



Self-Transformation

Self-identity for us forms a *trajectory* across the different institutional settings of modernity over the *durée* of what used to be called the "life-cycle."

Anthony Giddens

One does not simply see more of the world . . . one also accepts the invitation to become a better person.

Chris Rojek and John Urry

In the travel narratives they tell, backpackers re-create themselves as *changed* persons. The great journey, they enthusiastically admit, supplies more than mere recreation and even more than a profound experience per se: rather, it is downright transformative. Upon performing their travel experiences, the backpacking narrators establish a heightened dialogical context that facilitates powerful claims of self-change.

Admittedly, these claims were not apparent from the start; it was well into the research that their salience struck me. This was probably due to the neatly seamless fashion in which they were incorporated in the narration as well as to the obvious ("naturalized") state identity claims have in the discourse of contemporary tourism in general. All in all, twenty-eight (approximately 70 percent) interviewees mentioned self-change spontaneously (as did all the others upon specific questioning). While discussing the backpackers' claims of profound self-change and the intricate way they were tacitly woven into our conversations will be explored at length later, I wish to begin by first attending in general terms to the theme of self-change within personal narratives and second by exploring the relationship between contemporary tourism discourses and identity.

A pervasive genre by means of which individuals articulate identity focuses on the theme of self-change, in which narrators describe a dramatic moment or episode in their biography, one that generated a major and enduring self-change. In such cases, a substantial deflection from the expected life trajectory is depicted, a pivotal moment in which the narrator's identity is altered. Though the *raison d'être* for the change is rooted in the past, the theme of self-change powerfully engages the present and carries futuristic prospects as well (Langellier 1999; Ochs 1997; Ochs

and Capps 1996). In particular, such claims of personal change constitute, by their generic definition, a clear instance of projection into the present and the future, as they performatively carry experiences from past to present. After all, if the change that is depicted is indeed an enduring one and its meaningfulness does not cease, it should only naturally be enacted and displayed in the act of narration.

Although self-change is commonly (and commonsensically) construed as a theme within narratives of personal identity, it is challenging to conceptualize it differently: rather than constituting a pivotal moment across some preassumed progressive trajectory, it is proposed here that the self-change theme may, in fact, be *the only or the primary* instance of identity. If, as suggested by Giddens in the epigraph above, identity is to be thought of as a trajectory, then it is possible that the themes encompassing transformative experiences are the hallmark of late modern times. For if people are continually (trajectorily) becoming, then the pervasive and constitutive means by which people can relate to, articulate, and experience their selfhood is through the mechanism of self-change.

This, indeed, sits well with the exponential growth of international tourism over the last decades. Tourism acts as both a consequence of and an aid to the Western enterprise of engaging in a “panoply of going concerns” (Gubrium and Holstein 2000, 102) that supply the discursive conditions for self-realization. Note that since tourism is commonly perceived as a haven, a recess, from the burdens and constraints of everyday modernized life, and not as additional institutional engagement, it is (uncannily) located in the moments in peoples’ lives that are thought of as not “tangled” in discourse, wherein narratives of identity are susceptible to the effects of (trans)formative institutional discourses.

In line with Giddens’s observation above, recently we have come to acknowledge the crucial interrelationship that exists between institutions—and the institutional discourses and practices they embody—and identities. Various modern institutions bear a fundamental influence on whom we are continually telling ourselves and others that we have become. As Gubrium and Holstein (2000, 97) appealingly argue, the self is currently “big business, the stock-in-trade of a world of self-constituting institutions, which increasingly compete with each other for discerning and designating identities.” This state of affairs is arguably one of the hallmarks of late modernity, when the self is “saturated” by technologically disseminated institutional discourses (Gergen 1991). These discourses are appropriated or consumed by individuals and become resources for the construction of identity (Bruner 1991; Taylor 1989). Put more simply, these institutions supply us with “something (interesting) to talk about.”

Yet it is not only that identity is “saturated,” or that institutions compete with each other over individuals’ and groups’ identities. More actively from the consumers’ perspective, there is an enormous inventory or arsenal of resources, narratives, and alternatives by which identities may be consumed, elaborated, and performed. Particularly in relation to voluntarily institutional engagements, such as tourism, the point should be made that what consumers choose to pursue is a consequence of the identities they choose to perform.

The literature on tourists in general and on backpackers in particular points to how the myriad experiences of tourists become narrative resources, employed in the capacity of performing and (re)establishing identity. As Elsrud (2001, 606) observes of backpackers, "through establishing a (mythologized) image of Otherness, a story about self-identity can be told" (see also Adler 1989; Bruner 2005; Desforges 2000, 938; Neumann 1992, 1999; Selwyn 1996).

Since the trip is the event with which identity is intimately correlated, claims of touristic identity are performed in terms of a dramatic episode-related self-change; "touristic stories," Desforges (2000, 927) notes, "are used to present new self-identities."

Indeed, as long as tourist excursions are commonly perceived as precisely that—that is, excursions from habitual everyday life—the experiences they endow are seemingly separated from the "rest" of the biography. This structure accounts for why tourist narratives frequently relate to and are framed by the impression of self-change. To refer again to Desforges, touristic stories are used to present new self-identities because by being framed as "touristic" they suggest an excursion from (or intrusion into) the linear progressive trajectory of "normal" biographies. Interestingly, however, due to the processes of commercialization and mediatization, contemporary tourism pervades lives and is in fact a less and less autonomous and secluded practice. This is another way to state—*this time vis-à-vis the language of identity*—that tourism and modern culture(s) are enmeshed.

Identity and Authenticity

Though the structural dimensions of different touristic activities may vary greatly, they share a number of underlying factors. The dazzling array of forms of tourism is actually rooted in a few founding discourses or metanarratives that are the industry's energizing forces. These discourses inspire and shape the touristic experience, by means of which tourists can construct their identities. Thus, although backpackers comprise a more or less formally distinct touristic subgroup (see chapter 1), their experiences and underlying discourses are not unique to this subgroup but are rather shared by other forms of tourism (Richards and Wilson 2004b, 2004c).

Research on tourism indicates that one of the basic motivations of tourists to travel pertains to the theme of "authenticity." According to MacCannell (1976), the modern tourist's primary motivation for travel is the pursuit of authentic experiences. In an alienated, industrialized, and homogenized modern world, individuals romantically seek a pure, original, and unpolluted whole. The search for authenticity is construed not as a matter of (mere) leisure but as a meaningful, existential desire that may endow the individual with a richer and fuller experience of being; it is a much sought-after resource made available by the tourism industry, allowing its consumers an "ecstasy of experience" (Ritzer and Liska 1997, 106).

Tourism has become an “industry of authenticity” (Wang 2000, 71), wherein “existential authenticity becomes a commodity.” It plays a restitutive role, by which it purportedly bestows upon the tourist—visiting the Taj Mahal, the Louvre, Niagara Falls, or participating in a safari in Kenya—a sense of realness. Moreover, tourists, while seeking authentic destinations, also engage in the pursuit of “hot authenticity,” seeking their own authentic selves (Selwyn 1996, 21–25).

It is with regard to the profound experience bestowed upon tourists by the discourse of authenticity that they are capable of talking about themselves becoming transformed with authority and persuasiveness. The quality of uniqueness, inspired by institutionally constructed authenticity, which is initially associated with the destination, serves as a reality anchor by means of which the claim for the construction of self—and the cultural capital associated with this claim—can be credibly articulated and performed. Within an environment of utter consumerism, the tourist accepts the invitation to change (as noted by Rojek and Urry in the epigraph above) as she or he consumes the discursive commodity that authenticates one’s sense of selfhood. The industry circulates and perpetuates identity discourses together with the well-defined practices and itineraries by means of which they are to be pursued. Though usually not overtly (as is the case with, say, psychotherapy), the romanticist perception of authenticity is concerned as much with selfhood as it is with sites and destinations.

“Simply a changed person”: Tourist Self-Change Narratives

Following are two excerpts from the interviews with Boaz, who backpacked in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and with Sharon, who backpacked in Southeast Asia, both for eight months. Both narrators typically explicitly state that they underwent significant self-change upon their return from the trip. Crucially, they locate these statements in the *final parts* of our interview-conversations: after eighty minutes of narration in the first case and sixty-five in the second. As will be shown, the meaningfulness and impact of these sequences rests on the preceding adventurous travel narrative, into which they are tacitly woven and upon which they reflect in hindsight.

Boaz mentions the prevalence of backpacking among his acquaintances, stressing, “everyone, everyone, traveled in South America or in the East.” After a pause, he begins:

Boaz: And I returned changed
quite changed

if it’s changed as far as life experiences go

that is mmm

I left—

I left the country IGNORANT

I left the country ignorant in that I don’t know many cultures

I haven’t MET with many cultures

perhaps I read about
 them or had seen them on television
 but I haven't run across them really
 physically
 and after I return
 and after all I see
 and after all I hear
 that is—
 I'll give you an example
 I KNEW New Zealand
 that is
 I knew it's a beautiful country and all—
 but I didn't know PARTICULAR SPOTS
 when I arrived to travel
 there then suddenly
 I know a lot more with regard to general knowledge of the country (quicker)
 on the region on the—
 people
 that is if you ask me today about New Zealand
 I'll know MUCH MORE than I knew before
 ask me suddenly about the mountains and all the rest
 and I'll know more than I knew before (quickly)
 you see— like—
 that is you leave the country when you DON'T KNOW MUCH
 [and] when you return you
 suddenly know EVERYTHING
 you also know yourself better because you put yourself in
 many situations
 like I told you about the volcano suddenly (quickly)
 or in the very difficult physical
 conditions at the trek
 you simply know yourself differently than you knew
 yourself before
 you simply stretch inside you the
 the limits of your abilities the
 limits of your self-knowing
 it's exactly like that
 you know yourself very good
 simply you're much more responsible for yourself for the
 people around you
 [you are] simply a changed person

Boaz is rather straightforward in indicating how deep and dramatic is the change he has experienced. Attesting that he returned from the trip "simply a changed person"

amounts to an explicit claim of self-change. The trip, Boaz asserts, has *truly* (“really, physically”) allowed for an encounter with “many cultures”—that is, with the authentic Other—which is what generated self-change. The change is constructed by way of an association, one that the narrator suggests is only natural and consequential to the trip: the true encounter led to a significant enhancement in the alleged knowledge of the destination, which led, subsequently, to a sense of profound knowledge of himself. It is this knowledge that led to a sense of self-change. Boaz stresses that his new knowledge was not gained from afar, nor is it of a general or blurry character anymore. Rather, it is authentic knowledge attained by means of a seemingly *unmediated encounter*. It is founded on close and solid (firsthand) knowledge of “particular spots,” as he puts it, which suggest it is a detailed, “factual” type of knowledge.

The dramatic character of the description is established by the forceful invocation of the empty-to-full metaphor, which follows the cyclic course of the trip. Boaz left the homeland “ignorant” and returned “full,” in a state in which he now possesses answers, where he now “know[s] everything.” The repeated use of the word “suddenly” (four instances) further communicates the sense that change was dramatic. In employing this metaphor, Boaz’s narrative is indeed transformative: his life story is retrospectively reconstructed in a dichotomous, dramatic fashion, where the latter, posttrip part—leading up to the present and projecting onward—is viewed positively, even admiringly. In terms of travel-related cultural capital, or narrative capital, Boaz establishes that he has mastered the knowledge engulfed by backpacking (he is asking the interviewer to test him: “ask me”) and consequently has gained entitlement rights to an identity story and hence to a claim of self-change.

In the following extract Sharon argues that she has changed, yet she does so in a different, milder tone than Boaz. Her frequent hesitations, pauses, and self-retractions render the segment more reflexive, and the claim lacks the definite, explicit, and “masculine” parlance of Boaz’s assertions. Nonetheless, Sharon aims at communicating the same profound message and cleverly accomplishes this goal through the use of a more tacit rhetorical strategy.

Sometime before the extract begins, Sharon mentions that she feels she was not successful in conveying her powerful emotions and experiences to me. She recalls that a day before our meeting she spoke with an acquaintance who had recently returned from the trip who, like her, had been deeply moved by the experience. She pauses and then says:

Sharon: This trip really DOES something to you

I can’t put my finger on WHAT but it changes your
perception of things in many ways

I’m not—

it’s hard for me to say that I was once this
way and now I’m different

that today I see specific matters differently

[but] I feel INSIDE MYSELF that some (quickly)

change has occurred in me but I can't— (quickly)
 I can't say WHAT
 what has changed

Chaim: mmm but you FEEL it [and—]
 Sharon: [and people] see it
 certainly
 people who know me and others too like—
 everyone told

me I've changed
 and it's— you know
 the trip—
 where else can you have such a thing ...

later I DID travel to places that have opened up only recently
 I reached less touristic places
 it attracts me

you see the pictures you see it's a completely DIFFERENT world
 not one that we know of or
 even think of ...

it had already begun being touristic but not enough
 I KNOW that if I'll travel there NOW it won't be the same anymore
 it's clear to me

because people hear about it and so they travel
 and in big numbers

Sharon argues that she underwent a meaningful change, that upon her return she was “different.” She makes it clear that the impact of the trip on her is to be framed in terms of identity and selfhood, and in this regard it is unmistakably of a positive, wide, and enduring scope. As in Boaz’s argument, the change she sensed is narrated in a way so as to indicate it is directly linked to the unique experience of the trip, about which she rhetorically asks, “where else can you have such a thing?”

Yet Sharon indicates that the particular, or even general, domain of the profound changes remains unspecified. Unlike Boaz’s straightforward narrative, it is precisely the vagueness or the unspecificity of the description that persuasively communicates Sharon’s argument. The two words she chooses to emphasize in the beginning, “really DOES something” and “I can’t put my finger on WHAT,” are related. They are simultaneous indications of the powerful impact of the trip on her, on the one hand, and of its inherent ineffable (unnarratable) quality, on the other hand. They emphasize what positively *is*—that is, the profoundness of the experience, the authenticity of the personal change—and what *is not*—that is, what is extra-discursive, noncommunicable. The difficulty of putting into words her experience of personal change, a difficulty she previously interpreted as a failure of her communication skills, does not undermine the message she communicates but rather enhances it.

In other words, what could have been paradoxical is complementary in her narrative: the immensity of the experience, Sharon suggests, lies precisely in the fact that it is located *beyond* speech, beyond the possibility of spoken words to articulate and communicate it referentially. By employing this structure of complementary *confirmation and negation*, Sharon establishes a communication that concerns the "ineffability of the immense." What she describes is profound and elusive both simultaneously and consequentially. It is essential to the construction of the experience of self-change and to its successful communication that its impact be located beyond the sayable. The claim she makes about identity is thus also a claim about language and about the various ways it may be manipulated in the performance of self/self-change (Stromberg 1993, 1–16).¹

When Sharon asserts that she cannot elaborate further on her immense feelings, I feel impelled to confirm her experience, to share *my experience* with her—to indicate that I understand that self-change has indeed occurred and that it rests "inside" her as a "deep" feeling. My assertion that it is inner and experiential in essence ("you FEEL it") compels Sharon to claim that, even though she acknowledges its innermost quality, the change is by no means abstract or invisible. By her correction of me, her insistence that the changes are not only (subjectively) felt but also (objectively) seen, the similarities between Sharon's and Boaz's narratives gradually come to light. What is "visible" for Sharon is "actual" for Boaz: in both cases, claims are made to "actual" manifestations, to their factual quality, which is crucial for communicating a sense of authentic self-change. In both cases the actual changes are construed as the result of a trip (which truly occurred) and the real or "true" encounter with authentic views, cultures, and so on therein.

Finally, soon after Sharon stresses that she arrived at an authentic destination, she evokes a temporal attribute of authenticity ("travel there now"). She suggests that the nearly epiphanic moment she experienced is singular and fleeting. Experiencing authenticity is presented as a matter of arriving at the right place at the *exact* right time. It is not only the unique place she has visited but also the special moment—the last minute—at which she has done so that together amount to what has touched and "influenced" her profoundly. Sharon incorporates a variety of the discourse of time in tourism, whereby the new spoils the old (Cohen 1986; Dann 1996, 218–28). In the convergence of authenticity and identity, it is both the whereabouts and the whenabouts that matter, and it is through the institutional discourse of nostalgia that tourism powerfully draws time, as a commodity that becomes a resource, into the autobiographical time of the lives of tourists (Bruner 1991, 242, 248; and with specific regard to backpackers, Elsrud 1998, 312, 318–19).

Moreover, temporality and evanescence give the impression that Sharon was one of the last to *witness* the uniqueness of which she narrates. She is, thus, a witness of things bygone, and her story is not merely a touristic travel narrative but a testimonial one, bearing witness to that which once was and is no longer. Bearing this witness has affected her profoundly and consequently, she, too, has changed and she, too, will not be the same thereafter. Relying on the hermeneutics of witnessing, Sharon thus draws a parallel between the destination she visited and her

inner realms—both of which have altered irreversibly: both of which require a witness to capture the experience and “propagate” it (Barbara Johnson, qtd. in Felman and Laub 1991, 23).

Authenticity Performed: Transcendent Texts and Self-Change

The concern is with performance as . . . creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of the ordinary course of events.

Dell Hymes

Narrative arguments of this magnitude, wherein the self is construed as undergoing valuable and significant changes, are among the strongest claims that can be asserted by personal narratives. In order for the narrator to speak convincingly of such meaningful occurrences, which, being internal, cannot be observed or measured, their performances need to be sufficiently anchored in culturally powerful and socially persuasive texts. For this reason, narrators draw an association between their experiences and some other authoritative topos of extraordinariness, which authenticates them and renders them credible and valid.

Texts of such type have two prerequisites. First, they must embrace some sort of “transcendent” quality. They relate to and convey some profound realm of meaning, consensually acknowledged as such by members of a socially relevant subgroup. Second, they do not refer to the Self, at least not explicitly, but to some other (or better, Other) realm of meaning. Thus, narratives of dramatic occurrences, which take place “within” the boundaries of the conscious self, correlate with dramatic archnarratives (such as the romanticist travel narrative) pertaining to events that occur “outside” it and that are perceived as being responsible for its vicissitudes. In other words, though transcendent texts are seemingly of other/Other subject matters, they nevertheless inherently revolve around the Self.

The following two excerpts illustrate the employment of transcendent text (Maingueneau 1999) in the context of tourism. They occurred earlier in the conversations than the previous excerpts, when the narrators were describing the sights they saw and the adventures they underwent (the core travel narrative). The first is drawn from Sharon’s narrative (preceding the above excerpt by forty minutes) and the second from a narrative by Danit, who describes trekking in the Peruvian Azangate mountain range. In both cases the conversation flows while we look now and then through pictures from the trip. Sharon and Danit describe breathtaking views in what seem to be naïve descriptions, typical of tourists’ excited and wordy accounts. However, these descriptive segments can be read as legitimizing sources of the identity claims that follow shortly after. In contrast to the sequences described above, the apparent subject of these segments is not the Self (the “inner” realm) but the impressive sights viewed by tourists (the “external” realm).

Sharon: It’s all clouds here. so here I took pictures all the time because they kept on changing but again. you can’t see it in the pictures. it’s

not—you know I tried to do [a montage] with the pictures mmm but it never came out right . . . it's simply the—the change. but you can't see it. it's not—you know all the time the clouds are moving and shifting forms and suddenly there's a hole HERE [where light shines through] and previously there was a hole HERE. and—the shades again they are changing all the time. you see, these pictures are already more light . . . here you already have the blue. here it's still all red.

Chaim: Yeah, wow—

Sharon: I don't know it's something (quietly) different. simply different.

While Sharon foregrounds that which is shifting and fleeting—the moving clouds, Danit concentrates on that which is stationary—the Peruvian mountain chain. Nonetheless, the scene's dynamic quality is competently communicated.

Danit: There are whole mountains that are—

or in that red color

or in the color of dark green

and then you think that you see—

that it's only say

the MOUNTAIN that's in this color or the

SAND that covers it

but no

you see whole rocks that are in that RED color or whole rocks that

are in the green color

and you simply—

at some point you reach it and you walk on it and you

look

"I'm walking on a RED mountain

I'm walking on a green mountain"

simply amazing [there—

(quietly)

Chaim:

wow] wow

(quietly)

Danit:

amazing

Both Sharon's and Danit's extracts are fine illustrations of the semiotics of the tourist gaze, as they powerfully evoke vision and referential language related to it. These not only convey but also construct the remarkable, the authentic, which assume in tourism the shape of peoples or places, urban or natural. In all cases, the moving gaze endows the tourist with the powerful lived experience of authenticity (Wang 2000). Once they are actually "walking on" authentic places and "knowing" authentic cultures and peoples, to use Danit's and Boaz's excited words, backpackers consume the commodity of constructed authenticity, with the intention of constructing an identity vis-à-vis a dramatic narrative of self-change.

The breathtaking scenery, the intense experiences it bestows upon the backpackers, and the travel narratives capturing and enacting these experiences amount to what Maingueneau (1999) describes as “self-constitutive discourse.” These are powerful transcendent texts that are deeply rooted in modern-Western societies and are “under the control of something transcendent, such as Tradition, Reason, Truth” (190). Of central importance to these texts is what lies *beyond* narrative—that is, the ineffable. What grants them their transcendent authority is precisely their being “under control” of that which is beyond narratability, “bordering on unspeakable meanings,” as Maingueneau puts it (183). To use a Turnerian terminology, such discourses are of liminal quality, and their generativity and authority are drawn from being located “betwixt-and-between” (Turner 1967): they are intermediaries between the sayable and the unsayable, between language and the “nonreadable surround” (Silverstein and Urban 1996, 1).

The vivid descriptions provided by Sharon and Danit, which are seemingly related not to the Self but to the scenery, amount to transcendent narratives of backpackers. Their identity claims, which are staked as high as self-change, are viably asserted by being bound to a transcendent text. The narrators summon profound meanings that are perceived as existing independently both of the viewer—that is, the gazing tourist subject—and of language.

Symbolically, the role these narratives play corresponds to that of revelations (Stromberg 1993) or gospels (Harding 1987) in religious evangelic narratives of personal experience and change. Such institutional discourses enable the articulation of selfhood at a (trans)formative moment, endowing the individual’s narrative with much-needed validity vis-à-vis claims of transcendence and authenticity.

Transcendent discourses, however, are imbued with authority with regard to particular historical and cultural contexts. In tourism, the romantic (adventurous) experience lies at the core of the desire for authentic experiences. This is what grants backpackers’ overwhelmed narratives their transcendent quality and is their legitimizing “Source” (Maingueneau 1999). It enables the construction of an identity having “deep interior” (Gergen 1991, 18–47), where the authentic self allegedly lodges and in which its feelings abide. The “deep exterior” reverberates here with the deep interior, both of which are simultaneously constructed as encompassing great depths.

Performing Self-Change:

From the Semiotics of Attraction to the Semiotics of Extraction

In addressing backpackers’ performances of self-change, I wish to offer three observations. First, in the settings of their narrations backpackers are granted a “voice” (Shotter 1993, 7–10) or a “speaking role,” as Keane (1997, 58) observes in relation to religious experience: “Transformation consists of taking a new role as speaker . . . [of] being transformed from the listener to the speaker . . . the speaker’s religious identity is approached . . . as an inhabitable speaking role with all the discursive and moral possibilities that may entail.” Those who have heard time and again stories by

others before they left for the great journey have now themselves become storytellers. Vis-à-vis the great trip, backpackers shift—transform—from the listener role to the narrator role.

Having a voice, or a speaking role, is crucial for a performance wherein the experience of self-change is induced. In an illuminating discussion of the language of born-again evangelists, Peter Stromberg (1993, 29) observes that the change “occurs as a result of changing embodied aims into articulable intentions.” Entering the domain of the articulate, Stromberg suggests, “draw[s] a new part of the subject’s experience into the realm of the self,” producing a sense of self-change. As pointed out by Maingueneau (1999, 183, 195), too, it is precisely the capacity of allowing permeability of meaning from the ineffable to the effable (from the embodied to the articulable) that characterizes the effect of transcendent texts, and it is that which allows for a self-change narrative to be performed viably.

Hence, the experience of self-change is located within narrative, or narratability. Consequently, the narration of a self-change experience *constitutes its experience*. Language is not employed in this regard only referentially, conveniently located within the effable, but also constitutively: it is through language, in its transformative capacity, that self-change is intersubjectively experienced. Clearly, narratability and the move to the effable require sociocultural conditions of the type that makes performance possible—namely, a community of speakers wherein one can assume and materialize a voice, a speaking role: and, as the earlier chapters showed, wherein the speaker can conjure and perform various social voices *directly* by quotation.

The second observation to be considered is that performance entails the bridging of the experiential (and epistemological) gulf that lies between the there-and-then of the narrated events and the here-and-now of the storytelling occasion. The more fluid and seamless the weaving of the two contexts, the more persuasive and effectual is the performance. There is a unique paradox here that the narrators need to contend with when performing self-change before an audience that *has not* traveled. Because the listeners did not know the narrators prior to the trip and are thus unable to compare the “before” and “after,” all they have to go on is the story of the self-change. The backpackers are thus under pressure and are required to persuasively *show* self-change in vivo. They accomplish this performatively by extensively employing metacommunicative allusions addressing the very acts of communication in which they are involved (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Lucy 1993c). These, in turn, affect the pragmatics of the conversation, or “the pragmatics of putting narrative into practice” (Langellier 1999, 127).

In order to implicate their interlocutor(s) in their narratives and bridge the two realms, the backpackers establish performative—interpersonal and intersubjective—communication, by means of which they are able to perform their new speech role, that which instantiates their significant self-change. It is an instance in which narrative points beyond the referential and descriptive and achieves a social action, that of the sense of transformation, within the process of (co-)narration (Ochs 1997; Wortham 2001).

It was only within interactional positioning that I was able to experience and “know,” as termed by the backpackers, the sense of self-change they underwent. By merely listening to their stories, within the semiotics of tourism I, too, acquired a conversational position: that of the (implicated) listener. I was uncannily drawn from the storyrealm into the taleworld, feeling that by attending to their stories I also participated in them to a degree (see Harding 1987 and the discussion in chapter 2).

The third and final point I wish to make is that in a performance, transcendent texts are seamlessly woven into the realm of lived (inter)personal experience, thus imbuing the narrative with credibility and authority. The transcendent quality—institutionally constructed authenticity, in the present case—is “imported” from the alleged there-and-then to the here-and-now and is constructed and re-enacted interpersonally as lodging within the (transformed, transcendent) Self. Consequently, the occasion of narration is imbued with features of that which it describes: it describes authenticity and establishes it simultaneously.

In the first extract above, Boaz is consistently referring to himself, until, at a certain point, he addresses me directly for the first time, suggesting two illustrations of his newly gained knowledge. He employs a repetitive structure (“ask me”) as he rhetorically invites me to test him. Under the equation that he draws, correlating new knowledge with self-knowledge and subsequently with self-change, establishing detailed familiarity with the destination is crucial.

The problem Boaz faces is that *I did not know him before his trip*. He thus searches for ways to credibly communicate the knowledge he has gained. He stresses that his knowledge was previously only of a general and mediated character (“seen them on television”), while after the trip it is accurate and founded on concrete details. From this point onward, it is me to whom Boaz explicitly refers. He follows the lead he himself has made as he ventriloquizes me into the conversation and suggests answers to the queries that he puts in my mouth.

Interestingly, these queries are only seemingly hypothetical. What Boaz suggests I *could have* asked is in fact what I *indeed asked*. It is the inquiry that lies at the core of our meeting, its underlying motivation. When he suggests that I ask him about New Zealand or “about the mountains,” he in fact indexes the context of the interview and the fact that I *did* ask him such questions earlier (the answers to which generated his posttour narrative). This is why he alludes to the core narrative when he reminds me, in a metacommunicative note, that he previously told me about such events (“like I told you”).

The way he implicitly indexes the context of our interview meeting constructs the roles and positions we play in it. Elaborating on the experiences and undertakings of the trip positions Boaz as “knowledgeable” and myself as “ignorant.” Hence, the emerging rhetorical structure, the transformative before-and-after claim, denotes in the performance not only Boaz’s experiences but mine too. After all, the knowledge I presently hold of New Zealand resembles, in kind and scope, the knowledge he had *prior* to the trip. Through conversational positioning, the metaphor is cast

dialogically. In this capacity Boaz positions himself as occupying the role of the experienced (full, after) and myself in the role of the novice (empty, before) in an interpersonal, "pedagogical" interaction (Briggs 1988, 82–83).

Note that the word *suddenly* ("ask me suddenly") functions in a metacommunicative capacity. This is the only instance in which it refers to the present context (in its three other occurrences it denotes the narrated events). An analogy is thus drawn between two occasions that carry dramatic and, more important, factual weight: that which occurred during the trip and that which occurred during the performance of the posttour narrative. What *was* dramatic and sudden *is* dramatic and sudden. From the perspective of the self-change claim, which is located at the end of the narration, akin to an evaluative sequence or a coda, both of these contexts are not here-and-now, and are thus alluded to. While I did not participate in the trip, I certainly did play a role in the narration, collaborating with the narrator in the conversation.

In a more profound way, the unspoken understanding we both share is that Boaz has *indeed* traveled—that he has actually participated in the practice. We both take this statement as a true fact and agree, epistemologically, that it "occurred." We agree that traveling amounts to an actual or factual practice, which from the outset led to my desire to meet him, in the same way that, from the perspective of the self-change segment, the narration took place. By the time the narrator arrives at telling her or his transformation, the conversation has an ontic weight of its own, so that the assertion may rest on the *eventfulness of the conversation* itself and on how we both assumed the speaking and listening roles throughout.

At this point in the collaborative storytelling, narrator and audience share the ground they have covered together. The location of the self-change argument toward the end of the interview is thus not coincidental. It stands in epistemological and metapragmatic tension with the events depicted in the core narrative, which itself depicts the "actual" occurrences of the trip.

Moreover, by meeting with him and listening to his travel narrative, I gained substantial knowledge of the destination. And if this knowledge is correlated with self-change, as Boaz contends it is, then the occasion of the interview amounts, in itself, to the commencement of *my own* experience of self-change. Paraphrasing Boaz, I also "put myself in situations" in the present actual/factual encounter with him (as he did with regard to the destination) in which the seeds of self-change are planted. In this sense authenticity and the semiotics of attraction more generally have a "contagious" quality: they travel with the traveler. Hence, the audience is repeatedly constituted in the performance as a traveler. From a performance perspective this perpetuation entails the shift from the "semiotics of attraction" (for example, MacCannell) to the "semiotics of extraction" (for example, Brunner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett).

Similarly to Boaz, after my reflexive comment ("but you *FEEL* it"), Sharon employs metapragmatic cueing as she chooses to stress four words: "DID," "DIFFERENT," "KNOW," and "NOW." The first two emphases confirm the fact that she did in fact

travel, and, more important, the fact that she arrived at authentic and inspiring destinations previously not visited. Akin to Boaz, she, too, establishes what is agreed upon as factual in our conversation. The position of the third emphasis is only natural—after all, the real and authentic sites inspired a unique experience, one that is captured in the intimacy of her knowing, of her coming to know. The final emphasis evokes the *context of the narration* of the posttour performance. The narrator contends that from the perspective of the present, both the places she visited and her Self have changed irreversibly. As noted earlier, her story has a testimonial quality, and it is she, at the present moment of the conversation, who “knows” and treasures that which has vanished.

The precious singularity of which she narrates also reverberates within the occasion of narration. By listening to her remarkable story, I, too, became a witness (a “second-order” witness, a witness of a witness). As I suggested, the semiotics of extraction are contagious and therefore, in a way, I also get to see that which is transcendent, which now lies within the narrator and not at the destination. As asserted by another backpacker when describing how he descended to the town of Namche at the end of the Everest base camp trek, “I told everyone of my adventures and so I was a kind of an attraction. It was nice. [People] asked me and took my advice.”

Though she does so more implicitly than Boaz, Sharon forcefully evokes the sense of self-change with me. Through tacit employment of metapragmatic framing devices, she suggests that my self-change is *already* under way. Her pointing out (and correcting me) that people in fact *see* it (among several other allusions she makes to vision) evokes referentiality and the tourists’ gaze. But now she draws the tourist gaze onto herself. *She* is now the one who should be looked at and viewed with appreciation, and it is “within” her Self that an authentic attraction—with its unspecifiable and ineffable characteristics—is located. She establishes a “second-order” type of authenticity: at present, what is worth viewing is (within) Sharon. As she indeed indicates, people actually “see it,” both those who “know me and others too . . . everyone” (perhaps alluding to myself/audience).

Again, Sharon faces the need to establish the credibility of the fact she has changed, even though I did not know her previously. Similarly, backpackers commonly assert that upon their return, their inner change was clearly apparent, and that “people would see [it] in my eyes” (in those very eyes that have seen, gazed at, and consumed authenticity). The vicissitudes of authenticity are the vicissitudes of its powerful constructing gaze. In the conversation I am the listener/spectator, I am a tourist of sorts, granting the narrators their role as changed while, at the same time, being implicated in and by that change.

In this regard we should consider the narrator’s unique use of the irregular (reflexive) conjugation of the word “change” (*hishtanut*, “some change has occurred”). This specific form appears, in fact, only in Sharon’s interview and only twice: once in the self-change assertion and once in the core narrative (in the second extract from Sharon: “it’s simply the—the change”), where it refers to the changing contours of the clouds. Akin to Boaz’s use of the word *suddenly*, Sharon uses this pivotal word

both in the transcendent text *and* in its reflexive, evaluative coda, referring, in the latter, to her self-change (herself change). Thus, what occurs within her is as profound and perhaps as “natural” as the events she witnessed.

Once again, two “destinations” are simultaneously referred to: one at a spatio-temporal distance and the other nearby both in space and in time, being constantly re-created in the fleeing narrative interaction. Semiotically, we can see how the contention that contemporary tourism entails and promotes a blurring of the signifier with the signified is here performed by the tourists’ evocation of double reference or twofold “conceptual structures” (Wortham 2001, 36). Consequently, narrating tourists have themselves become potent signifiers of what is worth the tourist’s gaze and narrative. After “actually” being there, they become signifiers—not only on-site markers of the attractions but off-site markers as well (Dann 1996, 9–12). They are now metonymically associated with the destination vis-à-vis their own (owned) narratives. In a way, they have now become an “attraction” themselves, while their listener/spectator has transformed, too, and has become a tourist.

Thus, the performance of their transformation is an occasion in its own right and it emerges as homologous with the event of the actual travel. The transformative, metapragmatic force of language begins precisely with the listening role, without which the speaker’s role cannot be inhabited later.

As for Sharon’s second extract, the depiction of the dynamic play of subtle hues and shifting clouds persuasively conveys the twofold point she has been making: the more spectacular the views, the more elusive and ineffable they are—the harder it is to communicate them. Here, again, the complementary rhetorical structure of confirmation and negation emerges, wherein each evaluative judgment reinforces the other. The confirmation concerns the *experience of witnessing* a spectacular view, and the negation lies in the recurrent expression of dissatisfaction with a referential mode of communication. It amounts to an instance on a metacommunicative evaluation typical of romanticist-idealist language. As observed by Vološhinov (1973, 85), the possibility of expression is negated on the grounds that it can “deform the purity of the inner element”; which is why in relation to singularity and foreignness, language in tourism is problematic, an “enemy,” even (as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes [1998, 239], following Sontag 1966). In the performance these two aspects converge: the narrator conveys that she or he is overwhelmed and frustrated alternately (or, more accurately, simultaneously).²

The three narratives point to what lies beyond the sayable, that which is extradiscursive. They imply that there are no narrative shortcuts, no words to replace acts. To continue the process of my own transformation, I now need to embark upon a trip myself, a practice that has two profound “destinations”: sites and self.

Finally, an illustration of how the interlocutor is skillfully implicated in the taleworld is also found in Danit’s depiction, which is drawn from the core narrative and does not seemingly concern her self-change (or mine). At first glance Danit seems enthusiastic about sharing her powerful experiences without being preoccupied with their communicability (she stresses how “simply amazing” the views

are). Yet a closer reading reveals here, too, the narrator's metacommunicative statements concerning the communicability of her profound experience. Masked as a descriptive sequence, a meaningful mininarrative is embedded within the excerpt, where Danit narrates her gradual, and eventually successful, approach to a colorful mountain.

The narrative points out that the first impression of the view arouses both admiration and suspicion. The remarkable sight arouses doubts about its realness; about whether it is "only" the sand, the mountain's "cover," that is colored. Again, the twofold structure is discernible: the more awesome the spectacle, the more elusive it is for expression. Yet in the narration it is so both in the eyes of the tourist-protagonist *and*, later, in the ears of the interlocutor: the fact that Danit is not sure of the reality and authenticity of the mountain may reflect the audience's hesitation as to whether her self-change is authentic and real or only a "cover," a superficial colorful façade.

The answer Danit provides to her preceding (skeptical) hesitation—a subtle way of ventriloquizing me—is a resounding no: the mountain *is* authentic—its color is natural (its *inside* is red or green). In a particularly excited utterance, Danit describes how sharp and real its colors are and, in the scene's crescendo, how she actually *reached* the colorful mountain and actually walked on it. It is then that she resorts to the use of quotations, which instantiate in the narration the actuality of her being there.

When she describes reaching the mountain ("at some point you reach it"), Danit actualizes her protagonist's voice and tells herself out loud—and, in effect, tells *me*—she is/has actually been there. The quotation, fusing "expression with communication" (Lucy 1993a, 20) through a shift in the spatiotemporal perspective, is a crucial metacommunicative framing device that marks here the convergence of the narrated events with the event of narration and conveys, in a seemingly unmediated ("direct") manner, that she has been there (see chapter 1). It performatively parallels and enacts the narrated fact that she has reached, *in actuality*, what she previously only saw from afar. By arriving at the truly "red" mountain, Danit has reached the inside of the direct quotation, so to speak, a crescendo that I echo sympathetically. Now she—her transformed self—is as enthralling an attraction as is the marvelous mountain. She is speaking from within the experience with a voice that, if I should wish to own it, I would have to travel there for myself. After the trip she establishes having gained not only storytelling rights (Hymes and Cazden 1978; Shuman 1986), but also *quoting rights*.

The double reference here—that is, my witnessing her being within the quotations in the there-and-then (taleworld)—means that at present *I* am the witness of the authentic, already on the track of my own touristic transformation. In the interview situation Danit short-circuits the referential order. She accomplishes this in speech and quotation rather than in gaze and vision. The verb with which she introduces the quotation is "look," which is a play on the usual type of speech verbs. Danit exchanges—transforms, translates—the perceived *immediacy* of vision with

that of *direct* quotation. The colors of her changed self are just as authentic and real as the colors of the mountain, and just as she experienced (viewed) the mountain, I experienced (heard) her.³

To conclude, backpackers' persuasive narrations of self-change are accomplished through the performative implication of their audience. They do so by manipulating pragmatic aspects of live narrative interaction, which rests on the perception that by seeking to interview them, the researcher is already implicated in their taleworlds.

Posttour storytelling again emerges as a constitutive rite of its own, and not as a by-product of the trip. As a social action, the stories amount to an initiatory rite in the listeners'/yet-to-be backpackers' own search for self/self-change and to the beginning of the construction of their touristic taleworld itinerary. The interlocutor is conversationally positioned and experientially constructed as the novice, occupying the listener role, and the narrating backpacker is cast as the experienced performer, occupying the speaker role. As Bauman (1978, 4) has remarked, narration changes social relationships and categories of identity inside and outside the performative event.

The narrating backpackers cleverly work around the "evidential problem" and around the problem of conveying the fact that they have changed to an audience who did not know them beforehand. In the interactions, their self-change assertions are located toward the end of the core narratives, at a point where conversational roles and identities have already been established. Moreover, the credibility of their argument is gained through the drawing of a parallel between the trip and the core travel narrative, on the one hand, and the latter and the self-change segment, on the other hand. These segments are not organic (narrative) parts of the travel narrative, they are "hanging" evaluative clauses (Labov 1972) and hence are knitted to the narrative via metacommunicative comments. This work of "knitting" parallels the work of overcoming or short-circuiting the epistemological gulf between the core narrative ("discourse"), and the trip ("practice"). It accomplishes important metapragmatic work in the performance.

Further, the backpackers' accounts revolve around the ineffable, insofar as they extradiscursively point toward two nonlinguistic "destinations" simultaneously: sites and selfhood. Both, they suggest, possess a factual quality of the kind language is commonly not accredited with. Their stories suggest (somewhat paradoxically) that there are no narrative shortcuts. No words to replace acts: in order to be viable and valid, self-change claims should be closely associated with practices that are perceived as "extradiscursive": occasions of traveling. Such metapragmatic work is effectively accomplished under shared perceptions of language in the West, particularly the subjectivization of speech (Silverstein 1976; Vološhinov 1973).

This is where the frequent employment of quotations and voices, abundantly presented in the chapters in site II, comes into the picture. In the reported dialogues, others' directly reported words assume the significance of a souvenir. Somewhat paradoxically, these reported words and utterances assume a nondiscursive or

extradiscursive status and are as factual and as credible as souvenirs. Although they consist of words, when direct quotations are transported from the spaces of tourists' experiences (in)to the performances "in one piece," as it were, they validate and authenticate the claims made by the narrators.

Finally, the success—credibility and authenticity—of the performance of self-change is intimately tied to the performance's persuasive character and intention (described and discussed in chapter 2). The description of positioning and dialogue in the storytelling occasion presented in this chapter indicates that self-change is persuasive insofar as persuasion is transformatory. The two are dialogically interlocked performances: if you have been persuaded, your self-change has already begun, and if you have started to change, you are in the process of becoming part of the community, and its discourse—part of yours. Put simply, good performances make for good persuasions, and vice versa.

"Garçon, get me someone who speaks Tibetan!"

One of the funniest moments of my life happened during my second trip to India, this time together with my future wife, Orly (who had also backpacked in India a few years before). We spent three wonderful weeks in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, most of the time in and around the towns of Dharamsala and McLeodganj, of which we still occasionally reminisce warmly, with the wonderful views and fresh air of the Indian Himalayas.

One evening we went out to dine in an Indian-run Tibetan restaurant. My memories of that evening are blurred and dim. Earlier that evening we met a group of three Israelis, a woman and two men of our age, who immediately seemed to share our lighthearted mood. They, too, were looking for a place to dine. Of the place itself all I can remember was that it seemed quite dark inside. In my memory the scene around us was darkish, with a soft spotlight directed on our table of five tourists. The dinner was long, we had many courses, and the experience was very pleasing.

One of our three companions was extraordinarily funny. I remember thinking: "This guy is a talented comedian." He was born in Israel, where he spent his childhood years, but had lived most of his life in the United States. Consequently, he knew both Hebrew and English fluently, although he had a clear foreign accent in the former and not in the latter. Toward the end of the evening we were getting ready to pay the check, an act that would prove to be an annoyance, because we had ordered and shared more dishes than we could remember and because the waiters did not impress us as being very efficient or orderly. At one point our newly acquired American-Israeli friend exclaimed, in a rolling authoritative voice that imitated and animated a demanding American tourist: "Garçon! Get me someone who speaks Tibetan!" This was terribly funny because it was clear the American tourist he was imitating had no knowledge of the Tibetan language (nor did our friend or, for that matter, any of us) and that he was playing a consumer's game: ordering people, services, and com-