Kenneth Iain MacDonald

EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE: THE BODY, GLOBALIZATION AND THE DILEMMA OF RIGHTS.

INTRODUCTION: GLOBALIZATION, JUSTICE AND DISTANT OTHERS

Globalization is commonly understood to be both a process and a condition through which people and economies around the globe become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, particularly through time/space compression and the emergence of rapid transport and telecommunication technologies. But it is also a process that has inserted all of us into new sets of social relations, the ramifications of which we fail to comprehend or appreciate.¹ Our actions, whether we know it or intend it, are tied to the lives of unseen others as we insert ourselves into commodity chains through decisions that we make as consumers. An important element of this understanding, however, is that this process does not operate outside of specific intentions to benefit from existing inequalities around the world, whether that exists as cheap labor, lax health and safety regulations, or the lack of enforcement of existing environmental legislation. Globalization is encouraged, in part, through the ability of the interests of capital to benefit from conditions that, from a liberal humanist perspective, would clearly be seen as a violation of rights, or at the very least the spirit of rights. This violation signals an important question: if we assume a liberal humanist desire to respect rights universally (a general doctrine of the social structure of nations that claim a largely European origin), then what conditions encourage the absence of an obligation to deal with these violations or infringements of rights? A response to this question can be, and often is, framed in terms of a fundamentally geographic phenomenon – distance. However, distance in this case is not simply a spatial phenomenon, it has a specifically moral component that emerges through intensified globalization and creates a category of a distant and invisible other.² In essence, the technologies of


globalization that annihilate socio-spatial distance insert us into webs of relationships with individuals and communities that are unknown to us in any corporeal way. Despite a general sense of expanding knowledge of the world, distant people and places are known to us vicariously as an agglomeration of representations brought to us through interpretive popular media, or sporadic touristic contact. Despite the hope that Marshall McLuhan held out for the benefits of such encapsulated contact when he coined the phrase “global village”, ‘distant others’ seem to remain outside of an immediate sphere of moral consideration. However, it is not so much the assignation of rights that fails in the modern world – we have, after all, a declaration of universal human rights - but the consequent duty to impartially respect those rights. This duty fails, some authors suggest, because of a radically outdated notion of the significance of physical or ideological proximity to moral consideration.

Some scholars would claim that the abuse of the rights of others - expressed as the failure to respect or to fulfil the responsibilities congruent with the rights of others - continue because obligations are historically circumscribed by ideas of spatial proximity and ideological constructs of the family and citizenry. These boundaries are not really surprising. Our historical sense of the spatial reaches of our actions, accurate or not, is circumscribed by a pervasive sense of proximity. Moral extension, for all practical purposes, reaches along lines shaped by a sense of closeness, whether that is expressed in specifically spatial terms (e.g., neighbours) or in social terms (e.g., kin, friends). Sometimes moral extensions rely on corporeality (e.g., co-workers), often they do not (citizens). Regardless of whether the sense of closeness has proximal or ideological groundings, morality is conceived as a socio-spatial relation and contains implicit notions of both social and spatial limits.

Unfortunately, this understanding of social and spatial distance that pervades morality is no longer suitable to the world in which we live. There are serious problems with the notion of moral proximity that lead us into a moral paradox. This is simply that knowingly or unknowingly, our actions, by virtue of what we have pursued in the name of the so-called ‘good life’ (powerful technologies, financial security, etc.), have the capacity to, and do, negatively affect those who are distant from and invisible to us, yet co-extant with us in webs of global power relations. Ideologically, however, we are locked into a

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moral box of proximity - meaning that the morality that we have inherited from pre-modernity (and the only morality that we have) is a morality of proximity, and as such is horribly inadequate in a world where all important action is an action on distance. For most of us, our ‘moral conscience’ rests once we have satisfied a moral responsibility to care for those geographically and socially near to us. The ‘distant’ effects of what we do or desist from doing remain invisible; or alternatively, are presented as the responsibility of agencies which neither demand, nor would be very happy if we showed too keen an interest, let alone interference, in with their activities. This raises an important question of whether supranational but statist social agencies, like the United Nations, allow us to escape the individual burden of responsibility as they establish a kind of institutional care through which we can devolve our responsibility to care for distant others. Caring to a large degree has become an institutional rather than an individual responsibility or, at the least, institutions provide a means through which caring can be channelled in a relatively convenient form as institutions take on the role of defining problems for us and prescribing solutions so that the role of the individual becomes one of simply providing the means for the institution to implement an identified ‘solution.’ The construction of expert knowledge that surrounds most institutions is used to relieve the individual from the obligation to critically appraise the structural causes of whatever problems are addressed via institutional support. For example, individuals can provide money or goods to aid in ‘recovery’ from damage from a natural hazard without having to worry about addressing the structural causes of vulnerability which actually condition the terrain of suffering during and following some extreme natural event. Institutions and agencies who assume responsibility for administering the aid provided via individual support do little better at interrogating the underlying causes of vulnerability. So, for all its complexities, the phenomenon of globalization illuminates the geographical problem of morality. Through it we find that the cancelling of spatial distance, as measured

5 Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics (1993).

6 Moral conscience can be defined here as the sense of moral obligation that is either imposed via some prescriptive ethical code to which we subscribe or some sense of the obligations that fall upon us through a recognition of rights. Where we recognize that rights extend to others who exist outside of our immediate reach, our failure to take action is often couched in terms of a rationalized ability to do more about injustices that lie closer to ‘home’ than those that lie at some distance from us. This is often expressed in the credo that ‘we should take care of our own problems of poverty and homelessness before sending assistance in the form of foreign aid to others.’ This relies on the ideology of nationalism as the basis for ascribing aid and assistance.

7 This devolution both relies upon and maintains a pervasive belief that ‘international development’ is an inherently ethical activity.
by the expanding reach of human action, has been insufficiently matched by the expansion of moral proximity. Given the ramifications of those actions, the ethical tenet of impartiality demands that this increased capacity to effect the lives of distant others should be matched by an equal extension of moral consideration. An important question would seem to be how to extend this moral consideration. The immediate and naive answer seems to be that individuals, made aware of how their lives are directly interconnected with those of invisible others, would attempt to address the inequities in these relationships. This was McLuhan’s hope. However, there is an alternative way to ask the question: what generates moral distance in the first place? What elements of subjectivity exclude so-called distant others from our sphere of moral consideration and obligation? Why does moral distance persist even when the objective bases of spatial distance are being effectively challenged and undermined? It is not enough to say that they persist because of a failure to extend the notion of duty or obligation that is consequent with any assertion of the existence of rights? Rather, I believe that we need to address a more fundamental question: How does the historical construction of difference legitimate actions that result in the inequitable distribution of rights around the world?

This article addresses some of these questions here by employing the notion of epistemic violence specifically in reference to a set of small communities in the Karakoram mountains of northern Pakistan. In these communities, men incur the negative health effects of serving as baggage carriers for a burgeoning tourist and mountaineering industry. In a village at the western end of the Himalayan chain, the option of challenging the negative health effects experienced through processes coincident with globalization is not available to people in the way they are to people who see their subjectivity as being constituted partly through the liberal discourse of rights. This understanding of different subjectivities must be a key issue in addressing the reasons underlying these global inequities. Perhaps the best way to expand on this point is through example.

SPATIAL PROXIMITY AND MORAL DISTANCE IN THE KARAKORAM HIMALAYA

The Karakoram range contains some of the highest peaks in the world and has attracted explorers, professional travelers, hunters and mountaineers, for much of the past 150 years. Over the past 30 years the number of travelers to the
area - now mostly trekkers on trips arranged through adventure travel firms- has increased significantly, with the most intensive growth occurring in the last 10 years. For the past 15 years, I have been conducting village level research in Karakoram communities and, at least initially indirectly observing interactions between village men and travelers who use their labor as porters. More recently this interaction has been the focus of a specific research project which questions the reproduction of oppressive and exploitative labor relations in an era when most of those doing the travelling (primarily Europeans and North Americans) are explicitly conscious of the concerns of social justice and are accepting of some notion of universal human rights.8 Given this exposure to concerns of social justice, a primary question arises: how is it that oppressive labor relations are maintained in the act of mountain travel? I describe the nature of this oppression below. What is salient here, however, is that the spatial distance between those involved in differential positions within a commodity chain (adventure tourists/porters) does little to reduce the inequities involved in the production relations that constitute that chain. The case of Karakoram porters and trekkers is not one where two groups are interacting at a distance. Rather, it is a case where globalization leads to a direct, face-to-face connection; where the commodity chain of global tourism brings consumers (those who travel) directly into contact with the lowest rung on the commodity chain of travel (those who carry their bags). Here, those distant others created through market exchange are no longer distant. Yet the oppressive relations characteristic of moral distance persist: oppressive labor relations which rely on institutional structures of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, subtle - and sometimes not so subtle - forms of violence, and ecological exploitation. This persistence in the face of direct contact, exposure and interaction confounds any assertion that proximity acts to relieve the inequalities produced through processes related to globalization. Exposure to exploitation and inequity is no assurance that the asymmetry of power relationships will be reduced.

This should not be surprising to anyone versed in contemporary racial, ethnic, gender or labor relations. There is a diversity of interdictory structures unrelated to the parameters of physical space that distance individuals from the

8 See Kenneth I. MacDonald, Push and Shove: Spatial History and the Construction of a Portering Economy in Northern Pakistan, 40 COMP. STUD. SOC’Y AND HIST. 287 (1998); Kenneth I. MacDonald & David Butz, Portering Relations as a Locus for Transcultural Interaction in the Karakoram Region of Northern Pakistan, 18 MOUNTAIN RES. & DEV. 333 (1998).
objects of suffering. In the case of porters for example, Pakistani tour operators are adept at mimicking ‘western’ behaviour and knowledge. They operate in the position of culture brokers, filling the ambivalence between ‘clients’ and porters with an air of cultural authority, assuring ‘clients’ that they are versed in culturally appropriate social relations and relieving them of the need to concern themselves with the treatment of those local men who they employ. Indeed, through a discourse of ‘cultural expertise’ they attempt to convince the traveller that the ‘proper’ knowledge to deal with labour relations can only be acquired through ‘cultural’ (usually equated with nationalist or religious affiliation) means, inaccessible to the traveller. Take, for example, this remark from the promotional brochure of a firm situated in North America, run by a man of Pakistani birth and his American wife, both retired from careers in International Banking.

The Northern Areas of Pakistan are under assault once again. The enemy is not as evident, but just as serious; the enemy is us. Visitors, trekkers and mountaineers who enter this fragile ancient ecosystem create unnecessary environmental and cultural degradation. Concordia Expeditions was formed to counter this commonplace phenomenon by offering culturally and environmentally conscious intimate trips with individuals who know and embody Pakistan…. We at Concordia Expeditions are continuously in touch with the authorities in Pakistan to ensure that issues arising from indiscriminate tourism remain in the forefront of their attention. Our family and lifelong contacts enable us to influence those individuals in the tourism department and other agencies responsible for protecting and preserving Pakistan’s land and her unique culture for future generations. These same lifelong connections furnish a strong support system to Concordia Expeditions empowering us to provide exceptional trips to our visitors. Let us welcome you to Pakistan. It will be a pleasure and honour to introduce our beloved Pakistan and her people to you. You will be our personal guest.

The assertion here is that the firm can provide the traveller with privileged access to an experience by virtue of a national identity – one of the owners is Pakistani by birth and claims to have influence with “the authorities.” He also asserts the importance of Pakistani identity over local identity, tying his authority to the birth of the nation through the story of his father, a ‘freedom

9 BAUMAN, supra note 5; Arthur Kleinman & Joan Kleinman, The Appeal of Experience, the Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times, 125 DAEDALUS 1 (1996).

10 CONCORDIA EXPEDITIONS, PAKISTAN WITH PAKISTANIS (1998) (The reference to a prior crisis in this advertisement refers to a mention in the brochure that the owner’s father had fought, following partition, to secure part of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir for Pakistan).
fighter’ in the post-partition battle for control of Jammu and Kashmir. There is also an implication that this connection can result in cultural and environmental protection. The danger, however, is that this discursive production of the ‘cultural expert’ relies on a perverse form of relativism that can be used to obscure unjust treatment of porters. Indeed, it is often deployed in an attempt to convince travellers that they do not know what constitutes appropriate cultural and ethical norms, and that they should leave cultural matters to those ‘in the know’, those with ‘connections’, those with ‘influence’. This rhetorical device of a privileged cultural knowledge is not at all new. The British colonial administration also used it effectively to counter complaints of abusive treatment of ‘native labour’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In response, British authorities claimed a privileged cultural knowledge of "how to handle native labour,” cloaking the abuse of what would come to be recognised as human rights.11

Ultimately, proximity is no guardian against the abuse of rights. One reason for this lies in the discourse of rights itself. The assignation of rights rests on a premise of the universality of liberal individualism. Yet the ‘individual,’ including notions of individual ‘freedom’ or ‘liberty’, is not constructed uniformly or universally. Rather, they are very specific political and cultural products that emerged out of very specific genealogies of thought and through particular power relations and within specific fields of production.12 Where the notion of rights extends universally, it is from a particular position of power, and it is important to recognise that this discourse of universal rights, when combined with a belief in relativism, can also transfer power to certain individuals (e.g., tour organizers in the case of trekking). These individuals may exercise it cynically to the disadvantage of others who do not perceive themselves as individualised subjects able to exercise a claim to rights (e.g., men who work as porters). Often people in positions of power (e.g., travellers) feel caught. They find themselves in a situation where they recognise some validity in the notion of universal rights - which assumes that individual subjectivities are universally constructed in similar ways – yet they also recognise the validity claims of relativism. In the case of such conflicts, it is morally convenient to appear to respect rights by devolving responsibility onto some agent who claims


the culturally appropriate knowledge to do so in context – one who claims to recognise what are applicable rights and what are not. By doing so, however, travellers fall into the trap of potentially abusing rights through an assumption that obligations to adhere to rights have been satisfied institutionally. In fact, the discourse of rights, rather than protecting the interests of porters, can become a vehicle through which culture brokers garner control over porters and reduce their capacity to acquire an understanding of, and claim the protective element of, the rights assigned to them. There is, of course, no guarantee that such cultural agents will respect the rights of others. Class or gender bias, ethnic or racial prejudice, greed – any of the motivations that supersede rights in any other case - work just as effectively to impede the rights of the least powerful.13

The remainder of this paper approaches the beginnings of an explanation for the persistence of the subtle violence exercised on porters. Initially it describes the organisation of portering and discusses how institutionalised violence is exercised on the bodies of men who work as porters.14 Then it suggests that the institutionalised violence that continues today is a function of 150 years of constructing a knowledge of a body of subjected labour in order to serve the interests of travel in these region.

GLOBALIZATION, THE BODY AND INSTITUTIONALISED VIOLENCE: THE CASE OF MOUNTAIN PORTERS

The Body, Rights and Power Relations

The body is the ultimate site of rights. It is the body that experiences the violence and exclusion that is expressed within liberal humanism as the violation of rights. And it is the body that must assert a claim to rights in order to challenge that violation. This is a particularly geographical phenomenon, for the body is a site – a place - where violence is ultimately felt, and where any rights that can be claimed to operate against the exercise of violence are assigned. However, the body does not exist outside of power relations. Autonomy or the ability to exercise or claim a right is always defined within and through positions


14 There is certainly to my mind a violation of rights happening here (rights to dignity, rights to safety and security). However, for political reasons, the Northern Areas of Pakistan are not subject to the Constitution of Pakistan and the guarantee of rights that it offers.
of power. The body, then, is always a contested site of power. Inequity in power relations creates the opportunity structures through which rights are violated, but power is also required for rights to be claimed. Rights, then, are mechanisms through which power is negotiated, produced and exercised. In the case of competing rights, which is the case here, the rights of a dominant group to international mobility and those of others to dignity, safety and security force are ultimately decided by power and force.

Supporters of positive rights tell us that power bestows an obligation, or responsibility, on the dominant group to help fulfill positive rights and remedy the inequality that gives rise to an infringement of rights. But for the obligation to be manifest there must be an understanding and regular reflection on the subjects of rights as consistently equal – and we know in the world in which we live that this does not happen. Theories of rights have inadequately developed theories of power. In particular, they seem unable to address the epistemic causes of inequality that necessitate the existence of rights in the first place. They fail to deal epistemologically with the ideological sources of difference between individuals, and their manifestation in material practices of value-based discrimination. They are also grounded in a liberal humanist conception of the autonomous individual and are often inapplicable in social contexts where the individual is not conceptualized as such. This is an epistemological dilemma that is rarely addressed by the rhetoric of rights. As such, rights fail to be addressed as both a route of power and a discriminatory exercise of power that has been made possible through the very processes of difference and discrimination that rights are meant to address and "correct." For example, those involved in the process of declaring "Universal Human Rights" and generating the mechanisms through which rights could be claimed were steeped in a liberal humanist conception of the individual. Regardless of whether they "represented" different cultural groups, they also represented particular class and ideological interests that were more accordant with Enlightenment conceptions

15 I think this is what we are dealing with here, or at least the perception of competing rights. Travelers believe that they have a right to mobility; a right to go where their money and a transport infrastructure will take them. Yet people who service travelers have a right to dignity, safety and security. Obviously, these rights need not be in conflict, but quite often they are. The root cause of the conflict is often money, at least regarding issues of safety and security. Money for proper equipment, shelter, let alone decent wages would appear to alleviate some of this conflict of rights, yet it would also impinge on the ability of at least some people to travel because of the increasing expense. This is a confusion of ability and right, but some fail to make the distinction and see an infringement on ability to exercise a right as an infringement on the right.

of “the individual” than they were with the "culture" to which they "belonged."\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, a very important question arises as to what exactly constitutes the "culture" to which they belonged and supposedly represent.

The above issues bring together three domains of concern relating to the violation of rights: first, the body as a site of violence and contestation that both exercises and suffers the effects of power; second, globalization and the increasing contact of people situated differently within historically contingent power relations; and third, the contact between different systems of meaning.

Organization of Mountain Travel

The linkage between globalization, institutionalized violence and the interaction of bodies differentially situated in power relations can be seen through a web of relationships that connect desire and material effect. In the case of mountain travel in northern Pakistan, the desire to travel is reflected in any number of diverse sources that are readily appropriated and deployed by culture brokers who stand to benefit most directly by attracting ‘travelers’ to northern Pakistan. A brief survey of travel brochures published by these brokers reveals a reliance on a set of tropes to capture the desire of travelers. The romantic lure of association with imperial travelers, a fascination with the major peaks and the celebrity figures of mountaineering, the idyll of remoteness, the attraction of exclusivity, being ‘one of a select few’ to have visited a particular place, are all used to market northern Pakistan to potential travelers. Ego and identity play a large role in creating the desire to travel.\textsuperscript{18} Whatever the motivation of the traveler, globalization provides both the ideological and material circumstances through which travelers and porters find themselves within culturally contextualized and inequitable power relations. The inequity of these relations is borne out through an examination of the conditions under which men work in the service of travelers.

To appreciate the context of the asymmetrical relations that constitute the interaction between ‘sahibs’\textsuperscript{19} and porters, it is helpful to understand the role of

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. NGUGI WA’THIONGO, MOVING THE CENTRE: THE STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOMS (1993) who describes the persistence of colonialist European viewpoints in non-European literature

\textsuperscript{18} JOHN URRY, CONSUMING PLACES (1995).

\textsuperscript{19} I use the term sahib here to denote both trekkers and mountaineers. An Urdu term meaning “master,” it is an honorific and has been used to refer to Europeans (especially in their self-representations) since they
the porter in a typical trek or expedition. Any travel in the Central Karakoram cannot occur without the labor of porters. There are no roads that traverse the glaciated high altitude environments that trekkers and mountaineers come to visit. This was true with the arrival of Europeans in the area over 150 years ago and remains true today. There is really no typical trek or climb. Individuals may travel with one or two porters on short trips, while parties of ten or more may book their trips through trekking firms who the use a hierarchy of local agents to hire porters and make logistical arrangements. In these cases there is often a ratio of four porters to every one trekker. A party of ten trekkers easily becomes a group of sixty once they are on the trail. Expeditions can likewise be large or small, employing anywhere from twenty to 1,000 porters depending on the style, location and duration of the climb. The role of the porter is to carry goods and supplies for the party from one point to another everyday during the trek. Specific distances, known as stages, are covered each day. Recognized stages have been negotiated historically through acts of assertion on the parts of ‘sahibs’ and resistance on the part of porters. In most cases on a trek, two stages are covered in a day covering a distance of approximately ten miles, although specific distances vary from trek to trek.

On any given day, porters can expect to walk up to eight hours a day carrying anywhere between 25-35 kg (55-75 pounds) over rocky or glaciated terrain. They can also expect to be sent back as loads are consumed by the party. The decision as to who is sent back is usually at the discretion of the sirdar (overseer) and the threat of being sent back (and losing out on potential wages) is used as a mechanism of social control by sirdars. Porter loads are carried on crude wood frames lashed to the back by thin rope. Porters are expected to supply their own frames and to accommodate packed loads as best they can. Temperatures can be extremely hot during the day even when travelling over ice, while nighttime temperatures can dip below freezing. For the most part, the diet

began travelling in the Karakoram. As the ethnic demographics of tourism has changed, the term has also been used to apply to other travelers. I do not intend it to reify any superiority/inferiority binary between travellers and porters but it does signify a persistent continuation in the asymmetrical power relationship between the two groups.


21See generally, MacDonald, supra note 9; Macdonald & Butz, supra note 9.

22 Porters complain particularly about the barrels that expeditions often use for packing supplies. These are notoriously difficult to lash on to frames and tend to roll on the frame, pulling men off balance and magnifying already hazardous working conditions.
of porters consists of bread and tea for the duration of the trek. While on the trek, porters sleep under tarpaulin sheets, often on bear ice and usually have nothing more than a blanket and the bodies of their fellow porters for warmth. Despite occupying and travelling through the same space, the conditions under which porters labor stands in marked opposition to the conditions under which ‘sahibs’ travel. While "sahibs" cover the same distance they carry light, if any, loads, dress in expensive clothing designed for comfort and protection in outdoor environments, sleep in ‘high-tech’ tents, and eat nutritious food prepared and served by a staff of servants.

Despite fairly arduous and often dangerous working conditions, men continue to work as porters, even as they express the wish that they did not have to. For many, it is the only chance for their households to earn cash, a fast growing requirement in this region. Consequently, men will try to find as much employment as they can during the short three month season when trekking and mountaineering is at its peak. And they will continue to do so, year after year, until they suffer injury, develop chronic disabilities, are too old to carry, or find an alternate means of income. Increasingly this age of retirement is declining as older men cannot keep up with the pace set by young men, who are often unwilling to reduce that pace because of the relationship between speed and money, and the prodding of tour company representatives to maintain a quick pace.23 Men typically porter between the ages of fifteen and fifty though they are most frequently active between the ages of twenty and forty. There are also socio-economic variations among the men who decide to carry. Most come from households large enough to spare the labor from fieldwork and village responsibilities; some come from nearby market towns and are landless; others are students, home for the summer and hoping for contact with women travelers.24

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23 Tour companies increase their revenue by reducing the time required to complete a trek. This allows them to include more trips in a given season. The historical obstacles to reducing the duration of trips are established stages (defended by porters) and the need of porters to rest. Consequently, tour companies have consistently focused on contesting the meaning of a stage and inhibiting the solidarity of porters. This has some evident effects. Though the traditional practice has been for all porters to rest together, older men, for example, now complain that younger men no longer wait for them at rest stops..

The Body and Institutionalized Violence

I have no doubt that there is a toll taken on the bodies of men employed as porters. However, the evidence I have of the health effects of portering is anecdotal and observational and certainly not based on medical study. Indeed, the only research on the health effects of porters with which I am familiar is by Dr. Upendra Devkota, a Nepali neurologist, who has conducted research on spinal deformation among Nepali porters.25 There are some observational studies, but none based on long term observation of specific individuals or the presence or frequency of specific ailments. My observations are based on fifteen years of both employing porters and working with porters on research related to the material relations of labor that constitute a portering economy. In the course of that work, it has become clear to me that hard labor at high altitudes exacerbates existing conditions and contributes to the development of chronic health problems. My research has involved ethnographic fieldwork, in the course of which I have observed all of the following conditions in men who have been employed as porters for part of their lives: bruises, lacerations and abrasions; chronic wounds or sores; gastroenteritis; hernia; dysentery; high altitude pulmonary edema; high altitude cerebral edema; hypothermia; frost bite; eye infections, corneal ulcers; tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments.

These injuries are not intentionally inflicted upon porters by tourists or mountaineers.26 Rather, they reflect a form of violence brought on by the demands of a capitalized system that treats men as simply bodies of labour devoid of rights to dignity or working conditions that provide for their safety or comfort.27 They are a function of a discursive system that relies on rhetorical

25 Nancy Malville has also done physiological work comparing the weight load to the body mass of porters in Nepal. Dr. Bhudda Basnett has also provided observational evidence from his work with the Himalyan Rescue Foundation in Nepal.

26 The threat of physical violence certainly exists, and has certainly been made clear to men who have worked as porters. For example, Fanny Bullock Workman, an early traveller to the region had her Swiss guide physically beat and kick porters to induce them to proceed. Aleister Crowley publicly whipped porters at random as examples to the others. Sir Martin Conway's artist, William McCormick, threatened porters with his pistol promising that the first of them to desert would be shot in the back. This is not something confined to the brutal colonial past. As recently as 1975 a member of the American K2 expedition wrote in his diary: "If the expedition is stranded the Baltis should be punished. They should be stripped naked, and marched home in shame. They'll get out alive but they'll have a lesson. I don't want to kill them outright." (Rowell 1986; ). In 1986, another climber stood by and watched while the expedition liaison officer beat a porter with a whip.

27 The relative worth of porters can be examined through a comparison with other groups. For example, the Pakistani military as been occupying the upper reaches of the Baltoro glacier since the mid-1980s. They have suffered casualties because of the conditions under which soldier's must live. Recently, a shelter
strategies to naturalize difference between human beings. That naturalization is 
used to legitimate differences in treatment. I will address this in more detail 
below, but they are also a function of the increased demand for the ‘adventure 
experience’ both created and facilitated through a process of globalization. This 
increased demand for “adventure” has intensified the structural violence enacted 
on porters as it has lead to an increased and sustained demand for men to work 
as porters. It has also led to an intensified frequency of accidents and injuries 
suffered in the course of that work. Certainly, it has put more men in positions 
of risk. Much of this pressure to work, and the subsequent health consequences, 
can be related to changes in tourism brought about through globalization. 
Specifically, the interests of capital represented through the emergence of a 
global tourism infrastructure designed to seek out new destination markets has 
lead to an authoritarian organizational structure of tourism in northern Pakistan.

With the expansion of tourism over the past ten years has come an intense 
expansion of the local tourism infrastructure and competition among local 
outfitters to provide services for tourists and mountaineers.28 While these local 
firms cater directly to foreign tourists, more often they act as subcontractors to 
much larger international tour operators or as organizers for mountaineering 
expeditions. As subcontractors, they agree to provide a standard of service set 
by the international tour organizer based on what that organizer has promised to 
clients through advertisements, usually in the form of direct mail catalogues. 
There is usually little variation in “full-service treks” between companies because 
organizers are in direct competition with each other. Also, their clients often 
encounter each other along the trails and compare levels of service offered by 
different firms. Consequently, organizers have demanded increasingly higher 
levels of service from subcontractors. The degree of competition locally and the 
ability of international firms to outsource to different contractors has constrained 
the opportunity for local subcontractors to generate revenue and profit. With the 
provision of service standards set from outside, local sub-contractors can only 
attempt to compete on the basis of price. In the effort to reduce input costs, labor 
is the most elastic factor. To lower input costs and maintain a viable business

structure has been developed which can be permanently stationed at various locations along the glacier and 
is meant to provide protection and comfort for soldiers stationed on the ice. Despite the fact that porters 
have been operating in similar environments for much longer than the soldiers the motivation to research 
and design such a shelter out of concern for their comfort and safety does not seem to have existed among 
their employers.

28 John Mock & Kimberley O'Neil, Survey of Ecotourism Potential in Pakistan's Biodiversity Project Area 
(Chitral and Northern Areas). Islamabad: The World Conservation Union (IUCN) (1996). (at 
http://www.monitor.net/%7Ejmko/karakoram/biodiv.htm)
companies exact surplus value from labor, in this case porters, through infringing on recognized standards of treatment regulated by the government of Pakistan. They make up for the revenue shortfall by exploiting those least able to seek out other opportunities or protest.

While the government of Pakistan has regulations meant to standardize the conditions under which porters work, porters complain that tour operators routinely breach these regulations in an effort to reduce input costs and increase profit margins. The consequence of these infringements, they say, is an increased workload and poor working conditions for porters. While porters tend to rank the labour practices of some agencies as better than others, they are consistent in their reports of the ways in which agencies breach regulations. One of the most common complaints stems from the hierarchical way in which treks and expeditions are organized.

Typically, once an international operator has subcontracted logistical arrangements to a local organizer, it is that organizer’s responsibility to hire personnel for the trek/expedition. Companies typically have a stock of guides to whom they provide seasonal employment. A guide is selected for the trip and is responsible, along with a representative of the company, often the owner, for the hiring of a sirdar (porter foreman). It is typically the sirdar’s responsibility to arrange for the hire of porters. However, sirdars are often placed in a position where they are now made to bid for the job in order to be selected. This bid offer is the number of porters they will need to carry expedition loads. The company representative calculates the number of porters required based on official government regulations of 25 kg. per load, and will then ask sirdars to bid for the job. The sirdar with the lowest bid (i.e., offering the lowest labour cost) wins the job. The total load, however, remains the same meaning that individual porters are left to carry additional weight over the 25 kg. limit. The extra weight is often added surreptitiously to porters’ loads. But even when porters feel that their loads are heavier than usual they hesitate to complain, and attribute the feeling to fatigue. Occasionally, they will press the sirdar to have the guide reweigh the loads only to discover that it is 5-10 kg. overweight. Porters also

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29 I hesitate to call these "rights" as there is absolutely no recourse to legal structures to enforce these regulations in the case of porters. There is no mechanism through which they can claim these rights, other than to refuse to take a position as a porter.

30 Despite the existence of labor legislation in Pakistan meant to protect workers rights, particularly to health and safety, the Pakistani government rarely enforces this legislation. It is inapplicable in the Northern Areas because that territory is not governed by the Pakistan's constitution.
complain that they receive inadequate rations and consistently have to press guides and sirdars to dispense proper rations. A porter’s diet on a typical trek consists of little more than chappatis and tea. Poor clothing and shelter compound the effects of porter’s excessive loads and poor nutrition. While government regulations dictate porters are to be provided with certain items such as a jacket and footwear, organizers skimp on the quality of goods, providing each porter with a square meter of 5 ml. plastic sheeting to protect against the rain and snow, cheap plastic shoes for footwear, and cheap plastic sunglasses that fail to screen out harmful ultraviolet radiation. For shelter, porters are provided with cheap tarpaulins for every 12 men, and they are expected to sleep under these in all weather conditions.31 In some cases, porters report that guides fail to pay the standard salary for the trip they have completed. Wages are calculated per stage travelled and while there are occasionally arguments over what constitutes a legitimate stage, there is general agreement on the number of stages for established trips. Despite this, guides occasionally refuse to pay porters the stage-adjusted salary for a trip. When porters complain, some guides adopt a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude, knowing that if a porter complains excessively he puts himself at risk of being ‘blacklisted’, thus sacrificing his opportunity to earn future income.

As always, exploitation of this nature occurs within inequitable power relations. Porters suffer the adverse effects of competition within the adventure tourism industry because they are least able to change and challenge the structure. "Development" and modernization, however, have created both the desire and the material need for cash while a restrictive regional economy provides few outlets to earn that cash. Consequently, there are more than enough men seeking out portering jobs, and each knows that if he complains of maltreatment by his employers he can easily be left without any opportunity for employment. For the most part, employers are ancestors of local ruling families or individuals who either hold or have access to those in political office, thus enhancing the ability to shape government response to complaints of inequitable labour relations. Considering that porter labor underpins the entire tourism industry in the Central Karakoram, it may seem somewhat surprising that porters do not recognize their mutual interests and work to improve conditions.

31 While conducting the research upon which this paper is based, I routinely witnessed porters sleeping under tarpaulins in all weather conditions, and quite often with little under them but bare ice. These tarpaulins often bear the insignia of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and are an example of how goods destined for legitimate aid purposes find their way into the market place and end up, in this case, supplementing the revenue of tour organizers.
In fact, attempts to contest working conditions were common in the past.\textsuperscript{32} Reports of colonial travelers are rife with tales of porters refusing to work or striking for improved pay or supplies. While the nature of this resistance changed through time, direct observations and discussions with both porters and tour operators indicate that it was more overt before the emergence of the highly capitalized and brokered structure of trekking and mountaineering in the 1980s. Prior to that, porters and sirdars had direct contact with travelers and were able to use a range of different strategies to negotiate directly with their employers. Increasingly this negotiation has been taken over by culture brokers\textsuperscript{33} and the amount of overt resistance has declined. Strikes are rarely occur now, but this seems to have little to do with any sense that working conditions are satisfactory, and much to do with the ramifications of complaints regarding unsatisfactory conditions. In the contemporary world of trekking and mountaineering, there is just much more to lose by protesting inequitable and unsafe working conditions.\textsuperscript{34} Employers have also adopted specific practices meant to pre-empt any disruptive actions by porters. A common tactic practiced by guides, for example, is to confiscate porter’s National Identity Cards at the beginning of a trip and to retain them until the trip is over and the porter has been paid. If the guide determines that the porter has not fulfilled his obligations in any way, the guide can turn the porter’s card over to the closest police station. Since the card is the porter’s access to all government services and must be produced on demand for the police or the military, simply being in possession of the identity cards gives the guide considerable power over the porter.\textsuperscript{35} This threat of

\textsuperscript{32} MacDonald, supra note 9, at 288.

\textsuperscript{33} A survey of the promotional literature circulated by firms offering travel services in the region reveals that low resistance is actually used as a selling point by some agencies who ‘market’ their cultural understanding or that of their in-country organizers as facilitating “harmonious” relations with local workers.

\textsuperscript{34} In interviews during the summer of 1998, men who have worked as porters consistently agreed that working conditions were better under colonial regimes than they are today. They cited better treatment by foreigners, better supplies and, in terms of relative purchasing power, better pay as reasons for improved treatment. While not all of these men had worked as porters prior to 1947, they cited the experiences of their fathers and went on to say that conditions had changed significantly with the entry of “companies” into the trekking and climbing business. To a person they recommended that the power of the companies to arrange labor be eliminated and advocated a scenario where foreigners would once again negotiate directly with the men that they employ. There are also other factors such as historical intervillage suspicions and rivalries that inhibit the development of a common oppositional interest. I have dealt with how these are manipulated by tour organizers elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{35} That control over social behavior can be exercised by confiscating these cards is an example of what Foucault describes as “disciplinary writing.” MICHEL FOUCAULT, DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH: THE BIRTH OF THE PRISON (1977).
exposure to the surveillance and violence of the state also acts as a disincentive to protest maltreatment.

Some porters also say that while they would like to talk to travelers about their working conditions, guides act to prevent them getting access to travelers, claiming that the company is their employer and not the traveler. This is one of the hallmarks of brokerage; acting to remove the source of capital from an appreciation of its affects on labor and inserting barriers so that labor has little access to the ultimate source of capital that creates the demand. In our case, guides, as elements of a brokerage system, set up interdictory structures. These barriers ensure that porters have few means through which they can express their grievances to travelers, while travelers are kept ignorant of any discontent among their employees.

To summarize, porter's work under conditions that create the potential for serious injury and illness. This potential has increased as processes of globalization have increased the demand for, and facilitated an expansion of adventure travel. Additionally, the availability of capital has brought local subcontractors into increasingly heavy competition with each other. In an effort to capture market share and compete for slim profits within a highly competitive and fickle market, many subcontractors attempt to reduce input costs, including labor, the most elastic of these. When this is combined with increased competition for jobs, men who work as porters are increasingly subjected to hazardous working conditions and pay the cost in the toll taken on their bodies. There is little doubt that some of the labor practices occurring within the contemporary tourism industry in northern Pakistan amount to violations of commonly recognized human rights. Nonetheless, they can also be, and often are, interpreted as a competition between rights: In this case, rights of mobility on the part of travelers and their capital versus the rights of porters to a safe work environment. As in most cases where rights come into conflict, force wins.

We can turn to a number of material explanations for this outcome. One is simply the need to produce surplus value from labor, which is intensified in highly competitive environments. It is also possible to point to a brokerage system that, to varying degrees, keeps travelers deaf to the complaints of porters. Moreover, because traveler's encounters with porters are so short-term, they are not cognizant of the long-term effects adventure travel has on the porter's bodies. But all of these explanations avoid the reality that travelers can see the discrepant conditions under which porters and 'sahibs' travel. Something else, I suggest, underlies these material explanations; something which legitimates conditions of employment that elsewhere would be seen as an
infraction of rights, particularly if travelers were subjected to such conditions. I have already pointed to a partial explanation for this blindness in the way that culture brokers deploy a relativist argument to remove the burden of obligation from travelers. However, this analysis calls for a deeper examination as the effectiveness of this dubious argument needs to be explained by a traveler’s willingness to accept it. And that willingness, I suggest, comes from an understanding of porters that has been framed in terms of naturalized difference. It is the ambivalent acceptance of this naturalized difference on the part of travelers that makes moral and spatial distance irrelevant in the assignation, recognition and enforcement of rights.

The Historical Production of Moral Distance and the Absence of Obligation

Whereas liberal humanist foundations of rights assert that these inequities should not persist, various obstacles continue to inhibit the recognition of rights as universal. In the case of mountaineering and trekking porters, travelers and tour companies tend to deploy rhetorical arguments similar to those of transnational corporations taking advantage of cheap (or forced) labor. “They’re doing it of their own free will”, “they don’t know any other way of life”, “our activities bring cash into the area”, “they’re naturally adept at this kind of work” are examples of utterances made by travelers in response to claims of exploitation or injustice. However, such rationalizations exist because of a history of power relations. In our case these power relations can be accessed to expose how a knowledge of porters has been constructed within discourses which privilege the expansion of capital and the deployment of liberalism in that extension. One element of this argument is that human rights are universal constructs. While there is a general acceptance of the universal applicability of the concept of rights, despite its emergence form within European traditions of liberal humanism, there is also an ambivalence that surrounds the actual universal application of these rights. In the case of tourism, a liberalist argument that has gained credence is that the spread of capital and contact with ‘enlightened’ cultures will bring about the emergence of democracy, and bolster a regard for rights in locales now deemed to be without their benefit. Yet, there is an ambivalence that engulfs the extension of rights. Some of this ambivalence is embroiled in the right to difference, implicit in relativism. And relativism is at the core of the desire that feeds adventure tourism. Adventure tourism relies on the construction of difference to generate its appeal; the desire to travel, to escape from the mundane or the familiar. In other words, it presupposes a construction of difference, and that creates an ambivalence surrounding anything that might
obliterate difference. While accepting the universality of rights implies a reduction of difference, there is an unwillingness to dispense with difference as its removal challenges the legitimacy of the desire that underpins the travel experience.

It is exactly this ambivalence that allows culture brokers to assume the role of mediator, to step in and claim an understanding of a culturally appropriate deployment of rights. Yet, they continue to engage in forms of exploitation that would, under other circumstances, be considered an infraction of rights. In the case of adventure travel, capital is not only able to align itself with the allegedly moral exercise of the extension of human rights, but, through a partial appropriation of culture, it is also able to define at a local level the appropriate means of dispensing, monitoring and enforcing those rights. The assumption that a culturally appropriate institution is assuming the task relieves the individual traveler of the burden of obligation to defend the rights of others. Why does the individual allow this burden to be so easily removed? One potential response is to assert that it is an easy approach to assuaging conscience, but this calls the sincerity of the individual into doubt, as it assumes that individuals intentionally seek out and accept convenient ways of dealing with moral dilemmas. This may indeed be the case for some. But a more substantive response is that the individual traveler is subject to a historical construction of difference that maintains a boundary between their own identity and the identity of those whom they encounter in their travels. In the case of porters we can see how this construction of difference has relied on the generation of racial and ethnic typifications, stretching back over 150 years, through which porters have been isolated in a marginal position of moral consideration. I do not assert that this position remained static through time. However, there continues to be an epistemological boundary which separates elites from those who carry their bags; a boundary which leads to the deployment of institutional practices (such as government regulations or the actions of tour operators) that contribute to hazardous working conditions for porters. It is this historical production of a knowledge of others as different that becomes manifest as a form of epistemic violence.

This is, in part, a question of scale. The cancellation of distance, provided by technology, has not been matched by an ideological change which repositions those interacting within different frames of knowledge. For example, compare the remarks of two mountaineers traveling through the Karakoram village of Askoli, one in the early and the other in the late 20th century. For C.G. Bruce, Askoli in 1910 represented "primitive man at the edge of a primitive half-formed
world." 36 Seventy years later, Galen Rowell described Askoli as "pleasantly uncivilized, as representing that beautiful in between point at which the human race had hovered for most of its development up until the past two centuries." 37 The words are much the same. Both the place and its inhabitants are constructed as primitive and uncivilized, viewed as somehow sub-human from the vantage point of western "civilization". Here then, Balti porters are portrayed as anachronistic rather than progressive. This construction of a people out of time and place is used rhetorically to justify differential treatment. If certain individuals are deemed to be non-modern subjects, they need not be subject to the rights implied by modernity, such as the rights attendant upon autonomous individual selves. In many ways this resembles a pre-Enlightenment faith in the assignment of social status via birth, a system against which the discourse of rights emerged to challenge. Given that notions of the autonomous individual worthy of and able to claim rights are grounded in the liberal Humanism of the Enlightenment, anything that can be represented as standing outside of that grounding need not be considered to fall within its logical sphere of consideration. Rights, according to this perspective, need only concern subjects of the Enlightenment, subjects who conceive of themselves as autonomous individuals, recognize that they have rights and are able to exercise claim to them. 38

In the case of porters, their inability to claim rights is a function of power relationships that rely on a culturally and historically specific construction of knowledge. This construction has paradoxically circumscribed their location within a relative sphere of moral consideration. It is precisely this circumscription that reveals the relativity of morality. Men who work as porters, like all of us, fall both inside and outside of the bounds of moral subjectivity depending on the perspective of those with the power to extend moral consideration. The perspectives of foreign travellers, particularly Europeans, are contingent upon a history of colonial social relations. Within those relations, porters have been inserted into asymmetrical power relationships with

38 No doubt there are a host of reasons why residents of UNHCR sponsored refugee camps in Albania were shown markedly different (and better treatment) than, say, Somali refugees in Kenya. My argument, however, would suggest that we look for the source of these demonstrations of partiality in the notion that Europeans are specifically conceived as Enlightenment subjects by those who command international institutions and are therefore worthy of consideration within an enlightened worldview (e.g., worthy of rights). Beyond this, it is certain that they ‘know their rights’, can ‘claim their rights’ and would be able to articulate the points at which rights were breached by both their ‘oppressors’ and those supposedly providing for their safety and security, (e.g., UNHCR).
Europeans through the production of a body of knowledge about labour which was filtered through the racist, class-based moral ideologies that underlay colonial rule. These underpinnings, while not as explicit, persist today, and continue to place men who work as porters outside of a sphere of moral obligation when they assume the role of porter. Just as the moral condition of coolie was naturalized through the ideological structure of colonialism for travellers in a colonial age, the occupational label of porter has become a class label for contemporary travellers.\(^{39}\) It is, at least in part, the discursive placement of ‘the porter’ as outside of the bounds of moral consideration which helps to maintain oppressive labour relations. My final point then is to demonstrate that ‘the porter’ has historically been situated beyond this sphere and consequently to show that rights are breached through material labour relations not because of spatial distance but because of a moral distance that allows those with greater degrees of power to legitimate the exploitation of others. The discursive sources of this situation are derived from the ideological representations that foreigners have produced from historical interactions with porters and transmitted intergenerationally through a variety of forms (books, colonial reports, lectures, films etc). These ideological representations serve to produce a body of knowledge about ‘the porter’, to naturalize his condition, and to prescribe normative forms of behaviour and treatment for him based on that characterisation. This process of naturalizing the social condition of ‘the porter’ has its roots in a pre-colonial social structure but was intensified and effectively entered European discursive configurations during the colonial era. The following comments from the reports of travellers reveal the textual strategies through which this occurred:

"Because they are such good carriers ... it has fallen out that they are employed more and more for carrying purposes, till the patient, long-suffering Balti coolie has become a well known feature in the valleys of the frontier.” Francis Younghusband, 1898 \(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) Coolie was a label that preceded the use of porter and was not only applied to persons as an occupational moniker, but was also used to loosely define an ethnic identity. For example, in northern India the class/occupational label coolie was synonymous with, though not reducible to, the ethnic label Balti.

“The Himalayan shepherd is the personification of primitive and unintelligent man, scarcely higher in his habit than the animals under his care.” Fanny Bullock Workman 1908

The coolie understands only the application of superior force as an incentive to fulfil his obligations. Gratitude he does not know. Kindness he does not appreciate nor reciprocate, and ordinary motives of personal advantage, as understood by Europeans, do not always appeal to him. He is an Asiatic unswayed by those principles which regulate the conduct of conscientious Europeans. Either you must master him or he will master you. He knows no middle ground. Fanny Bullock Workman 1908

“One could not help feeling pity for these creatures, who were more like beasts than human beings. Their misery was terrible to behold, but they did not appear to feel this in the slightest; it seemed to fit them naturally - as naturally as the rags in which they were clothed.” Expedition francaise a l’Himalaya 1938

“If the expedition is stranded the Baltis should be punished. They should be stripped naked and marched home in shame. They’ll get out alive but they’ll have a lesson. I don’t want to kill them outright.” Leif-Norman Patterson 1975

“our sirdar knew... most of the cohort paraded before him... He selected the best two hundred. This was survival of the fittest unstrained: the lame were sent packing without ceremony or sympathy; midgets and idiots too (and there was a share of both) and then the crooks, cheats, troublemakers and whingers.” J. Barry 1987

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44 ROWELL, supra note 38, p.175.

“Well, they’re just born to it aren’t they. I mean it comes naturally to them.” Interview with an Australian trekker commenting on his perception that porters don’t seem to suffer from carrying loads, July 1997.

“I think it’s fair to say that they are different, that they are better able, for whatever reason - physically or mentally - to handle pain than we are. They are able to cross 6000 metre mountain passes in flipflops, when we wouldn’t even think of trying it… “Interview with a British mountaineer commenting on his perceptions of Balti porters, July, 2001.

These comments are not unusual, emerging as they do out of a colonial ideology buttressed by racism and class hierarchies. The anachronistic attitude they express is only one element of a discursive process that positioned certain people as naturally suited to particularly servile tasks. Many authors note how the racial typification and related material violence expressed in these remarks are common strategies of domination.46 What is remarkable is the degree to which these representations have persisted through time; how the knowledge produced within the racist and Orientalist ideologies of colonialism resonates through time to sanction particular forms of treatment today47. These comments are not intended to suggest that all travellers to the Karakoram receive these ideological representations or represent and act toward porters in the same way: they merely suggest that there is a specific chronology of representations that demonstrate how the position of porters in what is an oppressive and coercive labour relation is naturalized. Despite the emergence of universal rights, a general sensibility to ideology and forms of domination, and recognition of modes of social construction, the language of naturalism pervades the comments of travellers, today much as it did 150 years ago. According to these representations, the material conditions of oppression are experienced as natural


47 EDWARD SAID, ORIENTALISM (1979)
by porters. The effect of this naturalisation, I suggest, is to reduce the obligation to modify the material relations under which men work, and consequently to maintain the conditions of oppression. Granted that treatment of porters might not be as brutal as it previously was, but the persistence of the mechanisms through which difference and value hierarchies are constructed does help to explain the lack of concern for the violence enacted by adventure travel on the bodies of men who work as porters. It helps to explain why, when the spatial distance that separates distant others has been breached; when the extreme nature of power differentials become clear; when travelers are no longer spatially distant from those whose lives they impact; that the degree of that impact is not assuaged. This reproduction of the knowledge of ‘the porter’ as a naturalised bearer maintains the basis for what I have termed epistemic violence.

CONCLUSION

The infringement of rights that constitutes the maintenance of oppressive labour relations in mountain travel – and the material effects of that oppression manifested in the bodies of men and women - is grounded in the production and reproduction of a body of knowledge which continues to position porters on the margins of a sphere of moral consideration. What I have presented here is a case where intensified globalization has brought people into contact with each other. For tourists, porters are not distant others (at least in a physical sense). Rather, they are immediately proximal. There is no avoiding them, and the work they perform. But they are distant in an epistemological sense. The work that they do, and the violence they suffer, is legitimated through a historical and rhetorical process of naturalization. The question persists: where lies the political failure to respond to oppression? The comments that I read in mountaineering reports, on the websites of travellers, see in documentaries, read in travel books, hear from the mouths of travellers tells me that part of the answer lies in how moral distance is maintained through the way that race and class continue to be used to construct essential differences between people to situate them inequitably within power relations. If this is correct, then questions of the relations between injustice and health that stem from power relations between parties who exist in relations of inequality, as we all do to varying degrees, can only be addressed through first understanding how historical social relations continue to condition contemporary social relations. In our case, this requires an understanding of how the interaction between travelers and porters 150 years ago continues to work to reproduce conditions of social injustice today and a more nuanced understanding of how a historically produced knowledge of others acts as an
obstacle to maintaining the duties and obligations which exist in mutuality with rights. A solution to this dilemma of rights will be hard to find. Ultimately, this is a case in which it is hard to believe that people will pay a great deal more for travel to satisfy the rights of porters or that people will stop traveling in order to minimize their complicity in the inequalities of international tourism intensified through globalization. But at a minimum, it identifies the problem and exposes the need for a solution.
References


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This suffering, however, is qualified by Beck’s (1992) boomerang effect; a recognition that in a risk society there is a distinction between the distribution of wealth and the distribution of risk which makes it impossible to completely escape the risk effects of modernization.