The Fantasy of Authenticity: Touring with Lacan

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Abstract:

Amidst the plethora of research regarding the meaning of authenticity, there remains uncertainty as to the work authenticity performs in tourism. Existential authenticity conceptually shifts focus from the objects of touristic practice to a sense of Being, suggesting that authenticity can be achieved, albeit only in the liminal moments of tourism experiences. Psychoanalysis would contend otherwise – authenticity will always be beyond our reach. In a 2006 publication, Tim Oakes broaches the topic when discussing authenticity as "an abyss". We revisit that idea, developing it further through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis to argue that authenticity is a fantasy. It is not an empty concept, however, but like all fantasies authenticity does important work, particularly in tourism marketing and touristic motivation and experience. To better understand how authenticity as a fantasy fosters tourism desire, it is necessary to develop a conceptual understanding of alienation in relation to tourism motivation. This paper moves alienation from the periphery to the center of tourism theories, demonstrates the dialectical relationship of authenticity/alienation, and posits that as a fantasy authenticity is a malleable concept that has the ability to contextualize the "something" that is missing from our lives. As such, it will remain salient in tourism.

Keywords: authenticity; alienation; Lacan; fantasy; existentialism

> *Despite the fact that a whole industry has been built around an effort to hide the fact of authenticity's emptiness, tourism is an experience in which that abyss can abruptly reveal itself. We all gingerly step away from the edges, though, convincing ourselves to look elsewhere. Tourism offers all the myths necessary to divert our thoughts from the unsettling prospect. But somehow we know we've seen the answer already; it is merely a void.*
>
> *Oakes, 2006, p. 233.*

Introduction

As concepts, alienation and its dialectic authenticity have been central to tourism studies since the earliest theorizations of tourism as a social phenomenon by Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1976). Yet, these scholars offered widely disparate readings of the roles of alienation, inauthenticity, and authenticity in tourism motivation and experience, with authenticity more frequently positioned in a starring role and alienation relegated to the periphery of tourism

theories. Whereas Boorstin (1961) argued that tourism lacks authenticity, that it is comprised of pseudo-events, and as such tourists validate the inauthenticity of their daily lives by engaging in these staged encounters, MacCannell (1976) contended that while tourists may, in fact, encounter "staged authenticity" that is not necessarily the goal of their pursuit. Rather, tourists seek out authenticity as a counterforce to the alienation of everyday life, and as a result, their mistaken interpretations of the accuracy of "staged authenticity" are more a product of the sophisticated staging abilities of tourism practitioners than of the desires of tourists themselves (MacCannell, 1976). From these theories, early research that elaborated a gradient of authenticity (and thus alienation) (Cohen, 1979) and that tied tourism to anomie and ego-enhancement (Dann, 1977) clearly has its basis in the alienating qualities of modern (and later postmodern) life. More recently, Cohen and Cohen (2012) have noted that, toward the end of the 20th century, tourism studies moved away from the tight interconnection of alienation and authenticity and towards the issue of classification of types of authenticity (see for example, Bruner, 1994; Wang, 1999). In the last decade, however, alienation has been placed "back on the map" of tourism studies in a major way. Theoretically, Steiner and Reisinger (2006) have investigated existentialist notions of alienation in great detail. More specifically, Maoz (2006) has examined existential alienation in relation to personal crisis among Israeli backpackers, while Di Pietro and Pizam (2008) have observed Marxian alienation among fast-food employees. This re-emergence of alienation is all the more noticeable given two recent reviews in the *Annals of Tourism Research* (Rickly-Boyd, 2013; Xue, Manuel-Navarrette & Buzinde, 2014).

Just as authenticity has been traditionally categorized as objective, constructive, postmodern, and existential (Wang, 1999) [1], Xue, Manuel-Navarette and Buzinde (2014) suggest alienation can be delimited by the registers productive, consumptive, and existential These, we suggest, are more conveniently summarized into Marxian (productive and consumptive) and existential alienation. However, this omits at least one additional category – the psychological. This paper revisits the earlier arguments of MacCannell (1976; 1999) regarding alienation and authenticity and demonstrates their dialectical relationship through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis. While some have advocated limiting our theoretical engagement with authenticity as it represents myriad, disparate concepts (see Reisinger and Stiener, 2006a; 2006b; Lau, 2010), others contend that these various uses of authenticity do matter (Belhassen and Caton, 2006) and rather than disputing the meaning of authenticity we would be better served to ask "What does authenticity do?" (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). In this paper, we offer support to the argument that authenticity matters (Belhassen and Caton, 2006), but aim to lend another perspective from which to make such a claim while also opening up a dialogue on the work authenticity performs in tourism, specifically tourism marketing and touristic motivation and experience. To do so, we must consider authenticity a fantasy. This idea has been suggested by Oakes (2006), but not fully developed (see above quote). Working from a postmodern lens, he asserts that authenticity in tourism is a "void" or an "abyss" that when confronted "de-reifies" the subject-object binary of (post)modern life, inspiring the tourist to back away and continue the "search" for authenticity rather than to accept its "emptiness". However, we contend that authenticity is not "empty", but as a fantasy it has considerable implications for the impetus to travel. Further, Oakes (2006) does not address authenticity's dialectic, alienation. Thus, to fully appreciate the search for authenticity, we need a psychoanalytic perspective. Lacanian psychoanalysis holds alienation at the heart of the human condition while conceptualizing authenticity as a fantasy born out of this situation, thereby maintaining the dialectical relationship of these two concepts.

According to Lacan, fantasy plays a crucial role in hiding the true alienated nature of our existence in society, as it is a story that defines one's relationship to the "thing" that is lacking in life. Authenticity is a particularly powerful fantasy and one that is frequently associated with tourism. Because tourism is constructed as the symbolic opposite of our everyday (see MacCannell, 1976; 1999; Graburn, 1983; 2004), it is the proper setting for a potential encounter with the authentic (place, culture, self, etc.). Psychoanalysis and existentialism both tell us that alienation is inevitable, which suggests authenticity (as a fantasy) remains pervasive in tourists' motivations as well as tourism marketing because it is presented as the story of what is missing from our lives. However, psychoanalysis asserts that as a fantasy, authenticity can never be fully integrated into our lives, but is an always present motivation for seeking out the *extra*-ordinary. Authenticity as a fantasy remains malleable, always there to capture our latest desires. Thus, as we will argue, authenticity may, indeed, be vague and unattainable but it drives our individual and collective travel behavior in significant ways. As such, a psychoanalytic approach that holds authenticity/alienation together in a dialectical relationship has considerable potential for innovative research in tourism studies that is not only interested in how we make sense of the places we encounter but also why we wish to leave home in search of experiences in the first place.

Alienation Revisited

At the outset, we should note that we use the term "alienation" in the same manner as does tourism theory more generally – as a Western concept, one that is quite distinct from, say, that employed in Confucianism wherein those separated from their society and family suffer alienation.[2] Especially since Kierkegaard (1843), in Western contra Eastern philosophy, society is more typically seen as the cause of and not the solution to alienation, a topic central to both Marxism and Existentialism. It is from these two philosophical foundations (Marxism and Existentialism) that many of the theories of tourism have been developed.

The idea that we, as tourists, can find relief from our alienation through tourism experiences inspired some of the earliest theories of the relationship of authenticity to tourism. MacCannell (1976) suggests authenticity as a motivating force for the individual undertaking tourism, and that social practices – processes of sacralization and ritual attitude – that accompany tourism act in tandem to (re)produce the objects of tourists' sightseeing. Ritual, in modern society he argues, works as a sense of social duty and tourism is premised on ritualized sightseeing, offering the tourist the potential for social integration by participating in and completing the ritual (see also Rickly-Boyd, 2012). "Sightseeing is a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience" (MacCannell, 1999; p. 13). While individual tourists attempt to construct totalities through collective ritual, tourism practices actually celebrate differentiation by setting aside attractions, through processes of sacralization, that extend not only to cultural and natural features but to human beings as well, othered through tourism gazes (Urry, 1990; 2002). This is precisely the context from which authenticity has come to the foreground of tourism theory. The striving for totality and the potential of integration are symptomatic of alienation but are given less attention as researchers focus, instead, on the pull of

authenticity. Indeed, Wang (1999) recognizes this and, while also foregrounding authenticity, he is careful to highlight the relationship of the pursuit of authenticity to alienation as motivating force.

Marxist Alienation: In Marxist thought (see Ollman, 1976) workers in capitalism are alienated from the product of their labor, from the act of production, from themselves, and from other workers. Additionally, as Foster (2000, p. 72) points out, "Marx's concept of the alienation of labor – was inseparable from the alienation of human beings from nature, from both their own internal nature and external nature". Marx notes that this alienation "estranges man from his own body, from nature as it exists outside him, from his spiritual essence, his *human* essence" (Marx, 1844 cited in Foster 2000, p. 73, original italics). The solution, for Marx, is to be found in bodily practice, in action rather than in thought, and in physical, material practice that connects nature and individual (see Vidon, 2015). Foster (2000, p. 5) notes, "According to Marx, we transform our relation to the world and transcend our alienation from it – creating our own distinctly human-natural relations – by acting, that is, through our material praxis." Cultural Marxist Walter Benjamin extended these ideas further into theories of authenticity, arguing that authenticity is a premodern ideal that evolved out of the notion of originals with the rise of mechanical reproduction and capitalism. However, his theorization of authenticity did not stop with originality but, importantly, considered the mechanisms that establish it, namely aura, ritual and tradition (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). As such, it is not mechanical reproduction, *per se*, that leads to inauthenticity, but separation from the rituals and traditions of production and meaning that constitute aura that results in alienation. While we are alienated from our organic selves in all societies, we are only alienated from what we produce, from society generally, and from our fellow humans in capitalism, in both its modern and post-modern forms.

According to Xue, Manuel-Navarrette and Buzinde (2014), consumer alienation came into focus after the Second World War when economies based on manufacturing increasingly gave way to those based on services in much of the Global North. Such alienation is characterized by a state in which commodity fetishism occurs and, aided by advertising and mass media, individuals "actively engage and integrate themselves into a hegemony of consumption" (Xue, Manuel-Navarrette & Buzinde, 2014, p. 190). It should be noted, however, that a shift from industrial production to service production does not fundamentally alter the nature of capitalism (Mandel, 1972). Indeed, late capitalism is typified by the commodification of services and experiences and the penetration of capitalism into areas of life and geographical spaces from which it was previously absent (see also Harvey, 2005). The commodification of experience is central to tourism, as an industry in which the destination is the product that is crafted and marketed through the "experience economy" (see Andersson, 2007).

While Marx's notions of alienation have served as a foundation for some theories of tourism, alienation has rarely garnered the attention of its dialectic, authenticity (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). MacCannell (1976; 1999) contends that as individuals living in modern capitalist society, tourists are alienated and therefore seeking the authentic in tourism sites and experiences. As modern individuals become more firmly entrenched in their everyday lives, they become more alienated from both self and society and thus more acutely aware of their own alienation, which prompts them to seek the authentic outside of their daily lives. The answer to tourists' desires for authenticity and belonging, according to MacCannell, lies in sightseeing. He notes, "…it is

through sightseeing that the tourist demonstrates better than by any other means that he is not alienated from society" (p. 68). In this way, MacCannell argues that tourists seek to overcome their alienated states by engaging in tourism, visiting new, unfamiliar sites, and connecting with new peoples and cultures they deem authentic – "Touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences…" (p. 101). While what tourists find is invariably "staged authenticity" (p. 98), they nevertheless seek the authentic as a means to overcome their own alienation.

Existentialist Alienation: Alienation is less generalizable in Existentialism, as different philosophers held various ideas about the relationship of the individual to society. For example, Kiekegaard's alienation was an experience of the relation of one's soul to God (see Golomb, 1999), whereas Camus preferred the term "absurd" as a way of extending the idea of alienation to include the experience of the paradox of having freedom while also being estranged from society (Sagi, 2002).

In tourism studies, an existential perspective on authenticity/alienation has taken a generally Heideggerian approach, pushing the factors that produce alienation to the background and foregrounding the ways one can achieve moments of authenticity. Pearce and Moscardo (1986) were among the first tourism scholars to suggest a Heideggerian, ontological perspective to authenticity. In particular, they assert that authenticity can come from experiences with people and places, in accordance with Heidegger's concepts of self-actualization and Dasein, and therefore would be quite useful for tourism studies. Steiner and Reisinger (2006a) advance a Heideggerian authenticity that focuses less on being tourists/doing tourism and more on the ontological essence of being that tourism facilitates. According to this perspective, "whether people are authentic or inauthentic is determined not by how they respond to their possibilities but by how they project themselves" (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006a, p. 306). Similarly, Brown (2013) advocates for a Sartrean approach to consider the ways tourism acts as a catalyst for existential authenticity by providing a space/time (*Spielraum*) away from the everyday to reflect and then make changes to one's lifestyle upon return.

Further, Reisinger and Steiner (2006) suggest we should abandon the various conceptualizations of authenticity in favor of a singular, Heideggerian existential definition (see also Steiner and Reisinger, 2006a). Indeed, a Heideggerian perspective is quite useful for the study of existential authenticity in tourism, as this approach understands authenticity as transitory, as moments that are fleeting. Authenticity is not something one finds and then retains perpetually thereafter; authenticity must be continually pursued. That is, one must constantly fight the various forces of life that lead to alienation. Tourism's episodic nature lends itself to such an approach. Tourism is considered, generally, a break from everyday life. It functions through differentiation, in terms of location, routines, habits, and diets (MacCannell, 1976; 1999). It is in these breaks that existentialists would argue we might be able find a sense of self, but only briefly (see Graburn, 1983; Wang, 1999; Brown, 2013). In this view, Varley (2006, p. 182) contends, "[t]he elusive promise is that [the inauthenticity] in modern everyday life may be filled by the 'existentially authentic' adventure in its ideal type […] The possibility of transcending the mundane, everyday world lies in the journey toward authenticity, via the quest for adventure". Returning to our everyday lives, from traveling, reintroduces those forces of alienation we briefly escaped (see Moaz, 2006). Thus, tourism scholars interested in the motivations of touristic pursuits have been

drawn to existential notions of authenticity as a way to conceptualize the pull of tourism and the identity politics of touristic experiences (see Cohen, 2010; Rickly-Boyd, 2012b; Brown, 2013; Vidon, 2015).

Thus, existentialists view the self as alienated in society, but not lost to it. It is always beneath the surface of our social representations, and therefore able to be reclaimed in distinct moments and given room to breathe. And while one could move to other existentialists for their various interpretations of authenticity (from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche to Sartre to Camus (see Golomb, 1995)) and apply these to tourism research (which others have begun to do (see Steiner and Reisinger, 2006a; Brown, 2013), in this paper we are particularly interested in what psychoanalytic theory has to offer this analytical trajectory of tourism studies. Many modern existentialists were influenced by Freudian studies of alienation. And, conversely, as Mills (2003, p. 272-273) argues, "psychoanalysis has always been an existential enterprise […] Freud's entire metapsychology could be said to be an existential treatise on the scope, breadth, and limits to human freedom." However, while existentialists have worked at the center of the alienation/authenticity dialectical and investigated the possibility that authenticity exists, if only for a few moments, psychoanalysts from Lacan onward have deemed authenticity a fantasy, as alienation is inescapable. This distinction is particularly noticeable in tourism and leisure studies literature wherein alienation is viewed by those adhering to the notion of existential authenticity as being a phenomenon ushered in by Modernity, but not a condition of pre-Modernity (see Wang, 1996; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006a). A psychoanalytic perspective, however, illuminates the illusory nature of authenticity as the proverbial "backstage" beyond the tourist's reach precisely because it cannot exist, but one that still drives touristic motivation by relating to the individual's sense of self. This argument sheds light on why Oakes (quoted above) would posit that authenticity is "merely a void". However, while authenticity is a fantasy that, by its very nature, will always be just beyond one's grasp, it is far from "empty". In what follows, we summarize some of Lacan's most pertinent ideas regarding subjectivization, namely the mirror stage, mis-recognition, separation, desire, *objet petit a, jouissance,* and fantasy demonstrating the depth of psychological factors that lead to alienation and the fantasy of authenticity. By bringing alienation into the conversation we can, arguably, better articulate the factors that work to motivate tourists to travel away from "home" and to seek authenticity in the destinations tourism constructs and sells.

Enter Lacan

What the above discussion has teased out is that other kinds of alienation also exist. Foremost among these is psychological alienation. To understand this concept, we turn to the writings of Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst who worked from 1931 until just before his death in 1981. Lacan is most widely known for his weekly seminars, which began in 1951 and ended in 1980. In these seminars[3], Lacan advocated a "return to Freud" who he felt had become increasingly ignored in French psychoanalysis. Indeed much of his early work involves efforts to reanalyze Freud's cases and to elaborate on points first made by Freud, especially during the seminars held 1953-1955 (Miller, 1975; 1978). It must also be acknowledged that, like Freud, Lacan was and is enormously controversial (see Tallis, 1997). Despite controversies about his

personal life and his teachings, many of his ideas have found widespread adoption in psychoanalysis and also in literary and film studies, gender studies, and social science (Homer, 2005).

Like the existentialists, Lacan suggested that alienation exists in society at the most fundamental level and that it is ahistorical and context-free. Unlike the existentialists, he held that not only can it not be resolved, it cannot be avoided. Lacan's fundamental alienation occurs very simply because as subjects of society, we are always necessarily mediated by society. We speak its language and we think its thoughts (and if we do not, we are considered pathological and in need of treatment). Yet, the self (as opposed to the ego) remains active in our unconscious, bubbling to the surface here and there in dreams, slips of tongue, and in awkward moments that mark us as split subjects, signal the tension between the self and the ego, and signify the trauma of our subjectivization.

For Lacan (we follow the so-called "later Lacan" line of thinking here[4]), what might be termed "alienation" more broadly is separated into two stages: "alienation" and "separation." Both signal the emergence of the subject – an individual in society – but comprise different moments of that process. Lacanian alienation is intimately tied to the notion of the Mirror Stage and signals the emergence of the split subject, a subject that has both an ego or "outer self" and what we will term an "inner self." Separation, on the other hand, signals the emergence of desire and is marked by symbolic castration – the realization by the child that s/he can never be the object of her/his mother's desire. In this stage, desire "breaks into a thousand pieces that lodge themselves in objects and people" (Bailly, 2009, p. 130). As a result, the object of desire becomes shifting and multifarious. The object of desire is, in the words of Fink (1995, p. 94), "the rem(a)inder of the lost hypothetical mother-child unity."

Lacanian Alienation, or the Mirror Stage

The Mirror Stage is the critical moment at which the Subject is "alienated from itself and takes on its truly human character" (Bailly, 2009, p. 90). In the Mirror Stage the child first realizes that it is both self (an unconnected grouping of bodily sensations and feelings) and an "other" (a complete bodily presence visible as a single totality to others). The Mirror Stage is critical in that without it, the human infant never perceives oneself as a whole being. However, it is also *alienating* in that this complete being becomes confused with the self and, indeed, comes to take the place of the self. In essence a unified sense of self can be said to come at the price of "this self being an-other, that is, a mirror image" (Homer, 2005, p. 25).

This is the founding act of identity, an act that both situates the Subject within society (the big other or "Other") and gives it access to the symbolic realm *and* one that forever alienates it from itself and begins a lifetime of *mis-recognition* on the part of the Subject (Bailly, 2009). "The function of the ego is, in other words, one of *mis-recognition*; of refusing to accept the truth of fragmentation and alienation" (Homer, 2005, p. 25, italics in original). According to Lacan, the ego emerges at this time. It is no more and no less than the image in the mirror (Homer, 2005). The ego is thus an illusion of completeness and coordination provided the Subject by the Mirror Stage. Indeed, it is the function of the ego to maintain the mirror's "illusion of coherence and mastery" (Homer, 2005, p. 25).

The process of alienation forever situates the Subject within the Other (Bailly, 2009). Lacan thought of the relationship of the Subject to society along the lines of a Master's discourse (Lacan, 2002/2006; also Fink, 2004). Thus, to be said to exist is to be recognized by an-other. Because our image, which is equal to ourselves, is mediated by the Other, the Other becomes the guarantor of ourselves. "We are at once dependent on the other as guarantor of our own existence and a bitter rival to that same other" (Homer, 2005, p.26). This is precisely the Master-Slave dialectic of Hegel.

Alienation according to Lacan, then, is characterized by a "lack of being" through which "the infant's realization (in both senses of the term: forming a distinct concept in the mind and becoming real) lies in an-other place" (Homer, 2005, p 26). For Lacan, then, and contrary to existentialist views, a subject in society is not alienated from itself or from its work or fellow laborers. Rather, alienation makes the subject (Homer, 2005). As such, alienation is "an inevitable consequence of the formation of the ego and a necessary first step towards subjectivity. Contrary to the usual understanding of the term in philosophy or political theory – that is, alienation as *self*-alienation that must be overcome if a true self is to emerge – alienation, for Lacan, is unavoidable and untranscendable" (Homer, 2005, p. 71). According to Soler, 1995, p. 49) "alienation is destiny."

Lacanian Separation and the Creation of Desire

Separation is the second crucial phase of subjectivization in which the "child differentiates itself from the (m)Other" (Homer, 2005, p. 72). The move from alienation to separation involves the separation of the Subject from the (m)Other's desire and the realization that the Subject cannot ever fulfill the (m)Other's desire (Fink 2004).[5] More generally, separation involves recognition by the Subject of her/his own lack and a simultaneous recognition of the lack in all others in society. Because it is from this lack that desire stems, this is equivalent to the emergence of desire in the Subject and the recognition by the Subject that all others in society are also desiring Subjects. It is thus through the desire of the Other that the Subject's own desire is founded (Homer, 2005). In other words, because one desires to be whole, as does everyone else, we spend our lives searching for wholeness (an impossibility), which necessitates the construction of fantasies in the form of pathways (or lifestyles, consumption practices, experiences, etc.) to wholeness.

If Lacanian separation sets in motion desire, if it creates desiring subjects, what exactly, then, is desire? It is not a need precisely because a need can be fulfilled. Desire is beyond need and can never be satisfied (Homer, 2005). Desire is that which arises as the remainder "from the subtraction of need from demand" (Homer, 2005, p. 72). As desiring subjects, we cannot help but desire and indeed need to desire. The necessity of desiring for Lacan is best summed up by his admonition that one should never "give ground relative to one's desire" (Miller, 1986, p. 319). Desire is thus an end in itself. "Desire is always a desire of a desire" (Zizek, 1989, p. 196). This is because "desire, strictly speaking, has no object" (Homer, 2005, p. 87). If we recall that desire stems from lack, a lack we recognize in ourselves and in Others, then desire is always "the desire for something that is missing and thus involves a constant search for the missing object" that would fulfill that lack (Homer, 2005, p. 87). But that missing object is a fantasy both because it doesn't exist and because it never did exist for lack is a constitutive condition of the (split) Subject. Yet, through fantasy, "the subject attempts to sustain the illusion of unity with the Other and ignore his or her own division. Although the desire of the Other always exceeds or

escapes the subject, there nevertheless remains something that the subject can recover and thus sustains him or herself. This something is the *objet [petit] a"* (Homer, 2005, p. 87). Homer (2005, pp. 87-88) explains further:

> The *objet a* is not, therefore, an object we have lost, because then we would be able to find it and satisfy our desire. It is rather the constant sense we have, as subjects, that something is lacking or missing from our lives. We are always searching for fulfillment…and whenever we achieve these goals there is always something more we desire; we cannot quite pinpoint it but we know it is there. This is one sense in which we can understand the Lacanian real as the void or abyss at the core of our being that we constantly try to fill out. The *objet a* is both the void, the gap, and whatever object momentarily comes to fill that gap in our symbolic reality. What is important to keep in mind here is that the *objet a* is not the object itself but the function of masking the lack. … In Lacanian terms, fantasy defines a subject's "impossible" relation to the *objet a*.

For Lacan, fantasy is crucial to the fabrication of reality. Fantasy is quite simply the story we tell ourselves in order to make sense of our world and to keep the trauma of The Real at bay. Put another way, fantasy is subjectivized trauma – trauma made comprehensible by recourse to the symbolic, to society. Lacan refers to the process of subjectivizing trauma as "traversing the fantasy". In traversing fantasy and subjectivizing trauma, the Subject takes "the traumatic event upon him/herself and assumes the responsibility for that *jouissance"* (Homer, 2005, p. 89). While a complicated concept, *jouissance* generally refers to the enjoyment of pleasure and pain in which a hypothetical state is more pleasurable than the actuality. Further, according to Homer,

> The difficulty in talking about *jouissance* is that we cannot actually say what it is. We experience it rather through its absence or insufficiency. As subjects we are driven by insatiable desires. As we seek to realize our desires we will inevitably be disappointed – the satisfaction we achieve is never quite enough; we always have the sense that there is something more, something we have missed out on, something we could have had. This something more that would satisfy and fulfill us beyond the meager pleasure we experience is *jouissance*. We do not know what it is but assume that it must be there because we are constantly dissatisfied…Furthermore, in assuming it is there and that we are lacking it we generally attribute it to the Other. The Other is believed to experience a level of enjoyment beyond our own experience…This belief in the excessive *jouissance* of the Other is sustained through fantasy. Fantasy is one of the ways through which we reconcile ourselves to our dissatisfaction with our own *jouissance* and the impossibility of the real. Through fantasy we construct our social reality as an answer to the intractability of the real (Homer, 2005, p. 90).

According to Lacan, alienation is not a condition of modernity or post-modernity. Nor is it a condition of pre-capitalism, industrial capitalism, or late capitalism. Alienation is the result of humans being in society. To be a Subject is to be alienated, and with that alienation comes the desire for wholeness. Because wholeness is impossible to attain, we turn instead to the task of fulfilling desires, in the form of the *objet petit a*, for which the enjoyment of the Other (*jouissance*) appears to be located. Yet, these desires are endless. Tourism becomes a way of attempting to fulfill our desires and obtain a moment of *jouissance* for oneself.[6] That there is a society somewhere at some time that is not alienated, that is authentic, is a fantasy. It is a necessary fantasy that structures our reality and protects us from The Real of our split nature as Subjects. While we believe that while we may not have ever experienced what it is like to live authentically, someone somewhere – some Subject Supposed to – has,(Žižek, 1989). It is this that allows vain hope that makes the various places/things/experiences, the various *objet petit a* tourism boards dangle in front of us so compelling[7]. And we are seduced by it precisely because we are desiring Subjects seeking the materiality of the fantasy of authenticity. But because authenticity is a fantasy, we can never quite experience its material form, its *objet petit a* for it is

"chimerical" and our desire goes unfulfilled (Žižek, 1989, p. 65)., We remain alienated, even when we travel.

Discussion

Lacan tells us that alienation is a product of society, which is not dissimilar from existentialism's take on the concept. But, unlike existentialism, Lacan does not offer much hope of finding authenticity. Instead, psychoanalysis turns to the role of drives, desire, and fantasy, among other factors, to understand our motivations. It is important, then, to distinguish existential authenticity/alienation from the alienation/fantasy of authenticity of psychoanalytic theory and the ways this can be distinctively useful for tourism research. In particular, we suggest that by attending to the dialectical relationship of alienation/authenticity, rather than focusing on authenticity alone, tourism research can further develop an understanding of the ways everyday lives relate to tourism practices (see for example, Hannam, 2009), how touristic meaning-making relates to pre-tourism motivations (see for example, Metro-Roland, 2011), as well as the power of tourism marketing (see for example, Morgan & Pritchard, 1998).

Towards conceptualizing the relations among touristic motivation, host-guest encounters, and tourism experience, Oakes' (2006), draws a connection between the burgeoning concept of existential authenticity in tourism and its psychological limitations for tourists on the ground. And while we are in agreement with much of his analysis, we suggest that delving more deeply into Lacanian psychoanalysis, and alienation specifically, will further explicate the desire for tourism that promises to fulfill the fantasy of authenticity. In particular, Oakes points out the dissonance between American tourists' expectations upon visiting a Miao village in southern China and the actual experience of their encounter. Although expectations not being met are a common occurrence in most aspects of life, Oakes notes that this has serious consequences when touristic practices are driven by the pursuit of the self through differentiation and the politics of otherness.

> [T]ourism not only traffics in the reification of authenticity, but by the very transparency with which it commodifies and manipulates symbols and meanings, it also reveals with sometimes sharp clarity just how contrived the "real world" of objects can be. It is perhaps fitting, then, that in the Miao village visited by the Americans, the villagers expected the Americans to act like tourists but their assumptions about how the Americans would perform this clearly backfired. This is partly because although the Americans recognized their role as tourists and perhaps implicitly knew the kind of behavior such a role entailed, they nevertheless rebelled against it in attempting to perform the more likeable role of knowledgeable aid workers and ambassadors of crosscultural exchange. The clash of expectations and assumptions about the roles played by tourist and villager alike produced a moment of de-reification for the Americans. (Oakes, 2006, p. 248-249)

In other words, Oakes observes tourists with a desire to discover a sense of self through encounters with exotic others (their supposed opposite), yet what these tourists actually encounter are peoples quite similar to themselves, in the most unsatisfying ways. In the Miao

village, tourists came in search of (authentic) primitive, humble, quiet people (to which they could bring humanitarian gifts of seeds and perform the self they want to be), but what they found were exuberant and entrepreneurial villagers aggressively selling their goods. To put it frankly, the tourists encountered not their opposites, but people all too familiar. They came face-to-face with who they are and rather than accept this, they deemed the village "inauthentic" and continued their pursuit. Oakes (2006, p.250) concludes from this:

> The paradox of authenticity is that it vaporizes only when you look for it. […] To the extent that people again and again need to recognize that the subject is not the object, and that this doublet remains a shallow expression of being, authenticity exists to fulfill this need. Yet to the extent that this need leads one on a journey, a quest for some*thing* or some*where* "authentic," it will always recede and disappear from view, inexpressible in a modern language of binaries.

This is precisely where Lacanian psychoanalysis can most benefit tourism research regarding marketing, expectation, motivation, and experience, as it understands authenticity as a fantasy. In Lacanian terms, Oakes' discussion of authenticity as "a void", "an abyss", or the "something" that "vaporizes only when you look for it" is more in line with an *objet petit a*, which is "both the void, the gap, and whatever object momentarily comes to fill that gap in our symbolic reality" (Homer, 2005, pp. 87-88). We suggest, however, that authenticity is better understood as a fantasy. Fantasy is not an "empty" concept, but malleable. While fantasy and *objet petit a* are related, a fantasy is a story that reconciles why the "thing" is missing from life. In tourism, authenticity is not the "thing" that is missing, but the self-rationalization that while one's life is missing all sorts of "things", they do exist elsewhere in other places/lifestyles/cultures. The fantasy of authenticity, as employed in tourism, tells us that we need not fret because we can fulfill our desires for the authentic through travel. Tourism marketing speaks directly to our alienation with fantasies of authenticity that highlight the *jouissanace* of other tourists as they engage with various *objet petit a*, suggesting to potential tourists that they, too, can have such a fulfilling experience. Of course, the *objet petit a* are ever-changing, as the desires that inspire the fantasy of authenticity can never be satiated.

Lacan pinpoints our alienation in society as the source of fantasy. As Lacan explains, alienation has a social origin; it is not simply a product of modernity, or postmodernity, or capitalism for that matter. Alienation is a result of being a subject, existing as split from one's biological self. But, that we fantasize about authenticity – an authentic self, an authentic society, and an authentic place – serves a crucial function in postmodern, advanced capitalist societies. It is a necessary fantasy that structures our reality and protects us from The Real of our split nature as subjects. Put another way, in order to effectively protect ourselves from recognition of The Real, we depend on the fantasy of authenticity as the mechanism through which we attempt to subvert or obscure our own alienation. Because authenticity is a fantasy, however, any attempt at realization of an unalienated self is necessarily always frustrated, hence the emergence of Lacan's "lack" or Wang's (1999) "feeling of loss".

Furthermore, while Oakes' argument hinges on expectations, perceptions, and the pursuit of authenticity alone, we posit that alienation is an equally powerful motivating force to leave "home" for a short period of time. As such, alienation should be considered in conjunction with authenticity. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, I – the subject – sense that I am not complete, that I am not a whole person, as one is alienated from one's biological self. This lack is perpetually palpable in our lives, with each of us attempting to ignore it or find wholeness in

differing ways. This alienation takes various forms with corresponding desires, and corresponding material foci (*objet petit a*). However, while the fantasy of authenticity has its basis in a pervasive, singular desire, the resulting material foci (*objet petit a*) are many and correspond to individual identities and situations each promising in its own way a set of experiences that provide reconnection of the split subject each of us represent. As such, the fantasy of authenticity does vital work in tourism. Thus, further research that asks "what does authenticity do?" has the potential to push the boundaries of how we conceptualize authenticity and illustrate its relational qualities (see Rickly-Boyd, 2012).

In his most recent book, MacCannell's (2011) examination of sightseeing takes a psychoanalytic approach to tourism ethics that turns attention to fantasy and pleasure. He suggests that since "[t]he natural domain of pleasure is fantasy", it is "[o]nly in fantasy are we completely free endlessly to pleasure ourselves" (2011, p. 53). Because the differentiations of the "everyday" and "tourism" are symbolic (not real), and it is the symbolic that supports fantasy, tourism has become a natural domain for the construction of fantasies. Despite the breakdown of dichotomies and the rise of reflexivity with postmodernism, though, tourism remains an objectifying endeavor, even among the self-reflective "post-tourists" (Oakes, 2006). Otherwise there would be no attraction to experiencing new peoples and places different from our homes and ourselves (MacCannell, 1999). This, thus, suggests why authenticity remains pervasive in the discourses of tourism, from tourists' accounts to tourism practitioners and marketers. If alienation is inevitable, as both psychoanalysts and existentialists argue, then the differentiation that facilitates tourism would suggest authenticity as an appropriate accompanying fantasy. Authenticity becomes a fantasy, a story that reconciles the sense of something missing in our lives (our lack) with material, societially-approved foci (*objet petit a*) for our ensuing desire. Tourism, constructed as the symbolic opposite of our everyday, is suggested to us by society as where the fulfillment of our desire (for authenticity) might be found. But because fantasy is constructed from desire, it can never be fulfilled, thus new *object petit a* necessarily continue to be constructed by individuals and marketers alike. Thus, the fantasy of authenticity is perpetuated in tourism. It, nevertheless, does vital work in terms of tourism motivation and experience, as it is the promise that while we remain alienated in our everyday lives, the authentic (place, culture, encounter, self) is out in the world, somewhere. Once we approach the authenticity we are seeking, having but a moment of satisfaction (or disappointment or frustration), desire rises up again pointing us further towards the horizon. Out there, somewhere is the *jouissance* (imagined enjoyment) we seek, excessive beyond our own enjoyment. Authenticity is a fantasy that makes sense of that hypothetical *jouissance*, and in so doing, tells us to keep going.

Conclusion

Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine alienation and authenticity leads to the conclusion that authenticity is a fantasy. Fantasy is the domain of pleasure, and as such it functions to avoid an encounter with The Real. Tourism in particular houses many of the fantasies that counter our alienation, as it is differentiated from the everyday (see MacCannell, 2011). And thus, like all fantasies, authenticity performs an important function. It is a fantasy that assures us that, despite the fact that life is characterized by fundamental alienation, there remain certain places where such alienation is absent that we as tourists can visit, learn, emulate,

and re-create ourselves. Each of these fantasies has corresponding tourism sites, circles of representation, and performances. In fact, these fantasies can build from one another creating feedbacks in which alienation drives travel decisions, which then result in greater alienation upon returning home. As recent research by Cohen and Gössling (2015) suggests, hypermobility can have disparate effects on individuals. While it may expand one's social networks and experiences of places, it can also weaken the sense of connectedness to home and community through time away, by putting spatial distance between loved ones so that practices of everydayness cannot be performed together (Cohen and Gössling, 2015). This can lead to greater feelings of alienation at "home" countered by fantasies of authenticity to be found in the "freedom" of the road, illustrating the dialectical relationship of authenticity/alienation. More broadly, conceptualizing authenticity as fantasy further explicates one of MacCannell's (1976; 1999) germinal arguments – the backstage is always beyond our grasp as tourists. It is beyond our grasp because it is a fantasy that has no basis in reality. Thus, expanding upon Oakes' (2006) contention that authenticity evaporates only we search for it, we find that utilizing a Lacanian perspective illuminates the nuances which underlie the desires for authenticity that drive its pursuit in tourism. By considering Lacan's ideas regarding subjectivization and alienation – separation, desire, *objet petit a*, *jouissance,* and fantasy – we have demonstrated that the work of authenticity, as a fantasy, is about more than motivation for experience, but it is related to deeper psychological demands that arise from alienation.

A central focus of our lives, according to Lacan, is the question "What does society want of me?" Lacan holds that, try as we might, we cannot stitch ourselves as subjects back together for the simple reason that our needs are framed within society and articulated as demands in its language, yet our desires always exceed our needs because they have origins outside of language and we are, as a consequence, unable to fully represent what we desire (Bailly, 2001; Lacan, 2002/2006; Žižek, 2007). This gap or "lack" between desire and the fulfillment of demand further increases our (always unfulfilled) desire. We are thus faced with either admitting that we are alienated or believing that there exist places on Earth that we can presumably visit in hopes we might experience authenticity (Cohen, 1979). To admit that we are irrevocably alienated is logically untenable, to believe there exists some place where we could experience what it might be like to be unalienated is logically sustainable fiction – it is convenient and mentally stabilizing fantasy. Sustaining this fantasy is much less difficult than coming to grips with existence as a split subject. Tourism is simply the means whereby some of the fantasies of authenticity are practiced.

In conclusion, while we agree with Belhassen and Caton (2006) that authenticity matters in tourism research – in all of its forms (objective, constructive, postmodern, and existential) – we would add that another reason each of these registers of authenticity remains significant, besides the fact that they are used by both tourists and tourism practitioners, is that they all, necessarily, relate to authenticity's dialectic – alienation. Alienation has been underexplored in tourism studies, with its cousin concept authenticity receiving much greater focus thus far. But turning our attention to alienation as well paints a bigger picture of tourism motivation and experience, and the influence of marketing on these processes. The desire to seek out the fantasy of authenticity does not exist without its dialectic, alienation. The fundamental alienation that accompanies our existence results in a lack that fuels a multiplicity of desires for wholeness. The fantasy of authentic experience on tour is one of these desires. But like all fantasies, the touristic

fantasy of authenticity can never be completely satisfied, driving the perpetual desire for more travel and more experiences in pursuit of various manifestations of authenticity. Thus, authenticity matters, but necessarily so does alienation.

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[1] Wang (1999) contains four subsections in his article and, while, he does suggest existential authenticity stems from postmodern theorizations, subsequent research has clarified that existential authenticity predates postmodernity (see especially Steiner & Reisinger 2006a; Brown 2013).

[2] We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

[3] The seminars were open to the public starting in 1953.

[4] Generally, "later Lacan" denotes Lacan's thought from Seminar XI (1964) onward (Homer, 2005).

[5] This is also referred to as "symbolic castration" or the "castration complex" (see Homer 2005; Bailly 2009).

[6] Alienation resides not only in our everyday but also in our touristic experiences. If alienation is constitutive of the social subject, as Lacan argues, then it resides in the subject and is not spatially or temporally situated outside of the subject.

[7] In this statement we recover MacCannell's (1976) original formulation but in Lacan's notation as $<>*a*, where $ is a subject of society and *a* is MacCannell's "back-stage". This may be read as saying that tourism is comprised of subject's relationships/fantasies concerning back-stages.