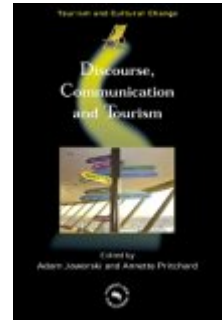


Adam Jaworski, Annette Pritchard, eds.. *Discourse, Communication and Tourism*. Buffalo and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005. ix + 249 pp. \$74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84541-020-9.



Reviewed by Piers Smith

Published on H-Travel (December, 2006)

This collection describes and analyses tourism practices in various communities and regions throughout the world. Though much of the focus is on the experiences of package tourist communities, space is also devoted to backpacker or independent travel communities. Several essays examine hosts and interactions between hosts and tourists. Place is another area of interest, at the level of landscape and region (for example, Welsh mining and southern Polish farm landscape) as well as city (Venice) and country (Wales, India, Fiji, and Namibia). A number of essays look at various types, or genres, of tourism, from eco- and agri-tourism to heritage and ethno-tourism. Finally, in their study of the numerous modes and meanings of tourism practices, the contributors draw on a selection of primary source materials, including television programs, online messages, postcards, brochures, and advertising.

In their introduction, the editors note that the social sciences and the humanities have largely ignored tourism as a serious and fruitful field of inquiry. Although the subject may have been well

represented in anthropology and ethnography (and in the work of art historians, cultural geographers and American studies scholars), it has not received the same exclusive and in-depth analysis as other forms of social and cultural history. *Discourse, Communication and Tourism* seeks to remedy this imbalance. Bringing together scholars from different disciplines (including sociology, linguistics, media and performing arts, and communication studies), the editors hope to provide the study of tourism with a cutting-edge theoretical framework and to demonstrate its practical applications. Much of the impetus for the book's overall critical sophistication (and possible confusion for the reader) lies in the use of a triple-decker understanding of discourse, what it is and how it works.

As outlined in Adam Jaworski and Annette Pritchard's introduction, the contributors to *Discourse, Communication and Tourism* use discourse in three ways. First, they treat discourse in the sense of the term as traditionally used by linguists, as sentence-based communication. Second, they use discourse as running discourse, or that

type of language use that continues over a number of sentences and involves the interactions of speaker and auditor in a specific situation, all within a milieu of social and cultural conventions. This is also known as discourse analysis. Third, the authors employ a use of discourse which is associated with the work of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and post-structuralist thought in general. According to this understanding of the term, discourse refers to the idea that language, or language-like forms of communication, "not only reflects but also shapes social reality, our identities and our relations with others." Furthermore, discourse is not merely passive; it actively generates "patterns of power, dominance and control" (p. 5). This by now standard constructionist position often treats representations of any kind, whether they are graphic (in this case, posters, postcards, images, maps) or written (brochure blurbs, postcard messages, captions, hypertexts, TV scripts, interviews), as ideologically motivated. By extension, identity cannot be self-produced: it is the product of ideologically driven discursive formations.

One problem with this view, as many critics of post-structuralism have pointed out, is that it leaves little possibility for agency, or for self-produced identities. Most of the essays in the collection conform to this deterministic logic. A typical example is Uta Papen's essay, "Exclusive, Ethno and Eco: Representations of Culture and Nature in Tourism Discourses in Namibia," in which she examines cases of private tourist practices within the hegemonic corpus of tourism companies. Papen argues that private tourist practices do not constitute a genuine divergence from the dominant discourses, which tourism companies produce. Private tourist practices, she says, are only subversive to the degree that they co-opt the dominant discourses. By extension, she sees local ethno-tourisms as reactive to, and thus managed by, global market practices. There are a few exceptions, however, to such deterministic readings of tourism practices. Kelly Davidson's essay on India

as a transgressive space and Camille C. O'Reilly's study of competing narrations of backpacker identity both make an effort to engage with the problem of agency and self-fashioning in and beyond discourse. These pieces attempt to show how tourism practices are interpenetrated with personal investments (dreams, wishes, role-playing), which are often at odds with the trammeling demands of dominant discourse. Davidson's essay finds self-reflexivity within the backpacker communities of New Delhi and Goa. Individual backpackers, Davidson notes, contend with the problematic nature of their quests for authenticity. Likewise, O'Reilly explores questions of fluidity in matters of self and identity within the imaginary community of internet-archived records of travel.

By mixing the three uses of the term discourse, the individual essays are sometimes confusing and even incoherent. Further complicating matters, the reader has to judge whether or not each essay coheres with its neighbors and with the larger thematic framework. For this reader, a few essays seem merely descriptive and even banal. Instead of considering the grander discursive architecture into which their object of study might fit, they stick to dry, itemized, sentence-based analyses. Chris Kennedy, for example, in his essay "'Just Perfect!' The Pragmatics of Evaluation in Holiday Postcards," turns what might have been a brisk run through the attitudes and expectations of postcard senders into a grim trudge through illustrative lists. With pages of concordances and attitudinal epithets, Kennedy thus spoils the reader's pleasure. Theory is nodded to in passing, rather as one might nod to a shadowy figure in the trees. Other essays, such as those by John Urry ("The 'Consuming' of Place") and David Dunn ("Venice Observed: The Traveler, the Tourist, the Post-Tourist, and British Television") and the piece by Nikolas Coupland, Peter Garrett and Hywel Bishop ("Wales Underground: Discursive Frames and Authenticities in Welsh Mining Heritage Tourism Resorts") offers sharp critiques of particular tourism practices, moving easily

from micro-sociolinguistic discourse analysis to macro-critiques of relations of power and identity politics. The Coupland, Garrett and Bishop piece, in particular, shows how to draw together the different senses of discourse and the troublesome issue of authenticity into a single univocal argument without distracting the reader with unnecessary jargon, tedious data-crunching or portentousness—for example, how is the tourist experience of place and community authentic? What does it mean to describe a place or practice as authentic?

The book is divided into four parts, entitled, "The Semiotics of Touristic Space, Landscapes and Destinations," "The Discursive Construction and Representation of the Tourist Experience," "Identities on the Move," and "Performance and Authenticity." Subject matter is not confined to contemporary tourism practices. Of the ten essays, two deal with historical Welsh subjects, examining comic postcards of the early twentieth century and heritage tours of coal-mining landscapes. The remaining essays focus on the present day: backpacker travel in India and Fiji, and backpacker travel as a discursive construction (illustrated by internet communities), eco- and ethno-tourism in Namibia, agri-tourism in Poland, and lastly, Venice as seen by three British TV documentaries from different historical periods in the last century. The concluding essay returns to postcards as discourse, in the first and second senses of the term mentioned above. The essay analyzes, both programmatically and paradigmatically, a representative sample of postcards produced in Britain.

John Urry's opening essay on "The 'Consuming' of Place" sets the tone, and standard, for the nine essays just outlined. As the author of two well-known and influential books on tourism, *The Tourist Gaze* (1990) and *Consuming Places* (1995), it is perhaps unsurprising that his work is often cited by other authors in the collection. Too much anxiety of influence, however, can lead to uncritical repetition, a failure of nerve that Urry's own

essay, which otherwise might have extended his earlier arguments, also manifests. Different types of touristic gaze are presented, but the term "gaze" itself remains opaque. A closer examination of the theoretical provenances of the term (in Laura Mulvey's feminist cinema criticism of the 1980s) as well as that of "consumption" (and of the later complications of both terms in film theory or cultural studies generally, as in the work of Kaja Silverman) might have helped orient the reader as well as made for a more energetic, less reverential set of echoes.[1]

Urry's consuming gaze seems out of place alongside another social science theorist, Erving Goffman, whose work crops up in different places in the collection. Like Urry's undisputed gaze, Goffman's ideas are presented without contestation or complication. In "Tourism Performance as Metaphor: Enacting Backpacker Travel in the Fiji Islands," Stephen Doorne and Irena Ateljevic explain that Goffman's approach to interpersonal communication is based on "the dramaturgic or performance analogy, where individuals and groups engage in individual and collective performances when and where they meet" (p. 174). This leads to a reading of backpacker traveler practices in Fiji entirely from the perspective of Goffman's analogical frame, complete with his sub-categories of role-playing, stages, settings, backdrops, and audience. The frame becomes an end in itself and, as a result, the Fijian content becomes incidental. Such a rigid quasi-structuralist view of a tourism practice, ultimately self-contained and positivistic, is at odds with the violence and negativity of a consuming gaze. The latter entails post-imperial global flows, not so easily contained within fixed boundaries of space and metaphors of performance or stable relations of self to other; speed, mess, and complexity are more accurate indices of the kind of touristic reality that Urry theorizes.

By contrast, the essay on Polish agri-tourism, by Adam Jaworski and Sarah Lawson, frames its

analysis with an account of Arjun Appadurai's notion of five-fold global flows, which produce heterogeneous, disjunctive, and multi-faceted cultural processes. By using Appadurai's open-ended framework, Jaworski and Lawson avoid the pitfalls of Doorne's and Ateljevic's more structured, or holistic, reading of tourism practices. Yet, Jaworski and Lawson do not appear to be aware of their critical difference from the former's Goffmanesque piece. Some engagement with these theoretical conflicts, in the book as a whole, might have given the collection a productive edginess, a sting in the tail. These caveats notwithstanding the book does offer an important contribution to the burgeoning field of tourism studies and should, as much for its uniqueness as for the success of its individual essays, prove a point of departure for further work in the field.

Note

[1]. Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-travel>

Citation: Piers Smith. Review of Jaworski, Adam; Pritchard, Annette, eds. *Discourse, Communication and Tourism*. H-Travel, H-Net Reviews. December, 2006.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12668>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.