Chapter 11

'Authentic' Anxieties

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Better than anyone else before or since, Marx and Engels articulated the central theme of modernity. 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned': for better or for worse, all the old certainties of self, society, and culture dissolved in the face of capitalism. They went on to explain that 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.' As a result, 'The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country.'[1]

Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage elaborates on Marx and Engels' insights. Capitalism no longer seeks raw materials and markets for its industrial goods alone, but cultural raw materials that can be transformed into hard cash through the conservation, restoration, and outright fabrication of indigenous landscapes and traditional cultural practices for the amusement of metropolitan consumers. In this light, the rise of heritage and cultural tourism stands as another episode in the two-century history of modernity, though perhaps one given particular urgency in the face of the increased, and increasingly global, scale of tourism and the transformation of local cultures and societies that it has seemed to engender.

At the same time, the significance of tourism transcends the vast profits it generates or the idle amusement it offers. There would be no market for these kinds of activities, no crowds willing to undertake expensive, sometimes arduous journeys of discovery, if the contemplation of the indigenous and the traditional were not so central to the experience of the modern. The adjectives *traditional* and *modern* are themselves artefacts of modernity: tradition did not exist until it was imagined as the defining complement of modernity. As the chapters included in this volume reveal, the root pair can be elaborated into a whole lexicon of dichotomous adjectives: ancient and modern, indigenous and cosmopolitan, hidden and

transparent, mysterious and known, obscure and legible, pure and impure, substantial and ephemeral, and most of all authentic and inauthentic. In this sense, the concept of tradition serves as a mirror of the anxieties to which Marx and Engels gave voice, that Raymond Williams explored in *The Country and the City*, and that has been the single great theme of Euro-American and much non-Euro-American literary and cultural writing for two centuries: the anxiety that arises from the fear that modern life is by its nature inauthentic – even counterfeit or spurious.[2]

The articulation of tradition and modernity is a global phenomenon. Tradition was sorted out from modernity in the Euro-American core at least as early as it was in its peripheries and dependencies, and the manufacture of heritage operates as industriously in the developed as in the developing world.[3] Yet the essays here imply that there is a significant difference when the practice is asymmetrical, as it often is in tourism to developing nations. It is the nature of that difference that is at issue: how can we assess the impact of heritage and cultural tourism on its destinations? To what extent do the residents of tourist regions accept or even participate in the construction of a visitable heritage for visitors? When do concepts of heritage and its wealth-making potential become tools of power for indigenous elites, as they have in Timothy Mitchell's New Gurna or Anne-Marie Broudehoux's Rio de Janeiro? In what ways can residents use the concepts of tradition and heritage as a rubric within which to resist that power, as in Mark LeVine's Jaffa?

These analyses of heritage are worthy additions to the contemporary discussion of modernity, but many also share some of the troubling assumptions of that discussion. These are evident in the title of this book: *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage*. How can heritage be manufactured or tradition consumed? 'Manufactured' is often a term of abuse, implying the false, as in a manufactured excuse or situation. Even more, something that is manufactured is artificial, the antithesis of the natural that is so valorized in Euro-American thought. 'Consumption' is a using up – ingestion followed by the excretion of waste – and by analogy a wasting disease (tuberculosis). In the folklore of capitalism, consumption is hedonistic indulgence, the opposite of the productive self-discipline that Max Weber called 'the Protestant Ethic'.[4]

Manufactured traditions are not inherently pernicious, as Nezar AlSayyad notes in his introduction. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argued in their classic work *The Invention of Tradition* that 'authentic' and 'manufactured' traditions serve nationalist and ethnic goals equally well.[5] In many cases, it is frustrating and possibly counterproductive even to try to make the distinction. The outdoor museums that Paul Oliver discusses in this volume are collections of moved, restored, conserved, reconstructed, and newly built structures that defy the attempt to certify or deny authenticity.

Despite these ambiguities, scholars of heritage and tradition too often leave unchallenged the notions of tradition as a definable, hence commodifiable, entity, and of authenticity as a testable and desirable quality of tradition. Implicitly or explicitly, they assume the defence of tradition and authenticity against modernity and artificiality. Like Dean MacCannell's tourist, they search for some 'true' experience of difference, one created for insiders, available only to the most sympathetic and persistent outsiders.[6] Yet – again – 'all that is solid melts into air': every appearance of authenticity turns out to be a mirage, a simulacrum manufactured only to be consumed. Thus the attempt to deconstruct the discourse of modernity becomes simply an example of that discourse, betraying a continued allegiance to modernity that flourishes in the so-called postmodern age.

Our loyalty to modernity's concept of authenticity has much to do with our own insecurity about what we do. As architects, planners, historians, anthropologists, and preservationists, we are part of the mechanism that manufactures heritage. As relatively prosperous, privileged people, we are consumers of tradition. As postmodern intellectuals, we understand that authenticity is an elusive, perhaps non-existent quality. At the same time, for most of us at least, our political or emotional commitments incline us to side with those who seem to be the victims of modernity, and we search for some objective grounds for valorizing their position over that of Marx's cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. In our heart of hearts, we want to be Gramscian organic intellectuals.

To reconcile our emotional investment in authenticity with our intellectual scepticism, we commonly locate authenticity in the realm of *identity*, defined by *difference* and validated by *culture*. *Tradition* is evidence of the continuity of identity through time. *Heritage* is the visible product of tradition, calcified and commodifiable. By this reasoning, identity conveys an authority to local forms that is lacking in cosmopolitan ones, and to 'traditional' forms that is lacking in 'manufactured' ones.

But culture is a slippery concept, and identity and difference even more so. Consequently, it might be more fruitful to understand heritage, tradition, and modernity as strategic political positions, rather than as fixed or essential qualities of sites or cultural practices, much less of individual identities. Individuals routinely shift from one cultural position to another, adopt one identity or another, as occasion demands. Sites likewise seem to take on varying colourations according to the angle from which one views them. To account for this, recent theorists have begun to speak of 'hybridity', a term that retains the essentialist qualities of the original dichotomies. A hybrid is a third thing created by the amalgamation of two fixed, because genetically coded, entities.

A fresh start requires a subtler understanding of identity. We might begin with the anthropologist Anthony Cohen's useful distinction between

selfhood and personhood. The former denotes the 'substance of me', while the latter refers to my social being.[7] Selfhood and personhood are both contingent and fragmented, but they are not the same. In a classic discussion of the varied, often contradictory, aspects of selfhood, the psychologist Ulric Neisser subsumed personhood under the heading of the 'conceptual self', one of five aspects of the self or 'kinds of self-knowledge' that also include data derived from direct perception of the physical environment, from species social signals, memory, and the sense of singularity created by awareness of the uniqueness of one's personal experience.[8] In the context of these other modes of self-knowledge, the powerful structures of personhood, though influential, are not determining of our identity.

Analyses of heritage and tradition often conflate selfhood and personhood, personal and cultural identity. This is a relic of nationalist projects, which treated the state and the individual as macro- and microcosms of one another.[9] Nationalist rhetoric reduced the person to a socio-political identity; cultural nationalism reduces the same person to a common body of beliefs and practices – to a cultural artefact, that is. The alternative is the centreless inauthenticity ascribed to modern selfhood in Nelson Graburn's developmental metaphor for understanding heritage and tradition. Evocative as it is, his construct fundamentally conflates selfhood and personhood. If we respect the distinction, however, we should locate cultural variability and change in the realm of personhood rather than in a hybridity grounded in an essentialized self. Individual social identities are fluid even within apparently homogenous societies; cross-cultural contact introduces more possibilities for fluidity, rather than fluidity itself.

The distinction between selfhood and personhood, then, may help to understand cultural fluidity in a nuanced way. Host people can engage as persons, playing shifting cultural roles as the cultural, economic, or political occasion seems to demand, without necessarily understanding themselves as compromising essential selfhood.[10]

Something similar might be said about landscapes. That is, they have no inherent 'traditional' or modern identities or meanings. They are products of multiple, only partially overlapping, circles or realms of knowledge, practice, and significance. A single building, for example, stands at the intersection of realms of craft, finance, commerce, social practice, and sometimes cosmological or intellectual endeavour. It might be constructed by locally trained craftworkers, using materials manufactured half a world away, to house a colonial governor, decorated with classical columns, and oriented geomantically.[11] The 'foreign' materials might represent modernity to one observer, making do to another. To a third, they might have no significance at all. The building has no legible or unified identity. Instead, the attachment of a label such as 'traditional', 'indigenous', or 'modern' *conveys* identity on the building, and by extension on its makers and users,

rather than makers or users conveying an identity on their building. In that sense, all traditions are manufactured.

This is not to say that all such categories are imposed from outside. The same kinds of distinctions are recognized locally. An example is the cross-cultural phenomenon of the ancestral homeland, an imaginary assemblage of natural, historic, and sometimes newly created monuments, edited, altered, added to, and mythically knit together by bits and pieces of historical fact and fantasy to give it a distinctive, characteristic, legible form capable of grounding claims to territory, cultural identity, or nationhood. The Navajo homeland, Dinétah, defined by four sacred mountains, architectural ruins left behind by previous occupants of the territory (drafted as ancestors by the Navajo), and a body of sacred stories, is one. Like the Anglo-Saxon 'colonial' landscape of the East Coast of the United States or the Confederate landscape of the South, Dinétah shares space with the differently imagined homelands of competing indigenous and Euro-American populations.[12]

In a tourist setting, craft workers understand that they and their products have very different significance for local and visiting publics. African-American basket makers on the South Carolina coast work 'traditional' materials in 'traditional' ways, but they make 'traditional' basket forms only for tourists, to whom they offer business cards, so that their customers can recommend the maker to their friends.[13] On the other hand, the New Mexico *santero* (image carver) George López sold the same objects to tourists and local buyers. He told folklorist Charles L. Briggs that 'The block of wood is nothing more than wood . . . The difference is not in the wood or in the way in which one carves it. If you were baptized Catholic . . . then you can take your carving to the father and he will bless it. It does not do anything to pray to the carvings, because they are not holy, they have not been blessed.' Once the image was blessed, it was different, holy, but so was a car or a rosary that had similarly been blessed. 'He who sells it is responsible' for its proper disposition.[14]

Selfhood and personhood can offer a different way of looking at the visitors' side of the tourist-host relationship, as well. Tourists sometimes provoke dramas of social dominance (perhaps less brazenly in the present era of mass tourism and shifting political and cultural values than in Gregory's Egypt), and more often, probably, indulge a romantic mystification of the other. Cultural tourism is both competitive – tourists vie to visit the most, or the most authentic, or the most obscure sites – and integrative – they seek self-improvement through seeing the sights one 'must' see to be a cultivated or educated member of one's home society.[15] In this respect, touristic consumption is outward looking, an aspect of personhood.

But it is also a function of selfhood, which is more complex. Touristic consumption of 'heritage' and 'tradition', which from one perspective

appears merely as appropriation of the cultural 'property' of others, is also an act of bricolage through which consumers manufacture selves in ways that cannot be reduced to simple formulas.[16] As in all consumption, tourists seek pleasure, a kind of 'mentalistic hedonism' in which the cultural meanings sought may be less messages – about what it is to be modern, to be privileged, to be a member of one nationality or ethnicity and not another – than less articulated and less articulatable experiences of selfhood in all the varieties Neisser outlined.[17] However commodified the product may be, in the act of consumption the purchaser or user discovers and internalizes the associated human and psychological meanings. This process has been linked by the anthropologist Daniel Miller to Hegel's account of the process of objectification and reconciliation of Spirit.[18] Since analogous experiences of cultural difference are available to members of the host population, the effects of heritage and cultural tourism are much more difficult to assess than they appear to be at first.

All this is by way of arguing that the issue is not the authenticity of particular modes of engagement, or the legitimacy of the much-derided touristic gaze. Nor is it the mere tourist presence. To frame heritage and tradition in terms of authenticity – of the choice of traditional values, authentic forms, undiluted identities – is to miss the point. The problem is one of conflicts among values, all of which have some legitimacy. The problem, in other words, is political, as Mitchell, LeVine, and Broudehoux all make plain.

The rhetoric of heritage, identity, and authenticity are typically evoked in times of great political and economic changes – in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century, globally in the late nineteenth century and again in recent decades. This rhetoric is a way of claiming or challenging power where traditional political-economic authorities and ideologies close off more direct routes. One anthropological interpretation of ethnicity, for example, is as a device to draw boundaries that can help decide the distribution of scarce resources. This is one way to understand Mark LeVine's story of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, where ethnic difference codified as landscape 'heritage' articulated competing claims to real estate in a tight market. In the tourist world, exaggerated and commodified difference, as in the 'manufactured' traditional architecture of the many 'Chinatowns' found throughout the South Chinese diaspora, or the 'folk' festivals springing up in the American South, can divert needed income from more 'authentic', but often less conspicuous, competitors.[19]

Viewed in this light, the manufacture of heritage and the consumption of tradition become more difficult to define and equally difficult to distinguish in their effects from authentic and indigenous practices. The dichotomies of modernity lose their persuasiveness in the process. The focus of critical analysis begins to drift far away from cultural effects and to move toward political-economic causes.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Samuel H. Beer, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955, p. 13.

2. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

3. Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1976; Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950*, Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967; Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1997; and see the chapters by Phil Gruen and Paul Oliver in this volume.

4. Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp. 60-76; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York, Scribners, 1930.

5. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

6. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York, Schocken, 1989, pp. 91-104.

7. Anthony P. Cohen, *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 56-57.

8. Ulric Neisser, 'Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge,' *Philosophical Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1988, pp. 35-59. The other four are the ecological self, the interpersonal self, the extended self, and the private self, respectively.

9. Cohen, *Self-Consciousness*, p. 157.

10. Peter Lunt, 'Psychological Approaches to Consumption: Varieties of Research – Past, Present and Future,' in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 249.

11. Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 282-283. The historian of science Peter Galison has made a similar point in arguing that 'progress' in science is usually the product of the efforts of actors (e.g., instrument makers and theoretical physicists) whose interests, values, and circles of reference overlap only partially. In his metaphor, what appears to be a single strand of rope (change in science) is, on closer inspection, a series of short, intercalated fibres, none of which has an exact counterpart in any other. (Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997).

12. Upton, *Architecture in the United States*, pp. 78-86; Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays in American Memory*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1996.

13. On the differentiation of goods for local and tourist markets, see Nelson H. H. Graburn (ed.), *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, pp. 1-32.

14. Charles L. Briggs, *The Wood Carvers of Córdova, New Mexico: Social Dimensions of an Artistic 'Revival'*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1980, p. 193.

15. MacCannell, *Tourist*, pp. 91-104; Lunt, 'Psychological Approaches to Consumption,' p. 248.

16. Colin Campbell, 'The Sociology of Consumption,' in *Acknowledging Consumption*, p. 117.

17. Campbell, 'Sociology of Consumption,' p. 118.

18. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp. 19-33, 178-180.

19. Rodger Lyle Brown, *Ghost Dancing on the Cracker Circuit: The Culture of Festivals in the American South*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1997.

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