NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHENTICITY IN PILGRIMAGE TOURING

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the shift from constructivist to existentialist conceptions of authenticity in tourism. I argue that the existentialist approach represents a withdrawal from an ongoing and unresolved debate, rather than the reconciliation that it has sometimes been presented as. Such an approach has divorced the notion of authenticity from any inherent relationship to the act of touring. Utilizing ethnographic data from a study of a Jewish-American pilgrimage tours to Israel, I argue that a shared narrative linking observer and observed can resolve the dichotomy between constructivist and existentialist notions of authenticity.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has often been characterized as a modern quest for authenticity (Cohen 1972; MacCannell 1973). As Trilling noted, however, authenticity is an ambiguous term that resists definition (1972:12). In the study of tourism, the conception of authenticity has undergone three shifts over the past 40 years, with objectivist framings giving way to a social construction perspective and, later, existentialist conceptions. The shift to an existentialist understanding reframes authenticity in terms of the tourists rather than the cultures he or she encounters while touring. While this view retains some ties to the original concept, it largely represents a break in a new direction.

The utility of existentialist notions of authenticity ultimately depends on their reconciliation with the other usages of the term. As will be shown in this paper, such a reconciliation is possible under the delimited circumstances of pilgrimage touring, when a shared narrative unites the tourist and the toured. Whether the concept can be fruitfully employed more broadly will remain an open question.

SHIFTING CONCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY IN TOURISM

It is by now well-established that the notion of authenticity in tourism has suffered from lack of conceptual clarity. Handler and Saxton (1988), Bruner (1994) and Wang (1999) each attempted to overcome the conflations of meaning by classifying the term according to the various usages found across, and even within, studies. Of the three clarifications, Wang's (1999) is the most comprehensive, subsuming the categories offered by Handler and Saxton (1988) and Bruner (1994). Building on Selwyn (1996), Wang drew a critical distinction between conceptions that refer to the authenticity of the observed tourist object ("object-related authenticity" – further broken down into "objective," and "constructive" forms[1]) and those that refer to the authenticity of the tourist's first-person experiences ("activity-related authenticity").

As research on authenticity tourism has progressed, the field has witness two gradual shifts in emphasis that Wang's typology is well-suited to describe. First, with regard to the authenticity of toured objects, scholarship from the late 1970's onward has shifted away from the previously dominant "objectivist" approach of Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1973) to the "constructivist" position best represented by Bruner (1994), Cohen (1988), and Taylor (2001).

Objectivist conceptions treat authenticity as a property inhering in toured objects – one that can be definitively measured against a gold standard. Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1973) are generally taken as representing opposites poles in a debate over tourists' desire and ability to encounter such authenticity and learn from it. For his part,

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[1] Wang also identifies post-modernism approaches to Object-Related Authenticity (1999:356-8; cf. Baudrillard 1988; Eco 1986). But as these essentially abandon the concept of authenticity altogether they are of little interest or use for present purposes.

Boorstin denied that tourists had either the wherewithal or motivation to do so. Travel, he lamented, was a "lost art," that had become "diluted, contrived, pre-fabricated" (1961:77,79):

> "Formerly, when the old-time traveler visited a country
> whatever he saw was apt to be what really went on there….
> Today what [the tourist] sees is seldom the living culture,
> but usually specimens collected and embalmed especially
> for him, or attractions specifically staged for him"
> (1961:102).

Boorstin attributed this to the commodification of tourism as well as to the preferences of tourists themselves, "willing gulls" complicit in their insulation (1961:107):

> "The tourist seldom likes the authentic (to him often
> unintelligible) product of the foreign culture; he prefers his
> own provincial expectations. The French chanteuse singing
> English with a French accent seems more charmingly
> French than one who simply sings in French. The American
> tourist in Japan who looks less for what is Japanese than
> what is Japenesey" (1961:106).

MacCannell (1973) disputed Boorstin's assertion that tourists prefer contrived pseudo-events to authentic cross-cultural encounters, suggesting instead that touristic space is structured to satisfy the "desire for authentic experiences" that motivates "touristic consciousness" (1973:597). Borrowing Goffman's terminology, MacCannell argued that "back regions" are staged for tourists to enable them to feel as if they are penetrating beyond a false front. Like Boorstin, however, MacCannell questioned the ability of tourists to actually encounter what is authentic in foreign cultures. The "staged authenticity" ends up undermining the tourist's goal: "The idea here is that a false back may be more insidious than a false front, or an inauthentic demystification of social life is not merely a lie but a superlie, the kind that drips with sincerity" (1973:599).

Constructivist positions, a label proffered by Bruner (1994) and adopted by Wang (1999), emerged as a corrective to objectivism's "essentialist vocabulary" (Bruner 1994:409) and implicit privileging of the judgments of "experts, intellectuals or elite" (Wang 1999:353) over the emic perspective of the tourists themselves. Wang identified five features common to constructivist conceptions of authenticity: First, "there is no absolute and static original or origin on which the authenticity of originals relies." Second, our notions of origins are constructed to serve present needs and are contested. Third, "the experience of authenticity is pluralistic." Fourth, things are often labeled authentic when they conform to stereotyped images. Authenticity is, in this regard, a projection of tourists own expectations. Finally, things once defined as inauthentic can be redefined over time through a process of "emergent authenticity." (Wang 1999:355). Taken as a whole, the constructivist position transforms authenticity from a property inherent in toured objects to a set of socially-constructed symbolic meanings communicated by the objects. It remains to analyze the specific meaningful elements that

are commonly used to construct notions of authenticity, a task I will turn to later in this paper.

The second shift in scholarly emphasis involves a downgrading of the debate over the authenticity of toured objects in favor of a redefinition of the term to refer to the tourist's own first-person experience. Wang (1999) has emerged as the most self-conscious voice in this trend. In a call to "rethink" the concept, he articulated the notion of "activity-related" or "existential" authenticity.

> "[E]xistential authenticity, unlike object-related version
> [sic], can often have nothing to do with the issue of whether
> toured objects are real. In search of tourist experience
> which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied
> with an *existential state of Being* activated by certain tourist
> activities…. [T]hey do not literally concern themselves
> about the *authenticity* of toured objects…. They are rather
> in search of their authentic selves with the aid of activities
> or toured objects" (1999:359-60, emphasis in original).

The seeds of this approach can be found in previous studies, if only because the slippery quality of the term has led authors to conflate divergent meanings and shift usage from context to context. Crang's (1996) study of authenticity in living history alternately used the concept to refer to historical accuracy in materiel (1996:420) and "the *communitas* felt" with fellow reeenactors (1996:428). Hughes (1995) analyzed attempts to invent notions of authentic Scottishness and commodify them as objects of tourism and export. Concluding that even constructive authenticity is a chimera, he attempted to save the term through redefinition, arguing that "Authenticity continues to reside in the resistances, choices, and commitments that individuals express within the opportunities and constraints provided by globalized markets and global imagery to which international tourism is an increasingly major contributor" (1995:800).

Others have articulated the concept more deliberately. In a study of touristic dance performances, Daniel argued that the perception of authenticity was determined not only by faithful adherence to "style, type and context" (object-related authenticity) but also by "'the performer's commitment to the dance'" (existential authenticity) (1996:785). Handler and Saxton (1988), in their important work on living history, noted the "crucial ambiguity" in the ways authenticity is conceived: "[O]ne speaks of replicating the experiences of others in order to understand those others, while the other focuses on the authentic experiences that one achieves or 'has' for oneself" (1988:247). Applying the terminology introduced above, the attempt to understand the Other is the crux of objective authenticity.[2] By contrast, the concern for one's own authentic experience is the essence of existential authenticity.

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[2] Constructive authenticity presents an ambiguous case, because it implies that any efforts to genuinely appreciate and comprehend the Other are undermined by the way the Other is imagined. Although the intention remains to understand the other, the project often fails in the implementation.

Handler and Saxton's conception of existential authenticity draws upon Heidegger (1926) to argue that narrativity is the critical element. "Heideggerian authenticity, writ large, is life as a readable first person narrative, operationally read in the process of its composition, a life individuated in its authorship, integrated through its emplotment, and creative by dint of its invention" (1988:250). Such a life is "autobiography" rather than "obituary." (1988:250) The appeal of living history, they find, is that it is felt by its proponents to give "*access to lives and experiences characterized by the wholeness that historical narratives can provide*" (1988:251, emphasis in original).

The equation of narrativity with authenticity plays less of a role in Wang's (1999) conception. Instead, relying on Berger (1973), he sees existential authenticity as "a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and [which] acts as a counterdose to the loss of 'true self' in public roles and public spheres in modern society" (1999:358). This conception is foreshadowed by Graburn (1989) who saw tourism in terms of ritualized alternation between profane work time and sacred leisure time. Wang classifies existential authenticity into two types, intra-personal and inter-personal. He further breaks down each subcategory twice: bodily feelings and self-making, on the one hand, and family ties and touristic communitas, on the other (1999:361-5).

Lest the redefinition of authenticity from a characteristic of the toured objects to a characteristic of the tourist him/herself end the productive debate over object-related authenticity, it is important to raise two areas of concern. First, the proponents of an existential notion of authenticity have not shown that the concept bears any necessary relationship with tourism. Hughes (1995) saw it as a generalized assertion of freedom in the global marketplace. Handler and Saxton (1988) considered the issue from the perspective of the living history reenactors, a group differentiated from tourists as producers from consumers. Wang's (1999) examples largely concerned beach holidays, ocean cruises, mountain climbing and other forms of travel leisure that do not constitute tourism *per se*, insofar as the activities are not structured around a tourist gaze upon an objectified Other. Nor did his treatment of the friendships formed in tour groups relate this to the act of touring. While existential authenticity may be prominent in other forms of travel leisure, no one has yet speculated why it might lead people to tour other cultures. The concept may have utility for the study of cultural tourism, but this has yet to be established.

Second, it is worth pointing out the obvious fact that tourism involves not only the tourists, but also those subjected to the tourist gaze. Existential authenticity, with its concern for the tourists' quest for their authentic selves, utterly neglects this. Its one-sidedness therefore makes it an incomplete framework with which to address issues of authenticity when two parties are involved. In all such situations, tourists inevitably engage, for better or for worse, in what Taylor termed "the politics of other people's identity" (2001:14). Constructivists may debate the ways in which authenticity in toured objects convey an empathetic understanding of the Other versus a projection of the tourists' own preconceived images, but at least they will engage the debate. What Handler and Saxton term a "crucial ambiguity" (1988:247) is in fact a fundamental

tension inherent to any tourist experience where cultures are observed: Existential authenticity privileges the tourist whereas object-related authenticity privileges the toured.

The question, then, is not, as Wang suggests, whether authenticity needs to be redefined away from a focus on toured objects; it does not and should not, for so doing would deny one half of the touristic relationship (and the less empowered half, at that). Rather, two pertinent questions emerge: First, having clarified the various dimensions of authenticity in tourism, how does the encounter with authenticity in toured objects affect tourists' perceptions of their authenticity of self? Second, how does the inherent tension between the concern with the Self and the concern with the Other manifest itself in real tourist settings. While the tensions are present in all heritage tourism – tourism that involves an encounter with an authentic Other – the issues come to a head when the heritage being toured is ostensibly one's own: Pilgrimage.

TAGLIT*: PILGRIMAGE AS SOCIAL INTERVENTION*

We will explore these questions through the lens of *Taglit*[3], a series of mass-market pilgrimage tours that has sent over 20,000 North American Jews to Israel since the program's inception in 1999. *Taglit* emerged against the backdrop of growing concerns among Jewish-Americans over the survival of their ethnic community. Although hand-wringing over the decline of Jewish distinctiveness is nothing new (Rawidowicz 1987), over the past decade, Jewish organizations have responded to the perceived threat by directing resources toward social interventions designed to foster Jewish commitment.

Unquestionably, the most ambitious of these interventions has been *Taglit*, a ten-day pilgrimage tour in Israel, provided cost-free to North American Jewish college-age youth. To date, the program has enrolled approximately 20,000 participants who traveled in four waves during the Winters and Springs of 2000 and 2001. Initiated by private philanthropists, and supported by North American Jewry's communal institutions and the Israeli government, the $210 million intervention, slated to run semi-annually for five years, was conceived as "an outreach effort to young [Jewish] people who have not been drawn into existing Jewish frameworks" (Post 1999).[4]

North American participants in *Taglit* were in many regards a homogeneous group – mostly white, Jewish, middle and upper-middle class college students or recent graduates – although they varied along Jewish denominational lines. Most participants in *Taglit* were college students traveling in groups organized by campus. Each group of approximately

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[3] *Taglit* (Hebrew for "discovery") is known in English as "birthright israel" [sic].
[4] The specific nature of these "frameworks" was left unclear – although they presumably referred more to organizations such as synagogues than to institutions such as the family. Planners apparently conceptualized the Jewish population in dichotomous terms, positing a clear demarcation between a group that had "been drawn into existing Jewish frameworks" and a group that had not. Subsequent research with program alumni suggests that this conception was overly simplistic.

forty people had its own itinerary, tour bus, driver, and Israeli and American staff. Itineraries, which tended to be standardized due both to logistics and curricular guidelines (*Taglit* 2001; Chazan 1999), included visits to Jewish holy sites, nature hikes, meetings with Israeli youth, social events, tours of ancient and modern historical areas, and guest lectures on a variety of topics regarding Israel and Judaism.

COGNITIVE AND PROCESSUAL ELEMENTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF OBJECT-RELATED AUTHENTICITY

Before we can examine the interaction between object-related and existential authenticity, the nature of object-related authenticity needs to be further clarified. We will undertake this from the constructivist perspective. The five characteristics Wang (1999) identified as common to constructivist approaches outline the general assumptions and orientations of that school of thought, but do not address the specific meaningful elements used to construct notions of authenticity. The present task, then, is to answer the question "What makes an object of the tourist gaze seem authentic to the viewer?" The answer rests in *idealized conceptions located within impermeable boundaries, communicated symbolically and legitimated by authority.* Examples of this are scattered throughout previous literature on tourism, and, as will be demonstrated, are prominent motifs in *Taglit*.

Impermeable Boundaries

Authenticity is of the genre of concepts that derive their meaning only through the positing of their opposites. At the core of all such dualisms is a conception of boundary. In this case, an unbridgeable gulf is posited to separate and protect the authentic, on one side, from the inauthentic which resides on the other. Onto this dualistic space are projected meanings appropriated from similar binary notions: Self/Other, here/there (Cohen ; Hughes 1995; Taylor 2001), now/then (Taylor 2001), familiarity/strangeness (Cohen 1972; Harkin 1995; Hughes 1995), change/stasis (cf. Taylor 2001), fragmentation/holism (cf. Lett 1983; cf. Taylor 2001), profane/sacred (Graburn 1989). In contrast to other possible conceptions of authenticity, object-related touristic conceptions presume that authenticity is located in remote half of these dualisms. This is structured into the nature of cultural tourism, as the Self moves from the familiar here and now to the strange there and then in order to gaze upon an Other.

The definitional content of authenticity is always located in a specific *place, time* or *actor.* Hughes (1995) treated authenticity as a property of place, examining how the Scottish Tourist Board created a campaign to invent and promote the culinary heritage of Scotland. To construct a conception of authentic Scottish cuisine, a notion of "a natural relationship between a region's land, its climatic conditions, and the character of the food it produces" had to be imagined (1995:787). This required a good deal of selective perception because Scots, like other Westerners, largely consumed store-bought packaged goods manufactured by international corporations, and because even older foods and recipes were generally not unique to Scotland. (The French origins of some are

evident in their names) (1995:786). Authenticity resided here in a strict demarcation of space and a firm notion of territorial integrity. "In a traditional view, authenticity is validated by kinship with its conceiving culture and discernable from its especial characteristics that have been preserved through territorial separation." (1995:783) For his part, Hughes argued that the global influences upon Scottish cuisine destroyed any notion of impermeable boundary between Scotland and the rest of the world that could be used as the basis for an authentic Scottish culture. But this denial affirms the very point being made here: The imagining of firm spatial boundaries is crucial to the construction of authenticity. Anything that discredits this notion of boundary undermines the concept.

Authenticity can be located by imagining boundaries not only in space, but also in time. Taylor (2001), in his study of touristic constructions of Maori authenticity, articulated the point nicely:

> Attempts to locate the original and "true" Maori culture in the pre-European past…. proposed that European explorers introduced Time to the Other. Before the "discovery" of New Zealand, Maori culture is seen to have existed in a vacuum, as a holistically defined and static form of social organization…. Tourism projects which invoke the culturally "authentic" thereby seek to "realize" value and uniqueness in their products through the application of a distance between subject and object that is both spatially and temporally defined. (2001:9-10).

The establishment of a temporal watershed allows the content of authenticity to be attributed to one side of the divide. Tourism overcomes the dilemma of time-travel by recreating prior historical eras – e.g., living history (Handler and Saxton 1988; Bruner 1994; Crang 1996; McIntosh and Prentice 1999), museums (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) and archaeological sites – and also by presenting living cultures (such as the Maori) as signifiers of the past and pastness (Taylor 2001). The specific dating of the watershed is often diffuse. The discourse of authenticity often drawn upon the same dichotomies of change vs. stasis and fragmentation vs. holism that are commonly invoked to distinguish the modern from the pre-modern. As a result, the temporal location of this watershed is often placed at the onset of modernity (Cohen 1988) or the first contact with Europeans (Taylor 2001). This, however, need not be the case, as will become clear in the analysis of Birthright Israel, which draws multiple dividing lines throughout history – one of the earliest being the Roman exile of Jews from Judea in the year 70, and the most recent being the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries.

Tourists may also locate authenticity in specific actors, be they individuals or aggregations or collectivities. This usually takes two forms. The first distinguishes *us* from *them*, *subject* from *object* (Taylor 2001), *observer* from *observed*. In principle, if authenticity is seen to reside in the observed Other, then an explicit contrast is set up with the observing Self. But the definition of the tourist him/herself as inauthentic is problematic. It may occur if the criteria by which observers judge authenticity are

considered applicable to themselves as well. This is commonly the case in *Taglit,* where the lens of Jewish authenticity through which Israel and Israelis are observed and evaluated is also turned upon the Jewish tourist him/herself. Contrast this with Taylor's (2001) example of the non-Maori Westerner touring Maori culture in New Zealand. One might reasonably ask, "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" On a continuum of ideal 'Maoriness' only the Maori can be placed, not the tourist. But if the Maori represent not only Maoriness, but also the antithesis of modern Western culture – "the timeless and spiritually pure primitive," in Taylor's terms (2001:10) – then the tourists fit quite comfortably into a schema that contrasts the authentic 'primitives' with the inauthentic 'moderns.' Most attempts to portray tourism as a quest for the authentic (Graburn 1989; MacCannell 1989; Taylor 2001; Wang 1999;) have relied on this "deep-structural" framing (Cohen 1992). The degree to which tourists actually conceive of their own experiences in these terms is an empirical question that has yet to be adequately addressed.

An alternative means of locating authenticity in others involves drawing distinctions between authentic and inauthentic locals. Participants in *Taglit* sometimes spoke of meeting "real Israelis," as if this were a notable or exceptional event on their tour. Because the tourists rarely if ever labeled others Israelis as "fake" or "not real," the contrast between authentic and inauthentic locals was only implied, leaving it to examination of specific usages and contexts to unpack the implicit meanings. Definitions that invoked the Israelis' ethnic or religious backgrounds (e.g. secular vs. ultra-Orthodox, native vs. immigrant, Jew vs. Arab, Russian immigrant vs. American immigrant) were less common than definitions structured around varieties of the tourist experience. MacCannell (1973) argued that the perception of authenticity is associated with what Goffman called back-stage regions. This was certainly true of participants in *Taglit, for whom* "real Israelis" were most easily found far away from anything associated with the tourist industry – on side streets away from the shopping district; out of earshot of the 40-odd other members of the tour group; and in interactions with Israelis whose roles were not defined by the North Americans' status as tourists.

To summarize so far, cultural tourism locates authenticity on one side of a temporal or spatial divide. Authenticity is seen to reside 'back then,' 'over there' or 'in them.' By contrast, 'now,' 'here' and 'we' are implicitly or explicitly conceived of as bearers of inauthenticity. It is no surprise, then, that the tourist enterprise has been an object of derision (MacCannell 1989:9), both at the hands of intellectuals (see, e.g., Boorstin 1961) and at the hands of the touring masses themselves, who consider the presence of large numbers of other tourists to be barriers to authentic encounters with foreign cultures (for empirical confirmation, see Waller and Lea 1998; applications of this notion appear in Boorstin 1961; Cohen 1972). This also sheds light on why the commoditization of culture has been said to sometimes harm either authenticity itself or at least tourists' perceptions of it (cf. Cohen 1988; Greenwood 1977; Taylor 2001). Associated with modernity, commoditization is of the 'now.' Moreover, it implies that the toured cultures are themselves oriented toward the tourist bearers of inauthenticity. The strict boundary that distances the authentic then, there and them from the inauthentic

here, now and we is thus blurred. But without this boundary, the concept of authenticity cannot stand.

The reason for this lies in the way tourists attribute authenticity to the sights they observe. To restate the point made at the outset, authenticity is and must be constructed simultaneously with its opposite, which is only possible by positing the existence of the boundary dividing the two. The corollary to this assertion is that the impermeability of this boundary is crucial to the integrity of the concept. For proof, one need look no further than the writings of those who have abandoned the notion of authenticity as ridiculous or quixotic. For Hughes (1995) the inability to draw a strict demarcation between Scotland and the rest of the world was the undoing of any notion of authentic Scottish culture. Likewise, the postmodern critique of authenticity, offered by Eco (1986) and Baudrillard (1983,1986) "totally deconstructs the conception of authenticity through destructuring the boundaries between the copy and the original, or between sign and reality (boundaries on which the whole issue of Boorstin's and MacCannell's objective authenticity relies)" (Wang 1999:356)[5].

Idealized Conceptions

No matter where one tours, one need not look hard to find breaches in the fence separating the supposedly authentic from the supposedly inauthentic. And if one insists, the concept will collapse entirely under its own weight. Tourists, however, tend not to insist. In part, this is because not all tourists are concerned with authenticity (Cohen 1988; Pearce and Moscardo 1986). Those who care less about it are likely to be more lax in their cognitive construction of it. But even they have their red lines beyond which they would not consider the observed objects authentic. The boundary remains impermeable to whatever salient criteria are used to judge authenticity.

Another reason is that, even among those who do care, tourism is a form of play (Lett 1983). It allows for flexibility in matters like these (Cohen 1988:379; see also Bruner 1994; Daniel 1996). Coleridge's phrase "willing suspension of disbelief" is apt. Within the rules of the game, some types of boundary violations are acceptable (gift shops and public restrooms in Lincoln's reconstructed 1830's village) while others are unacceptable (1830's reenactors costumed in blue jeans) (Bruner 1994:401-2). According to Cohen, tourists "will often focus in such judgments on some traits of the cultural product and disregard others" (1988:378).

I would take the argument a step further. Selective perception and oversimplification are inherent to all conceptualizations of authenticity because strict boundaries can be drawn only through the elimination of disconfirming evidence. Attempts to consign the concept to oblivion must ultimately fail, for authenticity, in the end, rests not on the actual existence of impermeable boundaries, but on the ability of human beings to imagine them by seeing only what they want to see. And who would deny our supreme talent in this regard?

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[5] For a similar analysis of Eco's and Baudrillard's treatments of authenticity in tourism, see also Bruner (1994).

The need to simplify helps clarify a variety of issues related to authenticity in tourism, such as the treatment of the Other and the possibility of "emergent authenticity" (Cohen 1988). Take, for example, the "projection of tourists' own… stereotyped images .. onto toured Others" (Wang 1999:355). Because authenticity rests in oversimplification and selective perception, it is a lens best directed away from the Self. The Self, after all, is known too intimately. Its inconsistencies are too apparent. Its hodgepodge of sensations, cognitions, emotions, and environments too fragmented. The simplified narratives through which authenticity is imagined are inherently more believable when applied to things less familiar.

That these narratives can change with time is not problematic from the tourist's perspective. Selective perception also entails selective memory such that boundaries we may once have drawn can be easily forgotten. This can happen on the individual or the collective level. In this manner, "emergent authenticity" is born, and "a cultural product, or a trait thereof, which is at one point generally recognized as inauthentic may, in the course of time, become gradually recognized as authentic, even by experts" (Cohen 1988:379).

Thus, in addition to conceiving of the authentic by having an intuitive sense of the line that separates it from what is inauthentic, tourist constructions of authenticity give content to the sides of this divide by filling them with idealized conceptions. This is authenticity in Bruner's first sense – "verisimilitude," where "a *1990s* person would walk into the village and say, 'This looks like the 1830s,' as it would conform to what he or she expected the village to be." It is distinguished from authenticity in Bruner's second sense, "genuineness," where "an *1830s* person would say, 'This looks like 1830s New Salem'" (1994:399). The two viewers might come away with different assessments, but only the judgment of the contemporary tourist concerns us here. Implicit in the notion of verisimilitude is that the viewer has in mind images of what the object is supposed to look like. These are the Platonic forms that actual tourist experiences only imperfectly reflect, a point underlying essayist Walker Percy's lament that "it is almost impossible to gaze directly at the Grand Canyon under these circumstances and see it for what it is… because the Grand Canyon, the thing as it is, has been appropriated by the symbolic complex which has already been formed in the sightseer's mind" (1982:47).

These idealized images are cultural products, generated not only by deliberate efforts of the tourist industry (Taylor 2001; Urry 1990), but also by "a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos" (Urry 1990:3). Consider, for example, the Orientalist sentiments expressed by one American visitor to Jerusalem, who said "It is so different here from the US, the colors are right out of the movie Aladdin." The case of *Taglit* also demonstrates that religious and educational institutions also inculcate these preconceptions, and that such images are not only *preconceived*, but also *reconceived* through interactional processes that occur while touring.

Authenticity-generating expectations can take two forms: One regards specific images of the object being viewed. Numerous visitors to the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem, for example, thought that it would fill them with religious inspiration when they saw or touched it. Others merely remarked that the Jewish holy site was smaller than they thought it would be. One invoked the colloquial English name of the site to describe the "wailing" of a woman standing next to her. Would he have characterized her behavior in these terms if the place were called something else? In all these cases, tourists had some specific notions about the site they were encountering. The second form of expectations are generalized categories that can be applied to a variety of sites. For example, Bruner notes that the reconstructed New Salem houses were made to look weather-beaten to make them more credible to the tourists, even though in the 1830s they would have been extremely well-maintained (1994:402). In this case, a general expectation about how old buildings should look is applied to the specific case of the buildings in New Salem. The latter case allows for easy translation of preconceptions to new and unfamiliar settings.

Because perceptions of authenticity are so rooted in the drawing of boundaries and the formation of preconceptions – both eminently social constructions – issues of authority become inescapable. Who decides where to draw the lines? What are the forces that create our stereotypes and expectations? Which models are authoritative? To what extent does the authority to define authenticity lie with the tourists or the locals? Scholars are today less willing to arrogate to themselves the right to define what is authentic and what is not. At the same time, these determinations are being made all the time by tourism professionals, tourists and locals as well and are embroiled in "layers of contestation" (Bruner 1994:400).

Communication of Symbols

In the mind of the tourist, perceptions of authenticity are constructed as sets of idealized conceptions projected onto one side of a dualistic space. On the other side of the boundary lies the ostensibly inauthentic. Such conceptions are activated in the tourist experience through an encounter with toured objects that is essentially symbolic in nature (Culler 1991; MacCannell 1989).

The perception of authenticity can thus be seen as part of a communicative act. This is seen most clearly when the tourist attractions are obviously structured performances.[6] On *Taglit¸* for example, many groups visited a desert tent where Israeli Bedouin (or sometimes Jews) in traditional Bedouin costume described aspects of Bedouin culture, demonstrated the grinding of coffee, played drums, and served a meal consisting of large pita breads with salads. Of such performances, we might claim what Taylor said of similar instances he studied among the Maori: "Such shows transmit the over-signification of an identity of difference, a repetitious inscription of essentialized "Maori-ness," or in this case, 'Bedouin-ness' (Taylor 2001:16).

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[6] In other cases, the producers of tourist attractions may not be immediately present, but this does not detract from their ability to structure tourist spaces to communicate symbolically (for an extended treatment, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

However, the communication of authenticity need not be seen as the premeditated work of tourist industry providers. In fact, we can dispense with the requirement that the sender in a communicative interaction have actual agency, as long as the recipient is willing to impute meaning to what he perceives as symbols coming from the observed object. Such a process occurs in what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to this as "The Museum Effect" (1998:51):

> [The] museum experience becomes a model for experiencing life outside its walls. As the gaze that penetrated exhibitions of people from distant lands was turned to the streets of European and American cities, urban dwellers such as James Boswell reported that walking in the streets of London in 1775 was 'a high entertainment of itself. I see a vast museum of all objects, and I think with a kind of wonder that I see it for nothing.'….[As] areas are canonized in a geography of attractions, whole territories become extended theme parks. An ethnographic bell jar drops over the terrain. A neighborhood, village, or region becomes for all intents and purposes a living museum in situ. The museum effect, rendering the quotidian spectacular, becomes ubiquitous (1998:51,54).

But in spite of this ability subject virtually anything to the tourist gaze, MacCannell noted the curious paradox that tourists often ignore the "routine aspects of life as it is really lived" and look for authenticity elsewhere (1973:601). The paradox is resolved, however, once we understand that authenticity must be communicated symbolically. Much that the tourist observes glides past the eye without recognition because it is not seen as representing anything other than itself. It is treated as fact, not symbol. For *Taglit* tourists in Eilat, the environmental and experiential aspects of the visit like palm trees, azure waters, coral reefs, cocktails, bars, and dancing on the decks of boats were perceived as symbols of authentic beach leisure. The local working class upon whose labor Eilat's tourism industry rested were ever-present but scarcely noticed. Authentic Eilat, then, was largely perceived as a City of Leisure rather than a City of Labor (Kelner et al. 2000:13).

AUTHENTICITY OF OBJECTS AND AUTHENTICITY OF SELF ON TAGLIT

We now turn to addressing the question raised earlier: How does the encounter with authenticity in toured objects affect tourists' perceptions of their authenticity of self?

One of the critical problems with defining authenticity in tourism in terms of the existential condition of the tourist is that it severs any necessary connection with the act of touring itself. The reformulations of authenticity have not satisfactorily answered the simple question, "If leisure travel is concerned with finding one's true self, what is the point of touring other cultures rather than just going to relax on the beach?" As it is

currently framed, there appears to be no point at all. Wang and MacCannell offer only a discourse of modern alienation and liberation from the segmented self. But how does this matter to the American in Paris seeing the *real* Eiffel Tower, or watching a Frenchman in beret and striped shirt carry a baguette past the local cafe? Just as a person does not speak Language, but speaks English or Spanish or Urdu or what-have-you, arguing "modernity" here substitutes a general category for specific content. Existential authenticity is relevant to cultural tourism, but only in cases where there is a shared narrative that links the authenticity of objects to authenticity of the self. The specific content of the narrative will vary from case to case, but it's specificity in integral to the notion of authenticity in all its forms.

On *Taglit,* the narrative that was invoked (sometimes by trip organizers, sometimes by participants, sometimes by both) to unify many of the disparate tourist encounters portrayed Israel as the authentic bearer of Jewish tradition into the contemporary era. This was accomplished by the repeated drawing of boundaries. When ultra-Orthodox worshippers at the Western Wall were subjected to the tourist gaze ("The highlight was being at the Wailing Wall and seeing the way that religious people actually observe *Shabbos*[7] there"), a sense of Jewish authenticity was imputed by projecting boundaries along multiple dimensions. Temporally, the ultra-orthodox in the 19th century Eastern European garb became icons of pre-modern Jewish culture. Where other Jews had capitulated to the forces of modernity, these Jews symbolized a refusal to change, a refusal to compromise. They were authentic in Bruner's first sense, verisimilitude. They were a convincing reproduction of Judaism in its 'original' state. (Never mind that Judaism predated their variant of it by several thousand years. The important thing was that they looked like the real McCoy.) Like Heilman at the outset of his ethnographic foray, the Jewish tourists in Israel saw the ultra-Orthodox as "'Jewish primitives,'" "the absolute other, sequestered and opaque, whom modern, secular culture had somehow left untouched. (1992:xvii).

Orthodox Jews in Israel (not only ultra-Orthodox) were also located on the authentic side of a boundary separating those who were committed to their faith from those who were not. This sense was generated both by observations of their public behavior during worship as well as in private encounters with them in their homes, where some were hosted for Sabbath lunch. Those observing their prayer spoke of their enthusiasm and commitment.

> "I've never experienced such joy and such passion in
> religion as I've seen in this *Shabbat*,"

> "The Western Wall was probably the thing I remember the
> most, when there was dancing around and the people
> chanting prayers, I thought it was really amazing that
> people can have as much passion, as much devoutness, and
> they can be so focused on this one particular thing and
> believe in it so much."

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[7] Sabbath. Although pronounced *shabbat*.

People who entered their homes felt that this commitment to religion included an ethic of hospitality and caring.

> "It was really cool that the families here invited people they don't even know into their houses to just come in and have a meal…. It enlightened me a little bit seeing these people so into it, like it really gives them joy."

> "The Lazars[8] were amazing because, like, not only did they open their house but they really, genuinely love everyone. Like they asked all of us our names, and where you were from. The feeling there is so amazing.

Two points are worth emphasizing. First, extending the Daniel's argument made with regard to dance performances, here we find that the existential authenticity is not merely a characteristic of tourists. Rather, it can be observed in or imputed to third parties, who thereby are endowed with an object-related authenticity. Second, if it is indeed true that authenticity is conceived by positing its opposite, then we would expect that the framing of Israeli Orthodox as authentic in their commitment to Judaism would lead to an implicit contrast with other actors. In fact, the comparison was often made explicitly, lending credence to the overall argument. In the following quotation, a tourist contrasts behavior observed at the Western wall with memories of Sabbath behavior at home:

> "The Shabbat experience, I thought, was the most interesting Shabbat experience I've had, because I've been to Shabbat where people just light some candles, go to temple, come back. The one at the Wall was so much festivities, so much energy. So many people there really, really were deep into the whole meaning of Shabbat, taking the commandment of honoring Shabbat, the Sabbath. I just never had an experience where so many people were just so energized to be doing something on a Friday night that wasn't going out [to a party, the movies, etc.]. Where I'm from in America, people go out, most of them don't go to Shabbat."

The female tourist who was moved by the Lazar family's hospitality said that they were "the opposite of people who are always looking to get something in return, people who are materialistic, like the opposite. Like they're good-natured, wholesome, share with the world, giving people – something that's leaving American culture. People aren't so open."

The contrast with American culture in both cases is indicative. Israel's Jewish authenticity is also maintained in the mind of the tourist by drawing a boundary in space. Hughes (1995) may have rejected the possibility of constructing any true notions of

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[8] All names have been changed.

cultural and territorial integrity, but that does not appear to deter Jewish tourists in Israel. In reality, the idea that cultural integrity is maintained through demarcation of territorial boundaries underlies the entire Zionist project (as it does all nationalisms) and has roots deeply embedded in classical Jewish thought. Indeed, the very act of pilgrimage affirms the salience of this concept. To find Jewish authenticity, one must cross boundaries is space and travel from here to there.

Once in Israel, its status as the locus of Jewish authenticity is continually reaffirmed by recalling the alternative as a point of comparison.[9] In this manner, the narrative that frames the toured objects or others are applied to the self as well. Were Israel framed in other terms, it is not at all clear that tourists would view themselves in the same framework. On *Taglit*, one factor that encouraged the framing of Israel terms of a narrative that could also be applied to the self was the systematic integration into the itinerary of tour guide-facilitated group discussions. Each of these sessions, or "Conversations" were given titles such as "My Connection to Jewish Memory," "How I Relate to Israel – How Israel Relates to Me," and "Spirituality: Wrestling with God." The program explicitly asked people to talk about their Jewish lives in a narrative framework. This forced a narrative construction regardless of whether it existed prior to the moment of the discussion. From Handler and Saxton's perspective, the act of constructing the narrative is the critical element to existential authenticity, regardless of the content of the narrative. But, as noted before, the specific content is crucial because every narrative functions as a filter. In this case, the warp and woof the life stories created and shared was Jewishness. And with everyone in the group writing their autobiographies in these terms, the sense of narrative coherence to a life defined Jewishly became all the more compelling.

The sense of being tied into something larger than oneself emerged not only from seeing oneself as part of the traveling group of pilgrims, all of whom were defining the Jewish aspects of their existence as salient. It also stemmed from the temporal nature of narrative construction. It was not uncommon for discussion leaders to ask people about their Jewish upbringings. But life histories usually began before birth, by making reference to parents and grandparents. Thus, one's life is not solely one's own, and one is placed on an historical continuum that extends well into the past. The continuum extends forward too. Having spoken about where you came from, where you have been and where you are, the next logical question is where are you going. The destination is framed clearly in Jewish terms.

Jewish pilgrimage to Israel is a particularly revealing case with regard to the relationship between existential and object-related authenticity because the religious dimensions of the pilgrimage are inseparable from the ethnic dimensions. Where the

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[9] In practice, this raises a number of problematic issues that will not be addressed here, but that are worth thinking about: Israel's status as authentic center depends on positing differences between it and the places from which the tourist-pilgrims hail. But if the pilgrimage is to result in new self-understandings applicable back home, it has to be similar enough for the people to see themselves reflected in it. In a related sense, For the participants in *Taglit*, Judaism and Israel is presented as if it is Other to them. The whole framing of the program presumes that they don't know their heritage. But if it is their heritage, how don't they know it? And if they don't know it, how can it be their heritage?

former might tend to a universal timelessness, the latter are firmly rooted in the history of a people.[10] That is, the historicity of the narrative is crucial to the link between the two forms of authenticity. We find the that the Jewish frameworks tourists use to construct their own authentic life histories are the same used to imagine authenticity in the sight toured. *Taglit* was quite self-conscious in its approach to the narrative framing of sights, mandating that tour organizers construct itineraries to teach seven themes (1999): The nature of contemporary Israeli society; the *mifgash* (encounter) between North Americans and Israel; Jewish values; Zionism then and now; an overview of Jewish history; the Holocaust and Jewish life; and what it all means for us (the tourist-pilgrims). In a sample itinerary, *Taglit* suggested that a narrative entitled "From Holocaust to Redemption" could be taught through a day of touring the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum along with the Mount Herzl military cemetery, which holds the gravesites of fallen soldiers and deceased national leaders. *Taglit* was not the first to connect the two thematically; the recommendation was really nothing more than a codification of general practice. It is not surprising, therefore, that most groups implemented the program as suggested. By design, Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl sit adjacent to one another on the same Jerusalem hillside. Sitting in juxtaposition to one another, two distinct sets of partially overlapping events, spread out in one case over a decade and in the other over a century, and taking place in different parts of the world, are not only each framed as "coherent stories" occurring in "unified historical eras," but are also presented as elements in an eschatology of destruction and rebirth.

But what exactly is authentic at Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl? Tourists at the cemetery can view the black stone marker of Herzl's real bones, or the flame and marble under which lie the remains of Yitzhak Rabin, or the pillow-shaped headstones that mark the final resting places of young soldiers who fell in battle. Perhaps this is an encounter with authentic greatness or heroism or self-sacrifice. Whatever it is, it is remote from the lives of the contemporary American Jewish young adults. Noticing that many teenagers, between 16 and 19 years old, were buried there, one tourist said, "In America, we don't think about military service. Here, kids younger than me had to die to protect their country."[11] The phrase "had to die" is suggestive. Along with Yad Vashem, the day is spent encountering authentic Jewish death – death that is caused by the fact of one's Jewishness or in the defense of it. In this sense, there is a holism that contrasts with the fragmented individualism of modern American death. Authentic Jewish death happens *over there*, in Europe or Israel, *back then*, during the rule of the Nazis, and *to them*, those Jews who have the good misfortune of still living in societies where one's fate remains bound to the fact of that one is a Jew. This is the authentic death of Josef Trumpledore, the Zionist Nathan Hale who famously may have said, "It is good to die for our homeland." It is the death that is not death, because the people and the cause live on, inspired.

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[10] One question worth investigating would be the ways in which pilgrimages in other religious traditions draw on historical or other narratives to link the pilgrim's experience as tourist with his or her experience as a religious person.

[11] Military service is compulsory in Israel for most Jewish citizens. Upon graduation from high school, boys are conscripted for three years of regular service and girls for two years. Most men continue to serve reserve duty several weeks a year until age 50.

This, however, is but one element in a broader claim to authenticity made by Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl. In their design and in their viewing, the two sites also assert the authenticity of a specific modern Jewish historiography. The ashes to rebirth narrative is not the only historiography of modern Jewry, but it is the one officially sanctioned and backed by the authority of a nation-state (cf. Bruner 1994). In the ashes to redemption narrative, the destruction of European Jewry is given meaning through the Jews' ultimate redemption in a Jewish state, and Israel assumes its rightful place at the center of a new Jewish world. Israel's authenticity is an authenticity of territorial and cultural integrity.

Touristic constructions of alternative (though not necessarily competing) narratives of the modern Jewish experience are on display elsewhere. For example, Ellis Island and New York's Lower East Side tell a story of Jewish immigration, integration and success in a pluralistic America, without reference to the eventual decimation of Europe's Jewish communities. But these alternative constructions are not available for touring at Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl. In their absence, the narratives they would construct remain disparate fragments. They too can be sewn together… somewhere else. On *Taglit*, in the meantime, American Jewish tourists find a holistic Jewish narrative by touring representations of Israeli and European Jewish and history in Israel. American Jewish life is sidelined in this narrative, unsuitable for constructing a notion of modern Jewish authenticity, but eminently suitable for representing its opposite.

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