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Culture: “Sign Industries” as Makers of the
“Public Sphere”

Rodanthi Tzanelli

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Cultural Intimations and the Commodification of Culture: “Sign Industries” as Makers of the “Public Sphere”

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Abstract: What does ‘globalization’ mean for those who allegedly stand at the ‘receiving end’ of its messages? Do they truly stand at its receiving end only – or, are they partaking in it in covert ways? This paper proffers some theoretical reflections on the nature of new cultural industries and the interplay of local, national and global resistances that they induce. It singles out a specific case in which the contingent generation of interdependencies between Hollywood film-making and the ‘tourist industries’ that emerge from Hollywood screening of various locales leads to the production of new understandings of culture and identity in different parts of the world. The ensuing commodification of these locales by various agents of global tourist and Hollywood networks suggests that film and tourist industries are bound together through the circulation of the same cultural ‘signs’. These ‘signs’ are constantly interpreted - not only by cultural industry agents and consumers (film audiences, tourists) but also by the native populations and nation-states unexpectedly faced with this unprecedented commodification of their histories, identities and environments. The hermeneutic potential such ‘global circulations of the sign’ carry suggests that we examine the communication of different cultural industries as what I will term ‘global sign industries’. Reactions of localities and nation-states to this phenomenon encompass both hostility and submission to cultural commodification. This ambiguity, inherent in what I shall term ‘cultural intimations’ of identity, both reveals these ‘sign industries’ as unintentional makers of the ‘public sphere’ and presents the disenfranchised of late modernities as poetic agents of culture. Bringing together classical critical theory, social anthropology, cultural studies, and literature on the creative industries and sociology of culture, this paper aspires to contribute an understanding of the nature of globalization and its impact on cultural specificity.

Keywords: Cultural/Creative Industries, Cultural Intimacy/Intimation, Film, Globalization, Hermeneutics, Identity, Public Sphere, Signs, Tourism

Introduction

THE CINEMATIC ADAPTATION of Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* (2004) in 2006 (*DVC*), which visualized the fictional protagonists’ journey across sites of European history and heritage (Louvre’s Mona Lisa, the Pyramid, Saint-Sulpice and the Chartres Cathedral in Paris, Rennes le Château in Aude, The Last Supper and the Sforza Castle in Italy, Rosslyn Chapel in Edinburgh, the Temple Church, Westminster Abbey and Lincoln Cathedral), generated extensive tourist networks, providing a plethora of possibilities for visits to many places that figure in the book. The commercialization of yet another story about the “Holy Grail” ended up endorsing a version of cosmopolitanism: just like *DVC*’s cinematic heroes, tourists could now traverse the European space, “get to know” – or “glance” (Larsen 2001) - a tiny bit of “other cultures”, and bring back home material tokens of their experience. Nobody asked the anonymous local actors of these sites what they thought about these developments; it was just assumed that the cinematic glorification of their “heritage” would be enough to stifle any objections.

In reality, this commercially-led interpellation of cosmopolitanism has generated much resentment - especially in France, where understandings of cultural heritage are tied to the state and notions of national identity. Long before the release of the film, Minnesota talk radio host Ian Punnett, already leader of a *DVC*-inspired tour in 2004, acknowledged “the looks” that *DVC* tourists got during their visit in Paris. “It’s not enough that [France] contains the most beautiful art and gorgeous gardens and historical monuments?” locals would ask (CBS News, November 2004). The tourists’ desire to see the locations in which some filmed “mystic rituals” allegedly took place, irritated life-long parishioner at the Church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. He blurted to another reporter: “it’s all wrong. The description of the artwork, the architecture, the documents in this church [...] the secret rituals – I don’t know, because we never had any secret rituals in the church” (CBS News, 12 November 2004). In the end, the agitated parishioner decided to put on the wall next to the obelisk a notice: “Contrary to fanciful allegations in a recent best-selling novel, this is not a vestige of pagan temple. No such temple existed in this place. It was never called a Rose Line. It does not coincide with the meridian...” (Times Online, 30 March



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2006). A staffer at the Louvre's information desk under Pai's glass Pyramid communicated the same anger, when he sniffed that he had "no advice for the daily trickle of curious fans", as the whole *DVC* thing "is fiction" (USA Today, 21 October 2004). But at the same time there are Parisian hotel managers today who are keen to provide their own "critical tours" of the story, hence engendering a further element of the *DVC* tourist network, a form of de-territorialised identity that at least for a moment holds sway over "cosmopolitan" consumers and tourists.

This ambivalence ("we hate you, usurpers of *our* culture" – but "we can do this advertising better than you!") portrays a commercialized cultural *ecumene* we habitually split into "makers" and "passive recipients". This paper proffers some theoretical reflections on the nature of new forms of cultural production and consumption through an examination of the contingent generation of economic interdependencies between Hollywood filmmaking and the tourist industries that emerge from Hollywood screening of world locales. The ensuing commodification of these locales by various agents of global tourist and Hollywood networks suggests that film and tourist industries are bound together through the circulation of the same "signs", constantly interpreted - not only by cultural industry agents and consumers (film audiences, tourists) but also by the native populations and nation-states faced with the commodification of their histories, identities and environments. Therefore I ask two interlocked questions: How can we explore the nature and function of new creative/cultural industries that produce, circulate and shape "cinematic tourism" of the *DVC* type? It has been argued that the acceleration of globalization processes through telecommunication systems promotes a particular type of "global citizenship" that "benefit[s] mobile capital, manifested in the rights of the 'corporate person'" (Calabrese 2005: 301). Should we not assess the impact of such globalization on cultural specificity from the standpoint of those who are often excluded from academic and political debates on cultural production and experience in such global industries? By this comment I refer to those actors who work in these industries but do not occupy positions of corporate power.

I suggest that we re-think "cultural production", by juxtaposing its formal (cultural industries as organizations) and informal (cultural production in everyday life) regimes and practices - for the two run parallel, and eventually intersecting, lives. In the following section I develop ways of thinking about the interdependencies of various cultural industries with specific reference to the relationship between film and tourism. In the final section I turn the tables against such "academic talk" (reminiscent of Frank-

furt School theory), by presenting the *poetic* potential of resentful responses to all-embracing cultural commodification as their informal counterpart. The argument resulting from such juxtaposition both recognizes the agency of anonymous individuals who inhabit different cultural worlds and presents globalization as neither a top-down nor a bottom-up process but a creative intersection of the two.

Sign Industries: The Formal Regimes of Production/Consumption

The convergence of film and tourist industries is tied to the escapist nature of televised images: through them, we transcend our everyday routines and enter the world of daring adventure. A legitimate antecedent of this "cinematic tourism" can be found in the poetic function of eighteenth and nineteenth-century travel literature, produced by the more adventurous – initially male, later also female – explorers of the world to endlessly amuse readerships at home. Urry (2002) pointed out how the visual experience of touring, "gazing upon" other cultures and environments, both celebrates and domesticates otherness. Photographing and recording cultures and environments may become a way of disciplining "otherness" and producing authoritative knowledge about it. The travel book narratives of the Romantic era were destined to become "spatial trajectories" that clearly "mapped" and arranged locations in imagined registers (de Certeau 1988: 115). Unlike early travel rituals, including those of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Grand Tour in the Holy Lands and the Mediterranean region, tourism is a more organized system of leisure, consisting of capitalist networks of charter flight companies, hotel chains and travel agencies. We may identify in such organized tourism "mobilities" (Urry 2007: 102-3) the promotion of visualized imagination into a capitalist "node": images, the intangible and malleable aspects of social life, become a sort of binding force for global capital.

The relationship between material and non-material aspects of production and social interaction is a theme that dates back to the political theory of Marx. Following Marx's (1976) elaboration of labor and value, Harvey terms capital a "value in motion" (1999: 83-4) that circulates in different social domains and networks. This capital mobility generates new forms of cultural tourism while presupposing the existence of old and new capitalist networks. The term "culture industry" was invented on these premises by Frankfurt School theorists (Adorno 1991; Adorno and Horkheimer 1993), who saw in popular culture (music, film, magazines) a potentially destructive capitalist force of democratic dialogue. Nevertheless, the original "culture industry" thesis does not do much justice to the complexities of pro-

duction, because it considers the manufacturers of cultural goods as passive participants in a mystifying conspiracy against “collective consciousness”. If the manufacturers of cultural goods partake in the manipulation of symbols, should they not be considered as agents of socio-cultural change (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 4-6, 232)? Most modern economies are consumption-based, and “social technologies that manage consumption derive from the social and creative disciplines” (Cunningham 2005: 293). “Symbolic creativity” permeates contemporary socio-economic life, with most industries fashioning themselves on the cultural model (Castells 1996; Lash and Urry 1994). The implicit interplay of artistic creation and market production is central to the innovative aspects of commodification (Hartley 2005: 5-6; Miège 1987).

The self-same symbolic creativity can be observed at the receiving end of such intangible products. In film-induced tourist practices “cinematic tourists” (film viewers, potential tourists) consume signs: they buy holidays to filmed locations because of their Hollywood “aura” and re-enact cinematic narratives on location through organized tours or buy tokens that referentially belong to the cinematic plot. Tourist production is made possible through film consumption only because film produces meaning in the first place. Cinematic messages are already part of tourist circuits, because they tend to draw upon existing consumer experiences that circulate in the realm of contemporary culture (Ateljevic 2000: 381). Images and experiences of place and culture are not direct products of tourist industries, but objects that remain *overdetermined* by a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines and other consumption processes (Shields 1991; Rojek 2000: 54; Taylor 2001). The interconnectedness of all these sectors of the “culture industry” suggests that tourism begins with cultural “signification” (Culler 1988; MacCannell 1989; Wang 2000).

We may drop the *analytical* distinction between the film and tourist industries: both participate in the circulation of symbolic “sign values” (Baudrillard 1973). Baudrillard’s definition of the postmodern condition was based on the conviction that not only does the “sign” operate independently from the signified, but also their “loose relationship” has become responsible for the arbitrariness of textual and visual meaning. The manipulation of the sign by producers and consumers results in the “death of the real” (Baudrillard 1983: 53) and the rise of a society that lives through simulations. Baudrillard’s theory reconceptualized the impact of the mass media on the construction of reality and questioned the ways in which “dominant codes” of meaning rise and fall in Western liberal societies (Porter 1993: 2). This transcends the classical Marxist distinction between production and consumption on which Adorno and

Horkheimer based their thesis, as the two modes become interchangeable in what I will term *global sign industries*. These *industries* trade in images and ideas, the intangible aspects of local and national culture, are *global*, because they thrive on their economic and political interdependencies and generate, manipulate and market cultural *signs*. Central to the operative forces of these industries is a game of continuous hermeneutics: by filmmakers (of novels on which films are based), audiences (of films), holiday providers (of audiences’ film readings) and tourists (who base their holiday on films). Cinematic hermeneutics figure as a mode of both consumption and production, enriching the cultural systems of our late modern worlds.

I dropped Adorno and Horkheimer’s singular (“industry”) because it disregards the numerous possibilities for different cultural industries to establish strategic “alliances”. Moreover, the determinants that shape the marketization of cultural products often still depend on context: Bollywood and Hong Kong movies have their own audiences. Still, media conglomerates affiliated with or originating in Hollywood have more transnational power than small media firms, which are eventually absorbed by Hollywood. Hollywood’s involvement in the provision of tourist services is irrefutable. I do not suggest that the cooperation of Hollywood and tourist agencies leads to mergers, only that their interest in sign manipulation and capital generation coincides (Beeton 2005: 9). Even within film industries, power and control over the production and successful marketing of a film are unpredictable. Cinema corporations are always competing to secure the emotional investment of their viewers, involving film directors and other Hollywood agents in discussions with fans (Ryan 1992). These actors will proceed to plan their policy independently from emerging tourist industries, although such policies may in fact benefit the latter. Convergence of interests can even be “crafted” to secure interdependencies that will reduce risk of failure, or “silence” criticism from without (Hirsch 1990; Garnham 1990: 160-2). The *Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*, 2001, 2002, 2003) “cinematic trilogy” had to overcome such an obstacle: Tolkien’s fans were very particular about the cinematic transposition of the story. On-line communiqués to fans by director Peter Jackson, as well as other televised interviews, were part of an organized attempt of media conglomerates to simultaneously “tame” fan networks (potentially dangerous for corporate interests) and use them for the maximization of profit (Murray 2004: 19). But the *LOTR* films also became responsible for the birth of a colossal tourist industry that draws upon cinematic imagery to globally advertise filmed locales (Tzanelli 2007: 67-82).

The single “culture industry” vision also tends to dismiss the role of consumers as “symbol creators” (Willis 1990) of ideas and consumption practices. In the case of the consumption of tourist images and ideas, it assumes that the meaning of “culture” (mediated through film and tourism) is prescribed by “capitalist elites”. Audiences receive texts and images in many ways that may or may not coincide with those of the original message of their creators (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Dunn 2005): “it is one thing to assume that cinema is determined in ideological ways [...] that is, that various institutions of the cinema *do* project an ideal viewer, and another thing to assume that those projections *work*”. (Mayne 1995: 159) Most cinematic narratives tend to incorporate contradictory social visions, suggesting to viewers both reaction and conformism. Even the most ideological films carry within their narratives “potentially progressive undercurrents [...] by delineating [...] the salient fears, desires, and needs that make up the everyday fabric of [...] culture”. (Ryan and Kellner 1990: 2)

I am fully aware that academic pluralism often ends up replicating the “free market” logic of neo-liberalism. Simply put, celebrating the absence of unitary cultural meaning and the presence of arbitrary “signs” may symbolically sanction the operation of global sign industries (Gitlin 1998). I do not intend to pass the hermeneutic unpredictability of cinema and its fans for political activism however (Murray 2004: 12). Fan cultures are both anti-commercial in their pursuits and interests (e.g. the development of distinctive modes of interaction within fan communities) and commodity-oriented in their nature (Hill 2002). Distinguishing between fan creativity and political resistance highlights processes that exist independently from consumer “sign-reading” and may even support economic exploitation and inequality. The angry Frenchmen of the introduction - the actual “hosts” of “cinematic tourists” - must find a place in the study of global sign industries. Local encounters with demanding consumers, who arrive at the filmed place with certain preconceptions in their mind, may become part of this game of sign-reading. Should we not ask what happens to screened indigenous cultures during such encounters?

My understanding of culture refers to the malleable and porous systems of beliefs, ideas, habits and customs that order our everyday life and are communicated to others through signs and symbols (Geertz 1973, 1986). In the Boasian anthropological tradition represented by Benedict (1934), Mead and Sapir (1929), humans spin “webs of significance” (Geertz 1973: 5) around their community, providing it thus with a clear definition. Culture grants individuals with a “home”, and is in turn protected by them from erosion by alien interventions (Herzfeld 2005). Yet,

its promotion into a stable, master “sign” is the mantra of the nationalist ideologue for whom perennality and fixity remain the nation’s irrefutable properties (Gellner 1998). In reality, culture does not develop in a political void (Nederveen Pieterse 2004: 116-7). In tourist-host encounters in particular, it never figures as a stable system that exists *a priori*: “authenticity” is the outcome of interactions between hosts and guests, “in which tourees attempt to mirror tourists’ desires and vice versa” (Kroshus Medina 2003: 355; Cohen 1988; Ryan 1991). So, I do not follow a “hard core” Marxist perspective, which views globalization and its institutional affiliates (political Americanization, MacDonaldization, media globalization) as destructive forces of national boundaries, state control and cultural specificity (Ritzer 1996; Hirst and Thompson 1999; Hutton and Giddens 2000). Although I acknowledge that the complexities of so-called (Western!) “late modernity” are manifested in the interconnectedness of the economic, cultural and political spheres and make the compartmentalized study of different domains of human experience very difficult (Jameson 1984; Held *et.al.* 1999; Giddens 2000; Urry 2003), I will not fall prey to a pessimistic Luhmannian thesis either. The idea that the “West” is a coherent, closed system that functions on autopoietic principles, assimilating everything for its own self-preservation, does not take into account the plurality of “Western” experiences and their external receptions and appropriations. I proffer a less deterministic argument, which acknowledges that global disseminations of cultural images through sign industries *do* take cultural specificity *out of its context* for commercial purposes (Tomlinson 1999), but the very process of doing so induces *culturally productive* local and national responses (Foster 1991: 236; Milne and Ateljevic 2001; Ray 2002: 5.2; Nederveen Pieterse 2004: 55).

We may remember Anderson’s (1991) insistence that the wide dissemination of certain ideas through print-capitalism generated national identities, as collective imaginations needed universalized “mediated” messages of culture to be born. Today these messages are not addressed only to the “nation” or created exclusively by its “elites”. The construction of popular versions of national or ethnic cultures by the media enables localities and nation-states to “meet the world” and escape the cage of a not always happy isolation. This “banalization” (Billig 1995) of culture, the interaction of self-imagining and external representations, triggers processes that change the face of nations and localities in unpredictable ways (Held 2000: 1-3). As Strain explains, cinematic technologies and the “travel mystique” share “*the illusion of demediating mediation*” (2003: 3), the idea that certain types of experience have the power to erase the mediation of reality altogether. Strain

develops her argument from classical anthropological and sociological studies of tourism, but she concentrates mainly on the work of MacCannell (1986), who identifies in travel a search for authenticity stripped of the marketing discourse of tourism. Cinema manufactures a version of authenticity while simultaneously blocking and filtering the mechanisms of exoticization employed in the construction of imagery and narrative. Cinema has the power to *simulate* authenticity while denying that it engages in simulation. Nations are also caught in processes of demediating mediation that may convince them to accept cinematic simulations of their indigenous monoculture as “real”. The commodification of indigenous specificity by global sign industries exerts pressure on the hosts to perform for foreigners (Nash 1977) and endorses the marketization of authenticity “by the pound” (Greenwood 1977) but is often welcome as an economy booster and generator of job markets (Leadbeater and Oakley 2005: 301). Any assessments of the local and national impact of “cinematic tourism” have to be structurally and contextually specific: they have to explore the position commodified cultures occupy in collective imaginations outside their cradle, and the historical and economic relationship of the nation-states that “host” them with the rest of the world.

Previous research conducted in four continents and countries (Thailand, New Zealand, Greece and Cuba) (Tzanelli 2007) may suggest that cultures mobilized in demediating mediations are easily exoticized because their hosting nation-states are situated outside or in the margins of the “developed” world. Their geographic or political marginality, their peripheral role in the world economy and their colonial or crypto-colonial pasts place them in a subsidiary position when it comes to the articulation of the national or local voices that object to “developmental” projects originating in Western economic centers. Rapid tourist expansion calls for makeshift solutions that involve the growth of informal markets, support poor payment, and introduce or exacerbate community rivalries and competition (Agarwal et. al. 2000). Consider for example the overlaid resistances of Thai localities to global capitalist interests *and* their internal representatives, the Thai state, during the shooting of *The Beach* (2000), a Hollywood film that commodified the natural backdrop of its narrative (Phi Phi Leh, Krabi region). *The Beach* boycott was used by Hollywood and its capitalist satellites in subsequent publicity campaigns, encouraging the Thai state to further commoditize areas normally protected by national laws. Today anyone with an Internet connection can visit sites that trade in exotic Krabi holidays and book a room in the newly erected “traditional style” hotels of the Phi Phi islands. In spite of the international support

from well-organized activist circles, the battle was fought and lost. Much like the Thai state, which from the outset acted like a partner of external economic interests, the Zealandish state seemed willing to adopt capitalist tactics so as not to be marginalized in the battle for brand monopolies: the glamorization of Auckland as a “fashionable” urban destination for *LOTR* fans, the renaming of New Zealand as the new “Middle Earth” and the replication of the “sign industry” model in another region of the island after the release of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005) to encourage more tourism, simply shows how the periphery “beats” the center by emulating it. In absence of any organized state control of film-induced tourism on the Greek island of Kefalonia screened in *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* (CCM, 2001), the locals partook in the commodification of their island as a way out of economic marginalization by the national center (Tzanelli 2001: 240-1; Tzanelli 2007: 117-8). International tourist providers detected this lack of economic state regulation early on and stepped in to appropriate the terrain. As a result, today many Kefalonians who work in the service industry cater to foreign tourists *on behalf* of international tourist providers. At the same time, the French example of the introduction forces one to qualify any Marxist analysis: France has been part of the European “world center” (Wallerstein 1974, 1980) for centuries, but seems to harbor the same resentful resistances to commodification we may find in European and other global “peripheries”. An examination of sign industries exclusively as formal organizations engenders the well-known academic paradox of “Marxist elitism”: who knows better what sign reading is about than those who produce and consume signs *within* a culture, after all? Once this question is asked, my initial definition of “global sign industries” collapses like an unstable tower of cards.

Ressentiment: Cultural Intimations and the Making of Public Spheres

The academic search for “resistances” to the capitalist system is as old as Marxist theory and has been under constant attack in recent years by the defenders of pluralism (Hesmondalgh 2002: 82-5). This conflict between Marxism and pluralism is guided by the unresolved relationship of economics with culture, which late critical theory re-addresses. I refer to Honneth’s (1979; 1991: 32-72) take on Adorno and Horkheimer’s reduction of rationality to instrumental rationality. Honneth’s critique of early Frankfurt School theory supports the Habermasian distinction between the *praxis* of intersubjective interaction and the *poesis* of engagement with objects, and wants to restore the possibility of theoretically guided political

practice and collective struggle (also Lukács 1968). It does so by *both* refuting the unfiltered penetration of the ideological products of the “culture industry” into consciousness and Adorno’s elaboration on artwork’s “mimetic knowledge” and the instrumental rationality prevalent in consumerist society (Cahn 1984: 45). For Adorno, mimesis swings like a pendulum between advertisement and critique, infusing cultural production with a performative contradiction. Contrariwise, Honneth is guided by Habermas’ differentiation between the sphere of normative interaction and the sphere of production, with the former being the *locus* of opposition and resistance that remains emergent in everyday social exchange. He views the “cultural sphere” as the location of practical-critical activity, mirroring thus Habermas’ (1991) placement of the “public sphere” in the social history of Enlightenment communication. Anderson’s emergence of “imagined communities” through print-capitalism immediately springs to mind here: nations may become a corollary of “public sphere” communications that counter the capitalist systems of late modernity; by the same token, day-to-day communications between participants in such “imagined communities” may be regarded as makers of a “deliberative” type of democracy that communicates problems to global and national centers of power alike.

Perhaps then the “cultural imperialism” thesis, which laments the commercialization of communication, the allegedly inevitable homogenization of culture and the weakening of democratic dialogue (Herman and McChesney 1997), misses something. More correctly, it *dismisses* those who actualize collective self-presentations: the nation-states that, following the emergence of sign industries in their territories, have to stage “pure”, unspoiled, “culture”; the nations that relegate their real “self” to forgotten history to embrace capitalist modes of identity-trading; and the anonymous local “hosts” who have to fix a permanent smile in their face to welcome tourist industries and the “cinematic tourists” to their country. What happens if we prioritize *them* as “sign” readers and producers in this analysis?

The underdogs of film-induced tourism are the true pioneers of “intimations” of commodified culture – a phenomenon by no means limited to film-induced tourism. My term “cultural intimations” owes much to Herzfeld’s Goffmanesque analysis of “social poetics” that refers to “the strategic or tactical deployment of ideal types – stereotypes, laws and regulations, representations of culture, nostalgic folklore” (2005: 47) by those who aspire to present a coherent image of their culture to others. Just as global telecommunications produce demediating mediations, cultural intimations produce simulacra of sociality, projecting outwards an image of social

intimacy that allegedly leaves the core of native culture intact. In instances of cinematic tourism “culture” and “globalization” reveal themselves as discourses of “hybridity” that is contextually specific, “rooted” (as in Appiah 1998) in real-life encounters and interactions. If globalization involves a “structural hybridization” and refers to the less flexible formations of political economy, cultural intimations are manifestations of “cultural hybridization”, and relate to the active re-shaping of culture by its everyday users (Pieterse 1997: 49-57). Cultural intimations reveal the private, repressed in Marxist literature, face of cosmopolitan encounters: they are the crossroads of different cultural horizons that produce collective “Selves”.

The communicators of cultural intimations may be anonymous members of the national community or even agents of its political center – for, the two will practically operate in similar ways. The mobilization of what, “at the local level, are relatively intimate distinctions between outsiders and ‘our own’” (Herzfeld 1992: 99) by the nation-state is pronounced in responses to film-induced tourism. State initiatives in New Zealand following the international success of the *LOTR* *were* public performances, stereotypical narratives of the New Zealanders as efficient entrepreneurs who “know how” to plough their way through global economic competition (Tzanelli 2004). The idea of “hard bargaining” defined the actions of Greece’s powerful Archaeological Council (KAS) in 2006-7, when Greek-Canadian actress Vardalos managed to obtain permission to shoot her new comedy, *My Life in Ruins* (*MLIR*, 2008) on the Acropolis (*The Guardian* 18 October 2008). Since the 1960’s, when the *The Guns of Navarone* and *Zorba the Greek* used Rhodes and Crete as backdrops, no major film was shot in the country. The fact that recent Hollywood blockbusters *Troy*, *Alexander the Great* and *300* (all related to Hellenic history) were filmed elsewhere has to do with Greek anti-Americanism dating back to the junta (1967-74) and the lack of tax alleviations the government was prepared to give to filmmakers. Yet, it seems that even the permanent nationalist suspicion that Hollywood’s “Elgins” will appropriate a European heritage lawfully guarded by Greeks exclusively, cannot stand up against the pressures of a tourism-dependent national economy. Despite Greek warnings that no ancient stone should be moved and no cinematic enhancement should be made to the archaeological site, Vardalos’ enterprise was supported by the Ministers of Culture and Tourism *and* the Greek Film Centre whose website today proudly hosts photos of the shooting (see H.F.C.O. website). It is not coincidental that *MLIR* marks this change in policies towards foreign film-making in Greece: Tom Hanks and his half-Greek partner, Rita Wilson (financers of

Vardalos' previous hit, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002)), are the film's executive producers. The presence of two "diasporic Greeks" granted the whole enterprise with "concessions" only those who vaguely belong to the Greek "imagined community" could secure.

One may compare this display of Greek "bargain" skills to the shameless "swindling" of "foreign" film crews and tourist visitors on the Greek island of Kefalonia by locals who recognized the exploitative potential of *CCM*. Mirroring stereotypical perceptions of the "Greek character" as a whole, the Kefalonian entrepreneurial spirit manifested itself when the *CCM* stage team reconstructed the old Argostóli (capital of Kefalonia) in Sámi and visitors and tourists began to photograph themselves in front of the cinematic facades. This confirmed that the stage exuded the essential "historical authenticity" for the film, as even the old generation of locals admitted. A Kefalonian printing company took shots of *CCM*'s stage and reproduced them as "Old Argostóli" postcards for tourist consumption "without bothering to explain that the images shown were of a film set that would only be there for a few weeks" (Clark 2001: 95). Today, in *CCM*-induced tourist resorts, foreign visitors can enjoy "staged" dancing *à-la* "Zorbas the Greek" that local restaurant owners, inspired by the film's dancing routines, organize for their customers (Tzanelli 2007: 114). Culture emerges thus as the synthetic product of conflict between the desire for a uniform, independent, "self" and imposed external representations. Discursive practices of "staged authenticity" (MacCannell 1973) in tourist encounters are based on patterns of habitual misrecognition of host identities as pure and untouched by visiting "others" and of identity performance as a social reality.

Because cultural intimations are not uncritical mimesis of commodified signs, their local and national communicators are *always-already* components of the global sign industries: they perform a function similar to that of formal organizations (Hollywood, tourist industries) that commercialized their culture in the first place. At the same time, cultural intimations become expressions of *ressentiment* (Nietzsche 1969), an acknowledgment that economic power rests with formal organizations, while screened nations remain trapped in global political and economic structures. I do not endorse a bleak Nietzschean vision of the world: the communicators of cultural intimations retain clear insight into the injustice of the economic structure within their cultural horizon (also Sayer 2000). The "struggle for power" (otherwise known as "market competition") that guides the agendas of formal sign industries becomes a "struggle for recognition" (Honneth 1995) when it enters the domain of informal communications. At

stake for the "host" country and its localities is the gesture of recognition as autonomous agents in the global scene and in cultural terms – a recognition that can never be fully expressed by tourists, the faceless representatives of media conglomerates or the various managers of tourist agencies tied to the sign orders that they produce and maintain.

For example, the opposition of Thai localities to *The Beach* and Western cinematic tourist practices in the touristified region was not expressed solely through protests; it was also mediated through language. International tourists of the "backpack" sort were dubbed by locals "falang kee-nok" (white bird shit): Westerners who symbolically pollute the Thai cultural terrain with their presence, but who may also arrive "bearing gifts" for the locals. The Thai term retains this exquisite ambivalence because it is often used to describe prospective son-in-laws who do not offer the obligatory present to the families of the bride – a "gift" that must be equivalent to her dowry (Tzanelli 2007: 54-5). At the same time, there were locals who rushed to grasp the opportunity for profit making, contributing thus to the cinematic tourist market (Tzanelli 2006). We may compare this to Rome's "centurions", Italians in gladiatorial costumes who are struggling to earn their living in the new market economy blockbusters such as *The Gladiator* (2000) created. The commodification of the Colosseum by the state and private investors found a continuation in the actions of such Italian "entrepreneurs", who pose for the tourist's camera in front of the monument. Accusations that these "gladiators" provide "theatrically cheap" but economically expensive "tourist services" to "cinematic tourists", combined with attempts by the city of Rome to impose on them "professional codes", led to street arrests of "gladiators" for carrying real swords to look more authentic to tourists and street conflicts, with tearful centurions claiming that they have families to feed and no money for fancy costumes to satisfy the "tourist gaze" (Tzanelli 2007: 2).

We must, therefore, avoid conflating the *functional* analogies of formal and informal sign industry exchange with their *structural* interrelationships. The cultural signs of cinematic tourism are "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1984) which circulates in social fields (Britton 1991): those forced to operate as their "hosts" will be invited to exchange local and national *values* (histories, landscape, customs) with the *monies* "guests" (formal industries, tourists) bring into their country. The forced equation of values with money reveals the signifying potential of economic practices as both cultural and material (Ray and Sayer 1999). And yet, an *exactly* balanced exchange of economic and cultural capital is never possible, because the two forms of capital are not identical

(Sahlins 1974: 193; Ardener 1989) and the exchange does not satisfy both parties. The presence of *ressentiment*, the protests of local and national actors against formal sign industries, even the occasional “cheating” of their economic representatives, aims to challenge the “unfairness” of an externally imposed (by foreign investors or even the “state”) economic system that turns the very provision of hospitality into a marketable commodity. The ever-present complaint of disempowered hosts that formal sign industries reduce “pure” moral values (the specific cultural contexts of hospitality) to material gain (cinematically “staged authenticity”) justifies the hosts’ *ressentiment* and “cheating”. Through this near-tautological discourse of cause and effect the hosts demand recognition for their services on the basis of self-interest (Berking 1999: 124) and irrespectively of their deviant attitude.

The marriage of calculative, monetary, exchange with pure reciprocity, which has been the focal point of an interdisciplinary debate on affinities and differences between Marxist politics and Maussian anthropology (Malinowski 1922; Sahlins 1974 and 1976; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Parry 1986; Cheal 1988; Firth 1983: 102-3; Strathern 1983; Appadurai 1986: 11), allows more space for the exploration of resentful responses than an approach that would support their separation. It alludes to the disrespectful, even humiliating, alternatives to “giving” and “taking” that define “pure” Maussian actions of reciprocity: is asking for things to be delivered and finding ways to obtain them when they are not, not *both* the sign of entrepreneurial determination and an acknowledgement of demoralization (Van Baal 1976: 170)? *Ressentiment* becomes the only reason-

able response to this stranding between submission to the calls of global capitalism and the need to “salvage” what we can from an identity already in the process of transformation.

Conclusion

Because the representational apparatuses of global sign industries find their practical counterpart in reactions of their “hosts”, I propose that social scientists move some theoretical and ideological signposts to allow inclusion of their local and national (en)actors, often classified as inert recipients of globalization and processes of identity production-consumption. *Contra* the Adornoesque critique of culture industry as “mass deception”, I view their cultural intimations as products of reflexive-poetic reasoning that deepens the systems of our multiple late modernities: reflexive because it is accompanied by tacit knowledge of the injustices that sustain global capitalist networks, but poetic because it creates new versions of identity. We may argue that by including understandings of “culture” by local, national and other actors into an ever-changing syncretism, sign industry actors destroy *and* re-constitute “public spheres” in different corners of our globe. The polemical corrective that follows this observation prioritizes the communicators of cultural intimations as sign-makers, admitting them into debates upon the nature of cosmopolitan agency. As a Kefalonian native proudly (but indignantly) explained to me when referring to the cinematic hero of *CCM*, Corelli is now *dópios* (native) - never mind he speaks *kséna* (foreign languages).

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