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## From exoticism to authenticity. Textbooks during French Colonization versus Global Tourism

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► **To cite this version:**

Claudine Moïse. From exoticism to authenticity. Textbooks during French Colonization versus Global Tourism. *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 2017, Imaginaires des peuples et des langues: reconstructions identitaires après la première guerre mondiale / Romanticizing Difference: Identities in Transformation after World War I, 2 (43), pp.116-133. hal-01973600

**HAL Id: hal-01973600**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01973600>**

Submitted on 8 Jan 2019

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*From exoticism to authenticity.*

*Textbooks during French Colonization versus Global Tourism.*

*Abstract. This article will explore the French fascination with « the primitive » and « the exotic » in the post-World War I years through a study of representations of the French colonies in textbooks intended for primary and secondary school children. It will underline continuities between these « exotic » representations and contemporary discourses centered on non-Western peoples « authenticity », particularly in the world of international tourism.*

After the First World War, exoticism asserted itself in all its variety, from colonial exhibitions to Negro dances, from schoolbooks to literature (with André Demaison, André Gide or Henri Michaux, for example). It revealed itself, through various scientific and artistic forms, in a fascination for otherness and for the primitive, which, by creating a distance, essentialised difference.

We will focus, first, on this notion of exoticism, in between the ideology of the Noble Savage and a form of Romantic heritage, reconsidering its foundations, its distinctive features and its geopolitical and hegemonic purposes. Our investigation will rely on a selection of history and geography textbooks in which the colonies are mentioned. Today, at a time when cultural diversity is taking over interculturality, the notion of exoticism is being superseded by that of authenticity. We will then turn our attention, looking at recent ethnographic data, to the new representation of the Other, particularly present in globalized tourism, in order to show that it remains the hidden face of a distanced and reified building of otherness with a view to retaining power and which is nonetheless set, to some extent, in the line of the Roaring Twenties exoticism.

**1. Theoretical preamble: identity and discourse analysis**

The socio-linguistic approach - which I claim to be part of - tries to understand processes at work in society and in particular the power relations, the social inequalities and how an individual comes to be constructed as dominated, through the discourses that are being circulated or the uses of language, especially interactions.

*From self to Other*

In view of this, I would like, first, to identify the relation of the self to the Other, hence therefore, the dynamics of identity-building within an interplay -back and forth- of otherness. The inter-war years did not, by a far cry, conceive of the individual as we, in our postmodern times, do. Nowadays, individualism prevails: expressing both egotism and withdrawal, inwardly-looking into a narcissistic EGO, as conceived in the 1980s (Lipovetsky 1983), but also meaning “individuation” (Giddens 1994) and construction of the self in the form of a distanced “I”, which requires of the postmodern individual the capacity to determine what to be-come, guided by his “ideal of himself” (Touraine and Khosrokhavar 2000:11). Through telling and narrating, as transfiguring the past (Ricoeur 1990, Cyrulnik 1999, Orofiamma

2008), individual stories are trying to make sense. At the same time, through action, beyond the reflective level, and decisions seen as anticipating what to be-come, lives are being built. We are both in a condition of permanency and evolution, having to accept ourselves in some state of existential distress since we are escaping ourselves, feeling that “I” is becoming an Other while remaining within himself. Such instability, which can be worrying at times and can spark crises, is yet necessary to subjectivation, that is a real awareness of the self.

But even more, intersubjectivity asserts today the recognition of the individual. “I” exists only because the Other acknowledges me. Such certainty was reached belatedly, by Hegel, long after Descartes. This is how, according to Ricœur (1900), the subject is *idem*, i.e. what he owns and shares with other beings, and *ipse*, i.e. what makes him unique. From a postmodern standpoint, the subject is born of his confrontation with otherness in its heterogeneity; the (re)cognition of oneself requires an indispensable recognition of the Other as different, a process which I view as fundamentally and ontologically necessary to give meaning to oneself in this *life smashed to smithereens in the context of postmodern experience* (Bauman 2003: 310-338). The individual and social subject is never given, it can only exist thanks to interaction. It is born out of an Other, which it represents to itself, voicing, hence revealing the self.

Yet, before the postmodern individual subject appeared, before there was the necessity to be oneself, by oneself and thanks to oneself, society and the state provided reassuring frames that shaped destinies. “Le programme institutionnel” (Dubet 2002) of the nation-states, which delineated identities and determined lives, has allowed for a long time to socialise individuals and to anchor them in a professional and family fabric, until the 1960s, which started questioning their ontological bedrock. Thus, the reification of the subject has made it possible for the encounter with the Other, that old story dating back to the time of the first conquests, from the *barbaros* to the Noble Savage, to strengthen the former’s certainties and domineering stance. Diversity, then, meant universalism and, by a mirror effect, ethnocentrism, nationalism and racism, or exoticism as extolled by some of the literary texts, now turned classics (Todorov 1989) from Rousseau to Chateaubriand, or the testimonies of the explorers (see, further to the milestone exhibition at Musée du Quai Branly in 2006-2007, Daubert (Ed.) 2006). What was at stake, at the time of the “voyageurs<sup>1</sup>” and missionaries, was to think of the Others, also representatives of a group, as non-belonging and antinomic to the White, civilised race.

If, nowadays, one can expect some degree of reciprocity and intersubjectivity, the reduction of the Other, though other forms than those of ethnocentrism or exoticism, can contribute, as we will see through authenticity, to enhance the individual’s confidence and beliefs. To the Other, he can also impose or prescribe identities which reify, categorise and reduce cultural complexity to a single same identification. Instead of relying on the seminal analysis offered by Barth (1969), a view by now widely accepted and to my mind impossible to ignore if one wants to grasp the complexity of the topic, according to which ethnic groups are neither pre-established, nor immutable nor frozen in time and which shows that ethnic barriers delineate identities that are shifting and in motion, carried by a dynamic move, there are still a number of discourses about the other and his identity/ties which keep expressing unconditional frozen stances.

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<sup>1</sup> The term was used to refer to the pioneers, who discovered Canada.

### *Identity in discourse*

It is by analysing discourses that I attempt to grasp such constructions of identities and such representations of the other, which are in fact self-telling. The critical sociolinguistics (Helle 2002), the sociolinguistics of identities (Forlot 2013) or the sociolinguistics of the subject and of social and ethnic inequalities I refer to, are to be related to ideologies at work in discourses, therefore to discourse analysis.

My baseline is Louis Althusser's way of conceiving ideology, a thought-provoking reflection in that it appears, in its Marxist foundations, to be heralding the uses Michel Foucault will make of it, anchoring it in discourses, as well as Edgar Morin, who will link it to the representations of reality and will develop the sociology of ideology (1991). What I like about Edgar Morin is that way he has of telling us the facts of the world, I like his way of considering ideas, the "things of the mind" organised in a "noology", taken as they are in their own life and evolution and at the same time "dependent on the human minds/brains which produce them as well as from the point of view of the cultural conditions in which they appeared" (Morin 1991: 109 et.s) One must retain from Edgar Morin and Michel Foucault that paramount idea that ideas can only be viewed in their historical context, so that one can eventually go beyond them.

What must then be done, through discourse analysis, if one considers that ideologies - or to put it otherwise, ideas that are being circulated - run through discourses, is to grasp their origins and their relation to time (and to previous discourses), hence therefore to look at their historicity. By stating that "ideology has no history" (1970: 37), Louis Althusser only tries to point out its positive meaning, as if to show it as eternal, that is to say "omnipresent, transhistorical, hence immutable in its form throughout the whole span of history". We must seize discourses in their discontinuity, but also in their historical recurrence, understand "the conditions of their existence, set their limits as fairly as possible, correlate them with other utterances" (Foucault 1969:42 et s.) As far as this article is concerned, we will attempt to see to what extent discourses on exoticism and authenticity are both steeped in their era and also how they can be seen as showing continuity and responding to each other. To distinguish them from judgement or opinion, I tend to say that ideologies form themselves into systems of ideas, are structured and spread within *discursive spaces* (Heller 2002), playing on power relations, that may include a range of discourses which can be complementary (*exoticism, the conquest, economic development...* for colonization) or antagonistic, linked by a principle of discontinuity (Foucault 1971: 54-55) (what are the various ideas and discourses on the Other, within the frame of *colonization?*). The notion of discursive space can be seen as akin to that of *discourse shaping*, initiated by Foucault (1969: 52-53) and taken up by Michel Pêcheux (Haroche, Henry et Pêcheux 1971). It thus appears that a given discourse contributed to shape previous elements and ideologies, the latter being backed by hegemonic discourses. Meaning that, according to Foucault, a discourse is "made up of the whole combination of effective utterances, dispersed and linked to events as they are, as well as bound by their own unique context" (1994, I/ 705). Or, in other words, there are "discourses which give birth to new speech acts, which take them up, transform or comment them, in short, discourses which, endlessly, beyond their formulation, are spoken, remain spoken, and are yet to be spoken" (Foucault 1971:24). The various discourses which define a discursive space are bound

together by relations of temporality (a new discourse is going to supersede, without erasing it completely, an older one, from exoticism to authenticity...), of legitimacy (which discourse becomes, at a given time, dominant, listened to and reproduced and with what consequences for whom?), of power (what political interests have the social actors in maintaining some discourses?)

In this way, every social actor takes part in the spreading of discourses, especially the hegemonic ones, in the social field, to purposes that are his/her own, whether they be social, economic, political, even personal. I will attempt here to understand what helps construct ideologies (meaning what I have just defined), built as they are into discourses, and what leads social actors to adhere to certain values. In short, what is always the matter is to understand what *interests*, material and symbolical, lead the subjects to do what they do, to produce the discourses they produce: what Louis Althusser calls the *practical-social function*. Faced with the analysis of data - here textbooks and tourism material - I will thus be in a position to see that the authors' motivations are influenced, in a complex way, by the historical representations and the social and economic factors.

Via the spreading of discourses, it is dialogism which is being questioned. Any discourse refers to previous discourses, either in an implicit way (through its themes for example), or in an explicit way thanks to linguistic marks which allow us to reconstruct this or these other discourse(s) (reported speech, quotations, borrowings or at times a more discreet polyphony) which will have to be pointed out. Stereotype built into a discourse plays a significant role. The scope of stereotypes has, over many years, been widely studied: what comes out of the many analyses that have been carried out (Putman 1975, Barthes 1965, 1975 and, more recently, Amossy 1991, Boyer (Ed) 2008) is a number of distinctive features. One can mention, about stereotypes, "their high level of recurrence, their semi-frozen form, their absence of any specific identifiable origin, their long-lasting anchoring in the consciousness of a fairly broad society, the near automatic nature of their uses (both when uttered and received), their abstract, general, all-purpose nature, the reversibility of their values (a stereotype changes status according to who looks at it) and the polemical aspect of their uses" (Dufay 2001). Within the frame of the spreading of discourses, the notion of stereotype, such as it accepted, needs to be expanded and redefined, being as it is constrained by events that respond mutually to each other and by the interests of the social actors. Thus, images on authenticity, deriving from globalization, cannot be apprehended through their frozen form, their high level of recurrence, their automatic use or their lasting anchoring in social consciousness. They also echo previous discourses on historicity, while they are at the same time constantly invented and reinvented. In this way, the stereotypes on authenticity are constructed through many layers of readings and of ideas that are circulating and through the interactions of social actors whose interests take part in the discourse building.

## **2. From exoticism to authenticity**

### ***Exoticism and viewing the Other***

Within the frame of an intercultural reflection (Abdallah Pretcelle 1996, 2003, Camilleri 1985, 1991, Camilleri et Emerique 1989, Dervin et Liddicoat (Eds) 2013), hence of a "relational and hermeneutic anthropology" (Abdallah Pretcelle 2003: 25), based on "every effort to build links between representatives of different cultures" (Camilleri 1993: 44), the notions of ethnocentrism and exoticism are central (Ladmiral et Lipiansky 1989). In the

relation to the Other, or what could be called “the intercultural encounter”, exoticism is the mirror of ethnocentrism, which can both, beyond any process of identity building, and from radical viewpoints, also generate ideas of exclusion, which are hence racist. “Ideally, exoticism is a relativism, like nationalism, but in a symmetrically opposed way: in both cases, what is valued (...) is a country or a culture defined exclusively through their relation to the observer” (Todorov 1989: 355).

Exoticism always refers to an idealised representation of the foreign Other, conceived as being better than the same, in a reified, often reductive worldview which is an “ode to the lack of knowledge” (Ibidem: 298). It thus appears that it is less a matter of “enhancing the Other’s worth than of criticizing oneself, and less the description of the real than the expression of an ideal. Nobody is intrinsically Other: one is Other only because one is not me; by terming him/her Other, basically, I have said nothing, yet; even worse, I know nothing of him/her and I do not want to know” (Ibidem: 297). It is in this way that exoticism has endured, through Western creation and imagination, written into the figure of the “Noble Savage” and the romantic travel writings, from Chateaubriand to Ségalen via Loti, at a time when the fascination with foreignness arose from an ambiguity, that of a defeated black body which also revealed a hidden, unacknowledged desire. From rejection to attraction, from exoticism to mystery, the Other’s body remained the expression of a mixture of fears, desires and repulsions.

### **Authenticity and viewing also oneself**

I will attempt in this article to grasp the notion of authenticity as defined through tourism, which has become a darling research field for geographers and sociologists (Rieucou and Lageiste (Eds) 2006), even for Anglo-Saxon sociolinguists (Jaworski, A. and Pritchard 2005) in so far as it tackles the changes in society and identity and the economic mobilities and practices. This is why the current tourist event, whether it be a tour, a “fair”, “solidarity”, “sustainable” or “trash” trip, still raises the question of what travelling shows of a group, in the meeting of Otherness. But, whatever the travel mode, whatever the type of traveller one may fancy to be, from, among other possibilities, the profiteer to the exile, including precisely the “exote” (Todorov 1989: 376-386), the meeting seeks to be “genuine”, bathed in an unmistakable subjectivity of what is supposedly “authentic”.

Authenticity, as I view it, does not rely only on events or facts that are consistent with a historical truth that can be duly assessed, on the contrary it is “emerging” (Cohen 1988: 379), that is to say it is inventing itself in order to create a tradition and a social meaning to which the doers and the consumers, and in other circumstances, tourists, adhere. Contrary to exoticism, it is not only the Other which gives it birth through his/her eye, it is also made visible by the very group which seeks the Other’s eye (Le Menestrel 1999). It is thus negotiable, co-built, in a sort of tacit complicity, backed by a number of shared beliefs, of emotion and connivance (Brown 1999) between the purchasers (or tourists) and the sellers (the visited groups). The staging of “authentic” products then relies on the making of high-value images, which help create a link of memory and history, a way to bring the past to life through discourses, objects and practices. Elements that are chosen, mythologized, emblemized to the detriment of others, cast aside, which shape both representations and identities. Objects that are stamped with the label “authentic” then find themselves in the midst of an essential relation of meaning between past and present, an untouched islet of

historical consistency and of simplicity, conjured up to invent tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992). “Authentic” facts recreate a group identity through the reappraisal and reclaiming of a culture which, without being devalued by its cash value, will be assessed at the price level of its sale on the market, i.e. through its commodification (Faure 2003). Therefore, by valuing authenticity, beyond promoting the recognition of a group, one gives economic and market added value. Thus globalization, an era devoted to economy and profit, through the uses it makes of a commodified authenticity, redefines identity. The authenticity of history, of culture, even of language, relies on issues of marketing, of development and of markets to take. In a way, globalized economy gives a chance to a new development of cultural and linguistic minorities, which bet on a new artistic and touristic culture to make themselves visible in their “authentic” specificity (Moïse & Roy, 2010).

What now remains to do is to study how, through geography textbooks of the 1930s and current tourism literature (guidebooks and brochures), exoticism and authenticity, in the way they have of building the Other and oneself, partake in hegemonic discourses that are close to each other, sharing links of historicity, in which the interests of the actors, the resources, both material and symbolical, and the stereotypes respond to one another.

### **3. From geography textbooks in the thirties in France...**

#### ***The historical and ideological context***

The geography schoolbook used for Primary School Leaving Certificate (certificat d'études) from which I have drawn my reflections for this article (analysing pages 64 to 68) was published in 1933 by Hatier. The textbook was released in a complex hectic period, the inter-war years, marked by the Depression, following the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash, and by the rise of fascist regimes as well as by technological improvements and colonial expansion. Further to the conquest of Algeria in 1830, the Third Republic (1870-1940) successfully spread the “French Empire” from Africa to Asia, an expansion widely supported by the vast majority of the French nation. From 1870 to 1940, a “colonial culture” (Blanchard & Lemaire 2004) asserts itself through the implementation of a coherent political doctrine and of cultural programmes, upheld by a scientific approach to naturalistic anthropology revolving round the race theory (Blankaert 2001). Human zoos, as early as 1877 (Bancel, Blanchard, Boetsch & Deroo 2004) together with ethnic shows will help serve the cause. The 1931 Colonial Exhibition, a large-scale celebration of the French Empire, set in Bois de Vincennes under the aegis of Maréchal Lyautey, a great figure of colonial wars and of the French Protectorate in Marocco, embodies the national spirit of conquest and turns out to be a resounding success, beyond imagination, attracting 33 million visitors in six months. The exposition was made up of bungalows akin to “indigenous” architectural styles and exhibited men and women’s daily lives, in what came to be called human zoos.

Posters, travel literature, geographical societies, public addresses and schoolbooks, i.e. any form of “entertextualisation” (turning into text) will be used, especially after 1870 and the defeat of France against Prussia, to help build an attachment to the homeland bound by a strong feeling of national unity. The ideological discourse on the greatness of France and her Empire thus endeavours to justify, in the form of a popular culture, the validity of colonization, through all available means (Lemaire 2003: 201). The school syllabuses, in particular those linked to geography, history and literature, before giving access to learning and knowledge, provided, through unambiguous official instructions (Manceron 2003: 153) a

social worldview in keeping with the reproduction of national ideologies and contributing to the making of proud patriotic citizens.

### *The discursive spaces of the Other<sup>2</sup>*

The discursive space through which textbooks construct the Other comes in the form of a range of discourses. That of exoticism - on which I will focus - is based on other ones which fuel it, like for example the discourse on economic resources, the one on the benefits of colonization or on greatness or on taking possession.

When *the wealth of economic resources* is called upon, it is with a view to objectifying, thus erasing the Other. The geographical landscape is described in terms of its profitability and productivity and in order to help the settlers. The terrain and climate are mentioned for their agricultural potential in relation with rainfall (“*the neighbouring area of Sahara is only poorly rain-fed*” or “*the southern area gets very heavy rains*”), their production, of “*vegetables*”, of “*olive oil*”, of “*wine*” or “*wheat*” and their range of food – groundnuts, sugar, cocoa, tea, coffee, rice, vanilla, rum, pepper - or their potential industrial output – coconut, cotton, rubber, timber. Waterways are viewed as instrumental or not to trading, “*they are non-navigable torrents, usable for irrigation purposes*”, while Djibouti has a “*very big harbour (...) where many vessels make a call*” or Haiphong for Tonkin, or Indochina which is “*very well located on the route to China and Japan that European ships take, both ways*”. Similarly, the population is interesting for its exploitable labour force, “*the farming Kabyls or Berbers*”, “*Morocco, with its five or six million inhabitants, is a country of the brightest future and is already highly prosperous*” and Western Africa, which “*provides (...) good farmers*”. As to the natural resources, they seem to have never been exploited, “*below Moroccan soil, lie mineral reserves as yet insufficiently exploited*” and several colonies like Cameroun and Equatorial Africa, Madagascar or Indochina, are dubbed “*countries of the future*”. The discourse comes from a society which entered market economy with the Industrial Revolution and whose “*geographical*” presentation portrays natural resources from a utilitarian and economic viewpoint. What matters is “*to convince public opinion that colonised territories can secure the best possible conditions of exploitation, thanks to their limitless resources, infrastructures and labour force, therefore hold promises of increase in wealth. It is proven that the official discourse only considers the colonies as a reservoir of goods, to be used only by and to the exclusive economic profit of the Nation. Only through the ethnocentric lens is the geography of the colonies a matter of interest*” (Boddaert 2013).

*The boons of colonization* revolve round the superiority of the “*White race*”. In Madagascar, “*the Hovas, of the Yellow race, (are) already civilised*”, which implies that the Negroes are lazy, opportunistic and have no sense of the value of things, not to say of sheer values, etc. They also revolve round a civilising mission of the French state, in charge of developing these countries by building railways and a road network, by turning the rivers into navigable waterways or by “*drilling close to a thousand artesian wells*” in the Sahara desert, a technical (“*several hundred meters deep*”) and humanitarian prowess, since France supplies water to the locals. Lastly, colonization takes on the role of protector of the oppressed peoples, since in

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<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank here all the second year distance education students in the Professional Master’s degree which whom I have been working, from 2011 to 2014, on the Christine Develotte’s courses, on inter-war years textbooks and on the issues I am tackling in this article. The ideas that follow are a synthesis of our exchanges and of their work.



Africa, the most savage continent of all, it has rescued whole peoples from “*the tyranny of local petty kings*”, from “*slave raiding*” and from a “*cruel (...) despot*” who reigned over that “*land of human sacrifices*”. Such benefits, seen from the angle of White civilising superiority, are conveyed through the descriptive texts of the schoolbooks, lesson after lesson, and expanded as well through “lectures” (narratives) and the iconography, photographs and maps, which serve as argumentative evidence.

The vast tracts of land that France now owns, described as being extensions of mainland France and formalised by the use of coloured world maps and of possessives, testify to the greatness of France and her Empire. Algeria and Tunisia are “*like extensions of our country*”, “*Algeria is a colony in which we settled a hundred years ago*”, “*Bizerte will soon be our Brest or our African Toulon*”, Morocco is the country where “France has established her protectorate”.

### ***The discursive space of exoticism***

Far from showing the richness of the natives’ lives, from revealing their specific features through their traditions, their history, their religion, what the pages in the textbooks enhance is their lack of consistency, yet another way of strengthening the rich superiority of the civilizing Western world. Elements of idealization of the Other, in fact, only contribute to voice what Western man and woman would (yet) like to be, to criticize what he/she is, though this is done in a way that is not devoid of kindness, referring to a lost, fantasized ideal. The discourse of exoticism is imbued with the nostalgia of the beginnings, “the superb ruins that Roman domination left there”, or with the picturesque or the odd “The location of this city is truly amazing, one of the most curious in the world”, or with the state of Nature “Negro deckhands lead a most natural life, without in the least worrying about the caimans that inhabit the Senegal river” (...) They spend long hours cavorting in the water. (...) They half enjoy towing a barge for hours on end”, or with the dreams of a lost Paradise “Among the sandy stony spaces of Sahara scorched by a relentless sun, one comes across the not too frequent oases, such heavens of freshness and greenness”. Emphasizing markers are added to enhance such idealisations “an old, highly picturesque town”, “one of the most beautiful spots in the world”, “Saigon, one of the loveliest cities in the Far East”.

In each and every case, the objectives of such discourses, i.e. the implicit policies underlying the texts, are met. Ideological discourses aim at enhancing, on the part of the French, a sense of self-worth. Such enhancement relies on the indispensable, economic, civilizational, moral role France ascribes herself. The discourse may seem to argue in favour of the colonized Other, who needs educating in order to bestow better living conditions on him, above all it serves the imagined grandeur of the nation, under the form of attraction/ rejection, that is to say of reification/ denial of that Other. Textbooks, material resources used in schools on a large scale throughout the country have made possible the creation and spreading of stereotypes on colonised peoples, hence to give shape to a racist ideology which has contributed to some degree of national cohesion for nearly a century. Such reifying discourse is very efficient in so far as it allows the creation of oversimplifying and binary categories, swaying between oneself and the Other.

## **4. ... to Canadian touristic magazines nowadays**

It may seem odd to compare discourses that are so widely distant in space and time. Having worked on both types of data, it has struck me how techniques could be similar, even if exoticism is a reified discourse centred on the Other in order to value oneself while authenticity is also a reified discourse, but centred mostly on oneself... taken as an Other.

### ***The production context***

Taking advantage of a globalized economy, in between the global and the local, French-speaking communities in Canada have been trying, for some 25 years, to develop the tourism sector. Thus have grown several forms of activities: eco-tourism centred on nature, advertising the snow, the peacefulness, the mountains and the open spaces, adventure tourism oriented toward hunting, fishing, snowmobiles and treks in the Far North, as well as a cultural and heritage tourism, funded by various levels of government (Moïse, McLaughlin, White 2006). Heritage tourism, which is partly my topic here, helps developing the economy of francophone minorities in Canada and enables to reassert some identity values. It also helps attract tourists who expect to experience the life of “genuine French Canadians”. Through the use of natural, symbolical, cultural and linguistic resources, French historical roots are consolidated, also opening up onto an attractive global scope. In between authenticity and commodification, the monuments, objects and languages benefit tourism activity and assertion of identity in a globalized world. This form of tourism is based on various aspects of the Canadian francophone communities’ history and minorisation: British colonization then conquest, the opening up of the West and the first missionaries, exchanges with the natives, persecutions and struggling against the British, early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialisation, especially in Ontario, strong political mobilisation in the 1960s.

Direction Ontario, an agency based in Ontario, publishes a francophone guidebook for Ontario, translated into English since 2009, and offers francophone “authentic” products. This guidebook offers discursive recollections of the founding myth of Ontario. A few years ago, it also edited a number of newspapers, aimed at tourists, which claimed to be compilations of period newspapers but were in fact pieced together.

### ***The discursive spaces of the self***

The discursive space of self-construction, in the Direction Ontario touristic guidebook and made up newspapers, runs through various discourses. The one I will focus on, the discourse of authenticity, relies on others which fuel it, like that of the founding myth and of the French language.

*The founding myth* takes shape along the routes borrowed by the touristic guidebook, in “*the footsteps of the explorers*”, which follow the great discoverers of North America, in particular in Ontario, and thus recreate a French-speaking historical memory, made up of unifying anchoring recollections that may have been forgotten. “*The area shows the bravery and determination of explorers such as Etienne Brûlé, Samuel de Champlain, Pierre de la Vérendrye and his sons, as well as travellers who crossed the rapids on board imposing yet frail bark canoes, laden with furs.*” (Guide touristique 2013:124). Relying on the conquest and rooting in this founding myth, which has contributed to making and uniting French-speaking Ontario, enable to invigorate a common origin, to be glorified and embellished. In the 1960s, this founding myth did not hold ground, it seems, because it had been, for one thing, defeated by the submission and the humiliations inflicted by the British, and because, for another, the

French Ontarians see more their origins in early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration from Quebec. Through tourism, these old roots resurface, made up of greatness, conquest, which tend to erase the destructions, famines and defeats, forgetting that this Ontarian land was no more than a transit place, for French people who did not stay (Moïse 2004). What matters then is not only to tell oneself to the others but to tell oneself to oneself, thus weaving an identity link for the community.

The legitimacy of the French Canadian group, therefore of francophone minorities, thus relies on a form of cultural anteriority and on *the French language*, which stages itself through high-value narratives, touristic routes, museums or newspapers, in order to reproduce a community ideology and increase its original, unique touristic appeal. Not only do the introductory pages of the 2013 issue of the guidebook (pages 2 and 3) pick up on the narrative telling the creation of French Ontario ("*French Ontario is 400 years old!*"), with the photo of a child holding the French Ontario flag to convey historical continuity ("*400 years ago, at the request of Samuel de Champlain, Etienne Brûlé left the St. Lawrence Valley to go and discover les Pays-d'en-Haut. This is how the first European set foot on what was to become Ontario*"), they also lay the stress on the French language. Since "*today Ontario Francophony is still bursting with life*", the guidebook explains, on page 3, "*in the address lists on which regional sections end, the acronym FR guarantees services in French, in one form or another.*" Similarly, the newspapers that were pieced together and given over to tourists a few years ago, in 2006 in particular, were exclusively written in French. They took part in the building of a heritage, resorting to an artefact, with sheer material value, i.e. the newspaper itself, and also endowed with discursive meaning, the reference to significant events.

The resources, both material and symbolical, used in the guidebook, aim at providing tourists with experiences that are built up by discourses and entertextualised, aiming at specific purposes. Such experiences and discourses are based, whether it be genealogical research one may undertake in some museums, former trading outposts, canoe or cycling trips in the footsteps of travellers, on authenticity, both narrative and material. This form of authenticity is worked out from French Canadians' traditional historical images, to which they give extra significance in order to commodify them more easily and use them, with some success, for touristic promotion.

### ***The discourse of authenticity***

The 2013 guidebook (on page 128) points out "*the true Native American cultural experience one can go through in various places, up North*". As to the newspapers, pieced together for tourists, they attempted to recreate a French Ontarian history which could serve the historical authenticity of the community, both as a link with the First Nations and within French lineage.

The authors of the made up newspapers (see Moïse & Roy 2010) have attempted to show periodicals as they could have circulated at the said time. Each page therefore covers a period - 1600/1700, 1700/1895, 1896/1903, 1904/1910, 1911/1933, 1934 to today - and relates events considered significant. They are staged according to their unfurling in time, against the background of what must be remembered as historically meaningful, of milestones and landmarks. The historical choice is unambiguous: what is praised is the conquest, what is hushed is hardships and misery, not a word on the French Ontarian fightings. The staging is a well-thought out gathering of texts, photographs and documents within periodicals that attempt to report on the past. The readers are accessories to this anachronistic object,

accepting as they do photos referring to events concerning the “Indians” between 1600 and 1700 and accepting to take themselves centuries back: “*Last week, the Indians of the New Post area, one of the Hudson’s Bay Company trading outposts, stopped for the night at the foot of the New Post waterfall. They made the most of the day swimming in the river and catching the biggest fish of the 1895 summer*”; here the authenticity of the past conjures up exotic images of the Noble savage and of the state of Nature. The Northern expanse is largely evoked through the names successively given to one of these periodicals, *La Gazette du North* (The Northern Gazette), changed into *La Gazette du Nouvel Ontario* (New Ontario Gazette) from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896, hinting at a Francophone North. A North which is home to the natives, the Indians, as mentioned in the supposedly period texts. The Indians, being close to nature, are reflections of ruralness, hence of the purity somehow linked with nation-building, which will be one of the founding stones of the French Canadian people. The first text in *La gazette du Nord* quotes the speech delivered in 1660 by a representative of the Cree: “*Our land is like a garden, because many things grow here and the Indians are among the things that grow.*” The natives have always lived in harmony with the French Canadians, as stated by the comment of a photograph showing a canoe: “*The Indians have often helped the French (sic) to move along the rivers of the Bay. Here one can see an Indian family building a bark canoe. Bark canoes and snowshoes, made by Indian men and women, powerfully contributed to ease the lives of Europeans on the new continent*”. It thus seems that the natives are built as a reflection of the French Canadian people, in harmony with nature, conquering, struggling for their rights, exotic, yet inclusive figures.

Authenticity also requires the building of the group history, magnified into a succession of “events”, among which the reference to the *coureur des bois*, the trapper and the fur trade is paramount. Once more, the conquest seems to have been achieved by the Canadians, who were not yet French Canadians. The two periodicals insist on the great figures of the time, Samuel de Champlain, Médart Chouart des Groseillers and Pierre Esprit Radisson, all three explorers and discoverers. The two pages of one of the newspapers which deal with these topics have been entitled *L’explorateur* and *Le coureur des bois*. Both papers describe at length how Pierre de Troyes captured the outpost at Moose Factory, and the French Canadian superiority over Hudson’s Bay, a strategic point for fur trading. “*It only took two hours to the French to take the fort. (...) After our victory at Moose Factory, we captured Rupert (Fort Charles), then we besieged Quinchicouane (Fort Albany) before the English surrendered. (...) After decimating English trade on the Bay, de Troyes left, appointing d’Iberville governor of the three outposts, leaving 40 Canadians on the spot.*” The paper points out how strongly the French mark is still visible through place names: “*On coming back to Moose Factory, de Troyes changed its name into Fort Saint-Louis, Rupert took the name of Saint-Jacques, while Albany would, from then on, be called Sainte-Anne.*”, in order to convey a stronger sense of reality, hence of factual truth and authenticity. Lastly, the final mythologizing element is colonisation, already referred to under the titles *The Missionary* and *The Colonizer*, in praise of both religious ideology and of the use of land and raw materials. Beyond submission, misery and the harshness of life, what is glorified is the marks left by the French Canadians. Then follow the descriptions of “*Abbot de Bellefeuille’s Missions at Lake Témiscamingue*”, how the Oblates of Mary Immaculate settled at Saint-Claude Mission, and the French Canadian parishes. “*In a very short time, French Canadians who had come over to colonize the area organized themselves into a French-speaking catholic parish.*” Further down “*colonizing priests came over to us, in Quebec, full of praise for New Ontario farming and*

*resources*”, reported a member of the Toussignant family.” Moreover, besides supporting religious colonization, it appears that newspapers were also advertising industrial development, in the wake of the coming of the railway and of the opening of mines and forestries. *“The Northbound Transcontinental, going to Ontario and the West, which goes through Quebec, has already created many jobs.”*

The reader also willingly agrees to take part in media stir, when the gold rush to the North, *“A true Klondike at Cobalt!”* or the Great Haleybury Fire of 1922, *“The fire burns everything down”* are evoked. These two events, related at some length in the two papers are evoked with much dramatic effect. *“Then, in no time, less than necessary to turn the ore into silver bullions, the Toronto Bank, the Union Bank, the Ottawa Bank and the Bank of Canada opened offices here to serve the only town where it can be said that cash and silver flows in!”* Such staging of the town of Cobalt is all the more efficient as a last article, dated 2002, declares that *“a panel of seasoned historians has elected Cobalt as “the most historic” town in Ontario.”* As to the Haleybury Fire, the journal shows an interest in stories that are being circulated: *“Stories are many. Some say that Monsieur Gervais Sutherland allegedly sacrificed himself to save two children he did not know. A woman is said to have given birth by the lake where many people had taken refuge to avoid the flames. Others, the story goes, took shelter in a well.”* In this way, somehow, the reader can only be made to share in this unifying embellished story, emblematic of a community in search of an authentic history. The papers seem to repeat the great unifying myths which mark out French Canadian history, of which tourist know nothing. What they focus on is highlighting the French fact in Northern Ontario, predating the political community movements of the 1970s. From a very conservative viewpoint, they repeat a French Canadian discourse in which contacts with the British are virtually non-existent. The periodicals try to root the building of French values in a magnified, glorified origin, which is based upon the Northern mythologized spaces, the *coureur des bois* and colonization. Precious little is said about contemporary times and their political and linguistic struggles, nothing on the effects of globalization.

This discourse on authenticity is in fact a discourse of self-reliance and of self-legitimation of the French francophone community, similar to the insular and self-assertive mentality shared by the 19<sup>th</sup> century French Canadians, a discourse which is to a wide extent cut off from realities, whether historical or current. These papers seem to provide the opportunity to sell myths, even touristic sites, to be exploited in order to write deeply the group identity into them. Historic heritage-building is propped up here by an authentic “us” deriving from a homogeneous past and seems to forget the possible meltings, movements and mutations of today. In the course of our decoding, it appears that, in our globalized world, this discourse, which banks on authenticity as if to supply extra history, cannot be called into question. As I was saying at the beginning of this article, authenticity creates events which, being staged and given high significance, allow to bind the group together and to weave a common history.

In all cases, the objectives of those behind the discourses, namely the implicit policies that underpin the texts, are achieved. Ideological discourses now aim at self-authenticity and at the authenticity of one’s origins, while reifying it particularly through the description of “Indian” customs or “Native American experience”, hence self-valuing at the same time.

## **Conclusion: from exoticism to authenticity toward self-construction**

It is clear that of the two discursive spaces of self-construction, the one on colonial exoticism is the discourse of authenticity used by Francophone Canadian current minorities and that both hinge on other circulating discourses (economic wealth, the benefits of civilisation, the greatness of Empire versus the founding myths, the French language), both being part of continuing process. They are similar on this and on the fact that they serve the same political interests of the actors, namely self-valuing for cultural but also economic purposes, that they both rely on processes of identity reification and that they make use of the written material resources at hand on a large scale (thanks to the school system, tourism and the Internet).

One could argue that they are not bonded by historicity and that they are not rooted in the same patterns of domination – the colonizer’s self-discursive space upholds a hegemony while the self-discursive space of Francophone minorities work for a visibility that might well be lost otherwise. This is true but this is perhaps the reason why authenticity cannot be “exotic” on oneself in so far as it is invented by the group. Exoticism is therefore a reified way to look at the Other, aiming at an indirect heightening of one’s value, by a mirror effect. Authenticity is more complex in that it looks at one self, reifying oneself and taking oneself as an Other. This self taken as an Other is given substance by resorting to figures borrowed from the past or tradition, or even from alien figures which may have constituted the self and can then become “exotic”. As an example, the French Ontarians rely on their own history (or a history which they piece together) but they also, as a ripple effect, build up the figure of the Native American, which is both an insider and an outsider in their group of belonging, through the use of the chosen exotic images.

In that sense, one may wonder is such discursive spaces of self-construction in relation with the Other, by the polyphony of themes and stereotypes, especially revolving round nature and innocence, do not respond to each other within a frame of Western imagination figments that seek to show, one way or other, through links of discursive filiation, their own cultural worth. Anchored in different times, they nonetheless still echo one another<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Translated by Francine Tolron, Professor (Emeritus) at Avignon University.

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