Chapter 7

Power, Knowledge and Tourguiding: The Construction of Irish Identity on Board County Wicklow Tour Buses

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Tourism industries construct and communicate images of the cultural, ethnic and national identities of host populations, images which are reproduced in brochures, guidebooks and in the language of tour guides. Such representations are attempts at attracting foreign visitors to holiday destinations by portraying these as exotic, mysterious or in other ways different from the every-day lives of potential travellers. In doing this, however, tourism imagery may also create a sense of 'otherness', of difference between the intended audience, the tourists and the people and culture of the destination country (see, for example, O'Barr, 1994). Irish tourism imagery can be seen as a discourse on Ireland and Irish identity, which it constructs by selectively representing certain features of Irish culture, while dismissing others. Whereas media researchers have long acknowledged the need to examine audience readings of messages found in mass media, no attention has so far been paid to how Irishness is understood by foreign visitors during their holiday in the country. This chapter seeks to address the lack of attention to tourist interpretations by offering a preliminary exploration of how Irish identity is constructed on one-day tours to Glendalough in County Wicklow, not only by the tour guides, but also by the tourists themselves.¹

The Tourist(ic) Gaze

Urry has illustrated how the Foucauldian notion of a constructive, powerful gaze can be applied to the tourist experience. He argues that such a tourist gaze stems from expectations of (visual) pleasure and experiences out of the ordinary, which are constructed and 'endlessly reproduced' through various mass media and objectified in the tourism imagery (Urry,

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1990: 3). Yet Cheong and Miller (2000) feel that Urry attributes too much of the construction of the gaze to the tourists themselves. In an elaboration of Urry's work they argue instead that a *touristic gaze* is constructed and controlled by powerful professionals in the tourism industry such as brokers, guides, hotel employees and writers of guide-books. These, according to Cheong and Miller, are the agents of power, who are able to select which aspects of the holiday destination are to be submitted to the gaze. Both these perspectives see the gaze as created by imagery, by touristic representations. In other words, the gaze is sustained by touristic discourses.

The Touristic Discourse

International tourism creates a world to be gazed upon by transporting people thousands of miles to gaze upon it, and it constructs this world by interpreting and explaining it to us. The information given by guides and guidebooks can be seen as part of a wider touristic discourse, in Hall's (1997a: 44) words a 'group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing knowledge about – a particular topic', which is shaped by a particular historical context. Foucault (1972: 6) suggests that the discipline of history has been characterised by an attempt to reveal an underlying continuity between our past and our present. Like history, the touristic discourse seeks to create an uncomplicated past (and present) to be gazed upon, and it presents consistencies in its subject matter, the destination, rather than contradictions. And like historical discourses, the touristic discourse lends speech to artefacts, which 'in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say' (Foucault, 1972: 7). Thus, the touristic discourse gives speech to the destination by translating it to foreign travellers, enables the place to say more than what it says 'in silence' that is, uninterpreted. A foreign country, experienced in a 'raw' state, as a jumble of sounds, sights, smells and tastes, cannot be 'understood' that is, given coherence and narrative, without some form of mediating, of interpretation by tourist guides or guidebooks.

Power, Knowledge and Tourism

This raises the question of the relationship between knowledge and power in tourism. Here, again, we may draw upon the work of Cheong and Miller (2000). They argue that although tourists are most often potential targets of the power of agents and guides, in Foucauldian terms, power is everywhere in tourism. The authors thereby highlight the omnipresence of power in tourist relations. Foucault does not see power in static terms, it is not something that is acquired and held. On the contrary, power is 'pro-

duced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one to another' (Foucault, 1980: 93). We must not think of power as running in a straight line from oppressors to oppressed. Instead, we must start by considering the 'local centres' of power, the micro relations of the discourse in question. We must consider how these relations make particular statements possible and, in turn, how the discourses support the power relations. Foucault (1980: 98) suggests that, for instance, the specific relationship between confessor and priest led to a certain type of discourse on sexuality, which again reinforced the relations between these agents. With regard to the touristic discourse, the most 'local centres' of power might be the relations between tourist and tour guide. The guide possesses professional expertise, which gives him or her the power to construct what he or she is interpreting. The tourists are strangers to the place they visit, whereas the guide is a local, one who revisits it and re-interprets its meaning again and again. In addition, as the tourists are out of their own culture (Crick, 1989), they are dependent upon the explanations of the guide. So, if they are to 'understand' the destination, they must accept the guide's expertise. Implicit in the touristic discourse lies the claim that the local culture, history or landscape can only be 'understood' from the point of view of the guide. The locals are constructed as 'other', to be gazed upon. Therefore, for a tourist, it is the guide, the person who 'speaks one's own language' – culturally as well as linguistically – that one must turn to in order to comprehend them. Thus it appears to be the tour guide who has the power to speak, not the tourists and not the locals.

Encoding and Decoding Touristic Messages

If tour guides construct 'Ireland' through discursive practises, the tourists on the Glendalough bus can be seen as their audiences. How they interpret what they are presented with – how they 'read' Irish identity – may therefore be similar to the ways in which other audiences have been found to interpret the messages of the mass media. In order to examine whether the tour guide holds any measure of power to influence tourists' interpretations, Hall's (1980) model of encoding and decoding may prove useful. This model has successfully been applied to other discourses on cultural identity, such as interpretations made by museum visitors (Dicks, 2000; Fyfe & Ross, 1996). According to Hall (1980), meaning is produced at both the production and consumption stages of communication, at the moment of encoding and that of decoding, as well as in the text itself. Hall argues that meanings are imposed on audiences in the form of a dominant or preferred meaning, yet cultural texts are polysemic, and audiences actively decode such texts, thus the resulting reading cannot be guaran-

teed. To understand how meaning is constructed at different moments within such a 'circuit of communication' (Hall, 1980) of tourism, the micro power relations on the Glendalough tour, one must become a passenger on the bus. On this tour the bus driver takes on the role of guide and engages in constant narration. This 'text' can be seen as containing encoded messages. The guiding, therefore, is the first moment to be examined. The following discussion is based on findings collected through participant observation and interviews during and immediately after four one-day tours to Glendalough. The four guides are referred to as guides A to D. The passengers on all tours were of European or North American nationality, the majority were female, and apart from four Austrian students in their early twenties, all were aged between 38 and 64. Full details are given below for each respondent quoted. In addition to the observations, a total of eight tourists and two tour guides were interviewed at length.

Directing the Gaze

As the bus carries us through Wicklow towards Glendalough, the driver – who is also our guide – provides explanations and information, which shape our perception of the world outside. Ireland is presented to us, all we have to do is remain in our seats, lean back and watch as it unfolds outside the windows, as if in a cinema. Each scene in this 'film' is brought to our attention as we approach it. The guide will inform us that, for example, 'on the left you see ...', and, as if he² had physically pulled strings attached to our heads, we all move and turn to the left so as not to miss this aspect of Ireland. We 'zoom in' on what he has mentioned, focus our attention on it. At this specific point of the tour, then, the windows on the left-hand side of the bus make up the screen in this Cinema of Ireland. Whatever might be on the right-hand side ceases to exist as it is not part of this particular scene. An actual film shown in the visitor centre at Glendalough is a continuation of the form of presentation on the bus rather than a break with it. Our understanding of what Ireland is, therefore, includes only carefully selected tourist markers towards which our gaze is directed by the guide's narration. It is a fractured text we are presented with, consisting of many discursive elements, including the guiding, the landscape, the monastic ruins at Glendalough, items for sale in tourist shops, the interiors of a pub in which we have lunch, as well as tapes of traditional music played on board the bus. Each object or each word spoken can be understood as a sign with a signified meaning, a message for the tourists to decode. All of these signs can be read for ideological messages regarding Irish identity. The messages sometimes seem to contradict each other and visitors are confronted with multiple 'Irelands' throughout the tour. There are, however,

certain themes, certain dominant meanings, of Ireland and Irishness that can be identified on all the tour buses I joined.

Themes

First of all, Ireland is presented as a place of unspoilt natural beauty. The selected route follows the South Dublin coast, then continues through the Wicklow mountains and is chosen to encompass the most beautiful parts of the area. In addition, the guide's narrative focuses our attention on particularly scenic aspects of the Ireland we pass through and what is pointed out to us includes trees, lakes, hills and valleys. The guide facilitates us to read what we see as picturesque – he points out the 'neat little villages', the 'nice scenery and lovely greens' – and informs us that when we get to Glendalough we will be able to 'feel the stillness, no matter how busy it is' (guide B). Throughout most of the tour, Ireland also remains old-fashioned and traditional. The focus in much of the guiding is on historical elements rather than on the Ireland of the present, the items selected for us to admire are medieval castles, churches and towers. In Glendalough we are transported back in time as we walk through the old gateway to the monastic city. The narrative of the guide allows us to imagine life in the tenth century but we also get a sensory experience thereof by walking through the place, in the footsteps of medieval monks, and by entering the darkness of the church called 'St Kevin's Kitchen' and breathing in the cold, damp air inside. In the guide's narrative, a hollow in a stone wall becomes a holy water fountain and he encourages us to touch it, to feel the marks left by centuries of fingernails. Thus, at Glendalough, we not only gaze at Ireland's past. We smell, taste and touch medieval Ireland. In this way, much of the tour presents Ireland as an escape from modernity, to a place, like the Wicklow boglands through which we pass, where 'nothing has changed since the ice age' (guide C) and where 'the bog only grows one foot every thousand years' (guide A). Other messages concern the Irish people who appear friendly, entertaining and talkative. The guides claim to be 'cuddly' (guide A) and loveable, offering hugs and friendly advice. However, other aspects of the Irish stereotype also emerge, as Irish people are shown, through jokes and anecdotes, to be superstitious beings, drinkers of whiskey and stout. The Irish may be fun but they cannot be trusted: at the beginning of the tour, guide C promises us: 'I'll tell you lots of lies'. This image of the Irish(man) as a loveable but untrustworthy rogue mirrors what Rolston (1995) has called the paternalistic racism towards the Irish, often found in tourism literature on the country.

On this tour, modern-day Irish life is also mentioned, although less frequently. The Celtic Tiger now seems to have become a tourist marker, with

references to the economic boom and the low unemployment. The tour guide, therefore, unavoidably touches on political issues. However, comments regarding such are infrequent, and they tend to be downplayed. For example, after briefly criticising the government for not acting on the housing crisis, guide C quickly adds, 'I won't go into politics' and moves on to talk about a bird sanctuary we are passing. Political aspects of Irish history are also downplayed, frequently by the use of humour. Medieval tribal wars are referred to as 'these two squabbled a lot' (guide B), and the most horrifying example of warfare we encounter is 'two men pulling at each other's beards' in the film at Glendalough. Although invasions are addressed by the guides, and indeed Irish history sometimes is constructed as one long occupation ('then after the Vikings came Oliver Cromwell' guide D informs us), any mentioning of such issues is transient and always decontextualised. Ireland's largest minority ethnic group, the travelling community, receives little attention, despite the fact that their halting sites are passed several times on the tour. When referred to, the issues involved are depoliticised – we are told that the travellers refuse social housing and jokes are made about their 'expensive new cars' (guide B) – of which I see none. Thus the guide selects aspects of Irish history and culture and physical objects in the Irish landscape and gives them significance through narration. Tourist interpretations are aided by the guiding and by the film at the Glendalough visitor centre, which helpfully informs us that 'small stone churches and round towers' have become 'symbols of Irish culture'. That is, they have become signs signifying Irishness. What can be read from them is most often the international stereotypical myth of 'Ireland as Emerald Isle': natural beauty, old-fashioned and traditional, inhabited by friendly rogues, decontextualised historically and politically.

Frameworks

Therefore, the presentation draws on broader, international touristic discourses. All the messages – the guiding, the film, the selected signs – can be understood as discursive elements part of a larger narrative about Ireland. It is this narrative which is reproduced by the tour guides rather than the guides constructing their own version of Ireland. Although the guides appear to make the discursive choices – they are given free hands by the companies³ – most often they choose to point out aspects of the country which are already part of the wider touristic discourse on Ireland. For instance, while passing through Ashford, they will point out Mount Usher Gardens and comment, 'This is what the village is famous for' (guide B). In other words, this is how the village is constructed through national and international touristic discourses, all other aspects of it remain invisible, to

the guide as well as to the tourists. When I (a Scandinavian) asked him in an interview why certain features are selected, guide B answered: 'Eddie Irvine, Daemon Hill, Bonó, people all around the world would know about them. Van Morrison, I'm not sure, do you know him?'; thus at the same time assessing whether his presentation (which includes pointing out alleged homes of these celebrities) is consistent with the international image of Ireland.

The touristic discourse not only gives messages about Ireland as a tourist destination, it also claims to explain historical facts about the country. On this particular tour, the discourse alleges to interpret the ruins of the Glendalough monastic site for us. It gives voice to the early medieval buildings and monuments, and it is related to what Slater (1993) calls the 'oral framework' of the 19th century local Glendalough guides, who offered tourists interpretations of the place based on folklore and tales. The discourse of the driver-guide who leads us through the site tends to be at variance with the more academically informed discourse of the audio-visual show and exhibition at the Glendalough visitor centre, which the tourists are given the opportunity to visit. Both discourses present historical information about the ruins upon which we gaze and both highlight the same buildings and sites within the monastic city but, depending on the framework, the physical space which we interpret as Glendalough is constructed differently. In the narrative of the visitor centre, the ruins become archaeological discoveries, examples of the craftsmanship and monastic culture of tenth century Ireland, as the film explains the materials and skills needed to build them. Whereas that of the visitor centre is a formal, scientific discourse, which appears informed by archaeology and history, the discursive choices made by the driver-guides seem to be based on the entertainment value of the anecdotes through which the place is interpreted, such as stories about the life of St Kevin, the founder of the monastery. This is a narrative based on myths and legends about Glendalough. Perhaps this construction of Glendalough as a supernatural place facilitates the touristic messages about Ireland as a place out of the ordinary, unlike the world from which the tourists have come, a romantic and mythical land. However, neither of the two narratives exists in pure form. The driver-guide draws upon both as sources for his narration of the place, weaving together fact and fiction. Even the formal audio-visual show at the visitor centre includes items of humour, which gives a sense of entertainment and pleasure, facilitating a more light-hearted reading of Glendalough. Finally, the guides also draw on other sources of information for their presentation, although less frequently than the two mentioned earlier. They might comment on inflation and add 'so I hear on the radio' (guide D) and sometimes personal frameworks seem to emerge. Most

obvious an example is guide C's comment on Temple Bar, which does not seem tailor-made for his audience: 'Dublin people don't really go there, cos it's full of tourists'. Such statements are relatively rare but they can perhaps be seen as examples of an 'authentic' local voice.

Touristic Readings

If the dominant meaning of the messages on board the tour buses, as we saw earlier, can be said to communicate the international touristic discourse on Ireland as Emerald Isle, then significant evidence can be found of this reading being accepted by the intended audience. At first glance it would appear that most of the participants do not challenge the touristic discourse of the guides but take on subject positions required for the discourse to make sense. They take on identities outside traditional, beautiful Ireland, in modernity, and place themselves in the exclusive tourist world which, according to Boniface (1998), is neither destination nor home, from which they can gaze at the Irish people as a friendly 'other'. They seem to accept the expertise of the guides and the information presented. When tourists are asked in interviews what they will remember from the tour, they describe Ireland as a place of scenic beauty, it is 'quiet', 'serene', 'green' and 'beautiful'. It is seen as empty space. Or when commenting on what they think is typically Irish, they mention the 'quaint little villages' encountered on the tour. Historical elements are also dominant and the Irish people are very much described in terms of their stereotypical qualities. In the words of the tourists, they are 'friendly', 'lovely', 'charming' or 'accommodating'. They 'like their drink' and 'there is a mystical thing attached to them'. In other words, the tourists reproduce the language of the guides and of the touristic discourse.

Interviews with passengers reveal that although they recognise the guiding as constructed, that the guide is 'just doing his job' (passenger H: American female, age 48, 'half Asian',⁴ controller of corporate travel agency, first visit to Ireland), they still accept the information and advice he gives and they see his 'entertainment' style of presentation as a reflection of his friendly Irish nature, rather than evidence of tourism as a staged event. 'He was very proud of his background, his Irish roots, and the history and what Ireland has to offer', the same passenger comments. What is interpreted as the guide's sincerity is not contrasted with his showmanship or what another passenger calls his 'theatric' performance; on the contrary they are seen as one and the same. A similar view is expressed by other passengers in a conversation I overheard during the tour:

- K: I love the Irish, they're so, *echt*, what they say they mean it . . .
 J: Yes, so sincere.

K: Sincere, yes. [The guide] is very good, he is like an actor.

(Passenger K: German female, age 59, retired accountant, second visit. Passenger J: American female, age 44, occupation unknown, first visit.)

Being entertaining, therefore, is accepted as an integral part of the Irish identity, deception as a sign of sincerity.

Critical Interpretations

However, it seems that not every tourist simply accepts all given information nor all suggested connotations. On the bus some forms of oppositional readings are also made. These may take the form of a refusal to play along or deconstructing the touristic discourse of the guides. At the Upper Glendalough Lake, guide C announces: 'It's lucky to take a pebble and bring it home'. This comment draws upon the touristic discourse of Ireland as mystical, of the Irish as superstitious and of Glendalough as supernatural. The guide takes on the role of expert and, as gatekeeper, enables us to take part in the magic and bring with us a token of enchanted Ireland. Some people take a stone but passenger G (an English female midwife, age 42, on her first visit to Ireland) comments instead to the guide: 'You must be very lucky, if you come here all the time'. Throughout the tour her attitude is clearly ironic, a feature of what sociologists have called post-tourism (see, for example, Lash & Urry, 1994). She reveals the underlying assumptions of the touristic discourse, of the guide sincerely sharing the magic of Ireland with passive, accepting visitors and she 'reads' not messages about the Emerald Isle but instead focuses on the logic of the guide's presentation. This does not mean a dismissal of his skills, in a later interview she praises them ('He is very good, very funny'). The guide's narrative is appreciated for its style rather than its content, it is recognised as an art form, as a constructed media discourse rather than a source of information about an objective Irish reality.

Other passengers are more directly critical of the guiding. When one guide points out the house belonging to Eddie Irvine (the Formula One driver), a passenger turns to me and asks, plainly, 'Is that true?'. After another tour, an American 40-year-old male accountant (passenger L, on his first visit) mentions to me that he thought the guide's reference to unemployment – in passenger L's words that 'they used to export people but now they can't get enough' – was 'a funny comment', then asks me to verify it. It therefore seems that, rather than passively accepting the preferred meanings of the guide's narrative, some of the tourists seek out other sources of information with which to compare it. Perhaps such

critical comments can be more effectively understood by returning to the Foucauldian concept of power. According to Foucault (1980), discourse can be both an instrument of power, as we saw earlier, but also a point of resistance, a starting point for an opposing strategy. The new discourse may, in this case, be a post-touristic one, through which pleasure is gained from reading and analysing the strategies employed by the guide rather than from the touristic messages about Ireland which he seeks to communicate.

However, this alternative, ironic touristic reading of Ireland seems to be applied to isolated events, rather than to the tourist experience as a whole.

Last night we went to a pub in the city centre to listen to traditional Irish music. [laughs] It's not very authentic. It's a mix of Irish music and 60s and 70s English music done in an Irish way, isn't it. But I suppose that's what you would expect to find in Dublin, it's not like a pub in the country, is it? (Passenger B: English male, age 39, mature student, first visit)

This comment could, perhaps, at first be understood as an oppositional reading of the touristic discourse, recognising the staged nature of tourism in Dublin. However, there is at the same time an unwillingness to let go of the touristic image of Ireland, even when it is not found. There remains the belief in such an authentic, traditional Ireland, albeit physically located elsewhere, beyond reach.

Indeed, most touristic decodings of the guide's messages seem to be negotiated and whereas they may accept the overall construction of Ireland as Emerald Isle, passengers will negotiate meanings of specific signs in specific situations as exceptions to the rule (Hall, 1980). Some passengers on the buses are actively engaging in the construction of Ireland through their own discourse, through talking and thinking about it. Some seem to have their own agenda, their own narrative, which they confirm to one another, such as discussing the houses the bus passes. At other occasions, tourists seem to listen to what is said by the guide but give it their own meaning, they may giggle at comments which do not seem amusing to others or turn the factual information given into a joke:

Guide: Dublin is a corruption of an old Irish word.

E (to me, seated next to her): The Irish are all corrupt aren't they, they're like the English [laughs].

(Passenger E: English female, age 58, occupation unknown, first visit)

Here, pleasure is gained from engaging playfully with the subject matter and creatively attributing alternative meanings to it, yet without necessarily challenging those intended by the guide.

Tourists' Cultural Resources

In their reading of Ireland and Irish identity, the tourists do not only draw upon the messages in the discourse of the guide. When interviewed after the tour, they combine the narratives encountered with other discourses, their own cultural resources. Some draw upon experiences as tourists elsewhere. Thus, Ireland as a tourist destination is compared to others, such as when passenger H (details given earlier) mentions to me at Glendalough that 'the stones here remind me of Macchu Pichu'.⁵ However, more often Ireland is found to be somehow inferior, friendlier but less grand, as when Glendalough is contrasted with Rome: 'The ruins were less, what shall I say, impressive, than Roman ruins, they're more bare, they look just so much older. Em, somehow I think I expected more' (passenger M; Italian-American female, age 62, first visit). Readings of Ireland and Irish identity are also facilitated by drawing upon other cultural resources from tourists' personal background or life experiences. Many of the American passengers had attended Catholic schools where they had come in contact with Irish Americans, and all are familiar with Saint Patrick's Day celebrations, which they read as signifiers of Irishness. Tourists' own ethnicity may also influence how they engage with the question of Irish identity. When discussing what it means to be Irish, passenger M, a second-generation Italian-American woman discusses Irishness in terms of Irish-Americans whom, she believes, 'are Irish in their own way', relating their position in society to her own life experience: 'Americans think I am Italian and Italians think I am American'. It would, therefore, seem that although tourists at times objectify and stereotype the native Irish, at other occasions tourism cannot be said to lead to 'othering' of the host population. Rather, tourists draw on their own cultural resources to relate to the Irish in various ways. Passengers H (details given earlier) and I (American female, age 42, homemaker, first visit), discuss the economic situation in the country with reference to that of their own. They compare the situation of Irish civil servants (mentioned by the guide) to that of teachers in their own state and recognise them as similar. In the same interview they discuss Irish lifestyle with reference to their experience in restaurants, where they were surprised to encounter smoking. This creates a certain distance and they conclude that the Irish are less healthy than their own kind. However, this is not interpreted as a specific trait of the Irish people, rather as a result of socioeconomic structures of Irish society, considered inferior to their own:

'We have more choices in California, it's a healthy and wealthy state' (passenger I).

Other frameworks frequently drawn on are those of mass media representations of Ireland and the Irish people. Fictional accounts such as Hollywood images of the country are mentioned by passenger L (details given earlier) as influencing his understanding of the Irish past and present:

My picture of Ireland is almost like, you know, from the media I've always understood that there are certain countries that people have always wanted to get out of. And Ireland, you know that movie that Tom Cruise made,⁶ I mean, he basically had the picture of beauty, living on a mountainside with the sea, and they couldn't wait to get out. So I think that's the history, at least that's what I understand about Ireland.

Passenger L's image of Ireland as a place of natural beauty and emigration does not appear to have been changed or elaborated by the actual encounter with the country or by the presentation of the tour guide. Other passengers frequently refer to discourses of international news media, which represent Ireland as a place of political violence. Many of the tourists express the view of Ireland as a country touched by terrorist acts or civil war and their vision of the country appears to involve the IRA in a prominent place. They are unlikely to have had such a view consolidated by their stay in Dublin⁷ and certainly there is nothing on the tour which brings this aspect of Ireland to mind. Indeed, the audio-visual show at the visitor centre at Glendalough involves a direct attempt at disassociation from violence. It mentions the 'ascetic streak' in the Irish, and explains how medieval Irish monks chose to 'do battle with the devil rather than with other human beings'. Yet, for many the idea of Ireland as a place of violence remains unchallenged by the visit.

Thus, many of the passengers on board the tour buses seem to maintain an understanding of Ireland which is based, at least in part, on their expectations and pre-tour conceptions – informed by various other media – rather than on the information they are given by the guide or the events they experience. Therefore, their decoding of Irish identity must be understood not only in the context of the tour but also their holiday as a whole and indeed that of their general lives. A final example from interviews carried out with passengers after the tour may serve to illustrate how tourists discuss and actively negotiate the meaning(s) of Irishness. They draw upon multiple frameworks for arriving at an understanding, and these include the guiding and the tour.

- Int.:** Is Ireland the way you imagined it would be before you came here?
- I:** Yeah, green and [laughs] rainy.
- H:** Yeah, definitely, it's very green, that really was not a shock to me.
- I:** Like today, when we were out looking in the countryside and stuff like that . . .
- H:** It's just so green, more, more, more, it's just impossible. And now we know why, it's like [guide's first name] says, it's like, what did he say, six months of rain and the rest is wet, six months of being wet.
- I:** Or the T-shirt that says 'four seasons in one day', that's definitely totally true, and the other thing that strikes me too, is you won't see too many cosmopolitan . . .
- H:** Yeah, it's a very white race. That's the first thing, I'm half Asian, the first thing I notice when I go to see a different country is the ethnic . . .
- I:** I've been to different parts of Europe, you see a little more . . .
- H:** I don't know, maybe because it's an island, kind of isolated, the first stop is London, and they remain there.
- I:** You do see a few pockets here and there.
- H:** But if you go to San Francisco you see Chinese, walking out of your house, you know, so it's no big deal.

(Passengers H and I; details given earlier)

In this example the two American tourists draw upon the following frameworks: pre-existing understandings based on international touristic discourse ('green and rainy'); visual signs during the tour ('what we saw today'); verbal signs in the guiding ('like [guide] said'); visual signs in tourist shops ('the T-shirt'); own experience as member of an ethnic minority ('I'm half Asian'); touristic experience elsewhere ('different parts of Europe'); geographical knowledge ('it's an island'); own experience of Ireland outside tourist world ('you do see a few'); own experience of life in the United States ('if you go to San Francisco' where the respondent lives). Thus, unlike the touristic discourse of the tour guide, in which – despite some contradictions – a preferred or dominant reading could be detected, in the active and continuing negotiating of meaning of Irishness which can be found in the discourse of the tourists, Irish identity remains fragmented, ever changing, made up of multiple signs, and no final or fixed definition arises. As Hall (1997b) argues, we continually define and redefine identity through discursive practice, it is never constant or complete.

Discussion: Power and Knowledge in Tourism

So, what can be concluded about the power to construct knowledge about a touristic destination? In the present exploration it has seemed that the situation is more complex than what Cheong and Miller (2000) have described as 'power-ful guides' and 'power-bound tourists'. The guide does hold a powerful position as professional expert and does control much of what is gazed upon and what is dismissed and, therefore, is able to mediate much of the tourists' encounter with the place they visit. However, his or her power to influence tourists' interpretations of this place and its people is less obvious. As we have seen, when examined closely, both messages and readings have proven less than straightforward. In the presentation of the guide, we found several different frameworks, different Irish 'voices' competing, although the touristic discourse tended to be the strongest. This is due to the nature of discourse, its intertextuality. According to Fairclough (1992: 56), texts are always shaped by other texts and utterances that have gone before. The guide must rely on pre-existing cultural frameworks to construct Ireland, because, as Hall (1997a) states, culture depends on the exchange of shared meaning. Therefore, the meaning of Irishness relies not on the material things used to symbolise it but on how people have agreed to interpret them. Our notions of what being Irish can or cannot mean, therefore, depend on how Irishness has been represented before, in other discourses, such as the international touristic discourse which informs so much of the guiding on the Glendalough tour.

The tourists' narratives, too, are intertextual and contradictory, as they draw upon the cultural resources available to them to interpret both the messages sent by the guide and the Ireland they encounter outside the tour. Although the tourists often view the Irish as 'other', most interviewees were unwilling to make definite statements based only on the tour or on their short stay in the country. They seemed aware of their lack of cultural knowledge to interpret Irishness conclusively. Although when asked what they believed was 'typically Irish' most answered in terms of the touristic discourse, this may simply illustrate their knowledge of and ability to express and engage with this discourse. By no means is this necessarily their only interpretation. Tourists may be removed from their own culture but this does not restrain their cultural abilities, and they still have resources to draw upon in interpreting cultural meaning. In the case of the tour-bus passengers I spoke to, these resources included touristic discourses on Ireland and elsewhere, fiction and news media discourses on Ireland as a place of violence or emigration, Irish friends and acquaintances, as well as their own autobiographies. The tourists turn to these

when creating a narrative on Ireland and Irish identity, which existed parallel, and sometimes in contrast, to the interpretation offered by the guide.

In these micro relations of tourism between coach passengers and their guide, power to construct the destination therefore is indeed omnipresent, flowing between points rather than remaining fixed or stable, and extending to the tourists themselves. The position of the guide, powerful as it is, can never be considered permanently fixed, and neither can the touristic discourse be expected to be reproduced unchanged forever. The guide must keep in mind the audience whom he or she addresses, and 'try to find out what sort of people are on the bus, what they like, if they want a lot of information or a laugh' (guide A). It is up to the guide to 'read' the audience and decide which discursive elements will provoke the least resistance. According to Foucault (1980), power is productive rather than repressive. Through a touristic discourse it produces subject positions from which we can understand the meaning of Irishness. But, in addition, the omnipresence of power, the resistance and active negotiation which takes place in and over this touristic discourse produce new ways of reading and interpreting Irishness and will continue to do so. Neither tourists nor guide can be said to hold exclusively the power to construct Ireland and neither are completely free to choose discursive elements in their narrative on Irishness. Due to the intertextual nature of representation, both will base their version of Irish identity on the symbols that have been used to represent Ireland before in the various discourses – touristic or otherwise – which deal with this complex and ever-changing issue. Finally, the degree to which tourists display resistance to the touristic discourse and construct their own interpretations of Irish identity may be greatly influenced by their sociocultural position and hence their access to cultural resources. Yet this study suggests that even tourists who seem to uncritically accept the messages in the guiding do, at other times, draw on alternative discourses. It seems unlikely that tourists take on a specific, stable position on a continuum between the touristic gaze, negotiated readings and post-touristic irony. They cannot be said to apply any one such lens consistently, rather they seem to incorporate various interpretations when actively negotiating the meanings of Irishness, which is recognised as more complex and contradictory than the friendly people and a green unspoilt land offered by the guides. Further research is needed to examine how different tourists engage with various touristic texts on Irish identity. It is likely, however, that they will all display some sort of power and resistance to the discourses they encounter and that all will be found, at least to a certain degree, to actively negotiate their understandings of Ireland and Irishness.

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Notes

1. The data presented in this chapter were collected on bus tours on four dates in Winter 1999 and Spring 2000. Although the tours were arranged by two different tour operators they followed similar routes, collecting passengers at various points in Dublin's city centre, then following the coast south of the city, into the Wicklow Mountains to Glendalough, where passengers were given a guided tour of the monastic city and the opportunity to visit the exhibition. All tours lasted between seven and eight hours.
2. On all the tours attended the driver-guides were male.
3. According to interviews with two of the guides. One comments on his employer: 'He doesn't know anything about that end of it... if I tell him something he believes it.'
4. Ethnicity given when and as stated by respondents.
5. City of the Incas, a popular tourist destination in Peru.
6. *Far and Away*, the 1992 Hollywood film starring Cruise in the role of an Irish emigrant.
7. Throughout the period of fieldwork for this paper the Northern Ireland peace process was ongoing and no major incidents of violence were reported in the media.

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