Elephant in the City: An Analysis of Visual Culture and the Aesthetic Elsewhere of Indian Restaurants in Montreal, QC.

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ABSTRACT

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Rhiannon Herbert

This work is a comparative analysis of the visual culture of Indian restaurants in two neighbourhoods on the island of Montreal, Quebec. This project conceives of visual culture as that which constitutes the dialectical and dynamic exchange of visual knowledges in social, cultural and urban contexts, and in doing so, frames the research process as being engaged with the production and reproduction of such knowledges. Through photographing and analyzing the street front aesthetics of these restaurants, the work explores the role of the visual in projecting ethnicized identities that engage the imaginations and expectations of culturally and historically positioned gazes within the context of consumption, culinary tourism, and place branding. This work is a unique contribution to the literatures of Indian restaurants as the first to be conducted in Montreal, as well as being a contribution to the growing field of visual culture as both a subject and methodology, reflexively problematizing the positioned gaze of the photograph and the authoritative categorizations of academic authorship.

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

Tables

Figures

ix

Graphs

Images

Maps

Plates

Chapter 1

Introduction

The development of the study of place within geography has become, without argument, an interdisciplinary project. Taking notes from areas such as sociology, anthropology, the humanities, and even art history, the "humanistic turn" (Ley, 1985) in geography has provided the critical momentum necessary for a broad, reflexive and integral scholarship. To this end, the analysis of place- based visual culture entailed in the following material has been facilitated by the collaborative and interdisciplinary range increasingly present in human and cultural geography. Drawing from writings on socio-spatial theory, place making and branding, semiology and symbolsim, postmodernism, issues of cultural representation, notions of authenticity, and the growing field of visual studies, this project aims to document and analyze one interesting case study of visual culture as used to communicate and evoke an ethnic 'other' and 'elsewhereness' (see Hopkins, 1990) within the landscape of Montreal eateries; specifically, those aesthetic and architectural cues employed by Indian restaurants throughout the city.

The city of Montreal, as with most Canadian cities, grew from a project of European settlement and colonization. At the time of Cartier's arrival to the island, the

area was peopled by the Iroquois of the St Lawrence valley, whose First Nations ancestors had been living in that part of the continent for more than six thousand years (Dickason, 1979, 1997; Germain & Rose, 2000). The settlement of Montreal was founded roughly a century later as a French missionary colony, and while First Nations presence has since been severely marginalized, Montreal grew to see several incarnations as a city: it was North America's fur trading capital, a major industrial and port city whose principality in the north-east competed with that of New York, and the centre of well over half of Canada's wealth by the turn of the twentieth century (Germain & Rose, 2000). Montreal was most certainly a French city in its first century, largely homogenous in make-up save for the presence of First Nations and Blacks as slaves in a domestic capacity. With the British conquest, immigration from the British Isles opened up, and the demographics of the city shifted accordingly. The mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie that came to positions of power and development at this time were an elite of predominantly Anglo-Scottish origin, and during the peak of their success and influence, had an enormous impact on the spatial, architectural and aesthetic tone of the city (Cooper, 1969; Germain & Rose, 2000; Gowans, 1966). This is a significant point for our purposes in that this distinct urban structuring was both inherently cultural, as well as visual - a pattern of space, a kind of vernacular sheathing, within which successive waves of social and cultural change have gone on, and as we shall see, mark and modify

imposed exteriors.

While the Protestant Scots ruled house in Montreal, French Canadian and Irish immigrants, along with later arrivals of Jewish and European origin, provided the labour base for the city's wealth (Germain & Rose, 2000). A French majority in the city was eventually re-established by the late 1800s on account of rural-urban migration (Cooper, 1969). In all, the formative years of Montreal, though clearly dominated by colonial processes and European roots, have always encompassed a surprising diversity of culture.

Since the Second World War, this cultural diversification has exploded along with migration (Miles & Thranhardt, 1995). Montreal has experienced a steadily increasing influx of immigrants from around the world, thoroughly diversifying the ethnic composition of the city population (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 213-53). Bringing with them the sensibilities of other social and material cultures, the immigrant communities of Montreal have helped to diversify the possibilities of place in the city: different arrangements and uses of space, different aesthetics and vernacular touches, different sights, smells and things. Working from the premise that space and place are socially created, the cultural diversification of Montreal has therefore diversified the possibilities of place in the spaces of the city. The places that such cultural diversity generates are part of the focus of this study, as are the ways that such places cultivate, promise and present their visibility in the urban environment. It is my argument here that the

3

diversification of place in Montreal has been most apparently visible in spaces of consumption. No surprise here perhaps, given the commonly accepted predominance of consumption in driving the social and economic rhythms of urban activity (Hayward, 2004; Lury 1996; McCraken 1988).

The spaces of consumption receiving special focus within this project are concerned with our most basic consumptive need: food. What one eats, as a member of an ethnic and cultural group, is hugely involved with cultural identity and practice (Lu & Fine, 1995), and as immigrants have continued to arrive in Canada and North America over recent decades, many 'ethnic entrepreneurs' have turned to culinary pursuits to support themselves and others in their community (Keith, 1995; Lu & Fine, 1995). Restaurants, as sites of deliberately designed places of consumption, are ideal to the researcher concerned with intersections of culture, place, performance, and the visual.

As this project examines Indian restaurants, with 'ethnicity' being mentioned in relation to various aesthetic elements, an examination of the tern "Ethnic restaurants" is necessary to avoid engaging these concepts unthinkingly. The concept of 'ethnicity' and the challenges of its definition have been a topic of much study, evolving over time in the literature (Nash, 2009). Where early sociological definitions positioned ethnic groups as social groups who shared a subjective belief in common descent, later conceptions have emphasized the importance of self-definition in ethnicity, with a belief in shared histories,

be they imagined or real, contributing to what has been termed the "invention of ethnicity" (Alba 1990; Conzen, 1979; Sollors 1989; Weber 1968 [1922] in Nash, 2009).

Theorist Herbert Gans also explored this idea, and while not wanting to conflate invention with fiction, saw ethnicity to be an adaptive process, especially in the context of immigrants, be they the descendents of European settlers or relative newcomers to North America (1979). His notion of 'symbolic ethnicity' relates to these considerations, where ethnicity may be free from affiliation with ethnic groups and ethnic cultures, and is instead "…dominated by the consumption of symbols, for example at ethnic restaurants…" (Gans, 1979, p. 44). The ethnic restaurant, then, is especially relevant to the identification of visual cultural projection in communicating and encouraging a culturally-consumptive experience by promising, via consumptive proxy, the experience of a different place, of elsewhereness, and of otherness in the pursuit of a culinary tourism (Goss, 1993; Long, 2004).

As people from around the world have come to call Montreal home, there has been a marked proliferation in the number of ethnic restaurants (Nash, 2009; Richman Kenneally, 2004). Walking through the island, one is liable to pass by foods hailing from practically every continent on the globe in just a few downtown blocks. Indeed, Montreal has become known for its multi-cultural culinary offerings, with ethnic restaurants comprising a lot of what's available, as is evident through first-hand observation or a

brief perusal of business listings (see *restomontreal.ca*, for example).

Packed into the aforementioned vernaculars of Montreal's founding French and Anglo ruling classes, these comparatively far-flung cultural presences now energize and animate the most exciting and active streets of the city. Despite occupying re-purposed and pre-existing spaces that embody either the historical or the banal, the ethnic identities of these eateries are effectively communicated to passing stomachs and minds through a visual projection of identity, place, and to that extent, 'elsewhereness'. It is this everyday exchange of visual culture that concerns this project.

While Asian, Lebanese, Jewish and Italian foods and restaurants have held a strong presence in the city for quite some time, still more recent immigrant populations have contributed more recent generations of ethnic cuisine. Given the particular interest in recent literature on urban areas characterized by ethnic restaurants, as with the Indian eateries populating the Brick Lane area of London, England (see Maitland Gard'ner, 2004; Mavrommatis, 2010; Shaw et al, 2004), this thesis seeks to focus on Indian restaurants as a case study in Montreal, which is of special interest in that no work to date has been done on this topic in Montreal. The following section will elaborate on the objectives of this research.

1.1 Thesis Objectives

The general objective of this work is to identify and analyze the visual culture, the aesthetic symbolism and motif, employed by a selected group of Indian restaurants on the island of Montreal, as means of communicating, evoking, and branding an ethnicized sense of place. To this end, the project seeks to explore how ethnicity, understood as a symbolic and adaptive process (Gans, 1979), and 'elsewhereness', as a sense of the location 'other' (Hopkins, 1990) are expressed in the visual culture of restaurant aesthetics. Specifically, this project looks at how an ethnicized cultural identity is visually communicated within the limited template of the front streetscape: the sign, the windows, and general 'face' a place of business offers in promising a consumptive cultural experience within.

The research end of this project entails looking at the visual exteriors of thirty Indian restaurants in two different neighbourhoods on the island of Montreal: The Plateau Mont-Royal, and Parc Extension (otherwise known as 'Villeray – Saint Michel – Parc Extension', but for brevity's sake, will be referred to simply as 'Parc Extension' in the material of this thesis). The aim is to identify and analyze what visual markers of ethnicity are utilized in order to signal a specific type of consumptive cultural experience and 'place-brand' (Hankinson, 2010) and to discern any distinguishing themes or differences in the use of such markers between the two neighbourhoods. To this end, a set

7

of aesthetic criteria were established, around which the analysis takes its structure. Whereas Parc Extension is home to a large Indian population (Germain, 2011), the Plateau is largely gentrified, with passer-by demographics made up of other cultural groups (primarily Anglophone and Francophone) and, to a large degree, tourists (see tourisme-montreal.org). Will restaurateurs employ different visual strategies and branding to identify themselves in accordance with these differences? Keeping this 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990) in mind, the last part of the analysis involves a reflexive element that attempts to account for the way in which my own positionalities affect the way in which I view, interpret and associate the visual culture of the restaurants in question in an attempt to destabilize the categories placed on what was observed, and as such, the act of observation within the parameters of this project.

With respect to the Indian theme in the restaurants selected for this project, choosing one relatively distinct ethnic restaurant type for the purposes of this work allows for an analysis whose specificity and focus is aimed to generate a conclusive consistency while accommodating the limits of time, resources and scope possible within this level of research. While my findings will hopefully be of some interest, the larger emphasis and inspiration for the project are simple and celebratory: to engage with and appreciate the inherent positivity of diversity in multiplying the possibilities of place and visual culture in Montreal.

The objectives of this thesis, then, are to answer and analyze the findings of the following series of research questions:

1. How is an ethnicized cultural identity visually communicated through the exterior aesthetics of Indian Restaurants in Montreal city?

2. Is there a noteworthy difference in the visual culture employed by Indian restaurants between the two different neighbourhoods involved in this study?

3. How is my subjectivity and positionality as a researcher and cultural outsider involved in what I deem to be examples of ethnic visual culture?

This last question is an important part of the analysis and discussion in that it addresses the gazes inherent to the project. This is significant not only for the purposes of honest and reflexive scholarship, but also in involving the visual culture of the research methodology as well. This project looks at the visual while making use of visual data acquisition in the form of the photograph. Photography is a loaded practice involving issues of perspective, looking, and record; being aware of the intellectual and literal framing that occurs in photographic essays and analysis is necessary for a complete

reflection on both the process and findings of the research (Schwartz, 1996; Sidaway, 2002). This will be discussed in greater depth in the section of the thesis dealing with methodology.

Before moving on to the theoretical framework of the project, I would like to re-emphasize that the nature of this project, as it analyzes and considers such questions, is both positionally-aware and essentially celebratory. It is not my intention to attempt a critique of cultural authenticities, nor do I presume a neutrality or objectivity throughout the research; this is simply not possible. Authorship and perspective, as they relate to geographic writing and visuality, are inescapable aspects present in the project, however, they are acknowledged and problematized in the analysis towards the aim of retaining reflexivity and responsibility in the representational elements of the study. What I hope to offer is a body of work that explores and appreciates the diversity of place-making made possible by cultural and ethnic diversity in the urban context. With that in mind, the following section looks at the spread of secondary resources that were drawn from in order to engage these intentions.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins the research and reflection in this project spans a number of subjects, and reflects the interdisciplinary nature of what has been considered in the research. It was necessary to develop an approach that was grounded in the socio-spatial theories of humanistic geography and then moved outward to branches of sociological and semiological study, as well as the fields of visual theory and practice. The framework of this project, then, is characterized by an architecture of social and cultural geography, with the methodological aspects being guided by the concept and practice of 'visual culture', conceived to be that which involves the dialectical and dynamic exchange of visual knowledges in social, cultural and urban contexts. As such, this project is understood as a process engaged in the production and reproduction of visual knowledges in the context of socially created place. These various aspects are covered in greater detail in the literature review and material pertaining to methodology, which are to follow.

2.1 Literature Review

As previously stated, the general objective of this thesis project is to identify how ethnicity and 'elsewhereness' are expressed in the visual culture of restaurant aesthetics, looking specifically at how an ethnicized cultural identity is visually communicated, at the street front, of Indian restaurants in Montreal. Given this objective, the literature considered in preparation for the research and analysis spans a number of disciplines and subjects – beginning with socio-spatial theory, and ending with topics on visual culture and photography.

This span of literature is by no means exhaustive. In addition, it should be noted that the sequence in which the literature is presented is simply one interpretation of how the various theories and thoughts may be related; while writing this review I was often hard-pressed to impose order on the material. The topics entailed include those of socio-spatial theories of space and place, semiology, consumerism, postmodernism, notions of authenticity, representation, symbolism, and 'visual culture' as both an area and approach to study. While these areas overlap quite naturally, it is the visual element that provides the connecting narrative thread throughout the review. Given that the goal of this thesis is to explore the visual as a wielded strategy in communicating and evoking cultural and place-based associations (and my own subjectivities and interpretations of such) the role of visual culture and *looking* is the theme to remember throughout the review and thesis

12

as a whole.

We will begin this review with the essentials: place, space, and our dialectical relationship with them both. In the early seventies, geographer David Harvey was discussing something widely underappreciated that he referred to as the 'geographic imagination' (1973). In Harvey's view, academics, professionals and individuals in contemporary society were distressingly unaware of the extent to which their lives were shaped by the geographies, politics, and economies of spatiality (Cloke, 2002). Since Harvey's lament, the recognition of space and place in every day life has been on a steady climb of academic and professional recognition and relevance. Thanks in large part to the early work of social theorists, anthropologists and geographers, notions of space and place have become standard topics of scholarly investigation, and increasingly, cross-pollination. The levelling of academic narrative provided by postmodernism and poststructuralism has also helped to increase the porousness and interdisciplinarity of spatial/placial study, allowing for the multiple and flexible research standpoints and methodologies necessary to meet the increasingly complex and abstracted spatialities and energies of our cities – the aesthetics of Indian restaurants being a case in point.

While this study is unique in Montreal, as it happens, there is a growing set of writing on Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom. The following section reviews this

literature, which has provided me with a point of reference and departure for embarking on my own research.

2.1.1 Building on the Literature: Indian Restaurants in Britain

Studies of the cultural and aesthetic significance of Indian restaurants have already been undertaken by researchers such as James Maitland Gard'ner, whose 2004 study of the Bangladeshi community of East London shows that an active celebration of cultural heritage can have social and economic benefits that extend beyond ethnic boundaries (2004, p. 76).   Since the late 1980's, Brick Lane, otherwise known as 'Banglatown', has become a veritable hub of Indian dining. Dozens upon dozens of Indian restaurants line the street, each projecting a promise of culinary and cultural 'elsewhereness' through the combined spectacle of competing shop fronts.   The character of the area was cultivated by residents and business owners as part of a larger arc of neighbourhood development, resulting in a visually rich and distinct area that celebrates the material and culinary culture of India while generating an important source of income as an immense tourist draw (ibid.). The distinct aesthetics of the Brick Lane area have not only made a significant visual impression on the physical urban environment of the city, but have helped to promote the value of cultural diversity as it is manifest in space and place (ibid.).   This celebratory and positive perspective is echoed

14

in the policy-oriented study by George Mavrommatis that traced the evolution of ethnic representation in the Brick Lane and Brixton areas as well, citing a transition from pathology to celebration of ethnic concentration and cultural diversity in London over the past several decades (2010). Stephen Shaw, Susan Bagwell and Joanna Karmowska also studied this phenomenon in East London, looking at the policy rationale in selecting multicultural districts as destinations for leisure and tourism while examining how ethnic and cultural differences was marketed to that end (2004). Elizabeth Buettner has also contributed to this literature, looking at the tensions between culinary and ethnic cultures in '"Going for an Indian": South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain' (2008). My own research and analysis has drawn on this literature for insight on the socio-spatial dynamics of ethnicity as it relates to concentrations of ethnic and culinary culture in the context of Montreal; it was useful in examining distribution and locative significance, in addition to considerations of place-branding, a topic that is touched on in the analysis and discussion. The next series of literature engages with the broader topics and fields that informed the content, beginning with the classically geographic topic of place.

2.1.2 Place: Our Collective Dreaming

While we begin with place, we also begin with the visual, through the gaze of Walter Benjamin. Captured by the energy and mystery of the city, Benjamin, in his seminal essay 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century' (1969) effectively captures much of what those who study cities are fascinated by: the city as practice, as process, and increasingly, as spectacle. Through the eye of the urban wanderer, the 'flaneur', Benjamin treats the arcades, passages and gallerias of Paris as the physical manifestation of 'collective dreaming': an ever-evolving product of social consciousness. For me, this reading of the urban environment as an allegory of society is poetic, sublime, and accurate. Much like Guy Debord and the Situationists, Benjamin's way of seeing the city restored a joy, wonder, and playfulness to urban study or observation that is absent from the equally important works of Marx or Engels, or the cynicism so often present in contemporary work dealing with the immateriality and illusion of the consumption-drenched present. 'Paris' provided a shift and expansion of narrative that went beyond strictly empirical description into a more reflexive and open dialogue of the spatialities of consumption, production, and even thought itself (Shields, 1991). The wanderer's gaze that figures in his reflections is still relevant, even as that eye has arguably transformed into that belonging to the individual-as-tourist and individual-as-consumer.

16

The year after 'Paris' was published, the French social theorist Henri Lefebvre published the succinctly titled 'Production of Space' (1974). Building on the poetics of Benjamin and Debord, Lefebvre's space was more rigorously defined. Rejecting the commonly held distinction between conceptual and "real" space as per the current empirical paradigm, Lefebvre defined space a social product with physical dimensions. As better explained by architect Craig Wilkins, "Lefebvre's space has a history, a past, and is reciprocal – it is created by but helps create social interaction. It is a form of performed communication, a spatial practice that can be observed, repeated, and remembered. Thus space is practiced place." (2001, p. 2).

This notion of space and place as practiced in everyday life was further explored by geographers in the 1970s and early 1980s by people like Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), Edward Relph (1976), and Edward Soja (1980), among others. In 'Topophilia', Tuan approached place as that which is infused with character and attachment through practiced, living engagement: "topophilia", or love of place. In a similar but more categorical approach, Relph's 'Place and Placelessness' identified place, a site of meaning, in opposition to 'placelessness', that is, what he saw to be the encroaching banality of corporate-style development. Soja's take on the topic was decidedly more political and Marxist in nature, accounting for the political economies and histories that shaped our lived-in spatialities whether we love them or not. Importantly, Soja framed his observations of

these relations as a type of dialogue, with his assertion of the 'socio-spatial dialectic' being "...the homologous and dialectical relationship held between the social and spatial structures arising from the mode of production" (1980, p. 208). As the perspective taken in this project is concerned with the communicative aspects of aesthetics in the urban environment, this understanding of a back-and-forth engagement between observers and the observed is applicable as a theoretical underpinning to the asserted dialectical character of visual culture.

Despite the rather timeless relevance of the socio-spatial dialectic concept, the emphasis placed on material production in Soja's thought is problematized by the level of abstraction, for lack of a better term, in the present post-industrial and post-modern urban economy. Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities pointed out how objects come to lose their solidity and 'realness' of use value and become spectral under the aspect of exchange value (1983, pp. 444-461). This loss of solidity is exacerbated by the rise in symbolic value in the abstracted market place: a system of 'commodity aesthetics'. Rooted in a discourse of Marx's analysis of the commodity form, Haug's, 'Critique of Commodity Aesthetics' (1986) explores the contradictions between use and exchange value in the context of advertising and design, citing how modern commodity forms and their valorization have come to intersect our emotional and sensual realms. This notion of commodity aesthetics, along with a recognition of the role of symbolism and desire in

systems of production and consumption, has come to characterize the growing body of literature concerned with the aesthetic and social aspects of consumerism. These issues are implicated in recent literature concerning 'place branding', where the practice of marketing place as product is discussed at various scales, from nation to city to the delivery of a specific service (Hankinson, 2010; Skinner, 2008). Works by theorists like Tim Cresswell, as in 'In Place/Out of Place' (1996) and the more recent 'Place: A Short Introduction' (2004) touch on these issues as they relate to place-making and place meanings, while the issues of perception and geographies of the tourist gaze were established in spatial and placial theory by the likes of Mike Crang (1994; 1997; 1998; 1999).

A good portion of the research and literature on the rise of aesthetic and symbolic value is concerned with what has come to be termed 'consumer culture', and the aesthetics of consumption more generally. The next section of this review looks at works that deal with what I term 'the semiology of consumption', that is, the symbolic and communicative capacities and character of contemporary consumption.

2.1.3   The Semiology of Consumption

Consumption, in our contemporary Euro-Western social and political economy, has become an especially performative, symbolic, and often immersive act of acquisition.

The paper by Rob Shields, 'The Logic of the Mall' (1994) and more expansive text 'Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption' (1992) look at these involved psychologies of consumption, focusing primarily on the spatialities of shopping centres as the stage for both the act and experience. Shields notes how retail spaces have changed over the years from purposeful centres of purchase to carefully engineered mazes that facilitate a kind of flanneurie and leisure where consumption is an impulsive and highly visual form of entertainment: a culture of consumption.

In her 1996 text 'Consumer Culture', Celia Lury spends multiple chapters exploring the material and social aspects of consumerism in terms of the meanings and communicative capacities of acquisition and consumption. Such notions are not new: Levi-Strauss discussed the idea of such symbology in 'Totemism' (1963) where natural objects become symbols for other things, principles, or cultural and social groups themselves. In 'Culture and Practical Reason', M.D. Sahlins directly applies this old anthropological observation to the symbolic circumstances to commercialized modernity, arguing that manufactured objects are the new totems, signifying membership to a consumer group, or other desired associations (1978). John Berger, in 'Ways of Seeing' noted how advertisements manage to motivate material consumption, but in place of an object as symbol, use imagery that invokes desire, selling back to the consumer not only an item, but the idea of a yet unattained state of happiness (1972). G.D. McCraken

elaborated on this observation in his book 'Culture and Consumption: New approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities' in 1990. Naomi Klein's now infamous 'No Logo' (2001) explored this phenomenon through researching the power of visual and ideological branding. The book has recently been republished with a new introduction in 2009, indicating the continued relevance and even urgency often related to such topics.

The associative power of the visual in all this is rooted in semiology, the study of signs and sign processes such as likeness, symbolism, signification and communication. Most credit the term and field of semiology to Charles Sanders Pierce, who wrote extensively on its implications (see Philosophical Writings of Pierce, 1955). Years later, in a typically dense contribution by Umberto Eco, 'A Theory of Semiotics' (1976) provides a rigorous and thorough approach to the discernment of code systems and the production of signs. For Eco, the sign operates on the grounds of a previously established convention, and is taken to be the thing that stands for something else (1976, p. 16). Simple enough. However, Eco's later work on the commercial and cultural uses of signs can be seen works like 'Faith in Fakes' (1986) and 'Travels in Hyperreality' (1995) , where he asserts that representation, re-representation and replication have come to replace, and in effect, become more real, than a reality of originals. Similarly, in Guy Debord's ' Society of the Spectacle' (1983), individuals are described to live in a world

21

that has been fabricated for them - what was once direct and experiential is now a series of layered representations and re-representations, with the spectacle comprising a copy with no original referent; the copy refers to itself (ibid.). This fragmentation of modern society into a maze of simulacra and seemingly endless relativity is associated with what cultural critics and academics identify as the condition, and perhaps the crisis, of postmodernism. We explore this next.

2.1.4 Postmodernism and Evoking the 'Elsewhere'

The term "postmodernism" first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of 'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge' by Jean-François Lyotard (1984). In this short yet influential book, Lyotard identifies the postmodern state and its epistemology to be that of the rejection of grand metanarratives such as those espoused by the traditions of the Enlightenment or Marxism, replaced by a plurality of smaller narratives devoid of any dominant ideological architecture. F. Jameson's 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Captialism', offers a periodic account of the postmodern, noting the role of aesthetic production as it has become integrated into commodity production and society. In Jameson's view, the "frantic economic urgency" with which current capitalism operates has assigned an increasingly

essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation (1991, p. 2). Charles Jencks, in his book 'What is Post-Modernism?', originally published in 1986 and re-issued with updates ten years later, traces the development of this intellectual dismantling since the 1960s along with where he saw society to be headed. Other postmodern inquiry by Jencks has dealt with the theme of architecture, where he explores the new public language of architecture as a pastiche of aesthetic and visual reference in the urban environment (1987, 2002). Jenck's work on architecture arises frequently in the cited literature of other theorists interested in the aesthetic aspects of commercial environments, much of which was researched to the ends of better understanding the ethnic symbologies involved in this project.

Two important theorists involved in researching the postmodern in commercial environments and aesthetics are Jon Goss and Jeffrey S. Hopkins, who have contributed much to the study of aesthetic signification in retail spaces. Jon Goss began to tackle these topics with his essay 'Modernity and Postmodernity in the Retail Built Environment' (1992), as well as in his paper of the following year, 'The "Magic of the Mall": An Analysis of Form, Function and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment' (1993). In both these pieces, Goss analyzes what he asserts to be the exploitation of the 'power of place' by developers and designers to manipulate behaviour and facilitate consumption. The connections between design, image, and consumption are

drawn in his consideration of the retail environment itself as a system of signification. In this system, not only is symbolic expression given to the cultural values of consumer capitalism, but preferred meanings are actively attached to commodities and displays in order to reference other times and places (1993, p. 19).

The associative idea of 'elswhereness' is credited to Jeffrey Hopkins, established in his study of the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta entitled 'West Edmonton Mall: Landscape of Myths and Elsewhereness' (1990). Drawing on the semiology of Pierce (1955) and the ways of seeing of Berger (1984), Hopkins proposes the concept of a "landscape of simulation" (1990, p. 2) whereby iconization, that is, signification by resemblance of shared characteristics and use, is employed as a spatial strategy in the mall to create and evoke a sense of elsewhere (ibid.).

What Hopkins described as the growing intrusion of spectacle, fantasy and escapism in the urban landscape was referenced in 'Place and Placelessnes' by Relph as 'disneyfication', denoting an absurd and entirely synthetic place made up of a surrealistic combination of history, myth, reality and fantasy (1976. p. 95). This idea was revisited in 'The Disneyization of Society' by Alan Bryman (1999), where it is argued that the principles of the theme park are spreading to an increasing number of sectors in society, with aspects such as theming and the dedifferentiation of consumption growing in line

with a 'McDonaldization' of society through dimensions of efficiency, predictability and control as per G. Ritzer's notion of McDonaldization (1983; 1999). With respect to theming, Bryman looks specifically at restaurants, noting that the themed restaurant has become a fixture of the contemporary commercial landscape, drawing on well-known and accessible cultural ideas and symbols, taking care to surround diners with sounds and sights that while incidental to the act of eating, are a major reason for the restaurant being sought out in the first place (1999, p. 29).

While it's true that thinkers like Goss, Hopkins and others are concerned primarily with the immersive experience of retail environments, their recognition of how symbolic landscapes provoke associations in individuals-as-consumers is readily applicable to the microscapes of signage and exterior aesthetics in the city. The associations provoked, however, bring up another issue: that of authenticity. Lookers and would-be consumers gaze upon referents and deduce what it is they mean, and to what extent these reference promise the real (if that is indeed what is being sought). The following section of literature deals with these topics in greater detail.

2.1.5   Authenticity

The notion of authenticity has been written on to a great extent in relation to the

issues of identity, culture, representation, and for our purposes, the visual. As we shall see, authenticity is a decidedly recent crisis, tied up with individuality and navigating the complexities of modernity and everything that has followed since. Interestingly, the notion of authenticity also appears bounded to Euro-Western perspectives and ideologies. This has special significance in that the study at hand is concerned with how ethnic and cultural identities are projected to individuals in a Western city and context, away from the cultural geography of origin, and in that my own eye is influenced by a so-called 'Western' upbringing and education.

To begin, an early yet seminal example of authenticity tackled in academia is 'The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society' (1970) by Marshall Berman, which examines authenticity as a revolutionary concept tied up with the development of the individual in Euro-Western consciousness. Berman, focusing on eighteenth century Paris, explores how the idea of authenticity arose in opposition to bourgeois, capitalistic ideas of self-interest and spoke of a revolutionary sentiment to seek real meaning in the everyday life of a society in much transformation. Lionel Trilling's 'Sincerity and Authenticity' (1971) comes from a similarly historic perspective, though here, he uses a comparative hermeneutic structure, citing authenticity to have replaced sincerity as the central element in the individualist world view. Trilling equates the sensation of authenticity to Rousseau's 'the sentiment of being', and asserts

that the search for authentic experience to be a condition of modern existential anxiety: "…that the word authenticity has become part of the moral slang of our day points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences." (1971, p. 93).

Richard Handlers' 1986 'Authenticity' picks up on this anxiety and takes it further to include control and implications for 'othering'. For Handler, authenticity is a construct of modern Western society. As it pertains to culture, Handler argues it to be closely tied to notions of the individual in that both popular and scholarly ideas about culture tend to imagine cultures as discrete and unique units, much like a personality configuration (1986). This isomorphic tendency, along with the search for the authentic, is part of what Handler sees as the intention to appropriate realness through the acquisition of cultural products, or in the case of restaurants, to physically ingest the authenticity of others in order to renew ones' own (ibid.). 'Affirming Authenticity: Consuming Cultural Heritage' by McIntosh and Prentice (1999) explored the consumptive side of authenticity as well, asserting that in Western societies, what is considered to be authentic is largely the consequence of replicated interpretations, and as such, a deliberate cultivation of experience and association (ibid.).

This presentation of authenticity as it relates to culture has been explored by many

27

scholars preoccupied with ethnic enterprise, restaurants especially. In 'The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as Social Accomplishment' by Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine, it is discussed how ethnic entrepreneurs often establish an economic niche though businesses that depend on a display of ethnic culture that while seen as authentic, must also be palatable and within the bounds of cultural expectations held by Western clientele (1995). This is echoed to some degree in the works concerned with consumer culture in multiethnic neighbourhoods in East London, where policy actively transformed cultural identity into attractive spectacle (Butenner, 2008; Mavrommatis, 2010; Shaw et al, 2004), Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky, in his essay 'The Roving Palate: North America's Ethnic Restaurant Cuisines' (1985) touched on some of these topics as well, with his interest lying in the relatively recent proliferation of ethnic eateries, along with relationships held between the geographic pattern of a given cuisine and that of the related immigrant stock, which be claims to be weak at best (1985). 'Eat the World: Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants' by Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli, examined the issue in the context of Quebec city, taking the view that ethnic restaurants offer opportunities to become familiar with the foreign (2002). Given that Quebec is a neighbouring city within the province, this paper was interesting for comparative review.

While cultural representation and related issues are largely left aside in the

preceding papers, 'The Role of Authenticity in Ethnic Theme Restaurants' (2004) by researchers Claus Ebster and Irene Guist looked at representation as it affected perceptions of authenticity. Here, it was shown that theming was a device used to impress a feeling of authenticity on those with less actual familiarity with the culture and associated cuisine in question, whereas those with greater levels of contact and knowledge with said culture found such aesthetics and iconography much less important, and if anything, an indication of a lesser or compromised authenticity. Importantly, the research of this thesis will be looking into similar territories when attempting to find changes in aesthetic devices between neighbourhoods and their corresponding demographics. It will be interesting to see if aesthetic representation and symbolism has any significant variance. The following section of the literature looks at these issues in greater depth.

2.1.6   Culture, Representation and Symbolism

The literature reviewed in this section, grouped by the issues of representation and symbolism, tend to orbit around the topic of culture. Given the cultural and ethnic element of the project at hand, these were the most appropriate selections. Since the time of Malinowski, Mead and Strauss, the idea of 'culture' has undergone much development

and expansion. Recognized apart from 'othering' and notions of race, culture has left the grounds of colonial anthropology and is now explored in a number of fields and contexts - scholars are now blending disciplinary perspectives to engage with particularities and groupings that transcend static categories (Geertz, 1993). With this in mind, let us consider the following contributions to the cultural field.

The much cited paper 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference' (1992) by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson addresses the conceptual multiplicity of culture that this thesis attempts to work with. While acknowledging the spatial in conceptions of culture, Gupta and Ferguson call for study that does not implicitly map culture(s) onto place, as with nation states and political boundaries. Relating to the Euro-Western eye discussed in previous sections of the literature, Gupta and Ferguson are also wary of the practice of cultural critique. When founded as a dialogic relation with an 'other', therefore yielding a critical viewpoint of our own culture, such a critique assumes an already existing world of distinct 'cultures' along with an unproblematized distinction between 'us' and 'other' – the dichotomous habit of 'Western' thought and conceptualization so well explored by Edward Said in 'Orientalism' (1978). Wishing instead to develop an analysis of culture that is not conceptually or geographically isomorphic, Gupta and Ferguson call for cultural study that reflects and follows the transformative, connective character of post-fordist and post-

modern society (1992). Given that the intention of this thesis is to investigate the way visual culture can be applied as a means to deliberately self-otherize via iconic, aesthetic strategies, and given this analysis will be couched in comparison, these observations regarding dualizing tendencies are important to keep in mind.

Similar thoughts on the multi-faceted character of what we deem to constitute culture are expressed by Chris Jenks in 'Cultural Reproduction' (1993).   While the reflections in the text are many, what stuck out in my reading was his articulation of culture as an inherently dynamic act in the making: "Indeed, the idea of culture emerges from the noun 'process', in the sense of nurture, growth and bringing into being [...] culture, as process, is emergent, it is forthcoming, it is continuous in the way of reproducing, and as all social processes it provides the grounds and the parallel context of social action itself" (1993, p. 3). This necessarily plastic conception of culture not only encourages the study of cultural phenomena as part of the socio-spatial dialectic, but implies the need for a process-based methodology as well. If the subject of study is not static, nor should the research lend itself to any authoritative finality.

'Place/Culture/Representation' (1993), a text edited by geographers James Duncan and David Ley, is based on a series of essays prepared for the symposium 'New Directions in Cultural Geography' in 1989. The volume addresses the issues of process,

representation, and the authority of authorship with respect to cultural and place-based study, with contributed chapters united by the view that landscape and place are constructed by knowledgeable agents caught up in webs of economic, social, cultural and political circumstances that are often not of their own choosing. For Gupta and Ferguson, cultural geographic research must reflect histories and contexts, where neither the individual nor context is privileged, but are understood to be dialectically related (1993, p. 229). Regarding authorship and the role of the researcher, Duncan and Ley note in the epilogue how the act of observing and reading landscapes and their elements brings with it the history and intentions of the academic. It must be recalled, they argue, that the meanings of what is observed are unstable and multiple realities, and that consequently any presentation is best thought of as a presentation; a construction that is contentment, partial and unfinished (1993). In using photography as a visual methodology for the research as well as in reflecting on my own assumption and assertions of ethnicized visuality, these insights are particularly relevant.

Looking at the other end of this dialectic, from the view of cultural producers, a work by Ann Swidler entitled 'Culture and Action: Symbols and Strategies' (1986) provides some insight that has retained currency over the years. Coming from a sociology background, Swidler was interested not in the estimation of how culture shapes action, but rather, how culture is used by actors. This recognition of active agency is

important for our purposes, as it recognizes the self-aware application of cultural elements by groups and individuals to various ends, and as part of a larger process of cultural adaptation and change. Given that this project looks at the use of culturally-referent aesthetics by cultural members, this is a useful insight. Taking what could be considered a more reactionary stance, theorists Lester Rowntree and Margaret W. Conkey use a continuum model in their paper 'Symbolism and the Cultural Landscape' to wage their assertion that symbolism, in a cultural context, is often wielded as a social claim to space and time (1980). Under cultural stress, shared symbols are accessed and promoted to the ends of a kind of cultural identity confirmation – when the footing of identity is destabilized, groups make use of an iconography that can be counted on to provide an aesthetic unity (ibid.).

This element of stress was explored a couple years prior by Amos Rapoport, in 'Culture and the Subjective Effects of Stress' for the journal Urban Ecology in 1978. Here, he defines stress as the matching of a situation against subjective norms and expectations (1978, p. 257). Working with our loose hypothesis that deliberately cultivated ethnic aesthetics are utilized to better assert and advertise a consumptive cultural experience, one can extrapolate this proposed relationship between stress and symbolism to the cultural and commercial landscapes of the city.

This 'stress' may also be related to cultural movement and displacement. John Berger, previously referenced in this review, wondered if migration may be more and more portrayed as the quintessential experience of our age (1984, p. 55). In the Canadian context, this is especially true. In a work by Nigel Rapport, entitled 'Migrant Selves and Stereotypes' (1995) he notes how for a world of travellers, migrants, exiles and commuters, 'home' comes to be found more in practices and interactions, where "discursive iodoms come to provide beacons of constancy and recognition" (1995, p. 268). In his essay, Rapport examines the way migrants maintain and project a sense of cultural identity through stereotypes, asserting that individuals personalize the stereotyped discourse through putting elements of it into practice, interpreting and utilizing its implications within the context of their own lives and intensions. Rapport sees stereotypes as a kind of shorthand, offering both opposition and exaggeration; a blunt instrument that flourishes in edgy and complex environments (1995, p. 282). So, while the use of stereotypes – and this can be applied to symbolism and iconography – may be dismissed as pathological or untrue, it may also be seen that such seemingly superficial aesthetics are part of a practice of interpretation in defining and utilizing socio-cultural otherness. It is important to keep these thoughts in mind in the interest of better understanding the motives of designers and owners, as well as in appreciating the degree of agency involved in utilizing representational strategies.

34

The next and final section of this literature review engages with visual culture, providing a departure point for the ensuing photo-essays and analysis.

2.1.7   Looking, Visual Culture and Visual Practice

Theories of Looking

As previously stated, the common thread throughout the theoretical framework of this study, as well as with the literature reviewed in preparation for the research and analysis, is that of the visual. This final section of the literature covers works on looking and the significance of the visual, as well as the notion of 'visual culture', which is a term that has gained ground in various fields over the past couple of decades. The literature discussed here is arguably some of the most important work considered in preparation for this thesis, as it was central to informing the methodology, analysis and reflection.

I'd like to begin by citing the art historian and social critic John Berger. In 1984, Berger wrote 'Ways of Seeing'. This concise and highly influential publication is comprised of written and photographic essays based on Berger's BBC television series of the same name, originally aired in the late seventies. 'Ways of Seeing' has had a lasting impact on academic as well as popular understandings of the politics of looking. The

book made a big impression on me when I first read it years ago, and it pleases me to return to it in this context of research. In 'Ways of Seeing', Berger establishes the assertion that there is a tendency to know our worlds in a visual capacity. This assertion informs his critique of art and advertising, where in a decidedly un-jargoned manner, he explains the ways in which particular ways of seeing are not only historically and culturally cultivated, but are often deliberately controlled experiences that work to re-establish the authority of the dominant classes along with the narratives necessary to sustain patterns and cultures of consumption (1984). His earlier volume, 'About Looking' (1980) navigates these topics in less political tones, exploring our role as observers in revealing new layers of meaning in what we see. The deft and critical insights offered by Berger are essential, in my view, to properly grasp the dialectical nature of seeing. By probing the significance of looking and seeing as means of cultural production and re-production, Berger provides an art historical and sometimes radical voice to the discussions of space, place, and culture in the social sciences.

Works by W.J.T. Mitchell, a prolific thinker and writer on all things seen, are also crucial reads to preface any foray into visual analysis. Works like 'Iconology: Image, Text and Ideology' (1987), Picture Theory' (1994) and 'What do Pictures Want?' (2005) are all valuable pieces exploring the role of the visual and the image in society and art. While the latter works are concerned with images specifically, arguing that they have, in

36

a manner of speaking, living essences and characters, 'Iconology' is most useful for our purposes in its exploration of the iconography of imagery to "…show how the notion of imagery serves as a kind of relay connecting theories of art, language, and the mind with conceptions of social, cultural, and political value" (1987, p. 2). 'Practices of Looking' (2008), now in its second edition, was written by leading scholars Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright. Here, they examine the range of approaches to visual analysis through a review of theory and practice with respect to a variety of media. Guided by a dialectical understanding of visuality, the authors analyze images and the world of the everyday visual as they relate to cultural and representational issues and methodologies.

The following section builds from this acknowledgement of the visual as a means of knowing and producing knowledges by looking at the field and practice of 'visual culture' itself.

Visual Culture

Visual culture as an idea, term, practice, and field of study has become firmly established over the past couple of decades. While it can involve just about every discipline, from geography to art history to anthropology, the common focus within this cross-disciplinarity is found in the study of cultural aspects that are inherently visual and/or image-based. It is now possible to retrieve many texts and introductory volumes

that cite visual culture right in the title, aimed at both students and professionals working with visual topics and information. One such example is 'Visual Culture' (1995) edited by Chris Jenks. 'Visual Culture' is a comprehensive volume - the title alone suggests a certain authority on the topic - whose contributing chapters touch on the practices and politics of the visual as they appear in various facets of society. As editor, Jenks discusses the centrality of the eye in Western culture, and elaborates on the need for a reflexive looking, arguing that it is both necessary and possible to forge a conscious recognition of the constructive relation between our visual practices and our visual culture (1995, p. 11). For Jenks, there is no objective vision, and to observe empirically is not possible; our own subjectivities are infused into looking, and any analysis and research needs to involve this reciprocity. This is something this project aims to accomplish.

The first edition of 'An Introduction to Visual Culture' by Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999) helped to establish 'visual culture' as a field in and of itself. In 'Introduction to Visual Culture', Mirzoeff explores how and why visual media have become central to contemporary everyday life, arguing that the visual is replacing the linguistic as our primary means of communication and understanding the postmodern world. Since the proliferation of visual study that followed the first edition, the second edition (2009) was left to concentrate on discussing the visual politic in different aspects of media, culture,

governance and commerce. For Mirzoeff, looking is a right – a claim to respond critically to the ubiquity of the visual in contemporary society – and his work is guided by this sense of awareness and agency. Additionaly and importantly Mirzoeff sees visual culture as a practice and methodology, something that this project has taken and run with. As the work in this thesis not only analyses visual culture but uses the visually-based medium and methodology of photography to capture and present the findings, there is an engagement and production of visual culture involved in both the research process and products. With this in mind, the last sub-section reviews considered literature concerned with visual practice, with a special focus on photography.

Visual Practice

'Visual practice' refers here to *practiced visualities*, that is, the use and application of visual technologies, methodologies, and creativities. The emphasis being applied within this notion of visual practice is on that of photography, the use of which figures heavily in the research process of this project.

Photography has long held a special status among the empirically-minded due to the factual authority credited to photographic technology and record. However, in recent decades, the objective neutrality of the photograph has come under question and photography is increasingly understood to be the complicated product of visual and

39

epistemological processes that it really is. Famed art historian and social critic Susan Sontag's 1977 collection of essays 'On Photography' contains a series of essays that explore the action and inaction involved in photography, argued at once to be part of symptomatic voyeurism and an active, even aggressive event of acquisition. Her observations regarding how taking a photograph indicates that the individual doing so has, in a manner, "mastered the situation" (1997, p.12) is a darkly humorous and deft summary of the pitfalls of photographic representation in academic research.

French literary theorist Roland Barthes, who wrote 'Camera Lucida' in 1980, inquired as to the nature of photography through investigating the effects of photographic images on the spectator. For Barthes, the process of photography involved a spectrum involving the photographer, the object of the photograph, and the spectator. His special concern was with deconstructing the emotional effect of certain photographs – the book is part ode to his deceased mother - and this was done by developing the twin concepts of '*studium*', the cultural, linguistic and political interpretations of a photograph, and the '*punctum*', denoting the personal interpretation that connects the observed to the photographed. John Berger and Jean Mohr's 'Another Way of Telling' (1982) also examines the instability of documentational and factual meaning in photographs, exploring the tension between the photographer and the photographed, the visual and the viewer. While these latter works are very philosophical in tone and form, their offerings

on the innate subjectivity involved with photography are entirely valid in informing an aware photographic research practice.

Aside from works that ponder photography in the abstract, the acknowledgement of the visual has been long recognized as rather central to fieldwork and research in geography. This is exemplified by founding geographer Halford Mackinder over a century ago, who went so far as to conceive of the geographic discipline as a special form of visualization itself (1887). There have been a good number of papers and texts concerned with the role of the visual record in geography with photography examined in particular, still, these are largely of an historical bent in that they discuss the role of photography-*past* in imperialist and empirical geographic pursuits and approaches (see Bell, Butlin & Heffernan, 1995; Edney, 1997; Godlewska, 1999; Ryan, 1997, 2005; Schwartz, 1996; Schulten, 2001; Withers, 2002). Geographer Felix Driver reviews this long standing relationship between photography and geographic fieldwork, asserting that the nuances of observation have always been integral to the theories and practices of geographical knowledges. Building from his 1995 paper 'Visualizing Geography: A Journey into the Heart of the Discipline', Driver's 2003 piece for Antipode entitled 'On Geography as a Visual Discipline' addresses the (then) present state of the discipline, expressing a need to devote a greater attention to the visual as a subject of inquiry in its own right. Driver stresses thinking about representation in geography as more than

something to be counter-posed to notions of practice, and rather, as something produced through practice itself (2003, p. 228). This insight is applicable to the use of photography in this project as a form of reflexive engagement with positioned visualities.

Gillian Rose, in the paper 'Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, Some Photographs and a Researcher' (2000) looks at how meanings in photographs are established by their uses, as well as their status as part of particular geographic archives. She notes that:

> "Recent work on photography and geography has certainly focused on the meanings of things photographed. Several writers have made a strong case for the importance of photographs as a source for historical geographers […] these geographers argue that photographs are not simply mimetic of the world they show. Rather, it is being argued that the production, circulation and consumption of photographs produce and reproduce the imagined geographies of the social group or institution for which they were made" (2000, p. 555).

These points have special relevance for the photography practiced to the ends of this project, as they do not presume to be documentary, but as stated by Rose, are part a circulation of ideological production as well as a visual, social and spatial dialectic

between myself, the city, and its histories. This dialectical process as it applies to urban representation was explored in an undergraduate fieldwork setting by James D. Sidaway, whose report 'Photography as geographical fieldwork', published in the Journal of Geography in Higher Education in 2002, looks at the use of the camera as a research methodology among his students. In Sidaway's view, photography is an accessible and creative means with which to introduce and explore questions of methodolgy, epistemology, and representation. By asking students to analyze their project photographs taken during fieldwork in Barcelona, Spain, Sidaway found that an aware use of the photographic medium, in keeping with a pedagogical awareness of the issue of representation, allowed for reflection among the students on what criteria was being used in the choice to frame certain things and in selecting certain images.

In the paper 'Show Me How it Feels to Work Here: Using Photography to Research Organizational Aesthetics' (2002) Samantha Warren discusses the potential role of photographs in exploring the aesthetic dimension of work environments. Warren cites the limitations of text-based research as a medium of articulating aesthetic experience due to the sensory and visual nature of aesthetic phenomena, and argues that such issues necessitate the employment of a more "sensually complete" methodology (2002, p. 225), and as such, introduces photography as one step towards this end. The recently published doctoral thesis of philosopher and photographer Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, entitled

'Guided Tours: The Layered Dynamics of Self, Place and Image in Two American Neighbourhoods' (2009) uses photography as the central means to process knowing and experiencing place through seeing. Her knowledge of the photograph as a subjective frame of vision informed her research path in that her photographs were combined with the place-knowledge and first-hand accounts of two neighbourhoods in New York City and Los Angeles, provided by her own experience as a resident in addition to those of other residents who acted as tour guides along the way. On her walks/tours, certain places that figured in the stories and memories of residents were photographed and discussed. Participants were later asked to look at her photographs and provide reflection on what the images meant to them. These interpretations were included in the discussion of the thesis, along with her own memories and commentary, contributing to the discursive place-making process inherent to knowing, living and seeing as explored in the project. Bendiner-Vinai's use of the photograph as an object of perspective is one that has immense value for the analysis in my own work.

In terms of texts that provide explicit council on how to pursue visual methodologies in the social sciences, there are a number that have been referenced for the approach taken in this project. Markus Banks, teacher at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropolgy at the University of Oxford, wrote the publication 'Visual Methods in Social Research' in 2001, and followed up with 'Using Visual Data in Qualitative

Research' a few years later in 2007. Informed by his concentrations in visual anthropology, cultural studies and ethnographic film, these texts read as a manual for students in the social sciences whose research combines visual materials in the course of field research. Banks stresses visual media are objects that are entangled in social relations; while being representations of reality, these media are not direct encodings to support various theorizations, and are therefore subject to the influences of their cultural, social and historical contexts of production and consumption (2001). Generally, Banks argues for a humanistic, engaged and reflexive approach to social research. These concerns are thematic in most recent publications on similar topics. 'Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation' edited by Gregory Stanczak (2007) echoes the call for a critical awareness in visual media as a research tool, examining visual research as employed across a variety of disciplines. 'An Introduction to Visual Research Methods in Tourism' (2011), edited by Tijana Rakic and Donna Chambers, was also valuable in informing the research process of this project as it promotes the use of a range of visual methods in the context of geographic tourism studies.

The following chapter will build on this literature in an articulation of the methodological approach taken in the research portion of this project.

Chapter 3

Methodology

While guided by broad reading on theories of place, social process, the aesthetics of consumption, cultural representation and the other fields and topics previously discussed, the methodological component of this project was accomplished through the visual practice of photography. While the use of photography specifically has been long practiced in ethnographic pursuits where the camera is relied on to document and preserve the moments and objects of human culture, contemporary geographic social and spatial research has experienced a recent surge of the visual in both teaching and practice (Driver, 2003; Ryan, 2003). The field of geography, in which this thesis is framed, has long been a discourse in making and interpreting the visual world (Ryan, 2005), reaching as far back to Ptolemy's conception of geography as an enterprise essentially concerned with picturing the world (Breggen & Jones, 2001). In recent years, however, geographers have shown increasing interest in how the popular impulse towards visualization both shapes and reflects geographical languages, practices and ideas, and in doing so, are moving in step with the increasingly visual nature of contemporary society and culture (Driver, 2003; Ryan, 2003; Tuan, 1979). This increasing interest in visual cultures and methodologies has also been tempered by the knowledge that the relationship between

46

sight and knowledge is mediated through complex perceptual and cultural processes, and indeed, this mediated nature of observation and depiction is central to a growing body of geographical scholarship that examines the representations of landscape in visual culture, including considerations of architecture, design, and aesthetics (Browntree & Conkey, 1980; Crang, 1999; Ryan, 2005).

The arc of the methodological approach and framework, then, is one of a practiced visual culture: as explained by Nicholas Mirzoeff, visual culture is a methodological strategy, a tactic which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer (Mirzoeff, 2009). In looking at the aesthetics of Indian restaurants, assumed to communicate and evoke a particular ethnic elsewhere and cultural aesthetic recognizable to the expectations and tastes of the consumer, a visual culture approach – one that examines visual culture while using a visual methodology to explore and analyze it – is fitting to the intensions of this thesis.

In amassing a list of restaurants for this study, restaurants listed as "Indian" were researched through the internet listings of eateries in Montreal (see restomontreal.ca). It was discovered that just over 30 such restaurants were located within the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods, with the great majority of them being situated

along the streets of St. Laurent and St. Denis in the Plateau-Montreal neighbourhood, as well as Rue Jean-Talon and Rue Jarry in the Parc Extension neighbourhood. Thirty restaurants exactly ended up being part of the study, with fifteen in each neighbourhood. These two neighbourhoods, as will be discussed in the chapter concerning site, differ not only in their proximity to the downtown core, but in their demographic make up as well. Whereas Plateau-Montreal is a largely gentrified area that hosts an Anglophone, Francophone and tourist-based population (in the summer months especially, for the latter) the Parc Extension is currently characterized by a large Indian population, amongst other significantly sized minority groups and recent immigrant communities (Germain & Rose, 2000). Photographs were then taken of thirty Indian restaurants, from the view of the sidewalk, in an attempt to capture the street front external aesthetics of each business as it would be witnessed by my self as a would-be consumer and passer-by. Following the collection of this visual data, each photograph was reviewed and analyzed with the aim of identifying the use of particular cultural aesthetics, and in doing so, identifying any themes, patterns or consistencies in the visual culture of the restaurants as a group and by neighbourhood. This stage of the analysis was then followed by a second tier of review in which the photographs of the restaurant exteriors are examined as objects of visual culture in their own right; that is, as examples of my visual subjectivity and engagement with visual culture in the city.

48

The subjective character of photography lends itself to this type of reflexive analysis. Previously mentioned in the literature review, Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani's photo essay and research into the visualities of knowing and living in place (2009) provided a great deal of inspiration and guidance in my own photo-taking and in my review of such photos: once the visual data has been gathered, as in my case, a kind of index of culturally evocative aesthetics of businesses at the scale of the street front, the photos were then available for a second analysis that accounts for their being products of my own cultural and academic vision. Her psychogeographic approach to the photographic assignment, along with the review of the photos as objects of perception, provided me with a loose model for my own approach to taking pictures in this project.

The methodology, then, is comprised of both qualitative and quantitative elements, accommodating a reflexive visual culture along with a categorical and numbers - based analysis. Together, these approaches generate a certain tension in the methodology, however, the application of blended methods provides for a research approach that is strengthened by the qualities and informational viewpoints of differing social science methods. The intention here is to provide an analysis and discussion that is thorough; one that benefits from the more traditional geographic research canon as well as the possibilities offered by more contemporary and deconstructivist approaches.

In sum, the photographs and analysis of this project aim to be a humble contribution to the growing recognition and discussion of visual phenomena in the socio-spatial dialectic of our cities, as well as an opportunity for critical reflection on the use of photography as a visual methodology in and of itself. Given the explorations of visuality, of culture, representation and authenticity inherent to this thesis, along with the acknowledged dialectical relationship between place and person that has been established in the literature, the use of photography in this thesis is an ideal method to express the exchanges and transformations of meaning in ethnic and cultural aesthetics, as well as in addressing my role in this process as a cultural outsider, 'looker', and positioned researcher.

Keeping these methodological points in mind, the following chapter deals with the site(s) of the restaurants photographed for the project. The aim is to present some historical and demographic context for the restaurants and ensuing analysis. We will begin with a review of the site of Montreal city, along with the neighbourhoods of Parc Extension and the Plateau – Mont Royal.

Chapter 4

Site

This project involves several sites, along with several notions, or layers, of place: we begin from the city of Montreal, looking at life on the island in particular. From this municipal and geographic context, we then look at two neighbourhoods of the city. These are the Plateau-Mont Royal neighbourhood, and that of Parc Extension. The concentration on these neighbourhoods is due to the finding that the online listings of Indian restaurants for the island of Montreal showed most to be located in these two areas. This finding lends itself to exploring a comparative analysis between the restaurants as they visually present in each neighbourhood. The histories and demographics of these neighbourhoods provides additional interest, as will be touched upon later in this section, citing the gentrification process at work in the Plateau and the significance of Parc Extension as an affordable area for new immigrants.

Generalizations are difficult to avoid, and I'd like to acknowledge the limitations of the project in properly capturing the degree of variance and individual agency and creativity in every-day place-making and cultural identity occurring in these areas, as well as the city at large. Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are broad and complex issues, as work by Annick Germain and Martha Radice have shown in their research on

51

multiethnic neighbourhoods, immigration, and cosmopolitanism in Montreal (Germain, 2011; Germain & Radice, 2006).

Despite the cultural and culinary diversity that is likely to exist within the selection of restaurants in this study, they are united in this thesis by virtue of their listing as 'Indian' restaurants alone. Indeed, many of these restaurants self-identify as 'Indian cuisine' right on their signs, as is visible in the photographs and as will be discussed later on in the analysis. No other greater cultural unity is assumed by extension of 'Indian' listings. What is sought in this project is to document and reflect on how ethnic and cultural aesthetics, and by default, a sense of 'elsewhereness', is cultivated and projected in the visual culture of Indian restaurant exteriors. The actual range of identities, contested and projected, within the highly diverse cultural milieu of Montreal is assuredly far greater than what the parameters of this project can hope to accommodate. With these footnotes in mind, we will begin with an overview of Montreal, followed by the selected neighbourhoods.

4.1   Montreal

As discussed in the introductory section of this thesis, the city of Montreal grew from a project of European settlement and colonization, and this is reflected in the spatial, architectural and aesthetic tone of the built environment. That said, all flows of

immigration following these French, English and Scottish roots have steadily made their mark in Montreal, adding degrees of cultural and aesthetic diversity on the island over the years. Indeed, the transformations wrought by waves of immigration on the socio-cultural space of Montreal since the 1960s are leading to the substitution of the traditional French-English dualism for that of a truly multi-cultural centre. The increase in international migration since the 1980s especially has made the city increasingly multiethnic and culturally pluralistic, yielding a vibrant diversity that has come to permeate neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, the arts and cultural fields throughout the city (Germain & Rose, 2000).

While much of this immigration has come from Europe, this too is beginning to change. According to Canadian census data, in 1971, nearly 98 percent of the population of Montreal had European origins; with the East Asian (primarily Chinese) population holding a significant presence as well. However, since the early 1980s, the percentage of non-Europeans has increased by roughly 3 percent every 5 years, with 59,940 persons of South Asian descent and 32,675 persons of Southeast Asian decent identified to be living in Montreal as of the 2006 Canadian census counts (Statistics Canada).

Table 1. *South Asian and Southeast Asian Populations in Canada, Quebec and Montreal. Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Counts for Canadian Provinces and Territories and Census Divisions. 20% Sample Data.*

Geocode	Geographic Name	Total - Population by Visible Minority Groups	Total Visible Minority Population(1)	South Asian(2)	Southeast Asian(3)
1	Canada	31,241,030	5,068,090	1,262,865	239,935
24	Quebec	7,435,905	654,355	72,845	50,455
2474	**Montréal (Que.)**	**1,823,905**	**455,970**	**59,940**	**32,675**

While the ever-swelling population of Montreal flows off-island in the greater metropolitan area, the highest concentrations of immigrant communities have always been found and remain on the island of Montreal itself (Germain & Radice, 2006). As we review the neighbourhoods of Plateau - Mont Royal and Parc Extension, we will see the extent to which these immigrant communities have contributed to neighbourhood histories and present-day character.

For the purposes of this project, I will be defining neighbourhoods along the boundaries of Montreal boroughs or "arrondissements". According to the charter of the city of Montreal, these boroughs were officially conceived and structured as a function of administrative and management considerations (Collin & Robertson, 2005). The boundaries of the arrondissements are reflective of the otherwise informal neighbourhood boundaries, each with their own characteristics and identities derived from a range of

54

geographic, historic, socio-economic and socio-demographic histories and circumstance (ibid.).

Figure 1. *The neighbourhoods of Montreal. Source: Ville.montreal.qc.ca*

4.2   Plateau - Mont Royal

Going back to the beginning, during the seventeenth century, the Plateau - Mont Royal district was originally the site of the village of Saint-Jean Baptiste, located at the north end of Sherbrooke and running up to the intersection of Duluth (Criekingen & Decroly, 2003). Primarily occupied by English families that had moved away from the

increasing density and activity of the central city, the village was eventually annexed into the city of Montreal proper by the early 1900's. A major influx of Eastern European immigrants later in the century gave the neighbourhood a strong Portuguese presence that has lasted to the present, however, the working-class roots of this neighbourhood have since been overshadowed by a process of gentrification (Criekingen & Decroly, 2003; Germain & Rose, 2000).

While the presence of restaurants has been long-standing in the area (Nash, 2009) there has undoubtedly been an increase in the range of cuisine available in the Plateau, most notably along the Plateau routes of St. Laurent and St. Denis. There are over thirty Indian restaurants along Saint Laurent and Saint Denis, all of which have been photographed as part of this study.

Historically, Boulevard Saint Laurent was the main conduit for European immigration. Newly arrived immigrants typically followed a pattern of settling first in neighbourhoods immediately east and north of the city core, then gradually travelling northwards to gain access to more middle-class sectors of what came to be termed the "immigrant corridor" (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 222). English-speaking Montreal residents have referred to Saint Laurent as 'the Main' on account of it functioning as the main street for so many of the ethnic groups that now make up Montreal's Anglophone population. Whereas Saint Laurent has been associated with immigration, Saint Denis,

located a few streets down, has had a long history of being a busy commercial artery of the city that was (and is) associated with an unofficial Francophone-Anglophone geographic divide, despite the reality of there being a much more complex series of linguistic and cultural intersections and overlaps occurring in the area (Germain & Rose, 2000).

Beginning in the 1980s, the city of Montreal undertook the policy of awarding comparatively larger grants in the Greater Plateau - Mont Royal district, along with the implementation of a number of neighbourhood revitalization programs aimed at conserving the architectural character and heritage of the area. These actions sped up the gentrification process in the Plateau that has since wrought changes in socio-economic demographics, retail structure, housing costs, and a heightened presence of leisure and tourist-based consumption (Criekingen & Decroly, 2003). The process of gentrification in the Plateau - Mont Royal area has seen the traditional immigrant corridor replaced by newer reception areas where rents are priced at a more accessible level. This brings us to the other neighbourhood considered within this project: Parc Extension.

4.3   Parc Extension

Built in proximity to the Canadian Pacific Railway yards, the neighbourhood

Parc Extension was formerly an Anglophone neighbourhood. Originally a small village outside of Montreal, Villeray was annexed by the Montreal municipality in the early 1900's and has experienced steady growth and integration with the rest of the city since the Second World War, while Parc Extension, developed on land purchased in a speculative capacity by the city as part of a Parc Avenue extension in 1907, has consistently served as a place of arrival for many immigrants and continues to be one of the most multi-ethnic districts of the city (Germain & Rose, 2000). After the civil war in Greece during the 1940s, large numbers of Greek immigrated to Montreal, concentrating in Parc Extension as well as the Mile End, and for a time, Parc was an important centre of Greek culture. However, the population of the neighbourhood has since diversified considerably, becoming an area of great importance for more recent immigrant settlement from around the world. Characterized by high density and affordable rents, Parc Extension is now home to a sizeable immigrant community (Germain, 2011). This make up is visible in the concentration of 'ethnic' businesses and restaurants in the area, including a proportionally large number of Indian restaurants (see indiagoldpages.ca; restomontreal.ca).

Figure 2. *Proportion of immigrants in the neighbourhoods of Montreal. Source: Collin & Roberston, 2011.*

Chapter 5

Analysis

5.1   Restaurants

In selecting restaurants for this study, the online yellow pages for restaurants in Montreal were consulted under the search criteria of 'Indian restaurants'. The resulting list of thirty such restaurants were then visited and photographed for the project. The great majority of these fell within the neighbourhoods of Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension, with many, as stated previously, being located along the streets of Boulevard Saint Laurent and Saint Denis. The following table lists those restaurants that were found through an online search of 'Indian restaurants' in city of Montreal, sourcing the website restomontreal.ca. The search, conducted in March of 2011, yielded a list of 74 restaurants matching the criteria of the Greater Montreal region and Indian cuisine. The thirty or so restaurants then selected for this study were chosen for their locations in the Plateau and Parc Extension neighbourhoods, and are listed in the order that they were encountered in my walks through these respective neighbourhoods. Fifteen restaurants were considered within each neighbourhood, with the great majority of them lined along the streets of Saint Laurent and Saint Denis in the Plateau, and Rue Jean Talon and Rue

Jarry in Parc Extension.

Table 2. *List of observed Indian restaurants by neighbourhood and street location, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Restaurant Name	Neighbourhood	Street
Du Pain de L'Inde	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St. Laurent
Atma Restaurant	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St. Laurent
Mysore Restaurant	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St. Laurent
Chef Guru	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St. Laurent
Le Palais de L'Inde	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St. Laurent
Lumiere de L'Inde	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St Laurent
La Porte de L'Inde	Plateau-Mont Royal	Blvd. St Laurent
Restaurant East India	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue Prince Arthur
Le Rajput Authentic and Fusion Indian Cuisine	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue Prince Arthur
Faim Du Mond	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis
Restaurant Ambala Fine Indian Cuisine	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis
Roi de L'Inde	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis
La Nouvelle Lune Indienne	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis

Restaurant Bombay	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis
Restaurant Shezan	Plateau-Mont Royal	Rue St. Denis
Moti Mehal	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Restaurant Bombay Mahal	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Restaurant Punjab Palace	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Restaurant New Sana Tandoori Palace	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Sana Restaurant	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Buffet Delhi Bombay	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
DBR Curry and Naan Delhi Bombay	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Maison Indian Cury	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Pushap	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Restaurant Lazzeez	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Restaurant India's Oven	Parc Extension	Rue Jean Talon
Jasmine Patisserie Oriental	Parc Extension	Rue Hutchison
Malhi Sweets Indian Cuisine	Parc Extension	Rue Jarry
Desi Dera Restaurant Inc.	Parc Extension	Rue Jarry
India Beau Village	Parc Extension	Rue Jarry

The restaurants observed for this project are represented in the following simple maps (Map 1, 2). Each restaurant is denoted by a red place marker. In comparing the distribution between the two neighbourhoods, it is interesting to note the differences in distribution; the Parc Extension Indian restaurants tend to be much more clustered, while the Plateau – Mont Royal restaurants are spread throughout the area. The possible significance of these distributions will be commented on later in the analysis and discussion.

Map 1. *Distribution of observed Indian restaurants in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood, Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: maps.google.ca*

Map 2. *Distribution of observed Indian restaurants in the Parc Extension neighbourhood, Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: maps.google.ca*

Distribution of Observed Indian Restaurants in
Plateau – Mont Royal, Montreal.

2000 ft.

Legend

1. Du Pain de L'Inde
2. Atma Restaurant
3. Mysore Restaurant
4. Chef Guru
5. Le Palais de L'Inde
6. Lumiere de L'Inde
7. Le Rajput
8. Restaurant East India
9. La Faim du Monde
10. Restaurant Ambala
11. Roi de L'Inde
12. La Nouvelle Lune Indienne
13. Restaurant Bombay
14. Restaurant Shezan
15. Porte de L'Inde

Distribution of Observed Indian Restaurants in Parc Extension, Montreal.

2000 ft.

Legend

1. **Moti Mehal**
2. **Restaurant Bombay Mahal**
3. **Buffet Dehli Bombay**
4. **Masion Indian Curry**
5. **DBR Curry and Naan**
6. **Restaurant Punjab Palace**
7. **Pushap Restaurant**
8. **Restaurant Lazeez**
9. **Restaurant New Sana Tandoori Palace**
10. **India's Oven**
11. **Jasmine Patisserie Orientale**
12. **Sana Restaurant**
13. **India Beau Village**
14. **Dera Restaurant**
15. **Malhi Sweets Indian Cuisine**

5.2   Aesthetic Criteria

The objectives of this thesis are grounded in an analysis of the visual culture of the ethnicized aesthetics and the culturally and subjectively loaded gazes involved in their interpretation. In order to provide a quantifiable set of data to substantiate and reach these objectives, the analysis presents a system of visually-based aesthetic criteria with which to identify and quantify imposed categories on observed visual culture. These criteria enable a degree of research based analysis through which themes and patterns may be identified and discussed.

After walking through the neighbourhoods of the Plateau Mont Royal and Parc Extension and taking care to photograph the street front exteriors of all restaurants involved in the study, I reviewed the photographs in an effort to distinguish such themes and patterns. The result of this review was the establishment of a series of aesthetic criteria which proved, in my eye, to be consistent in the visual culture of the observed restaurants. I suggest these criteria as a categorical means to follow aesthetic strategies and cues employed in communicating a sense of 'elsewhere' and ethnicity. The following material introduces and discusses these criteria.

66

5.2.1 *Geographical Referent*

While not an explicitly visual tactic per se, the use of geographical referents in the names of Indian restaurants in both neighbourhoods was a frequent occurrence, and as such, deserved consideration in the analysis in that these references are a) visually communicated by way of text, and b) visually oriented in their ability to evoke the imagery of another geography and culture. This line of reasoning also accounts for the text on signage to be part of a process of "provoked association", whereby place names operate as "symentical metonyms" that refer to a larger whole through their associative characteristics (Hopkins, 1990, p. 4), evoking a sense of another time or place ('elsewhereness') through word - reference in the symbolic microscape of the street front.

5.2.2 *Stylized Fonts*

The textual information and imagery communicated by way of the restaurant name and adjoining associations is also relayed in the visuality of the text form in terms what that form evokes in the imaginations of those who see/read it. Many of the Indian restaurants observed in this study make use of stylized fonts, with the most ideal examples sharing similar styles (Plate 2). These styles seemed to orbit around a distinct look that would appear to reference a certain conception of 'Indian', or at the very least, an 'exotic' artistry and aesthetic. Claiming no knowledge of Indian art, it should be

noted that such instances are read and seen reflexively as part of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1992).

5.2.3 *Colour*

Review of the photographs revealed a thematic use of colour in many, if not all, of the signs and exterior decorations of the Indian restaurants considered for the project. While red was observed to be the most commonly used colour, green, orange and white were also observed to figure frequently in signage and general exteriors. Green, orange, white and blue are those that make up the Indian state flag (Virmani, 1999, Image 1). Other observed colours include yellow and pink.

While blue and red have been cited in marketing research as having both common use and broad appeal in international branding exercises (Madden, Hewitt & Roth, 2000; Singh, 2006), folk historian Donald MacKenzie's reading of the historical Indian text, the 'Maha-bharara' found the colours blue, red, yellow, and white to be important symbolically in Hinduism (McKenzie, 1922, p. 144), while orange, or various shades of saffron, are considered to be a particularly sacred colours in Hinduism and India at large (Madden et al, 2000).

5.2.4   *Iconography*

'Iconography' is a broad hanger, yet applied here, aims to encompass the use of all iconographic and culturally symbolic imagery made use of in the visual culture (at the scale and visibility of the street front) of the restaurants considered for this study. Iconography is being defined and understood in this instance as that which constitutes representative imagery; those images which depict people, places and things that are associated with particular meanings and associations. This understanding is derived largely from a Barthian view of iconography, whereby the presumably shared associations and meanings of certain images are utilized as a type of visual currency (Barthes, 1978). The analysis of this project seeks to make use of this understanding, while taking care to emphasize and explore the context in which these images are produced, presented and represented as instances of an ethnicized cultural iconography in tandem with the validating recognition of a reciprocal gaze.

Examples of iconography identified in this study pictured and discussed in the analysis include the use of national iconography, as in the use of the Indian national flag or the three-headed lion emblematic of India to those who would recognize it, along with symbols, objects and figures that have become iconic of Indian culture, be they earnest or accurate in this association to Indian persons or otherwise, as with the picturing of the

iconic structures of the Taj Mahal or Gate of India. More general uses of iconography are also considered, as with the picturing of elephants or human figures, and in the much softer and interpretive use of decorative designs and flourishes supposed to relay a recognizable 'Indian' artistry or aesthetic.

5.2.5 *Architectural Elements*

As discussed in prior sections of this thesis, the spaces that these restaurants occupy are all of a pre-existing building stock. Architectural elements, then, cite exterior modifications or flourishes made to either alter the appearance of the exterior or to make a visual reference to the architectural motifs of (traditional) Indian building features and design. Observed instances of this type of architectural reference were found in the use of the classic archway or *Chnandrashala* so often seen in classic examples of Hindu and Muslim architecture (Ching, 1995; Peterson, 2002).

Now that these criteria have been established, the following tables entail an essentialized point system whereby the restaurants are evaluated in terms of a set of aesthetic criteria. This stripped-down visual checklist is used as a means for comparison and analysis in identifying themes and patterns in the visual culture of the considered restaurants, as well as a jumping point for the following discussion that re-states and re-examines the criteria through the questions posed within the research objectives. It

70

should be noted that while the aesthetics of the restaurant exteriors have been broken down into this set of criteria, the categories are unstable in their production and interpretation through the gaze of my own positionalities, as well as being implicated in the inherently dynamic and transformative dialectic of cultural production and reproduction. The typology is a suggestion that facilitates analysis, and not an assertion of 'real' or static categories.

Marked boxes represent the presence of each criterion (as I've determined them, and I've seen them) on a restaurant by restaurant basis. The restaurants have been organized in to two groups, represented by the following two tables. They are listed in the order that I physically and photographically encountered them, grouped thereafter by street. The first group is made up of those restaurants studied and photographed for the project in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood, with the second group being comprised of those restaurants found in the Parc Extension neighbourhood.

Table 3. *List of restaurants and observed aesthetic criteria, Plateau Mont- Royal and Parc Extension, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Restaurant	Geographical Referent	Stylized Font	Colour	Iconography	Architectural Elements
Du Pain de L'Inde	✓	✓	✓		
Atma Restaurant		✓	✓		✓

Mysore Restaurant	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Chef Guru			✓		
Le Palais de L'Inde	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lumiere de L'Inde	✓		✓	✓	
La Porte de L'Inde	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Le Rajput Authentic and Fusion Indian Cuisine	✓	✓			
Faim Du Mond		✓	✓	✓	
Restaurant Ambala Fine Indian Cuisine	✓	✓	✓		
Roi de L'Inde	✓	✓	✓	✓	
La Nouvelle Lune Indienne	✓		✓	✓	
Restaurant Bombay	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Restaurant Shezan			✓		
Moti Mehal			✓		
Restaurant Bombay Mahal	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Restaurant Punjab Palace	✓		✓	✓	
Restaurant New Sana Tandoori Palace		✓	✓		
Buffet Delhi Bombay	✓	✓	✓		
DBR Curry and Naan Delhi Bombay	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maison Indian Curry		✓	✓		
Pushap		✓	✓		
Restaurant Lazzeez		✓	✓		
Restaurant India's Oven	✓	✓	✓		
Jasmine Patisserie Oriental		✓	✓		
Sana Restaurant			✓		
Malhi Sweets		✓	✓	✓	
Dera Restaurant Inc.			✓	✓	✓
India Beau Village			✓		

The following section will discuss the findings related to the observed aesthetic criteria. Commonalities and differences amongst the use of various criteria will be explored within a comparative framework between the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods. Patterns and themes in the visual culture of these restaurants are identified, along with a deeper discussion regarding the ways in which an ethnicized, visual representation has been interpreted to exist by way of these aesthetics and overall visual culture of the restaurants as they are seen from the street.

5.3   Analysis: Aesthetic Criteria

An initial comparison of the presence of the aesthetic criteria, as I have defined and identified them, shows that the Indian restaurants in both neighbourhoods emphasize the use of stylized fonts, colour, and the image-based category of iconography (see Tables 3, 4, 5,6).

Table 4. *Totals of observed aesthetic criteria: Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension, Montreal, QC.   2011.*

Neighbourhood	Geographical Referent	Stylized Font	Colour	Iconography	Architectural Elements
Plateau – Mont Royal	11/15	10/15	15/15	9/15	3/15
Parc Extension	4/15	9/15	15/15	6/15	2/15

The next table represents the proportional use of the aesthetic criteria in the form of percentiles, shown by way of comparison between the two neighbourhoods. The percentages were derived from the total observed use of each criterion by neighbourhood, with the frequency of occurrence being divided by the total number of restaurants in each (15).

Table 4. *Comparison of observed aesthetic criteria by percentage:, Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Aesthetic Criteria	Plateau – Mont Royal	Parc Extension
Geographical Referent	73%	47%
Stylized Font	67%	60%
Colour	100%	100%
Iconography	60%	40%
Architectural Elements	2%	.07%

Represented by graph, the same data allows us to visualize rates of observed aesthetic criteria by neighbourhood as well. These graphs present the data with the use of whole values, with rates of occurrence for each criterion being weighed against the total number of restaurants in each neighbourhood (again being 15).

Graph 1. *Rates of observed aesthetic criteria in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood, Montreal, QC. 2011.*
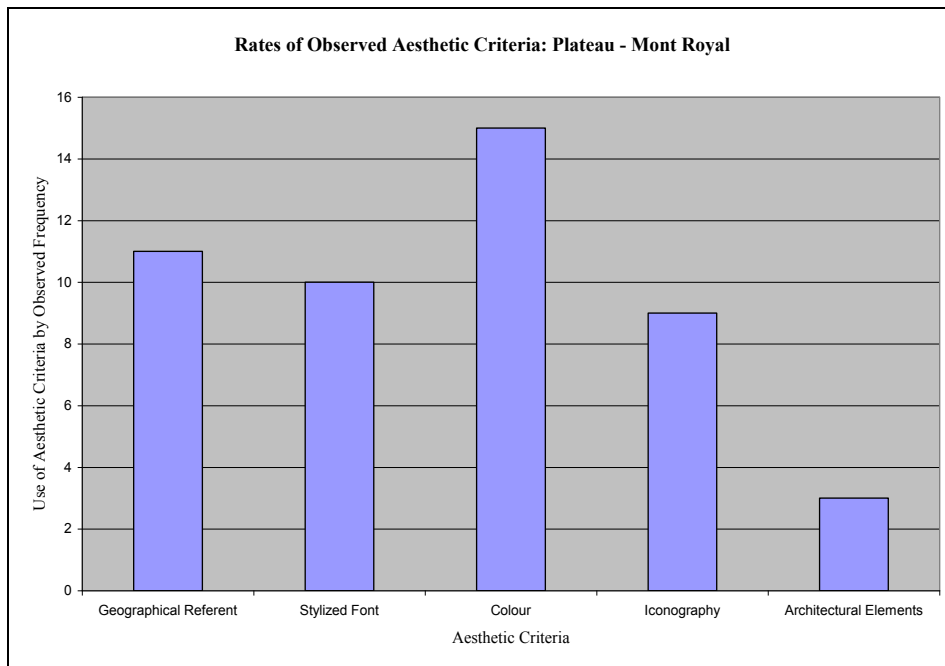
Graph 2. *Rates of observed aesthetic criteria in the Parc Extension neighbourhood, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Rates of Observed Aesthetic Criteria: Parc Extension
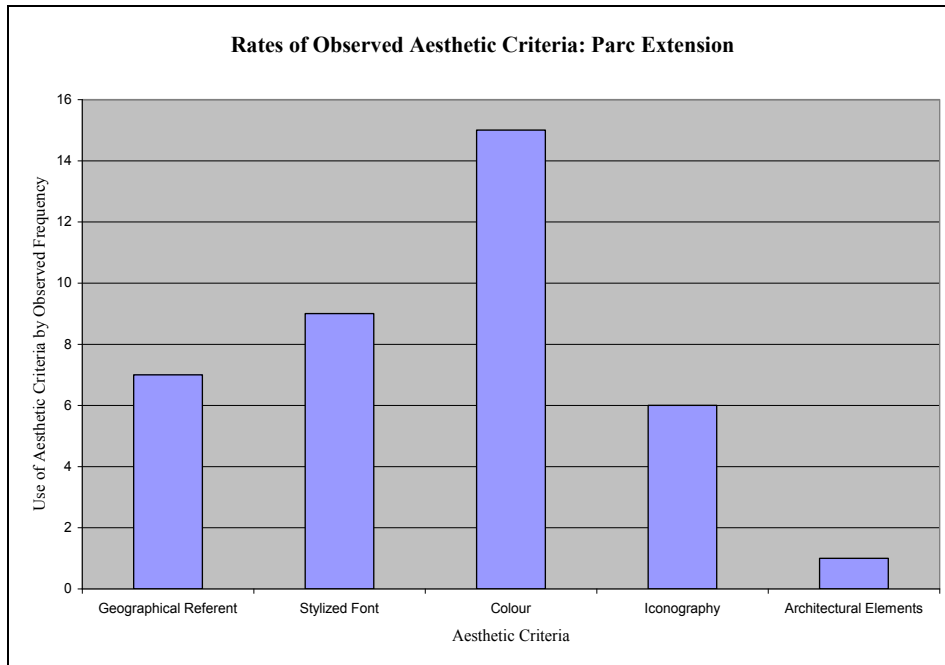
When we look at the use of the established aesthetic criteria as a set of comparative percentiles, (see Table 7) or visualized in whole numbers in a graph, (see Graph 1, 2) we can see that the fifteen restaurants considered in the Plateau Mont – Royal neighbourhood make greater use of all criteria than the fifteen looked at in the Parc Extension neighbourhood. The most notable quantitative differences are found in a higher use of iconography in the Plateau – Mont Royal restaurants, along with a greater

use of geographical referents in their names. The following sections examine the rates and implications of the observed aesthetic criteria in the same order that the aesthetic criteria were originally presented.

5.2.1 *Geographical Referent*

It was observed that 11 out of 15 of the Plateau Mont - Royal restaurants considered in this project have geographical referents in their names. These references range from that of the country of India itself, a city in India, (as with 'Msyore', or 'Bombay', now known as Mumbai) or that of a smaller geographical region or city within the Indian nation-state (as with 'Rajput', a province). The following table helps illustrate this observation, organizing referents by reference to 'country', being that of India, and references to Indian cities and/or regions. As previously stated, it was found that Indian restaurants located in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood made greater use of referencing India itself, while those references made in the business names of Parc Extension restaurants tended to favour the scale of cities and regions.

Table 6. *List of Indian restaurants in Plateau – Mont Royal that make use of geographical referents in business names, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Reference to Country	Reference to City or Region
Du Pin de L'Inde	Mysore Restaurant
Lumiere de L'Inde	Restaurant Bombay
La Porte de L'Inde	Restaurant Ambala
La Palais de L'Inde Roi de L'Inde	Le Rajput
Roi de L'Inde	
Restaurant East India	
La Nouvelle Lune Indienne	

Table 9. *List of Indian restaurants in Parc Extension that make use of geographical referents in business names, Montreal, QC. 2011.*

Reference to Country	Reference to City or Region
Maison Indian Curry	Restaurant Bombay Mahal
India's Oven	Restarurant Punjab Palace
India Beau Village	Buffet Delhi Bombay
	DBR Curry and Naan Delhi Bombay

As geographical referents were included in the aesthetic criteria by virtue of their role in visual culture via the process of 'provoked association', whereby place names operate as 'symantical metonyms' that refer to a larger whole through their associative characteristics (Hopkins, 1990, p. 4), it is interesting to contemplate the implications of referencing India explicitly, as opposed to referencing a more localized, and presumably, more obscure scale of geography. The Indian restaurants observed in the Plateau-Mont Royal neighbourhood reference India often, perhaps provoking a necessarily broad and vague association within the imaginations of consumers who are likely to have less actual familiarity with Indian geography and culture, given the higher rates of tourism and lower rates of resident immigrants of recent generation in that particular neighbourhood (see Figure 2; Germain & Rose, 2004; tourismemontreal.ca). By conjuring images of 'exotic India', the restaurants effectively market themselves as a specific kind of place and place-based experience. This self-marketing shares certain attributes with some ideas of place branding, as associative imaginings at the scale of an entire country and its cultures are wielded at the scale of the restaurant. In this way, as the restaurants utilizes the 'brand' of India to extend their own.

5.2.2 *Stylized Fonts*

Second to colour, the other most heavily used aesthetic criterion in both

neighbourhoods was that of stylized fonts. While some preliminary connections have been made between font and emotional ties in recent studies (Juni & Gross, 2008; Thangaraj, 2004), there is a dearth of material exploring cultural representation through the means of letter form itself. That said, it was noted that there was a visible consistency in the look and form of text in the signage in of observed Indian restaurants in both neighbourhoods (Plate 1).

Plate 1. *Examples of stylized fonts in the signage of Indian restaurants in the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods, Montreal, QC. 2001. Source: Author's own.*

Pictured, from left: Le Palais de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, La Porte de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, Buffet Delhi Bombay, Rue Jean Talon, Pushap Restaurant, Rue Jean Talon, India's Oven, Rue Jean Talon, Malhi Sweets, Rue Jarry, Jasmine Patisserie Orientale, Rue Hutchison, Sana Restaurant, Rue Jean Talon.

Plate 2. *Examples of other stylized fonts in the signage of Indian restaurants in the Plateau –
Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods, Montreal, QC. 2001. Source: Author's own.*

*Pictured, from top left: Restaurant Bombay Mahal, Rue Jean Talon, Restaurant Ambala, Rue St.
Denis, Atma Restaurant, Boulevard St. Laurent, Mysore Restaurant, Boulevard St. Denis.*

The examples pictured, taken from photographs of restaurants in both
neighbourhoods, show a tendency towards what could be described as an ornate style of
text characterized by decorative flourishes, supposedly to evoke associations of an Indian

or exotic aesthetic and visual culture. Other examples depart from the main style pictured in Plate 1, but still evoke a sort of stylized exoticism that became recognizable within my touristic gaze. In the case of 'Atma Resaturant', located along Saint Laurent, the stylization of the text has been made to resemble a foreign and presumably Indian form of Sanskrit (see Plate 1).

These signs, by way of their fonts and colours, are not only deliberate projections of difference, but are engaged with the expectations and imaginations imbued in a particular kind of looking (Molz, 2004; Urry, 1990). This way of looking may be understood as guided by the touristic gaze (Urry, 1990, 1995) - one that is specifically attentive to difference. This gaze notices contrast and distinctiveness; it shifts objects and actions out of the common visual world and alights on that which stands apart.

5.2.3 *Colour*

In the most literal sense of visuality, colour figures in most everything we see, and has long been an integral element of social and material culture (Gage, 1999). Indeed, with respect to marketing, colour is often one of the first elements considered as part of the overall psychological strategies of branding technique (Aslam, 2006).

In reviewing the photographs taken throughout the course of this study, it was found that the colours observed in this study are drawn from a fairly consistent palette.

Red, blue, yellow, orange and green characterize the signage and exteriors of every restaurant photographed for the project, in some combination. Upon detailed review, it was found that red was the most frequently used colour in both neighbourhoods : in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood, the colour red figures in the exterior aesthetics in nine out of the fifteen restaurants, while in Parc Extension, red was observed in ten out of fifteen. Yellow was the second most frequently observed colour, again, in both neighbourhoods, with blues, oranges, and green following suit in descending order. Pink turned up all of twice – once in each neighbourhood.

What we can immediately gather from these observations is that the range of colour used in the Indian restaurants photographed for this study is rather consistent, producing a pattern of colours that are not only vibrant, but predictable. While reds and blues tend to be popular choices in both marketing strategy and public appeal (Aslam, 2006), it is also worth noting that the consistency of the palette in the context of these restaurants coincides with the meanings of such colours in Hindu culture (see McKenzie, 1922; Madden, 2000).

Image 1. *National flag of India. Source:Newworldencyclopedia.org*

Plate 3. *Examples of the colour red as featured in the aesthetics of Indian restaurants, Montreal, QC. 2001. Source: Author's own.*

Pictured from top left: Lumiere L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, Restaurant Ambala, Rue St. Denis, India's Oven, Rue Jean Talon.
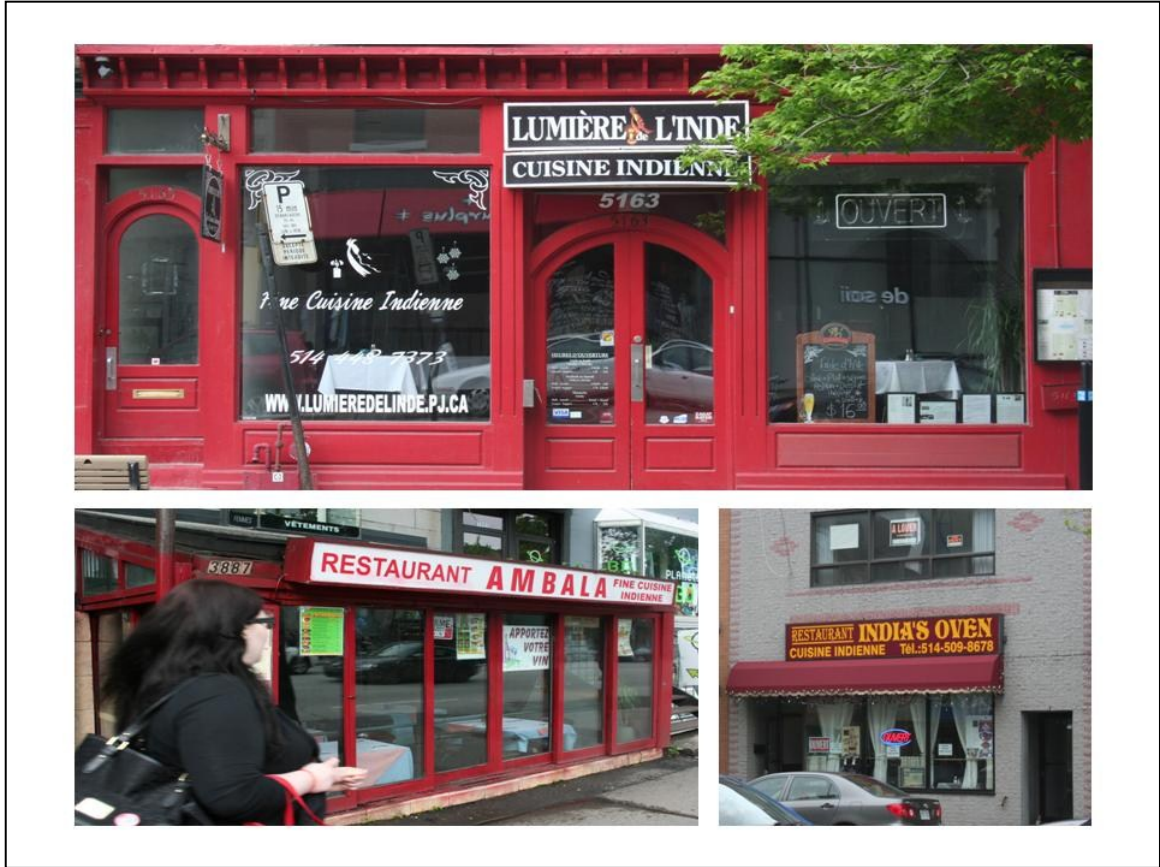
The prominence of these colours in the exterior aesthetics of the featured restaurants provides a clear correlation to the colour symbology of the Indian state: the national flag of India (Image 1) is characterized by a tricolor arrangement of orange,

white and green, marked in the centre by a blue wheel (Virmani, 1999).

Plate 4.   Examples of colours prominent in the national flag of India in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2001. Source: Author's own.

Pictured, from top, left to right: Moti Mehal, Rue Jean Talon, Mysore Restaurant, Boulevard St. Laurent, Restaurant Pushap, Rue Jean Talon, DBR Curry & Naan, Rue Jean Talon.

Plate 5. Examples of other colours in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2001. Source: Author's own.

Pictured, from top, left to right: Maison Indian Curry, Rue Jean Talon, Restaurant Lazzeez, Rue Jean Talon, India Beau Village, Rue Jarry, Malhi Sweets, Rue Jarry, Le Palais de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, Le Roi de L'Inde, Rue St. Denis.

Speaking on a personal level – something that I will get into further in the reflexive portion of the analysis dealing with the associations inherent to my own gaze – I can say that colour, as well as font style, were so consistent that I began to scan the

streetscape for what I was coming to know as the tell-tale sings of an Indian restaurant. My eye would travel along in search of combinations of red, green, yellows and orange, which proved a fairly accurate technique, despite the visual chaos present in the dense signage that characterizes the main, heavily commercial streets involved in the study (Saint Laurent, Saint Denis, Rue Jean Talon and Rue Jarry). This tendency to scan the general visual culture of the environment for colour (as well as particular styles of lettering, as will be discussed shortly) speaks to the urban semiotics described by Gottdiener (1986) where individuals work to spot and decode the spectrum of meanings imbued into the physical and visual substance of the city. In the vein of Jenks's assertions regarding the reproduction of culture, even as it operates at the level of purely visual information, my eyes and expectations became trained through the consistent associative display of these colours in direct conjunction with an ethnically and culturally defined form of consumerism (Geertz, 1993; Jenks, 1993, 1995).

5.2.4 *Iconography*

As stated in the section introducing the aesthetic criteria, the understanding of iconography being applied here is one that identifies instances of representative imagery, that is, the use of imagery as an iconic system of reference to communicate meaning and establish a desired association; a "visual lexis" (Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001, p. 92).

A review of the types of iconography observed is helpful to establish themes in the exterior aesthetics of the Indian restaurants examined in this study. It was found that while some iconography was nationally and culturally explicit, as in the use of the Indian flag, other uses of iconography were more reliant on popular perceptions and imaginations of traditional India, while the most subtle uses of decoration made use of vague iconographies of exotic aesthetics. It has been written that in the spiritual vocabulary of Hindusim, there is the concept of '*darsan*', where Hindus go to the temple and meet the powerful, eternal gaze of the eyes of God. '*Darsan*' means to "see" the divine image, and it is the single most common and significant element of Hindu worship (Eck, 1998, p. 1). This beautiful practice and concept is interesting to keep in mind in exploring the visual in Indian iconography, be these images and emblems actually representative of this religious tradition or not, as it provides an extra contextual layer to thinking about visual culture in relation to India that is meaningful in ways that marketing and branding concerns can never be.

The following portion of analysis will consider each of the identified iconographic themes, with photographic examples from the photographed restaurants provided for visual reference.

As stated, some of the observed iconography is arguably explicit and literal in its use of national symbology, as in the display of the Indian flag (see Plate 6). The purpose, meaning, and associative elements to a picturing of the Indian flag are hardly disputable – the flag represents the Indian state, and therefore, is symbolic of the Indian nation and country in the political sense at the very least. In the case of the Restaurant Bombay, located along Saint Denis in the Plateau, the flag was figured alongside the three-headed lion, India's national symbol, a sculpture of which is located in Kamala Nheru park in Mumbai (Bombay), India (Banerjea 1941; Rao, 1914). This icon was also featured in the signage of 'La Nouvelle Lune Indienne', located along Saint Denis, placed above a pair of praying hands. 'Mysore' restaurant along Saint Laurent in the Plateau features an image of 'the gateway of India', an iconic architectural monument in Mumbai, India (see Plate 6). I'm inclined to wonder if 'Le Porte de L'Inde', located along Boulevard Saint Laurent, is loosely referring to this icon as well.

Plate 6. *Examples of observed instances of 'Indian' iconography in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: Author's own.*

Pictured, from top left to right: Restaurant Bombay, Rue St. Denis. Restaurant Bombay, Rue St. Denis, Pushap, Rue Jean Talon, La Nouvelle Lune Indienne, Rue St. Denis, Restaurant East India, Rue St. Denis.
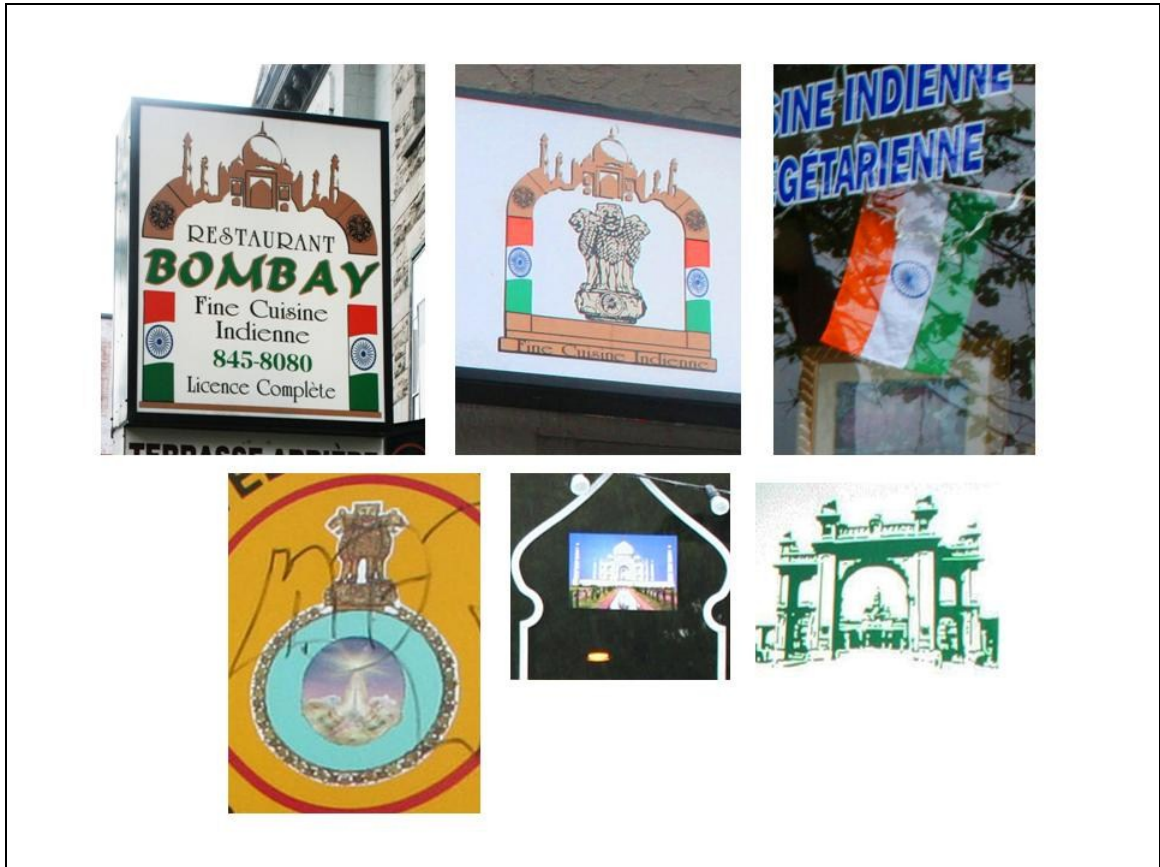
The Taj Mahal, though while not officially affiliated with Indian nationhood, has become emblematic of India in its capacity as a stunning example of Indian architecture as well as a meaningful symbol of Indian culture in the popular imagination (Begley,

1979; Begley & Desai, 1989; Singh, 1997), and is present in the imagery used by the 'Bombay Mahal' and 'Restaurant East India' in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood.

Other elements of visual culture deemed to constitute a type of iconography were much more subtle; decorative elements were observed in the exteriors of the restaurants in the form of ornate designs and patterns used to help establish an overall impression of an 'Indian' ethnicized aesthetic. Consider the swirling plate-cover of the 'Punjab Palace', the decorative swirls of 'DBR Curry and Naan', or those found on the exteriors of 'Lumiere de L'Inde' and 'Lune de L'Inde' (Plate 7).

A commonly observed type of iconography was that of human figures. The figures shown here comprise all those that were observed in the exterior aesthetics of Indian restaurants considered for the study in both neighbourhoods. In all instances, the peoples pictured are presented in the dress and style of a 'traditional' conception of

Indian culture. The male pictured in the hanging sign of 'DBR Curry and Naan' is donning a turban, positioned next to what appears, in my eye, to be a cross between a gravy boat and Aladdin's lamp (Plate 8). This comical ambiguity relates as a humorous caricature, employing the shorthand of visual stereotypes to communicate the promised elsewhereness of the eating experience along with the ethnic character of the cuisine.

Observed female figures are seen to be clothed in *saris*, *cholis* (a type of cropped blouse) veils or *dupatta*, and a range of other accoutrements whose style and significance range immensely over the Eastern continent. While the geographic and cultural significance of these items are vast, and continue to adapt and evolve to the present day (Kosambi, 1970; Panikkar, 1964; Singh, 2000), this kind of background knowledge is not presumed of the viewer – rather, it is the visual representation of the traditional that appeals to the popular iconography of what is deemed to be 'Indian' and more broadly, of what is deemed to be 'authentic' in that capacity (Lu & Fine, 1995; Taylor, 2001). The use of female figures in this context is also some significance. While it is not within our reach to pursue the depth of discussion necessary to do full justice to the role of gender in iconography, cultural representation and projections of exoticism, the 'woman' has long represented a palatable, non-threatening and inviting iconic figure of otherness in the male westernized gaze, one that is arguably internalized and normalized in popular visual vernaculars (Berger, 1972; Sarkar, 1987; Warford, 1983). Indeed, the mythologized

'Indian woman' has been a persistent presence in the colonial imagination and continues to be apparent in projections of an attractive traditionality, and perhaps, a discretely sexualized exoticism (Bagchi, 1995; Guha-Thakurta, 2007; Hassler, 2008; Sarkar, 2000). It is also worth considering the gendering of food culture, as women in many cultures have long been associated with the preparation and serving of food, a connection that while intellectually outdated in any modern sense, is continually emphasized in advertising and marketing (Lundstrom, 1977, Shapiro, 2008). Furthermore, the colonial imagination, be it accessed consciously on behalf of consumers or not, is likely to relate women associated with other, 'less developed' countries in more traditional roles, thereby engaging notions of home-cooked authenticity etc. (Bagchi, 1995; Hassler, 2008).

Plate 8. Examples of human iconography in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: Author's own.

Pictured, from top left, clockwise: Dera Restaurant, Rue Jarry, Faim du Monde, Rue St. Denis, DBR Curry & Naan, Rue Jean Talon, La Lumiere de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurnet, La Lumiere Indienne, Rue St. Denis, DBR Curry & Naan, Rue Jean Talon.
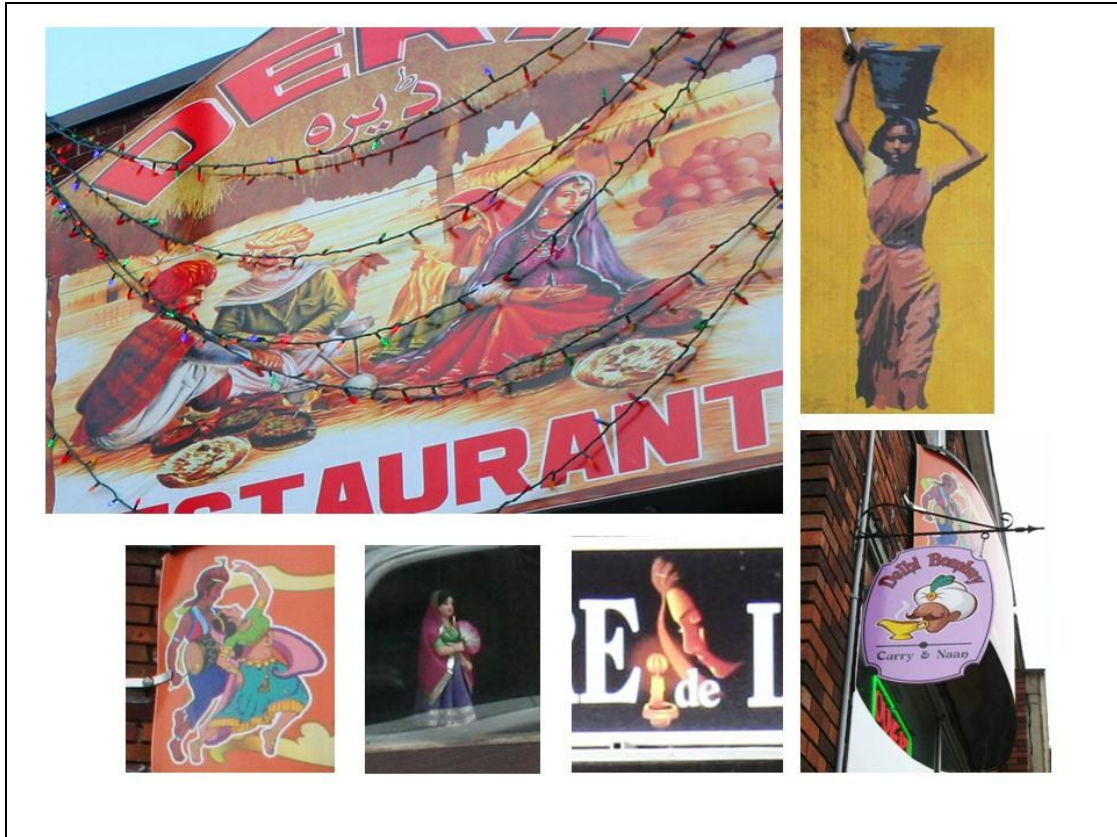
As figured in the title of this thesis, elephants were also observed to be featured as icons of India (Plate 9). Elephants are indeed associated with the India in the popular imagination, yet are also historically significanct in Indian history and Hindu culture

(Banerja, 1941; Kosambi, 1970; Ray, 1932). As such, the elephant may be seen to bridge the gap between associative iconography and something rooted in the actual cultural histories of the Indian people (ibid.) The 'Mahali Sweets' restaurant, located in Parc Extension, pictures the rose. It is the only restaurant to do so. Cultivated in India for centuries, roses are a recurring icon in Hindu imagery as well (Banerja, 1941).

Plate 9*: Examples of the elephant featured as iconography in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: Author's own.*

Pictured, from top left, clockwise: Le Palais de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, DBR Curry and Naan, DBR Curry and Naan, Rue Jean Talon, Le Palais de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laurent, La Porte de L'Inde, Boulevard St. Laruent.

5.2.5 *Architectural Elements*

A printed image of the Taj Mahal is pasted to the window of the Restaurant East India,, framed by the iconography of architectural reference of the horse-shoe or pointed archway known as the *Chnandrashala* (Ching, 1995; Petersen, 2002), painted on to the glass and housing the initialized shorthand 'EI' logo of the restaurant itself (Plate 10). A similarly subtle use of architectural reference was observed in the window decals of the Jasmine Patisserie in the Parc Extension neighbourhood, where ambiguous archways decorated the window-glass along with decorative designs and flourishes and tiny jasmine flowers along the main sign (Plate 10).

This use of architectural reference was also observed in a much more concrete expression on the façade of Atma Restaurant, situated along Saint Laurent, where the entire exterior of the restaurant has been re-finished so as to appear like an example of traditional Indian building materials and design (Plate 10). Combined with the other aesthetic elements of colour and font, the distinct and vibrant architectural exterior of the restaurant communicates an intense and tactile instance of visual culture that deliberately projects an otherness and 'elsewhereness' in the midst of the commercial streetscape of Saint Laurent; a fantastical, structural fantasy of ethnicized exoticism based in reference and replication; a micro-landscape of simulation (Duncan, 1976: 391).

Plate 10. *Examples of architectural elements in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in Montreal, QC. 2011. Source: Author's own.*

Pictured, from top left to right: Atma Restaurant, Boulevard St. Laurent, Jasmine Patisserie Orientale, Rue Hutchison, Restaurant East India, Rue Prince Arthur.

The consideration of architectural elements concludes this review of aesthetic criteria as seen and indentified in the visual culture and external aesthetics of Indian

restaurants in the neighbourhoods of the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension. The following material considers some additional criteria identified in the street front aesthetics and presentation of the considered restaurants worth considering in the overall analysis.

5.2.6 *Additional Criteria*

Additional criteria were also considered upon further review of the photographs, as it was observed that menus, positive reviews from newspapers and actual coloured depictions of menu items were also frequently featured in window displays. It was also observed that some restaurants in the Parc Extension neighbourhood featured language(s) other than French or English on their signs, presumably to cater to a local demographic whose linguistic range is larger and/or different than those found in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood, where French and English dominate (Germain & Rose, 2000). The breakdown of these occurrences in each neighbourhood is represented in the following table (Table 10).

Table 10. Additional criteria considered in the visual culture of Indian restaurants in the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods, Montreal, QC. 2011.

Criteria	Plateau – Mont Royal	Parc Extension
Featured Reviews	9	7
Visible Menu	9	6
Pictured Dishes	6	1
Languages other than French or English	0	5

This comparison reveals that while featuring positive reviews and menus in window-fronts is a common practice throughout both neighbourhoods (and indeed, based on my own observations, a common practice with many restaurants regardless of the ethnic origin of their cuisine), the Indian restaurants located within the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood made a greater use of showing actual pictures of the food somewhere on the exterior of the business. Given the greater density of tourist traffic in the Montreal Island downtown generally, it seems likely that the tendency to display menu items is a strategy aimed at a tourist population perhaps largely unfamiliar with Indian cuisine. Through the means of visual representation, the possible reservations of would-be consumers exploring an unfamiliar food experience may be assuaged by attractive representations of available meal items (Buettner, 2008; Long, 2004; Molz,

2004).

Another interesting difference is found in how only restaurants in the Parc Extension neighbourhood featured languages in their signage that was other than French or English. Given the greater proportion of immigrant and Indian communities living in the Parc Extension neighbourhood (Germain & Rose, 2000), the argument follows that the presence of other languages is meant to cater to such residents, and perhaps by extension, assumes less of a tourist-oriented customer base in general. Such demographic information may also shed light on what restaurants in Parc Extension have chosen to prioritize in their aesthetic presentation. Low rates of what could be termed a certain 'obviousness', as with pictured menu items and explicit geographical referents, may be understood with the demographics and lower rates of tourist traffic in the area in mind.

With the visual findings of the research having been presented, the following chapter will discuss the findings of the analysis in relation to the originally stated research questions, as outlined in the objectives of the thesis project.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1   *How is an ethnicized cultural identity visually communicated through the exterior aesthetics of the observed Indian Restaurants in Montreal city?*

It was found that an ethnicized cultural identity was visually communicated through the exterior aesthetics of the observed Indian restaurants on the Island of Montreal, in the selected neighbourhoods of Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension, by way of several aesthetic and visual criteria. These criteria were comprised of colour, stylized fonts, of various types of iconography and architectural elements, and the use of geographical referents in business names to evoke images and associations of the Indian continent and a generalized sense of 'elsewhere'.

The iconographies explored in the analysis are seen as instances of the symbolic amplification that constitutes the icon, the image, and their combination as referent to an ambiguous original, sometimes becoming so powerful that the representative usurps the real, the referent becoming a reference to itself. Considered as hypperreal spectacle, these iconographies may be understood to reference their own referential reality, rather than any 'authentic' cultural originality or geography (see Debord, 1995; Eco, 1979,

1995).

Be it in reproduction of architectural signature or in the graphic representation of specific symbols, structures, and figures, the significance of such iconography is found in its re-creation and re-enforcement through the dialectical processes of global visual culture, enmeshed as it is in transnational webs of commodification and reproduction (Lasansky & McLaren, 2004). Conceived in the context of advertising aims, such ethnicized iconography can also be understood as part of advertising as a (visual) culture of its own, (Barnard, 1995) regardless of the depth or accuracy possible in an informational landscape composed solely of reference.

This visual culture, this system of reference designed for a transmission of information that favors the eye and the gaze, is a decidedly post-modern referential process of other times and places in a surrealistic pastiche of myth, reality and fantasy (Hopkins, 1990; Relph, 1976). Design, image and consumption are blended in a delivery of meaning that actively attach cultural and ethnicized associations, even cachet, to the moment of the urban exterior (Goss, 1993). In this capacity, the sign of an Indian restaurant becomes at once physical signifier and conceptual signified, the associations and suggestions of its aesthetic attributes a transformative syntax. As such, the sign and exterior of the Indian restaurant becomes iconic of Indian restaurants, just as the iconography pictured in the sign and exterior of the Indian restaurant is iconic of India

(real or imagined).

Discerning the 'real' versus the 'imagined' in the landscape of ethnicized space and visual culture points to the notion of authenticity. For many consumers, ethnically themed restaurants may serve as their primary means of contact with a foreign culture, thus, the visual culture of the business 'face', functions as an initial impression, means of exposure and ambassador of a projected cultural identity (Wood & Munoz, 2007). As such, the visual culture of the Montreal Indian restaurants analyzed in this study are operators in the promise of authenticity, be it a deliberate message or the desired deduction of the would-be consumer. Indeed, authenticity as it relates to consumption is bounded to the desire for a meaningful consumptive experience (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). The visual culture of the Indian restaurants in this study constitute, then, contributions to the impression of a genuine cultural otherness in the capacity to advertise an ethnicized indentity via aesthetic elements that register in the shared symbolic lexicons of the popular Western imagination and tourist gaze (Hopkins, 1990; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). The eye that seeks difference, the eye that dutifully associates visual as well as semantic references, is led through the visual environment by the hand of that desire, the way lit by the presumed knowledges of what this authenticity ought to look like. The explicitly consumptive end of this associative negotiation results in the ingestion, as it were, of the authenticity of others in order to symbolically renew ones'

106

own (Handler, 1986). Samantha Kwan has mused that exploring 'authentic' ethnic food is also a way for conflicted middle and upper class Westerners to find a counterweight to their cooptation into Ritzer's "MCDonalized" society (1983), and as the incorporation of ethnic cuisine into leisure routines becomes more and more popular, it also becomes eventually de-exoticized and assimilated into Western culinary identity (2005).

One could argue that the visual culture – perhaps the iconography, the use of exaggerated decorative flair in text form, or the referencing of Indian place names and geographies – are distorted, simplified, and stereotyped by the translation process inherent to advertising, and by extension, branding (Kolter & Gertner, 2002; Messaris, 1997). However, I argue that the fluidity of the concepts of culture and of authenticity allow for the moments of translated meaning in visual culture to be understood as primarily dialectictical, collaborative, and subjective exchanges dependent on situation and context (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Jenks, 1993, 1995; Mitchell, 1987, 2005; Lu & Fine, 1995).   Following this line of thought, one can consider the dialectical and fluid character of this visual culture from the perspective of those of who employ it as active agents. Given that this study deals with Indian restaurants, the cuisine and culture of such establishments are of a transnational origin and imply certain sociologies related to immigration. 'Ethnic entrepeneurs' who make use of their ethinc and cultural knowledges in economic and community building capacities are then part of a political,

epistemological and aesthetic visibility that contributes to the character and depth of the city (Keith, 1995). Ergo, the visual culture observed and analyzed within this study are instances of personalizing and re-appropriating stereotyped discourse through practice, used as instruments within the urban and commercial environment, whose implications are directed by the intentions and wants of proprieters (Malach-Pines et al, 2005; Rapport, 1995; Swidler, 1986).

That said, it is worth thinking about these intensions and images beyond their immediate visuality. While an appreciation of the diversification of visual culture in the city as it relates to cultural diversity is both positive and of good intention, it is important to place this appreciation within the broader socio-economic and political contexts and histories of restrictive immigration policies, of access to the job market, and of the spatialities of economic inequality. Added to such considerations are the hidden politics of ethnic representation, given the realities of socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination; while the use of imagery and iconography as a self-aware means to advertise may be discussed as events of agency, as has been done in this thesis, these acts are likely to be laced with those tensions related to catering to the gazes and desires of those not similiarly positioned by way of culture, immigration status, economic status, and the adjoining limits these things bring in terms of cultural and entrepreneurial possibility. In this way, while cynicism about cultural 'iconic' imagery in ethnicized

108

visual culture is arguably negative and of no real learning value, a critical awareness as to the cultural, social and economic tensions and circumstances that underlie this visual culture in it's presence and application is both useful and positive in deepening a simple admiration and appreciation of 'diversity' as it is 'visible' in the city and foodscape of Montreal.

The following material now reviews the visual culture as restated through the second research question stated in the objectives, concerning identified differences in visual applications between the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods.

6.2   *Is there a noteworthy difference in the visual culture employed by Indian restaurants between the two different neighbourhoods involved in this study?*

Stated concisely, the noted differences in the visual culture employed by Indian restaurants in the Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension neighbourhoods are as follows:

a)   A greater use of aesthetic criteria in the Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood overall,

b)   A significantly higher use of iconography and geographical reference in the

Plateau – Mont Royal neighbourhood,

c) A greater use of pictured menu menu items in the window displays of Plateau – Mont Royal restaurants,

d) The presence of languages other than French or English on the signage of restaurants in the Parc Extension neighbourhood.

The degree to which these identified differences are noteworthy may be framed by the points raised concerning agency and intention in the respective urban contexts of the two neighbourhoods and their associated demographics. As previously stated, Parc Extension is currently an important arrival area in the city of Montreal for new immigrants, and is home to a large Indian community (Germain, 2011). The comparative density of Indian – owned businesses is also significant: a walk through the neighbourhood makes this apparent, as do the business listings for the area as observed in the 'India Gold Pages', a free business directory listing that operates as a type of yellow pages for the Indian community in Canada (indiagoldpages.ca). A review of the listings shows that a large percentage of listed Indian – owned businesses in Montreal are located along Rue Jean Talon in Parc Extension, the same street where many of the Indian restaurants in this study are located (Map 2). One could infer that the comparatively low use of more symbolically explicit visual culture, in the form of so-called Indian

iconography, geographical referents in business names, and pictured menu items, are related to the expectation of a greater level of familiarity with Indian culture in local clientele.

Research exploring the links between perceptions of authenticity and ethnic cuisine has shown that lesser degrees of contact and familiarity with the implicated culture are associated with higher responses to the visual character of theming (see Ebster & Guist, 2004; Lu & Fine, 1995). Conversely, it has also been noted that that the phenomenon of the "post tourist" (Feifer, 1985; Urry, 1990, 2002) involves an acceptance and even delight in the *inauthenticity* of the tourist experience, self-consciously playing with the symbols that popularly encode the ethnic restaurant (ibid.). The post-tourist, aware of the social and commercial constraints to the elusiveness of authenticity, copes with the proliferation of signs and styles that would otherwise overwhelm the seeker of a meaningful cultural and consumptive experience (Urry, 1990, p. 72). Considering this argument, the heavy iconography of some Indian restaurants in the study may be seen to have a certain ironic appeal in the gaze of the consumer, engaging in the dialectic of cultural projection and perception with an awareness of positionality that echoes the complicated positionality of ethnic restaurants whose use of stereotyped imagery and self-othering is an aware yet culturally and socio-economically tense process.

While not part of the observed visual culture per se, it was noted that the Indian

111

restaurants in the Parc Extension neighbourhood are distributed in a much denser pattern than those in the Plateau Mont – Royal. The density with which the restaurants are distributed recalls the 'Banglatown' and Brick Lane phenomena of East London (Maitland Gard'ner, 2004; Mavrommatis, 2010; Shaw et al, 2004). Like East London, the Parc Extension neighbourhood is home to a higher proportion of ethnic minorities and Indian-owned businesses (as demonstrated by the listings of indiagoldpages.ca, for example), but where it differs, perhaps, is in the active place-branding and policy initiatives applied to promote that density as a *place*; a destination for leisure, consumption and tourism of a cultural nature. While Parc Extension does boast a high concentration of ethnic minorities and a clustering of Indian restaurants, there has yet to be a policy-led branding exercise along Rue Jean Talon, with its reputation as a hot spot for Indian food remaining in the know for savvy clientele alone. The potential for place branding in Parc Extension is an interesting thing to consider, as the potential certainly exists for business owners and the municipality to cooperate (if such a relationship is indeed desired by business owners). The consideration of place branding in relation to this project is also interesting to consider in that while signifiers of ethnic or cultural difference inscribed upon the urban landscape are the fodder for this thesis, they are also those same elements actively capitalized upon in branding exercises to target audiences and communicate desired associations to visitors seeking goods and services they value

as exotic (Shaw et al, 2004).

Keeping these points in mind, the following section of the analysis will reflect on the topics of positionality in the process of viewing, along with the positionalities and perspective inherent to the process and methodology of photography as practiced in the making of this study and project. This portion of the discussion will reflect on the multiple gazes involved in observing and photographing this visual culture: my observations will be analyzed in light of my expectation as a researcher and as one who looks and who photographs while walking through the city.

6.3 *How is my subjectivity and positionality as a researcher and cultural outsider involved in what I deem to be examples of ethnic visual culture?*

As outlined in the methodology, the approach taken to the research process in this project was one of observation, of looking at and photographing instances of visual culture. 'Observation', as a term and practice, has become the root metaphor for much social science research, with visuality being instrumental to the methodological maneuvers in accessing and understanding social and spatial phenomena (Banks, 2001, 2007; Mitchell, 2006). Where applied unreflectively, scholarly observation has been

typically understood as an objective act whose legacy of presumed distance between subject and object has remained unproblematized (Banks, 2007). The field of geography itself has had a long history of observational practice rooted in colonially-minded epistemology (Bell & Butin, 1995; Ryan, 1997; Schulten, 2001; Withers, 2001). However, with the demise of unquestioned empiricism brought about by the destabilizing of grand narratives, the 'post' era of geographic thought and research – and whatever state we currently find ourselves in – has recognized the interpretation of the visual world as an inherently discursive practice, as an exchange, and as such, an event that is implicated in processes of cultural and ideological production and reproduction (Breggen & Jones, 2001; Ryan, 2005).

This idea of cultural reproduction makes reference to the generation and transformation of meaning in everyday life as it refracts through the spectrum of interpretation(s) of those living it, of those individuals, groups and systems enegaged in the sociospatial dialectic (Berger, 1984; De Certeau, 1988; Goffman, 1978; Jenks, 1993; Soja, 1980). Relating these concerns to research, culture and its reproduction are dynamics that we can gather within the notion of process – indeed, the idea of culture emerges from the noun 'process', in the sense of growth and cultivation (Jenks, 1993). The culture of the visual, and the study thereof, is then bounded in the emergent, transformative and creative context of social action; a place of constantly changing

interaction and definition where meanings and identities are continuously created and contested (Jenks, 1993; Mirzoeff, 2009). In this capacity, the symbolization discussed in the research at hand (via aesthetics, iconography etc.) must too be viewed as a social process, in so much that symbols constitute a type of regulatory mechanism that controls informational flow whose meanings adapt and transform in step with changing cultural and social needs (Rowntree & Conkey, 1980; Wagner, 1972). Given that this project is occupied with the analysis of the visual culture of restaurants who present a specific cultural identity in promise of a specific consumptive experience, an emphasis on process and exchange when considering the 'findings' is important.

With these insights in mind, the act of observation in this project, while necessary to the identification and analysis of visual phenomena and information, was and is implicated in the production and reproduction of meaning by way of looking at visual culture, and in generating visual culture by way of a methodological practice. The use of photography in this process in turn relates to ways of seeing, of positionality, and of gaze, as embodied by the lens of the photographic apparatus and that of my own culturally and institutionally imbedded eye (Berger, 1984).

For these reasons, as a research medium in geography, photography provides an accessible and perhaps obvious way to explore issues of methodology, epistemology and representation. The visuality so integral to geographic theory and practice is expanded by

a greater attention to the visual itself as a subject of inquiry, and by a recognition of representation as something produced through practice (Driver, 1995, 2003; Sidaway, 2002).

Recent research of employing photography in social research has termed it as part of a more "sensually complete methodology" (Warren, 2002), a description that I responded to in contemplating a way to emphasize my presence in not just the photographs and what they present, but in the walking, exploring and looking involved in their production. When used a means to processing and knowing place, the photograph is acknowledged as a frame of subjective vision (Bendiner-Viani, 2009), and while photographs furnish evidence, they may also be appreciated as experience captured (Sontag, 1977). The degree of aggression arguably implicit to photo-taking, in that it appropriates the thing or event pictured, is worth considering when avoiding the use of photographs as a means to support ones' own notions. That said, in photographing the exterior aesthetics of Indian restaurants in the neighbourhoods of Plateau – Mont Royal and Parc Extension, my aim was to gather visual data in the spirit of noticing and celebrating visual culture in Montreal as part of a visual and tactile re-discovery of two neighbourhoods I know and spend time in. Hoping to move beyond voyeurism and documentation, I undertook the photographic element of this study with the goal of learning from my implication in the process – photographing something means putting oneself into a certain relation to the

world that feels like knowledge, true, but I did not wish to conflate that feeling of knowledge with one of power.

In conducting and presenting research, while we are pressed to assemble a convincing narrative, it is always difficult to agree that the story has been fully told, and not from the point of view of one limited perspective (Shields, 1991). The act of observing and reading landscapes and their elements brings with it the history and intensions of the academic, raising the point that the meanings of what is observed are unstable fragments of complex realities; consequently, any presentation is best understood as a presentation or representation, a construction that is partial and unfinished (Duncan & Ley, 1993).

These limitations resonate with those of the photograph itself; the partial nature of authorship is manifest in the photographic image as document and object. As historical geographer Gillian Rose has noted, the production, circulation and consumption of photographs produce and reproduce the imagined geographies of the social groups or institution for which they were made (2000), in this instance, the traditionally Euro-Western and male dominated scholasticism, housed within the institution of the University. Applying both a visual and intellectual skepticism and reflexive awareness in light of these embedded ideologies is crucial to retain an earnest and more complete scholarship. Without the ability to see how a usually small, manageable research

question both emerges and is framed by a set of theoretical concerns, there is no thoughtful progress to be gained from study (Hanson, 1988, p. 5). Similarly, in studies involving taxanomic discourse and an observation of 'otherness', as in the authoritative identification and analysis of ethnically oriented aesthetic criteria asserted in this thesis, such a reflexivity has important value in problematizing the representation process; it points to the fact that this process always involves power relations and is mediated through historically changing institutions, class structures, historical accounts and epistemological assumptions (Cosgrove & Domosh, 1993, p. 53). While such a recognition cannot allow one to totally escape the pitfalls of author-ism and ethnocentricism, it does aid in the denaturalizing of the researcher's own categories, necessarily undermining the ground one stands upon as a researcher, and in deepening the representational responsibility required of visual research methods (ibid.).

6.4 Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Further Research

By examining the ways in which an ethnicized sense of place and cultural identity is communicated via the aesthetics and visual culture of a selection of restaurants listed as Indian in Montreal, Quebec, this project hopes to stand as a unique contribution to the existing literature concerned with the ways in which 'ethnic' cuisine and culture generate

multiplicities of place and place experience in the city. However, there are limits to pursuing these phenomena and ideas within the intellectual and temporal parameters of the Master's thesis, and this is reflected in the focus of the project. Future research could consider the visual culture of other types of restaurants in Montreal, accounting for a host of 'ethnic cuisines' and possibly correlating aesthetics and iconographies, in addition to exploring the imaginations and tensions associated with other cultural iconographies. This same approach may be applied to restaurants not considered 'ethnic' as well, analyzing the iconographies and symbologies associated with the aesthetics and visual culture of a range of eateries. There would also appear to be a great many applications for place branding research in relation to these topics, looking at the ways in which visual culture contributes to conceptions and promotions of place-as-product and in exploring the role of visual culture in communicating notions of authenticity and identity within the branding concerns of the restaurant industry. Such research, while beyond the reaches of what I consider to be my immediate field (geography) would be of great interest to those concerned with the use and study of exterior restaurant aesthetics as a competitive tool in creating, drawing, and sustaining consumer bases. Additionally, the consideration of visual culture as it relates to shared and projected associations has much value for research that seeks to discover and harness the exchanges of meaning that characterize the decisions of individuals seeking 'authentic' culinary experiences. Given the largely

119

external focus on visual culture applied in this thesis, there is also much potential for this scale and perspective to be explored in place branding as the moment and surface through which to communicate desired associations on behalf of the restaurant to would-be consumers.

To conclude, it is hoped that what this work has been able to provide will be received as both an analysis of visual culture as well as a contribution to geographic thinking on visual culture and phenomena. Understanding visual culture to be that which constitutes the dialectical exchange of visual knowledges in social, cultural and urban contexts, the geographic conception of the socio-spatial dialectic is expanded by the inclusion of visual culture as practice and process to yield a sort of 'socio-visual dialectic', where the increasingly conflated processes of seeing and knowing work to produce and reproduce visual cultures and knowledges. Given the focus on visual phenomena within the project along with the use of photography as the means to amass and review visual 'observations' and phenomena, the research and findings of this project were duly engaged with the production and reproduction of such knowledges in their analytical and methodological capacities. As such, this thesis is also an instance of visual culture by way of the photographs it produced; as objects, these photographs represent not only a kind of furnished evidence for the quantitative portion of the analysis, but are also objects representative of the act of looking, a way of seeing, and the value inscribed

upon the involved subjects by way of a historically, culturally and institutionally contextualized positionality.

It is my hope, finally, that this project was successful in conveying a celebratory appreciation of these visual cultures and diversities while acknowledging the socio-political contexts that exist and complicate their immediate visuality. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to engage with this diversity at a depth that I previously would not have accessed.

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