HOW "THEY" SEE "US"
Native American Images of Tourists

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Abstract: Native American folklore and mythology has many examples of burlesquing "the Other." Such historical parodies and critiques of "the whiteman" influence contemporary attitudes towards tourists. Pueblo and Navajo silversmiths in New Mexico express and manipulate stereotypical images of tourists and Indians in making and selling their work. This helps them deal with the problems of face-to-face interaction with tourists. Stereotypical images can function to defend and protect as well as to discriminate. Tourism research can profit from greater attention to "host" group attitudes towards "guests," and situationally specific interactions between tourists and locals. Keywords: folklore, images of tourists, strategies for communication, stereotypes.


INTRODUCTION

On the whole, researchers of colonialism, acculturation, and social change have concentrated on local responses to colonialism (such as revitalization movements, cargo cults, religious syncretism, etc.) and have rarely examined local perceptions of the actual agents of such change, the colonialists themselves. Despite evidence of Native American depictions of the whiteman from the period of first contact on-
wards, relatively few stories, jokes, and figurative portrayals of the whiteman were collected or published because researchers generally felt that this did not represent true Indian culture (D'Oro 1985; Holden 1976). An exception was Lips, who wrote a ground-breaking book in 1937, *The Savage Hits Back: Or the Whiteman Through Native Eyes*, which cataloged figurative portrayals of the whiteman throughout the colonial world. Only recently have scholars begun to produce any systematic commentaries on Indian views of the whiteman. Some of these have been by Native Americans, such as Deloria (1969) and Lame Deer (1972), some by “whitemen,” such as Basso (1979) and Holden (1976). Such commentaries have contributed to the belated awareness that Native Americans have a sense of humor (Salabiye 1986).

One reason that so little has been written about how “they” see “us” is that the attention of social scientists has been elsewhere, focused on cultural relativism, ethnic identity, and symbolic systems. This leaves the impression that cultural enclaves are all inward-looking populations, disinterested in the world outside. Currently, in the wake of the self-conscious underpinnings of psychoanalysis, the rise of theories of meta-art and meta-theater, and the reinstatement of subjectivity in the social sciences, scholars have refined the concept of reflexivity and started to study themselves as they study others. This has spotlighted biases in the ways we interpret, record and analyze ethnographic material (cf. Clifford 1981; Fabian 1983; Geertz 1979) and created rules of ethics in fieldwork. But such sensitivity to Western ethnocentrism is only half the story: worrying about the distortions foisted upon ethnographic material by culturally-trapped researchers is still worrying about how we see ourselves, not how “they” see “us.”

In this context, then, the images that one group draws on when characterizing another group have been examined from the angle of majority views of minorities more than from the angle of minority views of the majority. Hence studies of the significance and effects of Anglo-American stereotypes of Indians are easier to find than vice versa (e.g., Albers and James 1983; Honour 1975; Stedman 1982; Todorov 1982).

Yet it is safe to assume that from the moment Indians met whitemen, they were comparing and contrasting these strangers to themselves. Indian responses to the whiteman have varied with the times, historically following a pattern of astonishment, messianic worship, armed revolt, and finally bitterness (Blackburn 1979; Lips 1937:25-27). Whatever the period, Native Americans have always reviewed the whiteman’s national and personal characteristics and dramatized his actions, follies, and motives through art, performance, stories, and jokes. They have caricatured the fire and brimstone of the missionaries, the financial gouging of the traders, the hypocrisy of the great white chiefs, and the credulity of the anthropologists (Levitas, Vivelo, and Vivelo 1974; Witt and Steiner 1972). Like other “native” groups, Indians have developed rationalizations to explain why the unprincipled, greedy and deceitful whiteman has so much power and wealth. More recently, the whiteman has presented himself to the Indians in yet another role, the tourist, and the Indians’ critiques continue. Native
American responses to tourists are deeply informed by the historical background of Indian attitudes to the whiteman.

Basso's eloquent and seminal work (1979) on Western Apache imitations and parodies of the whiteman considers the significance of Apache images of the whiteman in the context of Apache life on the reservation. Basso analyzed spontaneous Apache performances done for Apache-only audiences, and showed how these "portraits" provided ways of understanding and dealing with the whiteman (Basso 1979).

Taking his work as a starting point, the purpose of this paper is to look at Southwest Indian images of the tourist in the context of Indians' actual interactions with tourists when selling their arts and crafts (this analysis is based on material collected during three years of intermittent fieldwork in Sante Fe, New Mexico). These images are part and parcel of communication with tourists, and provide Indians with formulae for protecting their privacy while selling to the tourists. Indian conceptions of tourists are more than commentary on the whiteman, they are effective responses to the double-edged nature of tourism.

IMAGES OF THE WHITEMAN AS TOURIST

Not all references to white visitors are readily accessible to researchers. They are often obscure, expressed through analogies, indirect allusions or traditional narrative figures, and frequently drenched with irony (Holden 1976). Anthropologists have often been unaware of pointed critiques of their own behavior. They can be oblivious to "native" opinions of them, partly because people naturally avoid criticism and partly because social scientists expect to observe indigenous cultures in context—not to be observed. In this sense, fieldworkers are tourists and the two share characteristics that become the butt of Indian jokes and stories that ridicule collectomania (see, e.g. Freilich 1970; Howe and Sherzer 1986). Barre Toelken, a folklorist who worked with the Navajo for many years, collected the following story that epitomizes the ways in which Indians can outwit social scientists:

On Warm Springs Indian reservation in central Oregon, some people tell a story about a wandering anthropologist who came across a coyote caught in a trap.

"Please let me out of this trap; if you do I'll give you lots of money," the coyote said.

"Well, I'm not sure. Will you tell me a story too?"

"Sure I will. I'll tell you a real, true story, a real long one for your books."

So the anthropologist sprung the trap, collected a big handful of bills from the coyote, and then set up his tape machine. The coyote sat, rubbing his sore legs, and told a long story that lasted until the tape ran out. Then he ran off.

The anthropologist went home and told his wife about what happened, but she wouldn't believe him. When he reached into his pocket to show her the money, all he came out with was a handful of fur and dirt.

And when he went to play his tape for the other professors, all that was in the machine was a pile of coyote droppings (Toelken 1977:xi).
NATIVE AMERICAN IMAGES OF TOURISTS

The wiley coyote, quintessential trickster of Indian lore and a modern emblem of Indian cultural freedom, is completely in character when he tricks the naive anthropologist. Equally in character is the whiteman. Replace the tape recorder with a camera, and one has a tourist. In this joke the whiteman is continually seeking what the Indian has, expecting him to have answers about nature, religion, and philosophy. Here the whiteman–anthropologist sees the coyote’s story as a commodity. He trades for what he wants from the Indian, takes it back into his own cultural milieu and, reifying it, infuses it with value out of context. Of course, taking it out of context turns it into dreck, because you cannot distill true Indian culture into collectables.

Reifying culture is fundamental to cultural tourism and fits well with the general sense in Indian folklore that the whiteman is a slave to consumerism. A Native American graduate student once told this writer that the statement “the whiteman would sell his own grandmother if he could” is frequently heard amongst Indians. In 1972, Sioux medicine man John Lame Deer said “For the white man each blade of grass or spring of water has a price tag on it . . . The Sioux have a name for white men. They call them wasicun, fat-takers . . . Americans are bred like stuffed geese—to be consumers, not human beings” (Lame Deer 1972:32–33).

The whitemen-tourists in the following joke are consumers who are unable to see the humanity of the Indian they come across. (This joke was told to the crowd at the opening of the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe in the summer of 1987):

A couple flew into Albuquerque airport to visit the Southwest. They rented a car and drove off to Laguna Pueblo down the old ’66. They stopped off in Laguna to see the place. As they were walking around they saw an Indian woman making bread in an Indian oven—which looks like a large earthen beehive. “Umm, that smells good,” they thought, and decided to buy some. So they sat down and watched the bread being baked, bought some and ate it.

The couple carried on their way down Route 66 and entered Navajo lands. They were heading towards Chinle, when the woman saw another beehive-shaped hut in the distance. So the woman said to the man, “Hey, let’s get some more of that great bread. We’ve run out of what we had before. Let’s get two loaves this time.”

But the Navajos don’t use these huts for baking bread, they use them as sweat baths. They have a curtain across the entrance and this was down, and a Navajo man was inside sweating away. He looked outside and saw these two white folks coming towards him in their car. He decided to wait until the car went behind the small hill in front of the sweat house and then run for it. So as soon as the car had disappeared behind the hill, he drew back the curtain cover and started running off, naked, across the plain.

Just then the white people’s car rounded the corner, and the woman saw him running away. “Oh honey,” she said “isn’t that wonderful, they even bake gingerbread men in there.”

These tourists, literally eating their way through the Indian reservations of New Mexico and Arizona, are too ill-informed to tell a Pueblo
Indian from a Navajo, and too ignorant to recognize real Indian culture when they stumble across it. Nevertheless, in the face of a strange new phenomenon, they draw on their own preconceptions and limited experiences as they struggle to interpret the signs of Indian life in front of them. Of course their ridiculous interpretation reflects their overriding interest in consuming, but it also renders the strange familiar in terms that they understand (interestingly, the motif of the gingerbread itself is almost certainly of Anglo-American origin, having been adapted by the Navajo to suit their needs). In the process, they dehumanize the Indian, patronizingly turn him into something “cute,” and see him as a fit object for consumption.

That the Indian’s nakedness is no surprise conforms to tourist expectations that Indians live primitively. The Indian streaking across the desert, however, is not naked because of his simple lifestyle but because he has been stripped by tourist inquisitiveness and chased by tourist hunger for native culture. The folkloric and literary motif of Indians being stripped by the whiteman encompasses the ravages of all white expansionism, not just tourism. A second Navajo joke reiterates this motif:

A young man was walking along a dirt road. He was looking for his horse. He was wearing a breech-cloth, like they used to do in those days. They wore it like a diaper with a string around the waist to keep it in place. The remaining cloth was left hanging down in the front and back.

He was walking, when suddenly a car stopped for him. The driver was a whiteman. He got in and they took off. When they went a little ways down the road, he stopped. As the young man was getting out of the car, he mistakenly closed the door on the back part of his breech-cloth. Without looking back, the whiteman cruised off in a hurry. It took with it the whole breech-cloth the man was wearing. He was left naked by the road (Keith Cunningham, personal communication).

This joke depends on the incongruity of the Indian’s public nudity. Humor often results when norms are confounded, but besides the sheer ludicrousness of the situation and the socially-taboo male nudity, the joke’s painful irony expresses a general Native American sense of Indian’s treatment at the hands of white society.

Both the above jokes draw on, and contribute to, common Indian stereotypes of the whiteman. On one level, they bear out standard interpretations of the function of interethnic stereotyping, jokes, tricksterism and parodies. For example, folklorist William Clements, drawing on the work of Basso (1979) and others, says of the ethnic joke that “while it may indeed be the vehicle for intergroup resentment and aggression ... it is also a construct of ideas by which participants in a culture define who they are—or would like to be—by laughing at what they hope they are not” (Clements 1986:95).

Therefore, the “Gingerbread Indian” joke may shore up Southwestern Indian identity by differentiating Indians from ignorant tourists. On another level, the joke also confirms Indian perceptions of white-man’s behavior and how whites push them around. It is widely believed
that humor provides an outlet for aggressive feelings, in the same way that horror stories and witchcraft beliefs release fears (Freud 1905). The aggression is transparent in this Navajo version of a widespread American joke:

A whiteman goes up to an Indian and asks him, “Hey where does this road go?” The Indian looks up and says, “The road stays, you go!” (Keith Cunningham, personal communication).

The Indian’s stand in this joke is in marked contrast to the two previous stories, where in one case the Indian runs away and in the other, he just stands there, letting what has happened sink in. Those two stories can be seen as indictments of Indian culture’s ineffectual rebuttal to the whiteman. This goes beyond the characterization of the ethnic joke as exaggerating the follies of the Other in order to strengthen one’s own sense of cultural identity. A further level of meaning in these stories is reflexive, a challenging self-critique generated by the interaction between the Indians and the whiteman.

By parodying the Other, the Indians also parody themselves. One of the cartoons in a slim volume composed by Freeman (1980), a Californian Indian, expresses this point. A tourist dressed in shorts is carefully taking a picture of three totem poles. “Made in Japan” is incised on the back of one of the totem poles. Clearly we have yet another example of the naivety and gullibility of tourists. The tourist is so preoccupied with *photographing* Indian culture that he fails to *see* the totem pole—but it does not matter to him anyway, because back at home his photograph will appear to be of the real thing. This confirms the stereotype of the whiteman’s blind collectomania. Even if the cartoon celebrates Indian tricksterism, it also pokes fun at Indians who no longer make their own totem poles—they are content to let these ersatz totem poles stand as if they are indigenous productions of their own religious and cultural values.

Freeman’s (1980) collection of cartoons is called *For Indians Only*. Indian stories and jokes about whitemen/tourists are essentially for the ears of Indians or others “in the know.” The assumption that communality and familiarity establishes the joke-telling context has encouraged researchers to assess ethnic jokes in relation to group cohesion and boundary maintenance (Dundes 1971; Greenburg 1972; Zener 1970). Much other research has examined the effects of contact on ethnic stereotyping and the problems inherent in cross-cultural contact (Davidson and Thompson 1980:39–62; Stening 1979), but the role of ethnic stereotyping in the process of actual documented interactions between two groups is still almost virgin territory. MacCannell suggests that “the relationship between the tourists and the local people is temporary and unequal. Any social relationship which is transitory, superficial and unequal is a primary breeding ground for deceit, exploitation, mistrust, dishonesty and stereotype formation” (MacCannell 1984: 387–88). So what does happen when two groups who regularly stereotype one another come together? How is their behavior towards one another affected by their prior expectations?
Stories Indians tell about tourists, while usually situationally specific, add up to a pool of common images. These images depict predictable tourist behavior, as well as incorporating a sophisticated awareness of the conventional preconceptions tourists have about Indians. This mental repertoire of stereotypes provides a versatile "map" which actively informs the ways that Indians deal with tourists when selling their crafts. The following diverse examples demonstrate the extent to which such interactions are intricately tied up with the perception, expression and manipulation of stereotypes.

One recurrent situation that Indian artists have to deal with is continually being asked about the cultural significance of their work. People buying Indian art are often very concerned with the traditionality and the "Indian-ness" of an art piece. They want a particular pot, jewelry design, storyteller doll, or whatever to illustrate a cultural story, to have symbolic and even spiritual meaning. After all, for many tourists, such souvenirs are not only chosen for aesthetic reasons, but also as reminders of a visit to another culture.

Yet many Indian silversmiths have told this writer that they use traditional shapes and symbols to create an aesthetic effect, not to tell a cultural story. Some stress that while their designs may reflect their heritage, they want to be treated purely as artists, not as representatives of Indian culture. Nevertheless, Indian craftsmen and traders sometimes respond to tourists' needs for cultural significance by telling them just what they want to hear. While some of the silversmiths observed and interviewed by this writer disapprove of this practice, others furnish tourists with stories for particular items even though they did not consciously make the pieces with any story in mind. Telling the tourist a snippet of traditional custom or narrative appropriate to a piece of art may simply be done to keep the customer satisfied.

On one level, this approach simply indicates that Indians can be as savvy as the next man in using successful marketing strategies. But it also responds to touristic fascination with Indian culture, while being cynical about tourists' inability to learn anything real about it (which brings to mind similar responses to unsuspecting anthropologists, as in the earlier coyote story). As in the totem pole cartoon described above, Indian culture through the tourist lens is often what the tourists choose to see, not always what is really there.

When selling his work to tourists, another silversmith interviewed by this author consciously parodies stereotypes of himself as an Indian. Cippy Crazyhorse, a highly respected Cochiti artist, always attends Indian Market (the prestigious annual market for Indian art, in Santa Fe, New Mexico) dressed in a suit to counteract what he imagines to be touristic expectations—that he would dress in traditional clothes. He told of a harmless trick he played one year on a middle-aged Anglo tourist in his booth at Indian Market. A lady was examining the silver balls on a squash blossom necklace. She turned to Cippy Crazyhorse and in the slow, over-emphasized fashion intended for someone who does not really understand English, she asked "Are these hollow?" Cip-
py promptly replied “Hello” and warmly shook her hand. Again the lady asked, “Are these hollow?” pronouncing the words even more theatrically this time. Cippy cheerily responded with another “Hello.” This went on a few more times, by which time everyone around was laughing, until eventually the lady herself saw the joke.

In this interaction, Cippy Crazyhorse manipulated some touristic images of Indians in order to confront them and thus liberate himself from ethnic stereotyping. By dressing in a suit, he symbolically reversed the image of a feathered Indian; he simultaneously enacted *ad absurdum* the stereotype of the dumb Indian who cannot speak proper English. Using the lady’s predictable preconceptions as the starting point of the communication, Cippy was ultimately able to cajole her into seeing him as a fully-fledged human being just like her.

Cippy Crazyhorse’s informal tricksterism has a formal, ritual counterpart in the Indian dances held on pueblo’s feast days. Here the traditional *koshare* clowns burlesque the outsider through symbolic inversion. Interestingly enough, Cippy himself often performs as a clown at his own pueblo’s feast days.

It is now a commonplace that such symbolic inversions and burlesquing serve to reaffirm community values. As Sweet (1985:32) reveals in her study of Tewa pueblo dances, “Tewa clown performances in fact provide social control by demonstrating how not to behave” (Keith Basso makes a similar point regarding Apache portraits of the whiteman, as does Victor Turner (1967) in relation to rites of passage, and Mary Douglas (1968) regarding humor in general). Pueblo clowns burlesque outsiders by exaggerating the already overblown stereotypes of a group (e.g., the Navajo), an institution (e.g., tribal officials or the Church), or a social role (e.g., the tourist): “San Juan clowns also enjoy borrowing a camera from an Anglo tourist and taking pictures of each other in ludicrous poses. They may also take pictures of the tourist who lent them the camera, thus reversing the roles with the outsider and subtly posing the question, ‘see how it feels to be photographed by a stranger?’” (Sweet 1985:33).

This action may indeed have internally cohesive functions, but one wonders whether the dancers would mimic the tourists if the tourists were not there to see the parody. Sweet’s question above hints at this, and it is plausible that the clowns’ antics (like Cippy Crazyhorse’s improvisations) are sophisticated tauntings: to see if the tourists can get the joke and to remind them of where they are and who they are with.

Not all responses to interactions with tourists are as seamless or as self-conscious as the ones just described. There are also spontaneous emotional reactions, although these too are steeped in conventional images of tourists. Such *un-crafted* responses often reveal the bitterness underlying the use of humor to deal with tourism.

Certainly the bitterness is almost always there, and ever ready to bubble up to the surface. One Indian described to this writer his feelings about whiteman stories and jokes, saying that when he was younger, jokes about white people usually occurred in the drinking atmosphere of bars. But if you were sober, he continued, the humor would drop away and be transformed into militancy.

Take the time a tourist pushed his way, uninvited, into a Navajo
moccasin-maker’s hogan (house) and began taking pictures with a flash of the family while they were eating. This real-life story starts out in the same way as the Gingerbread Indian joke, but has a different outcome. Infuriated, the Navajo man left the hogan and shot holes in the white-man’s car tires (the tourist’s reaction was to complain that it was his taxes that were funding the Indians on this reservation) (Barre Toelken, personal communication).

If you cannot fight back with actions, then you can with words. Steiner tells of a conversation with Laureen Waukau, a Menominee Indian who worked in an Indian store selling trinkets to tourists. Just before a busload of tourists arrived, she said:

Just recently I realized that I hate whites. When the tourist buses come through and they come in here and stare at me, that’s when I hate them. They call me “Injun.” Like on television. It’s a big joke to them. You a “drunken Injun,” they say. “Injun” is a degrading word, I hate it.

I am not human to them. I feel that I am an image, not a human being, not a girl, not even an Indian. You know what I am? I am a buffalo!

Then the tourists descended on the Indian store.

One lady gently touched the young girl’s wrist. “Dear, are you a real Indian?” she asked. “I hope you don’t mind my asking. But you look so American.” There was a stony silence.

“I am a buffalo,” Laureen said (Steiner 1968:90).

Inevitably Laureen is angry for being categorized either as a social problem or as a romantic Other. Neither version reflects her perception of herself, and it is unbelievable to her that she has to look “Indian” in order to be accepted as authentic by the tourists on whose dollars she depends. In replying to the lady, Laureen is reacting to romantic images of Indian lifestyles that perpetuate the idea of the “noble savage” and that are laughable in the face of the real hardships of poverty and marginality. Her reference to the buffalo plays on the association of Indians with nature (as opposed to whites with culture), and equates her with a nearly extinct, primitive specimen that has also suffered at the hands of the whiteman. Like Cippy Crazyhorse, but without the humor, Laureen manipulates stereotypes to confront the tourist and thus salvage some dignity from an unacceptable but unavoidable situation.

In order to do so, Laureen has ironically objectified herself in exactly the same way that tourists tend to objectify the Indians they meet. Gail Bird and her husband Yazzie Johnson are among the top Indian silversmiths in Santa Fe, and are sophisticated and well-traveled, but the respect in which they are generally held does not protect them from tourist trespass. Frantic buyers at the frenzied Indian Market often assume that everything is up for grabs and treat the Indians as objects too. The Indian and his art become indistinguishable, as does the tourist and his camera. Gail finds that some people think of her and other Indian artists as props and imagine they can come up and stroke
her hair or make an offer for the necklace round her neck. In defending her personal space, Gail is uncompromisingly articulate.

Uncompromising silence can be an effective defense too. The sullen, brooding, threatening Indian of literary and screen fame can provide a posture that Indians may adopt to avoid tourists or taunt them (Betaille and Sillet 1980). When folklorist Toelken was living on the Navajo reservation, he would hang out with the Indians talking and joking around at the Kayenta trading post. Whenever a carful of tourists rolled in, silence would descend. Frequently the tourists wanted directions, asked to take pictures of the most “Indian-looking” of the men, and tried manfully to make conversation. The Indians would remain silent and apparently sullen, but as soon as the tourists left everyone would burst out laughing (Barre Toelken, personal communication).

In this example, the stereotype of the silent Indian is being used “as an aggressive weapon against the very society that imposed it.” These words are from Abrahams’ classic 1970 study of how blacks adopted and manipulated white stereotypes of blacks, turning them into psychological weapons with which to fight back. “Though they accommodated to the stereotype image, they converted their supposed animality, supersexuality, and childishness—their thievery, laziness, and strong smell—from negative to positive attributes” (Abrahams 1970:230).

Somewhere between uncompromising silence and uncompromising articulateness falls another event Toelken has told this writer about. A tourist asked an old Navajo man if he would sing him the original version of the popular post-War song “Along The Navajo Trail.” The Indian said he knew the song and immediately began to chant something. He chanted on, and on, and on. The tourist grew embarrassed, wanting the Indian to stop, and eventually had to leave with the Indian still singing. When the tourist left, all the Navajos joined in, and for months afterwards people would start singing the song in the trading post and relive the comic situation. When a tourist is in the heart of Indian country and clearly a fish out of water, he becomes an easy target for trickery. Here the context has helped Indians to orchestrate an interaction their way.

While these stories demonstrate Indian responses to tourist assumptions about them, they also bring into play Indian assumptions about tourists. Enough tourists have behaved in ways that violate Indian space, privacy, and rights for tourists as a group to become stereotyped as ignorant, greedy, pushy, acquisitive, and inappropriate. As Royce has written, “stereotypes generally pick out some conspicuous attribute or attributes and let it or them stand for the whole” (1982:146). It looks as if the relationship between actual tourist behavior and the images of tourists expressed in Indian folklore and art confirms the argument that in all stereotypes there is a “kernel of truth” (Prothro and Melikian 1955). This is despite the enormous diversity of situations and interactions that individual Indians and tourists find themselves in when they meet. Thus stereotypes can become self-fulfilling, insofar as Indian stories about tourists help shape actual interactions as well as being shaped by them.

As noted earlier, tourists and Indians selling their crafts have widely divergent expectations of each other, and while Indians often have a
very sophisticated understanding of the tourists’ preconceptions, tourists rarely seem aware of how Indians might see them. This derives in part from the fact that Indian craftsmen have met numerous tourists while most tourists have encountered few, if any, Indians. Therefore, the same group of Indians sells to a different, if typical, group of tourists every year (with the exception of some familiar faces). Hence Indian stereotypes of tourists are cumulative, largely through actual interactions with tourists, while touristic stereotypes of Indians are usually held irrespective of any face-to-face contact with Indians. Apart from the images tourists have absorbed from American popular culture, visitors to the Southwest can feel well-informed about Indians through museums, lectures, books, tours, and Indian arts without having to converse with Indians. From a questionnaire given to tourists in Santa Fe, New Mexico, this writer learned that almost half of the sample of one hundred did not even meet Indians on their visit.

The balance of the sample most likely came across Indians at the portal of the Palace of the Governors on Santa Fe’s central plaza, one of the few established places where Indians and tourists come face-to-face. Here local Pueblo Indians selling their arts and crafts meet tourists on a daily basis. This allows tourists the satisfaction of buying authentic, handmade crafts directly from real Indians, and gives Indians the opportunity to sell their work at retail prices and get exposure as artists.

The social structure of the portal setting is overtly binary. The respective roles of buyers and sellers keep tourists and Indians separate, which is appropriate since the currency of cultural tourism is difference. The use of space at the portal underscores this. The Indians sit in a long line with their backs against the Palace wall. They sit on portable chairs, cushions and crates, and they wait. In front of them are spread their handiworks, displayed on blankets which mark their selling spaces. Beyond the displays is the colonnaded walkway along which people stroll and stop to look at the crafts. Tourists wandering by literally look down on the art and the Indians sitting behind it. They must squat down to the Indian’s level when they want to examine a piece or initiate a transaction, but they can freely move on, comparing work, prices, and probably the personalities of the sellers. Although being able to sell at the portal is an advantage for many craftspeople, the following description of state policies towards Indians might easily apply to the portal: “on one side they like to preserve us in nice little cages to show us off and on the other side they control Indian economic activities” (personal communication by a Pueblo Indian lawyer, Santa Fe, 1987).

For the Indians, selling at the portal is a job, with long hours and often uncomfortable conditions. They arrive by 7 a.m. to be assured a place to sell, which means that if they travel up from the Albuquerque area they have to leave home around 5:30 in the morning. They then sit cramped all day behind their rugs being asked repetitious questions about their prices, their work, and their culture. (Of course, there are compensations: earning a living, the pleasure of selling and of public appreciation, the chance to exchange news with other Indians, and so on.) At the same time as they are doing business, they are aware that they sit at the portal as representatives of Indian culture. In fact, during a recent court case, the portal’s Indian vendors were described
as “living exhibits” of the Museum of New Mexico, which owns the Palace of the Governors (Evans-Pritchard 1987:291).

If the Indians are indeed living exhibits, then one can look at the portal as a theater—with the Indians as performers for an audience of tourists. On the other hand, given the Indian anecdotes and jokes discussed here, it might be truer to the situation to say that the tourists are the performers. After all, in the theater it is usually the audience that is seated—as are the Indians at the portal. Of course, in reality both Indians and tourists are collaborating in performances which exemplify the “creative activities” that MacCannell argues arise “when cultures change, or collide with one another, or when their illogicality is exposed” (1979:153).

Mechling, writing about Indian dances performed for the public by a Colorado-based, non-Indian, Boy Scout Troop, the Koshare Indians, draws on MacCannell’s argument. He interprets the Koshare’s performances as symbolically interstitial. “The Koshares are at the boundary where White and Native American cultures meet. Their performances are semiotic interpretations of that boundary” (1980:29). Taking this line, the cultural interplay at the portal is a complex of improvised readings of the boundary lines between Indians and tourists.

This writer has a hand-carved Hopi kachina doll that is similarly a Native American interpretation of this boundary, in that it is bi-cultural, expressing both Hopi ritual and touristic behavior. The figure is painted in the traditional black and white stripes of the koshare, clown, and is parodying the tourist (Figure 1). With a balding head and a ridiculous grin, the tourist is dressed only in baby-blue, flowered Bermuda shorts. He wears three cameras around his neck and carries four camera cases (one may conclude that this means that one camera was stolen by the “natives”). This figure not only represents a cultural boundary, but because it was for sale to tourists, it is itself part of the interaction that brings Indians and tourists together. Indian art, which encompasses Indian culture for most tourists, becomes the performance, the reason for Indian-tourist interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

Spicer has marvelled at the impressive tenacity with which Southwestern Indian groups adhere to their ethnic identities (1962:106–110). Such tenacity is exactly what tourists have come to witness, and their presence has injected new life into pueblo economy. This makes several pueblos severely dependent on tourist dollars. So for all the negative images of tourists, tourism also has its benefits and the Indians cannot but feel ambivalent about the agents of white patronage. Just as some Indian artists feel ambivalent when making a sale: it is great to be appreciated, but there’s always the double-edged sense that your work has sold because it is Indian, not because it is fine art.

Discomfort is often in the air when Indians and tourists meet. The Indians are experienced but often equivocal, and the tourists are frequently uncertain, temporarily in what they perceive to be an alien world. In such arenas of cross-cultural uncertainty, any human action can be read several ways. For instance, Sweet has found that some Tewa
Indians feel that tourists' use of “please” and “thank you” is excessive, and consider the way tourists rush to introduce themselves to be a sign of impatience (1985:69). Therefore, what tourists might do to make things more comfortable for themselves can have the opposite effect.

A classic example of such interactional dissonance was described to this writer by Frances Begay, a Navajo selling at the portal. In the light of the whiteman's historical behavior towards Indians, the event's key image has a poignant seriousness to it. But as Frances tells the story, she has the last laugh. Her story confirms the stereotype of the ignorant tourist, while her laughter symbolically restores Frances' dignity in what might otherwise have been a humiliating (however unintentionally) situation:

A lady will come up to you . . . this is very frequent, it seems like you get it every other day. Older ladies, you know, like grandma-types that come. They say “You got a ring, a big one?” I say “For which finger?” She says “This finger.” [Here Frances raised her middle finger making the “Fuck you” sign, and then collapsed into laughter]. “They don’t realize they’re doing it you know” (Frances Begay, personal communication).
Mixed signals of this sort are an inevitable result of cross-cultural communication, the translation of word or gesture from A to B. But perhaps this is not as bad as it seems. After all, on one level, the dissonance between Indian and whiteman perceptions of each other enable the Indians to keep the tourists in the category of outsiders, while the tourists can avoid the discomfort of having to really try and understand the Indians. Armed with stereotypes of tourists, and aware of touristic stereotypes of Indians, Indians can exercise more control over frequently uncomfortable situations. They can develop ways to sell their art which protect their dignity, satisfy the tourists, and permit enjoyable interactions when the chemistry is right. Can one assume that either side really wants to alter this relationship?

When individuals cross cultural boundaries through face-to-face encounters, they naturally tend to rely on stereotypical conceptions of each other to frame and structure the interactions. Rightly or wrongly, stereotypical representations of the Other are resilient, widespread, and integral in cross-cultural translation, however dynamic and experimental these conceptions can be. As Royce notes, “Without them we would be confronted with a hopeless proliferation of unique objects, and we would be unable to predict the behavior of others” (1982:145). Of course, on a theoretical level, “any act of communication can be considered translation, since receivers must decode the sender’s message, “making sense” of it by translating it into their own frames of reference and mental sets” (Fine 1984:93). While one does not intend to be an apologist for intercultural misunderstanding, it is natural for human beings to rationalize the Other in whatever ways might be most beneficial to themselves.

One is rightly nervous of acknowledging the functional significance of stereotypes because they are so often ideologically wrong. But taking a moral stand on stereotyping should not prevent one from investigating the integral roles which stereotypes play in the process of tourism. Dundes writing on ethnic jokes, *blaisond populaire*, advocates this standpoint as well as reminding the reader of the moral aspect:

> We cannot expect international slurs to disappear—there is evidently a deep human need to think in stereotypes. What we folklorists can do is to examine the slurs to see what the stereotypes are and to label them as stereotypes. We should not let the humor of the slurs fool us into underestimating the potential danger of national character stereotypes (1975:38).

Indian stereotypes of tourists are probably not as potentially dangerous as tourist stereotypes of Indians. After all, tourists are only tourists for a few weeks at a time, on average, and then they can go back home, while Indians are Indians for life. In this light, the impact of Indians treating all tourists as if they share the same basic characteristics does not compare to the impact of, say, American images of Indians as lazy, drunken primitives or colorful, simple exotics. For a minority, for “fourth worlders,” ethnic labeling can be devastating: majority stereotyping of minorities generally oppresses. Minority stereotyping of majorities often seems to empower. By studying how these two processes
make contact in the arena of tourism, one can delve further into the communicative aspects of tourism and at the same time, right the balance by presenting more studies of how “they” see “us.”

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