Stumbling toward the Millennium:
Tourism, the Postindustrial World, and the Transformation of the American West

by Hal K. Rothman

I

Tourism is a devil's bargain, not only in the twentieth-century American West, but throughout the nation and the world. Despite its reputation as a panacea for the economic ills of places that have lost their way in the postindustrial world or for those that never previously found it, tourism typically fails to meet the expectations of communities and regions that embrace it as an economic strategy. Regions, communities, and locales welcome tourism as an economic boon, only to find that it irrevocably changes them in unanticipated and uncontrollable ways. From this one enormous devil's bargain, the dilemma of a panacea that cannot fulfill its promise and alters instead of fixes, flows an entire collection of closely related conditions that complement the process of change in overt and subtle ways. Tourism transforms culture, making it into something new and foreign; it may or may not rescue economies.

As a viable option for moribund or declining places, tourism promises much, but delivers only a little, often in different forms and ways than its advocates anticipate. Its local beneficiaries come from a small segment of the population, "the growth coalition," the landowners, developers, planners, builders, real estate sales and management interests, bankers, brokers, and others.[1] The capital that sustains these interests comes from elsewhere, changing local relationships and the values that underpin them, along with their vision of place. Others flounder, finding their greatest asset and their labor lightly valued. As a result, with tourism come unanticipated and irreversible consequences, unexpected and unintended social, cultural, economic, demographic, environmental, and political consequences that communities, their leaders, and their residents typically face unprepared. This coupling of promise and problem defies the typical mitigation processes of American society, the planning, zoning, and community sanction that historically combine to limit the impact of change.

The embrace of tourism triggers an all-encompassing contest for the soul of a place. As amorphous as is this concept, it holds one piece of the core of the devil's bargain of tourism as a form of living. All places, even untrammeled prairies or rugged deserts, have identities: people see and define them, they have intrinsic characteristics, and they welcome or repel as much based on people's definitions of them as on their innate characteristics. Human-shaped places—cities and national parks, marinas and farms—closely guard their identities, and their people locate themselves within these constructions in ways that give them not only national, regional, and local affiliation but also a powerful sense of self and place in the world. That identity depends on the context of the place, which is linked to its social shape as well as its economy, environment, and culture, and challenges to that identity threaten the status quo, especially when they strain the bonds of community by pitting against one another different elements that hitherto shared alliances. As these bonds fray, sub rosa tensions—there all the time but buried in the fictions of social arrangements—come to the surface, as the impact of change throws the soul of the place, any place, up for grabs.

In the twentieth-century American West, tourism initiates this contest as it regenerates myriad patterns that challenge and reshape the structure of commu-

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nities and regions. The initial development of tourism often seems innocuous and harmless: "beneath the radar" of outside interests, lucrative but not transformative. As places acquire the cachet of desirability with travelers, they draw people and money; the redistribution of wealth, power, and status follows, complicating local arrangements. When tourism creates sufficient wealth, it becomes too important to be left to the locals. Power moves away from local decision-makers—even those who psychically and socially invest in the ways of the new system tourism creates—and toward outside capital and its local representatives. This redistribution changes internal relations, as over time it consolidates into a new dominant template or overlay for the places it develops. The new shape disenfranchises most locals as it makes some natives and most "neo-natives" (those who are attracted to the places that have become tourist towns by the traits of the transformed place) economically better off and creates a place that becomes a mirror image of itself as its identity is marketed. A series of characteristic and oft-repeated consequences results from this scenario, leaving all but a few in tourist communities questioning whether they were better off in the economic doldrums in which they lived before tourism came to town.

In this sense, tourism is the most colonial of colonial economies, not because of the sheer physical difficulty or the pain or humiliation intrinsic in its labor, but as a result of its psychic and social impact on people and their places. Tourism and the social structure it provides make unknowing locals into people who look like themselves, but who act and believe differently as they learn to market their place and its, and their, identity. They change every bit as much as did African workers in the copper mines of the Congo or the diamond mines of South Africa, men from rural homelands who became industrial cannon fodder. Unlike laborers in these colonial enterprises, who lived in obscurity as they labored, tourist workers face an enormous contradiction: who and what they are is crucial to visitors in the abstract; who they are as service workers is entirely meaningless. Tourist workers quickly learn that one of the most essential traits of tourist service is to mirror onto the guest what that visitor wants from you and your place in a way that affirms the visitor's self-image.

Here begins a dilemma, a place where locals must be what visitors want them to be in order to feed and clothe themselves and their families, but also must guard themselves, their souls, and their place, from those who less appreciate its special traits. They negotiate these boundaries, creating a series of "boxes" between themselves and visitors, rooms in which locals encourage visitors to feel that they have become part of the place, but where these locals also subtly guide visitors away from the essence of being local. The Sugar Cane Train in Maui nods in this direction as the conductor tells us his story; tourists do not much care about the stories of the cane-cutters outside the train window.[2] In this process, the visited become something else, somehow different from who they were before as they exchange the privilege of their identity. This fraudulent offer to share an image of their sense of belonging for coin becomes a far harsher bargain than merely exchanging labor and the assets in their ground or on it for their sustenance.

This process of scripting space, both psychically and physically, defines tourist towns and resorts. All places have scripted space; the scripting of space is part and parcel of the organizing of the physical and social world for the purpose of perpetuation. Like commercial space, tourist space is specially scripted to keep the visitors at the center of the picture while simultaneously cloaking, manipulating, and even deceiving them into believing that their experience is the local's life, reality, and view of the world. "Wasn't it wonderful here [in Hawaii] before Captain Cook showed up," a friend said to me over dinner at an exquisite shoreside restaurant in Ma'alea Bay, Maui, thoroughly swallowing the fiction of the scripted space of tourism.[3]

Despite often seductively quaint and romantic settings, seeming harmlessness, and a reputation as a "clean" industry, tourism is of a piece with the modern and postindustrial, postmodern worlds; its social structures and cultural ways are those of an extractive industry. While its environmental byproducts are not the tailings pile of uranium mining, in the West they include the spread of real estate development, the gobbling up of open space in narrow mountain valleys, the traffic and sprawl of expansive suburban communities, and the transformation of the physical environment into roads and reservoirs that provide activity and convenience for visitors. Tourism offers its visitors romanticized visions of the historic past,

Cannery Row, historic sardine-canning district of Monterey, California, illustrates the ways tourism transforms communities and reshapes even their historical memories. After overfishing destroyed the Monterey Bay sardine fisheries after World War II, most of the canneries and working-class houses and businesses were abandoned. Modest numbers of tourists discovered the neighborhood by the 1960s, attracted by the picturesque bayside setting and closed buildings in quaint disrepair, and a few new shops and restaurants were founded to take advantage of the trade. That was nothing compared to what would happen after 1984, with the opening of the Monterey Bay Aquarium in one of the abandoned canneries. Instantly becoming one of the spectacular tourist destinations on the West Coast, the aquarium attracted ever-growing hundreds of thousands of tourists each year. Land values increased sharply; and monstrous traffic jams and parking problems spread to the old, narrow, neighboring streets, provoking loud protests from nearby residents in Monterey and Pacific Grove. A curious combination of luxury hotels and restaurants, art galleries, shopping malls (some in gutted historic factories), and shops specializing in junk tourist articles gobbled up land, tearing down historic buildings in the process and transforming the district. The legitimate industrial, working-class, and environmental history of the district was submerged in a tide of tourism. Virtually the only surviving historical images were those associated with the fictional characters and places in John Steinbeck's celebrated 1940s novel, *Cannery Row,* which at best provided little more than a minor footnote to the neighborhood's past. Above: Former laboratory of Ed Ricketts, marine biologist friend of John Steinbeck and the prototype for "Doc," hero of *Cannery Row,* ca. 1991, which is now in the process of becoming a house museum and the only interpretative historical site on Cannery Row. Right: Monterey Bay Aquarium, ca. 1991. *Editorial staff photographs.*

the natural world, popular culture, and especially of themselves. The sale of these messages, even in their least trammeled form, is what iconoclastic author Edward Abbey called "industrial tourism," the packaging and marketing of experience as commodity within the boundaries of the accepted level of convenience to the public.[4]

The most postmodern of such devices, the ones that meld the technologies, attitudes, and styles of the Age of Information, the era of the global transmission of knowledge that followed 1980, go even further. They purposely create another level of experience that masquerades or prepares for so-called authentic experience, blurring any line that may remain and often making the replica more seductive than the original. Using experience to script space in another way, to design artificial controls that seem natural and ordinary as they highlight the activity by subtly persuading the visitor that the activity is their own, this postmodern form shatters historical distinctions between the real and the unreal by producing faux replicas of experience independent of the activity from which they derive.

Las Vegas has best defined this reality in its redefinition of space, time, and meaning into constructs that serve the visitor, but this form has become ubiquitous. The climbing gym, which offers indoor "mountain climbing" and training for the initiated and uninitiated alike, also fused these concepts. Taking this experience to new heights is a 75-foot-high climbable rock face called Surge Rock, sponsored by Coca-Cola as a way to promote its newest soft drink, Surge, at Sega Gameworks in the Showcase Mall, a prototype upscale entertainment and commercial development that opened in 1997 on the Las Vegas Strip. As the project debuted, Showcase developer and entrepreneur Barry Fieldman climbed the rock-face; family and friends arriving at his six-year-old's birthday party watched him ascend as they rode the elevator down to the first floor, where other climbers assembled.[5]

With the varieties of experience available in the postmodern world, all tourism, from Surge Rock to the Eiffel Tower to an African safari, and even backpacking in the Desolation Wilderness of the Sierra Nevada or following in the footsteps of proto-archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, is scripted industrial tourism. The wealth of industrial society, its transportation technologies, its consumer goods, its emphasis on convenience, and the values of a postmodern, post-consumption culture create the surplus that allows people to have any experience they choose. Its goal is not experience, but fulfillment—experience that makes the chooser feel important, strong, powerful, a member of the "right" crowd, or whatever else they crave. Those determined to leave mainstream society in search of an individual sense of non-tourist travel are scripted into believing that backpacking in the Desolation Wilderness makes them unique or at least part of a rare breed, somehow intellectually and morally above other tourists. This conceit is common among elites—academic and environmentalist among them—who believe they know better than the rest of humanity. The embrace of the inherently fraudulent "ecotourism"—a mere codeword for an activity that parallels the colonial tourism of Theodore Roosevelt in Africa—reveals a stunning naivete in the hope of creating a better world. Finding the little out-of-the-way inn in rural Ireland no more "invents" a unique experience than does a bus tour of Las Vegas or the Universal Studios tour in Los Angeles. It merely offers a wrapper that promises certain sensibilities a self-affirming "authentic experience" in the viewer's terms. The delusion of distance from their society and the superiority of spirit, and sometimes the skill it connotes, exists even for the climbers of Mount Everest. Even as Rob Hall, the vaunted New Zealander guide of the Himalayas, recognized that his death was imminent during a tragic May 1996 ascent, he spoke to his eight-months-pregnant wife and unborn child through a satellite phone, diminishing the idea that any form of tourism can be other than that of the global market. The expedition took place so that people who could afford it could feel personally satisfied; a total of eight people died as a result.[6] "Bagging trophy," as some caustically refer to the status side of postmodern tourism, can be dangerous as well as exhilarating.

For Americans, the natural and cultural landscapes of a mythic American West hold these psychic trophies. The West is the location of the American creation myth, the national *sipapu*, the figurative hole in the earth from which Pueblo Indian people emerged in their story of the beginning of the world. The image

of the West, especially in the conquest that occurred between 1848 and 1890, serves that same mythic purpose for Americans. The Revolutionary War has distant meaning, but in the late twentieth century, the West holds mythic sway. In the post-Civil War West, the U.S. emerged anew and reinvented itself, shedding slavery, sectionalism, and states' rights and becoming the American nation that persisted until its post-Watergate fragmentation. The new nation embodied in the West transcended the inherent flaws of the first republic, which impaled on its own inconsistencies by the shelling of Fort Sumter; the West healed the hole in the heart of the nation born anew after this epic and cataclysmic tragedy. The revised national creation myth gave the West primacy in American life and thinking that grew from innocence and the potential for reinvention, a cachet that further marked the region's importance in a postindustrial world that increasingly depends on tourism. When Americans paid homage to their national and nationalistic roots, they did not look to Independence Hall; they went West as they believed their forefathers did, to find self and create society, to build anew from the detritus of the old.[7] This need for redefinition explains the historic and modern fixation with the West in the United States and even in Europe.

Western tourism stands at the heart of the American drama precisely because it occurs on the same stage as the national drama of self-affirmation. To Americans the West is their refuge, the home of "last best places," as writers William Kittredge and Annick Smith touted the region at the end of the 1980s, home to the mythic landscapes where Americans become whole again in the aftermath of personal or national cataclysm. This virtue and incredible burden makes tourism in the West more tantalizing and tempting, more fraught with tension and anxiety, and more full of text, subtext, and depth than anywhere else in the nation. The same activity in the West means more than elsewhere; the myth of exceptionalism has a life of its own as the Rockies rise in front of westward-bound travelers even as late as Jack Kerouac's adventures in the 1950s.[8] That peculiar standing makes western tourism a crucible in which the forces that drive American capitalism collide with growing and increasingly disparate and random forces, economic, social, cultural, and political, that shake the foundations of the modern world.

Different parts of the American West react to tourism in disparate ways. One West, urban and rural, is tourist-dependent; in states such as Nevada and Hawaii, which depend on tourism to the exclusion of other economic strategies, tourism has become an extension of state government. In both, tourism has paid the bills as it framed a postindustrial economy and postmodern culture; both also show traits of being plantation economies, run by outside capital and local overseers at the expense of the local public.[9] The identity of such places became what they marketed. Tourism there was studied, measured, and surveyed in an attempt to balance its impact with the profits it brought without alienating visitors.

In another West, rural, rooted, and increasing challenged by changing economic conditions, tourism has long been a byproduct, a shadow economy to which few gave much credence. To many, especially those possessed of the myths of individualism that permeate American culture, it seemed ephemeral and unimportant, not as substantive as making things, growing food, or raising animals. In places such as 1920s Jackson Hole, Wyoming, or southern Utah at the proclamation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in 1996, the outright dismissal of its significance as well as its amorphousness allowed tourism to develop with little input, to function autonomously, apart from other more thoroughly measured parts of the regional economy.

A third West, urban, more affluent, and more cosmopolitan, regarded tourism as an integral part of the regional mix, an essential sector of the economy that was not categorically different from the industrial sector or other service endeavor. Los Angeles and San Francisco reflexively cater to tourism as just another economic endeavor. Almost without the recognition of larger regional society, both visitor and visited, tourism acquired distinct forms in such places.

As different as they are in geography and activity, the forms of tourism create similar patterns of life. In origins, economic structure, hierarchical organization, dependence on corridors of transportation, and transformative impact on existing communities, a diverse range of places, from the Grand Canyon to Las Vegas and Disneyland, offers numerous parallels. Tourism

Las Vegas, Nevada, is perhaps the best illustration of the dynamic economic-development potential of tourism (in this case, principally through gambling) and the lure that entices many communities to follow that city's lead. Above: Las Vegas, ca. 1910, when the village was little more than a rail waystation in a harsh, unproductive desert. *Courtesy California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives, Sacramento.* Below: The Las Vegas Strip, lined with luxurious hotel-casinos, is today one of the most famous (and lucrative) streets in the world. *Courtesy Las Vegas News Bureau.*

is barely distinguishable from other forms of colonial economics. Typically founded by resident proto-entrepreneurs, the industry expands beyond local control, becomes institutionalized by large-scale forces of capital, and then grows to mirror not the values of the place, but those of the traveling public of the various moments of the twentieth century. The malleability of the industry makes the places that engage it more pliable, creating pockets of prosperity within localities that are typically limited to incoming neo-natives. Existing elites find themselves facing a trade-off. They can accept profitable but diminished status, or fight with all their energy against outside forces. For ordinary people who typically limp along in many of these locales, tourism offers the promise of panacea, but delivers far less. Many residents give up long-standing patterns of life with the expectation that tourism will provide better material sustenance without diminishing their sense of self or place. Often it does not, leaving people who had once been content in an unsettled mood and economically only barely better off. As a salvation for social, cultural, and economic problems, tourism has typically fallen short; success with it can be even more devastating than failure. Tourism's economic results range from good to disastrous; from a social perspective, no one it touches remains unchanged.

The selection of tourism as a community strategy is a sequence of imperfect choices, where understanding is muddled by the promise of prosperity. It is not inherently bad for people, communities, or regions. It is a choice; but as nineteenth-century social critic William Dean Howells once observed, choice can be a curse. For many places in the American West of the 1990s, tourism seems to offer the best available economic strategy to maintain community fabric, but places that seek it forget that the places that embraced tourism earlier in western history chose it because they had few other economic options. Tourism's greatest danger is its image as panacea. Community leaders hurry to imperfect choices derived from insufficient information without recognizing tourism's potential consequences. Only the benefits, only the successes, only the flow of revenue to state, county, and local coffers, and not the increase in expenditures and the changing social picture, occupy their thoughts. The economist's fallacious dream of rational choice based on perfect information collapses, as unanticipated consequences overwhelm expectations in tourist communities.[10]

II

As Maui reveals, tourism is where modern capitalism ends and its postmodern equivalent, a compelling rendering of the post-1980s cultural and economic landscape, begins. The view of the shore from Lahaina Bay offers a legible geography that operates within a series of conventions that appear intelligible to inhabitants of an industrial sociocultural and economic landscape, but are really quite different. On Maui, experience is the commodity for sale; viewing the whales both epitomizes and is at the same time irrelevant to this process. Maui connotes relaxation and renewal, the respite from the clawing of the modern; its scripting is designed to promote comfort, convenience, and security. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the experience of "being" over the comforts it offers. In this, it is postmodern script, placing the visitor at the center of the picture and encouraging concern with the self far and away above any interaction with the world. The physical world is not the catalyst for experience; on Maui, it is backdrop to the self.

Postmodern capitalism is new terrain, largely unrecognizable except to those who experience it. It is not the capitalism of Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Armand Hammer, or J. Paul Getty, but more that of Walt Disney, Bill Gates, and gaming impresario Steve Wynn. It is not national or nationalistic, but trans-national and global. Its emphasis is not on the tangible activity of making things, of ever-larger assembly lines and production processes, but in the marketing of images, of information, of spectacle. It creates information and information-processing systems and the accouterments that turn regional and national economic endeavor into a global commodity. Of equal significance, postmodern, postindustrial capitalism produces images that convey emotions—hope and contentment chief among them—as well as conduits through which information can travel. It is a form at once substantial and inconsequential, crucial yet trivial, meaningful yet ephemeral. Its sociocultural impact is vast; in its ability to move information, and as a result to move more traditional forms of economic endeavor such as

assembly-line work, postmodern global capitalism is truly revolutionary. Postindustrial capitalism has changed the very meaning of economic endeavor, providing new ways to produce wealth in a transformation as profound as the industrial revolution.

Industrial capitalism began in a productive ethos, a work ethic rightly or wrongly labeled "Protestant," and an ideal of making things large and small with an ebullient joy that helped make consumption of these goods an afterthought. Pragmatism permeated the production phase of American capitalism, that great expansion of productivity associated with the years between 1865 and 1914. It focused on the transformation of raw material into useable commodity, such as steel, or finished product, such as a sewing machine or telephone. The shelves of goods available in the "palaces of consumption," the department stores, were the signature of the age. Utility defined this phase of capitalism, manifesting in the time-and-motion studies of Frederick Winslow Taylor and the subsequent invention of the assembly line, as well as in transportation systems such as railroads and electric street cars that utilized industrial technologies.[11]

Intimately connected to production was consumption, the dominant feature of the stage of industrialization that gathered momentum following World War I. The spectacular consumption by the elite of the late nineteenth century, labeled "conspicuous" by social critic Thorstein Veblen, triggered an emphasis on the status, rather than the utility, of goods. This continued with the advent of mass technologies such as the radio, the moving picture, and later, television, and reached its pinnacle in the refinement of details that marked the planned obsolescence built into the graciously lined and finned vehicles of the immediate post-World War II era. Consumption became first a means to an end in American society, and later an end in itself; before collecting toys took hold, consumption fueled production. Consumption was about using and enjoying the largesse of American economic development, a concept foreign when industrialization began in the U.S., but that grew in significance in fits and starts until it gathered full force during the 1920s. That enjoyment made consuming goods desirable, or commodified them, went hand-in-hand with the rise of advertising, the widespread availability of credit, and the increased social importance of the self. It reached a pinnacle during the American Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, articulated with a razor-sharp edge by social observer and wag Tom Wolfe in his famed essay from the 1970s, "The Me Decade."[12] In this world, the needs of the individual ruled without social checks upon them. The ethic of tangible consumption became the dominant feature in the transformation of the nation from one that avowed deferred gratification to one that collectively and individually sought fulfillment in an instant. First industrial-age Americans made things; then they bought them.

In the postindustrial world, Americans became consumers of more than tangible goods, of the spirit and meaning of things rather than of their physical properties. What Americans of a certain class could touch and hold no longer exclusively granted the security and importance to which its possessors were accustomed. When anyone could lease a BMW, the elite needed more: the control of feelings, emotion, identity, and modes of understanding that signified status, a way to differentiate themselves from the increasingly luxurious mass cultural norm. A new step in commodification came to dominate the American and international landscape. Corporations packaged and people purchased what they felt granted them identity, but that identity ceased to follow traditional iconography and became a product of the international culture marketplace.[13] Modernism had been about finding the individual's place in the world of machines; the mergers and downsizing of postindustrialism rendered the individual irrelevant, as postmodernism made the self the only meaningful reference point. Ultimately, this affirmed a series of trappings, tangible and shapeless, that proclaimed an identity of the self, a far cry from the national identity of the production ethos. Adorning the self became a goal, but not only with jewelry and clothing. An intangible dimension gained great significance.

Tourism, in which people acquire intangibles—experience, cachet, proximity to celebrity—became the successor to industrial capitalism, the endpoint in a process that transcended consumption and made living a function of accouterments. It created a culture—languid and bittersweet, and as writer Mark Edmundson put it, "very, very self-contained. . . . There's little fire, little passion to be found"—that had as its object participation in consumption.[14] Yet even

On the site of a historic mansion, Sunnyside, the north Lake Tahoe resort, restaurant, and marina, promises to provide guests the "heritage of Old Tahoe." The historic structure, however, was remodeled beyond recognition in the 1980s, a subsequent fire destroyed much of what was left of the original, and the establishment is owned by a San Francisco-based chain. *Editorial staff photograph.*

the young recognized that this culture was equally post-tangible. Material goods no longer fulfilled and created status in the U.S. and Europe. Only a very few products were so elite that they could not be widely owned and even those few could be suitably copied. Goods were not sufficient; status became a function of context, of address, of place, of table in a restaurant. Although the water was the same and the towels no softer and only marginally fluffier at the Grand Wailea's pool than any other, the pool contained a trained aestheticism that Americans, and world citizens, mistake for "better." The pilfered wristbands there provided entrée into this world, the look of prosperity and status, wrapped around the intangible of presence in the "right" places. In the postindustrial, postmodern world, people collect the difference embodied in travel experience as some once collected Fabergé eggs. The act of travel, especially on terms dictated by the self, has come to mark the self-proclaimed well-rounded and has allowed individuals to define themselves as unique. Travel as defining experience has become a new form of religion, a harbinger of a new way in which to believe and especially value the self. Bumper stickers will soon sport sayings like "she who has been the most places and stayed in luxury in all of them wins," instead of the more passé "he who dies with the most toys wins."

Tourism is the archetype of the service economy, the market of the future. Its form resembles that of the industrial world and derives wealth from it, but tourism is new, postindustrial in the way it competes economically and in the transnational global patterns of capital distribution it reveals. The seemingly non-

descript Sunnyside Inn lodge and restaurant on the shores of Lake Tahoe appears certain to be a one-owner lodge, an old-time resort. Here in a restored home built by Captain Kendrick of the Schlage Lock Company early in the century, visitors receive an elegant and relaxing experience, real hospitality like the captains of industry received. A close look at the walls reveals a line of photos of peer restaurants, other members of the TS Restaurant chain—in Kaanapali, Lahaina, Malibu, and Huntington Beach.[15] The Sunnyside Inn has not belonged to family operators since 1986, when San Francisco restauranteurs bought the inn and restored it to its former elegance. Sunnyside Inn was one of more than one dozen restaurants, all scripted to offer unique experience, to be contained in one management group. This faux chain, precisely unlike chain restaurants such as Denny's in its diversity of ambience, but adhering to the chain formula, shows the ways in which activities packaged as distinct have structural parallels. These, too, are networks, shaped by the scripting of space, formed of capital, of influence, of power, of attraction, but that outwardly deny their association with each other in a way that industrial networks never did.

Nor is participation in this economy the same as in its industrial counterpart. Selling ambience, experience, and identity has little in common with selling durable goods, except for the physical act of selling. Little that can be touched and handled changes hands in the tourist transaction; the souvenirs are big business, but they are emblems of the point, not the point itself. What occurs is more complicated and ambiguous than a typical material sales transaction in American society. A feeling is transmitted and perhaps shared; a way of living is expressed; a mode of behavior, be it the ethos of skiing, the appreciation of the Mona Lisa, or the way to hold your cards at the blackjack table, is offered and recognized, if not always understood. These markers of belonging, of being part of the fashionable, the exciting, the new, become critical in a world where most earlier indicators of status have become easily attainable and, as a result, have lost their ability to differentiate from the masses. In this new form of exchange, something meaningful but not tangible, typically the identity, way of life, or feel of a place and its people, seems to be offered up for a price. But not always.

III

A view of tourism from the perspective of the visited, and not the visitor, highlights a different set of relationships in the transaction between visitor and visited. For locals and incoming "neo-native" workers, people who embrace the constructed ethos of a place and generally become willing to be underemployed there in order to imbibe its essence, the embrace of tourism leads to significant changes. A world in which people do what appears to be the same thing but in a different way, with a different feel, becomes first characteristic and then overwhelming. Sun Valley, Idaho, native and writer John Rember cogently describes this situation. "There are worse lives than those lived in museums," he mused about his own fate, "worse shortcomings than a lack of authenticity."[16] As problematic as is the concept of authenticity, Rember's definition holds much weight. "Authentic" to him is a world that serves its residents ahead of outsiders, that grows crops, hunts animals for the table instead of sport, and is tuned to the rhythms of the land; it is agricultural and industrial, the forms called "first nature" and "second nature" by noted historian William Cronon.[17] The tourist world inverts that principle, opening a new realm of existence, a "third nature," much to the distress of writers such as the late Edward Abbey and locals who remember a time before tourism descended upon them and changed their lives.

The world Rember remembers and eloquently describes is Cronon's first and second nature. First nature, the prehuman landscape (and I would add, its organization by humans for subsistence purposes), contained essentially hunting and gathering, herding, and small-scale agrarian regimes. It is not devoid of humans, for that would render it meaningless and abstract, a time beyond time for the human race. Instead, first nature describes hundreds of centuries of relationship between a species and their world, which they typically could only effect in small ways. The prototype for second nature became, for Cronon, Chicago, a place apart from first nature but intrinsically tied to it, its utility transformed by proto-industrial and later heavy industrial processes, forms of organization, and physical and intellectual structures and symbols.[18] If first nature was organized

to feed and clothe the self and the family, second nature's forms were designed to market to the world.

"Third nature," like postindustrial economies and postmodern thinking, focuses not on what can be touched but on what can be felt in a personal and emotional sense. It is a natural world organized to acquire intangibles, experience, and cachet, to grant identity, to regard nature not as source of food, but instead as fount of psychic energy and emotion. Faux or real, scenery evokes powerful emotions. The *fin de siècle* tourist understood the Grand Canyon as an affirmation of the nation. The postmodern tourist sees it not as external untrammeled nature, but in its impact on the self. Surge Rock is real to people who do not see El Capitan as more than a climbing rock; it provokes similar respect, because for the self, it shares the same purpose with El Capitan. Third nature is intangible, ungrasped by the hands. It is ethereal; only in the mind, and maybe even the heart, can its significance exist.

Yet even those who remember a world before the tourism of third nature and sometimes resent the present can not live without tourism, for it provides them a promise of permanence in place, a kind of importance, and income. Where Rember's ways of making a living never existed or have become tenuous, where the power of social structure has weakened and frayed, where many or even most have little to look forward to except the drudgery of poverty and irrelevance, the promise of tourism and, often, the physical changes and attendant growth it creates, provide hope and the glimmer of a future. Tourism begins as panacea for real problems, but becomes addictive. Its promise of vitality appears to offer a way to do better than survive, than merely to bump along near the bottom in eternal mind-numbing stasis. It is a way to dream of better in a reality much the same.

These multiple tensions play in ambiguous and multi-faceted ways in the development of a tourist economy. The selection or acceptance of tourism as a strategy for community well-being forces a new characterization of the virtues of place, different from its previous shape. When AMFAC developed Kaanapali as a resort, it evaluated the area differently from what it did for sugar production. It also illuminates a working description of the local power structure, soon to change as a result of tourism. These two features define place, often to the consternation of people who perceive their position in a manner different from how it becomes ascribed. Here John Rember's fictional characters live, here the "real" of the local world separates from the perceived real that visitors are encouraged to embrace, as locals deftly guide them away from their own essence. At this location, the tension between the various polarities of these different world views finds its manifestation.

Tourism turns place and people into something different, but few can do without its benefits. It brings new neighbors, who often do not share existing values, but those newcomers are a source of prosperity. In the West, tourism encourages the marketing of something different from the beef grazed on local grass, the timber in nearby forests, or the riches buried deep in the ground. While these, too, can be exercises in colonialism that impress a structure upon the town, they require only the backs of the locals, not their hearts or minds as well. In tourism, the very identity of place becomes its economic sustenance, and in that transformation is a complicated and paradoxical situation for the people.

IV

Three basic, overlapping, and intertwined types of tourism have evolved and become integrated during the twentieth century in the American West. All three existed in various forms from the beginning of the era of mass transportation. They rose to dominance in no small part based on the cultural values, the distribution of wealth, and the availability of transportation to the destinations that defined the ethos of the moment. All revealed specific attributes of the dominant thinking of their times, superseding the other forms of tourism that co-existed alongside them. In this respect, the different forms of tourism became cumulative rather than sequential. Each successive stage of dominance embodied traits of its predecessors as it wove those attributes into the new shape through which it refracted changing American values.

The first of these to develop was *heritage*, or *cultural tourism*, the marketing of the historic, scenic, and mythic past. Long before the turn of the twentieth century, Americans defined a cultural heritage for themselves apart from the European legacy they revered,

emulated, and to which they felt inferior. Cultural values and a need for a national iconography made a reverential approach to both the past and the spectacular scenic attributes of the West a cultural necessity. The art of Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, and others reflected that mythic formulation, and conceptually—and through the railroad, physically—generations embraced it. As long as travel remained an upper-middle- and upper-class phenomenon, heritage and cultural tourism exemplified its dominant ethos.

This class-based tourism reflected and resulted from the industrialization of the late nineteenth century. It embodied the simultaneous confidence and insecurity of the industrial age, the tremendous pride in the accomplishments of industrial society and the myriad benefits it brought, as well as the uncomfortable feeling caused by the changes it wrought. In the initial phase of national tourism, the industry embodied a class-based affirmation of the power and virtues of the modern, while providing a context for a critique of industrial society. In this ascribing of society-wide meaning to place, tourism served an important conceptual role in American society. Western tourism, so closely allied with the idea of Manifest Destiny, the quest for the sublime, and the desire to know that marked *fin de siècle* America, became an integral part of reassuring the powerful of their place in a rapidly changing world.

During the 1920s, broader distribution of increased wealth, better transportation systems, particularly the popularization of the automobile, and easier access to remote places initiated the rapid development of nationally marketed *recreational tourism*, a phenomenon that involved physical experience in the outdoors instead of the museum-like appreciation for cultural and natural features that characterized heritage tourism. This variation melded the amenities required by elite nineteenth-century tourists with activities that appealed to a broader public, less status conscious but more affluent and possessed of greater amounts of leisure time after World War II. One result was the development of the ski industry and the emergence of prewar resorts such as Sun Valley, Idaho, and in the postwar years, Aspen, Colorado.

As the infrastructure that supported travel developed, as roads stretched toward the horizon in the American West and tourist camps and motor courts followed, travel became democratized. No longer were the wealthy the only people who could arrive at desirable destinations. The social spread in automobile ownership assured that a wider range of people visited a broader spectrum of places and passed through a far more diverse world on the way, expanding the impact of tourism, but diluting the intensity of its message. The new traveler, more middle-class, and by the 1920s less tuned to the tastes of the American elite, enjoyed different activities. The influence of cultural and heritage tourism gave way to the sheer experience of recreation.

The growth in population and employment opportunities in the post-World War II era, technological innovations such as air travel and air-conditioning, and the rise of a society that placed a premium on leisure and had the discretionary money to fund that obsession helped inaugurate a third phase labeled *entertainment tourism*. Between 1945 and 1973, the U.S. experienced economic growth of such great proportion that it altered American expectations. The combination of wealth and technology allowed Americans unparalleled freedom and changed the way they experienced the world. Television contributed greatly to this conceptual reformulation, as did the panoply of popular culture devices, from cable television to the VCR, boombox, Walkman, and personal computer that followed. In this changing cultural self-pronouncement, the West retained even greater significance. It became a playground, the American dreamscape, historic, mythic, and actual, spawning a complex industry with the ability to transform places as it created an economy for destitute and flourishing communities alike. The development of Las Vegas, Disneyland, and their range of imitators characterized this phase. In the post-1945 United States, travel to accomplish personal objectives acquired the status of national birthright, and changing modes of transportation and accommodation made all its forms accessible to a broader range of people than ever before.

In the post-war era, the three basic forms of tourism melded into images of their earlier incarnations. Heritage and recreational tourism in the West, historically linked by geography, developed closer ties as the tastes of the American public changed. Entertainment

At Old Sacramento, tourism and history coexist in a tenuous, uneasy balance. In the 1960s, historic preservationists rescued Sacramento's most historic district from promoters and state engineers and bureaucrats who planned to demolish the gold-rush-era steamboat and railroad city center in order build a freeway along the Sacramento River. Subsequent success in attracting tourists and local shoppers, however, has had mixed results. The architecture of the gold-rush era is well restored, if greatly sanitized and romanticized, and important historic interpretive centers do exist at the California State Railroad Museum, the Sacramento Discovery Museum (of Sacramento history), the California Military Museum, the Wells Fargo History Museum, and a few other sites. Legitimate history is obscured for many visitors, though, by a host of other activities that have little or nothing to do with the district's past: jazz festivals, t-shirt shops, bulk candy stores, gourmet coffee houses, and a few fast-food chain franchises. *Editorial staff photographs.*

tourism eventually included both recreational and heritage tourism within its broad dimensions, packaging experience in resorts and national parks and mimicking what these forms offered in the packaged unreality of Disneyland, theme parks, and even Las Vegas. The result was an industry that was sufficiently malleable to weave straw into gold. As in the children's fairy tale about the miller's daughter, there was a steep price to pay for the trick: the cultural, environmental, and psychic transformation of place. Tourism makes new places that look like their predecessors and occupy the same geography, but ultimately all that the past and future share in such places is the physical attributes of the place.

The approach of tourism also frays the bonds of community. Ties within communities exist on two levels: actual bonds of connection and agreed-upon fictions of community. In this latter category, people paper over the differences among themselves in an effort to maintain the semblance of community. They stipulate that their disagreements are matters of conscience and belief that divide any people of good character and intent. The embrace of tourism, however, shatters such fictions, pitting different elements against each other, those who stand to benefit from the changes against those whose economic status will be driven downhill as a result. Such tension is not unusual in any kind of community; especially in small tourist or resort towns, the destruction of the fiction that all have the best interests of the community at heart leads to a rending of the social fabric. Those who stand to benefit, the members of the growth coalition, embrace the new, sometimes with terrifying alacrity; those whom this economic change leaves in stasis or decline seethe, resent, and sometimes resist.

These elements band together and develop a range of strategies to halt, slow, deflect, or reverse the changes that tourism brings. A continuum of response among those threatened evolves, taking all forms from resistance to negotiation to acceptance to denial, as places define themselves in terms of their past, which often seems far more palatable than the present and future. In highly educated and sophisticated communities, filled with neo-natives from the elite groups in American society, such resistance can be powerful and all-encompassing. The loosely defined rubric of "quality of life" serves as the concept behind such efforts. In communities with greater affinity to accept power from above, with fewer people who feel control over the fate of their place, such actions often consist of grumbling disguised as social critique. In all cases, the right to challenge change is conveyed through self-identification rituals that have social, cultural, and sometimes economic traits. These rituals, ranging from photographs of the people of Aspen lined up next to markers connoting the year they arrived on the local rugby field, to commercials reminding Las Vegans of "how it used to be before the volcano, before the pyramid," prove local and neo-native identity and strengthen ties within the wide group that are no less than ambivalent about the changes tourism causes.[19]

As a solution to the social and economic problems of the colonial status inherited from the nineteenth-century West, the tourist industry has vast limitations. The "sink" of economic strategies, the last resort of moribund communities and states, the bottom to which all economies flow, tourism is employed by local leaders as a solution to the problems of places with declining industries. Tourism requires no special skill of its employees save a willingness to be gracious and attentive. Operators of tourist enterprises rarely require tax abatements and local dollars to support the industry, and the retail trade generated by tourism fills the coffers of most western states with sales tax revenue. Tourism often becomes a response to economic desperation. It serves as a replacement economy for declining industries. Viewed through the rosiest of lenses, tourism promises that a community can retain its fabric and character as it brings prosperity.

Unlike traditional industries, which often bring a labor force that becomes socialized to local norms, tourism comes replete with transient newcomers. Labor follows tourism, as do managers and other supervisory personnel. So do neo-natives, people drawn to tourist destinations for their charm and amenities, for their *mise en scène*, who find themselves embracing a fixed moment in local time. The tourists themselves become a strong influence, objects of contempt and gratitude, but harbingers of a range of experience beyond that of most locals. The need for tourists to experience something they define as real, but that they can quickly understand, compels

change. Locals who expect to be who they were become who their visitors want them to be; increasingly these purveyors of local service cease to be local at all. Neo-natives replace locals, creating the oddly postmodern spectacle of newcomers imitating locals for visitors, to give those outsiders what they are paying for: reality as the tourist understands it.

A paradox results: local communities that embrace tourism expect that they will be visited by many people, but that, mostly, their lives will remain the same. They do not anticipate, nor are they prepared for, the ways in which tourism can change them, the rising cost of property in their town, the increased traffic, the self-perception that the work they used to do was not important, and the diminishing sense of pride in work and ultimately in community, and the tears in the social fabric that follow. Many find selling themselves more complicated than selling the minerals in their ground or the beef raised on their ranches. With diminishing economic options, tourism is sometimes all there is left.

Western tourism typifies the impact of the industry in places that rely on it throughout the world. The West remains an economic colony, supported by federal and outside dollars, subject to both extra-regional and intra-regional influences seeking to assert independence and to control its destiny, but which finds itself with the economic structure and socio-cultural issues of a colony hardened beyond transfiguration. The structure of these communities and their evolution, the way they utilize transient and semi-permanent labor, and how they constantly become reinvented as new forms of themselves highlight the problems of tourist-based economies. Identity becomes malleable, as national chains, many of them resort-based, replace local businesses. These stores become ubiquitous, obscuring local business and culture to a traveling public that is seeing just what it saw at home but in a different setting, and in the process, affirming home, travel destination, and self. This homogenization and increasing uniformity reflect, rather than foreshadow, transformation. Although the arrival of such businesses illustrates the increased economic importance of tourist communities, it also spells the end of existing cultures. Often this arrival amounts to "killing the goose that laid the golden egg." The inherent problem of communities that succeed in attracting so many people is that the presence of those very people destroys the cultural and environmental amenities that made the place unique.

This is the core of the complicated devil's bargain that is twentieth-century tourism in the American West. Success creates the seeds of its own destruction, as more and more people seek the experience of an "authentic" place transformed to seem more "authentic." In search of "life-style" instead of life, these seekers of identity and amenity transform what they touch beyond recognition. Things that look the same are not the same; actions that are the same acquire different meaning. In the process, tourists validate the transformations they cause; locals must bend as tourism deflects them, all the while fostering a grumbling social critique often indistinguishable from nostalgia for the world they have demolished. The tensions of industrial capitalism take on new shape.

Third nature, nature as spectacle, develops an ethos that claims more similarity to first nature than to the industrial second nature that provides its wealth. Tourism complicates; it defines and redefines life after industrialization. It is different, yet the same. Western tourism sells us what we are, what we as a nation of individuals need in order to validate ourselves, to make us what we want to be. In that process, we as tourists change all that we encounter. Making us what we want to be means shaping other places and people along with ourselves. This is the fault line of tourism, its Grand Canyon. CHS

See notes beginning on page 196.

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