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Abstract

Through their work, walking tour guides make the abstract histories and cultural flows of cities present and tangible for their followers – merging physical spaces, mental maps of information, and experiences through a kind of spatial storytelling. This social actor's position in regard to consumption and production thus lends itself to conceptualization as a pivotal cultural worker. To better understand this condition, this article has two interrelated goals: first, to raise the importance of Bourdieu's 'cultural intermediary' and the practice of spatial narratives as concerns for the study of culture, and, second, to refit Wendy Griswold's (1987a) 1987 framework for a sociology of culture in order to better suit social actors located within a 'circuit of culture'. Through the study of walking guides, this article places Bourdieu's provocative concept in dialogue with a clear epistemological framework.

Keywords

circuits of culture, cities, cultural intermediaries, narrative, spaces

Introduction: Engaging with the Urban Fabric

Cities present a fusillade of overlapping meanings, interactions, and practices, and history is populated with those who embrace the challenge of understanding and sharing their versions of that fabric. Like urban planners, detectives, flaneurs, and journalists, walking tour guides have their particular perspective, and corresponding set of practices. They may seem to be an unlikely source for the study of urban meaning-making, or of cultural work, in part because they operate at a smaller scale while 'growth machines' and 'power brokers' dominate the attentions of scholars. And yet, guides also make complex cultural flows *present* and *tangible* through storytelling in public places. The surfeit

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of culture in New York City creates the supply and demand for these city chroniclers, and they serve as a worthy group to study how a cultural scene is used, interpreted, and reproduced for an audience.

Guides' dispositions are perhaps best described by one of their own, Mark Shulman, who explains: 'The key characteristic of these people is the willingness or desire to pass this information along'. They do this through a kind of storytelling, researching the city and teaching it through tours. Unlike bus guides, who likely have more repetitive scripts and routes, walking guides are prone to improvisation, both in their stories and walks, and serve locals and visitors alike. Guides such as Mr Shulman rely upon their ability to manipulate unruly and ever-changing elements of the city into a coherent narrative. Participants do not turn to these tours for what they could easily find in a library or glean from the Internet, but to hear unknown tidbits, hidden urban treasures, and amusing anecdotes woven into a picture that re-presents a neighborhood, a community, or the city itself. Walking tours are also an attraction, and a distinct cultural object, because they are an *experience*. Participants get to occupy the spaces they learn about. This peripateticism – the Aristotelian activity of walking while teaching – recalls a Simmelian connection between the city, the individual, and particular spatial practices.

To understand the social world of these culture workers, this article draws from the findings of a six-year ethnographic study. For this research, intensive, in situ participant observation was paired with sit-down interviews with 78 individuals who work in and around New York City's tourism industry: guides, tour participants, representatives of local Business Improvement Districts and cultural institutions, historians, and owners of tourism companies. Furthermore, I spent over 150 hours taking 65 walking tours in New York City from September 2001 to March 2006, and from May 2008 to June 2009. Adhering to Kusenbach's (2003: 463) 'go along' method of qualitative work, which allows ethnographers to 'observe their informants' spatial practices in situ while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time', I took at least two tours with each guide mentioned in multiple locations, examined how different guides treated the same places – a valuable technique evident through comparison across experiences and interviews exhibited later in the article – and digitally recorded each interview with guides, before or after their tours. Mitchell Duneier's (1999) procedure for verifying data with each subject mentioned and garnering waivers for using respondents' real names was replicated. Lastly: greater details on the organization of, and struggles within, this field are provided elsewhere (see Wynn, 2005, 2007).

There are two interrelated objectives here. The first is to establish the relationship between guides and their practices through Bourdieu's concept of the 'cultural intermediary' to further develop what is called the 'circuit of culture' perspective. This effort develops the guide as a clear instantiation of the intermediary concept, while at the same time adding the rarely addressed dimension of spatial practice. The second objective is to provide a framework for understanding the whole cycle of labor conducted by intermediaries via a refitting of a methodology of culture proposed by Wendy Griswold to provide scholars a clear map of these particular cultural practices in a four-stage process. In placing these two objectives together, the importance of the intermediary for studies of culture is highlighted, while an analytic framework is developed to transcend old dichotomies in studies of culture. The following sections will examine the issues of

intermediaries and narratives, and illustrate this notion of cultural circulation with empirical data.

Cultural Intermediaries, Spatial Narratives, and Circuits of Culture

Respondents often described the melding of experiences and stories as key components of their work, stating that, ‘One of the fun things about doing tours, you’re really experiencing what you don’t get looking through a bus window’, and ‘Walking is about your senses. It is about *experiencing*’. Guides would also talk highly of their interactions on the street, with strangers and within the group, and the ability for everyone to ask questions and have a discussion. This sense of immersion, interaction, storytelling and serendipity is what, for them, gives guiding its distinct quality as a cultural form. But what are the analytic tools a social scientist can use to examine such practices? How can we garner a useful understanding of their work and their product?

These questions are perennial problems in studies of culture. To answer ‘What properties of culture should be measured?’, Jepperson and Swidler (1994) describe how the pervasive poles of production and reception, system and practice, structuralism and phenomenology, order and action, institutions and meanings, high and low culture, as sources of epistemological orientation have been reproduced in perpetuity. Then there are those who critique these Manichaeic conceptions (including Alexander, 1990; Battani et al., 1997; DiMaggio, 1992 and 1997; and Swidler, 1986), and still others who have sought to transcend them (including Benzecry, 2002; Ferguson, 1998: 636–37; Griswold, 1987b; Ortner 2002; Sahlins, 1976; Sewell, 1999; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991). A subset of researchers attempting to move beyond these divides comes from the cultural studies tradition, and has proposed the ‘circuit of culture’ perspective in the ‘Culture, Media, and Identities’ series (see Hall, 1997) and taught throughout the UK (Turner, 2003: 228). Du Gay et al. (1997), for example, use their examination of the Sony Walkman to propose a five-step process of representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation to study this cycle of cultural texts and artifacts – linking production with practices of consumption.

When turning from a cultural product such as a Walkman and to a cultural worker such as a walking guide, we are faced with the same old dichotomies but the new concern of examining a thinking, reflexive social actor. Several aspects of guides’ practices could be analyzed: we could, for examples, inspect their research techniques (e.g. primary sources or other guides’ tours?), the topics they choose (e.g. art deco or Chinatown?), their particular cultural products (e.g. are there common stops on tours, or are there unique elements?), or the ways they teach these topics (e.g. the Socratic method or lecture?). Through these questions it becomes clear there is another opportunity to either reinforce the dichotomies of cultural work mentioned above, or focus upon a kind of cultural circulation, specifically exploiting the academically curious, although not wholly unique position of the walking guide: to reframe the ‘aspects of their cultural practices’ as both consumers (i.e. as students of history, investigators of the city) and producers (i.e. as teachers on the streets), on the basis of ‘the model of a dialogue [or] an ongoing process’ (Du Gay, 1997: 10). Guides provide the opportunity to address these critical concerns and allow for a more tangible, more actor-centered model for understanding cultural cycles.

But to understand these actors, we must introduce two concepts to illustrate the role of these culture workers and their practices. The concept of cultural intermediaries comes from Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 359), who describes them as a class of 'new petite bourgeoisie', or 'knowledge class', involved with 'presentation and representation ... providing symbolic goods and services'. Similar actors have appeared elsewhere, albeit with less sophistication (see Florida, 2002). But it is a special issue of *Cultural Studies* (winter 2002) that examines this concept with rigor, directly assessing its value in transcending the dichotomies mentioned earlier. One contributor, Keith Negus (2002: 503–4), decouples cultural intermediaries from class in order to describe them more broadly, yet more precisely, as workers who are 'continually engaged in forming a point of connection or articulation between production and consumption', and as a social group that blurs the distinctions 'between high art/popular culture, and the divide between personal taste and professional judgment (or leisure and work)'. Du Gay (1997: 9) adds that intermediaries are symbolic experts 'able to affect the constitution both of processes of cultural production and of practices of cultural consumption'.

Identifying who exactly is an intermediary is a challenge, in part because of Bourdieu's (1984: 351, 359) characteristically indistinct – and perhaps too inclusive – conceptualization, although he made the case for activists, musicians, television and newspaper producers, journalists, and critics. The *Cultural Studies* issue adds examples of fashion designers, advertising executives, bookstore workers, and graphic designers (see McFall, 2002: 547; Skov, 2002: 567; and Soar, 2002: 570). Part of the intangibility in the term stems from its ability to be applied to creative types who shape symbols and ideas (e.g. musicians, sommeliers, and graphic designers), as well as those who manage the relationship between the producers of cultural forms and consumers (e.g. disc jockeys, ad execs, journalists, critics, and bookstore workers). The case of walking guides could further exacerbate the problem, since they have qualities of both types of actors. In their work, guides are like musicians who create a song, and in the second sense of the 'intermediary' term, guides are akin to disc jockeys before corporate radio, choosing cultural products to disseminate to a consuming public. Rather than reproducing this either/or dichotomy, the second half of this paper articulates these roles and proposes a way to think through these practices.

For much of the same reasons that culturalists have been attracted to the intermediary, others have turned to the notion of *narrative*. Bonnell and Hunt (1999: 17) describe narrative as another potential bridge 'between culture as system and culture as practice, [...] an arena in which meaning takes form, in which individuals connect to the public and social world'. For many new cultural historians, narrative has been a powerful tool to analyze the 'networks of patterned relationships connected and configured over time and space' (Somers, 1999: 128; see also Bearman and Stovel, 2000; Jacobs, 1996), providing the ways cultural workers articulate difference, whether it is to determine which wine to buy or music to listen to, or which blues club is deemed 'authentic'. Few researchers engage in the second dimension Somers refers to: *space*. It is an absence signified by Franzosi's (1998) otherwise stellar overview of 'why sociologists should care about narrative'. This lacuna can be filled by the guides' labors, as they use a heterogeneous and contradictory content, and a storytelling method wrought with fits, loops, repetition, and half-starts, and full of metaphors, ironies, and juxtapositions, to then configure new constellations of meaning; and as they do, identify which parts of urban culture are significant.

Critical to the purview of this article is that urban spaces explicitly shape this crafting and retelling of stories, just as poets and jazz musicians certainly have a spatial component to their performances. Narrative takes on a spatial form in the case of the walking tour as buildings become protagonists and city blocks become paragraphs, and a winding spatial thread replaces temporal linearity. For geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1980: 463), ‘transient feelings and thoughts gain permanence and objectivity’ through things and spaces, and for guides a railing or a cast-iron column provides the ability to touch and feel the city. Walking tours are a storytelling practice that locates a group, as guides spatialize history and culture, and ‘story’ place in a way that ‘time’ becomes *practiced*. These experiential moments are strung along like pearls on a narrative thread. Scholars have identified activities such as these as *spatial narrative* (De Certeau, 1984; see also Boyer, 1992; Duncan and Duncan, 1988; Hayden, 1996). Below, guides’ practices are portrayed in a fashion that demonstrates how space affects their cultural practices.

Both concepts – cultural intermediaries and spatial narratives – have been developed to engage with the trenchant dichotomies found across cultural research, and have yet to reach their full potential. The ‘arena of cultural circulation’ is opening (Nixon and Du Gay, 2002: 498) but has, to date, offered little analytical help to bridge ‘the enduring distance between production and consumption’, even, according to Negus (2002: 505), to the point of further *reproducing* the gap. For this reason I focused on characters who exhibit both the consumption and the production of cultural content and have the opportunity to assess this active process within the circuit of culture perspective. Such an agenda addresses many of the aforementioned Manichaean dichotomies by expressly linking consumption and production activities, renders the cultural laborer in a more holistic fashion, and further problematizes the constructed distinctions between high and popular culture, personal taste and professional judgment. While conceptualizing guides as cultural intermediaries makes these subjects generalizable to a larger group of culture workers, the second component of spatial narrative both highlights a unique subject for studies of culture and privileges something guides see as vital to their work.

Refitting the Framework into Four Stages, and One Step Further

In line with the view of culture as a ‘circuit’, the particular practices of intermediaries can be thought of as a discrete series of stages of social action enacted via spatial narrative. To develop such a framework I do not rely on more recent cultural studies work attuned to linguistic codes and cultural texts and artifacts (Hall, 1997: 4), but on refitting a study geared to social actors: Wendy Griswold’s (1987a) ‘Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture’. Addressing the impasse between studies of culture that use ‘production or consumption’ and ‘interpretive or institutional’ models, Griswold echoes the notion that such dichotomous logics are ‘ripe’ for transcendence, and proposes four specific activities for analysis, earmarked for two distinct types of actor: *intention* and *reception* as activities of a ‘social agent’, and *comprehension* and *explanation* as actions of the ‘social analyst’. ‘Thus’, she explains, ‘the four actions delineated by crossing the two dimensions involve the agent and the analyst in both the internal character and the external connectedness of the cultural object’ (Griswold, 1987a: 5). As time has passed,

many of the previously mentioned studies have addressed this same theoretical schism, yet few apply Griswold's practical framework.

Over 20 years later scholars are struggling with similar issues. Just as Bourdieu's intermediaries and a sensitivity to narrative may shed light on these divides, Griswold's methodology can gain new relevance and utility, modified onto a circuit of culture perspective. The applicability of her framework in this light relies upon a conflation of her two types of actor into one 'specifiable, observable, agent' as the pivot for analysis. A caveat is necessary: Griswold, in fact, pre-empts such a choice. In a footnote she reproduces the very distinctions necessary for transcendence by suggesting studies of people such as disc jockeys, who mediate culture between recording artists and audiences, should be avoided 'for precision's sake', so as to avoid theoretical conflation or obfuscation: 'one should avoid thinking of an agent as a mediator [so as not to obscure] the two separate actions involved' (Griswold 1987a: 18). Whether or not the apparent disuse of this essay is related to her epistemological distinction one cannot say, but if research has turned to cultural workers who sit at the intersection of such practices, as I and others suggest, Griswold's footnote must be discarded in favor of an understanding of an intermediary role that highlights both sets of activities. Guides can then be analyzed using the entire array of cultural practices made analytically distinct by Griswold. To use her terminology: they develop and research a particular theme or neighborhood (in the role of a 'social actor') and then reformulate and teach it to an audience (as a 'social analyst'). Walking guides provide a fresh research site, and add the unique social practice of spatial narratives to the discussion of cultural work.

In order to elucidate guides' cycle of cultural work, the following subsections offer discussion of each stage of Griswold's (1987a: 5) four 'stages of agency' – intention, reception, comprehension, and explanation, each defined below – to offer a clear analytical framework for empirical analysis of intermediaries for this and future studies. These discussions break the cultural cycle into the four stages, but then lead to a fifth section on how this cycle continues beyond the guide's own actions to indicate how this cultural circulation is an ongoing process.

Intention: being educational and entertaining in the street

Griswold's (1987a: 5) first action of the cultural worker is *intention*, wherein the social actor connects with a cultural object 'in light of the constraints imposed on him or her in the production and social incorporation of cultural objects'. In the case of guides, we see this through how they take a slice of urban culture and shape it into a tour for a group (e.g. Boy Scouts or Citibank) or advertise it in a publication (e.g. *New York Times* or *Time Out New York*) for a public tour. This decision determines how guides balance their own interests with those of their participants. Griswold (1987a: 6) is careful to acknowledge that at this stage the researcher must not 'reduce intention to an agent's individual psychology or consciousness', and to better understand the issues in this context, three interrelated matters that affect the guide's tour are identified here: *personalities*, *politics*, and *profits*.

Jane Marx, an autodidactic, independent guide, for example, believes that her clients come for her personality as much as for the tour content: 'They won't remember a god-damned thing from the tour, but they'll remember that they had a *great* time, and that

they love New York. My persona is what clients come back for'. Eric Washington, another self-taught and self-employed guide, gives 'Hidden Manhattanville' tours for a large cultural institution called the Municipal Art Society (MAS), and he explains further: 'If I'm going on ground that has been heavily trodden by guides, it's still original [because] it will reflect my personality. So basically, there's the same information, the same "anchors," give or take, but a lot will be different'. 'The personality factor', he explains, 'will create a dynamic that will shape how the information is disseminated'.

A guide's politics, in the broadest sense, can shape a tour as well. There are examples of overtly political tours. The radical politics of independent guide Bruce Kayton, for example, so strongly affect his content that he might sit at the foot of the Empire State Building's art deco façade and ignore it, favoring a story about the free schooling and medical care workers received within the B. Altman's department store across the street. In gearing up for the Republican National Convention, a group called the 'M27 Coalition' conducted a 'War Profiteers' walking tour on 18 September 2004. One's politics do not have to be as explicit, or expressly 'political', as these examples: another guide, Brendan FitzGerald, described the experience of turning down an institutional affiliation with a municipal museum because he feared they would compromise his 'corporate-owned public space tours'.

Profits shape the guide's intentions as well. A few offer free tours, but the majority work for a profit. The money is often meager and certainly irregular. Because of the wide variety of people giving tours (i.e. some three times a week, some three times a year), inconsistency of clients, and the seasonal nature of the industry, income across the trade is difficult to generalize. What is clear, however, is that attracting participants greatly informs which topics and neighborhoods are selected. Just because a guide is passionate about a topic doesn't guarantee success. Robin Lynn, who organizes the tours for the MAS, carefully monitors her programming: 'Art Deco, Midtown tours are a sure thing. Anything with light and sound usually gets an audience. [Brooklyn] tours of the conversion of vacant buildings to sustained buildings? That is a money loser right off the bat'. There is a balance, however. She still offers Brooklyn tours because she wants to 'expand the envelope' and 'take risks' despite barely breaking even. A cultural institution, however, has economic stability, whereas an independent guide needs every tour to count. Independent guides distinguish themselves via specialization but must also develop a broad enough repertoire to be flexible for any available jobs, and to be prepared for the many topics that may arise on tour.

Here the disposition, and social position, of the guide is at its most plain, as her personality, politics, and profits affect the first step of the intermediary's cycle. These three issues raise many of the key concerns for a larger study of walking tourism – of commodification, identity, legitimacy, entertainment, and education – but how *spaces* play a significant role must be highlighted for our purposes here. The spatial dynamic provides the characteristic substance of the walking tour and its significant obstacles. A well-trodden area can attract participants (e.g. Greenwich Village, Harlem, Times Square), but guides must differentiate themselves with either a unique take on the area, or a substantive shift: guides have described the desire to become 'Mr Ellis Island', or the 'Manhattanville guy', or the 'Ninth Avenue Foodie guide' in this effort. Furthermore, guides balance their politics, personality, and profits alongside such spatial selections. Space, in other words, is there right from the start.

Reception: weaving together collective representations

Griswold's (1987a: 5) second stage is where 'the social agent's consumption, incorporation, or rejection of cultural objects' enters the process of *reception*, and is perhaps most similar to the consumption of culture literature (e.g. Peterson and Kern, 1996). No guide has told me he or she has given a tour *without* research. Once intent is established, guides set themselves to unearthing material, consuming and incorporating data by searching through the dustbins of history and public space to construct a narrative to sell. Their research techniques are varied: developing their own filing system of notes and clippings, interviewing locals, whirring through microfiche, surfing the Internet, even taking other guides' tours. In the case of New York City walking tourism, there are two groupings in this regard: Big Onion Walking Tours is a company that hires 15–20 PhD candidates from local universities, and then there are independent guides who are more likely *autodidacts* who come from a wide variety of backgrounds; some are aspiring actors, others are retirees making money to augment their pensions. The former group of *academics* make their guides' scholarly credentials a key marketing point, while the latter are quick to describe themselves as 'jacks-of-all-trades' and 'aggressive generalists'. Big Onion guides do not have to worry about the business end because their boss, Seth Kamil, takes care of the advertising and the decision-making on tour topics and neighborhoods. He also provides historical materials for them: 20 to 25 pages, which is enough for eight hours of tour content. They are invited to elaborate with their own research, but 'all they have to do', Seth tells me, 'is show up'.

This approach differs from an autodidact's opportunistic, on the fly, and personal reception of information. Katia Howard is an example of an autodidactic guide (and one-time aspiring actress), who describes how she hits the streets more than the books as a part of her process:

I chose Ninth Ave. I walked up and down from 40th Street to 57th [Street] and ate at restaurants, chit-chatted with the proprietors, bought a lot of olives, bought a lot of bread. I isolated the merchants I wanted to deal with based on quality of merchandise, personalities, and their willingness – and also the ethnic diversity. And then I needed to know more about the history so I went to a bookshop in Rockefeller Center, I asked their advice, bought the books. I reference it. I went to the community board, went to the school board, I went to a church to find out the history of the religious institutions, and I let it fly!

This 'street-level' investigation is rare among more academic and historical guides, but independents such as Ms Howard privilege a different kind of 'reception'. This has less to do with Big Onion guides being more scholarly and more to do with their corporate structure and broader career paths. Big Onion guides give tours to pay the bills while doing something that harmonizes with their mode of research: historical method. Independent and autodidact guides are less likely to have a historical perspective and more inclined to knocking on doors and 'sniffing things out', as one called it.

Katia's practices show the spatial dynamic at work in the intermediary's reception. As with all guides, the intentional theme of a 'Foodie tour' is only one of the ordering elements, and is paired with a particular *place* as well. In examples like Mr FitzGerald's aforementioned public space tours, spaces take on a more explicit substantive role

wherein they not only shape the content but *are* the content. When I asked Brendan why his tours have almost no historical data whatsoever, he told me he prefers to focus on current spatial issues. He then adds, ‘I just don’t feel like I’m qualified to talk about history’. In Griswold’s framework, this is to say that he doesn’t feel trained to receive that information accurately, but that his autodidactic skills allow him to develop his own tours with a different set of materials.

Comprehension: thematicizing tour content

Comprehension, Griswold’s (1987a: 5) third component for this cycle – as we move from activities that are conventionally assigned to the ‘reception’ or ‘consumption’ of culture to those she perceives as the ‘production’ of culture – is evidenced by the ‘consideration of the internal structures, patterns, and symbolic carrying capacities of the cultural objects’. Guides use narratives to weave together the near-infinite possibilities of cultural objects into a theme (e.g. cuisine, sex, literature, music, theater, or architecture) as a way to understand and analyze the city. Themes serve as the criterion, allowing for a comprehension of the glut of possible information. For independent guide Eric Washington, ‘not every tour is conducive to telling a story, you know, with a beginning, a middle, and an end’. Here, he is expressing his struggle over telling the story of a tour, how one, in the language of Griswold’s (1987a: 17) framework, “‘grasps” the object, “gets a handle on it,” in order to do something with it’. Furthermore, here we see the spatial dynamic at play again. On a tour of Brooklyn Heights (an upper-class neighborhood south of the Brooklyn Bridge), Harry Matthews explains:

I like to start at the north end, the oldest part, [...] because I think that it is a good place to set a certain amount of historical perspective: how the neighborhood grew up, the relationship to the waterfront, which has now been cut off and where there is now a park [...] Then, you try to look for interesting sites that are in geographic proximity so that you don’t have to do a lot of walking.

This guide articulates the development of the community in combination with topography to narrativize his tour’s content.

To illustrate how intermediaries have the potential to ‘understand’ a cultural object of a place differently, the following are two fragments of field notes, taken from two different tours, by two guides as they analyze a single room (a benefit of an ethnographic method that follows multiple guides in the same settings, and the same guides in multiple ones), Grand Central Terminal’s Vanderbilt Hall:

One of Robin Lynn’s MAS tour guides, Mr. Marrone, gathers us around a wall to ask us about the materials. The group looks, and thinks about it, but no one speaks. He walks to the wall, and says, ‘They might look like it, but this wall is not French Limestone, not Limestone, and not even stone, but gypsum plaster molded to simulate French Limestone’. He describes this as a bit of architectural trickery – called a ‘curtain wall’ – as giving the illusion of being a load-bearing wall. The bottom rim of stone that comes to eye-level is Botticino Marble, and the flooring is Tennessee Marble. He invites us to touch the different materials, and arch our necks upwards to the top of the partition.

Three months later, on another tour:

Mr. Ferate, who works for the Business Improvement District that includes the Terminal, describes the experiences that a woman would have had when Grand Central served as the entry point for all tourists coming to New York City sixty years ago. 'Once', he explains 'this was called the Waiting Room'. He describes how wooden benches filled this empty space. He points to where the elaborate powder rooms and resting areas were. He talks of how travelers would arrive, grab their luggage, walk through the hall and out to a hotel a block or two away, and be reclining in bed within ten minutes. With a rhetorical furl, he asks, 'Now, where were you ten minutes after arriving at JFK? In a cab on the BQE? Still waiting for your luggage?'

Mr Marrone's and Mr Ferate's comprehension shapes the cultural object of the tour by identifying distinctly different components of a single source, 'elucidating the parts' in Griswold's terms. Here we see how a cultural object, in this case a room, can afford multiple stories, and different narratives. As autodidacts, they have received the information similarly but their modes of comprehension – the first taking on a more architectural theme, the second a more social one – make for very different interpretations.

Spaces shape the tour in another, more interesting fashion. Just as spaces can accommodate multiple narratives, it is important to note that they can force other themes too. To explain: It is an atypical tour theme that has a topic on every block and, unlike those inanimate decades in history that books skip over to arrive at the next momentous event in the next paragraph, guides must talk during the two or three blocks between 'points of interest'. After a Greenwich Village tour I asked Katia Howard to articulate how she handles these gaps, and she told me:

You figure, 'Well, I've got to walk across Eighth Street to get [them] from Eighth Street to Fifth Avenue to go down. Well, Eighth Street, what's there?' You have Jimi Hendrix's Electric Lady recording studio and the first Whitney Museum. You fill in the blanks.

Even in a city as historically rich as New York, pertinent information is rarely found in contiguous spaces. All tours have such stretches – which is to say there may not be relevant material pertinent to the particular intention or reception of the tour content – offering something of a (potentially) 'dead narrative space'. For seasoned guides, this is where 'filler' comes in. This is not pejorative: filler can include components that reinforce themes or orient the participant to a larger historical or cultural frame of meaning. Therefore, from broad overviews to interesting asides, many elements that would be excluded in a written historical or oral narrative are included in spatial narrative of a walking tour and factor into the comprehension for the guide.

Explanation: teaching 'how to read the city'

Explanation is Griswold's (1987a: 5, 20) fourth stage, wherein social actors make the 'connections between comprehended cultural objects and the external social world' for those 'beyond the creative community'. Guides enjoy the research tourism requires, but it is unimportant without being able to share what they have learned. This quality allows for direct associations between their storytelling and the interactive world. Whether

touching the marble at Grand Central or brushing up against the passersby on the sidewalk, guides relate stories that are wedded to the experiences of the city. Intentions, receptions, and comprehensions affect the explanation: a guide's personal or political orientation matching with their selection of a cultural theme, or pairing with their inclinations to more scholarly research, informs how they tour. Less evident, though, is how these presentations are shaped by the back and forth of storytelling with an audience and chance interactions with the city itself. And it is through that realization we can come to see how the explanation stage informs the tour as well.

Big Onion guides don't always know what group awaits them, and Jennifer Fronc described times when she has been happy to throw out all her plans when finding a rowdy class of grade-schoolers waiting for her to give them a tour. Independent guide 'Wildman' Steve Brill, for example, refuses to plan his tours of edible public park flora too extensively, claiming: 'Jazz is a big inspiration, and improvisation is important. The improvisational aspect of guiding gives guides a sense of freedom and variation. It keeps it fresh. The same plant might be presented in different ways, medicinal, ecology, cooking'. It is this stage of their work that many, like Mr Brill, see as the most charming, interesting, and satisfying aspect of their craft. For guides who give tours on the side of acting auditions, the work of developing a script, and working on an audience, creates a harmony with their multiple endeavors. Similarly, academic guides feel that these exigencies are preparation for their teaching careers.

Upon probing, Ms Fronc talked about keeping her audience in mind by using the Big Onion's analogy of layers:

[Participants] don't know to *read* what they are seeing. They don't know how to read the neighborhood: Is it dirty or is it clean? Is it safe? [...] I teach by using an analogy of *layers*, and pointing out the changes. There's this one moment in the Immigrant [tour with] the Jewish Daily Forward Building. It housed a socialist newspaper, then it was a Chinese missionary church, and it's now multi-million dollar condos. And then on the corner is a place called the Wing Shoon Restaurant, but it had been the Garden Cafeteria where Emma Goldman and Trotsky used to hang out, and now it's a Chinese restaurant. [...] I can talk about these layers, these changes in the neighborhood.

Jennifer's interest in 'teaching them how to read' underscores the notion of guiding as a form of education, echoing other guides who told me the major attraction for his clients is that 'they think tours are edifying' and that 'it's almost like being a school teacher'.

Both guides and participants, however, know walking tours aren't college lectures, and that the particular explanation of a walking tour is a rare form of cultural meaning-making. These spatial narratives are *experiential learning*. It is this embrace of the physicality of the city that gives their craft its truly unique quality, and serves as one of the most satisfying aspects of the job. Summing up the work for all his peers, Eric Washington asked me: 'I get to work outside, in the street, teaching. What could be better?' He continued to explain how guiding is teaching, 'but there are trees in the room and cars going by. What an odd classroom!' Just as Molotch et al. (2000: 793) see practices, history, and places as 'lashed-up' into a *place character*, guides feel that the experience of being in spaces, pointing to particular buildings, fusing together past and present into a single experience, resonates with the audience better than any classroom lecture. Guides'

practices are the actual work of that ‘lashing together’. It is the aspect of the ‘teaching’ here that is evidence of the end of the intermediary’s circuit, but it is also an indication of needing to think beyond the character of the guide.

Beyond the intermediary: ‘making their own maps of the city’

Because Griswold’s four-stage analysis is being retrofitted into a cycle, a more layered and cyclical conception reveals an ongoing cultural process in the case of the guide. The ‘culture’ in the cultural work of guides extends beyond this intermediary and spins away from their narratives, beyond the tour itself, to their clients. Guides encourage participants to become their own active investigators. After one of his Hidden Harlem tours, Mr Washington states:

I think walking tours are really fascinating because people get to do what they do all the time. They get up off the couch, they get dressed, they go out, and they walk. So they are maybe walking in an area they don’t generally walk in, they are going beyond the corner store. And they are seeing things that perhaps have been there the whole time that they’ve been there, that they have not taken notice of before. Then they go back to their neighborhoods and they see that their neighborhood, their block, has history too. Their building has history. I think that is so valuable, and that’s so exciting. Which is why I think there is plenty of room for non-academic historians to do this kind of stuff. [...] They will go and become stewards for their neighborhoods, their blocks. It just makes us all better citizens because they have that ‘hands-on’ relationship with history. They feel that they are a part of it. You don’t need a degree to share that.

And for Mr Shulman: ‘[The participant is] willing to have the experience of learning, of being the student [and] then he’s got those facts and is going to turn around and impress 50, 60 people over the course of the year’.

These would be empty sentiments without guides actively imparting their practices to others. Some guides do, in fact, distribute bibliographies, cite their source material, and describe their research methods for participants in an effort to make the process even more transparent. One autodidact shares his hand-drawn maps and begs his participants to ‘create and make their own understandings of the city’, and Brendan FitzGerald found it satisfying to ‘get emails from people who went and did these things on their own’.

Conclusion

This study of walking guides demonstrates a clear cycle of cultural work, a process only hinted at in earlier scholarship. Researchers can and should trace out the practices that cultural workers engage in, from start to finish, with a keen awareness of the cultural flows that precede and spin away from those actions. Looking back, we can now envision the practices of other culture workers in earlier work with new eyes: Negus’s (1992) study of the British music industry can be revisited to illuminate the cycle of strategies that connects how young music executives sign particular acts with how they also book other bands to perform in clubs, or Wright’s (2005) study of bookshop workers’ purchasing of certain books over others but then shaping the ideas of readers by making recommendations to customers, or McFall’s (2002: 547) study of advertising executives

selecting particular images by graphic designers and then publishing them in venues that either reinforce the designer's intent or ignore it. This framework offers the chance to 'see' more connections within cultural work and across activities.

This exercise has privileged the issue of spatial narratives, but new studies on other cultural workers can provide additional concepts to our understandings of cultural circulation. And, looking forward even further, as a wider swath of people are afforded the chance to engage in intermediary work thanks to new technologies for the production and dissemination of music, essays, lectures, and musings (Featherstone, 1991; Florida, 2002; Nixon, 1996), the public space of culture up for manipulation is far more expansive than the sidewalks of New York. This fact, in addition to the burgeoning literature on cultural labors over the last 20 years, has increased the necessity for a framework to analyze such activities in this fashion. Any bracketing of practices into 'production' and 'consumption' not only partially renders these new cultural workers analytically, it misapprehends the very significance of this ascendant class of the cultural intermediary. The breadth and variety of activities and the interconnections between them must therefore be appreciated and examined more fully. The study of cultural intermediaries is not to isolate the individual any more than it is to segregate his or her particular practices, and more can be done to examine the social relationships beyond the actor. The concept of the intermediary provides the opportunity to be more attentive to how these practices create a connection amongst actors, how one circuit connects with others.

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