PERFORMING AUTHENTICITY:

THE GAME OF CONTEMPORARY BACKPACKER TOURISM

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze contemporary backpacker tourism in Australia. It is an investigation into the degree to which aspects of backpacker tourism have become incorporated into mainstream culture despite backpacker tourism's image of being alternative. It is also a study which investigates the degree to which the image of the alternative is marketed to backpacker tourists. The thesis examines the manner in which backpacker tourists seek to escape the constraints of Western, post-industrial existence by engaging in a form of travel which is thought to be purer than mass-tourism. This is also an examination of the failure of these tourists to escape the matrix of the Western constraints they seek to escape.

Research was conducted by way of participant observation in the backpacking culture in Australia for a period of four months. Information was collected by way of observation, participant observation, and interviews with individuals located within the backpacking community.

Data collection yielded results which demonstrate the high degree to which contemporary backpacker tourism has become incorporated into mainstream capitalist culture. Most aspects of the pursuit which are believed to fulfil the desired escapism are actually part of the mass-tourist infrastructure. Accommodation, transportation, activities, and social behaviours are all aspects which have become commodified and marketed to these travelers. As such, the conclusion which was made is that there is very little about contemporary backpacking which is alternative. Furthermore, contemporary backpacking has become a game played by travelers who operate in a theater of perceived escapism and alternativeness. It is a game, however, which is completely within confined post-industrial capitalism.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTORY AND METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

The purpose of this study is to critically examine contemporary backpacker tourism in

Australia and the degree to which the pursuit has become institutionalized and incorporated into

mainstream capitalist culture. This study will also examine the degree to which backpackers are

subtly controlled and manipulated by the elements of Westernism they seek to escape. It is a

study of how authenticity is marketed to travelers who consume the backpacking experience with

the belief that what they are consuming is an authentically alternative experience. The evidence

suggests, however, that the elements deemed important for a successful backpacking excursion

are elements which are facilitated by agents of Western capitalism and, as such, the notion of an

alternative travel method is simply an illusion.

Backpacking is an increasingly popular method of international travel for young, usually

middle class, Western adults.[1] It is a pursuit which is reputed to be an alternative to mass

tourism and a rejection of the mainstream. Duration of travel is, on average, considerably longer

for backpackers than their mass-tourist counterparts, backpackers focus on minimal spending in

regard to accommodation, food and transportation (Riley 1988, 314, Loker-Murphy and Pearce

1995, 830) and the perception among backpacker tourists is that their experience fosters a greater

degree of authenticity than that experienced by mass tourists. The luggage, as one would

logically infer, is a backpack in which the traveler carries all necessary provisions; a choice of

luggage which is both practical for the longer duration of travel and effective as a symbolic

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[1]Backpackers do emerge from other geo-political and cultural locations such as Asia, Africa and South America. Statistics, however, demonstrate that the majority of backpacker tourists emerge from what are considered to be "Western" societies.

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means of distinguishing these travelers from the mass tourists they are believed to oppose.

Various modes of backpacking exist. The more mainstream form, the focus of this study, is exemplified by the young adults who travel throughout Europe or Australia during the summer months or immediately following graduation from a post-secondary institution. There also exists factions of backpackers who reject the mainstream form of the pursuit and strive to infiltrate "exotic" locations which lack a developed tourism infrastructure, although these individuals are increasingly being referred to by others and themselves as "trekkers". Although the differences make difficult the task of identifying backpacker tourists, all modes of the pursuit may be considered functioning parts of the same system. For the purpose of definition, the identity of backpackers may best be exemplified by a poster witnessed in a youth hostel: *dorms are reserved strictly for backpackers. A backpacker is defined as someone who is carrying a backpack.*[2]

Backpacking has traditionally been regarded as an alternative form of travel which is linked to escapist tendencies generated by the alienating pressures of Western post-industrial existence (Wang 2000, 30, Riley 1988, 317, Cohen 1979, 186). As well, backpacking usually occurs during a key transitional phase in an individual's life (Cohen 1972, 175, Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 827, Riley 1988, 317, Vogt 1976, 27) and is believed to be a means by which to alleviate the constraints of post-industrial existence. Backpacking is chosen because of the mythological belief that it is an alternative to the mainstream.

The issue of the alternative is paramount to the backpacking venture, as pursuing a method of travel which is believed to be alternative to the mainstream is often believed to be an escape from

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[2]Observed at a Brisbane, Australia youth hostel during field research.

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the mainstream. If the pursuit has become institutionalized and routinized, as I intend to demonstrate, then there is no true escape. I intend to prove that the attempt to escape results in inevitable failure as it is impossible to escape contemporary capitalism when undertaking a pursuit which is located squarely within its parameters. Contemporary backpacking has become fully integrated into the mainstream and is a mere extension of the capitalist system from which an escape is sought. Travelers thus only succeed in escaping one environment of constraints to another where the control mechanisms and systems of manipulation are more subtle and covert.

As a form of contemporary tourism, backpacking is rapidly growing demonstrating the degree to which it is becoming itself a form of mass tourism. Recent estimates suggest that "[e]very sixth arrival in the world is a youth tourist" (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 829) and that "[t]he average annual rate of increase of youth tourism today outstrips by close to 60% the average annual rate of increase of world tourism" (ibid., 827). The weight of these statistics is even more substantial when considering that the tourist industry is currently one of the fastest growing and prosperous industries globally with tourism becoming a major "development factor in post-industrial societies" (Lafant and Graburn 1992, 97) and a "key commodity" in postmodernism (Munt 1994, 109). Consequently, the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) has expanded its global chain of affiliated accommodations. It now consists of thousands of international locations with nightly visits reaching in excess of thirty million (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 823). Backpacker tourism is, therefore, quite indicative of a mainstream, mass tourist pursuit and is alternative in mythological reputation only. It is *an* alternative but is not *itself* alternative.

Several elements are involved in this study. The first element involves the deception of contemporary backpacker tourists. Backpacking is a pursuit which is marketed at potential

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travelers with the luring aspect being the "escape" and the "alternative". Because such lures are marketed by agents of capitalism they have become mere commodities to be sold and consumed. The "escape" is, therefore, no escape at all. The result of this is that there is no risk to the capitalist system as these individuals are still operating within the system and contributing to its function and productivity. The degree to which the pursuit has become a form of mass tourism will be proven through an examination of pre-travel preparations, the establishment of a highly routinized and regulated hostel network, pubs and nightclubs as key backpacker environments, and backpacker safaris as environments of exploitation. As well, the emergence of a clearly detectable travel circuit which demonstrates the degree to which backpackers are encouraged to follow certain courses of action will be discussed, as will the means by which social interaction and elements of the backpacking experience are facilitated by the structured and capitalistic nature of the pursuit. In the case of contemporary backpacking, the alternative *is* the mainstream. The success of this packaged and marketed authenticity also demonstrates how the capitalist system has generated a profitable response to the alienation and constraint it inflicts upon its members.

Within this environment of "alternativeness" is an opportunity for travelers to consume a cultural experience and transcend their transitional phase. All of this is provided by the very system they seek to escape. While this consumption transpires, travelers are able to pursue temporary lifestyles and conduct themselves in manners which may not be positively sanctioned in their respective societies if done in excess. It is an opportunity for travelers to shed their personalities and adopt alter-egos where they can "act out" in an uncharacteristic fashion (Vogt 1976, 29). Casual and informal social relationships, excessive alcohol consumption and drug

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taking, and casual sexual relationships are all behaviours which are prevalent within the backpacking culture. This is believed to be part of the overall escapist experience: an opportunity to freely engage in behaviours without concern for the consequence of this action. In short, it is a perceived state of absolute freedom. Most aspects of this freedom, however, are facilitated by the capitalist nature of the backpacking pursuit.

The result of the deception and the consumption of this "authenticity" is a dynamic situation in which both those seeking to escape "normal" lives in capitalist society and the capitalist system benefit. The capitalist system which levies the constraints has provided an environment, still very much constraining and manipulative, in which individuals may act out and "escape" while remaining under the control and influence of the capitalist system. The constraining system has provided an escape from itself while providing no escape at all. Also beneficial to the capitalist system is the fact that most travelers expect to return and be fully functional within the system they sought to escape.

The overall deceptive nature of backpacker tourism should not suggest that backpackers have nothing to gain as a result of this deception. Having consumed the experience, regardless of its actual authenticity, the travelers have obtained valuable cultural capital which they can market upon their return home. Pursuing a method of travel which is believed to be alternative to, and more difficult than, mass tourism is an effective method of acquiring this cultural capital. Furthermore, the belief that backpacker tourism is more authentic in nature aids in claims of worldliness and cultural sensitivity. The fact that the middle class habitus generally sanctions

such travel as legitimate in the first place ensures that the cultural capital can be acquired.[3] Also, if the travel method is sanctioned as legitimate then it cannot be regarded as purely alternative. Where "[c]lasses wage a hegemonic battle of 'classificatory struggles' seeking to distinguish themselves from each other...through commodities--which is taken to include both objects and experiences such as holidays" (Munt 1994, 106), the consumption of the "alternative" experience is a vital tool in the acquisition of cultural capital as long as those who participate in the experience continue to believe the deception.

Contemporary backpacker tourism is thus an elaborate system of illusions and control mechanisms which market an "authentically" alternative experience. There is nothing alternative about the pursuit and there is no real escape for those who enter this environment. Contemporary backpacking has become another aspect of capitalist culture, no different than the mass tourism it is believed to be alternative to.

Data collection was conducted by way of participant observation while undertaking a backpacking excursion in Australia. The location, as it was discovered, is ideal in that it is a location where backpacker tourism has become quite established. The popularity of Australia as a destination for backpackers, partly due to the distances involved in traveling there and the uniqueness of the landscape (Herath 1997, 442), has prompted the Australian Department of Tourism to invest millions of dollars in the research of this particular travel sector (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 820). Research undertaken by the Bureau of Tourism Research has

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[3]Terminology such as "cultural capital" and "habitus" may be attributed to Pierre Bourdieu and are discussed in such works as *In Other Words* (1990) and *Sociology In Question* (1993).

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yielded results indicating that in 1995-1996, two hundred and thirty thousand backpackers visited Australia. Overall, these visitors constituted six percent of all visitors to Australia and were collectively responsible for eight hundred and eighty-four million dollars in "direct visitor expenditure" (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 1). In 1999, the percentage of backpackers rose significantly to nine percent resulting in nearly three hundred and sixty thousand backpackers, each with a total average expenditure of just under five thousand Australian dollars resulting in a combined expenditure of nearly two billion dollars (*Bureau of Tourism Research* 1999, 2).

Backpackers are also regarded as an integral segment of the Australian labour force and "[support] employment and industries in areas which would not otherwise benefit substantially from tourism expenditure" (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 1). These statistics demonstrate the obvious economic and cultural impact of backpacker tourism in Australia and reinforce the decision to study contemporary backpacker tourism in this location. The above statistics also add credence to the contention that the pursuit of backpacker tourism has become a mainstream pursuit. On one level, the statistical information demonstrates the economic impact and widespread undertaking of this travel method suggesting that it is *not* indicative of alternative travel. On another level, the fact that data on backpacker tourism was collected, analyzed and published as a result of government initiatives to seriously research this travel sector further demonstrates the underlying institutionalization of the pursuit.

This is thus a study of contemporary backpacker tourism in Australia. The research conducted indicates that backpacking is a highly routinized practice. The backpackers consume "authenticity" as part of their attempted escape from the constraints of post-industrial existence. The environment of this escape, however, is firmly within the parameters of contemporary

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capitalism. The escape is, therefore, no escape at all. The research conducted has further indicated that every aspect of the pursuit is designed to ensure maximum profit through the exploitation of the travelers. Backpackers are subtly manipulated and encouraged to follow certain courses of action. As well, every aspect deemed important to the backpacking culture has become packaged and made ready for consumption. The backpackers consume this "authenticity" and directly participate in their own deception. The end result is a situation beneficial to both sides: profit and maintenance of control on the part of the capitalist system, and the acquisition of cultural capital through the consumption of the commodified backpacking experience.

Methods and Methodology

The primary methods employed to collect data for this thesis was participant observations, observation, and interviews with backpackers. During the course of field research, I was a backpacker who was conducting sociological research and not a sociologist who was attempting to conduct research by backpacking. There is a difference. All of the channels I followed from pre-travel organization through to the actual excursion were those followed by backpackers and channels which I would have followed in the absence of a research agenda. Furthermore, the decision to backpack in Australia was determined *prior* to the development of a research agenda.

As a travel destination, Australia was chosen in 1997 during a European backpacking excursion. This decision was made following the establishment of friendship with Australians during the course of travel. This is what I am referring to when I claim that I am a backpacker who is conducting sociological research and not vice-versa.

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Pre-Travel

Prior to departure it was necessary to fulfill all of the necessary obligations and formalities of pre-travel. The process of gathering information on such formalities was simply a matter of consulting a travel agent which, consequently, reveals a great deal about the mainstream and institutionalized nature of the pursuit. Because the intended excursion exceeded a period of three months, it was necessary to obtain an entrance visa from the Australian High Commission in Ottawa.

The application form required such information as the intended length of stay (entrance and exit dates required on form), the type of visa requested from a list which included *holiday, work, education,* and *business,* passport information and a notarized account statement from a bank. The latter was essential as significant funds are required in order for the visa to be granted. In my situation, the choice of visa was determined to be the *working holiday* visa as this would permit legal casual employment, and was described by the travel agent as being the most common form of visa for backpackers.

In regard to the bank statement, an applicant must possess an account balance of at least three thousand dollars plus evidence of a return ticket or five thousand dollars in the absence of a return ticket. The purpose of this is to ensure that the applicant has sufficient resources to finance the period of stay and that any employment engaged in would be purely casual and incidental, undertaken only for the purpose of supplementing existing financial resources.

The completed application was submitted along with my passport to the Australian High Commission for assessment and processing and within one working week the application was accepted and visa received as well as a list of governmental rules and regulations which were to

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be adhered to. Employment, if undertaken, can only be casual and visitors cannot remain with one employer for a period exceeding three months unless special permission has been granted by the Australian government. Failure to adhere to the rules and regulations of the visa could result in expulsion from the country.

The visa is valid for a period of twelve months which begins upon entry of the country, not at the time of issue. From the entry period, the visitor may enter and exit Australia indefinitely within the twelve month period. Once the twelve month period has expired, however, the individual cannot again obtain the particular type of visa used. Any individuals who wish to once again visit Australia at a later date must submit an application for a different type of entry visa.

Once the visa requirements were successfully completed, the next step in the process was to organize airfare and other necessities for travel. The travel agent informed me that the most common mode of transport utilized by backpackers was coach and indicated that I would be able to purchase a travel pass prior to departure. Catering to backpackers, Greyhound Australia offers a "kilometer pass" which permits the traveler to purchase a block of kilometers and use them in a debit fashion while traveling. I agreed to this and purchased a block of fifteen thousand kilometers. As is evident from the above, little effort is needed in organizing many of the formalities of pre-travel once again demonstrating the institutionalization of the pursuit.

From this point I made personal contact with Hostelling International Canada and purchased a one year YHA membership for twenty dollars which granted access to all YHA affiliated hostels in Australia. This was the only formality I had to organize on my own. The remainder was organized by the travel agent. The next step was to simply depart for Australia.

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As previously stated, prior arrangements had been made with acquaintances met during 1997, one of whom lives in Sydney. This resulted in established accommodation in Sydney and, therefore, there was no need to actively seek accommodation in Sydney.

The Travel Period

Subsequent to my arrival in Sydney and establishment of place of residence, my next step was to determine where I would go next and what I would see. This objective was met through consultation with my *Let's Go* guide, purchased prior to departure. I arbitrarily decided to initially visit locations within relative close proximity to Sydney. The first choice, based on the information provided in the guidebook, was Katoomba, located in the Blue Mountains and only a short distance from Sydney. Because the rail network reaches Katoomba from Sydney and is relatively inexpensive, I decided to utilize this mode of transport rather than validating the travel pass. The same decision was reached for Port Stephens and Canberra, all of which were visited for a brief period followed by a return to Sydney after each.

Following brief excursions from Sydney, the next phase was to begin traveling throughout the country. I decided after my initial arrival to Australia that my acquaintance from Sydney, Karen, would accompany me for a small duration of the trip. We opted to take a train from Sydney direct to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory where we would then begin our journey and I would activate my travel pass.

After visiting Alice Springs I activated my Greyhound pass and used it toward a guided tour, provided by Greyhound, of Ayers Rock, or Uluru as it is now known, the Olgas and King's Canyon. At the conclusion of the tour, the two of us traveled north with a night spent in Katherine and finally stopping in Darwin, located at the northern tip of the Northern Territory.

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While in Darwin we opted to purchase a three day tour package to explore Kakadu National

Park, an area which is considered a "must-see" on the Australian backpacking circuit. Leaving

Darwin after the tour of the nearby national park, we traveled east, resting in Mt. Isa and then

proceeded to Townsville on the east coast of Queensland. A short trip was then organized to

Magnetic Island which is only a short ferry ride from Townsville. Returning to Townsville, we

then traveled north first to Cairns to visit the Great Barrier Reef and then to Cape Tribulation

located in the northern rainforest region of Queensland. At the conclusion of this portion of the

trip we then began to move south where we parted ways. Karen returned home and I continued

to travel alone down the east coast.

My first stop was in Airlie Beach where I spent several days. From Airlie Beach I visited

McKay, Hervey Bay, Noosa, Brisbane, Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Port McQuarie, and then

returned to Sydney. All of the above mentioned stops were decided upon after consultation with

the travel guide. Byron Bay had been decided upon prior to arrival on the east coast as most of

the backpackers interacted with during the journey north from Alice Springs and east across the

country to the coast had stressed the necessity of getting to Byron Bay. Byron Bay became

regarded as perhaps the most significant backpacker "Mecca" on the circuit and a visit to this

town was essential in order to receive positive validation from peers.

After resting in Sydney after the journey south along the eastern coast, I traveled to

Melbourne in Victoria to visit another acquaintance met in 1997 during the backpacking

excursion to Europe. Visiting in Melbourne for several days I then traveled to Tasmania via

ferry where I visited Hobart, Port Arthur, Deloraine, and Launceston before returning once again

to Melbourne. From Melbourne I traveled west along the south coast to Adelaide in South

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Australia and then north to Coober Pedy in the outback region of South Australia. Coober Pedy represented the final destination of the trip and from there I slowly made my way back to Sydney where I remained for a short while before returning home. I thus began in Alice Springs, located in the middle of the country moving first north, then east across the country, finally proceeding south along the east and south coast before concluding in Coober Pedy also located close to the centre of the country. The circuit was, therefore a clockwise pattern (see appendix J).

Data Collection

Primary data collection was conducted by closely observing and actively taking part in backpacker activities in Australia. Firstly, data was collected by lodging at youth hostels which are the primary domain of backpackers. These hostels included both chain hostels, such as the YHA and Koala, and independent hostels. Hostels were chosen based upon information in the guidebook or on word-of-mouth recommendations received from other backpackers. In regard to lodgings, therefore, data was collected in prime backpacker environments.

I also sought to actively take part in backpacker activities, spending time in backpacker pubs (often located at the hostel), common rooms, dorms, kitchens, backpacker sights, tours, etc.. The process of interaction was simply a means of immersing myself in the environment and allowing social interaction to transpire. This, of course, is achieved by outwardly displaying the symbolic gestures which portray an individual as approachable which includes smiles, eye contact, small verbal gestures and physical bodily positioning in regard to the location of other backpackers. This last gesture consists of sitting or standing in close proximity to other travelers in order to increase the chance of interacting with these individuals. Of course, interaction with other travelers is not solely a passive act and one often needs to initiate social interaction and not

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merely wait for others to initiate interaction.

At the time friendships were achieved, I simply put myself in the situation of following group activities and being actively social. For the most part, my intentions of collecting data on such behaviour and environments were kept concealed from the other actors. There were situations where I debriefed subjects of my study of them personally as was the case with Matt and Dave from Port Stephens, Diana from Airlie Beach, and Garry from Noosa. The revelation of my agenda was to aid in data collection and engage in more formal questioning of the subjects.

When I chose to keep the agenda concealed, data collection was conducted by documenting information on the environment and social situation in a journal. This did not hinder my research as journal writing is quite common among backpackers. Therefore, the moments at which I was actually documenting activity I appeared to be a backpacker simply writing in his journal. The bulk of the data was thus part of an ethnographic process which involved immersion into the study group. Immersion was successful so data collection was only a matter of being conscious of the backpacker environment from a social science perspective, with attention payed to the more subtle details of the backpacker environment.

To summarize, the ethnographic study of backpackers in their environment was undertaken by immersion into the backpacking culture. This was achieved simply by being a backpacker myself. I traveled as backpackers do, lodged as they do, socialized and participated in activities as they do, and successfully interacted socially. The remainder was a matter of utilizing the tools of a social scientist to document the events which transpired as a result of these travels. Given the nature of the study, the ethnographic route was logically the best choice.

The Ethnographic Method

Because the purpose of my study was to examine the nature of contemporary backpacker tourism with attention payed to the behaviours of these tourists, the logical choice was to undertake the ethnographic method. This, according to Robert Prus, entails three key elements which include observation, participant observation and interviews (1996, 19-20). Each of these elements was utilized. More weight was reserved for both observation and participant observation than the third element, interviews. Observations were conducted by documenting behaviours from a distance while still locating myself in the backpacker environment and collecting materials such as brochures, maps, and pamphlets which are also deemed necessary for the ethnographic method (ibid., 19). As well, I was able to obtain statistical data conducted by the Australian government on backpacker tourism by contacting the Bureau of Tourism Research in Canberra. Participant observation was undertaken by directly participating in the backpacking culture, engaging in social activities, actively seeking acquaintances, passively waiting for acquaintances to be sought with me, and accepting invitations for social outings and social activity. This is an essential element as "the participant-observer role allows the researcher to get infinitely closer to the lived experiences of the participants than does straight observation" (1997, 201). Again, this was achieved by locating myself within backpacker environments such as hostels, pubs/nightclubs, backpacker tours, and other vital backpacker environments. Undertaking such a research process is essential as backpacker tourism is a highly social activity. It is advantageous, therefore, to study such behaviour in a "natural" environment as it would be considerably more difficult to do so under artificial experimental settings (ibid., 17).

The advantage of the ethnographic method in this instance is that I have an enhanced

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familiarity with the subject. As previously stated, the impetus for the Australia study was a 1997 backpacking venture to Europe. Inevitably, this had an impact on the Australia research as I was able to confirm certain practices by referring to previous practices which were similar. Prus contends that previous experience is valuable to ethnographic research and may aid in a more comprehensive understanding of the study (ibid., 219). Similarly, my familiarity with the practice of backpacker tourism means that I am better equipped to undertake the practice and am comfortable with such undertakings. As well, I am quite familiar with the behaviours of backpackers and, therefore, adjustment is not a difficult process. The advantage of this familiarity is also that the greater degree to which I am able to fully immerse in the backpacking culture, the greater the chance I have of fully understanding the behaviours and workings of the practice (ibid., 206).

CHAPTER II: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEMPORARY BACKPACKER TOURISM

The Grand Tour and its Successors

Contemporary backpacker tourism is by no means solely a modern travel phenomenon. It has a lengthy history, although there is not a simple linear development between backpacking as it exists today and earlier historical practices and pursuits. The academic literature surrounding the topic focuses on certain historical periods which are alleged to represent the birth of contemporary backpacking. The predominant point is the Grand Tour.

Given that the extended duration of time spent abroad is a vital component of contemporary backpacker tourism, the Grand Tour is an appropriate starting point for historical analysis. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Grand Tour involved young adults of the upper echelon of European, particularly British, society setting off in search of the unfamiliar, through ventures to neighbouring European countries, for the purpose of cultural and social enhancement (Riley 1988, 820, Towner 1985, 301). Though the purpose of the travel was primarily educational, the pleasure experienced through travel abroad has never been denied. Travel, then, served the purpose of increasing one's cultural capital due to the experience incurred through living abroad and experiencing the cultural "other".

The Grand Tour was a means by which to preserve the status quo; travel for social betterment was viewed as being respectful and legitimate, if pursued properly, and the upper classes found themselves in the only viable position to do so. Worldliness was deemed a positive attribute and the experience of European cultural diversity on a first-hand basis aided in the social development of the aristocratic youth.

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The Grand Tour was not the first instance of extended travel abroad. Similar ventures were undertaken during the Elizabethan period with some slight contrasts existing between the commonly held values of the respective travelers. The overall goal was similar, namely the enhancement of one's social position and/or cultural capital, but it is in the more minute details where the differences are found. Firstly, travel for the Elizabethan traveler was undertaken with a lesser quantity of luggage as this permitted greater saturation into the host culture (Feifer 1985, 65). In stark contrast, the Grand Tourist traveled with an abundance of luggage and an entourage (ibid., 100). Second, documents establishing a student status were a necessity as, similar to today, concessions were available and these were utilized by the Elizabethan tourist (ibid., 65). The Elizabethan tourist did not to actively seek "[l]uxury accommodation" (ibid., 75), unlike the Grand Tourist who often placed an emphasis on comfort during travel (ibid., 100-101). The Grand Tourist, therefore, did not fully immerse in the host culture and was there to gain worldliness while still maintaining some distance from the cultural other (ibid., 96).

Although the general perception may be that the Grand Tour was a closed travel circuit restricted to the upper reaches of the upper classes, this may not have actually been so. John Towner suggests two primary social groups supplied the bulk of Grand Tourists: "the landed classes of peers and gentry" (1985, 306) which were, in other words, the aristocrats who possessed inherited wealth and social status, and the "professional middle classes" who did possess a great deal of money and spending power but had limited time to pursue lengthy leisurely activities (ibid., 306) and whose habitus dictated certain tastes perhaps not shared by the upper classes. Despite the existence of two social classes participating in the Grand Tour, it is important to note that both social groups, when combined in numbers, constitute roughly and

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only nine percent of the general population (ibid., 306). Despite the proposal of the slightly varying social climate of the Grand Tour, it is still evident that it was a relatively exclusive activity enjoyed by the societal elite.

Social change affected the nature of the pursuit. Towner suggests a shift in the social status of the majority of Tourists beginning in the late 1700s. This was a shift away from the predominantly upper class Tourists to the professional middle classes (ibid., 310). Why the rise of the middle classes in the Grand Tour during the late eighteenth century? The shift is attributed to the upper class's quest for more exclusive or exotic locales, leaving the middle- classes to operate according to the traditional circuit (ibid., 310).

There is also a direct correlation between the rise of middle class Tourists and educational status. As the upper class Tourists declined in numbers, taking with them the intense focus on education and social enhancement, the number of individuals with a university background decreased sharply. According to Towner, eighty-five percent of Grand Tourists possessed a university background during the early to mid 1600s (ibid., 310). This dropped considerably to twenty percent by the early 1800s and zero by the mid 1800s (ibid., 310-311). This, evidently, marked a shift away from the "Classical Grand Tour" to the "Romantic Grand Tour" which was more characteristic of a purely touristic pursuit rather than an exclusively educational pursuit (ibid., 313).

Other consequences became evident as a result of the growth of the middle classes. Firstly, the average age of the Grand Tourist rose sharply "from 23 years to 42 years between 1547-1603 and 1831-1840" indicating that it was no longer an undertaking reserved primarily for the youth (ibid., 311). Time spent abroad also underwent a dramatic change. The decline of the upper

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class Tourist and the rise of the middle class Tourist who was restricted by the demands of early industrial capitalism led to a significant reduction in the time spent abroad, dropping from an average of forty months to four months (ibid., 316). This, of course, can be attributed to the original purpose of education and social enhancement which required longer periods of time spent abroad and the rise of middle class tourism which was restricted somewhat by limited spending power (ibid., 316).

Upon the inception of the Romantic period, many of the key characteristics of the Grand Tour participants began to fade, thus indicating the metamorphasis of the pursuit from something primarily educational in nature to something more indicative of leisure tourism. The Romantic tourist was one who deviated from the educational aspect of the Tour and utilized funds to experiment and "seek out exotic pleasures" (Feifer 1985, 138). This is definite evidence of a character change as the Grand Tourist strived to maintain high culture and prestige. Where the Grand Tourist was careful to fiercely guard [his] reputation, the burgeoning Romantic tourist "was prone to the kind of unconventional behaviour that could lead to scandal" (ibid., 140). Feifer maintains that, as a result of the onset of Romantic tourism, "[t]he decorously high culture that inspired the Grand Tour was being undermined" (ibid., 140).

The tradition which was held closely by the upper class Grand Tourist was coming to an end. Both Feifer and Towner point to key events which represent the cessation of the traditional Grand Tour. These were the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars which, according to Feifer, "rendered the Grand Tour a pragmatic impossibility" (ibid., 140). Towner, similarly, contends that "[a]fter these wars the Grand Tour never regained its old pattern of several years abroad" (1985, 316). The ever important route, however, remained relatively the same (ibid.,

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317). This route consisted of a circular pattern involving visits to Paris and passage through the south of France, travel through Italy including Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence, and passage north through Germany where the Tour would gradually come to a conclusion (ibid., 301). Of course, cities and towns in between these centres would be visited. This circular route is similar to that undertaken by many contemporary backpackers who may begin in London and move in a circular pattern around Europe concluding once again in London.

After the Grand Tour faded, Victorian travelers emerged and fell back on the appeal of the Grand Tour and began to travel in great numbers across the European continent at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars (Feifer 1985, 164). Tourism during the Victorian period served the purpose, once again, of social advancement.

The Industrial Revolution generated a significant shift for many away from the rural farms to the cities and factories and gave rise to holiday time and (for the first time) allowed many to travel for a short time (ibid., 166). As well, the Industrial Revolution spawned the rail network which provided for quicker and more efficient travel throughout the continent. Towner maintains, though, that the Grand Tour had shortened considerably "before the railways could have made a difference" (1985, 317). Travel was no longer an elitist pursuit, was open to other social classes, and was soon capitalized on.

Thomas Cook is one of the first who capitalized on the expanding railway and desire for travel by arranging discounted fares for groups of travelers (Feifer 1985, 167). Cook began organizing excursions and compiling information for travel guides (ibid., 168) and soon tourism became, in similar fashion to the rest of European society, industrialized. The tourists here, however, were primarily "middle class semi-professionals" (ibid., 187). Tourism had opened up.

The Grand Tour, therefore, underwent tremendous alterations over the course of time. It moved away from an elitist educational social elevator to a leisurely pursuit which was open to more, but not all, social classes.

Is there a connection between the Grand Tour and its successors and the contemporary backpacking industry? To a degree. The route undertaken by the Grand Tourists is quite similar to the main circuit of backpackers traveling western Europe today. As well, backpackers travel for an extended period of time, from one month to more than one year. Many backpackers also have some form of post-secondary education and need a certain degree of disposable income to finance such a lengthy excursion. There are, however, other instances of travel throughout the European countryside which are, arguably, more direct ancestors of the development of backpacker tourism.

Working Class Tramping

Although the Grand Tour, to a large extent, represents an elitist pursuit intended to enhance cultural and social status, developments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century provided for extended travel among the less affluent proletarian segment of European society. Arising out of what some consider to be "economic necessity" (Adler 1985, 337), working class tramping evolved as a legitimate labour pursuit in the newly industrialized Europe. Though there exists undeniable differences between the Grand Tour and tramping, namely the elitist focus on education of the former and the proletarian focus on labour as a means of sustenance of the latter, they shared some common purposes.

In many ways comparable to the objective of the Grand Tour, working class tramping served as an essential rite-of-passage (Riley 1988, 314) through the "separation from home and family

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required by Western styles of adulthood" (Adler 1985, 337).[4] Travel, therefore, appeared to be emerging as a key component of maturation regardless of social standing. As well as a rite-of-passage to adulthood, tramping also served a social function in that it provided a means by which the proletarian working class could "realize some of the values of the elite" (Riley 1988, 314). In this instance, the application of trade skills through journeys across the continent (ibid., 314) may have aided in the alleviation of some of the proletarian alienation suffered at the hands of rapidly expanding industrial capitalism.

Judith Adler maintains that the social elite generally traveled freely and without consequence while the working class has to actively justify extended travel (1985, 338). Given that the means to achieve this end was through labour pursuits and the application of trade skills, it is doubtful that tramping entirely liberated the proletariat from the constraints of industrial capitalism. If the worker "feels himself only outside his work" and that "in that labor he does not belong to himself but to someone else" (Marx 1983, 137), then perhaps it was not realistically possible for the tramp to experience self-realization through travel in the same way the elite could. On the other hand, through tramping, workers created new forms of sociability. According to Adler, "[l]ife on the road gave rise to secret 'brotherhood' societies, with their own insignia, songs, and ceremonies" (1985, 340).

Tramping may viewed as a rite-of-passage, but it was also a response to economic circumstances. It was a "response to the problem of unemployment" (ibid., 339) in that workers

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[4]Arnold Van Gennep discusses such processes in great detail in his classic work *The Rites of Passage*. Rites of passage are also discussed by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process* ([1969] 1995).

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relocated in order to acquire employment abroad. The tramping system helped to "regulate competition by geographically dispersing workers and delaying entrance to master craftman status" (ibid., 339). Tramping, thus, can be interpreted as a response to a labour surplus. Pressure was relieved in one labour market through the relocation of workers to vacant positions abroad.

Because tramping was a working class phenomenon, it soon received attention and scrutiny from the society at large. In Germany tramping workers were required to possess documents for presentation to police upon request in order to substantiate the legitimacy of their status (ibid., 339). Similarly, the French required documents verifying workers' employment status in order to avoid a label of vagrancy (ibid., 340). Despite being legal, tramps were subject to discrimination and found themselves on society's periphery.

The demise of tramping is attributed to the onset of World War I by Adler (1985, 340) and the Great Depression by Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995, 822). In the period around the nineteen thirties, therefore, any travel which involved loose attachments to society and required an extended period of time away from home became increasingly scrutinized and criticized. Social workers of the period devoted much attention to tramps. They became viewed as social deviants, allegedly suffering from a psychological state of "Wanderlust" (Adler 1985, 341, italics removed). Younger tramps were perceived as juvenile delinquents due to their loose attachment to society (ibid., 341). Although working class tramping declined it was still practiced by some, though on a more touristic level, who were attracted by the romantic image of the tramp. According to Adler, "the decline of the tramping tradition as a labour institution is matched, step by step, with its romanticization and adaptation for purely touristic purposes; deprived of its

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earlier necessity, tramping becomes aestheticized as a form of play" (ibid., 346).

The Youth Movement

As industrialism spread throughout Europe, the harsh conditions it generated within the cities induced many youth, primarily from the more affluent industrialized nations, to venture out and explore the serenity of the "unspoilt countryside" (McCulloch 1992, 22). As the numbers of traveling youth increased, so did the demand for reasonable accommodation. This demand prompted George Williams to found the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1844 (ibid., 22-23). Eleven years later, in 1855, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was established and both the YMCA and YWCA expanded significantly, especially in countries of "Anglo-Saxon origin" (ibid., 23).

During the same period bushwalking clubs were emerging in "German-Speaking Europe" leading to the establishment of marked pathways, accommodations, and guidebooks (ibid., 23). Similar developments were transpiring in England including the creation of Public Rights of Way which consist of a "network of public footpaths covering the entire country"; a network still utilized by contemporary backpackers (ibid., 23). The impetus for institutionalized accommodation, however, was found primarily in Germany (ibid., 23).

Known as Wandervogel (Birds of Passage), young students traveled throughout the countryside "carrying all their own provisions and cooking equipment on their backs" (ibid., 23). The Wandervogel was the driving force behind the German Youth movement. In 1884, Guido Rotter founded a Scholars and Students Hostel and sought to establish a chain of hostels in Germany and Austria (ibid., 23). In 1909, Richard Schirrmann persuaded other teachers in Germany to convert schools to temporary dormitories during the holidays and by 1910 had

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convinced authorities to establish the first permanent youth hostel (ibid., 24). By 1911,

seventeen hostels had been established in Germany and in 1919 the German Youth Hostels

Association was founded (ibid., 24). Visits soared from sixty thousand in 1919 to five hundred

thousand only two years later in 1921 (ibid., 24). Becoming the YHA, institutionalized hostels

spread throughout the countries of Europe and the world during the early half of the twentieth

century and included the countries of Switzerland, Poland, England, the United States and

Canada, and Australia and New Zealand (ibid., 24). There are currently over five thousand YHA

hostels globally (ibid., 24). One must keep in mind that this only includes YHA affilliated

hostels and does not account for the thousands of independent hostels which also exist.

The Transition to Tourism

Backpacking as it exists today, therefore, must be understood in terms of its relationship to

these earlier forms of travel. First of all, the Grand Tour served both the upper classes and

bourgeois segments of society through education and helped preserve their hegemony. Travel

for educational purposes was an option only for these elite segments of society. Tramping

existed concurrently with the Grand Tour but served the proletarian need for employment more

than education and social enhancement. Finally, the youth movement was a reaction to

nineteenth century industrialism. It led to the creation of the YMCA and YWCA in 1844 and

1855, respectively (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 822). The youth movement also gave rise

to the Youth Hostels Association which is the "world's largest accommodation chain" (ibid.,

823) and is the primary form of accommodation for contemporary backpackers.

With the decline of the Grand Tour and tramping, a new kind of traveler emerged; one who

romanticized the ideals of the tramp while also seeking to enhance his or her worldliness through

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immersion in different cultures. "[A]dopting a mock version of an earlier working class travel pattern" (Adler 1985, 337), the new traveler engaged in a "form of play" (ibid., 346) leading to a socioeconomic paradox in that it was the middle class temporarily adopting the identity of the working class and not the opposite (ibid., 337). This is the most direct ancestor of contemporary backpacking.

The Emergence of Drifter Tourism

The focus of travel thus shifted away from education and/or labour and towards leisure and pleasure. Historically, travel by large numbers for pleasure or tourism began early in the nineteenth century and is, therefore, a relatively recent phenomenon (Cohen 1972, 165). Cohen ascribes an inherent curiosity to humanity which is manifested in the fascination with cultures unlike one's own (ibid., 165). This, compounded with a loose attachment to the environment and ability to adapt to change, makes travel for pleasure an aspiration for many (ibid., 165).

As travel for the purpose of tourism expanded, so did the varying degrees of experiences available for the traveler. Erik Cohen, in his earlier work, identifies four primary categories into which travelers may be divided. These consist of the organized and individual mass tourist who participate in *institutionalized mass tourism* and the explorer and drifter who partake of *noninstitutionalized tourism*.

The organized mass tourist is one who, while abroad, stays within an "environmental bubble" and is guided through a rigidly fixed itinerary involving little, if any, contact with the host culture (ibid., 167). This generically packaged tourism is scripted in advance by travel agencies or outfitters accounting for all amenities including accommodations, transportation, guided tours, and often meals. This, therefore, permits the "visiting of attractions, whether genuine or

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contrived" (ibid., 167) while keeping the visitor at a maximum distance from those who reside within the host culture. This may be viewed as simply transplanting one's home environment abroad where the exotic is viewed without sacrifice to any "domestic" comforts. This is important as the mass-tourist strives for comfort and will spend significant amounts of money in order to achieve it (Butler 1992, 32).

Similar to the organized mass tourist is the individual mass tourist who retains many of the characteristics of the former yet possesses subtle differences. The primary difference lies in the proposed itinerary where the individual mass tourist enjoys a slightly higher degree of control (Cohen 1972, 167). The preponderance control remains in the hands of the travel agent, however, reducing the overall degree of freedom of the packaged tour (ibid., 168). The individual mass-tourist, similar to their "institutionalized" counterpart, remains within an environmental bubble and is significantly insulated from the host culture. Interaction with the "real locals" is virtually non-existent. Institutionalized mass tourism, therefore, serves the purpose of "experiencing" the foreign and exotic without interacting directly with the foreign and exotic.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the noninstitutionalized tourists: explorers and drifters. Explorers intend to deviate from the path of institutionalized tourism and investigate the culture which lies beyond the mass-tourist enclaves (ibid., 174). This is an active and conscious attempt to remove one self from the environmental bubble which encapsulates the institutionalized mass-tourists. The venture is generally arranged personally (ibid., 168) but comfortable lodgings and transportation are sought (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 823). The explorer investigates the host culture to a certain degree but never fully immerses him or herself

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(ibid., 823) and "remains somewhat detached" (Cohen 1972, 175). The explorer *will* move back to the bubble upon the experience of discomfort (ibid., 168). There is a chance, nevertheless, to partially experience the cultural other, an option rarely realized by the institutionalized mass-tourist.

The visitor who is said to enjoy the highest degree of immersion into the host culture is what Cohen refers to as a *drifter*. This is an individual who actively sheds the label of "tourist" and seeks to fully engage the visited culture (ibid., 168). For the drifter there is *no* environmental bubble, no rigid schedule (ibid., 168), a limited budget and little, if any, contact with the tourist industry (Riley 1988, 314). The drifter, then, is alleged to experience travel in a realm far removed from that of any other, especially those in the institutionalized mass tourism category.

Drifter Tourism

Classified as noninstitutionalized tourists by Cohen, drifters resemble Vogt's "wanderers" who are further regarded as *travelers* (Vogt 1976, 27). Vogt contrasts the *traveler* with the *tourist*, a label synonymous with Cohen's institutionalized mass-tourist (ibid., 26). Despite differences, both travelers and drifters possess many similar characteristics.

Initial observations of drifters by Cohen suggest individuals who are far removed from the sphere of mass tourism. An absence of an established itinerary and active attempt to co-exist with locals are primary characteristics of the drifter (1972, 168). Removing him/herself from the environmental bubble and straying from the path of the mainstream permitted the drifter to penetrate the host culture at a level unreachable by the institutionalized mass-tourist. The scope of drifter tourism expanded beyond the alternative, however, leading the pursuit, according to Cohen, to parallel mass tourism (1973, 90).

Drifters tend to fit specific age and socioeconomic characteristics. The drifter is characterized as being "a child of affluence on a prolonged moratorium from adult, middle-class responsibility" (ibid., 89). Furthermore, the drifter is usually, but not always, "a student or a graduate, who has not yet started to work" (1972, 175). This is a characteristic which Vogt claims is typical of wanderers as well. They are college or university-aged students or recent graduates who bear middle class backgrounds (Vogt 1976, 27). This is a characteristic indicative of contemporary backpackers.

Drifter tourism is linked by Cohen to tramping, the "American Hobos", and the travel of bourgeois youth of the Victorian period (1973, 90). Individualism and escapism are key traits of the drifter, generating behaviour which tends to be "hedonistic and often anarchistic" (ibid., 91-92). Similarly, Vogt contends that wanderers are, through their mode of travel, reacting to the affluent Western society from which they have emerged (1976, 27). The authentic experience is sought through penetration of the host culture on a "tight budget" (ibid., 27) in an attempt to rebel against the mainstream form of mass tourism. An essential difference, however, *is* addressed by Cohen who maintains that despite the link to tramps, hobos, and nomadic behaviour, these individuals traveled in such a manner out of necessity whereas drifters do not and are "[tramps] by choice" (1973, 91).

Drifter tourism grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s when middle class youth began to travel extensively throughout western Europe (ibid., 92). Though primarily a middle class phenomenon, Cohen notes that the numbers of working class travelers increased as did the percentage of female travelers (ibid., 93). As the number of drifters increased, so did the heterogeneity of the drifter population (ibid., 93). Drifter tourism now found itself entering the

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realm of the mainstream.

Drifters are equated with a counter-culture by Cohen. He links them with hedonism and drug consumption suggesting that they are part of a wider subculture (ibid., 94). However, Cohen indicates that drifter tourism, itself, is becoming an increasingly institutionalized pursuit (ibid., 90). Coinciding with this institutionalization is the formation of travel itineraries which become, in many respects, similar to those of mainstream tourists (ibid., 95). A transportation system also emerges, such as the use of trains or busses, as well as the ubiquitous use of guidebooks which have been dubbed the "hall-mark of sedate, middle class tourism" (ibid., 96). There is also the presence of "drifter communities" (ibid., 97) and what I refer to as backpacker Meccas.[5] Vogt also posits the notion of Meccas stating that cities or regions are often identified by the alternative guidebooks used by the group he refers to as travelers (1976, 36). I further this notion to include specific resorts or local areas. Finally, there is the extensive use of hostels as a primary form of accommodation (Cohen 1973, 97). Hostels are currently the primary mode of accommodation for contemporary backpackers. According to the Australian Bureau of Tourism Research, seventy-eight percent of backpackers used dormitories rather than private rooms and fifty percent of backpackers preferred dorm-style accommodation (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 22).

In regard to the motivation for travel, Vogt cites several criteria including inner desires and prestige (1976, 28). Prestige is achieved through the degree of independence, destination, and mode of travel (ibid., 28). The level of prestige achieved while abroad significantly increases the

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[5]Such a term is used by Vogt in his work "Wandering: Youth and Travel Behavior" (1976).

traveler's level of cultural capital which is invaluable in his or her Western existence.

For many, "the element of real adventure is drastically reduced" (Cohen 1973, 99). The more mainstream drifting or wandering becomes, the less likely it is that the travelers will penetrate the host culture and achieve an "authentic" travel experience. The trend toward mainstream drifter tourism, then, begins to sever the ties with its predecessor which was "driven by curiosity and a thirst for adventure and experience of the unknown" (ibid., 98). Rather than interaction with locals of the host culture, drifters increasingly find themselves interacting primarily with other drifters (ibid., 99). It becomes evident, therefore, that the intended experience becomes clouded and the emerging population of "mass-drifters" (ibid., 100) becomes in many respects similar to the institutionalized tourists which they seek to rebel against.

Contemporary Backpacker Tourism

The highly ambiguous nature of backpacking is addressed by Pamela Riley who proposes that despite being perceived as noninstitutional in certain respects, the long-term traveler "is neither clearly an explorer nor a drifter as defined by Cohen" (1988, 316). The identification of a contemporary backpacker involves numerous traits which are quite fluid resulting in a traveler who is highly dynamic in nature. A list of typologies to which long-term travelers may be allocated has been constructed by Loker-Murphy and Pearce. Significantly broadening Cohen's noninstitutionalized roles, long-term travelers may be classed as *moratorium* or *ascetic* travelers, *adventurers*, *goal-directed* or *party* travelers, *alternative* or *Peter Pan* travelers.

The *moratorium* traveler opts to engage in long-term travel prior to the establishment of a stable career and does so under conditions of increased comfort (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 829). The elevated level of comfort may suggest a long-term traveler who is located closer to the

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institutionalized tourist roles but differs in the length of time spent abroad. In contrast, however, *ascetic* travelers seek to avoid high levels of comfort and restrict any excess spending (ibid., 829). *Adventurers* may possess any of the existing characteristics with the primary difference lying in the quest for the adventure of discovering the "unconquered", usually with an audience to view and validate the behaviour (ibid., 829). Travel for the purpose of education, reminiscent of the Grand Tour, is the domain of the *goal-directed* traveler while the *party* traveler seeks the social atmosphere and engages in conduct which might be deemed inappropriate in his or her home society (ibid., 829). The *party* traveler thus emerges as one who wishes to shed his or her existing identity and temporarily adopt one which is perhaps more rebellious or uninhibited. Vogt also claims that, while abroad, "the individual may create or modify himself" (1976, 29). The *alternative* traveler actively pursues that which diverges from the mainstream, though the more the alternative is sought the more the alternative becomes the mainstream (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 829). Finally, *Peter Pan* travelers consist of those who are close to forty years of age and are pursuing a "second youth" allegedly attainable through interaction with younger travelers (ibid., 829). It is essential to understand, however, that the contemporary backpacker may possess any or all of these traits. For this reason, these typologies may best serve as ideal-types which are neither limiting nor exclusive.

A primary characteristic of contemporary backpacker tourism is the preference for low-budget travel. Whether it be in regard to food, transportation (Riley 1988, 320), or accommodation (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 830), an objective of backpacking is to restrict spending to a minimum. The motive behind such an objective may lie with the logical inference that the longer the money lasts the longer the traveler may spend abroad. As well, money conserved in

areas such as food and accommodation may later be used for social outings or the purchase of goods such as souvenirs. Backpackers are believed to be inquisitive about the amount of money other backpackers spend on specific goods and services (Riley 1988, 320). Such inquiries, when asked often, may be deemed inappropriate at home yet are completely acceptable and expected on the road (ibid., 320).

As time progresses, restricted spending leads to potential hardship, though this is not regarded as a negative aspect among many backpackers. On one level, travelers are said to be content with the opportunity to travel regardless of comfort level and, therefore, "lack of funds is no deterrent" (Vogt 1976, 28). Young travelers, especially backpackers, are "ready to put up with a lesser degree of comfort" (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 828) and thus do not regard hardship as an obstacle. This is multi-functional. From one perspective, this is a manner in which backpackers can actively attempt to distinguish themselves from the mass-tourists they seek to differentiate themselves from. From another, perhaps more directly functional aspect, hardship is yet another means by which backpackers can increase cultural capital through claims of hardship and difficult situations; experiences which will be positively reinforced upon their return home.

Hardship endured while on the road is believed to significantly elevate social prestige (Riley 1988, 320). The higher the degree of discomfort or "budget" status, the higher the degree of prestige. Discussion among travelers regarding spending habits may further serve to provide a gauge by which other travelers measure the success or failure of budgeting attempts. Such habits further relate to the identity game where middle class travelers adopt the personae of drifters or tramps. Backpackers attempt to act poverty stricken yet in reality require a significant amount of

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money to finance a long-term venture (ibid., 320). However, the validity or legitimacy of the image of the impoverished backpacker is sometimes brought into question by locals who are quite aware that abundant resources are necessary for a long-term vacation (ibid., 321).

An aspiration of the contemporary backpacker, similar to that shared by Cohen's drifter, is interaction with the locals of the host country. Both Riley (1988, 321) and Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995, 833) endorse this contention. Given the backpackers' status as a visitor, however, it is an incredibly difficult task and travelers often find themselves interacting more with other travelers than with the authentic locals they strive to meet (Cohen 1973, 99). The effort to totally immerse in the culture, therefore, seems, for many, ultimately fruitless.

Rejection of the "tourist" label is of prime importance to many backpackers leading many to pursue activities or travel methods which deviate as much from the mainstream as possible (Riley 1988, 321). For this travel niche, however, the alternative *is* the mainstream. This is re-affirmed by Riley who asserts that "[t]he irony lies in the fact that by seeking new destinations, the budget traveler spearheads mass tourism and expands the mass tourist destinations" (ibid., 322). The efforts of the backpackers to discover the untouched and alternative thus becomes "self-defeating" (ibid., 322).

Behaviour modification is a consequence of the emergence of norms which develop among backpackers as interaction among those in the group increases (ibid., 322). Visiting particular destinations deemed sacred among the backpacking circuit is an example of such behaviour as it is positively reinforced by other travelers through discussion (ibid., 321). The mass convergence on certain areas by backpackers resulting in the creation of mainstream backpacker locales, therefore, may be the product of emergent social pressures which develop among the group

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(ibid., 321). Consequently, "[w]hile many say an advantage of being a traveler is the lack of social pressure and demands, in reality a variety of needs and interests can be expressed or suppressed because of expectations" (ibid., 321). The social pressures which are being escaped, therefore, are replaced by an entirely new series of social pressures. This, of course, is a key component of the thesis and aids in the confirmation of the contention that the backpackers do not really succeed in escaping post-industrial pressures.

In regard to areas which are visited en masse by backpackers, Vogt maintains that "[i]n every country, there is at least one of these cities or regions" (1976, 36). The high status of these particular areas is upheld through a word-of-mouth communication network (Riley 1988, 323) and, on a more institutionalized level, through the publication and use of backpacker travel guides (ibid., 322).

Cohen contends that relationships between travelers on the road are often loose and non-committal (1973, 99). Travelers frequently associate with others only for a short period of time and then part hastily with little regret only to establish new short-term friendships (Riley 1988, 324). This is similarly asserted by Vogt who contends that the traveler "learns to accept the transient situations" allowing loose connections to become the norm (1976, 35). Travelers also tend to liberally disclose personal information to strangers, a practice quite common among backpackers but not so in the Western society from which many backpackers emerge (ibid., 35). Vogt maintains that the adoption of such behaviour on the road leads to difficulty in the establishment of long-lasting relationships upon return home (ibid., 35). This is disputed by Riley, however, who contends that contemporary travelers *do* maintain ties with their families and keep in regular contact with them during the course of their vacation (1988, 318) suggesting

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that the establishment of relationships may not be problematic after all. Riley does discuss the existence of a readjustment phase. This phase, occurring after arrival home, involves feelings of alienation as the individual must once again face "Western" pressures such as the "'emphasis on efficiency and the attitude toward time'" (ibid., 325) from which the individual originally tried to escape.

It is generally accepted that backpacker tourism is usually undertaken during a key transitional phase during one's life. Cohen portrays drifters as young students or graduates who have yet to establish a career (1972, 175). Vogt endorses a similar claim, describing travelers as students "college-age and above", primarily of middle class socioeconomic status (1976, 27) and constituting "the best educated generation in the world's history" (ibid., 29). Riley further maintains that contemporary budget travelers have recently completed post-secondary education "or are between jobs" (1988, 317). Providing a link between the Grand Tour and contemporary backpacking, Loker-Murphy and Pearce add that long-term travel may be part of an essential "transition to adulthood" and "is even an investment in human resources through the enrichment of life values and an awareness of varying environments" (1995, 827). This, of course, is a further indicator of the degree of cultural capital which can be acquired by travelers, as claims of worldliness and experience may be marketed upon return to post-industrial society. The habitus dictates that undertaking this form of travel is admirable which, in turn, permits the acquisition of this cultural capital. The travelers, therefore have little to do in the way of marketing as the values of the vacation have been predetermined.

Long-term travel is often stimulated by both push and pull factors which exert an influence upon the actors involved. For many, especially those in the Western post-industrial world, long-

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term travel is a means of momentarily "escaping from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routine" and postponing marriage or a career (Riley 1988, 317). Many youth of post-industrial societies are reluctant to enter a life-long career immediately at the conclusion of their education (Cohen 1973, 94). Those who choose to travel during this "void", however, expect to establish a career upon arrival home (Riley 1988, 326). The escapism, therefore, is a temporary event.

To the extent that there is a counter culture of travelers, Cohen portrays drifters as individualistic, "disdainful of ideologies" and "un-patriotic" (1973, 91). They are "escapists" expressing both hedonism and anarchism, some "begging, scavenging and 'sharing' food" while abroad (ibid., 92). As a consequence of their hedonistic and anarchistic ways, Cohen draws a link between drifter tourism and drug use although most drifters only use drugs on a recreational basis (ibid., 94). In contrast, Riley contends that contemporary budget travelers "do *not* beg" and "are *no* more hedonistic or anarchistic than members of the larger western culture" (1988, 318). Furthermore, in regard to drug use, Riley finds that contemporary travelers are significantly representative of their age group and, therefore, are not representative of a counter-culture (ibid., 318). However, I observed that although being representative of their age group, backpackers did often engage in excess drinking and drug use.

Tourism, Experience and Authenticity

The preceding discussion of the historical precursors to backpacking can be related to more general theoretical treatments of the relationships between tourism, experience, and authenticity. The opposite ends of the theoretical continuum are occupied by Daniel Boorstin and Dean MacCannel. Assessing tourism from a negative standpoint, Boorstin portrays the tourist as a

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highly shallow individual in search of contrived attractions referred to as "pseudo-events" (Cohen 1979, 179). Authenticity is not a priority of the tourist and satisfaction is achieved through fully guided and superficial tours (Cohen 1988b, 30) with "the tourist [seeing] less of the country than of its tourist attractions" (Boorstin 1964, 102). Therefore, the experience for Boorstin's tourist centres around a highly commercialized "system of illusions" (Cohen 1988b, 30). Other than on a highly superficial level, interaction with locals is almost non-existent and, due to the rigid confines of the guided tour, any social interaction is limited to fellow tourists (Boorstin 1964, 102). In these respects, Boorstin's account of tourist experience parallels Cohen's concept of the *institutionalized mass tourist*. Cultural events which are viewed by Boorstin's tourist are themselves held to be contrived or staged with locals acting out exotic or stereotypical aspects of their culture solely for the entertainment of the onlookers resulting in the locals' transformation into "dishonest mimics of themselves" (ibid., 103). This is of minimal concern for the tourist, however, as the tourist does not quest for the authentic (ibid., 106).

In contrast to the negative portrayal of tourism presented by Boorstin, MacCannel asserts that authenticity *is* sought by tourists (MacCannel 1973, 600). The variance in the portrayal of tourist roles may, however, be attributed to the populations studied by each respective theorist. Boorstin focuses on a population primarily of middle class, middle-aged background while MacCannel centres his study around "young, 'postmodern' tourists" (Cohen 1979, 180). Tourists, according to MacCannel, *do* quest for the authentic (Cohen 1988, 33) and attempt to fulfill this quest through the penetration of "front regions" into the rarely viewed "back regions" (ibid., 34).

Where Boorstin asserts that contrived performances are a sought by the tourist, MacCannel proposes that the "back region" is sought; a region "where members of the home team retire

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between performances" (MacCannel 1973, 590). This quest for the authenticity of back regions parallels a religious quest for the sacred (ibid., 590). This is a colossal task, however, as it is almost a certain impossibility to achieve authenticity once one has entered the arena of tourism (Cohen 1988b, 34). Upon penetration of a back region it is still highly possible that the region, itself, is a contrived back serving to provide the tourist with the illusion of the authentic (MacCannel 1973, 597). In many instances, therefore, the back regions are nothing more than disguised front regions carefully designed to satisfy the curiosity of the tourist. This is an affliction of contemporary backpacker tourism, as many areas are advertised for their authenticity but are no more than mere commercialized representations of the authentic. The tourist is thus deemed by MacCannel to be an honest victim of the tourist infrastructure unlike Boorstin who identifies the tourist as actively seeking the inauthentic (Cohen 1988b, 34).

Both Boorstin and MacCannel, however, focus on the extremes of tourist behaviour. In reality there exists a broad range of desires, experiences, and external factors which serve to influence the behaviour of tourists. Tourism in all of its guises, including backpacking, may depend significantly on an individual's quest for the "centre" of his or her society; the centre representing the core of moral values of the greater society (Cohen 1979, 180). There may exist a multitude of centres including political and spiritual and the degree of connection to any of these centres may depend on the degree of alienation experienced by the individual (ibid., 180). The following is an overview of various modes of travel pursuits and the societal influences which underscore these pursuits.

Undertaken strictly for the purposes of entertainment and leisure is the mode of tourism referred to by Cohen as *recreational* (ibid., 183). Recreational tourism occurs on a level which is

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highly superficial, by no means an act of "self realization", and is a mode most indicative of Boorstin's tourist or Cohen's *institutionalized mass tourist* (ibid., 184). The superficial and shallow tourist desires pseudo-events and the commercially inauthentic (ibid., 184). Recreational tourism is held to be a frequent practice among individuals who are *not* alienated from the centre of their society (Cohen 1988b, 36). The absence of alienation and the role which tourism plays in the lives of the actors is associated with a Functionalist view of modern tourism (Cohen 1979, 183) in that it is believed that, generally, the actor "will 'conform' with. . . society's ultimate values" (ibid., 181). Furthermore, "[g]oals and purposes are. . . defined as deriving from a central value system which endows individual parts with meaning" (Dann 1991, 163). From a Functionalist perspective, *needs* are a central feature of existence and, as it relates to tourism, involve "sociopsychological needs [such] as curiosity and adventure" (ibid., 163).

Despite being connected to the centre of their society, pressure is still exerted by society onto individuals, generating a need for temporary relief and for this reason recreation is a highly functional activity (Cohen 1979, 185). Traveling for the purpose of a temporary escape thus serves as a "'pressure valve' for modern man" (ibid., 185). Such societal pressures, therefore, induce a *push* and travel permits the individual to refresh and recharge before returning once again to the society from which he or she temporarily escaped (ibid., 185). The question arises, however, as to whether or not it is possible to completely refresh and recharge if the new environment is just an extension of the constraining system. Though being superficial and commercial, it is entirely possible that recreational tourism is *more* enjoyable for the actors than other modes of tourism because tourists willingly participate in the game, are fully aware and embracing of the inauthenticity (ibid., 184), and do not seek authenticity.

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It is, however, too simplistic to assume that all individuals are generally conformist. Many do, in fact, experience alienation (ibid., 181). Due to an increased level of alienation, certain individuals may seek a *diversionary* mode of tourism which involves a shift "away from the centre" (ibid., 185). The degree of alienation experienced by these individuals may induce feelings or perceptions of a meaninglessness existence but this does not drive the individual to search for meaning (ibid., 185). Rather, travel for diversionary tourists is a "mere escape from the boredom and meaninglessness of routine. . . into the forgetfulness of a vacation" (ibid., 185-186). A more meaningful existence is not realized upon return but travel is functional in that it renders alienation more tolerable (ibid., 185). Cohen depicts this mode of tourism as a "'healing balm for the robots'" (ibid., 186).

Both recreational and diversionary modes of tourism align with a Functionalist perspective of modern tourism and are most common among post-industrial mass tourists (ibid., 186). The difference is that the recreational tourist generally adheres to Western values and does feel alienated while the "diversionary" tourists are driven by their alienation (ibid., 186). Travel for diversionary tourists, therefore, is a "symptom of the general malaise of modern society" (ibid., 186).

Cohen asserts that "[a]lienation and the quest for authenticity. . . appear to be positively related" (1988a, 376). Initially, this suggests that those who experience a reduced state of alienation will not seek an authentic experience (ibid., 376) but, as it will be discussed below, this may not actually be an accurate assessment. As alienation increases, there arises in the individual an "opposition between self and society" (ibid., 373). A quest for the authentic results from the realization of the inauthentic nature of the individual's own society (ibid., 373). With

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this said, "the greater the alienation, the more intense the quest for authenticity" (Cohen 1988b, 35). This drives the individual to seek that which has not been polluted by [post] modernity (Cohen 1988a, 374).

The increase in the degree of alienation is a motivating force for some to pursue an *experiential* mode of travel. Increasingly cognizant of their alienated state, individuals begin a search for meaning through an experience of the *other* (Cohen 1979, 186). In this instance there is both a *push* from the society to which the individual belongs and a *pull* from the society in which the tourist believes that he or she will successfully find authenticity. This has further been defined by Cohen as a "modern variety of the traditional pilgrimage" (1984, 875, italics removed) and linked directly with MacCannel's perception of modern tourism representing a "religious quest for authenticity" (Cohen 1979, 187). As a modern pilgrimage, touristic time represents the "'nonordinary'" which parallels religious "'sacred time'" (Dann 1991, 161). However, this intense search for authenticity also permits the relatively easy manipulation of travelers by those in all sectors of the tourist industry.

The relentless drive to discover the back regions of tourist enclaves in order to experience authenticity may expose the tourist to the whims of the tourist industry. It is possible that "authenticity" is an elaborate creation spearheaded by those in the industry to mislead the tourist into believing that an authentic back region has been discovered (Cohen 1979, 187). In reality, the victimized tourist has only succeeded in discovering a new front region. Such a theory infers that it may be nearly impossible to discover "authentic authenticity". Such deception also occurs in backpacker tourism as certain locations are advertised to be authentic and non-touristic when they are actually artificial representations of authenticity.

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The deception utilized by the tourist industry reflect *developmental perspectives* which regard tourism primarily as an "industrial process" (Dann 1991, 160) in which commoditization encompasses every aspect of the tourist-host relationship including the social customs of the latter (Cohen 1988a, 372). It is this commoditization which leads to staged authenticity. Escapism, itself, becomes a commodity to be distributed and purchased, becoming an element of cultural capitalism (Dann 1991, 160). Through excessive commoditization, tourism becomes a "colossal deception" leaving the victimized tourist "thus damned to inauthenticity" (Cohen 1988a, 373). It is not necessarily the case, however, that the deception is part of an overtly contrived conspiracy involving the cultural capitalists in the tourist industry. Those who advertize authenticity may believe their product to be authentic representations of culture when they are not. Over time the inauthentic may become the authentic and if both sides believe the product to be authentic then perhaps it is.

Although its authenticity may be questioned, travelers do have an experience (Cohen 1979, 188). There is an awareness of the *other* and the experiential travelers achieve satisfaction casually surveying the *other* without immersing themselves in the other's culture (ibid., 189). The satisfaction realized through the viewing of the cultural *other* results from the perceived inauthenticity of the post-industrial society from which the traveler emerges (Cohen 1988a, 373). Though suffering from alienation, the traveler "does not strive to abandon modernity" and is "concerned about the authenticity of the Other. . . [but] does not identify with it" (Cohen 1988b, 36).

Experiential tourism may further be understood through the application of Neo-Durkheimian principles. From such a perspective, tourism is assessed with focus being reserved for anomic

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conditions, the sacred, collective representations and the manner in which travel enhances social status (Dann 1991, 160). An anomic state impels the traveler to "escape from the tedium of a dull 9 to 5 routine into a situation free from cultural constraint and responsibility" (ibid., 160). Of course, Western pressures are often replaced by an entirely new set of pressures (Riley 1988, 321). Neo-Durkheimian perspectives, similar to those posited by MacCannel, also regard travel as a "sacred quest" and a "form of secular pilgrimage" (Dann 1991, 161). Again, this is in response to the monotony of post-industrial existence.

An increase in the level of alienation generates a shift in the desired mode of travel and for some this means a shift to an *experimental* mode of tourism. Unlike those listed above, individuals undertaking the experimental mode no longer feel a connection to the centre of their society (Cohen 1979, 189). Afflicted by postmodern alienation, these travelers "[lack] clearly defined priorities and ultimate commitments" (ibid., 189). Not only is there a sense of disconnection from the values of the society, there is also uncertainty as to the meaning which is sought (ibid., 189) making the quest for an "'elective centre'" an arduous task (Cohen 1988b, 36). These experimental tourists are characterized by Cohen as being younger, predominantly "urban American, European or Australian", somewhat characteristic of *drifters* (1979, 189).

The experience of a high degree of alienation motivates others to seek an *existential* mode of tourism which is a mode "closest to a religious conversion" (ibid., 190). Putting forth an attempt to "'go native'", existential travelers strive to abandon most aspects of their Western background (ibid., 190), although this may be more of a role playing venture than an actual shedding of one's identity. Many cannot travel on a permanent basis and, therefore, it is necessary to navigate between two opposing worlds (ibid., 190). They will adhere to Western ideals while at home and

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then adopt their alter-egos when abroad. This is intended to bring some degree of balance to the lives of these actors.

The theories presented above are valuable assuming that the actors are cognizant of their alienation. There does exist the possibility that those who are alienated are not on a quest for their centre at all (ibid., 181). Similarly, it is possible that many are not "aware of their alienation" negating the notion that travel is a response to such alienation (Cohen 1988a, 376). Those who suffer the most may be those who are cognizant of their alienation. "Intellectuals. . . will be generally more alienated, and more aware of their alienation, than the rank-and-file middle-classes, and especially the lower middle class, who still strive to attain the material gains which those beyond them already enjoy" (ibid., 376). Though being a reference to the social scientists who study tourist behaviour, such a suggestion may be generally applied to those who have been educated and are aware of alienation. The degree of alienation may not be nearly as important as the awareness of the alienation.

The overt quest for authenticity may also be questioned as "'authenticity' is a socially constructed concept" (ibid., 374). Establishing the legitimacy of various travel pursuits is not, therefore, the responsibility of the social scientist and in the end the onus is on the actor to determine the success or degree of satisfaction of the vacation (Cohen 1988b, 37). This infers that what the actor *believes* to be authentic *is* authentic (ibid., 37). Is deception a negative consequence so long as the actor is satisfied in the end? It is the experience which is important and systematically dismantling or de-constructing every aspect of the pursuit could make travel significantly less enjoyable. For travelers, therefore, deception may be less harmful than awareness of the deception.

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From a simplistic outlook, travel may serve the purpose of allowing the actor to experience *something* which cannot be experienced in his or her own society (Cohen 1979, 182). It is a "form of play" and "make-believe, on part of both performers and audiences, is necessary" (Cohen 1988, 383). This further allows the actor to "seek compensation for the drabness of everyday life by playfully becoming either a 'king' or a 'peasant for a day'" (Dann 1991, 161).

Conclusions

There are obvious precursors to contemporary backpacker tourism. The Grand Tour, working class tramping, and the youth movement in Europe have all contributed to the development of the modern backpacker. Elements from each of these historical events gradually became romanticized by travelers who sought a travel experience which was alternative to the mainstream. As the notion of the alternative became more popular among travelers and the numbers of these "alternative" travelers increased, the backpacking pursuit became itself a mainstream pursuit. The pursuit is now more characteristic of a role-playing game where travelers pursue escapism and authenticity by way of the alternative in an environment which anything but the alternative.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

An Introduction to the Analysis of Backpacker Tourism in Australia

My contention is that the contemporary stage of backpacker tourism should not be analyzed as a deviant pursuit located somewhere on the periphery of mainstream behaviour. Rather, backpacker tourism is, itself, part of mainstream behaviour. Surely three hundred and sixty thousand visiting backpackers in Australia in 1999 who collectively spent nearly two billion dollars in direct expenditure represent something other than a deviant pursuit (*Bureau of Tourism Research* 1999, 2). Although certain aspects and historically specific epochs of backpacker tourism's development have been considered divergent from the mainstream and subject to social scrutiny, this mode of travel for the most part has existed in relative close proximity to the socially legitimate and sanctioned. Furthermore, the perceived "deviant" elements of backpacking's historical development have emerged to become romanticized by many who exist within the confines of "mainstream" post-industrial society further facilitating its complete integration into contemporary Western-industrial capitalism. Contemporary backpacker tourism is *not* something to be regarded as alternative but rather as a pursuit which has been, until recently, grossly underestimated by those who operate within the tourist industry.

Backpacking is no longer overlooked by the agents of Western capitalism. Like most aspects of Western capitalist culture, backpacker tourism is increasingly institutionalized and commoditized. Backpacker tourism is thus quite similar to mainstream tourism as a whole in that it "has become a commodity to be advertised, marketed and sold much like every other commodity" (Ritzer 1998, 141). This, consequently, has blurred the nature of the pursuit bringing into question its authenticity and function as a vehicle for the temporary release from

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the norms and values of mainstream society. It is a pursuit which effectively serves two groups— the individuals who undertake this form of tourism and the capitalists who benefit directly from such undertakings. Each are dependent on the other.

As a specific form of travel, backpacking may still be regarded as a method of escapism induced by alienation and constraint. These generate a need for soul-searching or temporary relief from post-industrial existence. Wang has attributed such a push to the dualistic nature of [post] modernity. The push, according to Wang, is induced by the Logos aspect of [post] modernity which is responsible for order and rationality resulting in the levying of constraints on the collective members of [post-] industrial society (2000, 30). This Logos aspect of [post] modernity, reminiscent of Weberian notion of the iron cage, is the element which depicts [post] modernity as an efficient machine.

The complementary component of [post] modernity which is said to be the response to the constraining nature of Logos is the Eros element. Counter-rational, Eros is described as the element of [post] modernity which exists to meet the needs and desires of the constrained members of society and, according to Wang, permits outlets for the gratification of such desires (ibid., 30). Therefore, despite the domination of Logos, Eros is needed in order to ensure the survival of the system as Eros permits temporary relief from the constraints levied by Logos. As Wang observes, "[c]ivilization is not about whether or not Eros should be satisfied but rather about how and to what extent Eros can be gratified" (ibid., 34).

Wang does indicate that such gratification must fall within the parameters of what is deemed socially acceptable (ibid., 39). Vacationing, as it has become highly institutionalized within the Western-industrial setting, represents one such socially acceptable outlet for members to pursue

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relief from the constraints which are levied upon them. Vacationing is highly functional within the system as it provides individuals with an environment which runs contrary to the alienating and constraining environment of their everyday existence (Urry 1995, 130) effectively acting as a "pressure valve" (Cohen 1979, 185). Seeking relief through leisure pursuits such as travel, is, therefore, an example of Eros gratification which is sanctioned by the rational Logos element (Wang 2000, 41).

Although it may initially appear as though Eros and Logos, as they are referred to by Wang, are separate elements of the same system, I suggest that Eros, despite existing to meet the needs of the constrained members of post-industrial society, effectively serves the highly rational Logos in a vital manner. What becomes apparent is that the rational system has safeguarded its own existence by permitting its members to briefly stray from the "iron cage", but of course not too far. In the case of backpacker tourism, participants are relocated to an environment which is every part as constraining as the system which they seek to escape, the primary difference being that the constraint mechanisms in this new environment are more gentle and covert but succeed in providing the appearance of an environment which is alternative to the constraining system in which they exist. This "gentle" form of control is indicative of a more postmodern form of constraint which is contrary to the overt forms more characteristic of modernity (Ritzer 1998, 144). As well, this "gentle and subtle control can be far more troubling than the blatant and brutal forms. People do not know how they are being controlled, or even that they are being constrained. Without such knowledge, it is difficult, if not impossible, to question and rebel against the control" (ibid., 145).

The important issue here is that Eros is a creation of Logos which keeps members of a society

at a certain level of contentment by permitting certain outlets. Constraint and alienation necessitate Eros yet Eros represents an effective tool of Logos. Therefore, despite being perceived as the antithesis of Logos, Eros is actually a highly rational component and is perhaps not that detached from Logos after all. Wang maintains that "[o]n the one hand, [post-] industrial capitalism created a need for leisure travel, and on the other, [post-] industrial capitalism developed a tourism industry to satisfy this need in a standardized, normalized and commercial way" (2000, 190). Travel as a means of "escape" from the iron cage of Western-capitalist society merely becomes what Cohen refers to as a "healing balm for the robots" (1979, 186).

Fieldwork conducted in Australia yielded results confirming the use of travel as a means of escape from the norms and values of everyday mainstream life in Western society. However, the escape was, itself, encapsulated in the mesh of commoditization and institutionalization characteristic of post-industrial capitalist society. Four informants encountered, Matt, Dave, Diana, and Cameron, fit the profile of a backpacker tourist: a) they were a transitional phase of life (Cohen 1977, 175, Riley 1988, 317, Vogt 1976, 27) and b) they expected to return to, and become fully functional within, the societies from which they originated (Riley 1988, 325). The four informants, being under age thirty, also fit the age profile of backpackers posited by the Bureau of Tourism Research which indicates that seventy-five percent of backpackers are less than thirty years of age (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 4).

Matt is a typical backpacker. Twenty-one years of age, Matt was vacationing in Australia and consciously "taking a break" from his routine existence in the United States. A recent graduate from college, Matt claimed to have no immediate career prospects and was, therefore, delaying his participation in the workforce, a characteristic shared by thirty-three percent of backpackers

in Australia (ibid., 5). Matt actually discussed his time in Australia as an "escape"from the pressures of his home life which were affecting his mental health. He was not eager to start a career and "settle down" and stated that he needed to "get out". Having previously spent time in Europe, Matt indicated that Australia was next on his list and represented an ideal location to "get away from it all". This escape was intended to be an escape from most aspects of his life in the United States: his part-time job, his long-term girlfriend, and the general monotony of his normal existence. The "escape" which Matt discussed was described as being one year which he could devote completely to himself without worrying about the pressures of his home life. Backpacking in Australia, according to Matt, was an opportunity for him to "soul-search" and "get a fresh start at things".

I encountered Matt in Port Stephens, located in New South Wales and in close proximity to Sydney. Matt was traveling in Australia for one year and was doing so on a work visa which he obtained prior to arrival. Prior to arriving in Port Stephens, Matt was in Sydney working and living with some friends in Bondi Beach, a popular backpacker locale, but felt it necessary to vacate as the "scene was getting old". During the course of his stay in Port Stephens, Matt obtained casual employment at the hostel in which we were lodging. This is ironic in that Matt was attempting to escape the pressures of his routine home life, which included part-time employment, by voluntarily entering a situation in which he was still working. Urry claims that "[b]eing able to go on holiday [is] to be obviously not at work" (1995, 130). In the case of many backpackers, including Matt, these individuals have supplemented their regular working life with an alternative working life. Therefore, although they are working, they believe that they are doing so under the conditions of the alternative and in a situation in which they are still achieving

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an escape. Work in Australia may thus not be viewed by backpackers as being the same as work at home, even though the duties may be similar.

The same can be said for Dave who I also met in Port Stephens. Slightly older, in his late twenties, Dave was vacationing in both Australia and southeast Asia, and informed me that he had decided to "take a break" from his telecommunications job in Ireland. Dave discussed his need to "just get away" indicating elements of constraint and a societal "push" felt at home, suggesting that his vacation, similar to Matt's, was an attempted escape. His situation, however, is even more ironic than the above mentioned Matt. Dave was taking a break from his job, as were thirty-five percent of backpackers in Australia (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 5), but was on his way to Melbourne to seek employment with a branch of the same company and was using his experience with this company to aid him in his quest for employment. Despite informing me that he was taking time off from his job in Ireland, Dave had not escaped his job. He may justify this escape, however, as he has been able to travel about Australia and southeast Asia. Dave fully intended to return to his job in Ireland and was merely on a six month vacation to "refresh and recharge". Both Dave and Matt exemplify one way backpackers benefit the capitalist labour market. They are part of a "floating" labour pool that can be called upon when needed.

Diana, from the United Kingdom, was not so much on an escape from her career life as she was on a soul-searching mission. Having recently parted with her long-term boyfriend and possibly re-establishing a relationship with a previous one, Diana felt that "something in her life was pushing her to get away" and arbitrarily chose Australia as a destination in which she could

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act out.[6] Similar to Dave and Matt, Diana does expected to return and be fully functional within her society.

Cameron, a Canadian, was encountered in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. A recent graduate from university, Cameron had no concrete career aspirations and was traveling as much as he could before he had to "grow up". Also similar to Matt, Cameron was traveling on a one year work visa and actively engaged in employment to help supplement funds while on the road. Cameron traveled previously in western Europe and Australia, similar to the view posited by Matt, was the next logical choice. Cameron did expect to return to Canada and establish a career but maintained that he would find somewhere else to travel after Australia as he was "not ready to settle down". He indicated that he would have to return to Canada soon, however, so that he could obtain a part-time job to help finance his next venture. Similar to Matt, Cameron believed that he was in an "in between" stage. Therefore, travel may be serving as an essential rite-of-passage to adult life.

Most of the other backpackers encountered were in similar situations. For example, Garry from the U.K. and Nadine from Germany were in Australia to take time off from their jobs. Both expected to return soon to their respective societies and return to the jobs they possessed before they left. Unlike the four informants discusses above, neither Garry nor Nadine had any intention of working while they were in Australia and were there to simply relax. They were, however, vacationing because they needed relief from the normality of their routine lives back home.

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[6]The notion of "acting out" is described in greater detail beginning on page 95.

For these individuals, an extended travel period is performing a function. Self-realization, according to Wang, is difficult under the conditions imposed by [post] modernity and [post-] industrialism and travel is designed to provide at least the possibility of achieving some degree of self-realization (2000, 67-68). Again, travel appears to provide the actors with a means of removing themselves from the constraining environment of normality and temporarily relocating themselves to an environment where they can meet their Eros desires (ibid., 41).

However, Western capitalism has fulfilled its own needs by permitting each of the informants to temporarily escape from the constraints of their existence. This serves to nurture these individuals as once they "recharge" they will once again return and be functional within the system they have strived to escape. The end result is that escapism has become a highly valuable and functional component of Western capitalism and is, itself, a valuable commodity (Dann 1991, 160). Wang suggests that vacations become "a necessary complement to and compensation for work, as a means of enhancing productivity and efficiency, and as an essential element of a reasonable standard of living" (2000, 100). It is in the best interest of the capitalist system to permit this temporary escape as it may increase the overall productivity of these individuals. Furthermore, it is my contention that these individuals are not escaping at all and that the rational system from which they seek to escape expands its scope of control to each and every aspect of backpacker tourism thereby perpetuating an elaborate system of illusions.

Initial Elements of Structure

Backpacker tourism may be motivated in part by the alienation that is experienced by life in highly bureaucratized and commoditized Western culture. Ironically, the attempted escape from this alienation can only, in most cases, be set in motion through highly commodified and

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bureaucratized means. Attempting to escape the "iron cage" can only be achieved by accessing channels within the "iron cage". The process of vacation organization from beginning to end is a highly institutionalized practice.[7]

Airfares and subsequent necessities such as travel passes can readily be obtained through consultation with a travel agent. Backpacking is well known to travel agents and they understand the kind of arrangements backpackers want. Prior to my departure, the agent organized my return airfare as well as a Greyhound Australia travel pass. The only formalities I was required to arrange without assistance from the travel agent was the entry visa and membership with Hostelling International which is a choice, not a necessity, for backpackers. In this sense, all of the major formalities of organizing a backpacking vacation are arranged by the travel agent demonstrating the highly institutionalized nature of the contemporary pursuit.

Guidebooks are widely used by backpackers. Two of the more popular publications are *Let's Go* and *Lonely Planet*. Such guidebooks, at times described as being "underground" (Riley 1988, 322) are so ubiquitous that they are often found in great numbers in travel and tourism sections in book stores. Surely high volume sales demonstrates the mainstream nature of the pursuit. Backpacker behaviour thus becomes something which is manipulated by the contemporary capitalist book publishing industry. Some of the backpackers encountered in Australia believed themselves to be acting independently and believed that they possessed a vast degree of self-determination. However, they were, in fact, enmeshed in a cultural world with its own normative structures.

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[7]A more detailed description of travel organization may be found in the *Methods and Methodology* section.

Backpacking as a form of travel is actually prompted by the mass media. *Lonely Planet* is not only a best selling travel guidebook but is also a popular television programme which promotes the ideals of budget travelers. Numerous other programmes exist which are quite similar in nature, each depicting independent travelers who strive to "get off the beaten path" and explore the areas which are believed to be ignored by the mass-tourist. Of course, the undertaking of such travel by masses of backpackers simply creates a new form of mass tourism.

This is simply another form of commercialized cultural capitalism. Increased marketing methods instill in the potential consumers the desire to seek these alternative locations and capitalize on the escapist desires which are generated by the system itself. During my stay in Australia, many of the travelers I interacted with were reading a novel titled *The Beach*, whose popularity may be attributed to the fact that the story revolves around the main character's backpacking adventures. Upon return to North America I was surprised to learn that the novel was to become a major motion picture. The popularity of the theatrical release is a testimony to the increasing popularity of backpacker tourism. Again, the irony lies in the fact that a quest for authenticity through alternative travel is stimulated by mass marketing. Ironically, backpackers are spreading the culture they are seeking to escape by infiltrating areas which lack a highly developed tourism base. As Riley contends: "by seeking new destinations, the budget traveler spearheads mass tourism and expands the mass tourist destinations" (ibid., 321).

What the above is meant to suggest is that actors are conditioned and structured prior to departure by the system they strive to escape. Again, the subsequent motives of the travelers cannot be understated. Although they seek to escape the iron cage, they are conditioned by the system to strive for this form of travel. This method of travel is endorsed by the society at large

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and the traveler acquires cultural capital which is invaluable upon return.

Guidebooks

Referred to as the "hall-mark of sedate middle class tourism" by Cohen (1973, 96), guidebooks are both symbolic and practical to backpacker tourism and, as such, their importance cannot be understated. The role of guidebooks among backpackers is far greater and of more importance than merely providing travel information although the ramifications of this travel information is significant. Knowledge and use of the guidebooks is a symbol of backpacker identity. The value of guidebooks thus transcends the practical information they contain. The books, therefore, have become an outward symbolic marker of membership in the backpacking community.

In the backpacking circle it is not uncommon to approach others or be approached on the basis of possession of a guidebook. Its outward display, therefore, is a gesture which indicates both to themselves and to others that they are indeed backpackers. Such outward displays often serve the purpose of initiating backpacker interaction. The books are, therefore, objects which have become collectively adopted by the group and used to signify the actors as belonging to this group.

Guidebooks are a mass market means to promote the ideas and values of alternative tourism. The books are used because of their focus on the low-budget aspect of tourism, providing detailed information about the necessities of travel. The *Let's Go* guide which I used throughout the study provided detailed information on a range of topics. Pre-travel requirements are discussed in the beginning of the guide and a city by city, state by state description follows. Each section pertaining to cities and towns provides a list of accommodations which includes a

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list of services and amenities which each establishment provides. They also include a map and set of directions to each establishment. Following this list is a selection of food options which include grocery stores and inexpensive restaurants. A list of sights is provided as well as a list of outdoor activities and available nightlife options. Information on how to get to, away from and around each city and town is also provided.

According to the 1999 issue of *Let's Go Australia*, budget travel is: "the only way to travel. Living cheaply and simply brings you closer to the people and places you've been saving up to visit. Our books will ease your anxieties and answer your questions about the basics— so you can get off the beaten track and explore" (v.). Of course, if one follows the guide closely one does not get closer to the local population. Lodging at hostels, dining at restaurants, and sampling the nightlife listed in the guides only brings backpackers into contact with other backpackers. The phrase "off the beaten track" in the quote above attempts to differentiate backpackers from other travelers, distinguishing between what theorists have referred to as travelers and tourists. Munt contends that such a division "amounts to little more than marketing" (1994, 117) and that in reality the difference between *travelers* and *tourists* is "little more than a figment of wishful middle-class thinking" (ibid., 117). Nonetheless, the guidebook remains a tool of distinction for backpackers and is, consequently, critical to the attainment of the cultural capital gained through "alternative" travel.

Large numbers of people use these books and follow the advice they provide. They are not secretive underground publications and their widespread use among the backpacking population means that large numbers of backpackers converge on the same locations leading these locations to become backpacker environments. Rather than providing a means by which backpackers may

interact with locals and get off the beaten path, guidebooks serve to promote comradery and interaction among their readers, isolating them from the local population, and ensuring that they follow the beaten path of the guide.

During the course of research in Australia, the guidebook represented the primary source of information on destinations, accommodations, activities, and food, although other sources of information were utilized at various points. My choices of destination were based on the description provided by the guide. Therefore, they were decisions subject to a significant degree of influence. Matt, one of the informants encountered in Port Stephens, New South Wales, stated that he only decided to visit the area after reading about it in his copy of *Let's Go Australia*. In this particular situation, the subject directly cited the guide's influence over his behaviour and stated outright that the guide had changed his mind.

Descriptions of particular areas by the authors of the guides encourage readers, subtly, into making certain choices. Such a contention is exemplified by the written description of Byron Bay. Located on the eastern coast of New South Wales, Byron Bay is well-known throughout the backpacking circuit. During the first two months of travel, in every place I settled and interacted with backpackers, someone recommended Byron Bay and stated that I had to get there. This is an example of the social pressure which exist among travelers as one's trip may be deemed a failure if he or she fails to reach a location regarded so highly by peers. This social pressure, in the example of Byron Bay, is directly reinforced by *Let's Go*.

The description of Byron Bay states that "[h]ere, *everyone* stays longer than they had planned" (emphasis in original, 178). Italicizing the word "everyone" emphasizes the significance of a visit to Byron Bay for one's identity as a backpacker. The authors may not be

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far from the truth. I encountered several individuals who stayed in Byron Bay longer than they had expected. One such individual, Cameron, revealed to me that he ended up staying in Byron Bay for six weeks, considerably longer than he had expected. The experience in Byron Bay is not of an indigenous, authentic culture. Rather, it is the culture of backpackers. The description in the guidebook continues.

> While Byron boasts palm reading, massage classes, and bead shops, it's more than just commercialized karma. The relaxed, rejuvenating coastal town with a famously "alternative" attitude is nirvana for its diverse devotees: aged hippies, dredlocked backpackers, bleached surfing devotees, punks, ravers, young families, sharp businessmen, and yoga gurus. It seems that Byron's lighthouse, the first in Australia to see the sunrise, is a beacon for travelers the world over (178).

This is a prime example of the manner in which the guidebook conditions the readers. The authors have painted such an alluring picture of Byron Bay that it is understandable that one may feel a sense of failure if he or she does not visit. The above description even capitalizes on the highly regarded notion of the alternative, a *must* for backpackers.

Hostels and Backpacker Subculture

Social interaction is an integral component of travel and is actively sought by the majority of backpackers. This is not meant to suggest that travelers arrive in groups and travel as such but that acquaintances are actively sought during the travel process. The Bureau of Tourism Research indicates that just over forty percent of male and thirty percent of female travelers traveled unaccompanied (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 7). However, a goal of the backpacking experience is to meet others. Although backpackers may share the myth that their form of travel

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fosters closer interaction with the local population, in reality the pursuit often focuses on the interaction between fellow travelers.

The environment in which most social interaction among travelers takes place is the hostel. The Bureau of Tourism Research defines a *backpacker* as someone who spent at least one night at a youth hostel (ibid., 22). Backpackers do often use other forms of nightly accommodations such as camping or lodging with friends or relatives (ibid., 22) but the primary accommodation remains the youth hostel.

In Australia, the network of hostels is quite extensive and varied. Hostel chains such as YHA and Koala exist along side independent establishments. However, both chain and independent hostels form a highly routinized accommodation network for backpackers and are present in almost every region in the country. Hotels have even capitalized on the desires of backpackers and offer hostel-like accommodations such as dorm rooms in order to attract backpacker clientele. My research suggests there is an increase in the preference for the independently run accommodations which are held to be more oriented toward the younger backpacking crowd. Networks such as the YHA affiliated hostels are increasingly being viewed as quiet and family oriented and are, therefore, not attractive to the backpackers who seek a "party" atmosphere. The proprietor of an independent hostel in Coffs Harbour indicated to me that independent hostels were far superior to YHA hostels as they provided backpackers with superior amenities, less sterile environments, were more in touch with the backpacking culture, and allowed patrons to interact directly with the owner. I observed that the more popular independent hostels capitalized on the highly social nature of travelers, provided on-site nightclubs and pubs, and offered a wide range of activities to entertain their clientele.

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Regardless of classification, hostels remain the primary lodging for backpackers. Hostels offer a variety of accommodation options: singles, doubles, and dorm rooms. The price range for hostels vary slightly from location to location but singles are always the most expensive option followed by doubles and dorm rooms. Beside being the cheapest option in hostels, dorm rooms are popular because they provide an excellent opportunity for social interaction. According to the Bureau of Tourism Research, seventy-eight percent of backpackers used and fifty percent preferred dorm-style accommodation (ibid., 22). This choice apparently is related to backpackers' desire for social interaction (ibid., 24). My informants confirmed this finding. The relatively low cost of dorm rooms and their contribution to social interaction lead these environments to be a key component of the backpacker identity.

Beyond the dorm room, hostels provide other spacial environments which facilitate interaction. These include *common rooms* and *games rooms*. Each are instrumental in developing the interaction process. I observed that common rooms contained furniture and usually a television set. Some of the common rooms also provide a library of literature based on a "take a book, leave a book" system. Others provide a video library as well. At any given time, there are usually at least some occupants in the common rooms.

Behaviour in common rooms is regulated by the informal rules that structure backpacker social interaction. For example, bacpacker etiquette or simple politeness dictates that the selection of television channels or videos follows a democratic process whereby individuals gain a general consensus before a selection is made. I observed this in the common room environment of several hostels. The democratic process which was observed in the common rooms brought together travelers who were not interacting until that point. The dualistic nature

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of the normative behaviour among the backpackers with regard to the democratic process of operating within the common room, combined with the physical environment, developed social interaction. This social interaction was thus the result of emergent backpacker norms performed in an environment facilitated by the hostel.

The linkage between the hostel system and backpacker subculture is illustrated by the following vignette from my fieldwork. I met Matt at the transit station in Port Stephens, New South Wales. Unsure of where he was supposed to be, Matt approached me, as he revealed later, because I was wearing a backpack. He indicated to me that he was going to the same area that I was but he did not have accommodations arranged. He informed me that he hastily chose the location after consulting his *Let's Go* guide but did nothing further in regard to organization. After learning that I had arranged accommodation at an independent hostel which he had read about in the guide, he asked if he could travel there with me.

At the hostel we checked in at the same time. After each of us disclosed to the proprietor that we preferred a dorm room, the proprietor asked if we would mind being in the same room as Dave, a traveler who was there by himself. Neither of us objected and the proprietor said that she did not think that Dave would mind. She also said that this would be a great way for us to get to know each other. Therefore, the proprietor was playing a direct role in facilitating interaction among us.

After brief introductions, Matt and I unpacked. Arriving at the hostel in the early evening, Matt and I had already eaten dinner, as had Dave. Looking for an activity, Matt inquired as to whether or not there was a common room or games room on the grounds. The proprietor indicated that there was a common room and directed us to it. Dave informed Matt and I that he

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owned a vehicle and would be willing to drive us into town so that we could purchase beer for the evening. Matt and I agreed to this and purchased beer for ourselves as well as Dave in order to demonstrate our gratitude. We then spent the first evening in the common room socializing and becoming better acquainted.

The next day, Matt, Dave and I hiked and spent time at the beach. At the conclusion of the day, we once again purchased beer for the evening. Matt expressed a brief interest in visiting a local pub but then decided that he would rather relax in the hostel. Most of the social interaction between the three of us transpired in the hostel setting. In this respect, the hostel directly facilitated interaction by providing a common room. On the other hand, this limited social interaction reveals more about the backpacking pursuit. During the course of our stay in Port Stephens, the three of us did not interact with anybody but ourselves and the hostel staff. Therefore, despite being on a path which is different than the "mainstream", we are still not experiencing another culture. We simply existed within a backpacker subculture which the hostel facilitated.

From the start of the Port Stephens visit we were in a situation completely within "touristic" parameters. I had arrived at the hostel based on the recommendations of a touristic guide book. Matt arrived at the hostel as a consequence of my choice. Dave had also stated that he had read about the hostel before arriving. Arriving at the hostel through a touristic publication, we then remained in this setting and failed to experience the cultural *other*. As such, this experience demonstrates the insulation of backpackers in regard to the cultural experience.

At the Blue Mountains Katoomba YHA, staff distributed their own maps of the town and area to each guest at the time of check-in. As well as mapping out the town and area, the maps

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contained a list of possible activities in the area. As these maps are distributed to everyone who resides at the hostel, the chance that these individuals will cross paths at some point during their stay increases significantly. The maps, therefore, gently channel their users in certain directions. This is not to suggest that each individual or individuals set out at the same time or follow the same route. The likelihood of hostel residents crossing paths, however, is greater than would be the situation in the absence of the distributed maps.

The staff at the Victor Lodge Bed and Breakfast in Canberra similarly distributed maps to all who checked in. Unlike the Katoomba YHA, the maps distributed in Canberra had predetermined routes marked on them. The staff also helped guests read the maps. During my stay in Canberra, I followed the advice of the staff and took the route they had highlighted. During my exploration of the sights, which were also recommended in my guidebook, I saw individuals I recognized from the hostel. After returning to the hostel later that day we recognized each other which generated first smiles then verbal greetings. Discussing the route and sights we had taken, it was learned that for the majority of the day we were only about fifteen minutes apart. The point of these ethnographic examples is that there is now a well established system of accommodations which caters to backpackers and which is the physical bases of the social and cultural elements of the backpacker subculture.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the extent to which backpacking has become enmeshed in the capitalist tourist industry is the creation of "super-hostels" in key backpacker locations. Such hostels exist in Sydney and Brisbane and are the most advanced and tightly controlled establishments in the country. The *Palace Backpackers*, located in the city centre of Brisbane, is a large complex consisting of five stories. Contained within the "hostel" is a restaurant/nightclub

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which provides nightly activities for patrons. This is an exclusive environment as there is a guard at the door who checks for a room key before permitting admittance. Also provided within the building is an internet cafe, food shop, travel agent, travel/tour service, and a "job club". The "job" club is designed to assist backpackers residing at the hostel in the search for employment while in Brisbane. These services can keep the flow of backpacker traffic and spending within the hostel. Backpackers can essentially organize every portion of their stay in Brisbane and sample the nightlife without leaving the building. The building, in fact, resembles not so much of a hostel in its traditional guise, as it does a large hotel. There is even a public address system which the staff at the front desk uses to inform residents of time, the beginning of events in the restaurant/pub, and the approaching check-out time in the morning.

Similar to the above mentioned hostel, the *Sydney Central YHA* is just as imposing. Described as the "world's largest hostel" by *Let's Go* (1999, 98), the hostel is said to provide a swimming pool, games room, travel centre, organized activities, restaurant/pub, internet cafe and parking (ibid., 98). As with the Brisbane hostel, the Sydney hostel is more of a backpacker complex.

Despite the idea expressed in the guidebooks that backpacking represents something of an alternative form of travel, the hostels that cater to backpackers present themselves in a manner similar to hotels and resorts. Advertisements, for example, often provide visual displays of the hostel with patrons engaging in social activity. Many of the posters observed focus solely on the social aspect of the particular hostel. A particularly striking poster featured a male being fondled in a swimming pool by three young women in bikinis. These advertisements also inform of the extra amenities which particular hostels provide, such as laundry facilities and an on-site

nightclub or pub (see appendices A, B, and C). The point is the focus on interaction between travelers *at the hostel*, rather than between travelers and locals.

Even independent hostels are tied together through informal relationships between owners. While in Cairns, Queensland, I attempted to book accommodations with a hostel chosen through consultation with the guidebook. The hostel informed me that they were full and that most of the other hostels would most likely be full as well. The owner then provided me with the number of a hostel which she said was *not* in any of the guidebooks and was new. Taking this advice I telephoned the hostel and they provided me with accommodation. A similar situation arose during my sojourn south along the eastern coast of Australia. While in Byron Bay I casually inquired into hostel accommodations at my next destination, Coffs Harbour. The owner indicated to me that he would take care of the situation. There was no real concern on my part, and I was comfortable leaving the process up to the owner. The owner informed me of a hostel which he regarded as the "best in Coffs" and said that he would telephone the hostel himself. When the owner telephoned the hostel in Coffs Harbour I observed that he was on a first name basis with the other owner. Perhaps not being an example of total collusion, it was evident that the two owners did have a system in place. While in Coffs Harbour I engaged in casual conversation with the owner of the hostel. He asked me about my next destination and I informed him that I was going to Port MacQuarie. He said that he knew of a good hostel and that he could arrange something for me. When he telephoned the hostel in Port MacQuarie he too was on a first name basis with the other owner.

Like mainstream hotels, it is common practice for hostels to provide a shuttle service to and from transit centres. In many of the destinations I visited in Australia, hostel representatives met

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the arriving busses. The times at which I pre-booked accommodations, the majority of hostels

informed me that there would be a shuttle waiting for me at the transit station. The shuttles are

not there only to transport travelers who have booked accommodations. They also seek to attract

travelers who have yet to arrange their accommodations.

Outside of the transit station there are usually designated spots where hostel shuttles and

representatives queue for the arriving travelers. During one of my journeys the Greyhound driver

informed all of the backpackers on the bus that there were strict rules governing the behaviour of

the representatives and that they are not permitted by law to approach travelers and must wait for

travelers to approach them. For this reason, various advertising techniques are employed.

Posters and signs are displayed by the representatives advertising the amenities provided by the

hostel.

Shuttles are the norm, not the exception. There is very little the traveler has to do in regard to

reaching his or her destination. In many instances, I booked a seat on the coach over the

telephone using the number from my travel pass and then telephoned ahead to one of the hostels

chosen out of the guidebook. From that point I only had to wait for the coach, disembark from

the coach and find the representative from the hostel I had chosen and then be transported

directly to the hostel.

This exemplifies two issues. Firstly, the shuttle service is one more example of the

convergence between mainstream tourism and backpacking. Hostels apparently are competing

for business with other forms of accommodation and perhaps each other. In that sense, many of

them are typical capitalist enterprises. Secondly, the shuttle service, while beneficial to the

travelers, is one more means through which the boundaries of the touristic experience are

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maintained. Interaction with local people is restricted to those who are employed as drivers and hostel employees. Backpacking, in Australia at least, does not involve "getting off the beaten track". Rather, it has its own well-trodden and defined trails.

Byron Bay: A Backpacker Mecca

The masses of backpackers who converge on Australia has led some areas to become completely overrun by hostels and others to create hostels where there was previously no serious tourism base. The Bureau of Tourism Research claims the expenditure of backpackers "supports employment and industries in areas which would not otherwise benefit substantially from tourism expenditure" (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 1). Locations such as Katoomba or Byron Bay are quite small but quite dependent on and structured by the tourist industry. Katoomba is dependent on both backpacker tourism and mass tourism, although it is quite difficult to distinguish between the two groups. Byron Bay, however, is almost wholly dependent on backpackers and is one of the most popular backpacker destinations in Australia. A visit to Byron Bay is almost mandatory for peer validation of one's backpacker experience.

The hostel options in Byron Bay, which has a population of about five thousand, are extensive. *Let's Go* lists eleven hostels and six inexpensive alternatives but by the time I reached Byron Bay, there were advertisements for new hostels. In comparison, *Let's Go* lists fourteen hostels for Brisbane which has a population of just over one million. The number of hostels in Byron Bay is almost suffocating. The owner of a Coffs Harbour hostel suggested that Byron Bay was quite inauthentic and at the point of collapse, as the town is too small to handle such a tourism base. He also feared that the saturation of hostels would undermine their profitability when the backpacker traffic levels off.

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Byron Bay has become a Mecca among travelers due primarily to its reputation, not its natural features. This reputation includes the highly "alternative" lifestyle of the residents which is alleged to represent a "hippie movement" or counter culture. The ones who seem to be adopting such lifestyles, however, are the travelers. Byron Bay has become a key environment in which backpackers can act out, temporarily adopting an alternative lifestyle. The town has become an environment of pseudo-hippies who drink and consume drugs with the contention that they are behaving in an alternative fashion.

The town has thus become a Disneyland for backpackers, a contrived environment. In the quest for authenticity, Wang contends that "[i]n such liminal experiences, people feel that they are *themselves* much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than they are in everyday life...because they are engaging in non-every-day activities" (2000, 49-50). On the road however these behaviours may be amplified as they attempt to "act out" with little fear of scrutiny or negativity.

The Arts Factory hostel is described by *Let's Go* as "weirdly wonderful" (1999, 179) where travelers may sleep in teepees and take part in "drum workshops" (ibid., 179). The Arts Factory also has a restaurant entitled *Supernatural Foods* where vegetarian dinners are prepared by Hare Krishnas (ibid., 179). Similarly, there is the Aquarius Backpackers hostel, Nomads, and the Blue Iguana Beachhouse (ibid., 179). Many of these hostels also organize day trips to the smaller village of Nimbin famed for its "hippie" population and its defiant attitude toward marijuana legislation (see appendices D and E).

Byron Bay stands as a notable example of the way in which backpacking blurs any clear distinctions between authentic and inauthentic experiences. The manner in which Byron Bay and

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the whole tourist infrastructure markets the alternative reputation of the town indicates that it is embedded in the capitalist tourist industry. The "authentic" experiences travelers have there may be interpreted as part of a life process ritual. Regardless, the consumption of this artificial authenticity is vital for validation of the backpacking experience and is invaluable for the quest for cultural capital. However, the point made here is that the highly institutionalized nature of the tourism infrastructure, which includes the hostel network, demonstrates the structured aspect of backpacker tourism and the manner in which desires and expectations are met by the industry. This exemplifies the dependence of the backpackers on agents of structure and exhibits their inability to escape the constraints and structures of post-industrialism.

Pubs, Nightclubs and Social Behaviour

This section is intended to address an essential element of backpacker behaviour which is the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs and the social behaviour which follows. Alcohol plays a significant role in the daily activity of backpackers. The social interaction which is so important to backpacker tourism often involves the consumption of alcohol and the environment in which the alcohol is provided, namely pubs and nightclubs. This environment is often provided by the hostel.

Cameron, whom I encountered during the course of a backpacker excursion to Uluru and King's Canyon, told me when I informed him of my study that I could not write about backpacking without discussing drinking and sex. This is, indeed, an appropriate statement. Much of the interaction which was observed directly related back to the consumption of alcohol and the environment in which this takes place. The high degree of alcohol consumption is one of the reasons that many hostels provide on-site pubs and nightclubs for patrons. I had many

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experiences which revolved around alcohol consumption. The following examples are drawn from my sojourn along the eastern coast as I made my way south from Cairns to Melbourne.

Traveling south, my first major stop was at Airlie Beach. While on the Greyhound I recognized a young woman from the hostel in Cairns who, in turn, recognized me. She asked me of my destination. Upon learning that I was going to Airlie Beach she smiled and replied that this too was her destination. She then asked me where I was lodging to which I replied *Reef Oceania*. Again she smiled and stated that this is where she was staying and that she would see me once we disembarked. The hostel is flagged by the *Let's Go* as highly recommended (1999, 333) so the likelihood of both of us lodging at the same location was not so much of a coincidence. Upon disembarking from the coach, the young woman introduced herself as Diana. To this point, the degree of social interaction between the two of us was minimal. We connected with the courtesy shuttle and proceeded to the hostel where we checked in together.

Assuming that we were traveling together, the receptionist asked if we wanted to be placed in the same cabin. The hostel is more representative of a resort where smaller groups of backpackers lodge in individual cabins rather than one large dormitory or building. Diana agreed to this and we proceeded to the room. At this point, Diana suggested that we go to the on-site pub to get a drink once we had unpacked. I agreed. Entering the cabin, the two of us introduced ourselves to the other occupants and invited them to the pub, an invitation which was initially declined.

Diana and I thus proceeded to the pub where we purchased drinks for each other and became better acquainted. The point here is that social interaction was minimal until the point at which we entered the pub. Such an occurrence may be no different under backpacking situations than

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normal home life, but the trend of interaction taking place within the pub setting was beginning to emerge. A short time later the individuals we had briefly met in the cabin arrived at the pub and, upon recognizing the two of us, seated themselves at our table. This included Chris, Debbie and Joan.

Chris expressed an interest in going into town and invited Diana and myself. Diana declined the offer but I accepted. With this the four of us waited for the courtesy shuttle into town. Chris insisted that he and I purchase and finish a jug of beer in the five minutes we had before the shuttle departed. Having accomplished this, we joined Debbie and Joan at the shuttle and went into town. Socialization between the four of us occurred primarily in settings which involved alcohol and Chris actively sought out a nightclub where we could consume more alcohol. Two different social groups, therefore, were interacted with almost entirely within the pub/nightclub environment. Chris proceeded to consume alcohol in excess well into the night.

The next day Chris stated that he wished to refrain from drinking, as he was drinking too often. He informed me that he had earned the nickname "koala" because he usually slept during the day so that he could go out at night. Little time, according to Chris, was spent visiting sights and more time was spent socializing and drinking. That night, however, I witnessed Chris in the on-site pub actively consuming alcohol with a group of individuals I did not recognize.

Similar to the first day, my interaction with Diana involved the pub and alcohol. The two of us were also introduced to two new arrivals in our cabin who we later interacted with in the pub. During the stay in Airlie Beach, nearly all of the social interaction which transpired did so within the pub setting. Furthermore, this setting, with the exception of the first night, took place within the hostel complex. The structure of the hostel was thus instrumental in facilitating social

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interaction. The interactive process, during the Airlie Beach visit, hinged primarily on the pub environment demonstrating the role of alcohol in backpacker culture and the manner in which such dependence on alcohol is capitalized on by the hostel to profit from and readily control backpackers by providing an environment in which they may socialize.

Similar situations were observed in Noosa, Queensland. Visiting for a period of three days, I checked into the *Koala* backpacker resort, one of the chain networks which exist in Australia. Testing the interactive process, I proceeded to the on-site nightclub at five p.m. for the beginning of "happy hour". The pub was relatively empty so I sat at one of the row tables. I sat writing in my journal observing what little behaviour was transpiring while consuming a bottle of beer. After about one half hour, two young women walked into the pub and looked the room over. They walked in my direction at which time I looked up from my journal and smiled. They asked If they could sit with me to which I agreed. Initial interaction focused on basic introductions such as names (Jessica and Veronica), countries of origin, and where each of us had been and where we were going. These basic "ice breakers" may also be regarded as subtle forms of social pressure as success or failure of the venture rests on the visiting of certain attractions which are discussed among backpackers. Therefore, the questions "where have you been" and "have you been to..." may serve as methods of measurement and legitimization as well as being introductory phrases in the early stages of social interaction.

After these basic introductions, Veronica and Jessica asked me if I would like to share a pitcher of beer. I accepted the offer and they purchased the first round. This is significant. Such a situation occurred in Airlie Beach where on the second day Diana, sitting with a group of individuals, invited me over to have a beer. Having consumed from the pitcher she had

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purchased, I felt obligated to purchase the next one. In turn, the next individual was obligated to purchase yet another round. Reciprocity in the purchase and sharing of alcohol is a key element in backpacker culture. This is the situation which ensued in Noosa.

After finishing the first pitcher I offered to reciprocate to which Veronica and Jessica agreed. Interaction between the three of us became more in-depth and we began to become better acquainted. The pub began to fill rapidly over the next several hours. As we were seated at row tables it was not long before others sat near. Brief interactions transpired between the three of us and the others at the table but this intensified with the onset of a "trivia contest". The contest was orchestrated by the staff whereby patrons competed for jugs of beer. The table at which we were seated began to combine answers so that we could win beer for the table. By the end of the evening everyone at the table was interacting and this was due, in large part, to the consumption of alcohol which was, in turn, provided by and within the setting of the hostel. Late in the evening a small group from the table suggested walking down town to visit a club and consume more alcohol. I followed them and the evening concluded at a local nightclub.

The next day I decided to follow the same procedure and after visiting some of the sights alone during the day, I went to the hostel's pub in the early evening. I recognized some of the individuals from the night before and joined them for a small portion of the evening. Included in this group was Garry. He will be discussed below. After a brief period of interaction I retired for the evening.

The third day I again followed the same procedure. Entering the pub at about five thirty p.m., I again sat by myself at one of the row tables in a relatively empty room. A short time later a young woman, who I shall call Michelle, approached and asked if she could join me. I accepted

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and we followed much the same introductory interaction process as that followed with Veronica and Jessica. This time I offered to purchase a jug of beer to which Michelle agreed. Following consumption of the first pitcher, Michelle proceeded to purchase the next. It was during this time that we began to socialize and learn more about each other. The two of us also decided to take part in the theme of the night which was a billiards competition where again the reward was alcohol.

Within this time frame Jessica, Veronica, Garry and many of the others from the first and second night entered the pub. They sat at other tables but I made sure to actively socialize with everyone. The main focus of the night was, like the others, the consumption of alcohol. Similar to the first night, such activity generated interaction between everyone at the table. The trend of socialization in the pub environment was clearly emerging. Discussions also took place in regard to our next destination. I learned that Garry was, like myself, heading to Brisbane. We suggested meeting and decided that we would choose the *Palace Backpackers* which is discussed above.

Having exchanged e-mail addresses and bidding farewell, I departed Noosa for Brisbane. Checking into the *Palace Backpackers*, I asked the receptionist if Garry had checked in. She informed me that he had and provided me with his room number. At the time I was checking in I recognized a young man named Tom who I had befriended in Hervey Bay. We laughed about our chance meeting and suggested going out for a drink later that night. I then met with Garry and the three of us agreed on a time to meet in the downstairs pub. The three of us did meet as scheduled and interaction during the course of the evening involved alcohol and occurred primarily within the pub in the hostel complex. The stay in Brisbane was brief and the three of

us soon parted ways. Garry, however, informed me that he was destined for Byron Bay and, upon learning that I was heading there as well, suggested that we meet once again. We agreed upon a hostel and Garry indicated that he would be arriving one day later than I but that this should not be a problem

Arriving in Byron Bay at night, I connected with the courtesy shuttle and was transported to the hostel. Checking in, the owner suggested that he was doing me a great favor by placing me in a dorm-style room where the majority of occupants were female. Upon entering the room I observed that I was the only one there but that all of the bunks, with the exception of one, were occupied. Having just unpacked, two individuals, one male and female, entered the room at which point they appeared surprised and somewhat uncomfortable with my presence. It became clear to me that their purpose was sexual intercourse so I made a polite joke about the matter and told them that I would give them their space. They laughed and expressed gratitude.

Returning later in the evening, I witnessed a group of individuals sitting outside of the room. I approached, introduced myself and learned that they too were waiting for the activity inside, which involved one of their travel partners, to finish. We shared laughs and briefly became acquainted after which time we retired for the evening. The next day two of the individuals met the previous night, one male and one female, invited me for a beer at a local pub. I agreed and we spent the afternoon at the pub, had some drinks, socialized, and then retired once again for the evening.

The next day I discovered a note left for me on the notice board from Garry informing me that he was in Byron Bay but was lodging at a different hostel. In the note he suggested that I meet him at his hostel for drinks as it was his birthday. I met Garry later that night where he

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introduced me to a group of his roommates, one of which was Nadine from Germany. Interaction once again focused on drinking, first at the hostel and then at the pub which my roommates and I visited the previous day. The next morning I prepared to depart for destinations south, continuing on my way to Melbourne with an intended rest in Sydney. Having befriended Nadine over drinks, we agreed to meet while in Sydney as she would be there at the same time. This did transpire but a meeting arranged between Garry and myself failed due to conflicting time schedules.

After departing Sydney and visiting friends in Melbourne, I traveled to Tasmania. While in Hobart I befriended two men who were lodging in my dorm room. One of them, of Swiss nationality, proposed that we go to the local nightclub/pub area in the downtown area. At the hostel there was no on-site pub. My other roommate, an American, and I agreed. We did not know a great deal about each other until we were out at the pubs in town. Mid-way into the evening I made a suggestion that I would return to the hostel. This was deemed unacceptable to the others who pressured me into staying for the remainder of the evening.

While visiting Coober Pedy in northern South Australia, I was introduced to a woman whom I shall call Mary. Through a misunderstanding she was allocated to the same dorm room as I. She had not anticipated being in a mixed dorm but she decided that it was acceptable. At the time I was the only one in the room which housed four. She introduced herself and immediately invited me for a drink in the on-site pub where we could socialize better. The evening was thus spent in the pub where we learned more about each other.

The examples described above reveal much about backpacker subculture. Firstly, it became quite apparent during my travels that alcohol played a pivotal role in the daily and nightly

activity of backpackers. Many social activities between backpackers hinge on alcohol. Hostels capitalize on this fact by providing on-site pubs.

Many of the hostels which have pubs or nightclubs have begun to enhance the pub/nightclub environment. As was evidenced in the *Koala* resort in Noosa and the *Palace Backpackers* in Brisbane, these hostels sought to enhance the quality of entertainment for patrons by providing "theme nights". The *Koala* resort in Noosa offered nightly themes which offered rewards of alcohol. The Noosa hostel also provided nightly "happy hours" which involved a reduction in the price of alcohol. In a similar fashion, the *Palace Backpackers* displayed posters in the pub/restaurant advertising the "Mr. and Mrs. Backpacker Competition". Such offerings are designed to prevent the patrons from exiting the complex, serving to maximize potential profits, and also contributing to the isolation of backpackers from the local culture.

If the purpose of travel is the temporary escape from the normality of Western existence then partaking in activity which is quite representative of the age group and is an activity which is undertaken in the home environment, cannot be considered, on its own, escapist. The escapism aspect, therefore, must result from the change in geographical environment. The activity becomes escapist when it occurs in an environment which is different from one's own. This is also the primary mode of acquiring cultural capital when one returns home. Stories of alcohol-induced adventures may not carry much value until it is revealed that the events transpired in an exotic location. From the viewpoint of the accumulation of cultural capital, therefore, the behaviour is legitimized because it "[signifies] an experience which contrasts with everyday experience" (Urry 1995, 132).

The purpose of the escapist retreat is social interaction. Consumption of alcohol among

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backpackers facilitates interaction in that it reduces social inhibitions. Under these circumstances, behaviour which may breach the limits of what may be acceptable in one's society may be tolerated to a greater degree especially among peers and, to a lesser degree, among locals who may simply dismiss the behaviour because of the traveler's status as a "backpacker". While abroad alcohol induced behaviours become a method by which backpackers can justify actions which may not be highly regarded when undertaken at home.

The Uluru Backpacking Safari

The relatively self-enclosed subculture of backpacking is also illustrated through the examples of two backpacking safaris. The first safari was undertaken during a three-day period, originating in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Alice Springs is a popular destination for both backpackers and mass-tourists as it is situated in close proximity to Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock, King's Canyon, and the Olgas. Uluru is one of Australia's premier geographical landmarks. Visiting the site is a vital component of the true backpacking tour of Australia. I traveled there by Greyhound coach and the majority of people on the coach were backpackers.

It quickly became apparent that social interaction was almost as important, if not equal to, the experience of visiting the famous geographical attractions. As Wang argues, the pleasure of consumption is derived partly from having others present (2000, 70). Moreover, even though a "packaged" safari tour is by definition a contrived experience, "people are not literally concerned about the authenticity of toured objects. Rather, they are seeking their authentic selves with the aid of tourist activities or toured objects" (ibid., 49). Visiting the attractions is of *less* importance than the discussion of the visited attractions at the conclusion of the tour.

The first day of travel yielded very little in the way of extensive interaction as people still had

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not been introduced to one another. At the conclusion of the first day of sight seeing Cameron, who I met in Alice Springs just prior to departure, suggested that Karen, my travel partner, and I meet him for some drinks at the on-site pub at the tourist compound located at Uluru.[8] It is worth noting that I approached Cameron in Alice Springs after viewing a Canadian flag sewn onto the back of his backpack. After commenting on the flag I learned that he had just graduated from Lakehead University, the same university which I attend in Thunder Bay. This common ground was the impetus for the interaction which was to follow.

That night Karen and I did proceed to the pub. Cameron had opted to sleep in the campgrounds whereas Karen and I bunked in the small dorms so we were unsure as to whether or not he would join us. Cameron did arrive with a woman who was staying in the campgrounds but who was not part of our tour. The night was spent drinking and discussing common stories about Thunder Bay and each other's trip to that point. Cameron had been in Australia for nearly one year. He had spent nearly eight months on the eastern coast and was desperately attempting to "see all of the sights" in a couple of months.

Early the next morning the tour commenced with a trip to Kings Canyon. By this point people on the tour bus were more familiar with each other, though interaction was still slightly limited. It had become evident to me that there was a group of individuals of Irish descent who were traveling as a group and they tended to interact primarily with each other, although they did acknowledge others on the tour. During rest stops certain lone individuals did make an attempt

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[8] I met Karen in Europe in 1997 and kept in regular contact. I stayed with her in Sydney and invited her to travel with me for a portion of my trip. This is discussed in greater detail in the methodology section.

to interact with others on the tour in an attempt to gain acquaintances.

At the conclusion of the tour Karen and I once again decided to go to the pub located within the grounds of the Kings Canyon resort. Cameron had also indicated that he would attend, though he arrived much later. Karen and I were joined by two of the lone travelers and the tour guide who bought Karen and I a drink, but not the others. Karen had noticed that the group of Irish travelers were outside at some tables at which point I suggested that we go outside. Initially we sat at a table by ourselves. The Irish travelers asked if they could join us. The evening was spent drinking and learning about each other.

The third day was the final day of the safari and at the conclusion of sightseeing we were to return directly to Alice Springs. That day we learned that one of the Irish backpackers, Douggie, was celebrating a birthday that evening and an invitation was extended to both Karen and I. The celebration was to take place at the hostel which the Irish group was residing at, a hostel different to ours. We both agreed. That night, Karen and I proceeded to the hostel and were the first to arrive. Cameron was the next. The Irish were the last. Drinks were shared and the overall impression of the tour was discussed.

Wang maintains that enjoyment arises in situations where travelers "[communicate] this pleasure with other tourists who are seeing the same sights together" (ibid., 70). This comradery arose as a result of discussions of the tour just undertaken and common stories and experiences of the overall vacation to Australia. An important fact emerged during discussions. One of the Irish girls pointed out how unusual it was to see an Australian backpacker.

After stories and drinks were shared, it was suggested that we proceed to the nightclub inside. As was the case with the hostel in Brisbane, entry hinged on the possession of a hostel key,

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apparently a key from any hostel was sufficient. The nightclub was an exclusive backpacker environment, further reinforcing the fact that backpackers interact primarily with other backpackers. The absence of Australian backpackers also exemplifies the degree to which backpackers are insulated from the local culture. Regardless, the night was spent consuming alcohol and celebrating Douggie's birthday. At the conclusion of the evening we said our farewells and prepared to go off on our own separate routes.

The Kakadu National Park Safari

Traveling north from Alice Springs, I eventually made it to Darwin with Karen. Darwin is located on the northern shores of the Northern Territory and is one of the popular destinations for backpacker tourists. Darwin is popular for two important reasons. Firstly, it is a strategic stop for travelers proceeding either west or east across the country. Secondly, and the reason for my visit to the area, it is located close to the Kakadu National Park, a massive and protected nature reserve. The most practical method of visitation is through a guided tour. To this there are endless options for every type of traveler, be it mass-tourists or backpackers. As it will become evident below, the two are nearly indistinguishable.

Karen and I obtained brochures for various outfitters at the YHA where we were residing. Most of the outfitters offered similar packages which ranged from one to five day tours (see appendices F and G). Karen and I had agreed that the three day tour was a fair choice and most of the outfitters offered a three day tour for about three hundred Australian dollars. There were other tours which were considerably more expensive but this was due primarily because of the amenities. For example, a more expensive three day tour might include over-sized tents, hot showers and air-conditioned vehicles. The three hundred dollar package, including the one

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which we eventually chose, included basic amenities including transportation, food and basic tents.

The decision was made to choose *Kakadu Dreams*, an outfitter which advertised small group sizes and personal tours of the park. Once our decision had been finalized we telephoned the company and signed up for the tour which would depart on a Wednesday and return on Friday. We were the last two individuals to be on the next tour. The outfitter further informed us that the guide would pick us up from our hostel and that we should "pack light". The YHA permitted us to leave our backpacks at the hostel while we were on the tour.

It should be noted at this point that while we were in Darwin, prior to departure on the Kakadu tour, we encountered Douggie on a street corner. Douggie is the backpacker discussed above who was encountered on the Uluru tour. After sharing a laugh about our chance meeting we discussed our reason for being in Darwin. Similar to Karen and I, Douggie and his friend were in Darwin to explore Kakadu and another national park. They told us about their outfitter and the fact that they had chosen a five day tour. It was initially thought that the variance in the itinerary would make it highly unlikely that we would cross paths but this was not so.

The next morning a small all-terrain vehicle arrived to pick us up from our hostel. The guide had already picked up the others from their respective hostels, one of whom was not a backpacker and was residing at one of the hotels in Darwin. The guide introduced himself to us as Ray and, while en route to the park, informed us of the activities ahead.

The intention of the tour was to get us closer to the unspoilt areas of the national park while still taking in the important sights. This included visits to aboriginal rock paintings, both Jim Jim and Twin falls (popular waterfalls of the area), and visits to a river where we could view

crocodiles in their "natural" environment. The outfitter's brouchure suggests a "no oldies" age range of eighteen to thirty-five due to the increased level of physical activity (see appendix F). The claim is that this will give the paying tourist more of an authentic experience. Ray further commented that this type of tour was far superior to the "wrinkler tours", referring to older mass-tourists.

During one evening, Ray discussed the benefit of choosing his company over other companies. He told our group that our tour was better because it did not involve the large coaches which are used by mass-tourists. He criticized the other outfitters and tourists claiming that the coaches transport the well-dressed tourists around the national park and when they return they are just as clean as when they left. Ray said that the tour that we were on was superior because we got dirty and were able to see things which the mass tourists were not.

Ray further criticized some of the other backpacker outfitters who he claimed were too advanced, providing showers and air conditioning. He claimed that we were getting the authentic experience because we had to hike and swim and sleep in tents at the end of the day. Despite Ray's claims, there was still a considerable amount of traffic in the areas we explored. We often passed other groups during the day and Ray was on a first name basis with many of the guides from other outfitters. The only time we were truly by ourselves was at the end of the day when we set tents up in an area called "private" by Ray. Other than that, we were simply a small group among many on tour. During one of the rest stops Karen and I even encountered Douggie with whom we interacted with briefly. We even began to recognize faces from other groups.

As promised, we did get quite dirty, did visit some of the sights, and were even able to exercise some control over the itinerary. In that sense, we did have an "authentic" experience. It

is important to recognize, however, the important symbolic role of dirt.

Close examination of the experience suggests that in another sense it was not a particularly unique experience. We were in reality a small segment of a larger mass converging on the same sights over the same time period. True, the individual group size was small, but we were truly part of a larger contingent.

Similar to the Uluru tour, but on a smaller scale, social interaction was an important factor in the success of the experience and was actively encouraged by Ray. Ray further suggested that group chemistry was essential for a successful tour and discussed how the previous group had been a negative experience. He did suggest that the overall chemistry was quite positive among our group and that it was the best group he had taken out in a while. Once again, alcohol played a role in the interaction process. While on tour Ray stopped at a rest area so that we could purchase beer for the evening. Nightly interaction revolved around food and drink.

After completing the tour, the suggestion was made that the group get together for drinks in Darwin. The location of choice was the Victoria Hotel, a well-known backpacker drinking environment in Darwin (see appendix H). That night several, but not all, of the group members attended for drinks. Ray was supposed to arrive but failed to do so. Overall, the interpretation among the group members was that the tour was a complete success and well worth the money.

Assessment of the Safari Experience

The travelers in each of the safari experiences discussed above depended significantly upon the guide and the outfitter who provided the service. A significant difference between the Uluru safari and the Kadadu safari, however, is that the mass-tourist characteristic of the former is not hidden or denied whereas in the latter the connection with mass tourism is actively denied. An

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"authentic" experience is created through a closer association with "the wild" than is typical of the mass-tourist industry. Camping and getting dirty signify a "break" with the norms and values of mainstream culture.

As stated above, in both safari experiences, there was little to distinguish backpackers from their mass-tourist counterparts. In the case of Uluru, backpackers even took advantage of a tour package which involved a high degree of organization. The Kakadu experience, however, attempted to market the idea of small group sizes and personalized tours as the only way to achieve a culturally authentic experience. This is partially due to what Munt has discussed as a "consumer reaction against being part of a mass" (1994, 102). However, the small groups were simply parts of a greater organized tour network and, as a result, the degree of authenticity was no greater than that realized by the mass-tourists which the smaller outfitters display a contempt for. What the outfitters did provide, however, was an elaborate performance which permitted the travelers to believe that they were consuming the culturally authentic. The group appeared to readily believe the contentions of Ray. The performance was, therefore, a success.

This is not meant to suggest that Ray or the other outfitters were overtly perpetuating a deception. They too may believe that they are offering unique, "authentic" experiences. Moreover, part of the safari experience is being able to consume experiences and "consume particular commodities in the company of others" (Urry 1995, 131). The social interaction among the members of the group is important for the legitimization of the "authentic" experience. The experience becomes immediately validated when the collective members of the group believe the experience to be authentic. Later, upon return home, the experience and its "authenticity" can be transformed into cultural capital among peers and friends.

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According to Wang, "[t]ouristic consumption becomes a social tool to enhance self-image and compete for status and cultural and symbolic capital" (2000, 204). In addition to the stories which can be told, souvenirs become tangible signifiers. Both safaris included stops at souvenir shops. Tourists of all categories purchase artwork and musical instruments which are said to be authentic products of local aboriginal people. Even national parks and nature reserves have not escaped the Disneyization of tourism (Ritzer 1998, 141). The safaris are contrived experiences which market authenticity. However, this appears to be of little concern to those involved. Especially in the instance of the Kakadu safari, the backpackers consumed the experience and did not question its "authenticity" even though it was orchestrated by a highly organized and commodified network.

<p align="center">The Backpacker Circuit</p>

The most obvious evidence of the enclosed and contrived nature of backpacker subculture may be the existence of an informal but well-known itinerary or circuit. During my 1997 excursion to Europe many backpackers that I interacted with early in the vacation I later saw at various other locations. Prior to departure my travel partners and I were informed by experienced travelers that this would occur. Indeed it did. In fact, certain individuals were witnessed several times during the vacation period, often several weeks apart. I had the same experience in Australia.

The first instance in which backpackers were recognized in different locations occurred a few days following the Uluru tour in which Karen and I encountered Douggie on a street corner in Darwin. Douggie was seen a short time later during the Kakadu safari. During the clockwise passage across the country Karen and I saw a trio of Dutch women, first in Mt. Isa, then Cairns,

and finally Cape Tribulation. After Karen and I had parted ways and I proceeded south along the eastern coast I again witnessed the trio in Byron Bay and Noosa. Karen and I were also approached by a gentleman in Cairns who had participated in the Uluru safari.

During my passage south I was able to frequently rejoin travelers who I had befriended because they too were traveling down the coast. Our itineraries were slightly different but there was often enough overlap to permit a meeting. It was for this reason that I was able to rejoin Chris in Hervey Bay after leaving him in Airlie Beach. I met some Swedish backpackers in Airlie Beach and encountered them again during an overnight rest in McKay. During my journey south I was also able to organize meetings in Brisbane and Byron Bay with Garry who I befriended in Noosa. While I was in Brisbane I encountered Tom from Hervey Bay on a street corner near the hostel. Nadine, who I met in Byron Bay, joined me in Sydney a couple of weeks later. This pattern is quite typical of the travel circuit.

While Karen and I were at a rest stop in Mt. Isa, prior to reaching the east coast, we encountered a couple who stated that they thought it quite unusual to meet travelers "going the wrong way". They had begun in Sydney and had first traveled north along the coast, then proceeded west inland and then intended to travel south. We, according to them, were traveling backward. I had encountered many backpackers in several locations during my journey. Clearly, I was not the only traveler proceeding in that direction. The common route around Australia may be counter-clockwise as many popular sights are located along the eastern coast. This may encourage many travelers to proceed north from Sydney as Sydney is the primary point of entry for travelers (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 18). The *Lets' Go* travel guide also endorses such a route. Although it lists the states in alphabetical order, the cities and sights within generally tend

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to follow the counter-clockwise pattern. For example, the section on New South Wales begins with a description of Sydney and then lists descriptions which geographically proceed north. The emergence of a backpacker circuit suggests the participants are not "getting off the beaten path". This indicates the degree to which backpackers follow along well marked paths.

Backpacker Meccas

During my 1997 venture to Europe, I noted that there were certain areas which were "must sees" among backpacker travelers; sights and geographical locations which were highly regarded among backpackers. A visit to these sights aided in the overall validation and legitimization of the vacation by other backpackers. Following Vogt (1976, 36), I have used the term Meccas to refer to such sights in Australia. Although he does not use the term "Mecca", Cohen discusses the notion of the emergence of "drifter communities" (1973, 97).

One of the most popular destinations for backpackers in Australia is Byron Bay, located on the northern coast of New South Wales. Everywhere I traveled and interacted with other backpackers, there was at least one individual who recommended Byron Bay. This is because of the symbolic lure of the alternative "counter culture" which is believed to exist here. I have already suggested that it may be less alternative than many think. Nonetheless, it is highly popular among backpackers judging both by word of mouth recommendations and the recommendations printed in the guidebooks.

Although there are non-backpacker tourists who visit Byron Bay, backpackers comprise the majority of its visitors. Statistics presented by the Bureau of Tourism Research indicate that thirty-seven percent of the backpackers surveyed reported having visited the northern coast of New South Wales while only three percent of all visitors to Australia reported visiting the region

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(Buchanan and Rossetto 1997, 18). This demonstrates the importance of the region to backpackers.

The northern coast of Queensland, renowned for its remote rainforests, is similarly a popular and recommended destination for backpackers. Forty-eight percent of backpackers reported visiting the region while only eighteen percent of all visitors claimed to have visited (ibid., 18). Darwin, Northern Territory, was a destination sought by thirty-eight percent of backpackers compared to only four percent of all visitors (ibid., 18).

A destination which I learned was highly regarded among backpackers was a restaurant in Cairns known as *The Woolshed*. Early in the vacation Cameron had discussed the restaurant claiming that a steak dinner cost only four dollars. *The Woolshed* is perhaps the most popular backpacker domain in Cairns (see appendix I).

Many of the hostels in Cairns offer vouchers to guests which are redeemable at the restaurant for basic meals. Backpackers are able to upgrade for a small fee in order to gain access to the entire menu. It was this small fee of four dollars which allowed Cameron to have his steak dinner. An interesting observation, however, was that this created two groups of backpackers in the restaurant; one group that was willing to pay for the upgrade and a second group that was not. At six p.m. nightly, the *Woolshed* bus travels around Cairns picking backpackers up from their respective hostels and transporting them to the restaurant. The restaurant then departs the restaurant at nine p.m. to deliver those who wish to return to their hostel. The apparent goal of the restaurant is to keep the backpackers in the bar. The "backpacker party" begins at nine p.m.. The restaurant aims to make its money off of the alcohol sales and the trade-off is the cheap meals.

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I visited the restaurant three evenings and each time the restaurant was filled to capacity. Most of the patrons seemed to remain in the building after nine p.m.. On two of the evenings I arrived at the restaurant one half hour before the doors opened and observed that there was a queue of backpackers waiting to gain entrance.

The significance of this as a Mecca for backpackers is that it has no real connection with the geographical sights of Australia. It is popular only because of its reputation as a backpacker environment and a restaurant which serves budget meals. Backpackers become an important source of revenue for the restaurant. Backpackers are encouraged to frequent the location by many of the hostels.

The existence of backpacker Meccas demonstrates the structured nature of the pursuit. Both word of mouth advertising among backpackers and recommendations in guidebooks generate peer pressure to visit these locations. Failure to do so puts the "authenticity" of one's identity and travels at risk.

Electronic Mail

Earlier studies of budget tourists suggested that these travelers often failed to establish meaningful relationships while abroad (Cohen 1973, 99) and, in some instances, have similar difficulties upon their return home (Vogt 1976, 35). Riley, however, suggests that travelers form brief acquaintances while on the road and part with little regret (1988, 324). I observed that relationships formed while traveling are quite casual and non-committal. Technological advancements, though, have made it possible to maintain contact even after the travelers have parted ways.

In Europe in 1997, e-mail use and internet cafes were by no means ubiquitous. In Australia,

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however, use of the internet was much more extensive. The majority of my acquaintances in Australia retained an e-mail account and checked it regularly. *Hotmail* was the most common e-mail account utilized by travelers, although some did use *Yahoo.* The benefit of either of these accounts is that the user is able to access e-mail via the internet meaning that a static location is not necessary. This is obviously highly beneficial to the transient backpacker.

The consequence of this is quite significant. Now, unlike in the past, backpackers have the ability to maintain contact with people they have met while traveling after they have parted ways. During my journey south along the eastern coast, I maintained contact with both Garry and Nadine, organizing details of future meetings via the internet. I also observed that a common element of the parting ritual now is an exchange of e-mail addresses.

While in Airlie Beach, one of my informants, Chris, eagerly checked his mail each day and stated that checking mail was a top priority for him. He informed me that a woman he had been traveling with, who had since departed, was in possession of an automobile that they had purchased together. According to Chris she was being evasive in regard to meeting and Chris wanted to be compensated for his share of the automobile. I did not learn of the result.

Computer terminals and internet access are readily available in Australia. Most of the hostels where I resided had access to the internet. The cost for terminal use averaged two Australian dollars for ten minutes. In the absence of internet access at the hostel, there are often internet cafes where travelers may check mail. *Let's Go* publishes a list of internet cafes in each city and indicates in the accommodation descriptions whether or not a hostel has e-mail facilities. The fact that the guidebooks reserve sections for information on e-mail facilities indicates the extent of e-mail use.

The addition of this technology has dramatically altered the character of backpacking and has generated an even greater rift between backpacking's contemporary form, and the forms of travel that proceeded it. Travelers' ability to keep in touch reduces some of the hardships and unique character requirements which used to exist. In contemporary backpacking, not keeping in touch with other travelers, or maintaining "loose connections", is a matter of choice rather than an inescapable consequence of long-term budget travel. In this respect, it must be noted that not every backpacker keeps an e-mail account or readily exchanges mail. It has become a common practice, but is not absolute. The technology, however, is the reason for this choice and, once again, has dramatically altered the nature of the travel pursuit.

"Acting Out"

Because backpackers may be seeking to temporarily escape mainstream culture, they frequently engage in behaviour which is referred to as acting out. Cohen (1973, 94) suggests that "drifters" are more prone to drug taking and alternative behaviour. Riley disputes this, however. She contends that contemporary backpackers are significantly representative of their age group (1988, 318). I suggest that the reality lies somewhere between these two positions. It is true that the behaviour of backpackers is significantly representative of their age group but it must also be noted that these behaviours at times involve excess or actions which would be frowned upon in their home societies regardless of the age category of the actors.

Many who travel to Australia do so because of Australia's reputation for extreme sports and activities. There are backpacker packages for bungee jumping and sky diving as well as white water rafting. Most of these activities are available to young Western adults in their own societies but engaging in these activities abroad increases the chance of enhancing cultural

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capital. It is more prestigious in North America to be able to claim to have gone sky diving over the Great Barrier Reef rather than in one's own city. The location and distance, therefore, is important in the overall quest for cultural capital. As well, the perception of independence may increase the chance that backpackers will engage in these activities when they would not have considered doing so at home. Being on the road and "getting away" provides an opportunity for these individuals to do something daring and something which they would never do at home. Again, claiming to have performed an activity which would be considered to be out of character helps in the accumulation of cultural capital at home.

Backpackers are representative of their age group but may engage in certain activities to excess thereby temporarily adopting "hyper-personalities" or extreme examples of their character. Vogt makes a similar contention claiming that travelers often adopt alternative personalities (1976, 29). The consumption of alcohol and drugs was quite frequent. Although such activity does often play a role in the lives of these individuals in their respective societies, the behaviour in Australia is often more extreme and in some instances individuals engaged in behaviour such as drug taking for the first time. Again, individuals "act out" behaviours in their perceived state of freedom that they would not engage in at home.

As discussed earlier, almost every situation in which I interacted with other backpackers involved the consumption of alcohol. This was facilitated by hostels that often endorsed and encouraged excessive drinking, an example being the hostel in Noosa where the staff organized drinking games in order to encourage group comradery. Though these individuals most likely consume alcohol at least on a semi-regular basis when they are at home, some consume amounts which are in excess to which they are normally accustomed. Several informants disclosed to me

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that they had consumed far too much alcohol while on vacation and that they were surprised at the amount they could consume. An interesting point here is that alcohol is not cheap. The funds which are conserved by the budget-conscious traveler are often spent on alcohol and nightlife. Again, the idea that backpacking, because it is low-budget in some respects, is open to any socio-economic category must be questioned.

Drug use is frequent. Though hard drugs were readily available, in my experience softer drugs, especially marijuana, were used most often. As already noted, Byron Bay is an environment where such drugs were readily available and frequently consumed.

A situation arose in Byron Bay which illustrates the manner in which travelers may modify their personality while away from home. A group of backpackers with whom I was sharing a dorm room told me that they were concerned about one of their companions. She had become involved with a local man who she met at the hostel. They were quite suspicious as to why a local would be frequenting a hostel but their friend was unconcerned. The relationship began with drinking. The local man then introduced her to soft drugs, which her friends alleged she had consumed only a few times in her life. My informants claim that within a few days the two had progressed to harder drugs, including LSD and ecstacy which she had never used before. They were very worried that the local was taking sexual advantage of their friend. They felt she was acting completely out of character as she was "a really innocent and naive girl".

Casual sex is also frequent among backpackers. As noted earlier, Cameron had said to me that I could not possibly study backpacking without discussing "booze and sex". He was correct. Casual sex has become an essential feature of backpacker subculture, at least, in Australia. Many of the hostels display posters with messages about AIDS and other sexually transmitted

diseases as well as providing condom dispensers in washrooms. *Lonely Planet* has even released a literary travel book containing stories of relationships established on the road.

While couples do often seek private accommodations if they have established relationships, sex is frequent and tolerated in dorm rooms. While in Byron Bay, I returned one evening to the hostel to find that a couple wished to have sex. I casually stated, with a smile and a joke, that I would leave them to do their business. They laughed and were thankful. Two days later the dorm was full and the couple decided to engage in sexual intercourse regardless. No one complained. A similar situation arose in Noosa, where a male and female who had met at a nightclub that night came back to the dorm and had sex, apparently unconcerned that there were others in the room. Again, no one seemed to mind. An informant, Tom, told me that while he was on the east coast he was in a dorm room in a similar situation. Everyone was asleep when the couple entered. They tried to be quiet but they woke everyone in the dorm. The residents of the dorm first cheered and laughed, and then stepped outside until the couple had finished. This is quite indicative of the casual attitude toward sex among backpackers.

It is common for backpackers to try to pair up with individuals from different countries and cultures. Some informants claimed that it was much more prestigious to have sex with someone from another country than to have sex with someone from their own nation. A backpacker magazine contained a rating system for sex, allocating a certain number of points to certain cultures. Specifically oriented toward men, the magazine stated that women from some cultures were easier to sleep with, and thus worth fewer points on the rating scale, than women from others. American women scored very low, while Japanese women scored very high. The casual attitude backpackers may have toward sex remains, nonetheless, firmly entrenched in both the

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sexist and racist attitudes of white, male, Euro-American culture

The behaviours discussed above illustrate how backpackers, while on the road, engage in activity which is somewhat uncharacteristic. This is an environment in which they are free from normal constraints and able to act out a hedonistic life-style. The subculture permits excesses with little scrutiny or condemnation. The "iron cage" of rationality is temporarily opened: "[r]ules of rational self constraint are relaxed and activities that may not be consistent with the requirements of rationality are permitted" (Wang 2000, 35). Cultural capital is also accumulated as part of a rite-of-passage between youth and full-fledged adult life.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS

George Ritzer appropriately posits that "the new world of tourism seems so different that it appears to lack much, if any, immediate connection with its modern ancestor" (1998, 134). Backpackers participate in a subculture built around a rite-of-passage for mostly middle class young adults. The group is quite heterogenous, but is identifiable nonetheless. There are norms and behaviours which are characteristic of the group and which differentiate the group from others. The use of the backpack itself is a symbolic marker that signifies membership in the group. Like many subcultures, however, it is linked to and reflects characteristics of mainstream culture, even as it proclaims its difference. Indeed, in many ways contemporary backpacker tourism is simply a new form of mass tourism in which the idea of being alternative and escaping the mainstream is the commodity that is consumed.

Backpacker tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourist industry (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 827). Backpacker values may (temporarily) vary from those which dominate mainstream culture, but backpacking is inextricably enmeshed in the capitalist values of the tourist industry. Backpacker tourism functions both as a mechanism of release from the norms and behaviurs of post-industrial society to spread the commoditization into the furthest reaches of society.

Constraints and Escapism

The constraints of postmodern life and the alienation which afflicts many young adults in Western post-industrial society produces a desire or need to temporarily escape the hegemonic norms and values. Postmodern existence has generated *increasing* degrees of uncertainty, alienation, bureaucratization, and a *decreasing* sense of authenticity. Furthermore, many young

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middle class adults delay participation in the labour force until their mid-twenties (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 827). An extended backpacking vacation is now a common element of this phase of middle class life. As such, backpackers are described as being "[children] of affluence on a prolonged moratorium from adult, middle-class responsibility" (Cohen 1973, 89).

Choosing to backpack for an extended period of time is also a means of attempting to rebel against the perceived artificiality of mainstream or mass tourism and pursue a travel method which is believed to offer a greater chance of having " authentic" experiences. Venturing forth, with the status of a "budget traveler", is a means by which to differentiate oneself from the mass tourists and thereby increase one's prestige among one's peers in the host culture (Riley 1988, 320).

The *push* of the constraints of post-industrial existence are complemented by the *pull* of luring aspects of tourism. This involves curiosity about that which is different, the romance of the exotic, and the appeal of being able to engage in an activity which is a contrast to routine normality. The *pull*, however, is now enmeshed in marketing schemes which play on these desires.

Travel in the instance of backpacker tourism, then, is intended to be a means of escaping in a method which is alternative to mass tourism. It is an attempt to find some degree of authenticity elsewhere in the absence of authenticity in the travelers' respective societies. It is also a means of temporarily delaying the responsibilities of Western existence, namely career and family, and engaging in behaviour which is considered to be free.

The escape to an alternate environment is also a means by which the participants may alter their personality and "act out". It was observed during research that this was in regard to

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"extreme" activities such as sky diving and bungee jumping. The adoption of alternative personalities also involved excessive drinking and casual sexual intercourse. All of these presented themselves as a method of role-playing; temporarily shedding one's existing personality and acting in a fashion which may not be acceptable in the post-industrial lives of these actors. The role-playing game, therefore, is an essential component of the intended escapism.

Backpacker tourism is also very much about social interaction and most aspects of this tourism are designed to facilitate this interaction. Pubs/nightclubs, hostels, safaris, excursions, and most backpacker environments focus attention on the interactive nature of the pursuit. Relationships are established and although casual, they still represent an important component of the pursuit.

The backpacking experience is also intended to be an "experience" of something which cannot be experienced at home. The establishment of relationships and the role-playing are but one aspect of the tourism but travelers need to provide evidence of a cultural experience in order to completely validate the excursion. This is done through the visiting of attractions and the consumption of Australian culture. The visiting of attractions and particular sights were observed to include both geographical and geological sights which Australia is famed for *and* environments which have become Meccas among the backpacker culture. Pressure for visitation under both circumstances is quite significant. Safaris have been observed to be an effective means of providing backpackers with an opportunity to consume this experience while still believing themselves to be in an alternative environment. It is thus a combination of each of these features which combine to validate and legitimize the backpacking experience.

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The values which exist among backpackers actually begins prior to departure and are the result of the habitus values of the socioeconomic spheres from which these individuals emerge. It is this habitus which instills such values in the backpackers. It has been stated that "[w]hen consuming cultural products...the value of the products chosen is partly determined by the value of the chooser, which in turn is largely determined through the manner of choosing" (Harker 1990, 94). Similarly, "[c]lass habitus creates meaning which allows participants of a social class to 'know the value' of certain practices and certain objects in a field" (Wilkes 1990, 123). The majority of participants are thus escaping in a manner which is sanctioned by the socioeconomic stratum from which they emerge, specifically the middle classes. The overall risk of such escapism being subject to scrutiny is significantly reduced.

Backpacking is a rite-of-passage to adulthood. In that sense, it fulfils a social function similar to that of historical antecedents such as the Grand Tour. Similar to Grand Tourists, backpackers return to their societies and culture having completed the rite-of-passage and are now considered worldly and culturally experienced.

To the extent backpacking is a temporary form of escapism, it is sanctioned and encouraged by the very system backpackers seek to escape. Literature, film, advertisements, and television programmes devote much time to presenting the attractive nature of backpacker tourism, marketing "alternative" travel as the best way to travel. Every aspect of backpacking is highly commodified and thus is "alternative" only in a very limited sense. The post-industrial economic structure and postmodern culture of the contemporary West have turned escapism, itself, into a commodity to be purchased and consumed.

The result is that every aspect of contemporary backpacker tourism has become routinized

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and structured. Australia represents perhaps the best example of a nation which has completely institutionalized the pursuit, from the private-sector tourist industry up to the federal government which conducts annual studies of backpacker tourism and issues special working visas to backpackers. Backpackers represent a profit potential for the tourist industry and also contribute to the growth of Australia's GDP through their participation in casual employment.

Youth hostels are available in almost every area deemed popular by backpacker tourists. Marketing themselves as authentically Australian, these hostels help stage the performance of the alternative and "real" experience backpackers seek. Coach is the most popular means of transportation for backpackers and this, too, is highly routinized. Coaches drop backpackers off at transit stations where they are usually given advice by the driver as to where to go and where to find hostel representatives. Backpackers are then met by the hostel representatives and shuttled to the hostel. The system of accommodation and transportation therefore, gently herd backpackers along certain paths. Contact with cultural "others" who are not part of the system is limited.

Evidence of the structured and routinized nature of the backpacker experience is also observed in regard to the emergence of a travel circuit. Backpackers travel either clockwise or counter-clockwise, usually starting in Sydney. There are established "must-see" destinations that the majority of backpackers are drawn to. I observed the same groups of individuals at different locations at various times throughout my trip.

Backpacking "experiences" can thus be viewed as components of a system of staged performances which provide the travelers with an economically and culturally-defined experience. The best example provided is the Kakadu safari. The complex system of illusions is

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aimed at allowing the backpackers to believe they are consuming an authentic experience in a small group when in reality they are small parts of a greater mass of backpacker tourists. The transgression of certain symbolic markers, for example, getting dirty, mark the experience as authentic. The escape of mundane middle class life becomes a commodity; a socially constructed experience which is marketed *and* consumed as being authentic.

Despite being manipulated by the agents of Western capitalism and failing to escape its reach, the backpackers still, through this consumption, arm themselves with valuable experiences and cultural capital. The mostly young middle class who comprise the backpacking population return to the constraining and alienating post-industrial economy and postmodern culture to which they belong. Of course, in one sense they never left either of these. By consuming the symbolic experience which backpacking involves, they are able to utilize this experience to enhance their social position in their home society (Wang 2000, 204). New claims of worldliness and cultural experience, as well as stories about outrageous experiences equip the returnees with cultural capital. The travelers are able to market themselves as more experienced and having successfully completed their rite-of-passage.

Almost every aspect of the temporary escape into an alternative and more authentic world, however, has been orchestrated and facilitated by elements of Western capitalism. Even the social activity and "acting out" are permitted, encouraged, and controlled by the highly structured nature of backpacker tourism. The freedom is thus a freedom dictated by the confines of the "matrix of social control" (Breiger 1990, 457).

The highly rational system of Western capitalism has thus preserved its own survival by providing a theatre in which those it constrains and alienates may act out their escapist desires

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with no real consequence to the capitalist system. Agents within the capitalist system, particularly the tourist industry, actively market the escapist nature of backpacker tourism in the hopes that increasing numbers of individuals will undertake this form of tourism.

The more the desire to experience the untouched expands, the further the tourist industry expands. Backpackers are perhaps unwitting tools of the industry. Their search for authenticity helps expand the scope of the industry. In return, the backpackers have "experiences" which can be used within their home societies upon their return. As well, by providing a temporary escape the capitalist system nurtures the individuals, permitting them to "refresh and recharge" and return to the system where they intend to be fully functional.

Contemporary backpacking has thus become an elaborate postmodern illusion. As long as backpackers believe the experience to be authentic they will continue to consume and be rewarded with the acquired cultural capital. Therefore, despite being the ultimate illusion, contemporary backpacker tourism performs important social functions for the escaping travelers and the constraining and alienating post-industrial society they seek to escape.
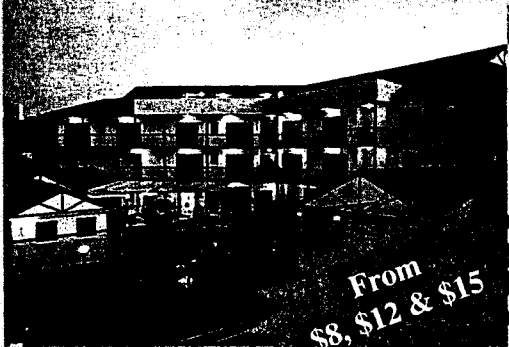
APPENDIX A

Sample Hostel Brochure

Source: *Aussie Backpacker Accommodation Guide*

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Sample Hostel Brochure

KOALA beach resort

QLD

N°oSA

No. 1
PARTY SPOT

NOOSA HEADS

Rooms with Ensuite
Close to Beach & National Park
Licensed Bar & Bistro
FREE entertainment, live bands & dancing
Pool & BBQ in Tropical Setting
Fraser Island Tours
Courtesy bus, TV Room (Free)

FREE SURF & BOOGIE BOARD HIRE

Call Toll Free **1800 357 457**
44 Noosa Drive Noosa Heads Q 4567
"The best locations... your favourite destinations"

KINGSTON HOTEL BACKPACKERS

ACT

73 Canberra Avenue, Griffith
TEL: (02) 6295 0123 or (02) 6295 6844
FAX: (02) 6295 7871

from $12 per night

MEALS from $5.90

CANBERRA

LOCATION
- Walking distance from railway station
- 200mts from two major shopping centres, cinemas and swimming pool.
- Walking distance to Parliament House, National Gallery, Science Museum and the High Court.
- 10 minutes from the City Centre

FACILILITIES
- Bottle Shop
- Poker Machines
- 18 Pool Tables
- Fox TV
- 3 Licensed Bars
- Bistro
- Beergarden

Catch Bus 238 from City Centre

AGJD8

Source: _Australia In Your Backpack_

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APPENDIX C

Sample Hostel Brochure
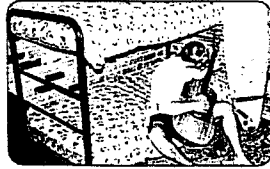
Barracuda's own day trips

Facilities

Barracuda Backpackers is owner operated and offers five star service in a backpackers hostel

Double room   Dorm room

Our purpose built accommodation includes dormitories (only 4 per room) twin share and doubles (come with ensuite bathroom and toilet). Each room has its own fridge, fan and fitted wardrobes.

- Swimming pool and spa
- Great local discounts on everything from photo development to eateries
- BBQ area with shaded patio
- Internet, ISD, phone and fax
- Barracuda's own day tours of surrounding area
- Help with finding fruit picking work in season
- Regular BBQ nights
- TV, video, games – 10 new videos each week
- Help in setting up an Email address
- Laundry and drying facilities
- Visa, Mastercard and Bankcard accepted
- Bottleshop run on demand
- Book exchange

Free

Spa   Volleyball in the pool

Every visitor to our hostel receives:
- Free orientation tour of the local area
- Free use of surf boards, boogie boards and fins
- Free scuba lessons in the pool
- Free linen
- Free tea, coffee and sugar
- Free use of lockers
- Free use of games equipment – volleyball, football etc.
- Free fitness facilities (weight training equipment, rowing machine etc.)
- Free use of fishing equipment

Coffs Harbour   Dining area

Source: Hostel Advertisement

APPENDIX D

Photographs of Nimbin, NSW

Source: Anonymous Backpacker

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APPENDIX E

Photographs of Nimbin, NSW

Source: Anonymous Backpacker

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Kakadu Dreams Brochure

TWO DAY KAKADU CAMPING SAFARI
4 WHEEL DRIVE MAX 9 PEOPLE

$240 PLUS PARK ENTRY FEE
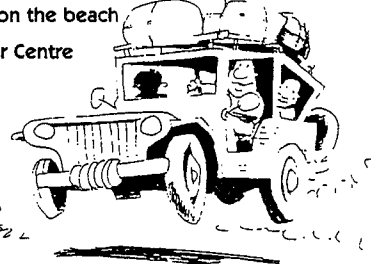
16 - 35 NO OLDIES ALLOWED

Day One:

- ○ Departs Darwin 7:00am
- ○ Billabongs and Birdspotting
- ○ Adelaide River and Jumping Croc Cruise
- ○ Termite Mounds
- ○ Bark Hut Inn - Outback Tradition
- ○ Lunch - South Alligator River
- ○ Nourlangie Rock Aboriginal Art Site or
- ○ Nanguluwur Art Site
- ○ Yellow Waters walk for sunset
- ○ Reptile spotting night drive to Jim Jim Falls Camp Ground
- ○ BBQ camp fire dinner
- ○ Sleep under the stars or in our tents

Day Two:

- ○ Early rise and breakfast
- ○ 4WD to Twin Falls Gorge
- ○ Bushwalking, exploring
- ○ Aboriginal Art, swimming
- ○ Enjoy lunch looking down the 1km Gorge
- ○ Walk over the rocks to the plunge pool and relax on the beach
- ○ Park Visitor Centre

THREE DAY KAKADU CAMPING SAFARI
4 WHEEL DRIVE MAX 9 PEOPLE

THREE DAY CAMPING SAFARI WHICH INCLUDES
BUSHWALKING, CLIMBING, SWIMMING, CAMPING UNDER THE STARS,
NIGHT CROC SPOTTING, ABORIGINAL ART & CULTURE.

$320 PLUS PARK ENTRY FEE 16 - 35 yrs

Day One:

- ○ Departs Darwin 7:00am
- ○ Jumping Croc Cruise
- ○ Bark Hut Inn - Outback Tradition
- ○ Lunch - White Lilly Billabong
- ○ Barramundi Gorge and Waterfall
- ○ Sunset at Yellow Waters
- ○ BBQ T-Bone steaks and salad
- ○ Camp at Jim Jim Billabong under the stars

Day Two:

- ○ Breakfast by Jim Jim Creek
- ○ Explore Jim Jim Falls
- ○ 4WD river crossing to Twin Falls Gorge
- ○ Look down a breath taking 1km gorge from 100m up on the Escarpment
- ○ Swim the waterfalls
- ○ Paddle 1km up to Twin Falls Gorge
- ○ Budami Lookout for the sunset
- ○ Kangaroo stirfry for dinner
- ○ Camp at Jim Jim Campground under the stars

Day Three:

- ○ Wake to the sounds of nature
- ○ Bowali Visitors Centre - Kakadu's Natural History
- ○ Bushwalking East Alligator River - views over Arnhemland
- ○ Ubirr Rock Art Site - art and cultural talk

Source: Advertisement Obtained at Darwin City YHA, Darwin, NT

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Kakadu's Wonderland Brochure

Aboriginal Guide Adventure Tours

Northern Territory's best Adventure Tour deals

For the fit & healthy adventurous traveller

For under 35.s

National Park
KAKADU

4 Wheel Drive Adventure

Camping Safari Small Groups

Max. 9 Passengers

3 DAY

Jim Jim & Twin Falls

Departs Darwin daily
Departs Katherine Thursdays only

KAKADU &

4 DAY

National Parks
LITCHFIELD

Jim Jim & Twin Falls

4 Wheel Drive Camping Safari
Small Groups 4 Days / 3 Nights

Departs Darwin every
Tuesday and Sunday

4WD ABORIGINAL GUIDE ADVENTURE SAFARI

Under 35's Adventure
For the Fit and Healthy
adventurous traveller

5 DAY

1 Day Katherine
3 Day Kakadu
1 Day Litchfield

Depart Darwin Tuesdays

Reservations:
KAKADU'S WONDERLAND
Phone 61-08-8981 2733
Fax 61-08-8981 3680
FREECALL 1800 677 599
GPO Box 4891. Darwin NT 0801.
Email: austour@ozemail.com.au
Homepage: hhtpp://www.ozemail.com.au/~austour/

Source: Advertisement Obtained at Darwin City YHA, Darwin, NT

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APPENDIX H

Advertisement For the Victoria Hotel

Source: Advertisement Obtained at Darwin City YHA, Darwin, NT

APPENDIX I

Advertisement for The Woolshed

Source: Advertisement Obtained at Tropic Days hostel, Cairns, QLD

APPENDIX J

Map of Australia
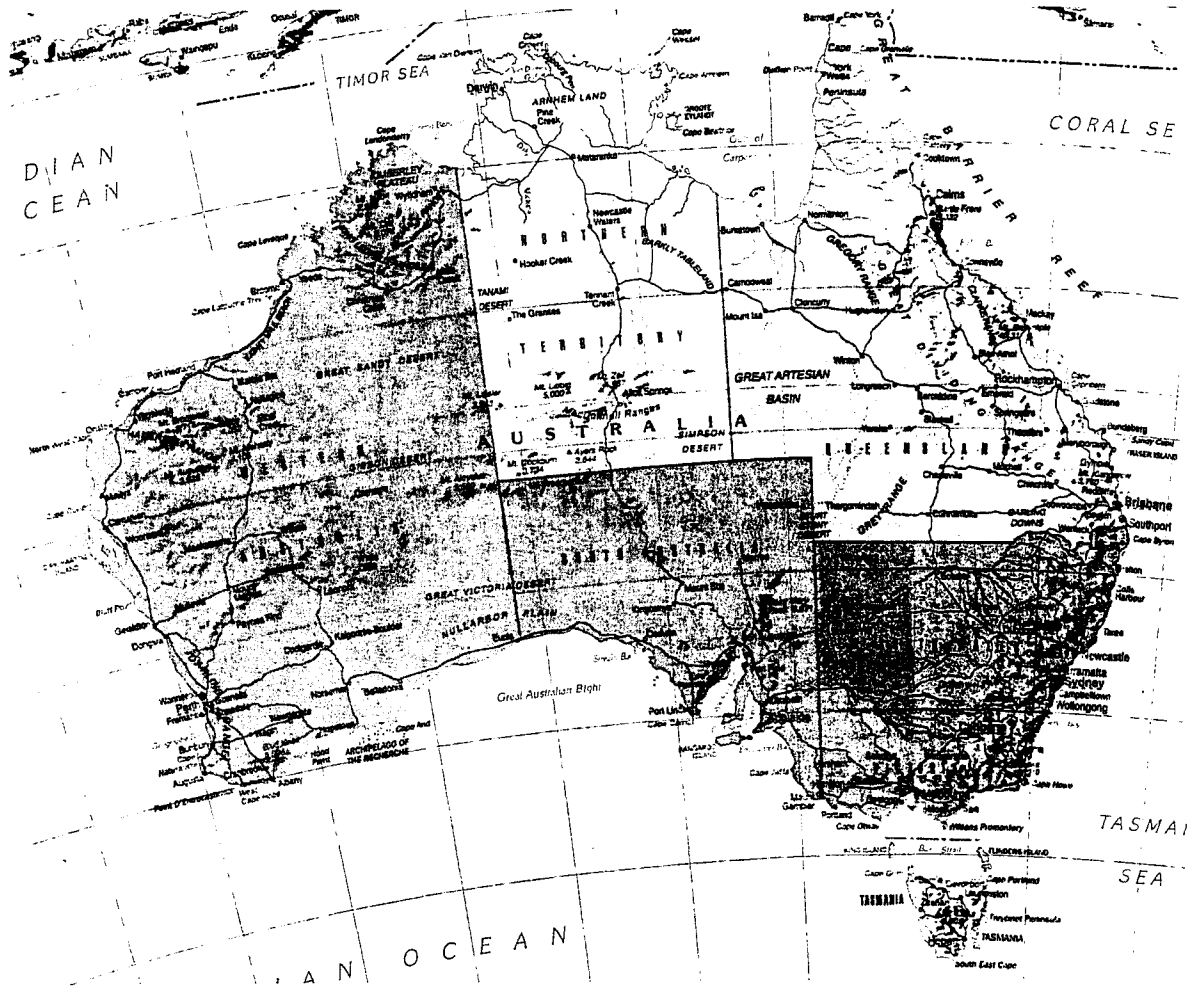
Source: Rand McNally World Atlas

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