INTRODUCTION

“Tourist” is used to mean two things in this book. It designates actual tourists: sightseers, mainly middle-class, who are at this moment deployed throughout the entire world in search of experience. I want the book to serve as a sociological study of this group. But I should make it known that, from the beginning, I intended something more. The tourist is an actual person, or real people are actually tourists. At the same time, “the tourist” is one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general. I am equally interested in “the tourist” in this second, metasociological sense of the term. Our first apprehension of modern civilization, it seems to me, emerges in the mind of the tourist.

I began work on this project in Paris in 1968 with much disregard for theory. Shortly after my arrival, I found myself at a reception given for some American scholars by the wife of the owner of Maxim’s Restaurant. We were presented to Professor Claude Levi-Strauss. Levi-Strauss gave us a brief statement on some recent developments in the structural analysis of society and then he invited questions. It was not possible, he said, to do an ethnography of modernity. Modern society is just too complex; history has intervened and smashed its structure. No matter how hard one searched, one would never find a coherent system of relations in modern society. (I did not bring up this matter which was so important to me. Someone else did. I just sat there listening.) Perhaps it would be possible, Levi-Strauss concluded, to do a structural analysis of a detail of modern etiquette, something like “table manners in modern society.” I admit to having
been somewhat put off by his remarks, so much so, in fact, that I
turned away from French Structuralism at that point, seeking refuge
in my small but growing inventory of observations of tourists. I would
try to understand the place of the tourist in the modern world, I
thought, outside of existing theoretical frameworks.

When I returned to Paris in 1970-71 to analyze my field notes and
observations, I was surprised to discover that my interpretations kept
integrating themselves with a line of inquiry begun by Emile Durk-
heim in his study of primitive religion. I was not surprised to discover
that the existing theory that best fit my facts originated in another
field: structural anthropology. This kind of theoretical transfer is
commonplace. Nor was I surprised that a theory devised to account
for primitive religious phenomena could be adapted to an aspect of
modern secular life. I do not believe that all men are essentially the
same "underneath," but I do believe that all cultures are composed of
the same elements in different combinations. I was surprised because
the most recent important contribution to this line of research is, of
course, Levi-Strauss’s own studies of the Savage Mind and of primitive
classification. I admit that I am still somewhat concerned about the
implications of his admonition that one cannot do an ethnography of
modernity, but I shall go ahead anyway, confident at least that I did
not try to do a structural analysis of the tourist and modern society. It
forced itself upon me.

The more I examined my data, the more inescapable became my
conclusion that tourist attractions are an unplanned typology of struc-
ture that provides direct access to the modern consciousness or "world
view," that tourist attractions are precisely analogous to the religious
symbolism of primitive peoples.

Modernity first appears to everyone as it did to Levi-Strauss, as
disorganized fragments, alienating, wasteful, violent, superficial, un-
planned, unstable and inauthentic. On second examination, however,
this appearance seems almost a mask, for beneath the disorderly
exterior, modern society hides a firm resolve to establish itself on a
worldwide base.

Modern values are transcending the old divisions between the
Communist East and the Capitalist West and between the "de-
veloped" and "third" worlds. The progress of modernity ("moderni-
ization") depends on its very sense of instability and inauthenticity.
For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in
other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifesty-
les. In other words, the concern of moderns for "naturalness," their
nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual
and somewhat decadent, though harmless, attachments to the
souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs. They are also
components of the conquering spirit of modernity-the grounds of its
unifying consciousness.

The central thesis of this book holds the empirical and ideological
expansion of modern society to be intimately linked in diverse ways to
modern mass leisure, especially to international tourism and sightsee-
ing. Originally, I had planned to study tourism and revolution, which
seemed to me to name the two poles of modern consciousness—a
willingness to accept, even venerate, things as they are on the one
hand, a desire to transform things on the other. While my work on
revolution continues, it is necessary for several reasons to present the
tourist materials now. This book may also serve as an introduction to
the structural analysis of modern society.

A structural approach to society departs somewhat from tradi-
tional sociological approaches, and I should attempt to characterize
that difference. Academic sociology has broken modern society into
several researchable subelements (classes, the city, the rural commu-

nity, ethnic groups, criminal behavior, complex organization, etc.)
before having attempted to determine the ways these fit together.
This procedure has led to careful empirical research and "theories of
the middle range," but it has not resulted in a sociology that can keep
pace with the evolution of its subject. Now, it seems to me that
sociology will not progress much beyond its current glut of unrelated
findings and ideas until we begin to develop methods of approaching
the total design of society and models that link the findings of the
subfields together in a single framework.

This task is difficult because of the complexity of modern society
and because its boundaries do not fit neatly with some other boundary
system such as those circumscribing a religion, language or nation.
There are pockets of traditional society in modern areas and outposts
of modernity in the most remote places. Modernity cannot, therefore, be defined from without; it must be defined from within via documentation of the particular values it assigns to qualities and relations.

The Method of the Study

The method for this study began with a search for an existing institution or activity with goals very similar to my own: an explanation of modern social structure. This approach enables me to draw upon the collective experiences of entire groups, that is, to adopt the “natural standpoint” and detour around the arbitrary limits sociology has imposed upon itself. The organized activities of international sightseeing seemed reasonably adapted to my purposes. The method is similar to the way Erving Goffman reconstructs everyday life in our society by following the contours of face-to-face interaction—interaction itself being a naturally occurring collective effort to understand, or at least to cope with, everyday life. It is also similar to the method Levi-Strauss uses to arrive at la pensée sauvage via an analysis of myths-myths being the masterworks of “untamed” minds.

I saw in the collective expeditions of tourists a multibillion dollar research project designed, in part, around the same task I set myself: an ethnography of modernity. I never entertained the notion that the old one-man-one-culture approach to ethnography could be adapted to the study of modern social structure, not even at the beginning. Methodological innovations such as those provided by Goffman and Lévi-Strauss, far from being exemplary, are minimally adequate. So I undertook to follow the tourists, sometimes joining their groups, sometimes watching them from afar through writings by, for and about them. Suddenly, my “professional” perspective which originally kept me away from my problem opened outward. My “colleagues” were everywhere on the face of the earth, searching for peoples, practices and artifacts we might record and relate to our own sociocultural experience. In Harold Garfinkel’s terms, it became possible to stop thinking about an ethnography of modernity and to start accomplishing it.

Perhaps I am guilty of presenting an ancient phenomenon as if we moderns just invented it. If, as a matter of fact, I am guilty of this, I can only say that such an act is a commonplace of social science, and is almost to be expected. Actually, self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other is a basic theme of our civilization, a theme supporting an enormous literature: Odysseus, Aeneas, the Diaspora, Chaucer, Christopher Columbus, Pilgrim’s Progress, Gulliver, Jules Verne, Western ethnography, Mao’s Long March. This theme does not just thread its way through our literature and our history. It grows and develops, arriving at a kind of final flowering in modernity. What begins as the proper activity of a hero (Alexander the Great) develops into the goal of a socially organized group (the Crusaders), into the mark of status of an entire social class (the Grand Tour of the British “gentleman”), eventually becoming universal experience (the tourist). I will have occasion to draw upon this tradition and other traditions which are submerging in modernity.

At a time when social science is consolidating its intellectual empire via a colonization of primitive people, poor people and ethnic and other minorities, it might seem paradoxically out of the “mainstream” to be studying the leisure activities of a class of people most favored by modernity, the international middle class, the class the social scientists are serving. Nevertheless, it seems to me that if we are eventually to catch up with the evolution of modern society, we must invent more aggressive strategies to attempt to get closer to the heart of the problem. By following the tourists, we may be able to arrive at a better understanding of ourselves. Tourists are criticized for having a superficial view of the things that interest them—and so are social scientists. Tourists are purveyors of modern values the world over—and so are social scientists. And modern tourists share with social scientists their curiosity about primitive peoples, poor peoples and ethnic and other minorities.

The Sociology of Leisure

This is, then, a study in the sociology of leisure. This field is relatively undeveloped, but it will develop quite rapidly, I think, as a consequence of the transition of industrial social structure to a “post-industrial” or “modern” type. Leisure is displacing work from the center of modern social arrangements. There is evidence in the movements of the 1960’s that the world of work has played out its
capacity for regeneration. Experimental forms of social organization are no longer emerging from the factories and offices as they did during the period of mechanization and unionization. Rather, new forms of organization are emerging from a broadly based framework of leisure activities: T-groups, new political involvements, communal living arrangements, organized “dropping out,” etc. “Life-style,” a generic term for specific combinations of work and leisure, is replacing “occupation” as the basis of social relationship formation, social status and social action.

Wherever industrial society is transformed into modern society, work is simultaneously transformed into an object of touristic curiosity. In every corner of the modern world, labor and production are being presented to sightseers in guided tours of factories and in museums of science and industry. In the developing world, some important attractions are being detached from their original social and religious meanings, now appearing as monumental representations of “abstract, undifferentiated human labor,” as Karl Marx used to say. The Egyptian pyramids exemplify this. Sightseeing at such attractions preserves still important values embodied in work-in-general, even as specific work processes and the working class itself are transcended by history.

It is only by making a fetish of the work of others, by transforming it into an “amusement” (“do-it-yourself”), a spectacle (Grand Coulee), or an attraction (the guided tours of Ford Motor Company), that modern workers, on vacation, can apprehend work as a part of a meaningful totality. The Soviet Union, of necessity, is much more developed along these lines than the industrial democracies of the capitalist West. The alienation of the worker stops where the alienation of the sightseer begins.

The destruction of industrial culture is occurring from within as alienation invades the work place, and the same process is bringing about the birth of modernity. Affirmation of basic social values is departing the world of work and seeking refuge in the realm of leisure. “Creativity” is almost exclusively in the province of cultural, not industrial, productions, and “intimacy” and “spontaneity” are preserved in social relations away from work. Working relations are increasingly marred by cold calculation. Tourism is developing the capacity to organize both positive and negative social sentiments. On the negative side, for example, “social problems” figure in the curiosity of tourists: dirt, disease, malnutrition. Couples from the Midwest who visit Manhattan now leave a little disappointed if they do not chance to witness and remark on some of its famous street crime. One is reminded that staged “holdups” are a stable motif in Wild West tourism. And tourists will go out of their way to view such egregious sights as the Berlin Wall, the Kennedy assassination area and even the ovens at Dachau.

The act of sightseeing is uniquely well-suited among leisure alternatives to draw the tourist into a relationship with the modern social totality. As a worker, the individual’s relationship to his society is partial and limited, secured by a fragile “work ethic,” and restricted to a single position among millions in the division of labor. As a tourist, the individual may step out into the universal drama of modernity. As a tourist, the individual may attempt to grasp the division of labor as a phenomenon sui generis and become a moral witness of its masterpieces of virtue and viciousness.

The industrial epoch has biased its sociology in several ways. Our research is concentrated on work, not leisure, and on the working class, not the middle class. Modernity calls into question the necessity of the dirtily industrial version of work, advancing the idea that work should have other than economic rewards and leisure should be productive. New species of commodities (do-it-yourself kits, packaged vacations, entertainments, work-study programs) reflect the modern fragmentation and mutual displacement of work and leisure, and the emergence of new synthetic structures as yet unanalyzed. This recent coming together of work and leisure suggests the need for a sociology of middle-class leisure that can integrate itself with our already established sociology of the working class.

The Structure of Postindustrial Modernity

The characteristics of modernity examined by social scientists are advanced urbanization, expanded literacy, generalized health care, rationalized work arrangements, geographical and economic mobility and the emergence of the nation-state as the most important sociopolitical unit. These are merely the surface features of modernity. The deep structure of modernity is a totalizing idea, a modern
mentality that sets modern society in opposition both to its own past and to those societies of the present that are premodern or un(der)developed.

No other major social structural distinction (certainly not that between the classes) has received such massive reinforcement as the ideological separation of the modern from the nonmodern world. International treaties and doctrines dividing the world into multinational blocs serve to dramatize the distinction between the developed nations and the lesser ones which are not thought to be capable of independent self-defense. Modern nations train development specialists, organizing them into teams and sending them to the underdeveloped areas of the world which are thereby identified as being incapable of solving their own problems. The giving of this and other forms of international aid is a sine qua non of full modern status, as dependence on it is a primary indicator of a society trying to modernize itself. The national practice of keeping exact demographic records of infant mortality and literacy rates, per capita income, etc., functions in the same way to separate the modern from the nonmodern world along a variety of dimensions. The domestic version of the distinction is couched in economic terms, the “poverty line” that separates full members of the modern world from their less fortunate fellow citizens who are victims of it, immobilized behind the poverty line in such places as Appalachia and the inner city. The field of ethnology dramatizes a still more radical separation: primitive versus modern. When the underdeveloped world fights back, the distinction is embedded in the structure of conflict, where one side uses “guerrilla” while the other side uses “conventional” warfare.

Interestingly, the best indication of the final victory of modernity over other sociocultural arrangements is not the disappearance of the nonmodern world, but its artificial preservation and reconstruction in modern society. The separation of nonmodern culture traits from their original contexts and their distribution as modern playthings are evident in the various social movements toward naturalism, so much a feature of modern societies: cults of folk music and medicine, adornment and behavior, peasant dress, Early American decor, efforts, in short, to museumize the premodern. A suicidal recreation of guerrilla activities has recently appeared in the American avant-garde. These displaced forms, embedded in modern society, are the spoils of the

victory of the modern over the nonmodern world. They establish in consciousness the definition and boundary of modernity by rendering concrete and immediate that which modernity is not.

The Tourist

It is intellectually chic nowadays to deride tourists. An influential theoretician of modern leisure, Daniel J. Boorstin, approvingly quotes a nineteenth-century writer at length:

The cities of Italy [are] now deluged with droves of these creatures, for they never separate, and you see them forty in number pouring along a street with their director—now in front, now at the rear, circling round them like a sheep dog—and really the process is as like herding as may be. I have already met three flocks, and anything so uncouth I never saw before, the men, mostly elderly, dreary, sad-looking; the women, somewhat younger, travel-tossed but intensely lively, wide-awake and facetious. Claude Levi-Strauss writes simply: Travel and travellers are two things I loathe—and yet here I am all set to tell the story of my expeditions. A student of mine in Paris, a young man from Iran dedicated to the revolution, half stammering, half shouting, said to me, “Let’s face it, we are all tourists!” Then, rising to his feet, his face contorted with what seemed to me to be self-hatred, he concluded dramatically in a hiss: “Even I am a tourist.”

I think it significant that people who are actually in accord are struggling to distance themselves from themselves via this moral stereotype of the tourist. When I was eighteen years old, I returned a date to her home on a little resort-residential island. As the ferry approached the slip, I reached for the ignition key. She grabbed my hand, saying vehemently, “Don’t do that! Only tourists start their cars before we dock!”

The rhetoric of moral superiority that comfortably inhabits this talk about tourists was once found in unconsciously prejudicial statements about other “outsiders,” Indians, Chicanos, young people, blacks, women. As these peoples organize into groups and find both a collective identity and a place in the modern totality, it is increasingly difficult to manufacture morality out of opposition to them. The modern consciousness appears to be dividing along different lines
against itself. Tourists dislike tourists. God is dead, but man’s need to appear holier than his fellows lives. And the religious impulse to go beyond one’s fellow men can be found not merely in our work ethic, where Max Weber found it, but in some of our leisure acts as well.

The modern critique of tourists is not an analytical reflection on the problem of tourism—it is a part of the problem. Tourists are not criticized by Boorstin and others for leaving home to see sights. They are reproached for being satisfied with superficial experiences of other peoples and other places. An educated respondent told me that he and his wife were “very nervous” when they visited the Winterthur museum because they did not know “the proper names of all the different styles of antiques,” and they were afraid their silence would betray their ignorance. In other words, touristic shame is not based on being a tourist but on not being tourist enough, on a failure to see everything the way it “ought” to be seen. The touristic critique of tourism is based on a desire to go beyond the other “mere” tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture, and it is by no means limited to intellectual statements. All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel.

Some Remarks on Method and Theory

My approach to leisure is metacritical or “anthropological” in the technical sense of that term. I do not, that is, treat moral pronouncements on leisure as having the status of scientific statements, even though some might qualify as such. Rather, I have used critical statements such as Boorstin’s in the same way that an ethnographer uses the explanations of social life volunteered by his native respondents: as a part of the puzzle to be solved, not as one of its solutions. I assume no one will think me motivated by a desire to debunk my fellow students of leisure. I aim only to understand the role of the tourist in modern society.

I am very much indebted to the other scholars who preceded me. Thorstein Veblen provided the most complete study of leisure in his Theory of the Leisure Class. I do not think I have deviated much from the spirit of Veblen’s original inquiry, even though, for reasons I will try to give, there is almost no resemblance between our specific findings.
quality of capitalism (its alleged fit with human nature, for example) that confines the revolution to the less developed, agricultural areas of the world. In the modern urban-industrial centers, working-class consciousness is already too differentiated to coordinate itself into a progressive, revolutionary force. In modern society, revolution in the conventional sense awaits the transcendence of sociocultural differentiation. Modern mass leisure contains this transcendence in-itself, but there is as yet no parallel revolutionary consciousness that operates independently and for-itself.

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 rewritten 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 leveled and rebuilt on a new model. Every masterpiece is repainted and every unknown shred of the past is dugout 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 replaced 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. This revolution continues. Modern culture is more revolutionary in-itself than the most revolutionary consciousness so far devised. Every major sector of modern society—politics, ethics, science, arts, leisure—is now devoted almost entirely to the problem of keeping pace with this revolution. "The Revolution" in the conventional, Marxist sense of the term is an emblem of the evolution of modernity. Sociocultural differentiation contains the secret of its own destruction and renewal.

After considerable inductive labor, I discovered that sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society. Sightseeing is a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience. Of course, it is doomed to eventual failure; even as it tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differentiation.

The locus of sightseeing in the middle class is understandable in other than merely economic terms. It is the middle class that systematically scavenges the earth for new experiences to be woven into a collective, touristic version of other peoples and other places. This effort of the international middle class to coordinate the differentiations of the world into a single ideology is intimately linked to its capacity to subordinate other peoples to its values, industry and future designs. The middle class is the most favored now because it has a transcendent consciousness. Tourism, I suggest, is an essential component of that consciousness.

The touristic integration of society resembles a catalogue of displaced forms. In this regard it is empirically accurate. The differentiations of the modern world have the same structure as tourist attractions: elements dislodged from their original natural, historical and cultural contexts fit together with other such displaced or modernized things and people. The differentiations are the attractions. Modern battleships are berthed near Old Ironsides; highrise apartments stand next to restored eighteenth-century townhouses; “Old Faithful” geyser is surrounded by bleacher seats; all major cities contain wildlife and exotic plant collections; Egyptian obelisks stand at busy intersections in London and Paris and in Central Park in New York City. Modernization simultaneously separates these things from the people and places that made them, breaks up the solidarity of the groups in which they originally figured as cultural elements, and brings the people liberated from traditional attachments into the modern world where, as tourists, they may attempt to discover or reconstruct a cultural heritage or a social identity.
Interestingly enough, the generalized anxiety about the authenticity of interpersonal relationships in modern society is matched by certainty about the authenticity of touristic sights. The rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of the importance of the authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see: this is a typical native house; this is the very place the leader fell; this is the actual pen used to sign the law; this is the original manuscript; this is an authentic Tlingit fish club; this is a real piece of the true Crown of Thorns. The level of authentication can be very low. After the fashion of a doctor with his ear pressed to the chest of a dying patient, a Councilman has suggested that New York City is “alive” because it makes “noise”:

Some see a certain danger in the anti-noise program. On the council floor Bertram A. Gelfand, a Bronx Democrat, said the code raised the possibility not only of a loss of jobs but also of delaying, or raising the cost of, vitally needed facilities such as new housing and rapid transit. Still others see another danger: That the code might rob the city of a certain je ne sais quoi. “One of the enjoyable things about New York,” said Councilman Michael DeMarco, “is that it’s alive, there’s a lot of noise.”

Some tourist attractions are not merely minimal, they are subminimal or generally regarded as “pseudo” or “tacky”:

A 13-story Fiberglas statue of Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of a new Biblical amusement park called Holyland, being built near Mobile, Ala. The park... will include visits to heaven and hell, Noah’s ark, gladiator fights, the Tower of Babel and the belly of the whale temporarily occupied by Jonah. All for just $6 a ticket.

But this type of attraction in fact functions to enhance the supposed authenticity of true sights such as the Statue of Liberty or the Liberty Bell. Modern society institutionalizes these authentic attractions and modern life takes on qualities of reality thereby.

In the establishment of modern society, the individual act of sightseeing is probably less important than the ceremonial ratification of authentic attractions as objects of ultimate value, a ratification at once caused by and resulting in a gathering of tourists around an attraction and measurable to a certain degree by the time and distance the tourists travel to reach it. The actual act of communion between tourist and attraction is less important than the image or the idea of society that the collective act generates. The image of the Statue of Liberty or the Liberty Bell that is the product of visits to them is more enduring than any specific visit, although, of course, the visit is indispensable to the image. A specific act of sightseeing is, in itself, weightless and, at the same time, the ultimate reason for the orderly representation of the social structure of modern society in the system of attractions.

This should not be taken to imply that sightseeing is without its importance for individual consciousness. Presumably sightseeing, along with religious fervor and patriotism, can be important for the development of a certain type of mind. It seems that individual thought and comportment add and detract almost nothing in modern society, but this is only an appearance that breeds a necessary sense of danger. It is a source of anxiety that our kind of society has the capacity to develop beyond the point where individuals can continue to have a meaningful place in it. If this development were to progress without a corresponding reconstitution of a place for man in society, modernity would simply collapse at the moment of its greatest expansion. But this collapse is not happening in fact. Tourism and participation in the other modern alternatives to everyday life makes a place for unattached individuals in modern society. The act of sightseeing is a kind of involvement with social appearances that helps the person to construct totalities from his disparate experiences. Thus, his life and his society can appear to him as an orderly series of formal representations, like snapshots in a family album.

Modernity transcends older social boundaries, appearing first in urban industrial centers and spreading rapidly to undeveloped areas. There is no other complex of reflexive behaviors and ideas that follows this development so quickly as tourism and sightseeing. With the possible exceptions of existentialism and science fiction, there is no other widespread movement universally regarded as essentially modern. Advanced technology is found everywhere in modern society, of course, and many students have examined it for clues about modernity, but it is not a reflective structure that expresses the totality of the modern spirit as, for example, a modern religion might if a modern religion existed. On this level, only the system of attractions, including the natural, cultural, and technological attractions, reflects the differentiations of modern society and consciousness.
Existentialism, especially in its popular and Christian versions, attempts to provide moral stability to modern existence by examining the inauthentic origins of self-consciousness. From a critical examination of existentialism (or sightseeing), there arises the question that directs this present study: 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 solidary societies, one of the strongest and most progressive known to history?

Both sightseeing and existentialism provide the beginnings of an answer to this question in their equation of inauthenticity and self-consciousness. Modern society, it is widely believed, has become moral in-itself. It contains its own justification for existence which it maintains as its most closely kept secret. The individual’s place in this society, his role in the division of labor, is no longer basic to social structure. Modern man (sociology has contributed to this somewhat) has been forced to become conscious of society as such, not merely of his own “social life.” As the division of labor is transformed into social structural differentiation, morality moves up a level, from the individual to society, and so does “self’-consciousness. Entire cities and regions, decades and cultures have become aware of themselves as tourist attractions. The nations of the modern world, for example, are not total structures that situate every aspect of the life and thought of their citizens, the sociologists’ “ideal societies.” At most, modern societies like France and Japan are relatively solidary subdifferentials of the modern world: places to be visited, i.e., tourist attractions. Modern interest in science fiction (as well as in existentialism and sightseeing) is motivated by a collective quest for an overarching (solar or galactic) system, a higher moral authority in a godless universe, which makes of the entire world a single solidary unit, a mere world with its proper place among worlds.
Staged Authenticity

The modernization of work relations, history and nature detaches these from their traditional roots and transforms them into cultural productions and experiences. The same process is operating on “everyday life” in modern society, making a “production” and a fetish of urban public street life, rural village life and traditional domestic relations. Modernity is quite literally turning industrial structure inside out as these workaday, “real life,” “authentic” details are woven into the fabric of our modern solidarity alongside the other attractions. Industrial Man could retreat into his own niche at his work place, into his own neighborhood bar or into his own domestic relations. Modern Man is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighborhood, the town, the family, which he once called “his own” but, at the same time, he is developing an interest in the “real life” of others.

The modern disruption of real life and the simultaneous emergence of a fascination for the “real life” of others are the outward signs of an important social redefinition of the categories “truth” and “reality” now taking place. In premodern types of society, truth and nontruth are socially encoded distinctions protected by norms. The maintenance of this distinction is essential to the functioning of a society that is based on interpersonal relationships. The stability of interpersonal relations requires a separation of truth from lies, and the stability of social structure requires stable interpersonal relations. This pattern is most pronounced in the primitive case where family structure is social structure. In modern settings, society is established
through cultural representations of reality at a level ‘above that of interpersonal relations. Real life relations are being liberated from their traditional constraints as the integrity of society is no longer dependent on such constraints. No one has described the impact of this social structural change so well or so closely as Erving Goffman. He has found that it is no longer sufficient simply to be a man in order to be perceived as one. Now it is often necessary to act out reality and truth.

I began my analysis of the problem of authenticity by starting across the bridge between structure and consciousness built by Goffman. I found it necessary to extend his conception a little to make it to the other side.

FRONT, BACK AND REALITY

Paralleling a common sense division, Goffman analyzed a structural division of social establishments into what he terms front and back regions. The front is the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons, and the back is the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and to prepare. Examples of back regions are kitchens, boiler rooms, executive washrooms, and examples of front regions are reception offices and parlors. Although architectural arrangements are mobilized to support this division, it is primarily asocial one, based on the type of social performance that is staged in a place, and on the social roles found there. In Goffman’s own words:

Given a particular performance as the point of reference, we have distinguished three crucial roles on the basis of function: those who perform; those performed to; and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it. . . . (T)he three crucial roles mentioned could be described on the basis of the regions to which the role-player has access: performers appear in the front and back regions; the audience appears only in the front region; and the outsiders are excluded from both regions. 

The apparent, taken-for-granted reality of a social performance, according to Goffman’s theory, is not an unproblematical part of human behavior. Rather, it depends on structural arrangements like this division between front and back. A back region, closed to audiences and outsiders, allows concealment of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front. In other words, sustaining a firm sense of social reality requires some mystification.

The problem here is clearly one of the emergent aspects of life in modern society. Primitives who live their lives totally exposed to their “relevant others” do not suffer from anxiety about the authenticity of their lives, unless, perhaps, a frightening aspect of life suddenly becomes too real for them. The opposite problem, a weakened sense of reality, appears with the differentiation of society into front and back. Once this division is established, there can be no return to a state of nature. Authenticity itself moves to inhabit mystification.

A recent example of a mystification designed to generate a sense of reality is the disclosure that chemical nitrates are injected into hams for cosmetic purposes to make them more pink, appetizing and desirable, that is, more hamlike. Similarly, go-go girls in San Francisco’s North Beach have their breasts injected with silicones in order to conform their size, shape and firmness to the characteristics of an ideal breast. Novels about novelists and television shows about fictional television stars exemplify this on a cultural plane. In each of these cases, a kind of strained truthfulness is similar in most of its particulars to a little lie. In other cases, social structure itself is involved in the construction of the type of mystification that supports social reality.

In fact, social structural arrangements can generate mystifications without the conscious manipulation on the part of individuals that occurred in the ham and breast examples. The possibility that a stranger might penetrate a back region is one major source of social concern in everyday life, as much a concern to the strangers who might do the violating as to the violated. Everyone is waiting for this kind of intrusion not to happen, which is a paradox in that the absence of social relationships between strangers makes back region secrets unimportant to outsiders or casual and accidental intruders. Just having a back region generates the belief that there is something more than meets the eye; even where no secrets are actually kept, back regions are still the places where it is popularly believed the secrets are. Folklorists discover tales of the horror concealed in attics and cellars, attesting to this belief.
BACK REGIONS AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

As yet unexplored is the function of back regions-their mere existence intimating their possible violation-in sustaining the common-sense polarity of social life: the putative “intimate and real” as against “show.” This division into front and back supports the popular beliefs regarding the relationship of truth to intimacy. In our society, intimacy and closeness are accorded much importance: they are seen as the core of social solidarity and they are also thought by some to be morally superior to rationality and distance in social relationships, and more “real.” Being “one of them,” or at one with “them,” means, in part, being permitted to share back regions with “them.” This is a sharing which allows one to see behind the others’ mere performances, to perceive and accept the others for what they really are.

Touristic experience is circumscribed by the structural tendencies described here. Sightseers are motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives, and at the same time, they are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals. The term “tourist” is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences.

The variety of understanding held out before tourists as an ideal is an authentic and demystified experience of an aspect of some society or other person. An anonymous writer in an underground periodical breathlessly describes her feelings at a women’s liberation, all-female dance where she was able, she thought, to drop the front she usually maintains in the presence of men:

Finally the men moved beyond the doorway. And We Danced-All of us with all of us. In circles and lines and holding hands and arm in arm, clapping and jumping-a group of whole people. I remember so many other dances, couples, men and women, sitting watching, not even talking. How could I have consented to that hateful, possessive, jealous pairing? So much energy and life, and sensuality, we women have so rarely and ineffectively expressed. But we did, on Saturday. The women in the band were above performing and beyond competition, playing and singing together and with we [sic] who were dancing. And We Danced-expressing for and with each other.5

Staged Authenticity

An earlier, one-sided version of this connection between truth, intimacy and sharing the life behind the scenes is found in descriptions of the ethnographic method of data collection. Margaret Mead has written:

The anthropologist not only records the consumption of sago in the native diet, but eats at least enough to know how heavily it lies upon the stomach; not only records verbally and by photographs the tight clasp of the baby’s hands around the neck, but also carries the baby and experiences the constriction of the windpipe; hurries or lags on the way to a ceremony; kneels half-blinded by incnsc while the spirits of the ancestors speak, or the gods refuse to appear. The anthropologist enters the setting and he observes. . . .

These writers base their comments on an implicit distinction between false fronts and intimate reality, a distinction which is not, for them, problematical: once a person, or an observer, moves off-stage, or into the “setting,” the real truth begins to reveal itself more or less automatically.

Closer examination of these matters suggests that it might not be so easy to penetrate the true inner workings of other individuals or societies. What is taken to be real might, in fact, be a show that is based on the structure of reality. For example, Goffman warns that under certain conditions it is difficult to separate front from back, and that these are sometimes transformed one into the other:

(W)e can observe the up-grading of domestic establishments, wherein the kitchen, which once possessed its own back regions, is now coming to be the least presentable region of the house while at the same time becoming more and more presentable. We can also trace that peculiar social movement which led some factories, ships, restaurants, and households to clean up their backstages to such an extent that, like monks, Communists, or German aldermen, their guards are always up and there is no place where their front is down, while at the same time members of the audience become sufficiently entranced with the society’s id to explore the places that had been cleaned up for them. Paid attendance at symphony orchestra rehearsals is only one of the latest examples.5

Under the conditions Goffman documents here, the back-front division no longer allows one to make facile distinctions between mere
acts and authentic expressions of true characteristics. In places where tourists gather, the issues are even more complex.

**AUTHENTICITY IN TOURIST SETTINGS**

Not all travelers are concerned about seeing behind the scenes in the places they visit. On occasion, and for some visitors, back regions are obtrusive. Arthur Young, when he visited France in 1887 to make observations for his comparative study of agriculture, also observed the following:

Mops, brooms, and scrubbing brushes are not in the catalogue of the necessaries of a French inn. Bells there are none; the fille must always be bawled for; and when she appears, is neither neat, well dressed, nor handsome. The kitchen is black with smoke; the master commonly the cook, and the less you see of the cooking the more likely you are to have a stomach to your dinner. The mistress rarely classes civility or attention to her guests among the requisites of her trade. We are so unaccustomed in England to live in our bedchambers that it is at first awkward in France to find that people live nowhere else. Here I find that everybody, let his rank be what it may, lives in his bed-chamber.6

Among some, especially some American, tourists and sightseers of today,. Young’s attitude would be considered insensitive and cynical even if there was agreement that his treatment of the facts was accurate, as apparently it was. One finds in the place of Young’s attitude much interest in exactly the details Young wanted not to notice.

A touristic desire to share in the real life of the places visited, or at least to see that life as it is really lived, is reflected in the conclusion of a tourist’s report from a little Spanish town:

Finally, Frigliana has no single, spectacular attraction, such as Granada’s Alhambra or the cave at Nerja. Frigliana’s appeal lies in its atmosphere. It is quaint without beingcloyingor artificial. It is a living village and not a “restoration of an authentic Spanish town.” Here one can better see and understand the Andalusian style of life.’

There are vulgar ways of expressing this liberal sentiment, the desire “to get off the beaten path” and “in with the natives.” An advertisement for an airline reads:

Take “De tour.” Swissair’s free-wheeling fifteen day Take-a-break Holiday that lets you detour to the off-beat, over-looked and unexpected corners of Switzerland for as little as $3 15,...Including car. Take de tour. But watch out for de sheep, de goats and de chickens.8

Some tourists do in fact make incursions into the life of the society they visit, or are at least allowed actually to peek into one of its back regions. In 1963, the manager of the Student Center at the University of California at Berkeley would occasionally invite visitors to the building to join him on his periodic inspection tours. For the visitor, this was a chance to see its kitchens, the place behind the pin-setting machines in the bowling alley, the giant fans on the roof, and so forth, but he was probably not a typical building manager. This kind of hospitality is the rule rather than the exception in the areas of the world that have been civilized the longest, a factor in the popularity of these areas with Anglo-Americans. A respondent of mine told me she was invited by a cloth merchant in the Damascus bazaar to visit his silk factory. She answered “yes,” whereupon he threw open a door behind his counter exposing a little dark room where two men in their underwear sat on the floor on either side of a hand loom passing a shuttle back and forth between them. “It takes a year to weave a bolt of silk like that,” the owner explained as he closed the door. This kind of happening, an experience in the everyday sense of that term, often occurs by accident. A lady who is a relative of mine, and another lady friend of hers, walked too far into the Canadian Rockies near Banff and found themselves with too much traveling back to town to do in the daytime that was left to do it in. They were rescued by the crew of a freight train and what they remember most from their experience was being allowed to ride with the engineer in the cab of his locomotive. A young American couple told me of being unable to find a hotel room in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. While they were discussing their plight on the sidewalk, an old woman approached them and led them by a circuitous route to a small apartment where they rented a blackmarket room, displacing the family of workers who slept on a couch behind a blanket hung as a curtain in the living room.
Certain individuals are prone to the kind of accident that leads to these experiences because they seek out situations in which this type of thing is most likely to occur. A report from the Caribbean suggests that a taste for action of this type can be cultivated:

“But tourists never take the mail boats,” said the hotel manager. That clinched the matter. The next afternoon, I jumped from the dock at Potter’s Cay in downtown Nassau to the rusted deck of the Deborah K., swinging idly at her spring lines. . . . [The writer describes island hopping on the mail boat and ends his account with this observation.] The next day, while aloft in a Bahamas Airways plane, I spotted the Deborah K. chugging along in the sound toward Green Turtle Cay. She is no craft for the queasy of stomach and has a minimum of the amenities that most people find indispensable, but she and her sister mail boats offer a wonderfully inexpensive way to see life in the Bahamas-life as the natives live it, not the tourists. Given the felt value of these experiences, it is not surprising to find social structural arrangements that produce them.

STAGED AUTHENTICITY IN TOURIST SETTINGS

Tourists commonly take guided tours of social establishments because they provide easy access to areas of the establishment ordinarily closed to outsiders. School children’s tours of firehouses, banks, newspapers and dairies are called “educational” because the inner operations of these important places are shown and explained in the course of the tour. This kind of tour, and the experiences generated by it, provide an interesting set of analytical problems. The tour is characterized by social organization designed to reveal inner workings of the place; on tour, outsiders are allowed further in than regular patrons; children are permitted to enter bank vaults to see a million dollars, allowed to touch cows’ udders, etc. At the same time, there is a staged quality to the proceedings that lends to them an aura of superficiality, albeit a superficiality not always perceived as such by the tourist, who is usually forgiving about these matters.

An account from Cape Kennedy provides illustration:

No sightseers at the Manned Spacecraft Center ever had a more dramatic visit than those who, by design or accident of time, found themselves touring the facility last month during the unforgettable mission of Apollo 13. . . . In a garden-like courtyard outside the News Bureau in Building 1, a group of tourists visiting the Manned Spacecraft Center here stared at the working correspondents through the huge plate-glass windows. The visitors, too, could hear the voice of Mission Control. A tall young man, his arm around his mini-skirted blonde girl friend, summed up the feelings of the sightseers when he said, half aloud, “Being here’s like being part of it.” “Dear God,” his girl whispered earnestly, “please let them come home safe.”

The young man in this account is expressing his belief that he is having an almost authentic experience. This type of experience is produced through the use of a new kind of social space that is opening up everywhere in our society. It is a space for outsiders who are permitted to view details of the inner operation of a commercial, domestic, industrial or public institution. Apparently, entry into this space allows adults to recapture virginal sensations of discovery, or childlike feelings of being half-in and half-out of society, their faces pressed up against the glass. Some political radicals and conservatives consider “swinging,” “massage therapy” and “wide-screen cunnilingus” to be indices of a general relaxation of society’s moral standards. These are, however, only special cases of reality displays, public orgasm worked up in the interest of social solidarity.

Other basic (that is, biological process) examples of staged intimacy are provided by the tendency to make restaurants into something more than places to eat:

The newest eating place in Copenhagen is La Cuisine, strategically located on the Stroget, the main strolling street of the city. Everyone is flat-nosing it against the windows these days watching the four cooks. In order to get to the cozy, wood-paneled restaurant in the back of the house, the guest must pass the kitchen. If he is in a hurry he may eat in the kitchen, hamburger joint-style.

“The kitchen” bit is a come-hither, actually, admits Canadian-born, Swiss-educated Patrick McCurdy, table captain and associate manager. “A casual passer-by is fascinated by cooks at work, preparing a steak or a chicken or a salad.”

What is being shown to tourists is not the institutional back stage, as Goffman defined this term. Rather, it is a staged back region, a kind of living museum for which we have no analytical terms.
THE STRUCTURE OF TOURIST SETTINGS

A student of mine has told me that a new apartment building in New York City exhibits its heating and air conditioning equipment, brightly painted in basic colors, behind a brass rail in its lobby. From the standpoint of the social institutions that are exposed in this way, the structure of their reception rooms reflects a new concern for truth and morality at the institutional level. Industry, for example, is discovering that the commercial advantages of appearing to be honest and aboveboard can outweigh the disadvantages of having to organize little shows of honesty. There is an interesting parallel here with some of the young people of the industrial West who have pressed for simplicity and naturalness in their attire and have found it necessary assiduously to select clothing, jewelry and hair styles that are especially designed to look natural. In exposing their steel hearts for all to see and in staging their true inner life, important commercial establishments of the industrial West “went hippie” a decade before hippies went hippie. Approached from this standpoint, the hippie movement is not technically a movement but a basic expression of the present stage of the evolution of our society.

The current structural development of society is marked by the appearance everywhere of touristic space. This space can be called a stage set, a tourist setting, or simply, a set depending on how purposefully worked up for tourists the display is. The New York Stock Exchange viewed from the balcony set up for sightseers is a tourist setting, since there is no evidence that the show below is for the sightseers. The exhibitions of the back regions of the world at Disneyland in Anaheim, California are constructed only for sightseers, however, and can be called “stage sets.” Characteristics of sets are: the only reason that need be given for visiting them is to see them-in this regard they are unique among social places; they are physically proximal to serious social activity, or serious activity is imitated in them; they contain objects, tools and machines that have specialized use in specific, often esoteric, social, occupational and industrial routines; they are open, at least during specified times, to visitation from outsiders.

Touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences, and the tourist may believe that he is moving in this direction, but often it is very difficult to know for sure if the experience is in fact authentic. It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation. In tourist settings, especially in industrial society, it may be necessary to discount the importance, and even the existence, of front and back regions except as ideal poles of touristic experience.

Returning to Goffman’s original front-back dichotomy, tourist settings can be arranged in a continuum starting from the front and ending at the back, reproducing the natural trajectory of an individual’s initial entry into a social situation. While distinct empirical indicators of each stage may be somewhat difficult to discover, it is theoretically possible to distinguish six stages of this continuum. Here, the exercise of a little theoretical license might prove worthwhile.

Stage one: Goffman’s front region; the kind of social space tourists attempt to overcome or to get behind.

Stage two: a touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some of its particulars, like a back region: a seafood restaurant with a fishnet hanging on the wall; a meat counter in a supermarket with three-dimensional plastic replicas of cheeses and bolognas hanging against the wall. Functionally, this stage (two) is entirely a front region, and it always has been, but it is cosmetically decorated with reminders of back region activities: mementos, not taken seriously, called “atmosphere.”

Stage three: a front region that is totally organized to look like a back region; simulations of moonwalks for television audiences; the live shows above sex shops in Berlin where the customer can pay to watch interracial couples copulating according to his own specific instructions. This is a problematical stage: the better the simulation, the more difficult to distinguish from stage four.

Stage four: a back region that is open to outsiders; magazine exposes of the private doings of famous personages; official revelations of the details of secret diplomatic negotiations. This is the open characteristic that distinguishes these especially touristic settings (stages three and four) from other back regions; access to most nontouristic back regions is somewhat restricted.
Staged Authenticity

Stage five: a back region that may be cleaned up or altered a bit because tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in: Erving Goffman’s kitchen; factory, ship, and orchestra rehearsal cases; news leaks.

Stage six: Goffman’s back region; the kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness.

That is theory enough. The empirical action in tourist settings is mainly confined to movement between areas decorated to look like back regions, and back regions into which tourists are allowed to peek. Insight, in the everyday, and in some ethnological senses of the term, is what is obtained from one of these peeks into a back region.

TOURISTS AND INTELLECTUALS

There is no serious or functional role in the production awaiting the tourists in the places they visit. Tourists are not made personally responsible for anything that happens in the establishments they visit, and the quality of the insight gained by touristic experience has been criticized as less than profound. David Riesman’s “other-directed” and Herbert Marcuse’s “one-dimensional” men are products of a traditional intellectual concern for the superficiality of knowledge in our modern society, but the tourist setting per se is just beginning to prompt intellectual commentary. Settings are often not merely copies or replicas of real-life situations but copies that are presented as disclosing more about the real thing than the real thing itself discloses. Of course, this cannot be the case, at least not from technical standpoints, as in ethnography, for example. The Greyline guided tours of the Haight Ashbury when the hippies lived there cannot be substituted for the studies based on participant observation undertaken at the same time. The intellectual attitude is firm in this belief. The touristic experience that comes out of the tourist setting is based on inauthenticity and as such it is superficial when compared with careful study. It is morally inferior to mere experience. A mere experience may be mystified, but a touristic experience is always mystified. The lie contained in the touristic experience, moreover, presents itself as a truthful revelation, as the vehicle that carries the onlooker behind false fronts into reality. The idea here is that a false back is more insidious and dangerous than a false front, or an inauthentic demystification of social life is not merely a lie but a superlie, the kind that drips with sincerity.

Along these lines, Daniel Boorstin’s comments on sightseeing and tourism suggest that critical writing on the subject of modern mass mentality is gaining analytical precision and is moving from the individual-centered concepts of the 1950’s to a structural orientation. His concept of “pseudo-event” is a recent addition to a line of specific criticism of tourists that can be traced back to Veblen’s “conspicuous leisure” or back still further to Mark Twain’s ironic commentary in The Innocents Abroad. In his use of the term “pseudo-event”, Boorstin wants his reader to understand that there is something about the tourist setting itself that is not intellectually satisfying. In his own words:

These [tourist] "attractions" offer an elaborately contrived indirect experience, an artificial product to be consumed in the very places where the real thing is as free as air. They are ways for the traveler to remain out of contact with foreign peoples in the very act of “sight-seeing” them. They keep the natives in quarantine while the tourist in air-conditioned comfort views them through a picture window. They are the cultural mirages now found at tourist oases everywhere."

This kind of commentary reminds us that tourist settings, like other areas of institutional life, are often insufficiently policed by liberal concerns for truth and beauty. They are tacky. We might also suggest that some touristic places overexpress their underlying structure and thereby upset certain of their sensitive visitors: restaurants are decorated like ranch kitchens; bellboys assume and use false, foreign first names; hotel rooms are made to appear like peasant cottages; primitive religious ceremonies are staged as public pageants. This kind of naked tourist setting is probably not as important in the overall picture of mass tourism as Boorstin makes it out to be in his polemic, but it is an ideal type of sorts, and many examples of it exist.

Boorstin is insightful as to the nature of touristic arrangements but he undercuts what might have developed into a structural analysis of sightseeing and touristic consciousness by falling back onto individual-level interpretations before analyzing fully his “pseudo-event” conception. He claims that tourists themselves cause “pseudo-events.” Commenting on the restaurants along superhighways, Boorstin writes:
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There people can eat without having to look out on an individualized, localized landscape. The disposable paper mat on which they are served shows no local scenes, but a map of numbered super highways with the location of other “oases.” They feel most at home above the highway itself, soothed by the auto stream to which they belong.16

None of the accounts in my collection support Boorstin’s contention that tourists want superficial, contrived experiences. Rather, tourists demand authenticity just as Boorstin does. Nevertheless, Boorstin persists in positing an absolute separation of touristic and intellectual attitudes. On the distinction between work (“traveling”) and sightseeing, he writes:

The traveler, then, was working at something; the tourist was a pleasure-seeker. The traveler was active, he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes “sight-seeing”. . . . He expects everything to be done to him and for him.”

As I have already suggested, the attitude Boorstin expresses is a commonplace among tourists and travel writers. It is so prevalent, in fact, that it is a part of the problem of mass tourism, not an analytical reflection on it.

In other words, we still lack adequate technical perspectives for the study of “pseudo-events.” The construction of such perspectives necessarily begins with the tourists themselves and a close examination of the facts of sightseeing. The writers of the accounts cited earlier in this chapter express Boorstin’s disappointment that their experiences are sometimes fleeting and insulated. They desire to get in with the natives, but, more important here, they are willing to accept disappointment when they feel they are stopped from penetrating into the real life of the place they are visiting. In fact, some tourists are able to laugh off Boorstin’s disappointment. The account of a trip to Tangier from which the following is excerpted was given by a writer who clearly expected the false backwardness she found there and is relaxed about relating it.

A young Arab pulled a chair up to our table. He had rugs to sell, but we insisted we were not interested. He unrolled his entire collection and spread them out on the ground. He wouldn’t leave. I could see beneath his robes that he was wearing well-tailored navy blue slacks and a baby blue cashmere sweater.18

Similarly, the visitor to Las Vegas who wrote the following has seen through the structure of tourist settings and is laughing about it:

Along with winter vacationists by the thousands, I will return to lively Las Vegas, if only to learn whether Howard Hughes, like the Mint Casino, has begun issuing free coupons entitling the visitor to a backstage tour of his moneymaking establishment.19

For these tourists, exposure of a back region is casual part of their touristic experience. What they see in the back is only another show. It does not trick, shock or anger them, and they do not express any feelings of having been made less pure by their discoveries.

CONCLUSION

Daniel Boorstin calls places like American superhighways and the Istanbul Hilton “pseudo,” a hopeful appellation that suggests, that they are insubstantial or transitory, which they are not. It also suggests that somewhere in tourist settings there are real events accessible to intellectual elites, and perhaps there are. I have argued that a more helpful way of approaching the same facts is in terms of a modification of Erving Goffman’s model of everyday life activities. Specifically, I have suggested that for the study of tourist settings front and back be treated as ideal poles of a continuum, poles linked by a series of front regions decorated to appear as back regions, and back regions set up to accommodate outsiders. I have suggested the term stage setting for these intermediary types of social space, but there is no need to be rigid about the matter of the name of this place, so long as its structural features and their influences on ideas are understood.

I have claimed that the structure of this social space is intimately linked to touristic attitudes and I want to pursue this. The touristic way of getting in with the natives is to enter into a quest for authentic experiences, perceptions and insights. The quest for authenticity is marked off in stages in the passage from front to back. Movement from stage to stage corresponds to growing touristic understanding. This continuum is sufficiently developed in some areas of the world that it appears as an infinite regression of stage sets. Once in this manifold, the tourist is trapped. His road does not end abruptly in some conversion process that transforms him into Boorstin’s
“traveller,” “working at something” as he breaks the bounds of all that is pseudo and penetrates, finally, into a real back region. Tourists make brave sorties out from their hotels, hoping, perhaps, for an authentic experience, but their paths can be traced in advance over small increments of what is for them increasingly apparent authenticity proffered by tourist settings. Adventurous tourists progress from stage to stage, always in the public eye, and greeted everywhere by their obliging hosts.

In highly developed tourist settings such as San Francisco and Switzerland, every detail of touristic experience can take on a showy, back-region aspect, at least for fleeting moments. Tourists enter tourist areas precisely because their experiences there will not, for them, be routine. The local people in the places they visit, by contrast, have long discounted the presence of tourists and go about their business as usual, even their tourist business, as best they can, treating tourists as a part of the regional scenery. Tourists often do see routine aspects of life as it is really lived in the places they visit, although few tourists express much interest in this. In the give-and-take of urban street life in tourist areas, the question of who is watching whom and who is responding to whom can be as complex as it is in the give-and-take between ethnographers and their respondents. It is only when a person makes an effort to penetrate into the real life of the areas he visits that he ends up in places especially designed to generate feelings of intimacy and experiences that can be talked about as “participation.” No one can “participate” in his own life; he can only participate in the lives of others. And once tourists have entered touristic space, there is no way out for them so long as they press their search for authenticity. Near each tourist setting there are others like the last. Each one may be visited, and each one promises real and convincing shows of local life and culture. Even the infamously clean Istanbul Hilton has not excluded all aspects of Turkish culture (the cocktail waitresses wear harem pants, or did in 1968). For some Europeans I know, an American superhighway is an attraction of the first rank, the more barren the better because it is thereby more American.

Daniel Boorstin was the first to study these matters. His approach elevates to the level of analysis a nostalgia for an earlier time with more clear-cut divisions between the classes and simpler social values based on a programmatic, back vs. front view of the true and the false. This classic position is morally superior to the one presented here but it cannot lead to the scientific study of society. Specifically, Boorstin’s and other intellectual approaches do not help us to analyze the expansion of the tourist class under modernization, or the development on an international scale of activities and social structural arrangements made for tourists, social changes Boorstin himself documents. Rather than confront the issues he raises, Boorstin only expresses a long-standing touristic attitude, a pronounced dislike, bordering on hatred, for other tourists, an attitude that turns man against man in a they are the tourists, I am not equation.20

The touristic attitude and the structure that produces it contribute to the destruction of the interpersonal solidarity that is such a notable feature of the life of the educated masses in modern society. This attitude has nowhere been so eloquently expressed as it was by Claude Levi-Strauss:

Travel and travellers are two things I loathe—and yet here I am, all set to tell the story of my expeditions. But at least I’ve taken a long while to make up my mind to it; fifteen years have passed since I left Brazil for the last time and often, during those years, I’ve planned to write this book, but I’ve always been held back by a sort of shame and disgust. So much would have to be said that has no possible interest: insipid details, incidents of no significance. . . . That the object of our studies should be attainable only by continual struggle and vain expenditures does not mean that we should set any store by what we should rather consider as the negative aspect of our profession. The truths that we travel so far to seek are of value only when we have scraped them clean of all this fungus. It may well be that we shall have spent six months of travel, privation, and sickening physical weariness merely in order to record-in a few days, it may be, or even a few hours—an unpublished myth, a new marriage-rule, or a complete list of names of clans. But that does not justify my taking up my pen in order to rake over memory’s trash-cans: “At 5:30 a.m. we dropped anchor off Recife while the seagulls skirled around us and a flotilla of small boats put out from the shore with exotic fruits for sale. . . .”

And yet that sort of book enjoys a great and, to me, inexplicable popularity.21