

Mark Neumann

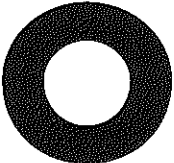
## Wandering Through the Museum: Experience and Identity in a Spectator Culture

"When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery.

Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just "others," that we ourselves are an "other" among others. All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilizations as if through vestiges and ruins.

The whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum: where shall we go this weekend—visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in the Tivoli of Copenhagen?

We can very easily imagine a time close at hand when any fairly well-to-do

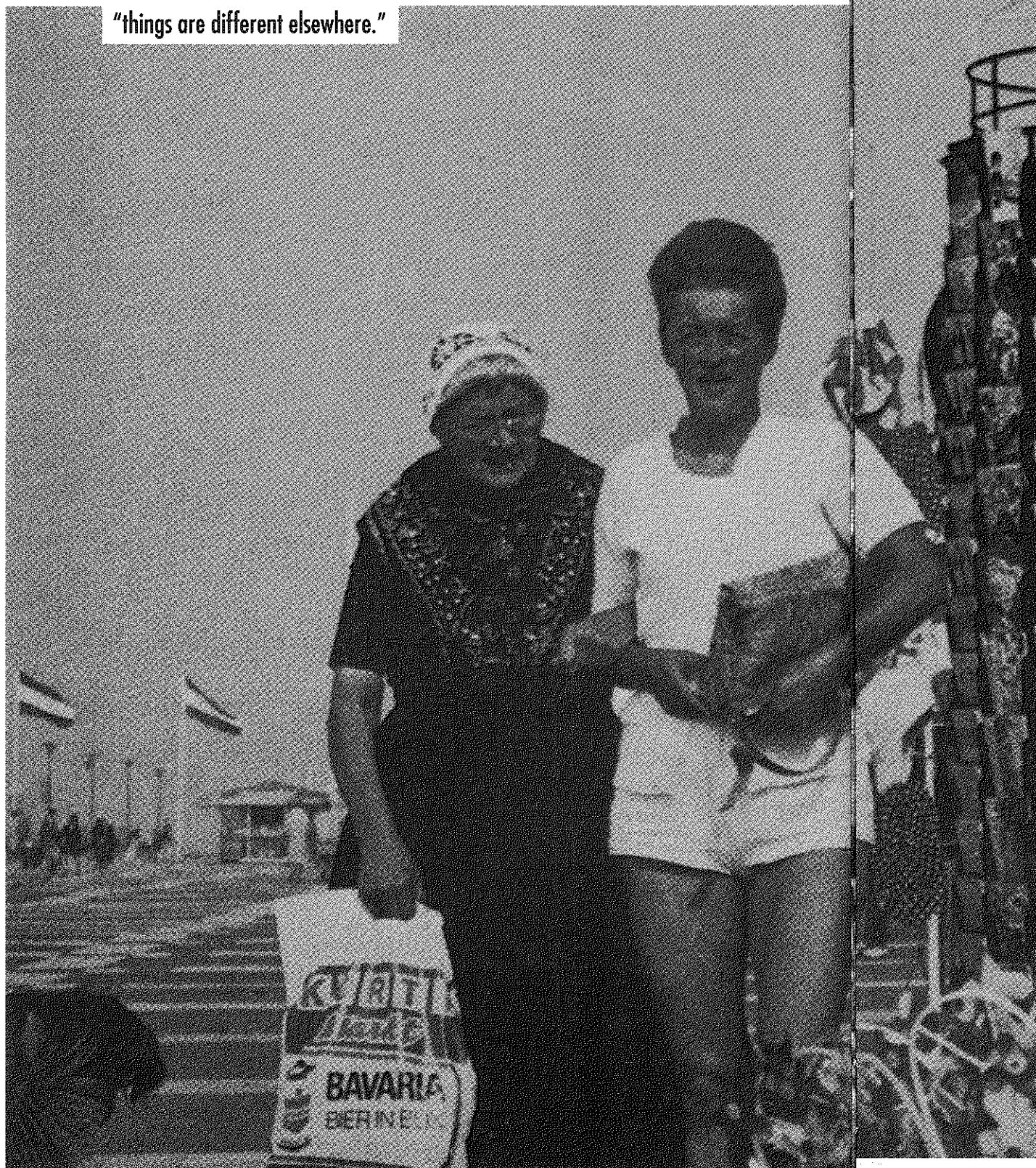
 In a recent trip to San Francisco, I took a short ferry ride with a hundred or so other visitors and toured what remains of Alcatraz prison in San Francisco Bay. The

person will be able to leave his country indefinitely in order to taste his own national death in an interminable aimless voyage."

Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*

Tourism and modernization go hand in hand. Historically, the tourist appears against a backdrop of broad cultural transformations that began in the mid-19th century. The developments of leisure time, and mass communication all converged in the rise of popular travel. Since that an industry of enormous proportion has developed around the common notion that

"things are different elsewhere."



prison on Alcatraz Island was active as a federal penitentiary from 1934 to 1963. It held the most disruptive, disobedient, incorrigible men from other prisons, concentrating them in one location. Presently, Alcatraz Island is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area managed by the US National Park Service, and a popular tourist site.

Arriving at the island, we were greeted by a park ranger who answered questions about the island and prison and invited us to a 15-minute slide presentation that explained the island's history. Following the slide show, we hiked up the hill to see the prison cells. Many of us had paid a few extra dollars to take an "audio tour"

of the cellhouse. The "audio tour," a tape that explains and describes different aspects of the cellhouse, is unusual: it is narrated by former inmates and guards of Alcatraz prison. As we walked through the cellblocks, their voices described how it felt to live or work there. Many of us walked in silence through the rows of cells, now empty, listening to the voices of men who once lived in them. Their voices transformed the concrete and steel space into the site of numerous stories. One voice recalled in detail the day he was visited by a long-forgotten sister. Another described how he managed his time and sanity in the darkness of solitary confine-

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ment. Another voice recalled a night when the sounds of a New Year's Eve party traveled across the bay from San Francisco, and crept into his cell. And still another voice invited me to stand in an empty cell. I looked at the small bunk and concrete walls while he described how it felt to live there, how after a time he felt as though the cell had become an extension of his body. I looked out through the cell bars at the other tourists. There I was with all of these strangers wearing headsets and carrying tape machines, moving silently through the still ruins of the prison while voices without bodies spoke to us of a past life.

Wandering through the museum, Ricoeur says. Alcatraz. San Francisco. The Grand Canyon. The Redwoods. New York. Boston. Or, as one city's promotional campaign suggested during the fuel crisis of the 70s, "Be a Tourist in your Hometown." The exhibits of the Museum are many and diverse. The map provided by my hotel in San Francisco divided the city into a series of exhibits—the Mission district, Fisherman's Wharf, the Embarcadero, North Beach, Chinatown, the Haight, the Tenderloin—each promising an encounter with the "other" and the peculiarities of others' lives. The map suggested that there is no real

"centre" of San Francisco. Instead, it is a mosaic juxtaposition of different worlds that people continually enter and leave. Like many cities, San Francisco exemplifies the modern, urban social domain where, as we have been saying since W.B. Yeats, "the centre cannot hold." And it is in the segmented and differentiated landscape of modernity that we so often find the tourist.

Tourism and modernization go hand in hand. Historically, the tourist appears against a backdrop of broad cultural transformations that began in the mid-19th century. The developments of leisure time, locomotive travel and mass communication all converged in the rise of popular travel. Since that time an industry of enormous proportion has developed around the common notion that "things are different elsewhere." Daniel Boorstin is one of a few writers who has attempted to sort out the social significance of tourism. Boorstin differentiates between aristocratic travel of the 19th century and the democratization of travel in the 20th century, arguing that the active, venturesome "traveler" of the 19th century was replaced by a more passive, pleasure-seeking "tourist." The modern age of tourism, says Boorstin, is filled with "diluted, contrived, prefabricated" experiences that transformed travel from an elite form of adventure to a popular act of consumption. In contrast to Boorstin, Dean MacCannell's study of tourists argues that tourism is an active response to the difficulties of living in the modern world. Where Boorstin suggests that tourists seek superficial and contrived experiences, MacCannell says that tourists instead demand authenticity. As primitive societies made pilgrimages in search of the "sacred," MacCannell views modern tourists as making quests in search of "authentic" experience.

Boorstin and MacCannell anchor the debate about the cultural meaning of tourism at opposing poles. The tourist experience is either shallow, an outgrowth of the superficiality of modern life, or serious, an attempt to escape the alienation of modern life and discover the "real." While neither of these views seems to comprehensively address the variations that are possible in tourist experience, the debate about the significance of tourism inflects much broader concerns about the relationship between society and the self. Ricoeur marks these broader concerns when he argues that the "whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum." A number of postmodern theorists might agree with Ricoeur's vision of an "aimless" self. Theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, for example, see the self as marooned in a "simulacrum," moving through mediations

of experience that have no veridical basis. Fredric Jameson describes the postmodern age as an exhausted machine that increasingly recycles its own cultural productions and artifacts. As he mourns the "death of the subject," Jameson suggests a pathological model—schizophrenia—as a metaphor to describe the fragmented consciousness of the postmodern individual. And Jean-Francois Lyotard tells us that the grand cultural narratives that unified societies, that allowed people to agree on the very dimensions of knowledge and culture, have fallen apart. The authority of cultural stories that ensured our understanding and ordering of the world no longer hold the same legitimacy. The postmodern age, says Lyotard, is one of "incredulity toward metanarratives" that legitimated scientific thought. For contemporary postmodern theorists, we live in a cultural moment where meaning is both relative and questionable.

Our options for experience do exist in a landscape of differentiation and fragmentation. But is our social experience as incoherent as Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard suggest? I think not. People do come to have a sense of coherent experience amidst the variations and differences that they find in their experience in modern culture. Yet ours is an age where we must struggle in order to find a sense of coherency in our experience, to find a sense of self in relation to the social world. As we work to make sense of ourselves and our world, we do so in places where we confront visions of self and world that others have made. We confront models of experience that tell us how we live, how we feel, what we think, and what we want. But these models do not always fit our experience, so we sometimes work against them, trying to find some sense of self and world that we may call our own.

Tourist sites are an appropriate place for locating the broad debate over self and society often proposed by postmodern theory. In an age when moral, social and scientific consensus is shattered by the divergent values and practices of various interest groups, tourist sites stand out as cultural landmarks that point to moments and places where knowledge, history, and aesthetics seem to be in fundamental harmony. Jonathan Culler points out that tourism itself is a major force of stability in the modern world in that it provides "a sense of what one must see, what you 'ought not to miss'... one may be uncertain as to what people ought to think about capital punishment but one knows what they ought to see in Paris." Tourist sites call attention to themselves as places where knowledge and values converge with people's curiosity. They are sites where

we find people engaged in a struggle to have a self in a society of spectacle. Tourism is a metaphor for our struggle to make sense of our self and world within a highly differentiated culture. While tourism does not provide a new centre, it does direct us to sites where people are at work making meaning, situating themselves in relation to public spectacle, and making a biography that provides some coherency between self and world.

People work to make meaning through tourism and travel on sites that have been designated by others as places of significance and worth. On Alcatraz Island I listened to the voices of former prisoners as they described the conditions of their incarceration. As I listened to their stories, I found myself both a witness and judge of those conditions. Their voices provided a way of responding and situating myself in relation to that place, a place their stories discursively inscribed with significance. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) suggests that by locating ourselves in relation to particular "voices," we find a sense of self in relation to experience. He offers a dialogic perspective to describe how various voices or discourses constitute self and culture. Bakhtin argues that we locate ourselves in a cultural moment by affiliating with, aligning with, or opposing existing forms of discourse. "Life is dialogical by its very nature," he says. "To live means to engage in dialogue, to question, to listen, to answer, to agree, etc." For Bakhtin, the self is constituted through responses to various voices in the sphere of a cultural dialogue. By responding to various forms of discourse, we take a position in relation to a voice that is different from our own, we make meaning for ourselves in relation to "otherness."

Tourist sites are places where many voices are at work. These voices typically suggest not only what to see, but also a way of seeing. Symbolic packages such as tour books, visitor centres, trail markers, signs, maps, brochures, and multi-media presentations suggest particular ways of experiencing a place. Rather than gaze upon places and objects in any pure or natural form, we more often confront a series of cultural discourses that veil things and places in terms of value and significance. We see "a canyon-as-a-geological-wonder," "a field-as-a-historical battleground," or "a painting-as-a-work of genius." Such places speak the voices of science, history, aesthetics, social class, and quite often, nationalism. Tourist sites are public places that privilege particular ways of understanding the world. In examining the cultural structure of tourist experiences we see some of the underlying cultural

voices that tourists confront as they attempt to find coherence in their social experiences, and a sense of meaning amidst discontinuities of contemporary life.

## The World as a Museum

The artifacts and exhibits of a museum are inscribed in discourses that are underscored by scientific measurement and verification, the authority of expert interpretation, history and authenticity. I recall my own excursion to the Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the Grand canyon. Hiking the heavily traveled Bright Angel Trail, I descended thousands of feet to the canyon floor. As I hiked down the trail, I confronted plaques and markers placed by the National Park Service that displayed varied forms of geological and anthropological information. The signs proposed a certain knowledge about the portion of the canyon where I was hiking and served to orient my experience of it. As I stood near the canyon walls and read the trail plaques, I positioned myself somewhere on a totalized "grid" of geological knowledge. I stood before the walls of the canyon and thought: "so this is what this land looked like so many million years ago." I found myself experiencing the canyon with an interpretive perspective that framed the immediate experience and placed me in the realm of a past geological moment, in the realm of scientific information as translated by the Park Service.

The prevalence of scientific information takes priority in many of the "natural" experiences provided by national and state parks such as Yosemite, Yellowstone, Great Basin, Glacier, Canyonlands, and Mesa Verde. In Henry Cowell Redwood State Park, north of Santa Cruz, California, I walked behind a family that was there to see the enormous Redwood groves. The children walked with their father who wore a large Bowie knife strapped to his belt. He carried a round, galvanized canteen over his shoulder and a 35mm Pentax camera around his neck. In one hand he carried a large portable cassette tape player that played rock and roll music and in the other a guide book that gave information about the trees that have stood there for centuries. The park service has built a trail that winds through the trees and attempts to limit a visitor's access to them. Like the Bright Angel Trail in the Grand Canyon, the trees in this park are framed and contained in a particular manner. A number is posted on a small sign in front of various trees. Each number corresponds to a number in a guidebook that provides the visitor with information such as an estimation of the age of a particular tree, its biological name, and at times, its

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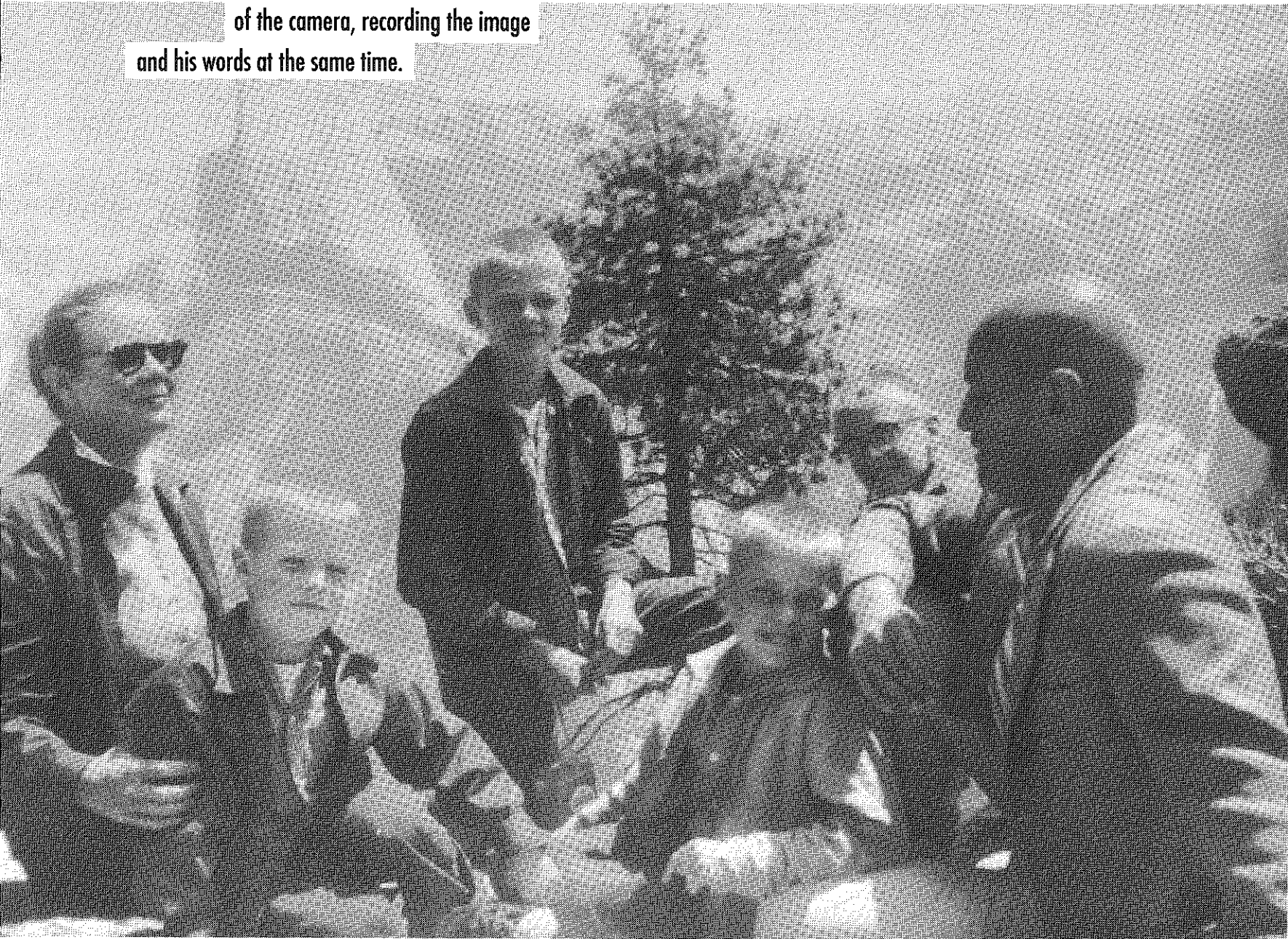


dimensions. The visitor numbered tree, found a pamphlet, read it aloud, photographed it, and called it the next "exhibit." As the trees, through science, they are presented as public spectacles that are staged for tourists.

Historically, the public-based interpretations of national parks resulted from a struggle fought over the management of land use that began in the late 19th century and continued into the 20th century. It was that the creation of national parks was a result of the struggle toward redwood preservation and the influence of natural scientists to "protect" the trees.



He held the camera still for a moment,  
 directing it at Half Dome, one of the large granite formations  
 that stand in Yosemite Valley. "I'm looking at the back-side of Half Dome  
 he said quietly into the microphone mounted on the side  
 of the camera, recording the image  
 and his words at the same time.



dimensions. The visitors in front of me stopped at each numbered tree, found its reference in the guide pamphlet, read it aloud, looked at the tree, sometimes photographed it, and continued down the trail to the next "exhibit." As the tourists come to know the tree through science, they acquire scientific knowledge. Henry Cowell Redwood State Park is one of many public spectacles that interpretively contain experiences for tourists.

Historically, the priority placed on scientifically based interpretations of natural phenomena in state and national parks resulted from earlier ideological battles fought over the management of public lands. Conflicts over land use that began at the end of the 19th century continued on into the 1940s. Susan Schrepfer shows that the creation of early national parks and efforts toward redwood preservation stemmed from the desire of natural scientists to "preserve artifacts critical to the

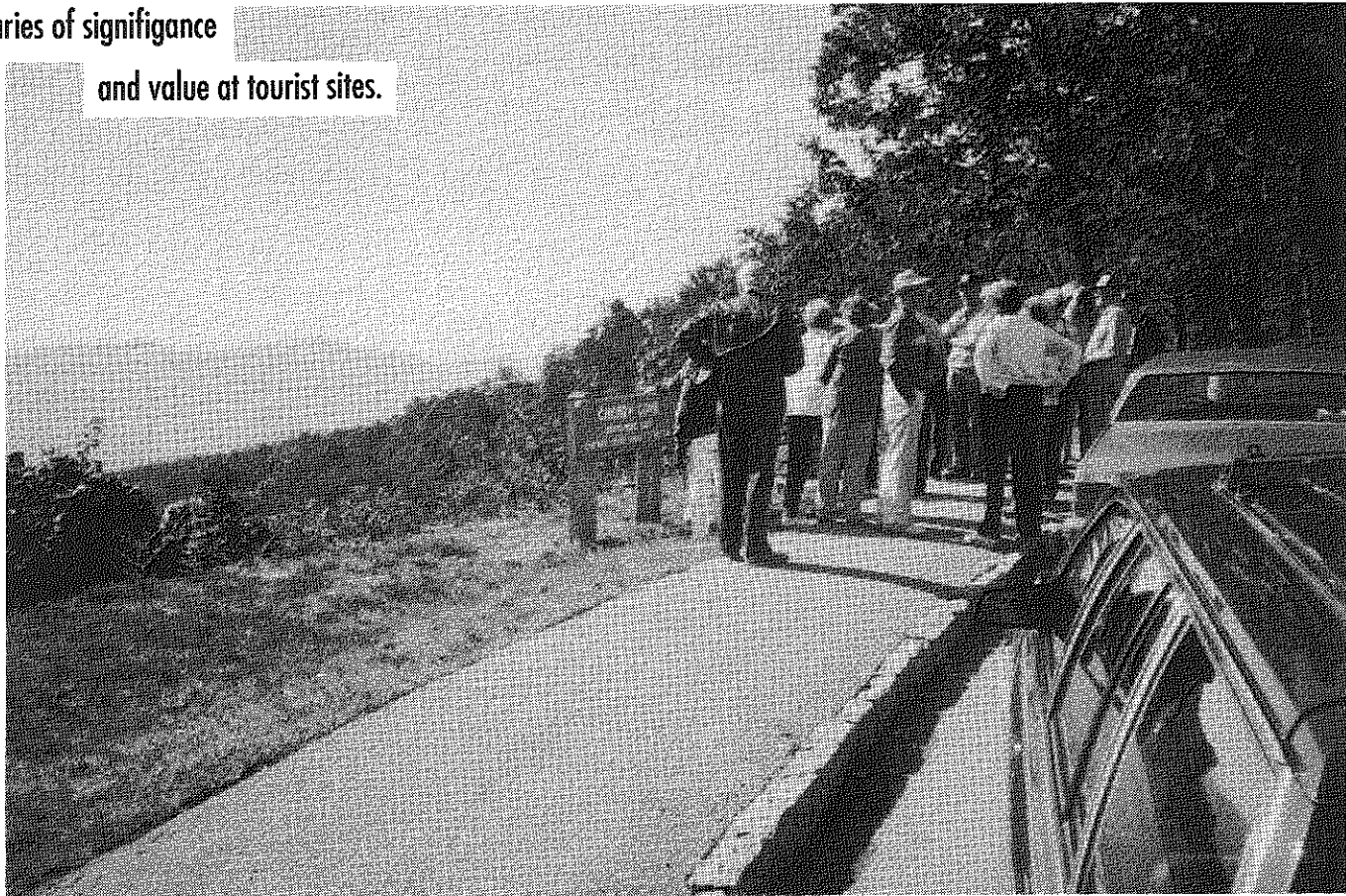
emerging disciplines of paleontology and paleobiology". According to Schrepfer, scientists who supported park interpretive programs during the early 20th century emphasized an importance in transmitting an understanding of evolutionary principles to the public. For subscribers to Darwinian thought, the parks provided "exhibits" that explained principles of natural selection, progress and development inherent in evolutionary thought. Such advocates supported the interpretive programs because they linked an understanding of the natural world to broader possibilities of economic and industrial progress, and human survival. In general, the early 20th century was a time when science proposed that humans could manage their own destiny. The interpretive park programs helped diffuse this kind of thinking throughout the public and build a foundation and support network for establishing a movement aimed at the significance and potential for

human evolution.

Presently, tourists confront park interpretations where the efforts of earlier scientists have taken hold. Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage*, first published in 1957 and a classic work among park interpreters, expresses both a method and an ideology for public interpretation programs. Tilden specifically shows a preference for scientific expertise in park interpretation programs. "The work of the specialist, the historian, the naturalist, [and] the archeologist is fundamental," he argues, "without their research the interpreter cannot start". One photograph in his book shows a young woman and a uniformed park ranger looking at a boulder hanging on the edge of a cliff in Acadia National Park in Maine. The caption beneath this photograph explains the image: "Natural features that might otherwise not be understood by the visitor take on new meaning through interpretation, as with

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and value at tourist sites.



this glacial erratic in Acadia National Park". This photograph and caption suggest a view inherent in the public interpretation project. The tourist in this instance is not capable of understanding because understanding falls within the dimensions of a particular kind of knowledge and outside the boundaries of everyday life.

From the perspective of the interpretive program, the tourist site is both a moment and place when individuals come together to collectively witness a vision of the natural world that boasts a human ability to understand and contain natural phenomena. Viewing the canyon, ruin, or artifact is a moment when tourists can witness the possibilities and promises of science that make claims on the natural world. As it appears in park literature, then, the naturalist's field hike or campfire presentation, a discourse of science positively or negatively contains the tourist and the spectacle. The public sight becomes one that can be seen as rich with scientific information or contaminated by the presence of signs, numbers on trees, or fenced-in walkways. Spectators can meaningfully substitute such representations/"voices" of science and history for the absence of direct, dialogical engagement with "otherness." The spectators confront the tree or the canyon as they are veiled in the discourse of science and history. In doing so, they confront an object or place that is culturally assigned a certain significance.

Tourists, of course, may rebel and see such interpretive efforts to be a nuisance or obstacle that hinders their appreciation of some more significant attribute of the place or object sought out in their journeys. Tourists, however, cannot escape the mediation of objects or events. In Don DeLillo's novel, *White Noise*, Jack, a college professor, and his friend Murray, an ex-sportswriter, drive to a tourist attraction called "The

Most Photographed Barn in America." As they travel to the site, they confront road signs that tell them they are approaching the famous barn. When they arrive at the attraction they find tourists swarming the area armed with photographic equipment.

We walked along a cowpath to the slightly elevated spot set aside for viewing and photographing. All the people had cameras; some had tripods, telephoto lenses, filter kits. A man in a booth sold postcards and slides—pictures of the barn taken from the elevated spot. We stood near a grove of trees and watched the photographers. Murray maintained a prolonged silence, occasionally scrawling some notes in a little book. "No one sees the barn," he said finally. A long silence followed. "Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn." He fell silent once more. People with cameras left the elevated site, replaced at once by others. "We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura. Can you feel it Jack? An accumulation of nameless energies."

A discursive assembly of signs and advertisements encapsulate the barn, translating it into an object of significance. The tourists see (and photograph) what they came to see. DeLillo's passage is reminiscent of Walker Percy's essay, "The Loss of the Creature," in which Percy explains why contemporary tourists cannot see the same Grand Canyon that was discovered by the explorer, Garcia Lopez de Cárdenas. Percy argues that the modern tourist cannot confront the Canyon directly: "It is almost impossible because the Grand Canyon, the thing as it is, has been appropriated by the symbolic complex which has already been formed in the sightseers mind. Seeing the canyon

under approved circumstances is seeing the symbolic complex head on." The canyon is ultimately a piece of evidence for the symbolic complex. When Murray tells Jack, "We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one," he suggests the discursive power and authority concealed in mediation. The tourist confronting a symbolic complex is in a place where a particular understanding of the world is built and reaffirmed through collective participation. In this case, photographing the barn is a collective moment of engaging in the discursive portrait that makes the barn significant. In a similar way, Percy's modern tourist is satisfied with the "real" canyon to the extent that it measures up to preconceived ideas about it that are present in the symbolic rendering of the Grand Canyon made by mass media, postcards, and other images of the canyon that circulate in the culture. Clearly, it is not that some authentic or essential, pure object exists beneath or behind the discourse that encloses it. Rather, the choice of a specific interpretation of the Redwood grove, the Grand Canyon, or "The Most Photographed Barn in America" eclipses other possibilities of interpretation and of perhaps discovering those things in another way. Tourists are rarely left to draw their own conclusions about objects or places before them. Instead, they more often confront a body of public discourse—signs, maps, guides and guide books—that repeatedly mark the boundaries of significance and value at tourist sites.

Much of the public discourse that suggests the importance of a tourist site is inherently political. Science is one prevailing voice that holds cultural authority, inscribing a site with a certain cultural significance. But science is only one voice heard at tourist sites. We also frequently hear other voices such as cultural history, commerce, and nationalism. I recall a visit to Philadelphia where I saw the Liberty Bell

displayed in a visitor large plate glass wind building that stands a view through the wind I stood in the middle though the bell were the building. If I flattened between them bell, the window and create one enormous p ence Hall with the Lib a group of tourists gath to a Park Service inter relating some details paused. "Now when I up and touch the bell, the bell you're going you'll feel, but I think liberty." When he finished moved closer to stroke across its surface, so make it ring, and other members as they tou

This experience ritualistic blending of ists took turns stroking dence of their history entire ensemble of rel a presentation of poli Bakhtin would argue Liberty Bell, as well heard in national park in culture. Centrip homogenizing effect and maintaining the social relations withi markers that transfo shared cultural signifi ing function. The po experience of the Lib nations that show us canyon, are examples tripetal force. Put s discourse endows a t tural significance. Ce ing unity and consen tance of places and because we already k as important. Adver forms of public disc complex described They furnish us (as a



displayed in a visitor centre. Behind the bell there is a large plate glass window that creates a frame around a building that stands across the park. The building in view through the window is Independence Hall. When I stood in the middle of the visitor centre, it looked as though the bell were superimposed on the surface of the building. If I flattened my perspective of the distances between them, the spatial arrangement of the bell, the window and Independence Hall seemed to create one enormous postcard—an image of Independence Hall with the Liberty Bell in the centre. I joined a group of tourists gathered around the bell and listened to a Park Service interpreter tell its history. He finished relating some details about the bell to the tourists and paused. "Now when I finish here I invite you to come up and touch the bell," he said. "And when you touch the bell you're going to feel... well I can't say what you'll feel, but I think it might feel like freedom, or liberty." When he finished the tourists applauded and moved closer to stroke the bell. Some ran their hands across its surface, some knocked on it as if trying to make it ring, and others photographed friends or family members as they touched the shrine.

This experience at the Liberty Bell suggested a ritualistic blending of religion and patriotism as tourists took turns stroking a sacred artifact, physical evidence of their history and politics. The bell, and the entire ensemble of relations around it, was couched in a presentation of political history and national pride. Bakhtin would argue that the voices at work at the Liberty Bell, as well as those scientific voices that are heard in national parks, maintain a "centripetal force" in culture. Centripetal force has a unifying and homogenizing effect that works toward establishing and maintaining the significance of a particular set of social relations within a culture. Discursive signs and markers that transform places into tourist sites of shared cultural significance are instances of this unifying function. The political narratives that frame our experience of the Liberty Bell, or the scientific explanations that show us the value of a redwood tree or canyon, are examples of discourse fueled by this centripetal force. Put simply, the centripetal force of discourse endows a tourist site with a particular cultural significance. Centripetal force works at maintaining unity and consensus about the value and importance of places and things. We go to tourist sites because we already know about them, and regard them as important. Advertising, travel guides, and other forms of public discourse that comprise the symbolic complex described by Percy, work centripetally. They furnish us (as a culture) with the knowledge and

vision of a place. And it is these interpretive packages that tourists confront as they work to find meaning in their travels.

## Images, Relics and Remembering

Last August when I visited Yosemite National Park in California, I watched a family traveling in an Isuzu Trooper wagon pull up next to my car in a parking turnout on the Tioga Road. A man got out of the front seat carrying a video camera and walked to the edge of the pathway where I stood viewing the valley. His wife and daughter sat in the car and waited for him. After taking a moment to quickly assess the view, he put the camera on his shoulder and panned across the valley. He held the camera still for a moment, directing it at Half Dome, one of the large granite formations that stands in Yosemite Valley. "I'm looking at the backside of Half Dome," he said quietly into the microphone mounted on the side of the camera, recording the image and his words at the same time. He recorded the scenery for another moment, then put the lens cover on the camera and walked back to his car. He pulled the Trooper out of the parking space and headed back onto the Tioga Road, one hand on the wheel and the other holding a can of Diet Pepsi, moving steadily as if on some schedule.

"Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs," argues Susan Sontag. "It can mean putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore power." This tourist in Yosemite seemed preoccupied with gathering evidence to remind him of his journey. His videotape may be a testimony to the events he witnessed on his trip. As he made a recording of the valley, he came to possess it in a certain way. He generated an artifact that recalls the experience, and makes a claim about his knowledge of the world. John Berger says "Like Positivism, the camera promised access to the real, an objective view of the world." As it is used in tourism, the photograph, home movie, or videotape is a form of "power" in that it provides proof of the authentic, the real experience that a person has undergone in his or her travels. In this way, the image becomes a piece of evidence that verifies a relationship between the self and the world. These images allow people to apprehend, contain, confirm, and measure their experience for themselves and others. The example of the tourist in Yosemite is a typical one. Many of us have seen, or been, this type of tourist. We know that we frequently photograph things that have already been photographed by others. But what is the nature of our

experience that prompts us to collect images and souvenirs from the places we have traveled?

In an old family photo album I found a photograph of myself taken when I was eleven years old. The photograph was taken on a family vacation that took my parents, younger brother and me across the country from Connecticut to California in a 1969 Ford Fairlane. This specific photograph was taken at a roadside rest area somewhere in Kansas. In the image, I see myself standing in front of the 10-foot-diameter of the wheel of a Caterpillar earth mover. The enormity of the wheel and its accompanying vehicle dwarf me. It is likely that my father told me to stand next to the vehicle to provide a measure or a perspective so a viewer of the photo could judge the size of the machinery. But the image suggests more. It is as though a particular aesthetic were embedded in the consciousness of the photographer, one that reveals a particular manner of arranging experience. The photograph provides evidence of the unusual, the spectacular, a capturing of difference. It serves as a private index of what is possible in the world that exists away from the home. My father could show his photograph and say, "This is one of the strange things we saw on our vacation. Look at how big it is next to my son." The photograph testifies to the range and variety of things and places that he has witnessed. In this way, the photograph appears to be made with a future moment in mind. The photographer transcends the immediacy of the moment and is projected into a later moment that considers ownership of such an image. But tourist photographs often suggest more than evidence of a person's experience. The images also suggest that tourist sites are places where people remake their sense of identity, their bond with others, their family. The vehicle could easily have been photographed without my standing in front of the enormous wheel. But my presence acknowledges a relationship between my father and me. My presence adds a value to the photograph because it marks a moment in our relationship. The photograph recalls a specific journey, but it also recalls a fragment of our relationship. In this sense, it objectifies the relationship. It is evidence of where *we have been* in terms of our kinship as well as geographically.

Photographs, videotapes, and home movies reveal a concern among tourists to tell their story. I remember a box full of canisters of 8mm home-movie film in my parent's home. Some months after a vacation, my father would sit at the kitchen table and combine the individual rolls of film on one large reel. He would take out the film that was poorly exposed and out of focus, and edit the fragments of film into a

sequence that recorded the chronology of events on the trip. The box in the closet was filled with travelogues—"Nova Scotia 1964," "Ontario 1966," "Florida, 1972." In some of these films I see "staged" moments, where younger brother and I are waving "goodbye" out of the rear window of our 1962 Buick Invicta station wagon, its roof rack loaded with luggage and camping gear. These scenes, along with title shots, were spliced into the large reels of the travelogue to add continuity. The film would begin with a shot of us waving as the car backed out of the driveway and we left home for vacation. The film would end with the car returning home. We find this same concern for continuity in photo albums, or slide carousels. People take out the "bad" shots, and put the images in some order that seems to make sense at the time, an order that tells some story. They are stories not only of places, but also of relationships between people. They are artifacts that suggest how we ambitiously devote attention to remembering ourselves, and presenting our experiences to others.

The production of tourist images is a kind of autobiographical act. Janet Gunn's (1982) theoretical approach to autobiography enlarges our understanding of the relationship of souvenirs to identity. Gunn approaches the notion of autobiography as a moment of cultural presentation. Where classical theories of autobiography focused on a "hidden self," Gunn argues that autobiography is a culturally symbolic space. It is in that space that we find moments when a person *displays* the self. The autobiographical moment is one when a person confronts his or her relation to the temporality of experience. For Gunn, this confrontation occurs as a person brings experience to language. The self displays itself through language and claims a site on the symbolic terrain of culture. Taking photographs and purchasing souvenirs show us that tourism is an instance when people are confronting a temporal dimension of their experience. The images from the vacation or the wearing of the souvenir t-shirt are acts of self display. They reflect moments when we read our experience through culturally meaningful symbols. For some, the photograph may provide a more personalized piece of evidence of their experience. But it is the souvenir industry that has most prolifically reconciled tourist experiences with the consumption of commodities. Ashtrays, lighters, t-shirts, posters, paperweights, are all examples that provide proof and verification of going somewhere that is away from home. Like the photograph, the wearing of a t-shirt is proof of one's experience. In some ways, it lets others know who you are, what you have seen or done.

T-shirts are perhaps one of the most popular souvenirs that display a sense of experience in a public setting. It is a piece of evidence of personal narrative. The public dimension of that narrative—the dimension evidenced by wearing the t-shirt—locates its wearer in

a cultural and historical space. Sometimes it is a space that not everyone can occupy. For instance, t-shirts proclaim participation in numerous, diverse public events that transcend museum showings, or visits to national parks. T-shirts frequently reveal an individual's participation in a city road race (road races generally include in their entry fee the price of a t-shirt that commemorates the event and participation in it), or shirts that merely declare the "survival" of an experience (for instance, "I survived Mt. St. Helens," "I survived the Buffalo Blizzard of 197\_\_\_," or "I survived Spring Break in Ft. Lauderdale"). Such souvenirs seem to mark a participation (or survival) in an event. But there is a reverse relation between the t-shirt and the personal photo. My colleague David Eason points out that the personal photo "stamps personal identity on public space while the t-shirt stamps a public identity on personal space." They are different ways of linking signs and experience.

These acts of self display place experience on a cultural level and provide a sense of cohesive unity to experience. I am not suggesting that people re-live their experience each time they look at a photograph or wear a souvenir t-shirt. The artifacts of the journey are fragments—photographs, t-shirts, souvenirs—that are unified by their owners, through stories and conversation. As these relics provide material evidence of lived experience, they also invite comment from others. The artifacts are public utterances that not only proclaim one's experience, but seem implicitly to ask for a response. The photograph and the souvenir are invitations to engage in a dialogue where the fragments of the journey can be weaved into a broader personal narrative. Such acts point to the self-conscious attempts by people to struggle to have a biography, to own experience.

Still, the accumulation of souvenirs by tourists as a means of authenticating and displaying their experience seems to suggest a contemporary cultural need to confirm the materiality of experience. That is, people need to mark themselves in time. In earlier societies, people closely tied to the land through agrarian labors marked time through a primary relationship with the earth. On a social level, they marked time initially with festivals that corresponded with changing seasons and harvests. By the Middle Ages, the carnival impulse of medieval folk culture found its way into the public marketplace. For medieval man, Bakhtin argues, carnival was a totalized experience that provided a second world, a communal world ordered by festive laughter and parody. "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by people; they live it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all people," says Bakhtin, "While carnival lasts, there is not other life outside it." Essentially, carnival was a way of marking time. Its "second world" opposed official forms of social order, but also placed boundaries around more common ac-

tivities (work or religion, for example) and punctuated experience. It was a centralized participatory event that located people in a common world.

The absence of carnival in western industrialized culture suggests the presence of other ways whereby people can punctuate the experiences of everyday life. The mediation of experience in various forms of public culture seems a natural consequence of a modern world that lacks the communality found in carnival. Perhaps it is the impulse to punctuate experience that brings us to tourist sites and public spectacles, prompts us to take family vacations, and sometimes resist the routines that constitute our everyday lives. For example, consider this headline news story about tidal waves:

## Quake Sparks Tsunami Warnings

Palmer, Alaska (AP)—A major undersea earthquake shook the Aleutians Wednesday and sent a series of small tidal waves speeding across the ocean to the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. . . While officials reported thousands heeded the warnings, many of the curious ignored them. "All the beaches are packed with people from Portland who want to see this," said Lt. Mike Thompson of the Coast Guard in Oregon. "The highway going from Portland to Seaside is bumper to bumper. I can't believe it." Hundreds of people went to San Francisco's Cliff House at Ocean Beach, jamming restaurants there just before the wave was due.

We build personal museums with photographs, souvenirs, and stories of our travels, our witnessing of the other. In building a personal archive, we situate ourselves within it. We place our relics out in public so others may view them, and perhaps, hope they may ask us to remember and tell our stories.

## "You won't believe where we ended up . . ."

While we might agree that there has been a decimation of master narratives that unify cultural practices, the metaphor of tourism implies that people do work to locate and narrativize themselves in a spectator culture. Tourism provides a site for considering how people make meaning in the midst of differentiated and fragmented social experiences. MacCannell suggests that "ethnography will eventually occupy a position in the modern world similar to the one occupied by psychoanalysis in the industrial world. Ethnography has always dealt with social totalities, and it has always

attempted to discover parts of society." MacCannell's ethnography is consistent with the idea that I have been using here. The basis of this approach is the positioning of the self in a broad dialogue of culture. We make narratives out of others.

Bakhtin suggests that the chronotope that provides for the possibility of relationships. Like "the is a chronotope, a time-space relation that contains certain experiences becoming American tourist sites. Science and History. tourism, and place possibilities for interpretation to various forms of public culture.

Yet, while stories may allow people to visit a site and should be visible, it may mean something different. Cultural visions of the site points out that in every culture there is also a centrifugal force for diversity, and stratification within a cultural moment. The forces of culture and tourist's experience.

In Jack Kerouac's novel, *Sal Paradise*, reveals the country from Pater Ocean. "I'd been poring

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attempted to discover their relationship between the parts of society." MacCannell's description of ethnography is consistent with the dialogical perspective that I have been using here to frame touristic experiences. The basis of the dialogical principle is the positioning of the self in relation to "otherness." As we engage in touristic experiences, we participate in a broad dialogue of cultural discourse where, frequently, we make narratives out of those confrontations with others.

Bakhtin suggests that "the open road" is a chronotope that provides for the chance meeting of characters. Simply put, a chronotope is a way of imaging actions that are possible of characters in specific time/space relationships. Like "the open road," tourism in general is a chronotope, a time/space relationship where certain experiences become possible. At contemporary American tourist sites, I have suggested experiences are significantly and often bound by "voices" of Science and History. Such voices are prevalent in tourism, and place constraints and boundaries on the possibilities for interpreting our experience in relation to various forms of public culture and ritual.

Yet, while stories and images that circulate in culture may allow people to agree that a place is a tourist site and should be visited, their journey to that place may mean something quite different than the popular cultural visions of that place suggest. Bakhtin also points out that in every instance of discourse there is also a centrifugal force that works at the disunity, diversity, and stratification of meaning that is possible within a cultural moment. The centripetal and centrifugal forces of culture may work simultaneously in a tourist's experience.

In Jack Kerouac's novel, *On the Road*, his narrator, Sal Paradise, reveals his dream to hitch-hike across the country from Paterson, New Jersey to the Pacific Ocean. "I'd been poring over maps of the United States

in Paterson for months, even reading books about the pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron and so on," recalls Sal, "and on the road-map was one long red-line called Route 6 that led from the tip of Cape Cod clear to Ely, Nevada. . . I'll just stay on 6 all the way to Ely." Sal's plan, however, quickly fails. He gets caught in a rain storm and retraces the short distance he'd covered. He realizes that Route 6 is an infrequently traveled road and hitching a ride is nearly impossible. "It was my dream that screwed up," says Sal, "the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes." Yet it is because his vision fails that he finds a different experience of travel, one that takes place on the edges of American culture. When Sal finally meets up with Dean Moriarty, his experience of travel becomes something that is not ordered by maps, books, or a nostalgic, romantic vision of the American West. Instead, his journey takes him through an America comprised of numerous and different worlds, and gives him experiences that do not fit with any models of travel he knows.

This passage from Kerouac's novel suggests how travel is a dialogical enterprise where self and culture are produced through the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces. Sal's narrative ultimately represents a struggle to find meaning through travel. The America he finds, however, is different than the one he expects. His travels often fail to confirm his expectation of the West and the meaning and significance he makes through his journey arises out of this conflict with expectation. His travels show us how a centripetal, singular vision of the West, converges with a set of experiences that push him away from any homogeneous notion of the West. Sal's journey is a making of meaningful experience that occurs in the space between the known and unknown,

between the anticipation and indeterminacy of experience.

The personal meanings of tourist experiences, I suspect, are achieved in a similar manner. People go to tourist sites loaded with expectations and knowledge about what they will find there. They do, quite often, see what they went to see. But I believe they also find something else, something that differs from their expectation, something they find through accident. It is the accidents and unplanned events that provide the basis of stories. We tell the story that reveals a confrontation with events other than those we expected at a tourist site. The stories of travel testify to the struggles of living. At least these are the kinds of stories I most often hear from others when they recount their travels. People seem more often to talk about losing traveler's cheques, seeing a neighbor in a far away place, getting a flat tire, getting stuck somewhere, seeing a famous person in a restaurant, getting robbed, missing a train, staying in a lousy hotel. They often speak about these events more than they do about the places they had set out for. Stories of familiar places are often heard. Stories of misfortune and the unexpected are typically more interesting. These personal stories represent a moment of transcendence, a witnessing of a moment where the familiar routines, expectations and boredom of everyday life collapses. It is in these ruptures that we find something of ourselves we may want to tell others.

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