more unified against its past, more in control of nature, less a product of history."²⁵ A third moment in this series is the conclusion that in order to construct a good

21. Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," p. 373. On the notion of "authentic" African art, cf. also Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1984).

22. Culler, "Semiotics of Tourism," p. 137.

23. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 122.

24. Turner and Ash, *The Golden Hordes*, p. 137.

25. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 83.

tourist object—one which makes “a convincing display of honest honesty”²⁶—it becomes necessary to construct it as a plausible simulation of itself. Cohen’s work on “alternative” tourism, such as hill tribe trekking in Thailand, which offers access to “primitive and remote, authentic and unspoilt sites beyond the boundaries of the established touristic circuits”²⁷—with the consequence that the traditional tribal cultures of the area are transformed by the outside forces that tourism both opens up and represents—gives some sense of the spiral of simulations to which this necessity gives rise.

This sense of paradox, it must be stressed, is generated within a conceptual framework that holds on to the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic. Its basis in MacCannell’s work is the distinction between the tourist sight and the marker that provides information about the sight. This is roughly the relation between a real object and its representation, and it therefore holds open the possibility of a sight’s being either represented truly or misrepresented. The concept of the “staging” of authenticity retains its ontological foundations. But MacCannell’s work itself points to and verges on a different understanding of the relation between marker and sight that would resolve this particular set of aporias. This understanding would take to its logical conclusion the insight that the marker is constitutive of the sight (which cannot be “seen” without it), and hence, as van den Abbeele puts it, “removes or defers the sight from any undifferentiated immediacy.”²⁸ The sight would itself be a further marker within a chain of supplementarity.²⁹

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This move resolves the forms of paradox associated with the conception of the authentic, but of course opens up a different set of difficulties. It is a move, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Edward M. Bruner argue, from the issue of authenticity to that of authentication, and it leaves open the question of the criteria according to which authentication and differentiation might occur.³⁰ This is a question about the practices by which limits and discriminations are set, and about the relativized systems of value which enable them. It is a question about postmodernism, and perhaps, as both Maxine Feiffer and John

26. Ibid., p. 128.

27. Erik Cohen, “‘Primitive and Remote’: Hill Tribe Trekking in Thailand,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1989), p. 31.

28. Georges van den Abbeele, “Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist,” *Diacritics*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1980), p. 7.

29. Van den Abbeele, p. 11.

30. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Edward M. Bruner, “Tourism,” *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 251.

Urry suggest, about the possibilities of a posttourism released from the touristic anxieties of modernity.³¹

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I should have liked to live in the age of *real* travel, when the spectacle on offer had not yet been blemished, contaminated, and confounded; then I could have seen Lahore not as I saw it, but as it appeared to Bernier, Tavernier, Manucci. . . . There's no end, of course, to such conjectures. When was the right moment to see India? At what period would the study of the Brazilian savage have yielded the purest satisfaction and the savage himself been at his peak? Would it have been better to have arrived at Rio in the eighteenth century, with Bougainville, or in the sixteenth, with L ery and Thevet? With every decade that we traveled further back in time, I could have saved another costume, witnessed another festivity, and come to understand another system of belief. But I'm too familiar with the texts not to know that this backward movement would also deprive me of such information, many curious facts and objects, that would enrich my meditations. The paradox is irresoluble: the less one culture communicates with another, the less likely they are to be corrupted, one by the other; but, on the other hand, the less likely it is, in such conditions, that the respective emissaries of these cultures will be able to seize the richness and significance of their diversity. The alternative is inescapable: either I am a traveler in ancient times, and faced with a prodigious spectacle which would be almost entirely unintelligible to me and might, indeed, provoke me to mockery or disgust; or I am a traveler of our own day, hastening in search of a vanished reality. In either case I am the loser—and more heavily than one might suppose; for today, as I go groaning among the shadows, I miss, inevitably, the spectacle that is now taking shape. My eyes, or perhaps my degree of humanity, do not equip me to witness that

31. Maxine Feiffer, *Going Places: The Ways of the Tourist from Imperial Rome to the Present Day* (London: Macmillan, 1985); John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990). Cf. Dean MacCannell, "Introduction," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1989), pp. 1–2: "The tourists and others no longer meet as representatives of 'modernity' and 'tradition,' even though they may continue to *act as if* this is the basis for their interaction." Rather,

one finds "primitive" and "peasant" peoples exercising economic rationality alongside of "modern" peoples who live in a world seemingly shaped entirely by myth; Indian clowns, dancers and sales people gulling their white clients; and a "modern" thirst for authenticity met by a "primitive" capacity to produce dramatic representations of pseudo authenticity. In short, what one discerns here is a new set of living arrangements associated with the double displacement of the Third World which is simultaneously post-traditional and post-modern.

spectacle; and in the centuries to come, when another traveler revisits this same place, he too may groan aloud at the disappearance of much that I should have set down, but cannot. I am the victim of a double infirmity: what I see is an affliction to me; and what I do not see, a reproach.³²

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A process of paradox similar to that developed in theorizing tourism is played out with the concept and the practices of *tradition*—that is, with the form taken by the sacralization of the past. The concept has been extensively elaborated in Gadamer's hermeneutics, in historiography (for example, in Hobsbawm and Ranger's collection *The Invention of Tradition*), and in the disciplines that deal with customary societies, especially anthropology. The force of the argument presented by Eric Hobsbawm and others is that the ongoing reconstruction of the past is an act not only of recontextualization but of invention, and that even the most "authentic" traditions are thus effects of a stylized simulation. Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin summarize the current critique of the concept like this:

One of the major paradoxes of the ideology of tradition is that attempts at cultural preservation inevitably alter, reconstruct, or invent the traditions that they are intended to fix. Traditions are neither genuine nor spurious, for if genuine tradition refers to the pristine and immutable heritage of the past, then all genuine traditions are spurious. But if, as we have argued, tradition is always defined in the present, then all spurious traditions are genuine.³³

This theoretical critique has been accompanied, however, by a substantial "postmodern" growth in representations/appropriations of the past, which run parallel to the tourist industry's representation/appropriation of modernity's cultural Other (of which the past is of course one major form). Indeed, Patrick Wright points out that nostalgia for lost patterns of everyday life and for auratic objects that seem to be inherently meaningful "surely forms a powerful motivation even for fairly high-cultural tourism."³⁴ The heritage industry, which now includes monuments not only to ruling-class power but also to those idealized patterns of everyday life and work, has become an increasingly important

32. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques: An Anthropological Study of Primitive Societies in Brazil*, trans. John Russell (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 44–45.

33. Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 97, no. 385 (1984), p. 288.

34. Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 23.

piece of machinery for the construction of tradition. But moralistic denunciation is as inadequate here as it is in the case of tourism. Robert Hewison exemplifies the problem when he writes:

Postmodernism and the heritage industry are linked, in that they both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives and our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and reenactment than critical discourse. We are, as Jameson writes, "condemned to seek History by way of pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains for ever out of reach."³⁵

Opposing the privilege of the written text to other forms of textuality, Hewison forgets not only that "costume drama and reenactment" have always been important vehicles of historical understanding, but that "history" is always a textual construct; the question cannot at all be about the gap between representations of history and history "itself," but only about the relative effectiveness, the relative political force, of different representations.

Patrick Wright's work offers a more politically differentiated account of the heritage industry, stressing its ability both to offer a celebration of past power relations and to project a vision of unalienated rationality. On the one hand, National History involves a ritualistic staging of heroic narratives in such a way as to deny their active historicity—their usability for the present. The past is constructed as a domain of authenticity through a public process of remembrance that affirms a continuity with the dead at the same time as it continuously repositions them at the heart of a narrative of the nation.³⁶ On the other hand, however, the valuing of the past as it connects to a present sense of loss need not merely be an exercise in idealizing nostalgia:

If the past now includes the ordinary traces of old everyday life among its valued contents, there are different things to be said about the sense of *uniqueness* which hangs over the celebrated objects within its changing repertoire. This sense of uniqueness may indeed still characterize precious works of art, but in recent times it has drifted far from its old academic moorings and it can now be held in common by, say, a phrase of rhyming slang, an old piece of industrial machinery (preferably *in situ*), a hand-painted plate from the turn of the century and a cherished landscape or place. It is not merely official cultural policy which determines the meaning or the extent of the

35. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 135.

36. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, pp. 69, 137.

modern past. The uniqueness of heritage objects may indeed be pointed out in official guidebooks, but it is far more powerfully expressed in the vernacular measures of everyday life. For the perspectives of everyday life, the unique heritage object has *aura*, and in this respect the national heritage seems to have a persistent connection with earlier traditions of bourgeois culture—a connection which may even be *especially* strong as the modern past reaches out to include not masterpieces but the modest objects of bygone everyday life in its repertoire.³⁷

This, I think, draws attention both to the cultural and political ambivalence of the retrieved everyday object, and to the struggles that take place over its articulation with the present. The past is reworked through different economies of value, and acquires a correspondingly differential force. The concept of the everyday may in its own way be as much an idealizing and a unifying category as that of the national, but it is perhaps more workable, more flexible, more open to multiple appropriations than the modes of official history. At the same time, however, it remains crucial to guard a deep suspicion of the auratic object, whatever the uses to which it may seem to lend itself. Nostalgia for a lost authenticity is a paralyzing structure of historical reflection.

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The “social disease of nostalgia”³⁸ has a particular history within the institution of Western medicine. Originally defined in the seventeenth century in terms of a set of physical symptoms associated with acute homesickness, it subsequently came to be closely connected with the “specific depression of intellectuals,” melancholia.³⁹ By the nineteenth century it had been extended to describe a general condition of estrangement, a state of ontological homelessness that became one of the period’s key metaphors for the condition of modernity (and which is also one of the central conditions of tourism, where the *Heimat* functions simultaneously as the place of safety to which we return and as that lost origin which is sought in the alien world).⁴⁰

A persuasive argument has been made that the development of sociology in the decades around the turn of the century was bound up with a discourse on modernity structured by nostalgia. Bryan Turner identifies four elements of the nostalgic paradigm that feeds into sociology: a sense of historical decline,

37. Ibid., p. 253.

38. Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 23.

39. Bryan Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1987), p. 147. Cf. Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972).

40. For a critique of the gendering of the opposition between travel and *domus*, cf. Meaghan Morris, “At Henry Parkes Motel,” *Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1988), pp. 38, 43.

giving rise to various social theologies of lost grace; a sense of the absence or loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty (the fracturing of the canopy of religious and moral value by the growth of capitalist relations and of urbanization); a sense of the loss of individual freedom and autonomy (the disappearance of genuine social relationships, and the bureaucratization of everyday life); and a sense of the loss of simplicity, personal authenticity, and emotional spontaneity.⁴¹ Linking together the work of Tönnies, Simmel, Weber, Lukács, and Adorno is "the notion that we constantly create life-worlds which through alienation and reification negate the spontaneity and authenticity of the will and its conscious subject, Man."⁴² Lukács's concept of the "second nature of man-made structures"—"a complex of senses—meanings—which has become rigid and strange, and which no longer awakens interiority. . . . a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities"⁴³—catches precisely that notion of a contradiction between a will to life and the forms of human association which from the start makes sociology so ambivalent a discipline.

Within this framework, nostalgia is "the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetition."⁴⁴ Against a degraded present structured by those "forms of human association," it sets a past, an elsewhere, characterized by immediacy and presence. A "sadness without an object," nostalgia

is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. This point of desire which the nostalgic seeks is in fact the absence that is the very generating mechanism of desire . . . nostalgia is the desire for desire.⁴⁵

Authentic and inauthentic experience; community and society; organic and mechanical solidarity; status and contract; use value and exchange value—the structural oppositions through which the relation between tradition and modernity is constructed (or rather, through which modernity defines itself against its mythical Other) are potentially endless but formally homologous.

41. Turner, pp. 150–51; cf. Roland Robertson, "After Nostalgia? Wilful Nostalgia and the Phases of Globalization," in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Bryan Turner (London: Sage, 1990), p. 49.

42. Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner, "Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2/3 (1988), p. 514.

43. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 64.

44. Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 23.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

The relation between the tourist and the familiar, between immediacy and forms of human association belong to this structure, and they continue to be as powerful experiential categories.

* *

Consider the list of things that Heidegger cites in "The Origin of the Work of Art" as examples of thingness: stone, clod, jug, well, milk, water, cloud, thistle, leaf, hawk. The list is reduced to a few essential objects: "a stone, a clod of earth, a piece of wood. . . . Lifeless beings of nature and objects of use. Natural things are the things commonly so called."⁴⁶ All are drawn from a stable rural world, the mythical time before modernity. The authority for the experience of things in this world is the "authentic experience by the Greeks—an experience of 'the Being of beings in the presence'" (p. 22) that has been lost to Western philosophy in the translation of Greek thought into the Latin categorization of substance with accidents, or as the unity of a manifold of sense or as formed matter.

The choice of things—auratic or "poetic" objects—is never merely illustrative. The example of the shoes—"A piece of equipment, a pair of shoes for instance" (p. 29)—is given with the full force of shoeness: use value, fetish value, a "world" that comes out from the shoe's deep interiority. "Equipment" is *Zeug*, that which bears witness, which comes to appearance. Halfway between the brute, self-shapingness of a granite boulder and the craftedness of the art work, it is the sediment of production for use. Its converse is the object produced for exchange, the commodity; but the category of exchange value is entirely and ably excluded from Heidegger's discourse (which is to say that it cannot be thought within it). The unstated and unspeakable opposition is that between the authentic object (since "as a rule it is the use-objects around us that are the nearest and most authentic things" [p. 29]) and the inauthentic world of commodity production.

In fact, the example of the shoes happens twice, or even perhaps three times, as Heidegger moves to "simply describe some equipment without any philosophical theory":

We choose as example a common sort of equipment—a pair of peasant shoes. We do not even need to exhibit actual pieces of this sort of useful artifact in order to describe them. Everyone is acquainted with them since it is a matter here of direct description,

46. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Row, 1971), p. 21, p. 21. Further references will be incorporated in the text.

it may be well to facilitate the visual realization of them. For this purpose a pictorial representation suffices. We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times. (pp. 32–33)

The choice is first of the “real” shoes, and then of a representation, selected purely for reasons of convenience (as a *Nachhilfe*), and as though it were transparent to the “real” object. The distinction between reality and representation is of course a distinction between two signifieds (not between a representation and a referent), and involves a characteristically novelistic production of a reality-effect. The question of the *genre* of this writing is of crucial importance here, as Heidegger’s language performs a double movement resembling that of the late nineteenth-century naturalistic novel (Zola or Dreiser or Hamsun, perhaps). The first movement is a reduction of the shoes to pure thingness, pure semiotic neutrality: “The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them. She stands and walks in them. That is how shoes actually serve” (p. 33). Their authenticity is directly a function of this naked being, as it is of the absence of reflection and of self-reflection on the part of the peasant woman. Woman, peasant, shoe: these are the categories of a Being which is authentic because of, and *essentially* because of, its unself-consciousness.

The second movement is the converse of the first, a move towards semiotic fullness that is still, nevertheless, predicated on an absence of self-reflection. It begins with a tentative turn, “And yet—” (*Und dennoch*), which then modulates into the slow unfolding of a narrative plenitude: “From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes” (literally “of the trodden-out in-turning,” *des ausgetretenen Inwendigen*, a sexualized swaying between inside and outside) “the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth”—a “toil” that belongs to no particular system of social relations because its context is that of a generalized human condition. The image of the shoes broadens into a landscape with peasant woman and then contracts to the shoes again: “On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls.” The fertility of the earth, the itinerary of the path: already the scene is becoming overdetermined by categories of gender. Then again a lyrical opening out from the dark inside of the shoes to the fullness of the world:

In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death.

Finally, a movement of withdrawal again: this landscape, these emotions can be observed only "in the picture," since "the peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them"; "she knows all this without noticing or reflecting" (p. 34).

We realize now that the example is not an innocent one, that "the work did not, as it might seem at first, serve merely for a better visualizing of what a piece of equipment is. Rather, the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work and only in the work," where it discloses "the unconcealedness of its being" (p. 36). But what have we been talking about? Neither the shoes in their nonrepresentational reality, nor simply a representation of the shoes, but something which is both and neither, something which partakes both of the peasant woman's intuitive knowledge of Being and of philosophical reflection (although this is description "without any philosophical theory"). The ambiguity of this space corresponds to the sexual ambiguity of the shoes, both inside and outside, opening and inturning; to the play between the sheltering and concealing motion of earth and the self-opening of world; and to the apparently gratuitous attribution of the shoes to a woman. In one sense, indeed, there is no ambiguity at all about this thing, this *Zeug*, this gaping hole that Heidegger and Schapiro and Derrida keep looking at, trying to go behind it to the thing-in-itself, this nameless or many-named thing, this euphemism, that opens and closes, that's laced or unlaced, that's worn by a pregnant peasant woman trudging across the furrows; this fetish. Yet the figure of the peasant woman is crucial to the problematization of the space between the inside and the outside of the painting, since, as Derrida notes in his commentary, these spaces are differently gendered:

There is something like a rule to the peasant woman's appearance on the scene. Heidegger designates in this way the (female) wearer of the shoes outside the picture, if one can put it that way, when the lace of discourse passes outside the edging of the frame, into that *hors-d'oeuvre* which he claims to see presenting itself in the work itself. But each time he speaks of the exemplary product in the picture, he says, in neutral, generic fashion—that is, according to a grammar, masculine fashion: "*ein Paar Bauernschuhe*," a pair of peasants' shoes.⁴⁷

Derrida's "disappointment" with the passage invoking the peasant woman has to do both with this (gendered) ambiguity, such that "one never knows if it's busying itself around a picture, 'real' shoes, or shoes that are imaginary," and with its "consumerlike hurry toward the content of a representation," the "massive self-assurance of the identification: 'a pair of peasants' shoes,' just like that!"⁴⁸ This urge to attribution, the quest to find the proper feet for the shoes

47. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 307.

48. Derrida, pp. 292–93.

(assumed to be a pair, left and right) is what Heidegger has in common with Meyer Schapiro, who claims them not for a woman and not for a peasant but for the city-dweller, and their rightful owner, Van Gogh himself.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, while continuing to insist that the shoes are “more or less detached (in themselves, from each other and from the feet),”⁵⁰ Derrida moves, in a somewhat puzzling way, to resolve the ambiguity about the status of the shoes in the text. Everything that relates to the peasant woman and to that embarrassing intrusion of an outside into the painting, everything that relates to the ideology of peasant simplicity (in other words, the *genre of writing* that Heidegger falls into) is, it turns out, nothing more than “an accessory variable even if it does come massively under ‘projection’ and answers to Heidegger’s pathetic-fantasmatic-ideological-political investments.” In the presentation of philosophical truth this “peasant” characteristic “remains secondary,” since “the ‘same truth’ could be ‘presented’ by any shoe painting, or even by any experience of shoes and even of any ‘product’ in general: the truth being that of being-product coming back from ‘further away’ than the matter-form couple, further away even than a ‘distinction between the two.’”⁵¹ The problem of the specificity of the forms of representation through which the question is posed is discarded like an old boot, and the example regains its innocence as a mere example, as *Nachhilfe*, regains its supplementarity (“accessory variable”) in relation to the most important matters of philosophical origin.

But what is at stake here is more than the philosophical question. It has to do with precisely that “pathetic-fantasmatic-ideological-political investment.” It has to do with the figure of woman and its relation to the fetish. It has to do with the impossibility of speaking exchange value. It has to do with the political implications of that construction (in 1935) of the category of “world” as “the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people (*im Geschick eines geschichtlichen Volkes*).” It has to do with the politics of “authenticity,” the politics of nostalgia for a premodern world.

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These shoes turn up again, as it happens, in Fredric Jameson’s best-known essay on postmodernism—here in contrast to Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*. And here, paradoxically, it is the Warhol shoes that embody the fetish, in both the

49. Ibid., p. 283 and passim. Cf. Meyer Schapiro, “The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh,” in *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein*, ed. Marianne L. Simmel (New York: Springer, 1968), pp. 203–9.

50. Derrida, p. 283.

51. Ibid. pp. 311–12.

Freudian and Marxist senses. It's not at all clear, however, what their sexual content (or indeed their lure as commodities) could be: they are "a random collection of dead objects," "as shorn of their earlier life-world as the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz," and the problem Jameson encounters with them is the impossibility of making that Heideggerian move to a "larger lived context." Van Gogh's shoes, on the other hand, retain their Heideggerian force as an index of authenticity, although only on condition that they are restored both to their historical context of the world of peasant poverty, and to their context in the history of the sensory materiality of oil painting. Indeed, so authentic and so innocent are they that Jameson even cites Derrida as remarking—"somewhere"—that "the Van Gogh footwear are a heterosexual pair, which allows neither for perversion nor for fetishization."⁵²

Whereas Heidegger had excluded any mention of exchange value, Warhol is all too fascinated by the commodity status of things. The problem posed by his work is that the images of Coca-Cola bottles or Campbell's Soup cans, "which explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital, ought to be powerful and critical political statements," but refuse the certainty of such critique. Moreover, lacking the hermeneutic resonance of Van Gogh's "heterosexual" and "unperverted" shoes, they signal the emergence of "a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense." In this they at once resemble and draw upon photography, which "confers its deathly quality on the Warhol image, whose glacéd x-ray elegance mortifies the reified eye of the viewer."⁵³

The shift here from locating reification in the image to locating it in the viewing subject parallels that "more fundamental mutation both in the object world itself—now become a set of texts or simulacra—and in the disposition of the subject,"⁵⁴ which constitutes the determinant condition of Warhol's work. This (and Jameson acknowledges as much) is a *periodizing* shift in which the opposition of postmodernity to modernity precisely corresponds to the construction of modernity through its nostalgic opposition to traditional society. In another essay Jameson exemplifies the transition to the commodified world of late capitalism through a familiar metaphor. With commodification, he writes,

the various forms of activity lose their immanent intrinsic satisfactions as activity and become means to an end. The objects of the commodity

52. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July/August, 1984), p. 60. I have been unable to identify this particular "remark" in Derrida's essay on Van Gogh and Heidegger, "Restitutions of the truth in Pointing [*pointure*]" (*Truth in Painting*, pp. 255–382), but the essay does of course canvas every conceivable mode of sexualization of the shoe and the shoes, "normal" and "perverse," "homo-" and "heterosexual." Derrida fundamentally questions the assumption that the shoes constitute a pair, and links the compulsion to pair them to a certain repression of "perversity" (e.g., p. 333).

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

world of capitalism also shed their independent "being" and intrinsic qualities and come to be so many instruments of commodity satisfaction: the familiar example is that of tourism—the American tourist no longer lets the landscape "be in its being" as Heidegger would have said, but takes a snapshot of it, thereby graphically transforming space into its own material image.⁵⁵

Here in a nutshell is the full nostalgic narrative of a decline from use value to commodity, from immanence to instrumentality, from the observing traveler to the possessive tourist, and from the world as being to the world as simulacrum. "One follows step by step the moves of a 'great thinker,' as he returns to the origin of the work of art and of truth, traversing the whole history of the West and then suddenly, at a bend in a corridor, here we are on a guided tour, as schoolchildren or tourists."⁵⁶

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If the tourist, armed with camera, can be taken to exemplify the shifting historical relationship between the subject and the world of objects, then the specific form of this relationship—the activity of sightseeing—must also be understood historically. And, in the first place, it must be understood that this nexus between travel and vision has not always existed. Judith Adler's "Origins of Sightseeing" gives a meticulously detailed account, which I follow here, of the birth of this "historically new, overweening emphasis upon the isolated exercise and systematic cultivation of the sense of sight." The practices of contemporary sightseeing, she writes,

must ultimately be understood in relation to the historical development (and eventual popularization) of post-Baconian and Lockean orientations toward the problem of attaining, and authoritatively representing, knowledge. They must be seen in relation to forms of subjectivity anchored in willfully independent vision, and in the cognitive subjugation of a world of "things." Above all, they need to be understood in relation to that European cultural transformation which Lucien Febvre first termed "the visualization of perception."⁵⁷

In the Renaissance, Adler argues, the aristocratic traveler "went abroad for *discourse* rather than for picturesque views or scenes." The art of travel

55. Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (1979), p. 131.

56. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 293.

57. Judith Adler, "Origins of Sightseeing," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1989), p. 8. Further references will be incorporated in the text.

prescribed for him (more rarely her) "was in large measure one of discoursing with the living and the dead—learning foreign tongues, obtaining access to foreign courts, and conversing gracefully with eminent men, assimilating classical texts appropriate to particular sites, and, not least, speaking eloquently upon his return" (p. 8). The late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries see a shift, however, away from a discursivity identified with scholasticism and traditional authority toward "an 'eye' believed to yield direct, unmediated, and personally verified experience" (p. 11). The change is clearly identifiable in Bacon's essay "Of Travel," with its prescription both of the cultivation of and conversation with good acquaintance, and of the detailed recording of sights witnessed in the course of travel—for didactic, it should be noted, not for aesthetic ends.

What emerges at this time is, then, an investigative art of travel, governed by an ideal of objectively accurate vision. It is closely linked with the development of experimental and observational methodologies in the natural sciences,⁵⁸ and indeed one of the major motives for traveling is, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the exchange of scientific information and the establishment of intellectual networks, which are then held in place by the system of scientific correspondents. At the same time the practice of keeping a travel diary grows to become a normal way of focusing observation, as does the writing up of travel notes in the form of fictive dated letters, reinforcing the valued sense of immediacy of witness. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the information-gathering focus of travel has come to include statistical inquiry and economic analysis, to such an extent, argues Adler, that "in this new concern with what later came to be called 'social indicators,' as well as in the further rationalization of impersonally conducted and more easily compiled observation, the history of amateur travel merges with the history of early social science" (p. 21).

By the nineteenth century, however, the amateur collection of information has largely been displaced by professional agents, and "a travel performance which had once been taken as a sign of seriousness and discipline was soon disdained as empty ritual, its epigone practitioners dismissed as hacks who simply ticked off a checklist of sights already exhaustively described by others" (p. 22). Its place was taken by a new discipline of connoisseurship for the eye, centering on the cultivation and display of "taste." In its aesthetic transformation, "sightseeing became simultaneously a more effusively passionate activity and a more private one" (although it had some famous and highly public models in the poets of the Romantic movements in England, France, and Germany). Originating in the discriminating perusal of privately owned works of art and

58. Cf. Barbara Stafford, *Voyage Into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760–1840* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), especially chapter 1.

cabinets of curiosities, its conception of the aesthetic later broadens to take in landscape and cityscape: not just pictures but the picturesque, now integrated into a more general economy of looking.⁵⁹ It is this economy, the "belief in the restorative effects of happily constituted scenes, and an increasingly romantic orientation to aesthetic sightseeing" (p. 23), that forms the basis of modern tourism and of what John Urry describes as a generalized tourist gaze.⁶⁰

Photography, the descendant both of the sketch pad and of the apparatus of scientific observation, unites in a dramatic way the disparate forms of knowledge—detached witnessing and aesthetic appreciation—that had made up this history. Its centrality to the industrialized tourism of the twentieth century (a "mass" activity that may include the most "private" and "individual" of pursuits) is a function in the first place of its ability to make readily available those aesthetic and observational competencies that had previously been the preserve of a cultural elite; but it is a function also of its power of capturing any piece of empirically witnessed reality and transforming it into a sign of itself—of "transforming space into its own material image" (Jameson). Photography as witness, as commemoration, as aesthetic framing partakes of just that mix of the sacred and the poetic that characterizes the testimonial poems of Basho, and like them it performs the crucial task of establishing the concordance of an empirical and personally experienced reality with an ideal pattern. The most Platonic of art forms, it describes what Urry calls "a kind of hermeneutic circle"⁶¹ between a set of culturally authoritative representations (brochures, advertisements, guidebooks, coffee-table books, all the idealized typifications of the Other), then the experiential capture of those images for oneself, and finally the display of a further set of representations which confirm the original set and its relation to the real. It is a process of authentication, the establishment of a verified relay between origin and trace.

Two related systems of representation—the postcard and the souvenir—complement photography's function of authentication. Susan Stewart has written interestingly about each. The postcard she describes as an instrument for converting a "public" event into a "private" appropriation of the tourist object, in a process by which the tourist first "recovers the object, inscribing the handwriting of the personal beneath the more uniform caption of the social," and then, "in a gesture which recapitulates the social's articulation of the self—that is, the gesture of the *gift* by which the subject is positioned as place of production and reception of obligation,"⁶² surrenders it to a third party who acts, quite involuntarily, as a witness to the simultaneous validation of the site and of the

59. Cf. Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

60. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 82.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

62. Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 138. Further references will be incorporated in the text.

self. The souvenir similarly transfers distance into proximity; it “represents distance appropriated,” and is thus

symptomatic of the more general cultural imperialism that is tourism’s stock in trade. To have a souvenir of the exotic is to possess both a specimen and a trophy; on the one hand, the object must be marked as exterior and foreign, on the other it must be marked as arising directly out of an immediate experience of its possessor. It is thus placed within an intimate distance; space is transformed into interiority, into “personal” space, just as time is transformed into interiority in the case of the antique object. (p. 147)

Arising not from need or use value but out of “the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia” (p. 135), the souvenir has as its vocation the continual reestablishment of a bridge between origin and trace. Like the medieval relic, which operates “by principles of sympathetic and contagious magic,”⁶³ it works by establishing a metonymic relation with the moment of origin (and its difference from photography and the postcard lies in its metonymic rather than representational figuration of the world of past experience). Like the fetish, the souvenir is a part object, and, since it is an allusion rather than a model, “it will not function without the supplementary narrative discourse that both attaches it to its origins and creates a myth with regard to those origins.” This narrative of origins is “a narrative of interiority and authenticity” (p. 136), a story not of the object but of the subject who possesses it and who thus, through the souvenir, possesses the lost and recovered moment of the past.

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“God, I hate tourists,” said Gerald. “They’ve made a mess of everything. Nothing is real anymore. They obscure anything that was there. They stand around, droves of them, clicking with their blasted cameras. Most of them don’t know what they’re gawking at. . . . I usually go to places where there are no tourists—places that haven’t been spoilt. But it’s getting to the stage now where even the size of a city or a country is no longer a defence. You know how mobs pour in and stand around taking up room, and asking the most ludicrous basic questions. They’ve ruined a place like Venice. It’s their prerogative, but the authenticity of a culture soon becomes hard to locate. The local people themselves become altered. And of course the prices go up.”⁶⁴

63. Victor and Ethel Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 197.

64. Murray Bail, *Homesickness* (Melbourne and London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 81–82.

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The structure of the tourist experience involves a paradoxical relation at once to the cultural or ontological Other and to others of the same (tourist) culture.⁶⁵ It is tourism itself that destroys (in the very process by which it constructs) the authenticity of the tourist object; and every tourist thus at some level denies belonging to the class of tourists. Hence a certain fantasized dissociation from the others, from the rituals of tourism, is built into almost every discourse and almost every practice of tourism. This is the phenomenon of touristic shame, a "rhetoric of moral superiority,"⁶⁶ which accompanies both the most snobbish and the most politically radical critiques of tourism.⁶⁷ Hans Magnus Enzensberger was perhaps the first to define this dissociation as a structural moment of tourism, and to indicate its inherent bad faith:

The critique of tourism. . . . belongs in truth to tourism itself. Its secret ideology, the value it sets on the "demonic," the "elementary," "adventure," the "undisturbed," all this is part of its self-advertisement. The disillusionment with which the critic reacts to it corresponds to the illusions that he shares with tourism.⁶⁸

Urry has sought to define the basis for this dissociation through the concept of the "positional economy"—that is,

all aspects of goods, services, work, positions, and other social relationships which are either scarce or subject to congestion or crowding. Competition is therefore zero-sum: as any one person consumes more of the good in question, so someone else is forced to consume less.⁶⁹

The congestion and environmental destruction that accompany intensive tourist development, for example, can be explained in terms of the positional competition between consumers of a scarce tourist product (although this explanation,

65. There is of course no unitary "tourist experience," and a number of taxonomizations seek to differentiate between very diverse forms of experience. See, for example, Valene Smith, "Introduction," *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*; Erik Cohen, "The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Findings," *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984), pp. 373–92; Donald L. Redfoot, "Touristic Authenticity, Touristic Angst and Modern Reality," pp. 291–309. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this essay I assume a common semiotic structure to many tourist practices. My argument is restricted to the first four of Smith's categories (ethnic, cultural, historical, and environmental tourism), and doesn't necessarily concern her fifth category, recreational tourism.

66. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 9.

67. The former is embodied in the widespread distinction between the tourist and the traveler, the latter in—for example—the Marxist moralism of Turner and Ash's *The Golden Hordes*.

68. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Eine Theorie des Tourismus," *Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1962), p. 185.

69. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 43; further references will be incorporated in the text.

like all such rationalist economic explanations, fails to take into account the capitalist organization of this "competition"). The notion of "scarcity" is itself not an absolute, however, since different modes of consumption of limited tourist resources have different consequences. Urry distinguishes between two primary modes of tourist consumption (two modes of the tourist "gaze"): one is the "romantic" gaze, which is "concerned with the elitist—and solitary—appreciation of magnificent scenery, an appreciation which requires considerable cultural capital" (p. 86), and which is therefore predominantly a middle-class mode of appropriation; the other is the "collective" gaze, which, based on popular modes of pleasure, is anti-auratic, anti-elitist, and participatory. From this distinction Urry concludes that the "arguments about scarcity and positional competition mainly apply to those types of tourism characterized by the romantic gaze. Where the collective gaze is to be found, there is less of a problem of crowding and congestion" (p. 46). But for whom is there less of a problem? Urry's argument assumes that the two modes are alternative to and separate from each other. This is not the case: collective or convivial tourism impinges on, and may crowd out, romantic tourism, whereas the converse does not hold true. This is not to say that the romantic gaze does not itself often end up imposing a forced competition, or that it does not at times deliberately seek to control access to its preferred objects; it is to say that the category of the popular here establishes a false universality.

Tourism, says John Carroll in an essay that is entirely complicit with the snobbery it denounces, "has brought to the many an experience that they imagined to be the privilege of the few."⁷⁰ Touristic shame is thus based not merely on the actuality of positional competition but on a *Verwerfung*, a denial and repression of the mass availability of privilege. It involves a fantasy of achieved upward mobility, and it has its favored models of the aristocratic good life. Two letters of Wordsworth from 1844, written on the occasion of a projected extension of the railway line to Kendal and Windermere, give a sense of the contradictions to which positional competition gives rise, and of their basis in a fantasy of class understood through the model of cultural capital.

The attraction of the Lake District, Wordsworth writes, lies in "its beauty and its character of seclusion and retirement," whereas the projectors of the railway have announced that their intention is "to place the beauties of the Lake District within easier reach of those who cannot afford to pay for ordinary conveyances."⁷¹ But Wordsworth's argument is not directly that seclusion and accessibility are incompatible, but rather that there is no point in opening up

70. John Carroll, "The Tourist," *Sceptical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 140.

71. William Wordsworth, "Kendal and Windermere Railway" (letters to the *Morning Post*, December 11 and 20, 1844), in *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 78; further references will be incorporated in the text.

the area to those who will not adequately appreciate it. This argument about taste is partly historical: "the relish for choice and picturesque natural *scenery* . . . is quite of recent origin" (p. 79), and especially when the landscape is relatively wild. Wordsworth cites numerous examples of English travelers who felt only horror at the Swiss Alps, and points out that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel writings, "where precipitous rocks and mountains are mentioned at all, they are spoken of as objects of dislike and fear, and not of admiration." The point is "that a vivid perception of romantic scenery is neither inherent in mankind, nor a necessary consequence of even a comprehensive education" (p. 80). (The word "romantic" here is opposed to the "ordinary varieties of rural nature.")

The question, then, is one about the appropriate means for furthering the growth in appreciation of "romantic scenery." But

surely that good is not to be obtained by transferring at once uneducated persons in large bodies to particular spots, where the combinations of natural objects are such as would afford the greatest pleasure to those who have been in the habit of observing and studying the peculiar character of such scenes, and how they differ one from another. Instead of tempting artisans and laborers, and the humbler classes of shopkeepers, to ramble to a distance, let us rather look with lively sympathy upon persons in that condition, when, upon a holiday, or on the Sunday, after having attended divine worship, they make little excursions with their wives and children among neighboring fields, whither the whole of each family might stroll, or be conveyed at much less cost than would be required to take a single individual of the number to the shores of Windermere by the cheapest conveyance. It is in some such way as this only, that persons who must labor daily with their hands for bread in large towns, or are subject to confinement through the week, can be trained to a profitable intercourse with nature where she is the most distinguished by the majesty and sublimity of her forms. (pp. 81–82)

The concept of cultural capital ("taste"), which is meant to place the discussion on the level of aesthetic competencies rather than on the level of social class, transparently fails to do so, since the aesthetic is immediately a code word for class. Nature "herself" is divided into two classes, with the lower level of "ordinary" rural beauty—the "neighboring fields"—assigned to the working class. The discussion of aesthetic education is insufficient as an argument, since there is no sense of how a progression from one class of beauty to the other could take place, and in any case the economic barriers are to be retained. It seems to be a question rather of keeping these artisans and laborers and shopkeepers in their natural station—which the mobility of tourism threatens—and of pro-

tecting them (and their "wives and children") even from their own desires: keeping them from "temptation."

There can be little doubt that Wordsworth's concern is indeed not for these aesthetically deprived workers but for those who enjoy a privileged and protected access to a scarce resource. Subsequent passages contrast the quiet enjoyment of natural beauty to the noisy vulgarity of those popular recreations that would inevitably accompany mass tourism (pp. 83–84). Popular pleasures and the romantic gaze are in conflict, and it is at once a class conflict and one necessarily internal to modern tourism itself. The "unavoidable consequence" of opening up the railways "must be a great disturbance of the retirement, and in many places a destruction of the beauty of the country, which the parties are come in search of" (p. 84).

The irony is, however, that it is Wordsworth himself who has issued the invitation, who has already educated the vulgar crowd to the beauties of the Lake District, and whose poems have acted as a sort of tourist brochure. This becomes a little clearer in the second letter, where he writes of various manufacturers in Lancashire and Yorkshire who plan to send their workers for holidays to the banks of Windermere. The conception of nature as spiritually restorative that underlies such an initiative is in no small measure derived from Wordsworth's own writings. Touristic shame and the opposition of an authentic to an inauthentic gaze work to repress an understanding of the investments (both financial and moral) that the circulation of cultural capital makes possible.

*

The infrastructure of the tourist industry is made up of

travel agents, tour operators and guides, hotels and resorts, transportation networks and information and communication systems, mass media marketing, tourist regions and attractions, travel gear and souvenirs, travel literature and films, educational institutions that train industry personnel and foster scholarly research on tourism, regulatory and policy-making bodies, government agencies, professional associations, and international travel organizations and clubs.⁷²

The function of the industry is to sell a commodity to a group of consumers. Accounts of its size and turnover vary considerably, but Cohen cites a rise in the number of international tourists from 25.3 million in 1950 to 291 million in 1980,⁷³ and Dominique Callimanopulos uses a similar figure of 285 million

72. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Bruner, "Tourism," p. 249.

73. Erik Cohen, "The Sociology of Tourism," p. 377.

tourists in 1980, 85 percent of them originating in North America and Europe, to project total export earnings of about 79 billion U.S. dollars annually.⁷⁴

In some of its aspects the commodity sold by the industry is a relatively material set of services (travel and accommodation, for example). But the more determinant aspects of this commodity (the "hooks" that keep consumers buying) are immaterial. The product sold by the tourism industry, in its most general form, is a commodified relation to the Other. This is not precisely a relation between host and guest, because, as Cohen points out, tourism involves pressures which

transform the guest-host relationship that is based on customary, but neither precise nor obligatory, reciprocity into a commercial one that is based on remuneration. This transformation involves incorporating hospitality—an area that many societies view as founded on values that are the very opposite of economic ones—into the economic domain.⁷⁵

One part of the relation to the Other involves, then, the commodification of hospitality. In its other major dimension, the relation involves the Other not just as a provider of services but as an object of attention. Its salable otherness is either that of the natural or built world, or that of an alien culture.

The commodification of reciprocal bonds, of the environment, and of culture are moments of that logic of contemporary capital which extends private appropriation and ownership from material to immaterial resources, and whose paradigm case is the commodification of information. What makes the process so difficult for those affected to control is the fact that these resources have previously been more or less freely available, or at least have been restricted in noneconomic ways. The effect, as Davydd Greenwood argues with respect to the commodification of culture, is that this appropriation can take place without any requirement of formal consent. Anything at all can be transformed into a commodity. This is clear when cultural services are paid for, but

it is not as clear when activities of the host culture are treated as part of the "come-on" without their consent and are invaded by tourists who do not reimburse them for their "service." In this case, their activities are taken advantage of for profit, but they do not profit, culturally. The onlookers often alter the meaning of the activities being carried on by local people. Under these circumstances, local

74. Dominique Callimanopulos, "Introduction," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 6 (Summer 1982), p. 3. For a useful set of statistics on tourist visits to the Third World, cf. *New Internationalist* 142 (December 1984), pp. 10–11.

75. Cohen, "The Sociology of Tourism," p. 380.

culture is in effect being expropriated, and local people are being exploited.⁷⁶

The logic of tourism is that of a relentless extension of commodity relations and the consequent inequalities of power between center and periphery, First and Third Worlds, developed and underdeveloped regions, metropolis and countryside. Promising an explosion of modernity, it brings about structural underdevelopment, both because of its control by international capital and "because it is precisely the *lack* of development which makes an area attractive as a tourist goal."⁷⁷ This is the paradox of the impossible appropriation of the Other repeated with an economic vengeance; and it is a paradox that rebounds, since any place at all can become the cultural Other of tourism.

76. Davydd J. Greenwood, "Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, pp. 130–31.

77. Susan Buck-Morss, "Semiotic Boundaries and the Politics of Meaning: Modernity on Tour—A Village in Transition," *New Ways of Knowing: The Sciences, Society, and Reconstructive Knowledge*, ed. Marcus G. Raskin and Herbert J. Bernstein (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987), p. 230.



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