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**THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF HISTORY: A DISCOURSE ON
HERITAGE AND NOSTALGIA IN THE 1990s**

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ABSTRACT

The dialectic of history as an ideology and history as a commodity can underpin a discourse on the production and consumption of history as heritage and nostalgia in the 1990s. History as an ideology is erased from the dominant space of representation, by history as a commodity; therefore, history as an ideology needs to be discussed separately from history as a commodity even though they are not independent categories; this is because they are mutually constitutive of each other. The processes and structures that underwrite this dialectic, Capitalism and Modernity, produce different outcomes in different places and at different times; outcomes such as the cabinets of curiosity during early modernity, modernist and postmodernist museums, heritage sites such as country houses, a shopping mall and a disneyfied theme park arranged around a historic locale and the gentrification of some parts of the inner City of London. These objects of history are produced, reproduced and consumed by social actors in different places and at different times. The production and consumption of history as an object does not explain why these particular outcomes exist in the places and the times that they do. These outcomes need to be explained, and can be explained, by using a dialectical methodology. Such an explanation would look at the underlying processes and structures of Capitalism and modernity.

PREFACE

A few years ago, my husband purchased some antique golf clubs. The purchase intrigued me: not only because of the items he had bought but also because his purchase highlighted the proliferation of antique shops that had appeared in the greater Manawatu area. Antique shops were found along State Highway One at Sanson and Bulls, in former milk treatment stations and once derelict buildings. The 'past' appeared to have been re-invented at three levels. First, collectable items such as old wooden furniture (complete with borer holes), ordinary rather than elitist china, period costumes, knick-knacks such as brand tins of tobacco as well as old machinery (whether in working order or not) such as Singer sewing machines had become fashionable. Second, particular buildings were refurbished to house these saleable collectables: this added a sense of authenticity to the items that were for sale. Third, many of these items for sale were not destined to be used once sold but were bought for display purposes.

What struck me as particularly interesting was that new items in period style were offered for sale alongside second-hand or antique items. Further, some items were physically altered to fit a particular purpose. For example, an oak dining table is easier to come by than a table with six matching chairs; as a result when a table is purchased by a proprietor without the chairs, a set can be made to match often using another piece of furniture the same age, such as a wardrobe. Thus the age of the wood would ensure a degree of authenticity to the entire set. Further, as a set, the entire suite would command a greater price than the sum of the chairs or the table individually.

During the search for antique golf clubs, it became apparent that prices varied by location: in the larger cities of Wellington or Auckland, a single club could be up to fifty percent more expensive than in the provincial areas while in an out of the way location, a single club could be up to fifty percent cheaper. Price played an important economic and social role in the acquisition of a club: if a bargain could be had, it was all the more enjoyable an experience.

The reasons for my husband collecting antique golf clubs were varied: not only were they a commercial investment but it was also a father and son activity, and related to an enjoyment of playing the game of golf as a leisure activity in the present.

My husband's collection of antique golf clubs is stored in a cupboard at my in-laws (where I hope they will stay). With each new purchase, however, the entire collection is brought out, dusted off, and the new acquisition(s) are examined as an integral part of the whole collection: where they will fit with respect to brand, age, and state of repair. One day, I am told, my husband will have enough clubs to make up a single set by brand, or a set of similar types of clubs of different brands. The clubs will then be ready to be displayed in a purpose made cabinet or mounted on the wall.

There is a caveat to this thesis: writing as a Pakeha in New Zealand in the 1990s, it is impossible to ignore the contested histories of marginalised groups such as Maori. It is also impossible to ignore any controversy surrounding the opening of The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in February 1998. As a result, this thesis deliberately sets aside these contested histories, not only because of the controversial nature of these histories but as a Pakeha researching Maori issues the very research itself would be contested by those better qualified to undertake Maori research, or research on behalf of Maori.

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