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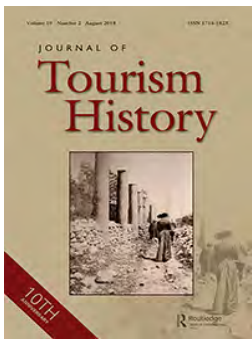
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Art, tourism and authenticity. Dean MacCannell in correspondence with José Díaz Cuyás*

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ABSTRACT

The launch of *The Tourist: New Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1976, written by Dean MacCannell (New York: Schocken Books), marked the beginning of a new academic discipline in the field of tourism studies. The acknowledgement of his pioneering role has become commonplace for an entire branch of university research that has not ceased to grow and develop over the past few decades. However, this broad consensus comes with a singularity: a misunderstanding about the theoretical foundations that have accompanied the book since its appearance.

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The launch of *The Tourist: New Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1976, written by Dean MacCannell (New York: Schocken Books), marked the beginning of a new academic discipline in the field of tourism studies. The acknowledgement of his pioneering role has become commonplace for an entire branch of university research that has not ceased to grow and develop over the past few decades. However, this broad consensus comes with a singularity: a misunderstanding about the theoretical foundations that have accompanied the book since its appearance.

Despite its ‘reality’, the figure of the tourist is reluctant to be fixed within a specific social category: you are a tourist when situated, but not permanently. This makes unviable any attempt of classifying the tourist in terms of identity or belonging to a cohesive group. The term ‘tourist’ does not only refer, in the author’s view, to the ‘real’ traveller, but above all, to ‘one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general’ (1). This analysis of a modern-man-in-general defied the compartmentalisation of disciplines at the time, and demanded a matching general theory of society. The challenge of facing that ‘ethnography of modernity’, for which the tourist worked as model, made MacCannell look for a holistic theory that crosses traditional boundaries amongst the social sciences.

Émile Durkheim’s sociology and Claude Lévy-Strauss’s structural anthropology – although used by MacCannell against the grain – gave him the foundation for that desired ‘theory that best fit my facts’ (2). Drawing on empirical work with a heterogeneous body of facts, his conclusion was that ‘tourist attractions are precisely analogous to the religious symbolism of primitive people’, and that these ‘provide direct access to the modern

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consciousness or “world view” (2). Charles Sanders Peirce’s and Roland Barthes’s semiology helped him articulate, theoretically, this systemic correspondence between tourism and society, as did the sociology of Thorstein Bunde Veblen, Frank Young, and particularly, Erving Goffman. Dean MacCannell’s book is not an actual theoretical or sociological study of tourism; it is precisely this new object of study that leads him to elaborate an all-embracing social theory about modernity. For MacCannell, modernity *is* the process of differentiation. The divisive nature of modernisation tends to increase the complexities ‘between social classes, life-styles, racial and ethnics groups, age grades (the youth, the aged), political and professional groups and the mythic representation of the past to the present’ (11). Attractions are the unplanned product and agent of these differentiations that allow uprooted tourists to build totalities out of uneven experiences.

This approach opens up a productive perspective for an interpretation of artistic manifestations, not only for works explicitly linked with tourism but in general. Art-works as ‘cultural products’, especially from the Sixties, are also affected by the ‘dialectic of authenticity’ governing the modern touristic experience. In a complex society whose nature is producing limitless differentiations, anything is susceptible to becoming an attraction. Similarly, from the neo-avant-gardes anything is also susceptible to becoming a work of art.

In this conversation, conducted via email between July and August 2017 and originally published in the Spanish-language publication *Concreta*, Dean MacCannell thoroughly addresses subjects such as the relationship between tourism and revolution throughout the development of the book, his theoretical and practical interest in the last decades on the symbolic play of art, the ideological consequences of the prevalence of the imaginary over the symbolic in contemporaneity, as well as its relationship with the current crisis of patriarchy.

José Díaz Cuyás: In your book *The Tourist*, published in 1976, you talk about two poles or extremes of modern conscience: tourism and revolution. On the one hand, you describe the willingness to accept or enjoy things as they are, and on the other, the desire to change the status quo. I have been fascinated about this dichotomy ever since I read your book. The publication seems to be nourished by this appealing dilemma in the 1960s and early 1970s, and perhaps by your youth too. I would like to start our conversation by outlining a series of questions about this. Your book about tourism was key in the transformation of an ordinary phenomenon into a serious issue, worthy of becoming a subject of academic research, but it originally emerged as a counterpart to another book that you planned to write about revolution. A proper modern myth that, even if its potential was diminished in the 1970s while you were writing, it was still very strong in the 1960s. What made you think about this dualism as a unique double-sided project? Why did you finally abandon the writing of the book on revolution? I am under the impression that in one way or another the shadow of this other book project is hinted throughout all your work about tourism. Am I right?

Dean MacCannell: You are right to suspect that my interest in 1960s style revolution was fading even before *The Tourist* appeared in print. I left the words in the text about wanting to study ‘tourism and revolution’ to mark my desire for improving human life. I have

never given up on that. And, yes, the unwritten book on revolution cast a shadow over *The Tourist* and all the rest of my work since then. But already in the early 1970s it was clear to me that ‘The Revolution’ (as we called it then) was not going to happen. Let me explain. My growing scepticism was based on a series of coincidental experiences that put me at the locations of three of the most potent expressions of 1960s revolutionary fervour. I was an undergraduate at Berkeley in the lead-up to the Free Speech Movement; in Paris in May of 1968; and at Cornell for the Black students’ armed take-over of parts of campus in 1969. At these events, I was an observer more than a participant. I marched and engaged in some public speaking, was gassed and had to dodge concussion grenades, but I never defended a barricade, broke a window, helped overturn a car, hurled a *pavé*, or made a Molotov cocktail. I did discuss strategy and tactics in detail with the more active participants and closely followed what was happening from inside the action. I still have my notes and drawings explaining how to transform a barricade from a defensive into an offensive weapon.

Paradoxically, my scepticism about ‘The Revolution’ was more a result of the successes of these moments than of their failures. I cannot say I became disillusioned. Because I was close enough to the action, I was never ‘illusioned’. Paris was my main education. After May, 1968 I began to look elsewhere for models for the future. Why? Not because we lost. WE WON. The student-worker coalition occupied the streets, every ministry, the stock exchange, the faculties, the factories, even the Opera. Charles de Gaulle publicly admitted that he could not use the regular police or army against us because he could not be certain of their loyalty. By the end of the month, it was clear that De Gaulle’s ‘forces of order’, the feared and hated CRS, had been overwhelmed. What happened next? NOTHING. No regime change, no negotiated demands, no institutional reforms. Looking back, it appears the only result was a reorganisation of the faculties designed to frustrate any similar future mobilisation.

Western Society had become too complex for the revolutionaries to re-program. I now believe that at its most positive, 1960s style protest is mainly pedagogical. The activists do keep us focused on systemic problems: economic inequality and unequal justice, abuses of police power, racism and xenophobia. They are good at framing the right issues, but have little imagination or effective strategies for actually steering the ship of state. (In this regard they are probably not much different from most of the current crop of democratically elected politicians.)

Before *The Tourist* was published, The Events of May had fizzled into summer vacation. The Free Speech Movement degenerated into the Hippie Movement – more about drugs than free speech. Black Studies became less about black studies and more about personal empowerment and self-esteem. Fifty years on ‘The Revolution’ has come down to the pathetic rhetoric of Bernie Sanders. So you are completely correct that I came at tourism from a revolutionary angle. It was clear to me that we needed a much better understanding of our current social situations and arrangements as a necessary prologue to changing them.

The passage in *The Tourist* that haunts me the most in this regard is this one under the heading ‘The Evolution of Modernity’:

Imagine what no revolutionary party or army has dared to imagine – a revolution so total as to void every written and unwritten constitution and contract. This revolution changes not merely the laws but the norms: no routine, no matter how small can be accomplished without

conscious thought and effort. During this revolution every book is completely re-written and, at the same time, every book, in fact thought itself, is translated into a new kind of language. During this revolution the cities are levelled and re-built on a new model. Every masterpiece is re-painted and every unknown shred of the past is dug out of the earth while all known archaeological finds are buried under new meanings. During this revolution, the overthrow of Capitalist economies appears as a midterm economic adjustment. This revolution is a true revolution, unlike the regressive pseudo revolutions of political and religious movements that make a place for themselves by burning the land and the books of others. This revolution that submerges the most radical consciousness in its plenitude is, of course, unthinkable.

And yet, our laws have undergone total change and our cities have been rebuilt block by block. Our masterpieces are remade in each new genre. Critical and scientific language that wants to describe these changes always risks seeming to have lost its meaning ...¹

It is very clear that I believed Modern Culture to be a much larger and encompassing domain than the economy or capitalism. And the cultural change that is happening around us today to be more revolutionary than 'the revolution' based on Marxist programs.

I had, and continue to have, complete respect for Karl Marx's analysis of the role of the worker in industrial production, the nature of the commodity, and especially his handling of the moral implications of his labour theory of value. These should continue to hold a place of respect in the study of what is going on around us today. But they have proven to be fairly useless as a basis for a call to action. I read the complete works of Mao Zedong and Vladimir Lenin (everything available in English) before finishing *The Tourist* and concluded that the proletariat of the industrial West was already too fragmented to gain the kind of revolutionary traction that was possible in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, or in China at its midpoint.

JDC: One of the main sources of your book is Erving Goffman's works about the microsociology of ordinary life. The development of his theory about the theatricality of everyday life is articulated around the idea of authenticity. You have used the concept of *authentic experience* to understand better what you call 'cultural productions'. In a broad sense all forms of art and tourism can be considered cultural productions ...

DM: Goffman was my friend and mentor and I always try to hold myself to the standards he set. He rigorously worked out the details of face-to-face interaction. And, yes, its theatricality. I was always more intrigued by macro-social phenomena – what is going on at the level of entire societies. My first move when I began researching *The Tourist* was to try to understand the effects of the shift from industrial production to what I called 'cultural production'. My anthropological education instilled in me an absolute: human adaptability and survival is inextricably bound to culture and especially to culture's capacity for change. Everything we call a 'cultural tradition' was once a radical innovation. The shift in emphasis from industrial production to cultural production, and the 'progressive differentiation of modern culture', seemed to me to be the main change that happened after the Industrial Revolution. My concept of 'cultural production' permitted me to bring

¹Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 12.

Goffman's handling of the theatricality of everyday life into my interests in macro-social phenomena. It amuses me that my term 'cultural production' has come into near universal usage in academic writing in the English language without acknowledgment of its source and origin and certainly without regard for the theoretical underpinnings I tried to give it in *The Tourist*.

JDC: In relation to the idea of *authenticity*: it is fascinating the parallels between Goffman's research into ordinary life and the expansion of happenings and performance art – in some sense a theatricality of the everyday, as a practice in itself in the New York scene. It is striking how something that should be self-evident became the subject of research for sociologists and a source of reference material for many artists working more or less in the same period. On the other side of the Atlantic, Henry Lefebvre, another sociologist and also pioneer of everyday life studies – but with a different take on it – organised an academic seminar at the C.N.R.S. in Paris in 1961. Guy Debord,² leader of The Situationist International, was invited. Debord, who always fed his fame for pleasure seeking, sent a tape recording that allowed him to maintain the play of being present in academia by being absent. In his intervention, Debord rhetorically asked himself: 'What is private life deprived of?' He continued: 'Quite simply of life itself, which is cruelly absent'. As an artist and theoretician, Debord brilliantly expressed what many thought: something very serious was taking place, something related to daily life that needed to be interpreted in terms of authenticity and alienation. Ordinary life was mediated and commodified. The same thing occurred with art; hence authentic life needed to be found, a real life that was only available, in this case, in art – revolutionary and experimental. Can we say then, that as it occurs with every cultural production in late capitalism, the dialectics around authenticity take place – although in very different forms – in the avant-garde (elite) as well as in tourism (mass culture)?

DM: My take on Debord and the Situationists may be a bit different from yours. His, and much other neo-Marxist thought and action, is marked by disappointment that 'the revolution' did not take place in the industrial economies of the West. Marx's formulations lent themselves, perhaps too easily, to the bourgeois fantasy that the industrial proletariat will continue to do our dirty work for us, including the work of revolution. Debord was principled in his disillusionment. He asks in theory and also in practice, 'if the revolution is not going to happen, is life worth living?' Debord attributes the failure of the revolution à la Marx, to a flaw in Marx's derivation of class relations, at least its continuing salience through the twentieth century. He looked beyond 'the means of production' and class dialectics for a new 'motor of history' and thought he found it in Capital's masterful substitution of imaginary human relationship for real ones – imaginary relations that serve Capital's needs for servile workers and eager consumers. In his formulation that you

²French poet, filmmaker, theorist and activist, born in 1931. Founder of the Lettrist International (1952–1957) whose excision led to the creation of the Situationist International (1957–1972), of which he was its most relevant theorist. His most well-known work is *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), which led to the creation of the sociopolitical category of 'spectacle'. Situationist's works aimed to unify artistic practice with political praxis. The inconsistencies between art and activism were their main points of controversy. To be consistent with his ideological stance, Debord refused to take part in the historic recovery of the movement initiated by the art world in the 1980s and 1990s. He committed suicide on 30 November 1994.

quote, 'life is deprived of life itself', he captures much of the pathos of humanity under late capitalism. But his fundamental opposition – some kind of original human 'reality' versus the Capitalist imaginary or the spectacle – does not form a self-sustaining dialectic. It is weighed down by an unacknowledged nostalgia for a kind of naïve positivism, that is, the idea that once upon a time human life was somehow objectively *real*.

JDC: Exactly, it is not an opposition based on an objective reality because, as you say very well, an original and full life never existed in the first place, that type of 'non-mediated life' is a dream. I am not sure if you agree with me, but I think that the dialectical relationship between authentic/inauthentic only works on a rhetorical level: it is the subjective perception of my life being inauthentic – that it has been falsified by social or cultural determinants – which really makes me imagine and desire an authentic life. However, an authentic or 'real' life has never had a historical existence. Yet the strength of this rhetoric in our lives, its capacity for seduction, is huge. The consequence of this naïve positivist approach, a non-self-sustainable dialectic – as you point out – is what makes it impossible to overcome in the classical sense. The effect of this opposition will always remain active because it does not have a relationship with the objective conditions of life, but with desire.

DM: No human group, not even the most primitive, has ever lived in anything resembling objective reality. Once the world has been symbolised and entered into human discourse every subject and object becomes displaced and re-valued at the speed of light and sound. All that is left of the real is that which cannot be fully assimilated symbolically – very little, actually. For better or worse, to be human means living a symbolically mediated fantasy. This is true before, during, and after Capitalism. Humans actually bring themselves to believe in the effectiveness of magic, primitive innocence, the power of office, the authority of the father and of the law, the purity of maternal love, Being, etc.

Working nearby (Paris in the 1960s) Jacques Lacan, very decisively, and with equal emphasis, put three co-extensive domains into play: the *symbolic*, the *imaginary* and the *real*. He made it abundantly clear that understanding any aspect of the human condition is contingent on exploring the relationships between these three domains.

In hindsight, Debord's personal and theoretical weakness can be attributed to his nearly exclusive focus on the *imaginary*. He had little interest in the *symbolic*. He put the *real* on a utopian pedestal, beyond the reach of his theory: 'All that was once lived has become representation'; 'being devolves into merely appearing'; 'images have supplanted genuine human interaction'. 'What was once lived', 'being', the 'genuinely human', these are tattered flags of the *real* being waved by someone who desperately desired it (and eventually found it) but had no idea of what it is. The real (including death itself) lay just beyond the horizon of his analysis (and his life) as an unexamined category of ultimate value.

I suspect that Debord's focus on the imaginary led him to over-estimate the power of late Capitalist aesthetics to shape human life. It is terribly important to be certain. But most people are able to think beyond how wonderful their lives might be if only they could live their lives entirely inside a televised beer commercial. *The Society of the Spectacle* and the critical positioning of the Situationists can be read as a retreat from our evolving symbolic that is reshaping all of human life including Capitalism itself. They got trapped inside their own conception of the imaginary.

This turn away from engagement with the symbolic may be as important as Debord's perspicacious descriptions of the Capitalist imaginary for his continuing popularity among academic 'critical theorists'. Today, especially in the United States, it suffices simply to repeat some partial aphoristic formulation from Debord, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Françoise Lyotard, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard, Alain Badiou, as if it might serve as a foundation for understanding 'the post-modern condition'.

Baudrillard gave us the most thoroughgoing theoretical update of Debord. Unfortunately, his 'simulacrum' is a similarly one-dimensional take on society and culture. Baudrillard directly attacked Marx's derivation of social class relations from the role of labour in commodity production. Now the wealth of those societies in which a capitalist mode of production prevails is no longer an immense accumulation of commodities. It is an immense accumulation of simulacra that have only a contingent relationship to the means of their production. According to Baudrillard, individuals are needed more now as consumers than as workers. Ergo, there is no longer any need for social class analysis. Heading down the same path as Debord, Baudrillard argued that class dialectics should be replaced by a *real/simulacrum* opposition quite similar to the *real/imaginary* opposition in *The Society of the Spectacle*.

Once again, *real/simulacrum* is not a self-sustaining dialectic that can pry open a window onto the future. Baudrillard argues that feigning (simulating) illness is the same as illness. Both serve equally to take a soldier off the field of battle. And often a malingerer will actually become ill with the ailment he fakes. Ergo, there is no difference between the real and the fake. This formulation became the basis for a number of questionable pronouncements by Baudrillard ('Vietnam did not happen', 'Watergate was not a scandal', 'The Gulf war did not take place') and his followers ('we now live in a post-scarcity society', 'the grand narrative of "class" is dead'). Far from being 'revolutionary', these slogans uttered by ostensibly 'left' theorists and philosophers could serve nicely as talking points for the US Republican party and others with far right political agendas. To be sure, Vietnam was a 'textual effect' (Fredric Jameson) but never *just that*, as anyone who left their life there, or even their legs, can attest. There is always a kernel of the real lurking. Illness can be faked just as Baudrillard asserts. What cannot ultimately be faked is freedom from a disease when a terminal disease is present. A total substitution of the symbolic by the imaginary would indeed destroy society and culture just as Debord suggests. But that substitution is far from complete and there are grounds for hope.

JDC: Your critique of Debord is very illuminating, and also of Baudrillard and your suspicions of the institutionalisation of 'critical theory' within academia – although not only in academia but also in contemporary art museums and the art world in general. In *The Tourist* you explained that the true meaning of revolution is, in a broad sense, always the cultural one. 'The revolution', in its Marxist and more conventional sense, would be one of the features of the evolution of modernity towards complexity through its own differentiations, not its denial. In this sense it would be social differentiation, as a systemic variable, which would hold the secret of its own destruction and restoration.

DM: You are making me realise that I should take greater responsibility for what I said about 'revolution'. Recall that I said: 'this revolution is a true revolution unlike the

regressive pseudo revolutions of political and religious movements that make a place for themselves by burning the land and the books of others'. These are harsh words and I might have a lighter touch today. But it is clear that I meant something greater than the regime changes and economic policy demands of the Confederates in the US in 1860; the Socialists in Russia in 1914; the Nazis in Germany in 1933 or the Communists in China in 1945.

By the historic standards I implicitly set in that passage from *The Tourist*, there have been precious few 'true revolutions' in human history: the invention of agriculture and privatisation of real property; the establishment of monotheistic religions putatively 'universal' in their scope; the Protestant Reformation and modern 'rational' Capitalism (if Max Weber is to be believed – and I do); the Enlightenment and establishment of democratic institutions (we are only part-way into this one); mechanisation of production processes and industrialisation; air travel, the internet and the invention of the negotiable security as necessary supports for the globalisation of capital and desire.

Even though the Internet did not yet exist, in my study I positioned modern tourism as the cultural arm of this last revolution. These six revolutions come immediately to my mind. There may be others that brought total change in the everyday practical conditions of affected humanity. But not many, if any. What these six revolutions have in common is they were woefully under-theorised as they were occurring and remain so today. Like Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' we bear witness to them but have no real understanding of why or how they occurred or how they continue to affect every aspect of our lives. They just keep piling up.

The rarity of what I called a 'true revolution' along with the ubiquity of its effects can be traced to a specific mechanism of human culture that has been hiding in plain sight since the Greeks but has only been described in technical detail in the past 100 years. Émile Durkheim was among the first to say it and he was certainly the most succinct: 'Thus, social life, in all its aspects and in every period of its history, is made possible only by a vast symbolism'.³ I love this sentence, perhaps more than any other written in the field of sociology. 'All its aspects ...' 'Every period ...' 'Only by ...' What sociologist writing today would have the guts to be this unequivocal; to be so adamantly certain he or she had seized the truth and to be so forthright?

Without the symbolic, society does not exist. Cannot exist. We would have no art, science and literature, of course, and no 'revolution' of any kind. We would also lose almost everything else we take for granted: no language of any kind, norms or laws, face-to-face interaction, no extended families, instruction and learning, economic exchanges, transmission of values, logic, etc.

There are important hidden aspects of the symbolic transmission of culture. It is a much greater construct than just a tool for 'human communication'. What we learn from both Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce is that no symbol, standing by itself alone, can have any meaning. 'In the beginning there was differentiation.' Symbolic systems are designed to produce *new* procedures, ideas, inventions, meanings. That is their essence. Peirce said: 'it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. *Omne symbolum de symbolo*. A symbol once in being spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience its meaning grows'.

³Émile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 264.

Here, I think, is culture's foundational and sustaining dialectic: On the one hand there is run-away differentiation based on culture's dependence on symbols, on the symbolic; the powerful engine of novelty and complexity that I suggested is the defining feature of cultural modernity.⁴ Difference or differentiation, I averred, is what sets the tourists in motion. However, on the other hand everywhere we turn there are efforts to block the production of new meanings, to try to freeze symbols in their place, to protect religious and other institutional redoubts in our civilisation from their origins in the engine of culture itself. Indeed, even to protect the idea of 'revolution' from being shredded by the symbolic perpetual motion machine running at full speed in the sub-basement of culture.

There are three large themes converging on the pages of *The Tourist*. And you are correct to notice that they are only partially realised there. Today I think our intellectual tools are sharper and it may be possible better to characterise what happens as these three themes come to light and come together. Here is how I would summarise them today: (1) From out of Durkheim's *Division of Labor in Society* and 'organic solidarity' the theme of increasing social differentiation and complexity – or alienation as the new normal. (2) The stress (both in terms of emphasis and pressure) on the *symbolic* underscored by Durkheim and meticulously brought forward in Freud/Lacan and in Derrida's masterful reading of Saussure. (3) An advance in the democratic principle of inclusion dramatically manifest in the globalisation of human values, recognition that all voices should be heard, that every normatively grounded human difference be respected. The figure of the tourist, the way I intentionally drew it at the time, is crawling all over all three of these themes.

So what does this mean for 'the revolution' as promoted by Debord and others on the New Left? Most evidently it means they set their sights too low. The righteous demand for a transfer of wealth from the wealthy back to those who produced it is a wonderful idea but much narrower in scope than the kinds of revolutionary changes that actually root themselves in human consciousness and society. Corrections for economic inequality need to be reconceived as a part of a much larger set of ideas and practices. Any current revolutionary work should be undertaken with a caveat. The big revolutions were not scripted. Or when they are scripted, as by John Calvin and Martin Luther, their eventual unfolding never follows the script. Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is an enormous ironic joke. How else could one read the logical linkage between the early Protestant doctrine of worldly asceticism and contemporary capitalist greed? Or, for that matter, how does one get from *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto* to the supercharged state capitalism in China today, or the corrupt kleptocracy in Russia.

I haven't given up on 'the revolution' but I think we are looking for it in all the wrong places. And we need to be more realistic in setting goals. With all the deference and respect that is due to Jesus, I must disagree with one of his last declarations. It's not the poor; it's the *rich* who will always be with us. If no one is rich there can be no poverty – either relative or absolute. We need to help the rich understand that they will continue to be fabulously well off even if they only have twice as much wealth as all the rest of us – not a thousand times as much.

⁴At the same time that I was working on *The Tourist*, Derrida, more elegantly, more precisely, was arguing that deferral of meaning, *différance* is the basis of all systems of signs.

JDC: I was thinking about the importance of the concept ‘revolution’ for contemporary art, from Romanticism onwards, but especially since the avant-garde movements. ‘Revolutionary’ is a very common adjective for artists. It is part of the mythology of modern art, but it is complicated to know what it means in every place and in every moment. An alleged revolutionary artwork could be in a short time an important attraction for museum tourist-visitors. This is obvious, but more important is that even today, the revolutionary ‘attitude’, some imprecise discourse à la Debord via critical theory more or less updated, is in some sense mainstream in art museums and festivals. When the myth of revolution has lost his persuasive power in our social and political practice, it seems that art institutions have in some sense the function of celebrating this lack. For that, they arrange ‘revolutionary’ artistic events as a kind of nostalgic *souvenir* ceremonies.

DM: ‘The revolution’ and especially the romantic figure of the revolutionary is a myth that effectively disables the left today. Your comments suggest that the art world has already started to figure this out for itself, by questioning its revolutionary myth of the avant-garde – not so much at the level of theory (where space should always be reserved for it) but in actual practice. How can we possibly recognise something as ‘avant-garde’ until after it has already proven its prescience and is therefore no longer avant-garde? It is, as you say, ‘complicated to know what it means in every place and in every moment’. One thing we can be sure of: any artist or movement promoting itself as ‘avant-garde’ almost certainly is not. Today’s academic critical theory (this may be its most dependable product) guarantees a proliferation of avant-garde simulacra—wannabe [want to be] cutting edge theory, art, curatorial practice, social formations that might be called ‘avant gardish’.

If we can set aside the pretensions of critical theory and look at what is actually happening around us with clear eyes, it is evident we are currently deep into a full-scale revolution. The most visible manifestations of this seem to be unrelated to one another, but when the dust settles they will appear as a single event piled up at the feet of the angel of history: (1) humankind fighting to survive man-made environmental disasters by trying frantically to switch to sustainable energy sources, saving and restoring precious natural resources, by recycling our waste, etc.; (2) some of us fighting to complete the project of democracy to the point that it can actually make good on its promises of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all; (3) unprecedented geo-cultural dislocations – millions of peoples in motion – huge and rapid flows of migrants and refugees and tourists.

The most ineffectual stance one could take in the face of this mega historical turn would be to endlessly mourn a still-born worker revolution. Or, to condemn art for having broken free of life. Life can break free of art, but never vice versa. Art never dies.

JDC: It was during the 1960s, in the final moment of the avant-garde myth, when anti-art trends reached their peak around the world. The desire to bring art and life together was so strong in the most radical manifestations of experimental art of the time that seemed to joyfully celebrate the death of art. Artists celebrated the death of art because they desperately sought life. This is the canonical argument used to interpret the tendencies linked to the performative, to happenings, Fluxus, and to Process Art. But perhaps we could say that those artists who denied ‘art’ in order to

embrace 'life' in their practice were looking for 'authentic experiences' in their own way. They looked for a kind of authenticity in art that was no longer available as it was understood by previous generations: an art separated from society and divided into traditional mediums that a younger generation accused of being false and commercial. I would like to insist on this polarity authentic/inauthentic, and how easy and prolific it was to apply to the artistic scene of the 1960s when the tensions, and also the contradictions, between commercial art and the avant-gardes were pushed to their limits. Do you think we can also apply this dialectical tension to the domain of art?

DM: You point to the turn art took in the 1960s valorising 'experience' and 'performance', 'happenings', and 'site specific' installations. I would like to recoup this new art for the current revolution properly so-called. The 1960s avant-garde openly insisted that its audience engage with it and become involved in its completion. My critical concern here echoes what I said about Debord. The hearts of the avant-garde artists of the 1960s were in the right place, but their aim should have been higher.

When it is framed as a vital organ of the symbolic, from the first outline of an animal on the wall of a cave, down to the present day, for better and for worse, all art must engage its audience and continuously demand that its audience complete it. Rather than being perceived as 'avant-garde' the movements of the 1960s should be credited with bringing into the light qualities and functions of art that had been there from before the beginning – art's privileged position *vis-à-vis* our changing symbolic order. Of course, as soon as this is brought to light, there will be a mad scramble to suppress it.

Art's demand on its audience is for *understanding*. Audience understanding ranges from thought and action that completes the intent of the artist, through indifference and contempt, to collaborative insights about life and experience that are entirely new even to the artists themselves. The function of *art and its understanding* is to question and perhaps to move the symbolic. This is the reason why, for centuries, the only art that was called 'art' was the exclusive possession of the most privileged. Any movement of the symbolic had to be cleared with them first.

The important break-through in the art of the 1960s would be its articulation of a better understanding of the function of art and the role of the artist. As you say, it exposed the 'tensions and contradictions' between art and its market. A positive outcome of the 1960s has been to heighten our ability to appreciate and learn from art that is not necessarily favoured by the class that can afford to buy it. This may properly qualify as revolutionary as it is crucially important to the ongoing project of democracy. Because of their willingness and desire to share with the rest of us their experiences, thoughts and perceptions, artists take into their own hands direct responsibility for constructing and reconstructing the symbolic order.

JDC: Above you referred to the dangers of 'total substitution' of the symbolic domain for the imaginary: we could say that this is a very common argumentative way within the more popular versions of critical theory – that is, to tend to totalise social categories. When someone says that spectacle or simulacrum are total, the individual is suddenly condemned to just two options: complete alienation or complete freedom. You know well Michel de Certeau's work, his book *L'invention du Quotidien* is

somehow a critical response to Foucault's *Surveiller et punir*. On the one hand, de Certeau celebrates Foucault's lucidity in shifting the analysis from the institutional systems of power towards the 'microphysics of power'. But on the other hand, he accuses him of prioritising systems of surveillance and repression, which seem to spread as a suffocating grid in social space. Precisely because he agrees with Foucault's take on this but not with its totalising perspective, de Certeau makes the case for the micro-resistance of ordinary people facing this sociopolitical order. He thinks that a consumer is not only a passive and alienated being, as Marxism would say, but perhaps someone who can act the same way a reader does in front of a book: in an active manner faced with the manufactured – i.e. the order of the city – that permits him to modify its semiotic functions. This approach does not negate the role of alienation in consumer culture, but opens the possibility for the consumer to have agency, and thus the possibility of art practices and tactics of popular resistance within consumerism. I think this is important for tourism.

DM: Michel de Certeau argued, in effect, that we all have myriad possibilities to do this every day, even as consummate consumers in a consumer society. This is the importance of his chapter on 'Making Do: Uses and Tactics' where he calls out the potential of commodities to be subversively turned against their capitalist creators. The subversive reframing of everyday commodities – and especially their corporate images from advertising – has been a hallmark feature of contemporary art since the 1960s. This can be extended to all of life according to de Certeau. Artists cannot leave well enough alone. They fire up the engines of semiosis with every project – sometimes meekly, afraid of the noise they might make – sometimes full blast.

I liked your comment about de Certeau's declaration: that the consumer is 'someone who can act the same way a reader does in front of a book'. Exactly. I look for insights embedded in individual works of art. And I have found that I am more likely to discover something worthwhile in an artwork than in most postmodernist theoretical writing. I, too, am a great admirer of much of the avant-garde art of the 1960s, especially of Fluxus, and most especially when a particular work throws into question some part of the symbolic order that is taken for granted to the point that it has receded from consciousness.

My way of living with art is to take each piece on its own. Will I find something here that will help me better understand some part of life or the world, including myself? I've never tried to rank artists or art works, or to understand the ways others sort them into schools or movements – high/low, insider/outsider, blue period/cubist period, etc. In my role as an applied social scientist, I have done studies of rural poverty and homelessness. Regarding the experience of poverty, I was able to find more telling details in Picasso's 'Le repas frugal' than in sociological studies of poverty. Art, for me, has a similar standing as an essay by Freud, or Durkheim, Marx, Goffman, et al.

Semiosis, art and tourism: Some people apparently believe they can exercise complete control over their own lives by inserting themselves perfectly into an existing symbolic order that they regard as fixed and immutable. That is, they believe they can exercise complete control over their own lives by completely giving up control. Others among us, foremost the artists, look for openings in the symbolic order, ways out, where we might contemplate and revise our sense of time, space, identity, accomplishment. We don't

feel 'stuck' in the symbolic, we are driven by a desire to try to enlarge it, to discover a 'beyond' on the other side of the symbolic walls around us. This is the motivation of the 'ethical sightseer' that I tried to describe in my most recent book. Let lose in the symbolic, the ethical sightseer runs along behind, and perhaps sometimes right beside, the artist.

The only way of escape for those who attempt to insert themselves perfectly into an existing symbolic order is to fantasise total release from any and all symbolic restraints. The tourist industry caters to this motivation by offering 'all inclusive cruises to nowhere'. The cruise company literally loads the boat with tourists, sails a few miles out to sea, drops anchor for a few days, then sails back to port and lets them off. For those who can't afford a cruise to nowhere, blind drunkenness and sex with strangers on a trash strewn tropical beach after a cheap and uncomfortable flight provides down-scale fulfilment of similar desires. The analogue in art might be the anti-art trends and the artistic celebration of the death of art that you mention, the use of garbage, excrement and urine to make artistic statements, and creating art that insists it operates outside all existing symbolic constraint. To me, these are symptoms of an avant-garde that cannot live comfortably with its own potential.

This may well be motivated by a desperate search for life, as you suggest. If it is, the avant-garde is looking for life in all the wrong places.

JDC: We talked above about a poor or wrong approach to the duality authenticity/inauthenticity – this desire of a full life without 'mediation'; I would like to ask you to what extent we could apply this to the mediated/unmediated dualism. I think this is useful in order to think about the art of the 1960s and about 'cultural products' in general. In this period we witnessed a collective fever that wanted to break the representational frame (mediation) in order to achieve the 'real', 'life', and the 'here and now' (immediacy). This aspiration towards the immediate, an enormously seductive impossible illusion, could have had very different formal manifestations: the happening, performance, the everyday art of Fluxus, but also the 'real' cubes of Minimalism, 'objective' concepts and measurements of Conceptual Art, 'real' actions and sites of the Situationists and land-artists, cinema *vérité*, even drug-induced hallucination in psychedelic art ... In opposition to the canonical reading of the 1960s motto 'Art=Life', which understands it positively as an overcoming of the limits of art and as a critique of artistic autonomy, I think that this (impossible) aspiration of an artwork without mediation, an art diluted in life (the real, the immediate) shows two historically intertwined problems: on the one hand, the general perception in the conscience of middle classes that ordinary life is something mediated (in the sense of inauthenticity); and on the other, the part of artistic or contra-cultural subjectivity, the idealisation of a new category without explicit content, the – unmediated? – 'life' as a sort of talisman capable of transforming whatever work it touches into authentic art.

DM: A central question framing *The Tourist* is: 'How do modern peoples live under conditions where Society has become so huge and seemingly disconnected from their day-to-day existence, so differentiated, specialised and complex, that no one can really know their place in the social totality?' My answer implies that human beings cannot exist without

some sense of authentic connection to society even, or especially, as it is being yanked from their grasp.

In your comments you provide some very helpful observations about how artists in the 1960s reacted to the same human challenge, and especially their despair in the face of it. Many wanted to blame Capitalism, which surely was not innocent, and to them it meant 'the end of art', even 'the death of life itself'. I have suggested that the Situationists were only prepared to recognise one kind of revolution and were blind to others that were going on all around them. Much of their despair stemmed from trying to understand a twentieth century problem using insufficiently updated nineteenth century social theory.

There was another crucial factor in play that you also helpfully underscore. It is the tendency on the part of some artists (they are far from alone here) to wish for a 'non-mediated life'. Debord's theses are shot through with expressions of mourning for 'the lost unity of life'.⁵ You suggest that the idea of an 'authentic, non-mediated life' has no force other than being a rhetorical trope. I agree, and as such, even though it was the Situationists' offensive weapon of choice, it was useless in the fight against the formations of late capitalism. It did, as you point out, condemn them to the false choice between 'complete alienation or complete freedom'.

The equation of authenticity and subjective transparency may be so deeply rooted in Christian thought, especially in its Protestant variants, that we will never be rid of it. The impossible ideal is to become so completely subjectively open to the Other that there are no secrets; multiple subjectivities in a perfect mirroring relation to one another; total intersubjectivity. It is an interesting idea for the establishment of a religion organised around the production of guilt and its expiation. But it makes little sense as a general social principle, and no sense for art.

We can never know exactly what is going on in our own minds, much less the mind of another. Consciousness effectively keeps some of its important parts hidden even from itself and certainly from all others. This should inspire art, not lead to existential angst. As artists and as human beings we cannot assume subjective unity and transparency even as a yet unattained ideal state.

We can *attempt to share* our subjective thoughts, feelings and experiences by means of symbolic exchange. We can sincerely work towards becoming ever closer to one another. We have enormous resources – the entire *symbolic* is available to us for this work – strong precedents in art and history as well as creative living examples all around us in the present moment.

It makes no logical sense for artists to demand transparent, unified, intersubjectivity as a condition for authenticity. If it could be achieved there would be no need for art, or language, or anything else that makes life interesting and worthwhile. In the face of current conditions, artists should be stepping up to provide leadership, not giving up.

In 1993, I was invited to an Artist Residency at Headlands Center for the Arts on a beautiful undeveloped part of the Pacific coast near San Francisco. We made many friends at Headlands and began collaborating with sculptors, performance and installation artists, at first softly, hammering nails where told, then more seriously. There in 1993 I became friends with Bernie Lubell, a brilliant sculptor based in San Francisco. He let me assist him in minor ways as he made an enormous installation from wood and

⁵See theses 2, 26, 29, 180, 187, and so on.

ropes in a gymnasium-sized room at Headlands – like an extension bridge across the entire gallery. I learned as much about face-to-face interaction from working with Bernie on that piece, and observing the visitors to it, as from reading a chapter of Goffman. From about 1995 Juliet and I have contributed conceptual installations to gallery and group shows every year. Our writing has priority, but every year we take off for about two months to make art together.

My close friend, the artist Victor Mario Zaballa is a Toltec Indian from the Aztec tribe. His work is unmistakably at once both high modernist and pre-Colombian Native American. When I asked Victor about his underlying philosophy, this is what he told me: ‘My work is informed by Toltecayotl from which my people also derive their name. In brief it is a philosophical idea that *art, science, citizenship* and *humour* are, or should be, interconnected, and we must try to forge unbreakable bonds between them in everything we do.’ This points us in the direction of a better way forward.

Paradoxically, we have arrived at a point where discouraged artists might actually be able to learn something from the ethical tourists. The tourists know they can approach authenticity, but never embody it. They are, after all, only tourists. And their approach is cautious. Not everything is as authentic as it pretends to be. And, if it is authentic, it may be overwhelmingly awesome. Once in the presence of authenticity, they know not to try to touch it. At least not with their bare hands. They have probably been asked to stay behind the velvet cord. They may be permitted to capture an image of it – though not using flash.

JDC: One of the questions that guided *The Tourist* was: ‘How can a society that suppresses interpersonal morality (the old, or traditional, morality founded on a separation of truth from lies) be one of the most solidarity societies, one of the strongest and most progressive known to history?’⁶ Today, despite the economic and social crisis, we have even more reasons to raise the same question.

DM: The road to The End of the Patriarchy is neither smooth nor straight for the tourist or the artist, or the revolutionary. Scattered throughout the pages of *The Tourist* is notice of another *epoché* crucial to my handling of alienation/authenticity. It is a difference in the role of *truth* in societies based on tradition versus our emerging highly differentiated modern society.

When an average member of a modernised society decides not to bother with the truth, or to live in a fantasy of his own or some others’ creation, his world does not fall apart. It has been assembled too strongly at a level above that of his everyday face-to-face interactions to be affected by his departure from the truth and/or escape into the imaginary. Debord and Raoul Vaneigem attributed this decomposition of everyday human relations to their substitution by the commodity spectacle. This certainly happened, but it was not causal. It was just big Capital taking advantage of a larger historical shift that it was caught up in as much as anything else.

The patriarchy was not a one-way street. Those who could seamlessly fit their behaviour into patriarchal symbolic arrangements could expect to enter into orderly domestic relations, receive fair judgment of their behaviour and accomplishments, and social

⁶MacCannell, *op. cit.*, 16.

rewards in proportion to their acceptance of, and adherence to, paternal norms. Unless, of course, if they were women. For women, the patriarchy was a one-way street. But even women could count on a few protections under patriarchal law. A good case can be made that art, at least in some of its precincts, has always questioned patriarchal values. And tourism may have been the first broad institutional arena responding to the coming end of the patriarchy. But today the effects of the decline of the paternal metaphor are visible, not just in art and tourism, but everywhere.

People may still adhere to a simulacrum of the patriarchal set-up if they wish. A sometimes-violent mock-up (or mockery) of traditional values has erupted within orthodox religious fundamentalism. This is only one of several current reactions. In addition to a retrograde embrace of a dead patriarchy we now have: (1) An individual or like minded group can opt to oppose some specific patriarchal constraint and enter into, and advocate for, apostate symbolic structures. Predictably, the rise of feminism, revisionist definitions of gender, and new kinds of marital and sexual ties were to be the first such new formations. (2) Entirely new symbolic structures can be proposed and advocated. E.g. environmental ethics based on and promoting the assumption that not just humans but plants and animals, the earth itself, and even the weather, should have rights and legal standing. (3) Utter sloth.

The departure of the sense of personal responsibility for the smooth functioning of the entire society lures some into the belief (3 above) that they have no responsibilities at all, even to themselves. They don't go out in search for new or alternative forms of morality or authenticity. They sink into their own egos without consideration for the lives of others or collective well-being. The post-patriarchal freedom to live as one pleases is a double-edged sword. We are free to build a democratic society that honours the potential of children, women and men equally, that fully protects nature and the environment, where the highest values are courage, justice, honesty, trust, temperance, generosity, self-respect and gentility. Or we can build a society dominated by louts. This has become a choice.

Juliet Flower MacCannell presciently warned us of this possibility in her 1991 book, *The Regime of the Brother*. My reflections here on *The Tourist* are very much influenced by her scholarship. She asks, after the patriarchy, what takes its place? She foresaw the rise of a new kind of male privilege where a raw form of male ego assumed all of the arrogant privileges of the old Oedipal father without any of his responsibilities to civilise, defend and protect those under his dominion. She clearly foresaw the rise of both ISIL and Trump. She suggested that democracy might provide a new form of human community and 'definitively displace the Oedipal model and its malevolent clones'. But so far it has not succeeded in doing so. Instead it has, in her words, 'retained the Oedipal form but not its substance (to moderate the ego-centred passions, to civilise and foster communal aims, to support sexuality through difference). Under the "name" of the father another and sadistic Other – unconscious superego, *it* – has begun its reign of pleasure and terror. The Regime of the Brother begins'.⁷ Now we have living proof that being congenitally unable to tell the truth under any circumstances, having multiple divorces and bankruptcies, having no drive other than selfishness and self-aggrandisement, does not disqualify someone from being elected president of the United States. Donald Trump's trajectory is predictable given the model I am developing here. So long as they were merely

⁷Juliet Flower MacCannell, *The Regime of the Brother* (London: Routledge, 1991), 12–13.

interpersonal every one of his character flaws could be overlooked, written off as the eccentricities of an entertaining clown or rogue, and/or offset with cash payments to his victims. When the same character is called upon to balance and coordinate structural differences at the domestic societal, or geo-political level, he's got nothing. Any tourist visiting the White House could do as well or better.

Without patriarchal direction, we must all face the future much as the proverbial artist faced the blank canvas, or writer, the blank page. Permit me provisionally to suggest that the end of the patriarchy brings three new formations of human character: (1) The regime of the louts; (2) the lost and susceptible and (3) those who see the vacuum as an opportunity to create a better, more democratic future for themselves and for the human community writ-large – artists, ethical entrepreneurs, those devoted to good governance that works for the people, other neo-revolutionaries.

The geo-social changes I wrote about in *The Tourist* continue to accelerate. And they continue to produce dramatic splits between hugely consequential positive and negative outcomes with equal probability. It is at this split where the work of the current revolution begins. Capitalism doesn't yet know how to balance morality with making money. It is still possible for a firm to supply a needed good or service at a fair price while paying its employees decent wages and remaining profitable enough to stay in business and even to grow. But in our post-Oedipal world, it is also possible to exploit the lost and vulnerable for profit. An entrepreneur hears about PhDs driving taxis. What does she do? Start a company that makes productive use of surplus knowledge? Or start UBER, profiting from the misery of systemic failure, thousands of people with time on their hands and a car that runs, who will shoulder all the costs and responsibilities, a company that even the business pages say has a 'toxic corporate culture', and has gone over to the 'Dark Side'.

The biggest task, the most revolutionary task, will be to get Capitalism back on the side of democracy. Technically, Capitalism never really needed democracy except as its propaganda arm in its struggle against communism. The only reason for Big Capital to tolerate democracy is a moral one. And the case for a moral Capitalism is not being made. The critique of Capitalism is, in the main, correct. But it should not be overplayed to the point that the only solution is to get rid of Capitalism in its entirety. Capitalism needs to be given a new moral compass and revolutionised from within.

Today's public discourse is almost wholly preoccupied with stories of those who cannot or will not adapt themselves to advanced social structural differentiation and the end of the patriarchy. These range from accounts of believers who retreat into perverted versions of medieval religious fundamentalism, through massive lay-offs in traditional trade and manufacturing sectors, to PhDs driving taxi's and working at espresso bars – home-grown self-radicalised terrorists; unemployed former factory workers who cannot figure out anything to do with their lives except smoke crack cocaine and play video games; neo-Nazis rioting to preserve pro-slavery symbols; drunken gap-year louts in the tourist demimonde; upper bourgeois heroin addicts; etc. While these stories dominate political discourse today, they cannot be the future of humanity.

As artists, writers, historians and other scholars we should try to join with, and shine a very bright light, on the lives and projects of those among us who are taking responsibility for directing our symbolic order in positive and liveable directions. I do not believe that if

we ignore the negative it will go away. But I am certain that if we fail to highlight and work towards positive adaptations they will never gain traction.

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