In the Middle of Nowhere?

A Sociological Guide to the Beaten Tracks of Backpacking

in the Former British Empire

by

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Abstract

Since the 1970s backpacking travel has become an increasingly popular and desirable pursuit among young people from western countries. Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet sold young people the practical know-how that would allow them to travel ‘off-the-beaten-track’. The off-the-beaten-track travel experiences of present-day backpackers’ are one way in which youth lifestyle, geography and identity are consumed and produced away from home and apart from the everyday world. This thesis provides an historical, textual and ethnographic analysis of the practices and discourses which distinguish travel from tourism, and it examines how particular destinations and experiences are considered more challenging, and therefore more valuable, than others. In particular it seeks to answer the question of what makes India such a ‘special place’ in the world of backpacking as a ‘litmus test’ for off-the-beaten-track travel. It begins by analyzing the historical precursors and ideological antecedents of the discourses and practices of independent travel and tourism in 19th Europe, with a focus on England and the role played by independent guidebooks in that period. The textual strategies employed in the most popular guidebooks today, those published by Lonely Planet, are then analyzed in connection with the production and consumption of particular backpacking enclaves in Canada, Ireland, and India, where the promise of travel as a self-cultivating, authentic, and valuable activity is realized. Finally, through a combination of detailed, in-depth, qualitative interviews with 24 backpackers in Canada, India and Ireland, historical and contemporary analyses of the Lonely Planet brand and guidebooks, as well as a multi-sited ethnography in three popular backpacker destinations of Vancouver, Delhi, and Cork, the thesis analyzes how the ideological codes of travel and tourism are historically produced, textually and orally mediated, and geographically circulated in the field of backpacking travel.
Preface

The ethics review for this research was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Certificate Number H07-01329.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful and talented daughter, Lauren Flynn-Kearney.
Taking a year out to go backpacking has become an increasingly popular and desirable thing to do among predominantly young, white, middle class professionals and university students from ‘The West’ (Richards and Wilson 2004, O Reilly 2006). Although the experiences of travelers have been written about in innumerable literary works, from Homer’s *The Odyssey* (1980) to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1992), it was not really until the 1970s that the possibility of becoming a traveler was realizable, for the first time, to so many young people in predominantly Western countries. The publication and popularization of alternative guidebooks for backpackers by companies such as Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, and Let’s Go gave these would-be travelers all the information and support they needed in order to strike out on their own and explore the world. From the 1970s onwards, what had previously been a world vicariously experienced through literature and movies, was now made increasingly available ‘in the flesh’. The exponential growth of the backpacking market, in which Lonely Planet was a key player, allowed scores of young middle class westerners to ‘live the dream’ and become travelers in their own right.

Since the 1970s backpacking has morphed from a relatively marginal and small-scale phenomenon to a multi-billion dollar industry. For example, Jarvis (1994) states the backpacking sector of the tourist market in Australia was already worth 1.5 Billion Australian dollars in 1991, and that ‘in 1989/90 the size of the foreign backpacker market in Australia was estimated by previous research at around 160,000 - 185,000 people’ (Jarvis 1994: 4). The promise of adventure and danger in foreign lands, enriching and exotic cultural experiences, an enlightened sensibility and forging one’s character under difficult circumstances suddenly became available, at a discount price, to masses of middle class youth. In contrast to the prepackaged holidays of
their parents’ generation, these young travelers wanted to do things differently and guidebooks such as Lonely Planet sold them the know-how that would allow them to travel ‘off-the-beaten-track’.

Why A Sociological Study of Backpacking?

On the final day of May 2000, I walked with my friend Colm to the taxi station in my hometown of Cork, Ireland. Earlier that week I had finally quit my job as a residential special needs worker and had also withdrawn temporarily from my MPhil degree in sociology at the university in Cork. It was a cold day but for once I was happy with the weather. I was about to depart on a trip of a lifetime: first stop, New Delhi, India and then on to Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and Laos. I planned to spend a full year away but eventually returned after seven months. I was happy to return and I looked forward to living a life where I did not have to pack and unpack my bags every few days. My few personal items had been safely stored in the attic of a friend’s house and I had said my final goodbyes to family and friends. I took with me my red, 70 liter backpack and a smaller 40 liter daypack. It felt good to leave Cork and see what the wider world had to offer. Little did I know that ten years later I would be living in Vancouver, Canada, writing my PhD thesis on many of the experiences I had during those seven months abroad. Returning to Cork in February 2001 was a strange sensation. Life had continued as usual there in its predicable fashion but I felt as though my previous seven months had been jam-packed with excitement and amazing experiences. It was an unsettling disjunction. Apart from some framed photographs of the places I visited that I had hung up on the wall (they were great conversation pieces when friends or strangers visited), I did not really think again about my travel experiences in Asia until I was living and studying in Vancouver, Canada several years later. When I arrived in Vancouver for the beginning of my PhD studies at the University of British Columbia, I stayed at the Jericho Beach Hostel. It was cheap, accessible and full of
people, some of whom were in the middle of their own backpacking travels around Canada and elsewhere. I found that I had a lot in common with these people and many travel stories were shared late at night as we talked on the beach. A considerable time later, during my studies at UBC, I read Georg Simmel’s excellent essay ‘The Adventure’ (Simmel 1997b) and I began to think seriously about my previous experiences in India and South East Asia. It was the adventure of travel and all the accompanying excitement that I wanted to understand. Thus, as I began to think back upon my past experiences and to read the tourism and backpacking literature, this became the catalyst for a new type of sociological travail.

What stood out most in mind about my previous backpacking experiences in India and South East Asia was the pervasive discourse of travel at work in the world of backpacking. It seemed to me that what everyone was doing was ‘traveling’ and that somehow I too was a traveler. I had learned that ‘tourists’ were in many ways the anti-thesis of what we were. It was a frequently used word of abuse and we avoided doing anything that might be considered touristic. Within this worldview tourists were not ‘in-the-know’, they paid exorbitant prices for everything, were afraid to leave their air-conditioned hotels and buses and get down and dirty in the real world of India. I felt that there was something noble about travel, something infinitely more valuable and worthwhile, and surrounded by tens of thousands of my fellow travelers in India and elsewhere, I found that it was relatively easy to sustain this view of tourists. In particular I learned that travel was construed as an essentially transformative experience which pits the individual against a series of challenges which must be overcome. Realizing this led me to question the precursors and genesis of the tourist/traveler distinction in an attempt to historicize the contemporary taken-for-granted superiority of travel and to examine more critically the contemporary travel experiences of backpackers in Canada, Ireland, and India.
During my backpacking trip in 2000 I spent three months in India and I was glad to finally leave for Nepal in September 2000. By the time I arrived in Kuala Lumpur in November 2000 I felt somewhat accomplished and world weary. To my surprise, when I met other backpackers in Kuala Lumpur, I was treated with a certain amount of respect by virtue of the fact that I had spent over three months in India. Some of these backpackers were doing the ‘easier’ South East Asian circuit, with some arriving in Kuala Lumpur from Europe, and others spending some time in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam before heading off to Australia. It was then that I began to realize that India held a special place in the minds of many backpackers. Its legendary status and reputation which I had experienced from my own travels led me to ask what exactly makes India such a litmus test and special place.

One of the strangest feelings I have had since arriving in Vancouver is the feeling that I am still living in a past which is intimately connected to my home country of Ireland. When I was in India, and in other countries like Nepal, Malaysia and Myanmar I rode on the railways, I visited India Gate in Delhi and everywhere I went I found traces of the former British Empire. When I first arrived in Myanmar I took a taxi from the airport to Yangon, the capital city. It was a long drive and the driver spoke English fluently. When I told him I was Irish he turned to me with a wide smile and said ‘Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein, yes, yes’. Despite the media censorship, he knew a lot about the conflict in Northern Ireland and was familiar with the colonial history of Ireland. Similarly, in India I had many conversations with people there who were well versed in Irish history and in particular the anti-imperial struggle for independence in the early 20th century. When I arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, I had no idea that Canada was a former colony of the British Empire but everywhere I went I saw statues of King George, the British flag still flying in Stanley Park in Vancouver, and the face of Queen Elizabeth II printed on the
currency. Although the British Empire as a political entity is long gone, all three countries are in their own ways still dealing with and working through a variety of political effects that their shared colonial history has left them: the Northern Ireland conflict and Peace Process, the partition of India and Pakistan which still fuels the troubles in Kashmir, and the resolution of First Nations lands claims in Canada, particularly in British Columbia. Living in between and traveling through these post-colonial landscapes forced me to think about how new articulations of Empire were possible in the ‘wake’ of the former British Empire. Similar to the ‘wake’ of a powerful ship which leaves behind a turbulent and unpredictable ocean, I wanted to examine the traces of the former British Empire that were still at work in all three places.

An aspect of the world of backpacking and travel that intrigued me was the overwhelming popularity of Lonely Planet guidebooks. Although people used Let’s Go, Rough Guide and others, Lonely Planet seemed to be in a class of its own. This particular guidebook has become so familiar that is has been constantly referred to in backpacker novels like Are You Experienced? and The Beach (Sutcliffe 1997, Garland 1996). Similarly in the travel programs I watched avidly before I went on my trip and during my own backpacking trip, Lonely Planet guidebooks were everywhere. When I came to Vancouver I had my very useful Lonely Planet Vancouver City Guide and when I went to India I had my Lonely Planet India guidebook and a South East Asia on a Shoestring guidebook too. Lonely Planet guidebooks seemed to be an inescapable part of backpacking. Although word of mouth was by far the most common way to get the latest information, the guidebook was considered an essential ‘must have’ in every backpack. It was the ultimate reference book and useful for all sorts of information about timetables, places to sleep and eat, where to go and what to avoid. For my research I wanted to understand how Lonely Planet had become such a legendary guidebook in the world of
backpacking, to the point where some referred to it as ‘The Bible’, sometimes sarcastically, other times more seriously. Acknowledging its canonical status within the world of backpacking, I was curious as to how Lonely Planet had established itself as the guidebook, and especially as the guidebook for India, and I wanted to see how backpackers actually used (or did not use) the Lonely Planet guidebook while traveling. So with my three central questions in mind - about the historical origins of the tourist/traveler distinction, the cultural and geographical contours of Empire, and the ubiquity of Lonely Planet guidebooks - I took another trip, this time back to many of the places I had lived and visited before. On that particular journey I brought along a plethora of books and articles about backpacking, tourism, and guidebooks, and with my research questions in mind, I began to write.

**Central Questions and Approach**

The idea of taking a year out to travel suggests an almost ontological separation between ‘real’ life back home and life ‘on the road’, one which animates and informs contemporary constructions and practices of backpacking as a form of travel. Nevertheless, I will be examining backpacking travel as one way of accumulating and consuming cultural and symbolic capital apart from the usual settings of home and work rather than as some necessary ‘break’ from it all. I consider the off-the-beaten-track travel experiences of backpackers as one way in which a certain lifestyle is produced, consumed, and accumulated away from home and apart from their everyday lives of work and leisure.

Backpacking as a form of travel is examined as a distinct practice that allows this consumption-based lifestyle to be ‘incorporated’ or embodied through the shaping of backpackers’ subjectivities in which travel is conceived and practiced as an increasingly important social and cultural institution for self-cultivation. Consequently I focus on those aspects of backpacking culture which emphasize the cultivation of moral character through
experiences of ostentatious poverty, physical hardship, and ubiquitous danger in foreign lands, and which thereby illustrate the toil and suffering that must be endured, performed and celebrated as a necessary part of life ‘on the road’.

Although guidebooks are used by tourists, day trippers, business people and locals alike, they have a special relevance and particular significance to one group in particular, namely backpackers, or ‘travelers’ as they more commonly refer to themselves. Since the 1970s the Lonely Planet travel company has been a key institutional player in the development of a distinctive backpacker subculture and alternative ‘travel industry’. Companies such as Lonely Planet have been at the forefront of selling the idea and possibility of ‘travelling off the beaten track’ to young people, helping to create and expand the backpacker niche market through budget guidebooks, TV shows, and websites. As a prime leader in the industry, Lonely Planet Corporation has been a key player in creating a new tourist market of young travelers and backpackers who ironically do not consider themselves tourists at all. Guidebooks such as the Lonely Planet series have become an instrumental and ubiquitous part of contemporary ‘independent’ travel. Commanding a 35% share in worldwide guidebook sales, Lonely Planet is the most frequently used and well known of all backpacker guidebooks (Richards and Wilson 2004). Lonely Planet sells something much more ephemeral yet apparently more valuable than tangible things like hotel accommodation, bus tickets, and package tours. It sells the idea of travel and the promise of turning that idea into an experiential ‘reality’. This is one example of what Hardt and Negri call ‘immaterial production’ (2000), a form of production that relies on the production of ideas rather than material ‘things’. Tony Wheeler, the co-founder of Lonely Planet, thus credits the astonishing success of Lonely Planet India as the guidebook that virtually ensured its status and success as the guidebook for alternative travelers. I examine how ‘Asia’
and India in particular provided particularly suitable cultural and physical geographies for helping to realize the maturation and enlightenment of the western traveler at a budget price, making India a first port of call. India is marketed, imagined, and experienced as one of the litmus tests for the travelers who wish to get ‘off the beaten track’.

Partly inspired by my own experiences of backpacking in India and South East Asia several years ago, I provide a more informed comparative and geographical contextualization of the above problematic in an attempt to better understand how particular geographies are considered ‘better’ and more challenging to travel in than others. Although Ireland and Canada are examined as distinct destinations in their own right, my primary analytical purpose in examining these sites is to shed comparative light upon India as one of the most enduring and popular backpacker destinations. Ireland and Canada are important and popular destinations in the backpacker itinerary where off-the-beaten-track experiences are also found and where distinctions between tourists and travelers are routinely articulated by backpackers on the road. However, it is primarily through a comparative study of these distinct geographical destinations that the centrality and importance of India as one of the most desirable backpacker destinations can be understood and the cultural meanings and value of travel off-the-beaten-track historically contextualized.

I argue that backpacking off-the-beaten-track, in both the ‘first’ and the ‘third world’, and in particular in India, is not just a matter of economics and budget but also a continuation and reproduction of dominant ideas and tropes about these places and the ‘locals’ who live there. I examine how, in the process of ‘rediscovering’ India as an ideal travel destination, both Lonely Planet and the multitudes of backpackers who visit there actively reproduce ‘ruling relations’ through the deployment of ideological and mythological codes (Smith 1999; Barthes 1993). In
taking a historical approach (especially in Chapters 1 and 2), I argue that these mythological
codes, articulated by both backpackers and travel companies alike, draw upon older, and
predominantly European discourses of travel and tourism that have helped to shape the meaning
and significance of the experiences of self-identified travelers, and structure how they interact
with and navigate the places and people they encounter. Unpacking and identifying the historical
precursors, contemporary articulations, and modes of reproduction of these mythological and
ideological codes constitute the central analytical problematic of this thesis. Backpacking has
become a well established travel industry with well-beaten tracks of its own, but which remain
largely invisible through a branded mythology of travel.

Understanding Backpacking as a Form of ‘Travel’

One of the most intriguing aspects of studying backpacking as a sociological
phenomenon, and one that forms a central concern throughout this thesis, is that despite the fact
that backpacking is now a well established niche market in the global tourism industry, there is
nonetheless a pervasive discourse of travel evident in both the conversations of backpackers and
in the guidebooks that they use. The following entry for ‘backpacking’ in The Urban Dictionary,
a popular online and user-generated ‘dictionary’ of all that is ‘happening’ in the world today,
helps to illustrate the commonly articulated differences and distinctions made between the
‘frivolity’ of the holiday and the more ‘serious’ task of travel. It is by no means a scholarly and
textbook definition of backpacking, but rather serves as an example of how backpacking is
commonly understood as a form of travel.

People go backpacking for all sorts of reasons but will almost always take offense if it is
implied that they are ‘on holiday’; backpackers typically consider travel a separate, more
serious engagement, all about broadening the mind, experiencing other cultures and
trying to satisfy what is often a deep-seated and more often than not insatiable 
*wanderlust*.¹ (My emphasis)

Here the ‘more serious’ practice of travel is clearly defined in contrast to the state of being ‘on holiday’ which is typically associated with mass tourism. As a form of travel, backpacking is usually understood not just as ‘separate’, but also as a ‘superior’ and ‘serious’ type of practice. *The Urban Dictionary* entry succinctly captures some of the most important and common elements of travel namely: the serious task of travel in comparison to the more frivolous fun of the holiday; the pursuit of educational self-cultivation or ‘broadening the mind’, and of authentic encounters through ‘experiencing…other cultures’; and the satisfaction of the ‘insatiable’ individual desire of ‘wanderlust’. The backpacker who adopts the mantel of ‘traveler’ is considered the most suitable type of person who can realize these ‘promises of travel’. These promises seemingly cannot be realized by the holidaying tourist who apparently stays forever on ‘the beaten track’ of tourism. Backpacking travelers and travel guidebooks such as Lonely Planet both replicate and redefine these well worn coded distinctions. The primary focus and contribution of this research is an examination of how these codes of tourism and travel and enlightened self cultivation are textually and orally produced and circulated, reproduced and modified in the world of backpacking travel.

Interestingly, travel comes from the French root *travail*, meaning ‘work’ or ‘labor’, whereas ‘holiday’ comes from ‘holy day’ or ‘day of rest’.² This contrast will be explicated in a number of ways throughout the thesis as an important theoretical and conceptual cornerstone concerning the necessary ‘work of consumption’ (O’Neill 2004: 61) that backpackers must do if their travels and their valuable experiences are to be considered more than extended holidays

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from their mundane, workaday worlds. Although some scholars have noted the distinction between travel as a challenging and difficult experience and tourism as a form of luxury (Sorensen 2003; O Reilly 2006), there has been no sustained attempt to articulate this distinction in theoretical terms as a form of value-productive labor that is produced within a particular symbolic system of exchange and accumulation. Instead, consumption has often been characterized as a passive process in the social sciences. From Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s criticism of the American cinema-going public in their now famous essay ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ (1972), to Daniel Boorstin’s attack on tourism and tourists in *The Image: a guide to pseudo events in America* (1973) and John Urry’s *Tourist Gaze* (1990), the idea that consumption is passive and work is productive poses a key theoretical problem and impasse which I seek to redress throughout this thesis. One important challenge to this idea has emerged from feminist cultural studies that draw attention to the ‘invisible work of women’ in capitalist modes of consumption. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to a significant body of literature on the sociology of leisure and consumption.

Thus, rather than maintain the traditional analytical separation of the realms of work and leisure, production and consumption, I argue that backpacking, with its culture of guidebook use and its emphasis on the uniqueness of *travel*, is a post-fordist tourist phenomenon that can be better understood as an *intensification* and *prolongation* of work rather than as a welcome break or vacation from it. Within the theoretical literature, there is a tendency to separate work from leisure and to analyze leisure as a predominantly consumptive phenomenon and work mainly as a productive phenomenon. For many backpackers in the postmodern era, work is now a necessary and desirable aspect of leisure itself. To extend George Ritzer’s insight that ‘the consumer becomes the laborer’ (1993) as a result of the post-fordist reorganization of
consumption and production, backpackers are constantly at work in their leisure. As self-defined and self-defining travelers, they actively work in a variety of ways to organize their own time, find their own accommodation and food, and generally be self directed in their pursuit of valuable experiences. Some backpackers may even seek out paid or voluntary work experience on the road. By distinguishing themselves from tourists they are not merely passive consumers of global spectacles, but active participants in the production of ‘surplus value’ through a labored hermeneutics of travel. In Capital (1977: 203) Marx argues that surplus value does not just accrue in the physical realm but also in the symbolic and imaginary realm. Thus we must not forget that experiences of global travel provide the ‘raw material’ for various kinds of visual and often immaterial consumption. Exotic places, racialized others, and quaint locals act as resources or raw material for types of interpretative work that reproduce older modes of seeing and understanding foreign others.

From my conversations with backpackers as well as in my analysis of the more public discourse of Lonely Planet guidebooks, I identify and analyze the distinctions between travel as a type of work and tourism as a type of holiday in order to illustrate how backpacking combines and reworks the discourses of both practices. I examine how the ‘work of travel’ done by backpackers is made possible through the various kinds of work that backpackers must do in order to produce and consume their distinctive travel (as opposed to mere tourist) experiences. For backpackers, the social rather than personal value of these experiences become valuable cultural currency in the pursuit of a lifestyle based on the conspicuous consumption of distinctive experiences in ‘foreign’ places, allowing backpackers to convert economically cheap travels into culturally valuable experiences.
The guidebook has become an indispensable instrument in this process of conversion in the way that it redefines budget travel as a form of post-fordist tourist consumption. All the usual things taken care of in a typical packaged holiday, such as transport, accommodation, and sightseeing, are now left up to individuals through their use of a guidebook. As a result of the re-emergence and popularization of this new instrument of independent budget travel, the travel guidebook (as both a physical and cultural text) has become an important institutional structure for this new form of budget travel, and in particular for instituting backpacking as a type of D.I.Y. (do it yourself) leisure. This D.I.Y. aspect of backpacking has become a defining feature of the challenge and pleasure of independent travel. Staying off-the-beaten-track of tourism requires effort. It is hard work. Where the tourist on holiday pays a far higher price for having all conveniences and desires ready-made and efficiently served up, the independent traveler is more of a self-service customer. In any D.I.Y. purchase, such as a piece of IKEA furniture, cafeteria food, or self-service grocery check-outs, in order to keep costs as low as possible the assembly of the final product requires extra effort and work by the customer. Pushing this post-fordist D.I.Y. logic one step further, guidebooks like those produced by Lonely Planet Corporation provide the ‘assembly instructions’ allowing young backpackers to individually design and manufacture their own unique travel adventures. In this way, the traditional boundaries of work and leisure that once separated ‘the holiday’ from the world of work are blurred or even rendered obsolete, and paradoxically hard work, or extra effort, becomes increasingly integral to the pleasures of leisure time through the practice of backpacking as a form of ‘independent’ travel.

Today, discourses of travel promise a ‘university-of-life’ education that will expand the intellectual and moral horizons of anyone who partakes in it and thus transform and cultivate the person in the process. Therefore, in important ways, travel is and has been long vaunted as
having a cosmopolitan, educational, and liberating potential for the individual, but for the individual alone. The development of a more cosmopolitan sensibility is one of the ‘promises of travel’ which has become part of the ‘official curriculum’ of travel as an educational and transformational practice in the ‘university-of-life’. In contrast to the perceived inferiority of tourist experiences in fulfilling the cosmopolitan promise of travel, backpackers frequently invoke their distinctive off-the-beaten-track travel experiences and more independent and adventurous style of travel as a reliable cultural vehicle through which their transformative journeys in the university-of-life can be most fully realized. An essential element to realizing the cosmopolitan promise of travel is the necessity of having authentic cultural experiences in foreign places. These encounters with difference presumably provide the raw materials or building blocks upon which a more cosmopolitan sensibility can be constructed.

The importance of travelling ‘off-the-beaten-track’ points to an important tension animating backpackers’ search for ‘authentic’ places to visit as well the significance of having authentic interactions with ‘locals’. As travelers, backpackers must maintain their (assumed) distance from tourism (the beaten track) by establishing their (assumed) proximity to all things local (off-the-beaten-track). I consider backpackers as inhabiting an interstitial and mobile position between these two ‘tracks’ and examine how their experiences and discourses of authenticity become instrumental in maintaining the integrity and value of their experiences as aspects of travel rather than tourism. In an attempt to provide a rudimentary visual summary of the aforementioned analytical themes, I asked my 14 year old daughter, Lauren, to draw a picture that would help me to illustrate these themes as I had been explaining them to her over the past few years. Unfortunately no longer a practice in the publication of books, the use of frontispieces between the 16th and 19th centuries in Europe was a popular technique to visually present and
condense a text’s central themes. The following illustration can thus be considered a frontispiece and an ideal-typical representation of the themes I discuss throughout this thesis.

Figure 1 ‘In the Middle of Nowhere’ illustrated by Lauren Kearney ©2010
At the very center of the image is the (male) backpacker reading a guidebook. His feet straddle two distinct tracks. As indicated on the signpost above his head, the track on the left is ‘the beaten track’ (TBT). To his right is ‘off-the-beaten-track’ (OTBT). The beaten track is wide and straight, signaling a type of experience that is predicable, standardized, and mainstream. The narrow and curvy path is ‘off the-beaten-track’; it is less mainstream (secondary roads typically have less traffic than main thoroughfares), and due to its many twists and turns is less predictable. Importantly, the backpacker occupies an interstitial and in-between position on these two tracks. In this context he is in ‘the middle of nowhere’. His guidebook helps him to navigate between these two tracks. Sometimes he will go to places that are very much on the beaten track, other times he will venture off the beaten track. In order to ensure that his experiences are those of a traveler and not a tourist, he ideally must avoid the beaten track where the holiday of tourism lies in wait, though practically he is frequently lured back to it. The scene is one of relaxation on the beach. Underneath we see the tour bus, ready to ferry those beach-loving package tourists on a guided tour of some place. While on this bus, the tourists will talk to each other and experience things from within a ‘tourist bubble’. Their ability to meet locals and have authentic experiences away from the beaten track is reduced when they remain within the tourist infrastructure, where they typically begin and where they inevitably return.

The mountain climbing scene on the right-hand side represents the challenge, the suffering that must be endured and enjoyed and celebrated as part of the necessary difficulty of travel. Danger and risk are present. Here we see the solitary traveler struggling to overcome obstacles on the way to the top of the mountain, experiences which help the traveler to engender self-cultivation, represented by the flag at the top. This scene depicts the ‘work of travel’ that must be undertaken in order to stay off the beaten track. Finally, returning to the backpacker at
the center of our illustration we can see beads of sweat trickling down his forehead. In order to stay off the beaten track and away from the holiday of tourism he must work hard, following the guidebook when necessary. In light of the ever increasing popularity and mainstreaming of backpacking this task becomes ever more difficult.

Methodology: Backpackers, Ethnographic Practice, and Guidebooks

The discourse of travel employed by both backpackers and the ‘travel industry’, of which Lonely Planet is an outstanding example, tend to naturalize and individualize social privileges and global inequalities. Backpackers and the travel industry celebrate travel as unimpeded and leisurely because the world really is open to them in every way. The two central analytical themes and axes of the work of travel versus the holiday of tourism, on the one hand, and the educational self-cultivation of authenticity, on the other, play out in different and uneven ways in all three destinations in Canada, India and Ireland. In particular, this thesis provides a geographically based examination of how such themes play out ‘on the ground’ by illustrating the importance of geography and ‘place’ in shaping and differentially constituting the distinctive contours of backpackers’ off-the-beaten-track experiences in all three destinations.

Since backpacking is an international phenomenon, comparing three different but interconnected destinations spanning the globe is necessary and appropriate. Although the three destinations of Canada, India, and Ireland are quite different places in many respects, they also share important commonalities that provide a methodological rationale for focusing on them in particular. Since these three destinations have all been featured in Lonely Planet guidebooks and are popular with backpackers, they can be examined as desirable destinations in their own right. Furthermore, all three countries share a common colonial history and thus can also be investigated as distinct geographies of the former British Empire. I argue that these former colonial landscapes can provide a grounded geographical and historical standpoint from which
new articulations and constitutions of ‘Empire’ (Hardt and Negri 2000) can be examined and analyzed. Finally, I have personal familiarity with the three sites under significantly different circumstances: as a backpacker in India, as a resident in Vancouver, Canada, and as a local in Cork, Ireland. My own standpoint of experience, which is differentially mediated in each site, is crucial in elucidating ideas and practices of work and leisure as they are reconfigured through the practice of traveling.

While research on backpackers and backpacking has involved ethnographic field work (Sorensen 2003), there has not yet been a study done using a historically based and comparative geographical approach. Rather than engage in arguments over the factors that ‘cause’ backpackers to travel, I want to show how geography and history still matter in constituting the experiences of backpackers as well as reconstituting the more abstract ‘ruling relations’ of capitalism and Empire in the contemporary material world of travel and tourism. A geographically based investigation of backpacking and guidebooks helps us to see that this power, like an electrical current, must always be ‘grounded’ in the material conditions of life. As Michel Foucault argues, ‘our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites’ (Foucault 1986: 23). The sites of Ireland, Canada and India are interconnected places within the ‘space of travel and tourism’ which can be investigated in their own terms by tracing the travelling experiences (including my own) to the ‘ruling relations’ (Smith 1990b) in which the sites are articulated and constituted.
Backpackers and Fieldwork

In June 2007, I began my research in Vancouver, Canada. I posted advertisements\(^3\) in three youth hostels in downtown Vancouver and within days two interviewees responded to my poster. At the beginning of July 2007 I then flew to India and spent a total of three weeks in Delhi and Leh (the provincial capital of Ladakh in Northern India, approximately 1000km north from Delhi) where I conducted fourteen interviews. In India I solicited interviews through casual contact with backpackers rather than through advertised posters. I finally arrived in Cork, Ireland at the end of July where I again advertised with posters in three youth hostels in the city center of Cork. I conducted four interviews in Cork and after spending some time in Ireland returned to Vancouver in June 2008 where I conducted three more interviews while staying at the Sunny Beach Hostel. In Chapter 3 I discuss in detail these aspects of my methodology and describe the different ethnographic sites in depth. I advertised my research project on hostel notice boards and put up posters in the area around the respective hostels. I also casually solicited interviews during my stay in the hostels since informal word of mouth is a crucial method of communicating among backpackers. In all four sites, I recruited interviewees from a broad cross-section of genders and nationalities who ranged in age from 19 to 41. In total I conducted in-depth interviews with 24 backpackers\(^4\).

Of those 24 interviewees eight were women and 16 were men. Almost half (11) were from European countries, two from South American countries (Chile and Columbia), five from North America (Canada and U.S.A.) and five from the Middle East (Israel). The single largest national group represented in my sample is Israel with a total of five interviewees. The average

\(^3\) See Appendix IV Interview Recruitment Materials
\(^4\) See Appendix I Summary and Breakdown of Interviewee Information
age of my interviewees was 27 years. 13 of my interviewees were currently using a Lonely Planet guidebook, two used online sources only, and five were not using any guidebook at all. Ten were traveling alone, four were in a group and the remaining interviewees were traveling with either one friend, one relative or one partner. At the time of the interview the average amount of time my interviewees had spent traveling was nine weeks. The shortest time spent traveling at the time of interview was one week (for two interviewees) and the longest period of time was 36 weeks (for one interviewee).

In Vancouver I interviewed a total of six backpackers and in Cork I interviewed a total of four backpackers. However, when conducting interviews in Vancouver with two Dutch backpackers I discovered they also had recent travel experiences in Ireland which they spoke of at length and so I included their Irish travel experiences in my examination of the Irish aspect of the research, which brings the total number of interviews on Ireland to six. Thus I effectively did six interviews each which were in or on Canada and Ireland. In India I interviewed 14 backpackers in total: seven in Paharganj, Delhi and seven in Leh, Ladakh, I interviewed a total of seven women and 15 men, each of whom came from places as far away as Chile, Switzerland, Israel and Finland. Since storytelling is a very common and enjoyable way of recalling one’s travel experiences, I paid particular attention to how travel experiences are spontaneously narrated and recounted during the interviews, in addition to asking them about their choice and use of guidebooks. The interviews were designed to provide in-depth qualitative information about backpackers’ experiences and thus in each instance I conducted very thorough (and often very long) interviews. My interviews were semi-structured which allowed me to pursue unanticipated themes and topics that arose during the course of the interview. Interviews
typically lasted for 90 minutes and covered a range of questions. Rather than aim for a representative sample, instead I decided to look for a variety of interviewees in order to compare and contrast as wide a range of experiences as possible and in order to more fully grasp the complexity and contradictions at work in the everyday world of backpacking. Because a central part of my research was about understanding the experiences of people ‘on the road’, I found the use of in-depth and open-ended qualitative interviews to be a particularly rich and methodologically appropriate way for exploring the experiences of these people. Furthermore, since the self-identification of backpackers as travelers was an issue I wanted to pursue in-depth, the interviews gave my interviewees the space to think about and reflect upon this question and other issues. Finally, as I note throughout this thesis backpacking is very much about having individually unique experiences and the cultivation of the self plays a large part in this pursuit. Understanding the individual experience of my interviewees first hand was essential in allowing me to analytically explore and subsequently reflect on these issues at a later time.

All of my interviews were tape recorded and transcribed (I discuss the performative aspect of this in Chapter 4). I received signed written consent from my interviewees and they understood that their individual identities would remain anonymous for the purpose of the research. Overall I had four different but interrelated groups of questions and in total I asked on average 24 distinct questions. The first group of questions pertained to the ‘here and now’, including demographic information about where they were from, time spent travelling so far, reasons for visiting the particular country, and the activities done while here. The second group of questions, the ‘travel biography’, related to level of experience backpacking, previous trips

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5 See Appendix V Interview Schedule  
6 See Appendix II Ethics and Consent
and so on, some of their favorite/least favorite places as well as their most memorable travel stories (if any). The third group of questions, on ‘tourism and travel’, related to how they identified themselves as travelers, tourists or something else. These questions sought a more reflexive response and asked them to think about how they see tourism, travel and so on in light of their own experiences. The final group of questions pertained to their use (or non-use) of guidebooks. Even for those interviewees who were not at that time using a Lonely Planet guidebook, nearly all had some previous experience of using one. These questions allowed me to ask whether or which guidebook they used, how they used it, which parts they found useful, and the amount of pre-departure reading or reviewing they did.

All of my 24 interviews were conducted in English, even though 22 interviewees spoke English as a second language, and only 2 interviewees spoke English as their native tongue. Although excluding non-English speaking backpackers limited my pool of potential interviewees, Canada and Ireland are mainly English-speaking countries while in India a significant number of people speak English because of its colonial past and growing tourist trade. In each country English is the ‘tourist language’, and like every other non-native speaking tourist destination, tourist industry workers speak the language of their customers. Since the vast majority of backpackers visiting these ‘English speaking’ countries from the former British Empire have a basic grasp of English, I was not surprised to find that English was the lingua franca of travel and tourism. My interviewees in all three field sites travelled from as far afield as Israel, Columbia, Germany, and Quebec, and recalled ‘off-the-beaten-track’ stories from their experiences in The Philippines, Mongolia, Tibet, Mexico, and Argentina, in addition to their many stories from their experiences in Ireland, Canada and India. These English speaking countries share a relatively common ‘geographical’ political and historical designation. They
constitute and are often collectively referred to as ‘The West’, a point which is hardly controversial or new, and which is often discussed in innumerable studies about backpackers (Sorensen 2003; Maoz 2007; Elsrud 2001). Furthermore, the earlier Lonely Planet guidebooks were written and published in English, for English speaking readers, and the majority of readers were from the same countries as the authors: Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland, Canada and the U.S., and occasionally from countries in Western Europe such as Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, where English is a widely spoken and informally recognized second language. Although now featuring a diverse range of guidebooks in a variety of languages, Lonely Planet remains the largest English language guidebook publisher in the world. This focus on the predominance of English in both guidebooks and interviews provides me with an important thematic focus on ‘the beaten tracks of the British Empire’.

In contrast to the usual ethnographic practices of accumulating substantial local knowledge by staying in one site for several months and interviewing locals, I conducted interviews with backpackers in four sites and over a relatively short period of time in order to explore their experiences of these places, and how their movement informs a particular style of travel experience. Thus, my research offers little in the way of a traditional ethnography of a singular location but instead offers a more encounter-based rather than place-based ethnography which is appropriate when studying groups of people who are mainly just ‘passing through’. It is important to remember that a backpacker’s mode of travel lends itself to fleeting encounters with particular places. Since Ireland and Canada are relatively expensive countries to visit (transport costs are high and accommodation is expensive), tight budgets come into play when backpackers make decisions about how long to stay in a particular area or country. In Ireland and Canada I noticed a significant difference in the amount of time that backpackers were spending there. Six
months of ‘pure’ travel without working, as was the case for many in India, was neither feasible nor desirable. Other travelers that I spoke to were working their way around both countries in order to fund their trip. Among my interviewees in Canada, the longest trip was two months. By contrast, in India, many people typically spend six months, sometimes more, and one backpacker I spoke to in India told me that he had been travelling for over two years. India was the final leg of his trip and he planned to stay there for several more months. The length of backpacking trips in India indicates how spaces are constituted through global economic inequalities and how relatively affluent backpackers (who are nevertheless traveling on a tight budget) gravitate to regions and countries where their money goes farther. They capitalize on existing global economic inequalities in order to maximize the time-money ratio. Nowhere is Benjamin Franklin’s maxim that ‘time is money’ so consistently and efficiently realized than in the space of travel. By using an interconnected methodology of interviews, textual analysis, and ethnographic observation, my aim has been to analyze how the three most important aspects of backpacking - the geographical destinations, the guidebooks, and the backpackers themselves - work together to produce new modes of post-fordist consumption as they retrace older paths of the former British Empire.

Guidebooks Past and Present

As mentioned above, guidebooks have long played an integral part in backpacking culture. For my interviews with backpackers an important set of questions related to how they actually used guidebooks during their travels. As I learned from the interviews, backpackers use guidebooks in two main ways: first, to get practical information on the beaten track, such as getting orientated, finding hotels, transportation schedules and routes, prices and currency, and so on; and second, in a less explicit way, to get direction and to confirm and enable their desire
to journey off the beaten track (though only occasionally as a practical guide on exactly how to do so). These initial fieldwork findings led me subsequently to consider the history of independent travel guidebooks and of how the tourist/traveler distinction contributes to an ethos of enlightened self-cultivation and then to develop a critical textual analysis of how these coded distinctions operate in particular ways in Lonely Planet guidebooks themselves.

Before I began my ethnographic fieldwork, I was struck by how the vast majority of guidebook research in sociology never really addressed how the readers of these books actually read and used them. Much of the guidebook scholarship tends to be historical rather than contemporary, and therefore, in light of any verifiable way of substantiating how or whether people actually read and used them, readers’ interpretations and use of guidebooks have to be taken for granted. Notable examples include Gregory (1999) and Grewal (1996) where the analyst must assume and speculate on how these guidebooks were actually read and used in a variety of historical contexts. Studies that deal with guidebooks exclusively as texts in contemporary contexts, such as Hutnyk (1996), tend to analyze guidebooks purely as cultural objects that operate within global systems of representation and reproduction. This approach, while interesting and legitimate, has limited use for the purposes of a grounded and ethnographic approach, but it is nevertheless indispensable (as I demonstrate in Chapter 1). By contrast, McGregor’s (2001) study of how travel guidebooks shaped backpackers’ perceptions and expectations of one particular place in Indonesia is illuminating, yet limited for my purposes, mainly due to its exclusive focus on one particular tourist attraction. Rudy Koshar’s (2000) excellent historical study on the role of the Baedeker guidebooks in the context of German national culture identifies an important thematic focus concerning the role of guidebooks in articulating the tourist/traveler distinction. However, Koshar’s analysis is historical and
interpretive rather than contemporary and ethnographic. My own research on Lonely Planet
guidebooks aims to be historical and contemporary as well as interpretive and ethnographic. To
the best of my knowledge, the present work is the first attempt to offer a combined hermeneutic
and pragmatic approach to the study of guidebooks. In order to address what I see as a
fundamental shortcoming in the guidebook literature and an important gap in the empirical study
of guidebooks, I therefore sought to examine how backpackers used and read their guidebooks
while ‘on the road’.

Having already discovered from my previous backpacking experience that Lonely Planet
was by far the most popular guidebook in use by backpackers, I focused my attention exclusively
on Lonely Planet guidebooks, both as an object of textual analysis and as an ‘active text’ actually
used in mediating social relations and personal perceptions in the field. Once I had identified
from my field research the two main ways noted above in which Lonely Planet guidebooks are
actually used in the field, I then began to investigate in more detail why this particular guidebook
had achieved such a legendary status in the world of backpacking, and in precisely what ways it
had become the iconic and canonical text for backpackers. In other words, I began in the
ethnographic field by doing interviews with backpackers about their use of guidebooks and then,
on the basis of these insights, I developed a textual and historical analysis of how Lonely Planet
texts mediate and replicate the mythological codes that are at work in the backpacking world.
Only after listening to actual backpackers was I able to answer my question concerning why
Lonely Planet was so popular and iconic in the world of backpacking in the first place, how it is
used in the field, and to what extent it replicates and reproduces themes that prevail among ‘the
community of practice’ of backpackers. More precisely, I wanted to identify exactly how the
promises of travel that Lonely Planet celebrates are formulated in order to understand whether or which of them are actually realized by backpackers on the road.

In conducting the textual analysis of the guidebooks most relevant to my research sites, I selectively use various editions of Lonely Planet guidebooks for India to develop a comparative analysis of earlier and later versions. Analyzing excerpts from different editions of the same guidebook provides a way of indexing how specific places are worked on and rhetorically represented by guidebooks over a relatively short period of time. Using different guidebook editions also engenders a more historical view of the presence of Lonely Planet since people typically read the most recent editions. I also examine the different written and photographic rhetorical strategies at work in Lonely Planet guidebooks that help to establish its particular brand of travel as authentic, trustworthy and valuable. In particular, I consider how Lonely Planet guidebooks may serve as ‘ocular devices’ which help to make places which are off-the-beaten-track visible in Ireland, Canada and India. A key aspect of this authoritative mode of seeing lies in the promise to bring the reader to places that were relatively undiscovered by others, ‘hidden gems’ that would show the reader/traveler what the ‘real’ or authentic Ireland, Canada, or India is really like. The guidebooks are thus designed to act as navigation devices or ‘cartographic legends’ which help the reader successfully move around, and within, each country, both on and off the beaten track. The ideal ‘prize’ for the reader at the end of this ‘track’ is a relatively unique, authentic and valuable experience of the ‘real’ Ireland, India, and Canada. Because my primary ethnographic focus is India, I also provided an historical analysis of the role Lonely Planet has played as a branded guidebook company in making that country such a popular destination for backpackers.
Tourism and Travel in Theory and Practice

This study draws upon and contributes to, and at the same time critiques and departs from, several theoretical works that are directly concerned with the sociological phenomenon of tourism. In this thesis I draw upon John Urry’s concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ (1990) to examine how the ‘gaze’ of backpackers and guidebooks is discursively authorized and culturally produced. The Tourist Gaze is a seminal work in the study of tourism and leisure and has remained a key reference point for other researchers (Rojek 1997; Cohen 2004). For Urry, the changing objects of the tourist gaze and the leisure-orientated consumption practices of tourists operate as markers of broader transformations in work and leisure, production and consumption, over the past century. In this context I apply Urry’s useful formulations to a specific group of tourists who ironically do not consider themselves tourists at all.

However, there are a number of specific shortcomings in this body of work that I also address, and in some respects I depart from in Urry’s emphasis on tourism and consumption. In particular Urry tends to conceptualize tourism through almost exclusively visual categories, hence his focus on the tourist gaze. Similarly the work on tourist sites and sightseeing by Rojek (1997), MacCannell (1989), and Boorstin (1973) likewise takes an ‘oculo-centric’ approach. While the visual is certainly an important aspect of tourism studies and of tourist experience, in recent years Urry and other have been criticized for theorizing tourism as a largely disembodied practice (Veijola and Jokinen 1994). Although Urry does briefly address this criticism in his 2001 edition of The Tourist Gaze, it is interesting to note that in both editions Urry does not use interviews with actual tourists or conduct ethnographic observation to substantiate his claims.

Another seminal theoretical work on tourism is Dean MacCannell’s The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class (1973). Similar to Urry, MacCannell lays a heavy emphasis on the centrality of the visual dimension of tourist experience. In particular, he focuses on tourist sites
and the importance of authenticity for tourists who visit these sights. I build upon but significantly depart from MacCannell’s analysis by showing how authenticity becomes a symbolic resource that can be accumulated through the corporeal experiences of backpackers, rather than simply a cultural aspect of the broader social structure of modernity. In other words, I examine authenticity as an important symbolic resource for backpackers and guidebooks in their search for off-the-beaten-track experiences and places in Ireland, Canada and India, and theorize authenticity as a key operator of distinction through which the travel experiences of backpackers are gauged and evaluated in contrast to the more inauthentic forms of tourist experiences.

For some tourism scholars such as Erik Cohen, authenticity is no longer an important aspect of tourism studies. In his 2004 article ‘Backpacking: Diversity and Change’, he argues that today’s backpackers are not alienated drifters, seeking existential experience and an alternative lifestyle to western material values; rather, in taking time out from their predominantly professional jobs and university careers they display a more ‘ludic’ rather than existential attitude to travel (Cohen 2004: 45). While acknowledging the relevance of Cohen’s shift of emphasis away from authenticity, in this research I show how authenticity is a central structuring device and important cultural value for backpackers in particular. In contrast to MacCannell, I do not argue that backpackers are driven to find genuine tourist sites as a result of a loss of authenticity in their everyday world. Instead I situate backpacking travel within the context of an emerging lifestyle culture of mobility, consumption and globalization in which global travel is but one important resource through which a new young middle class lifestyle is consumed and incorporated. My interviews, analysis of guidebooks, and my own previous experience as a backpacker indicate that, in light of an ever-expanding tourism industry, backpacking has become a ‘non-institutionalized’ form of tourism (Uriely 2002: 520), and that
discourses of authenticity still remain a key mediator of the symbolic and cultural capital that backpackers accumulate on the road. Thus I examine how backpackers as travelers are able to accumulate symbolic and cultural capital in part through their articulation of their experiences of authenticity in stories which are told on the road.

In an effort to move away from an oculo-centric and disembodied approach, since the early 1990s there has been an increasing emphasis and attention paid to the body in tourism theories which deal with ‘other bodies’ (Johnson 2001), ‘embodied visualities’ (Jokinen and Veijola 2003), ‘gendered bodies’ (Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic and Harris 2007), ‘the viscosity of race’ (Saldanha 2007), ‘the sensuous in the tourist encounter’ (Crouch and Desforges 2003) and ‘cosmopolitan bodies’ (Molz 2006). These and other studies point to the importance of thinking about tourism as an always embodied and corporeal phenomenon and about the somewhat banal but vitally important reality of tourism that bodies move around and move within and between discrete geographical spaces. In this context, I follow the approach of Cloke and Perkins (1998) in arguing for an approach to tourism that considers ‘being, doing touching and seeing, rather than just seeing’ (189).

On a related theme, several journal-length articles deal with the theme of risk and danger in the context of backpackers’ experiences and identity, the most notable being the work of Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely (2007), which specifically focuses on Israeli backpackers, but there are others too (Elsrud 2001, Lepp and Gibson 2003). However I depart from this research insofar as I focus on risk and danger as embodied experiences and as valuable forms of ‘cultural capital’ which are accumulated by backpackers and which thus become important resources in the cultivation of a traveler self. In particular, I address themes of risk and danger through an examination of how stories of risk, adventure, and moral courage become a valuable form of
‘symbolic capital’ through which a distinctive traveler sensibility is set apart from that of mass tourists.

For the purposes of my research I address backpacking as an embodied tourist practice and thus I deal in various ways with how gender and ‘race’ are performed by backpackers through their accounts of their interactions with locals and with one another. Doing a comparative study of backpacking rather than a monograph in a single place allows the embodied characteristics of travel to be rendered visible. Although the whiteness or ‘race’ of travelers is mentioned in backpacking research (Teo and Leong 2006), apart from Saldanha’s recent study of backpackers in Goa India (2007) it is rarely explored as a constitutive factor in structuring the experiences of backpackers and contributing to ideas concerning off the beaten track experiences, an absence in the research which I hope to address. A justifiable criticism of Urry is the scant attention he pays to gender and ‘race’ as central structuring mechanisms of the tourist gaze. Insofar as guidebooks also tend to construct ‘the traveler’ as somehow outside of the social categories of gender, ‘race’, and class, the traveler tends to be constructed as a subject without history and biography, as if from nowhere in particular. Throughout my interviews with backpackers, I am attentive to how these cultural categories are negotiated and contested with respect to the at least implicitly expressed ideal of a supposedly generic traveler.

However, while acknowledging the gendered and racialized aspects of backpacking, the primary theoretical approach I adopt to examining backpacking as an embodied practice is through the theoretical lens of Pierre Bourdieu and in particular his concept of ‘cultural capital’. In ‘The Forms of Capital’, Bourdieu notes that ‘the accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and
assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986: 244). In this sense, the practices of backpackers who are engaged in corporeal travel can be examined through what backpackers do, what they say, how they spend their time, and how their particular style of budget travel all allow for the accumulation of distinctive types of ‘cultural capital’ and the development of a more embodied cosmopolitan sensibility through travel.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the scholarship on cosmopolitanism (Harvey 2000; Beck 2006; Featherstone 2002; Calhoun 2003; Turner 2002). Much of this scholarship, including many of the authors mentioned above, has concerned itself with formulating, theorizing and critiquing ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a foundational concept in the contexts of political theory, democratic theory, debates on globalization, global ethics and citizenship and so on. As such, while there has been a plethora of conceptualizations of different cosmopolitanisms ranging from Beck’s ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (2006: 10) to Szerszynski and Urry’s ‘cosmopolitan civil society’ (2002: 477), insofar as the promise of broadening one’s mind, of transforming parochial sensibilities and so on, has long been a part of the discourse of travel, the work of Beck is particularly relevant. In his recent book Cosmopolitan Vision (2006), Beck outlines his ‘five…constitutive principles of the cosmopolitan vision’ (7), many of which deal specifically with understanding cosmopolitanism as a sensibility or ‘vision’ that can be actively cultivated in people. For example, he speaks about ‘the awareness of interdependence’, cosmopolitan empathy and perspective taking’ and the ‘experience of crisis’ (7). In the context of this study, I critically consider Beck’s principles in order to examine how the cosmopolitan promise of travel is articulated, disrupted, and negotiated by backpackers on the road. Furthermore, following David Harvey’s approach to cosmopolitanism which argues that
‘cosmopolitanism bereft of geographical specificity remains abstracted’ (Harvey 2000: 557), I draw from his approach by geographically situating backpacker travel as a potentially (and problematic) cosmopolitan practice in Ireland, Canada and India.

In addition to the seminal contemporary studies of tourism noted above, I also draw upon James Buzard’s detailed historical analysis of the tourist/traveler distinction and of anti-tourist discourse in his book *The Beaten Track* (1993). In Buzard’s (1993) succinct formulation, ‘off the beaten track’ has become a ‘master trope’ that denotes a *mode of travel*, a *type of person*, and a *kind of place* that derive their value and meaning in large part from its antithesis. Although Buzard focuses on tourism and travel in Europe during the period 1800-1914, these master tropes and mythological codes continue to persist in today’s world of backpacking. However, the social context and cultural terms through which these discourses and codes are formulated and practiced have taken on new variations. Thus we can see continuity as well as divergence and discontinuity at work between the discourses of travel and anti-tourism in different historical periods. I provide some contemporary illustrations of some of Buzard’s key concepts and insights while going beyond his analysis in order to examine the international geographical context in which the tourist/traveler distinction is articulated. The historical work of Rudy Koshar (2000) on early travel guidebooks is particularly relevant in this regard, especially his ideas concerning the use of guidebooks as enlightenment texts and their capacity to act as ocular devices. Koshar’s work is therefore relevant to my analysis of Lonely Planet guidebooks as ‘active texts’ in mediating and facilitating the cultivation of guidebook reading, transforming tourists on the beaten track into off-the-beaten-track travelers.

Although these scholarly works are directly related to the study of tourism and backpacking, there are other theoretical approaches that I selectively draw from. The work of
Pierre Bourdieu, as already noted, is particularly relevant, especially his ideas on cultural and symbolic capital, habitus and field. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu (1984) provides a theoretical framework for understanding how status-based distinctions operate to legitimize and reproduce certain aesthetic and moral judgments about the world as ‘naturally’ better than others, and thus are *active* in reproducing and replicating forms of distinction. In the context of my study, I show how discourses of authenticity, ‘off the beaten track’ and the traveler self serve as important sources of cultural and symbolic capital for backpackers, and are constitutive of a distinctive backpacker ‘habitus’ within the ‘field’ of tourism. As I noted above, Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is accumulated through practices of embodied cultivation which takes time and effort (Bourdieu 1986: 244). Backpacking is an important vehicle through which the *cultivation* of the traveler self is learned, practiced and incorporated. In light of Bourdieu’s argument that all forms of capital can be expressed symbolically, I pay particular attention in my interviews with backpackers to their stories and comments regarding their off the beaten track experiences, their distance from tourists, and their particular style of travel, which I consider to be examples and oral articulations of how cultural capital is symbolically expressed.

In *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* Bourdieu defines habitus as ‘classificatory schemes, principles of vision and division’ (1998: 10). The tourist/traveler distinction is one such classificatory scheme which acts as a ‘generative and unifying principle’ allowing backpackers to actively distinguish themselves and what they do, or more generally, to differentiate their *style* of travel from mass tourism. Thus, although backpackers occupy a distinctive position within the broader ‘field’ of tourism, their distinctive discourse and style of off-the-beaten-track travel marks them as different from and in opposition to the practices of mainstream mass tourism. In
other words, for the purposes of this study, I consider the ‘field’ of tourism to be bounded by how backpackers negotiate the borders between the beaten track of tourism and off the beaten track of backpacker travel. Bourdieu further defines habitus as ‘a generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle that is a unitary set of choices of persons, goods and practices’ (1998: 8, my emphasis). I argue that there is a distinct and identifiable backpacker ‘habitus’ which amounts to a ‘unitary lifestyle’ on the road, one characterized by an ethos of frugality and budget travel, distinctive discourses of travel, anti-tourism and authenticity, and a preponderance of guidebook use. It is important to note that backpacking is increasingly a heterogeneous phenomenon, but one that is still held together by a relatively distinct and recognizable choice of ‘persons, goods and practices’. In this sense I examine backpackers’ distinctive habitus within the field of tourism as a recognizable ‘community of practice’, that is, ‘an aggregate of people, who united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs and values - - in short, practices’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 186, quoted in Currie et al 2009: 14). I examine ‘off-the-beaten-track travel’ as the defining practice which unites backpackers as a community of practice and it is in this community of practice where backpackers ‘learn’ to become travelers.

In this respect, the backpacker communities of practice are also the sites for the production and accumulation, circulation and consumption of symbolic capital in the form of storytelling. Bourdieu notes that symbolic capital becomes a kind of literacy that people learn in order to read and utilize distinctions. In ‘The Forms of Capital’ he notes that ‘symbolic capital, that is to say capital in whatever form…is represented i.e. apprehended symbolically’ (Bourdieu 1986: 255). The use of stories by backpackers is one such way in which cultural capital is
‘represented’ in a symbolic form. Whereas Bourdieu notes that all forms of capital - economic, social and cultural - can be symbolically represented and reproduced through oral discourse and in everyday speech, I pay particular attention to the different forms of cultural and symbolic capital that are used and circulated by backpackers to differentiate them from mass tourists in their practices and discourse. In particular, I examine how their ‘off the beaten track’ stories serve as an important type of symbolic capital which conveys authenticity, difference and distinction.

In analyzing more precisely the reproduction of ideological and mythological codes through a variety of textually, visually, and orally mediated discourses, I found that the work of Dorothy Smith and Roland Barthes provides a key theoretical resource for this aspect of the research. Smith (1990a) conceptualizes texts as ‘active’ in the organization and reproduction of social relations. Although she focuses on the world of work, especially women’s work, her concepts are useful in understanding the textual and oral mediation of leisure discourse and how practices of both work and leisure are increasingly organized and reconfigured through these ideological codes. Smith defines the ‘ideological code’ as ‘a schema that replicates its organization in multiple and various sites’ (Smith 1999: 159) and ‘a generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary, written or spoken, ordered by it’ (my emphasis, ibid). In the context of this research I examine the tourist/traveler distinction as an ‘ideological code’ that regulates, organizes, and gives meaning to both the written and visual discourses of Lonely Planet guidebooks as well as the oral or verbal discourses of backpackers. In particular, I examine how these ideological codes are replicated ‘in multiple and various sites’, while at the same time paying attention to how they are also articulated differently in India, Canada, and Ireland. Thus, my research draws upon and expands Smith’s insights to consider how these
worlds of leisure and consumption are mediated through the materiality of texts. Like Smith, I see texts as encompassing more than just books and consequently I examine how websites and other electronic sources mediate the world of travel. I consider the increasingly important role of the internet in the inter-textual mediation of backpacking travel and use excerpts from the Lonely Planet website to further situate and extend my analysis of the guidebooks themselves. The twin interrelated binaries of ‘the tourist/traveler distinction’ and ‘the beaten track and off the beaten track’ serve as exemplary ideological codes through which the discourse and textual strategies of Lonely Planet guidebooks are organized and mediated by the discourses and practices of backpackers on the road.

The work of Roland Barthes takes this point even further by providing a compelling and useful methodological and theoretical framework for decoding photographs and texts. For Barthes (1993), images and texts are important mythological technologies, or forms of ‘mythic speech’, which circulate through popular culture. Barthes’ ideas about myth and mythic speech provide an important analytical and interpretive method for understanding how the ideological voice of Lonely Planet speaks through its guidebooks. For Barthes myth can be anything that has already been worked on by humans if it is used as a sign to convey meaning: ‘speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing, or of representations, not only written discourse but also photography, cinema, reporting, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythic speech’ (1993: 110). For my analysis of Lonely Planet photographs, I draw upon Barthes’ essay ‘Rhetoric of the Image’ (1985) and utilize his insights and methodology concerning the ‘photographic paradox’, that is, the apparent communication of ‘a message without a code’ (1985: 5). In particular, I analyze Lonely Planet as a popular brand which produces ‘mythic speech’ in representing off-the-beaten-
track places as undiscovered, untouched, and ready for consumption by the western traveler. In this sense, guidebooks such as Lonely Planet help to keep the ‘mythology’ of travel and the traveler alive. With its explicit discourse of ‘travel’, texts by Lonely Planet and backpackers stories draw upon the historical and cultural power of travel as an important signifier of individual cultivation and cosmopolitan enlightenment. In adopting a historical approach (especially in Chapter 1), I examine the historical genesis of these ideological and mythological codes, and I consider how they continue to organize and mediate the experiences of contemporary backpackers and the written discourse of guidebooks (especially in Chapter 2). In this context I theorize how socially and culturally constructed realities become ‘mythologized’ by being represented as transparent, self-evident, unchangeable and naturally occurring in the mythic speech of Lonely Planet texts and photographs, and in the oral everyday discourse of backpackers on the road.

In light of the emphasis on space and place in recent studies of globalization (Robertson 1995, Pieterse 1995), the particularity of ‘place’ has assumed a heightened importance as globalization is increasingly played out on the ground in ways that demonstrate that ‘geography matters’ (Tao and Li 2003: 302). As backpacking illustrates particularly well, Marc Augé’s concept of ‘non-places’ (1995) helps us to examine how mobility and consumption are key factors that help produce both place and non-place. Augé focuses on what he characterizes as the non-places of airports, supermarkets and highways by emphasizing their character as transit sites which travelers must pass through in order to arrive at their eventual destination. The concept of ‘non-place’ is useful in characterizing those places that become overused, bypassed, and eventually forgotten on the backpacker trail. In other words non-places can be characterized as those in-authentic places that backpackers typically seek to avoid or pass through on their travels.
which have become too touristic and over-commercialized. Augé specifically notes the importance of texts such as maps and advertizing signs in the use of non-places (1995: 56), which he treats as ‘instruction manuals’ that make non-places user-friendly and thus more efficiently navigated. His insight into how texts are instrumental in the efficient use and successful transit through non-places can be illustrated by backpackers’ use of guidebooks. I consider how guidebooks can be thought of as ‘instruction manuals’ for navigation through various places that backpackers visit, and how they produce contradictory tensions that increasingly bring place and non-place into sharper relief. From this theoretical perspective, we can say that backpackers are ‘in the middle of nowhere’ in the sense that they are constantly negotiating the borders between the beaten track of tourism and off the beaten track of travel.

In this respect, the world that the Lonely Planet traveler discovers ‘off the beaten track’ is an imagined geography with routes that potentially go everywhere, a smooth surface of open possibilities. Hardt and Negri (2000: 202, 235) claim that Empire is both everywhere and nowhere, it is ‘a non-place or Utopia’ and yet ‘Empire is materializing before our eyes’. The travel of backpackers and guidebooks helps to constitute a ‘roaming’ Empire’. travel off-the-beaten-track does not arrive at a final terminus but rather spirals in a perpetual circulation which reflects this new form of power. In order to function effectively as an imagined but not imaginary geography, the coded binaries of ‘the-beaten-track’ and ‘off-the-beaten-track’ work together to produce ever new circuits of desire and repulsion around the world.

**Chapter Outline: A Guided Tour**

The historical aspect of the emergence of backpacker and guidebook discourse is the subject of Chapter 1 ‘The Historical Genesis of the Tourist/Traveler Distinction’. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a genealogy of the traveler self by examining how the traveler and the tourist have been perceived and spoken about in European public discourse, with an emphasis on
distinctively British articulations of these themes. In order to more fully understand the genesis of the tourist/traveler distinction at work in the practices and discourses of the backpackers I interviewed and in the guidebooks I analyzed, I found it was necessary to provide an historical context to the mythological and ideological codes of the distinction between the tourist and traveler and between the beaten track and off the beaten track. Here I explore the historical, cultural and discursive foundations of the tourist/traveler distinction with reference to key documents which demonstrate how travel is typically articulated as an *educative, authentic, and cultivating* practice. Rather than conceptualizing backpacking and its culture of travel purely as an entirely new phenomenon, as the latest niche-market example of a heterogeneous tourism industry, I historicize the most pertinent aspects of backpacking culture by focusing mainly on the period between 1800-1900 when modern tourism emerged as a discrete and culturally identifiable practice in Europe. I draw upon the most pertinent discourses that helped to shape European ideas about travel, in particular European discourses of Romanticism, including romantic primitivism, Enlightenment and education. Examining the historical genesis of the tourist/traveler distinction helps us to better understand how the identities and practices of contemporary backpackers draw upon well-established cultural repertoires of anti-tourism, self-cultivation, and authenticity with respect to travel. Here I focus on the historical framework that James Buzard provides concerning ‘the beaten track’ and the tourist/traveler distinction as well as on the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, especially his concepts of cultural and symbolic capital, in exploring how the cultivation of the traveler self emerged and developed. In this chapter, I also examine two of the most well known and popular brand of independent guidebooks in the 19th century, those of John Murray and Karl Baedeker, who were both early entrepreneurs of independent travel. The guidebooks of Murray and Baedeker were instrumental
in helping to popularize and institutionalize discourses of educational self-cultivation and particular modes of seeing that signaled the emergence of the independent traveler as a recognizable and antithetical figure to the tourist. Here I draw upon the work of Rudy Koshar in particular in analyzing the cultural role of guidebooks as ‘active texts’ in the emergence of the European traveler self.

These central historical themes are further developed in Chapter 2 ‘Legends of Lonely Planet’, where I examine how guidebook companies like Lonely Planet also draw upon and use these discourses/cultural repertoires in order to successfully brand its guidebooks, and thus to further legitimate their authority and symbolic capital as ‘travel experts’. The primary focus is on the Lonely Planet guidebook and the different textual and authorial strategies that are employed to secure its authority and popularity among independent travelers. More specifically I examine why and how the Lonely Planet guidebook, as a specific type of ‘active text’ or ‘performative genre’, has become an authoritative voice in the travel industry and a popular choice of travel within the backpacker world. I discuss how Lonely Planet guidebooks evoke and utilize goals of education, enlightenment and cosmopolitan cultivation for readers. In particular I utilize the theoretical and methodological work of Dorothy Smith and Roland Barthes in analyzing how ideological and mythological codes are textually replicated and reproduced in Lonely Planet guidebooks. I also consider how particular textual strategies employed in Lonely Planet guidebooks are formulated in ways which transform people and places into objects of knowledge and desire, and I explore how these guidebooks make knowable, visible and comprehensible these places and people through a variety of means. For example, I show how Lonely Planet guidebooks serve as ‘cartographic legends’ to non-places which are ‘off-the-beaten-track’ in so far as they act as ocular devices which render visible authentic and
inauthentic places. Here I draw upon and extend Marc Augé’s theory of non-places, a theme which is continued in Chapter 3 in relation to how backpackers actually use their guidebooks on the road. I contextualize these cartographic legends within broader historical and geographical forms of mapping and knowing these previous colonies of the British Empire. I explore the discourse of travel and the anti-tourist discourses articulated by Lonely Planet, and consider how these discourses help to provide further authority and legitimacy to Lonely Planet’s brand of travel through particular writing and reading strategies.

There is a significant shift in focus and empirical material as I move from Chapters 1 and 2 to Chapters 3 and 4. These remaining two chapters deal with the interviews and ethnographic material as I explore the lived experience of backpackers who are on the road in Canada, Ireland and India. In Chapter 3 ‘The Beaten Track’, I begin by examining how Lonely Planet guidebooks occupy an ambiguous and contingent place in the discourse of my interviewees, as well as how Lonely Planet guidebooks help to facilitate the independence and cultivation of a traveler self. I explore how Lonely Planet guidebooks are used and read in the ethnographic field by many of these backpackers in ways that are often surprising, illuminating and contradictory. In particular, I focus on the dominant characterizations of tourists and tourism narrated by my interviewees. Here I use Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in relation to how tourism is seen as less prestigious and valuable to my interviewees in terms of what tourist do, where they go, and how they travel. I explore how discourses of travel among backpackers are tied into perceptions of tourists and locals across all three sites. Through interviews with backpackers and ethnographic observations in each setting, I examine how ‘the tourist’ and the beaten track of tourism that they travel on are spoken about, experienced and characterized by backpackers. Then I examine how these travelers differentiate and distance themselves from holidaying
tourists. Focusing on India in particular, but with the comparative frame of my interviews with travelers in Ireland and Canada in mind as well, I examine the ‘threat’ that tourists and tourism pose both to the places that these travelers are travelling through and to the ‘locals’ that live there. As the chapter title makes clear, the focus here is on ‘the beaten track’ and the perceptions, stories and opinions of backpackers about the holiday of tourism and the practices and mentality of tourists and what these mean and signify in the context of a traveler habitus. Once the beaten track has been explored and analyzed, in the subsequent and final chapter I turn to how the off-the-beaten-track stories of backpackers offer a distinct and valuable form of symbolic capital for backpackers who are on the road in India, Canada and Ireland.

In Chapter 4 ‘Off the Beaten Track’, again with a focus on my interviews and ethnographic observations, I explore what kinds of ‘off-the-beaten-track’ places and interactions are experienced by these travelers in all three sites. I analyze three stories narrated by my interviewees where their Lonely Planet guidebook has facilitated their own off-the-beaten-track adventures. Employing Marcel Mauss’s concept of ‘the gift’ (1990), I analyze their accounts of authentic interactions and genuine exchanges with locals in terms of inter-cultural reciprocity and personal generosity. The primary focus of this chapter is India, my main ethnographic site, with examples from Canada and Ireland brought in to highlight what is distinctive and different as well as similar and shared in this crucial test for backpacker travel within a larger global context. Through a detailed consideration of stories of risk and danger, I analyze why India continues to be constructed and experienced as the true test for the western traveler in comparison with Ireland and Canada. I examine how these western backpackers narrate their experiences of India and situate their own geographical subjectivity as westerners within broader historical discourses of India. I argue that for these western travelers, India acts as a ‘heterotopia
of compensation’ (Foucault 1986), that is, as a place that offers salvation through the consumption of cultural difference. The terms under which this difference is articulated is also addressed. I examine instances when the beaten track and its antithesis are experienced in paradoxical and contradictory ways by these travelers. In this chapter, in contrast to Urry (1990) and MacCannell (1989), I also attempt to bring the travelling body back into tourist theory.

Because backpacking is an international phenomenon nowadays, backpackers and their tracks really do ‘cover the globe’. An important international aspect of my analysis was therefore to interrogate whether self identified travelers, originating from a variety of countries, shared and participated in a recognizable ‘habitus’ or ‘community of practice’. Can the tourist/traveler distinction be found operating among different backpackers in all three different countries? Are the discourses of travel and anti-tourism a common feature of backpacker narratives regardless of where one interviews them? Do places considered ‘off-the-beaten-track’ by these differentially located and internationally diverse groups of backpackers share common and enduring characteristics? And finally, what can be said about the historical, political and geographical conditions that allow the inhabitants of this travelling global village to recognize what they are, where they are from, and where they are going? Does backpacking travel off-the-beaten-track really lead to places ‘in the middle of nowhere’ where the promise of a ‘lonely planet’ can be realized for everyone?
Chapter 1 The Historical Genesis of the Tourist/Traveler Distinction

The prosperity of a country depends, not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its cultivated...men of education, enlightenment, and character; here are to be found its true interest, its chief strength, its real power. (Martin Luther, quoted in Samuel Smiles, Character (1871: 1))

This comment by Martin Luther, as well as the context in which it was quoted by Samuel Smiles, captures and crystallizes three central themes of the following chapters. More precisely the major themes are captured in the three essential qualities that he indicates are essential for a prosperous country: ‘cultivated…men of education, enlightenment and character’. Although Luther outlines with certainty the type of person required for successfully building a prosperous nation, he does not explicitly indicate how these qualities were to be instilled and developed. This is where Samuel Smiles and his popular writings come to play a significant role some 400 years later. Samuel Smiles, a liberal English author, is widely credited as the author of the first self-help book. The book, appropriately titled Self Help (1859), was an instant bestseller7 and was called ‘the bible of mid-Victorian liberalism’ (Cohen & Major 2004: 611). A little over a decade later, Smiles published his second book Character (1871) where he further developed his earlier theme of self, with reference to famous men of character whose lives and works could serve as role models for his readers. Martin Luther, among others, was one of Smiles’ main examples and it is the above quote from Luther that Smiles uses in the thematic introduction for his book Character.

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7 Self Help was published the very same day as Darwin’s Origins of The Species (24th November 1859) and consistently outsold the latter (O Connor 2009).
Although the above *words* of Martin Luther and the self help *writings* of Samuel Smiles have no direct bearing on the chapter that follows, they are nonetheless important and relevant for several reasons. Even though Luther did not indicate *how* his three characteristics were to be realized, in this chapter I argue that, within European history, one ‘vehicle’ in particular was considered by many as the primary way through which the three essential characteristics identified by Luther, and Smiles, could be successfully cultivated. This vehicle or institution was ‘travel’, and over the space of several hundred years in Europe ‘travel’ was practiced in different historical periods, in different social contexts, and by different individuals and groups of people as one of the most important means for realizing and instilling these virtues. John Murray, the guidebook publisher we will meet later on in this chapter, owned and ran one of the publishing companies that sought to publish Samuel Smiles’ bestseller.

Although Smiles eventually went to another publisher, the brief crossing of paths between the best selling and famous self-help author and the even bigger selling and more famous guidebook producer provides a useful segue for a consideration of how travel guidebooks became ‘textual vehicles’ through which certain European ideals and civic goals could be *practically accomplished*. Samuel Smiles provided his readers with a sedentary text that he hoped could internally propel them towards achieving his (and Luther’s) goals of cultivation, education, enlightenment, and moral character. John Murray and other guidebook entrepreneurs such as Karl Baedeker likewise provided their readers with a more mobile type of ‘self-help text’ through guidebooks that would help to mediate and practically facilitate the realization of the individual and social goals of travel. In the course of this thesis these three themes appear again and again as we move from the 16th century exhortations of Martin Luther to the more contemporary exhortations of Tony Wheeler, the co-founder of Lonely Planet.
A Genealogy of the Traveler Self: ‘Travel’ and the Genesis of the Anti-Tourist Discourse

The cultivation of education, character and enlightenment are the three pivotal themes in the genealogy of the traveler self. By identifying the key historical periods in which the traveler was formed as an identifiable type of figure through a discussion of the main discourses of travel in early modern Europe, this chapter aims to retrospectively reconstruct the key historical and discursive moments in which the traveler self emerged and became codified in highly significant national and colonial contexts through the articulation of the tourist/traveler distinction. Beginning with a discussion of the Grand Tour of Europe and the importance of education to the formation of the traveler self, I then examine two threads of Romanticism. The first focuses more on the aesthetic dimensions of the traveler as a type of upper-class person with a cultivated and refined taste, whereas the second focuses more on the ‘work of travel’, and how the individual must develop a type of moral character that embraces adventure, risk and hard work. In conjunction with these two threads of Romanticism I show how an anti-tourist discourse emerged concurrently with Romanticism and how the tourist, understood as someone who also travels, was characterized as a debased and underdeveloped cultural figure, one who, in contrast to the traveler, did not have the requisite education, cultivation or character that was found so abundantly in the traveler. The final aspect in the genealogy of the traveler self, namely ‘enlightenment’, is examined in terms of how guidebooks functioned as ‘active texts’ in the enlightenment of readers and how the tourist was offered a form of textual salvation who could aspire to become a traveler through the use and cultural mediation of a guidebook.

Throughout this chapter I examine ‘anti-tourist discourse’ through an analysis of newspaper articles, literary works and guidebooks. Many of the critics of tourism and the tourist in these instances do not themselves constitute a group of self-styled travelers in the way that backpackers do today. In subsequent chapters, I examine how anti-tourist discourse is articulated
and practiced by people ‘on the road’. While ‘the traveler’ has been an ‘ideal type’ which drew its legitimacy and currency from a variety of different models over several centuries, it only became a collective identity in the past several decades in the sense outlined above. As tourists and tourism emerged as identifiable mass phenomena, the individualized ideal type of ‘the traveler’ remained a more nebulous and ephemeral form of prestige and status. Nonetheless the ideological code of the tourist/traveler distinction was central in textually organizing and regulating public discourse, allowing for the mass reproduction of these codes to permeate public consciousness and further entrench status-based distinctions that continue to be articulated to this day in the world of backpacking.

Examining the discourses and practices that are historically foundational to travel and to the emergence of the traveler self helps us to better understand how and why the tourist became such a despised figure and tourism such a frequently denigrated practice. The predominant European ‘discourses of travel’ that circulated from the 16th century to the 19th century need to be contextualized for us to understand how they became crystallized into a more focused ‘anti-tourist discourse’, and how dominant discourses of travel and tourism have become self-evident ‘truths’ within particular ‘communities of practice’. Early discourses of travel were by no means formulated exclusively as a reaction to the emergence of tourism in 19th century Europe, but by the beginning of the 19th century they were increasingly held up as a mirror by critics concerned to project a nobler ideal. Romanticism had a profound and enduring part to play in this anti-tourist discourse and in the concurrent development of the traveler self.

Since the birth of modern tourism in the nineteenth century, the meanings attached to both travel and tourism have been symbiotically interrelated and in constant tension with each other. Of course, all tourists ‘travel’. This general and relatively uncomplicated meaning of the
word ‘travel’ is used as a straightforward description of the movement of people from any point to another. For example, every day I travel to work and in the evening I travel home again on the bus. If I were to go on a two week vacation somewhere I would go to a travel agency to make the bookings. However, despite this everyday usage of the word, there are also historical and contemporary ‘discourses of travel’ that refer to and evoke very specific cultural practices, ideas, and values. With the birth of modern European tourism, which heralded an explosion of predominantly middle class travel throughout Europe and beyond, came its counterpoint ‘travel’ understood as a distinct and distinguishing practice that is decidedly not tourism.

James Buzard’s (1993) argument that anti-tourist discourse has historically been a definitive yet largely unacknowledged element of modern tourism is confirmed by my examination in later chapters of backpacking as a contemporary example and practical manifestation of this paradoxical distinction. Both backpackers and companies like Lonely Planet posit travel as a more educative, authentic, and character-forming practice. As Buzard (1993) notes, ‘‘tourist’ made it first appearance in English in the late 18th century, functioning as a straightforward synonym for ‘traveler’” (1), and thus did not yet appear to carry any of the pejorative connotations that it has today. However, he makes the further point that ‘‘tourist’ had acquired this darker side by the middle of the nineteenth century’ (1). In fact, contrary to his claim that it was not until the mid 19th century, the word ‘tourist’ had already begun to acquire a pejorative meaning as early as 1815. For example, describing the Battle of Waterloo, which took place in Belgium, June 18th 1815, A.V. Seaton (1999) quotes an illuminating comment by Lord Wellington, head of the victorious British-led allied forces against Napoleon’s armies, who after the battle quipped: ‘I hope the next battle I fight will be further from home. Waterloo was too near: too many visitors, tourists, amateurs, all of whom wrote accounts of the battle’ (The Times
1934: 17, cited in Seaton 1999: 133). Seaton argues that it was because of the unexpected surprise attack on Napoleon’s troops in Belgium that many holidaying tourists were subsequently present to both witness the battle and write about it afterwards, much to Wellington’s chagrin.

Buzard (1993) further notes that the denigration of tourism and tourists was linked to ideas of culture at the time, and more precisely to notions about what type of person was considered capable of properly appreciating culture. Much of the anxiety surrounding mass tourism lay precisely in such ideas, in that the tourist was characterized as a type of person who could never fully grasp, comprehend, or appreciate the various cultural aspects of travel when confronted with them. Instead, according to the critics, the tourist remained mired in superficiality, easily duped by inauthentic representations and generally poor taste (Buzard 1993: 1). With the birth of mass tourism, those who railed against tourism drew upon many of the more elitist discourses of travel from the Grand Tour as well as Romanticism in order to retain the prestige and status of a more pure and superior practice of ‘travel’ in the face of its more vulgar cousin ‘tourism’. With ever increasing numbers of middle class tourists venturing around the continent and further afield, and with improvements in the technology and of an increasingly tourist-specific infrastructure, the *symbolic and cultural capital of travel* which expressed and embodied the privilege of mobility and wealth was subject to the threat of dilution through massification, a point echoed by Georg Simmel:

> It is said that it is part of one’s education (*Bildung*) to see the Alps, but not education alone for its twin sister is ‘affluence’ (*Wohlhabenheit*). The power of capitalism extends itself to ideas as well: it is capable of annexing such a distinguished concept as education as its own private property (Simmel [1895] 1997a: 220)
The German word *Bildung* generally means education but it also has a whole series of other interrelated meanings, such as development, cultivation, and learning. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a history of the concept of *Bildung*, suffice to say that *Bildung* has frequently been translated as ‘self cultivation’ (Bruford 1975). Thus, when Simmel in his essay ‘The Alpine Journey’ comments that ‘it is considered part of one’s education [Bildung] to see the Alps’ (220); he is at least implicitly referring to discourses of self cultivation in wide circulation in the 19th Century. In fact these meanings of *Bildung* are deeply rooted in the German philosophical and literary traditions stemming from Goethe, Schilling, Von Humboldt, Herder, and have long been intertwined and used interchangeably. The concept of *Bildung* expresses the convergence of educative self-cultivation which pervades the discourses and practices of travel. Central to the concept of *Bildung*, especially as it was used by Goethe, is the idea of the formation of *individual* character and the cultivation of the inner qualities or culture of the individual. The literary genre of the ‘Bildungsroman’ or ‘novels of formation’ typically features a young protagonist who undergoes a journey through various trials, only to emerge later as a mature individual. This genre is generally considered to have been inaugurated by Goethe’s famous novel *Master William’s Apprenticeship* (see Wilhelm Dilthey’s comments in Crouter 2005: 27) and revolves around the formation of ‘William’s’ character through a series of individual and unique experiences. Dilthey’s conceptualization of the word ‘experience’ (*Erlebnis*), as ‘a test or trial that is lived through’ (in Makkreel 1975: 282-283), already resonates with present-day backpackers who search for ‘experience’ by traveling the world. Thus, as a form of *Bildung*, travel can be theorized as a modern-day ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault

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8 Beolingus Online German English Dictionary http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de/dings.cgi?lang=en&service=deen&opterrors=0&optpro=0&query=Bildung&iservice=&comment=&email=
in which individuals search for experiences by taking part in a broader process of self-transformation and cultivation. Throughout this chapter I examine key texts from the early modern history of travel that have helped to formulate and define the ‘technique of travel’ as both a social-cultural institution and an individualized practice of Bildung. Although the idea of educational self-cultivation is an extremely broad one and encompasses multiple meanings and practices, in the remaining chapters of this thesis I utilize the concept of Bildung strictly within the context of the practice of travel and its anti-thesis, tourism. As I discussed in my introduction, Pierre Bourdieu argues that ‘cultural capital’ is made manifest in embodied states. In particular, he notes that ‘the accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state…implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986: 244). In this chapter I critically examine the largely invisible ‘costs’ and invisible privileges underpinning the cultivation of the elite traveler self in England and Europe that became codified and entrenched in the tourist/traveler distinction, allowing the denigration of tourism to appear as a self evident and natural discourse in 19th century England.

Beginning with a brief examination of Francis Bacon’s Treatise ‘On Travel’ written in 1625, I examine how ‘The Grand Tour of Europe’ became established as an important institutionalized educational practice for the British aristocracy up until the 19th century. Then, through an examination of the guidebook advice and newspaper writings of William Wordsworth, the travel writings of John Ruskin and the travels and writings of Lord Byron I examine how Romanticism became a key discourse that was instrumental in helping to lay the foundations of anti-tourist discourse, and to redefine travel as a more solitary and individual pursuit practiced by cultivated people. Romanticism became a key discourse through which a strong anti-tourist discourse was articulated and ideologically codified, and also drew upon the
educational ideals of the Grand Tour formulated earlier. However, the Romantic movement in art and literature also introduced important new categories of aesthetic distinction against which the tourist was denigrated as a debased cultural type, with tourism increasingly seen as a destructive force and ‘blight’ on the ‘natural’ landscape. In particular, Romanticism helped to establish the importance and value of ‘the picturesque’ as a mode of vision. In this light, I also examine the most salient contours and dominant aspects of anti-tourist discourse through the travel writings of several cultural critics in the popular *Blackwoods Magazine*. I then return to Georg Simmel’s essay ‘The Alpine Journey’ for the way it articulates another key ‘thread’ of Romanticism that shaped how 19th century travel was thought about, namely, in terms of hard work, endurance and individuality. In the final section, I examine how guidebooks became didactic and ‘salvational’ texts that functioned within the logic of the tourist/traveler distinction and that drew upon Enlightenment discourses.

*From Bacon to Byron on the Grand Tour of Europe*

When a man had passed through some great public school, and attained a tolerable facility in verse composition in the dead languages - when he had capped this result by a university degree, and made what was called the Grand Tour of Europe - his education was said to have finished. (*Blackwood’s Magazine* 1855: 685)

In order to better understand how the discourse of travel came to be vaunted as superior to tourism, it is necessary to examine first how European travel became an important symbolic and cultural resource for the English upper classes and a vital marker of status, economic power and prestige. The Grand Tour of Europe was a key institution in English society from the 16th to the 19th centuries through which travel became a necessary and desirable cultural ‘apprenticeship’ for the elite classes. By the early 1800s, The Grand Tour fell into decline amongst the English upper classes. As Burk (2005) notes, important reasons for the decline include the rise of bourgeois individualism, which emphasized an ethos of hard work, self- sufficiency, and the
rejection of inherited aristocratic privilege, combined with an increasing moral ambivalence exhibited by the upper classes regarding the respectability of the Grand Tour. As Towner (1985) indicates, an increase in the amount of upper middle class professionals who were increasingly taking a shorter version of the tour, especially at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, also contributed to its demise as an exclusively aristocratic institution and to a diminution of the Grand Tour as an important form of cultural capital for the English elite.

The Grand Tour of Europe consisted of predominantly young aristocratic English men who traveled around Europe for up to several years. They were typically accompanied by a guide who would tutor them on a whole host of subjects, ranging from language instruction, in particular French, to education on classical architecture, systems of government, and various forms of etiquette. Italy was the main destination, mainly due to interest in the Renaissance as well as the abundance of Roman ruins there. The Grand Tour typically started from England, then to Paris in France, and continued on to the cities of Italy, with Florence, Rome and Naples considered the focal points. Although the history of The Grand Tour stretched over 300 years, the routes and destinations were well established and did not vary enormously over time. The Grand Tour was essentially a circuit that began in France, looped through Italy, parts of Germany, and eventually finished back in England. It is likely that the word ‘tourist’ developed from the Grand Tour since a central characteristic of tourism is that of a predetermined and relatively predicable route structured around certain ‘must see’ places in between. Also as Towner (1985) notes, The Grand Tour was instrumental in establishing a specialized tourist infrastructure of inns, transportation networks, and guides that catered specifically to the needs of these Grand Tourists.
The quote from Blackwood's Magazine above makes clear that at the very heart of The Grand Tour was the idea of education. The ideal goal was the cultivation of the minds and manners of young English men through a first-hand extended study of the classical art and architecture of Rome and Naples, visits to the royal courts of Paris, as well as lessons in recent scientific discoveries that edify the young traveler by exposing him to both the old world and the new. In other words, The Grand Tour provides a key to understanding the emergence of travel as a type of Bildung. As John Towner argues, there was a difference between ‘The Classical Grand Tour’, that ran from the early 16th century to the mid to late 18th century and was distinguished by its exclusive focus on education and social manners, and the ‘Romantic Grand Tour’ of the 19th century, that saw a move towards ‘a passion for the medieval and a love of wild nature with its sublime and picturesque scenery’ (Towner 1985: 314). For now, however, let us take a closer look at look what the Classical Grand Tour consisted of by considering one of the foundational ‘proto-guide books’ of the Grand Tour.

‘Of Travel’, originally published by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in the second edition of his Essays in 1625, is a brief précis which gives some expert advice to travelers about the educational purpose of European travel. Bacon writes, ‘Travaile, in the younger sort, is a part of education, in the elder a part of experience’ (Bacon 1936: 23). He further comments,

That young men travel under some tutor, or grave servant, I allow well; so that he be such a one that hath the language, and hath been in the country before; whereby he may be able to tell them what things are worthy to be seen, in the country where they go; what acquaintances they are to seek; what exercises, or discipline, the place yieldeth. For else, young men shall go hooded, and look abroad little (24).

The importance of a guide or tutor was seen as an essential part of the educational process of the Grand Tour. The guide and tutor was instrumental as a translator and as someone already familiar with the foreign country in question. Importantly, the guide or tutor was instrumental in
directing the attention of the young grand tourist to the important sights and educating him about ‘what things are worthy to be seen’, as well as placing these sights into an intelligible frame of reference for the novice. A key aspect of The Grand Tour was thus how it was mediated through the guidance of a more experienced and knowledgeable tutor. The guide was crucial in maximizing the educational value of The Grand Tour for the young ‘grand tourist’, without which he would (according to Bacon), ‘go hooded, and look abroad little’ (ibid). An appropriate guide was one who had already been abroad and possessed the requisite language skills, and thus could act as both translator and educator for the young grand tourist. In the final section of this chapter I consider how this practice of educational tutoring was eventually replaced by and textually mediated through the travel guidebook.

Concerning the people that the grand tourist was meant to meet, Bacon was quite specific:

As for the acquaintance, which is to be sought in travel; that which is most of all profitable, is acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors: for so in travelling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many. Let him also see, and visit, eminent persons in all kinds, which are of great name abroad; that he may be able to tell, how the life agreeth with the fame (25).

The Grand Tour was therefore also an important occasion to make social connections that could be useful in future enterprises. The classical Grand Tour was not focused solely on the individual experiences of the traveler but rather on cultivating the young man as a future ambassador or head of state. The idea that travel could be an important apprenticeship for the cultivation of ambassadors has not entirely disappeared from the discourse of travel. Indeed when we examine the travel discourses of Lonely Planet in the following chapter we will see how this idea re-emerges in the context of ‘global citizenship’. In the final passages of this essay Bacon ends by cautioning the would-be grand tourist.

When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries, where he hath travelled, altogether behind him; but maintain a correspondence by letters, with those of his
acquaintance, which are of most worth. And let his travel appear rather in his discourse, than his apparel or gesture; and in his discourse, let him be rather advised in his answers, than forward to tell stories; and let it appear that he doth not change his country manners, for those of foreign parts (25).

What is striking about this passage is that, in comparison with the later travels of Lord Byron (discussed below), here Bacon explicitly cautions against any substantial change in the individual character of the young men. Bacon acknowledges that the returning grand tourist should of course have learned important lessons from his educational experience, but these experiences should not bring about a substantial transformation in individual sensibility. We can see how the Grand Tour was seen as an important way of establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations as well for meeting ‘eminent persons’ whom the traveler could look to as future versions of his own self. Interestingly, Bacon warns that upon their return the young man should not hold onto any of the ‘foreign’ dress or manners that he may have picked up while in Europe, but rather insists that ‘his travel appear… in his discourse’. In other words, the returning traveler should be able to integrate his experiences into his persona and speech, and socially perform the fruits of his travel education while remaining unchanged in appearance and manner. Bacon advises that the returnee should not tell travel stories, however, but rather answer questions with decorum, erudition and restraint.

By the time that Bacon had written this treatise (1625) The Grand Tour of Europe was already becoming increasingly popular. Bacon’s advice was written during the time of the classical Grand Tour, and by the time the Romantic Grand Tour was coming to an end at the beginning of the 19th century, a new cultural figure of the traveler had emerged that would serve as the role model for many future tourists and travelers. Lord Byron’s Grand Tour at the beginning of the 19th Century was different in many ways from the traditional ideas of The Grand Tour laid out by Bacon at the beginning of the 16th century, and signified a transformation in the
relationship between education, self-cultivation, and travel. From then on, adventurous individual experiences as well as the possibility of self-transformation were to become the central focus of travel. Adventure, romance, heroism, sexual excess, and an anti-establishment ethos came to characterize this new figure of the ‘Byronic hero’ who would serve as the archetype for many English travelers in Europe and elsewhere. This emulation and imitation was secured by the fact that Byron’s publisher was none other than John Murray, who alongside Karl Baedeker would become one of the most widely published and read travel guidebook authors of the 20th century. Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, published in 1812, a long narrative fictional poem that described the unorthodox grand tour travel experiences of a troubled young man, was originally published by John Murray. Although Byron’s Grand Tour was by no means typical, Byron was after all one of the most notorious, infamous, and scandalized of British travelers: he serves as an important transitional figure that bridges the gap between the eventual demise of the Grand Tour on the one hand, and the emergence of the romantic traveler on the other. Thus, through figures like Lord Byron, travel as an institution of Bildung changed from having a scholarly focus to being a more romantic and adventurous mode of individual experience emphasizing self-transformation and the development of a cosmopolitan sensibility.

In a letter to his mother, Byron quipped:

> I am so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them, and of the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an Islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to set our young men abroad for a term among the few allies our wars have left us (quoted in Elze 1872: 88)

Here we can see that the goals of cosmopolitan self-cultivation achievable through travel that Byron has in mind are quite different from those outlined by Bacon. In contrast to Bacon’s more cautionary advice to the young traveler about the need to remain more or less unchanged following his travels, Byron evokes travel as a necessary and desirable form of civic virtue, one
that could potentially challenge ‘the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an Islander’ (ibid). Echoing Ulrich Beck in his recent book *Cosmopolitan Vision* where he criticizes the ‘self centered narcissism of the national outlook’ (2006: 2), Byron evokes continental travel as a desirable vehicle through which a ‘cosmopolitan vision’ may be cultivated. Importantly, Byron became one of the first figures of travel to celebrate estrangement from the mores and values of elite society in England, and the ‘Byronic hero’ became a well-established cultural figure in shaping the romantic traveler as a type of outcast through which travel became a practice of liberation and rebellion. Through the publications of John Murray and through the many references to Byron in Murray’s guidebooks, Lord Byron became a figure worthy of emulation by many middle class tourists and readers of Murray’s guidebooks who sought ‘picturesque’ landscapes and adventurous and transformative experiences in their own travels (Buzard 1993: 117)

**Romanticism and the Genesis of the Anti-Tourist Discourse**

The figure of Lord Byron, and the type of adventurous romantic travel he engaged in and became infamous for, thus signified an important historical and cultural shift in the European discourse of travel. On the one hand, Byron’s travel writings were increasingly popular at a time when modern mass tourism was a nascent cultural phenomenon (1800-1850) and Byron, amongst others, was an important icon whom Murray’s guidebook readers sought to emulate. Lord Byron, along with William Wordsworth, John Ruskin and Joseph Mallard William Turner, were all leading figures of a new romantic movement that helped to reshape the aesthetic and cultural sensibilities of how landscapes and people were viewed and experienced through the category of ‘the picturesque’. Romanticism helped to define and articulate new modes of perception and experiences of travel that facilitated the emergence of an anti-tourist discourse
through which the traveler was defined as a type of person with a particular sensibility that displayed a more profound ‘ability’ to experience and see the world. Romanticism helped to define the aesthetic and cultural terms through which travel experiences should be understood. It helped to provide some of the key distinctions and ‘cultural spokespersons’ (such as Byron, Wordsworth, Ruskin and others) who would help to crystallize how, or in what terms, the differences between travelers and tourists would be framed, legitimated, and articulated. In short, Romanticism helped to develop a new ‘literacy’ of taste and sensibility that became the dominant aesthetic sensibility through which an anti-tourist discourse was subsequently articulated.

In the introduction I outlined the theoretical approach of Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984). I noted that Bourdieu provides a conceptual framework for understanding how ‘taste’- based distinctions operate to legitimize and reproduce certain aesthetic and moral judgments about the world as ‘naturally’ better than others, and thus are instrumental in reproducing modes of aesthetic domination through everyday expressions of taste. The tourist/traveler distinction is an example of such literacy at work in the leisure sphere by allowing for the valuation of certain experiences and modes of perception over others as having more legitimacy, importance, and status. By looking at European and especially English society in the 1800s at a time when the emerging middle classes were increasingly using tourism and travel as an important marker of mobility and prestige, we can see how tourism and travel became important markers of class and status distinction and how certain ideas and practices concerning travel as distinct from, and better than, tourism were germinated. In other words, travel and tourism were coded and evaluated through a literacy of taste, and Romanticism became an important discourse in this process.
The poet William Wordsworth, in the introduction to his *Guide to the Lakes* ([1810] 2004), succinctly expresses attitudes related to travel, culture, and taste:

In preparing this manual, it was the author’s principal wish to furnish a guide or companion for the *minds of persons of taste*, and feeling for landscape, who might be inclined to explore the District of the Lakes with that degree of attention to which its beauty may fairly lay claim (2004: 27; my emphasis).

Ironically, Wordsworth’s guide was instrumental in making his beloved Lake District all the more popular, and much to his consternation, a plan was proposed for the building of a railway that would vastly increase the volume of visitors to the area. Upon hearing that a public railway was to be built to the town of Windermere in the Lake District, Wordsworth sent two letters of protest, and wrote two sonnets on the matter to the local newspaper *The Morning Post* outlining his objections to such a project. In the second letter dated 14th December 1844 (quoted in Harrison, Wood and Gaiger 1998: 216-220), he summarizes his argument in this way:

> The scope of the main argument…was to prove that the perception of what has acquired the name of picturesque and romantic is so far from being intuitive, that it can be produced only by a slow and gradual process of culture, and to show as a consequence that the humbler ranks of society are not and cannot be in a state to gain material benefit from a more speedy access than they now have to this beautiful region. (220)

Here Wordsworth is not objecting to the actual presence of the ‘humbler ranks of society’ in the region, but rather to the idea that building a railway to ensure ‘a more speedy access’ to the Lake District would not benefit them, as he argued that the proper cultivation of romantic modes of sensibility can only be produced through a ‘slow and gradual process of culture’. According to this logic, even if the humbler ranks had greater opportunity to visit his beloved Lake District, it would not make any difference since they were not ‘cultivated’ enough or lacked the cultural capital to benefit from it in the first place. For Wordsworth, such travel simply would be a waste of time! Of the many criticisms of the tourist which have helped to shape anti-tourist discourse, one of the most consistent is related to time, and here we can see how Wordsworth typifies such
an attitude: the value of a picturesque landscape is lost upon those who do not have the time to appreciate it, which of course begs the question of what group of people were cultured enough to appreciate the place in the first instance. Bourdieu notes that the accumulation of cultural capital ‘implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986: 244). In the context of Wordsworth’s criticisms, where self cultivation comes from a ‘slow and gradual process of culture’, we can see more clearly how time was itself a luxury affordable to the few. With the ever growing middle class tourism industry in England beginning to make inroads into places that were once the exclusive ‘property’ of the upper classes, the symbolic capital of picturesque places and their value as sources of aesthetic pleasure were increasingly under threat (a theme I discuss in relation to Simmel later on in this chapter).

At the same time as Wordsworth was waxing lyrical about the solitude afforded to ‘the stranger’ visiting the Lakes of Coniston, the tourist as a new type of cultural figure was entering into public discourse and cultural representations. For writers like Wordsworth and John Ruskin, dismay and angst about mass tourism seemed to arise from their suspicion that although actual tourists come and go, the tourist and all the attendant infrastructure of railways and hotels would not be departing anytime soon. Although the very first tourists of Thomas Cook stayed in Leicester for just a few hours, returning that same day, the tourist as a particular type of person was destined to become a permanent fixture on the moral landscape of modernity, and in particular on the cultural and physical landscape of Europe and beyond. Thomas Cook and his company were instrumental to the development of tourism in England and abroad, and according to Piers Brendon, Cook made a ‘unique contribution to simplifying, popularizing and cheapening travel’ (Brendon 1991: 17). It was precisely Thomas Cook’s contribution in ‘popularizing,
simplifying, and cheapening’ travel that aroused the frequent ire and condemnation from the upper classes of English society as more and more places that were once the exclusive ‘property’ of those who could afford to travel were now shared by middle class tourists in their droves. Cook enthusiastically promoted and utilized the burgeoning railway system as a way to make travel both more efficient and less expensive for more people, but how his tourists traveled became one of the focal points of criticism by people like Wordsworth, Ruskin, and others. Cook’s tours were the originators of the modern day package holiday. Accommodations, transport and food were paid for in advance and the tour was guided by a company representative who acted as both guide and chaperone for the tourists. The holidays and excursions were meticulously planned out, with preset timetables and itineraries. Of course the idea of such a common way of traveling shocked and disgusted many of those such as John Ruskin who perceived Cook’s form of tourism as the very antithesis of what real travel should be. Later on in this chapter I examine how the guidebooks of Murray and Baedeker functioned as an independent alternative to the tours of Cook and provided the textual means by which their readers could become independent travelers rather than mass produced tourists.

In *The Art of Travel* (2002), Alain de Botton notes that literary and cultural critic John Ruskin was a particularly vituperative critic of tourists, whom he loathed for not taking sufficient time to slow down and truly appreciate the places they were visiting. In a lecture given in Manchester in 1864 Ruskin produced a personal tirade which captures what the physical effect of mass tourism meant to those romantics who sought solitude in the Alps, away from the ‘masses’ and industrial modern urban life:
Your one conception of pleasure is to drive in railroad carriages. You have put a railroad bridge over the fall of Schaffhausen. You have tunneled the cliffs of Lucerne by Tells chapel. You have destroyed the Clarens shore of the Lake of Geneva, there is not a quiet valley in England that you have not filled with bellowing fire nor any foreign city in which the spread of your presence is not marked by a consuming white leprosy of new hotels. The Alps themselves you look upon as soaped poles in a bear garden, which you set yourself to climb and slide down again with “shrieks of delight” (Ruskin, quoted in de Botton 2002: 223)

The narrative of loss and destruction of ‘the natural’ pervades Ruskin’s lecture. The beautiful Alpine falls are replaced with a ‘consuming white leprosy of new hotels’. The Alps, one of the most important landscapes for Romantics, are turned into a fun fair, their only use now as a form of frivolous entertainment for ‘shrieking tourists’. Here we can see how tourism signified to people like Ruskin an inevitable destruction of places deemed sacred by many Romantics, and which in many ways provided impetus to find new places outside the tourist orbit. Although Ruskin is mainly criticizing the destruction of the physical and aesthetic landscapes his words also serve to highlight how the tourist was increasingly characterized as a mindless pleasure-seeker, devoid of any feeling or capacity for the appreciation of the ‘sacred’ character of the Alps. Echoing Wordsworth’s comments on ‘those swarms of pleasure seekers’ in the Lake District, Ruskin too denigrates and infantilizes the sensibility of the tourist as primarily concerned with entertainment and pleasure. He evokes the somewhat childlike image of tourists sliding down poles and ‘shrieking’ with delight. As I show in Chapter 3, this infantilizing characterization of the tourist as a mindless pleasure seeker continues to this day among backpackers.

Romanticism, with its focus on the self, also helped to consolidate the idea that certain places, peoples, and landscapes held restorative qualities for the travelling individual, in sharp

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9 An alpine waterfall immortalized in a watercolor by the English landscape artist John Mallord William Turner
10 Tells Chapel was captured in another famous painting by John Mallord William Turner.
contrast to the emerging industrial urban centers at the time. Most importantly, Romanticism articulated a key discourse that helped cement the connections between travel and the discovery of an authentic and ‘natural’ place under perpetual threat from an ever-encroaching industrial modernity. As we will see in the following chapters, this Romantic discourse of authenticity became further entrenched in anti-tourist discourse as it helped to contrast the in-authenticity of tourism as a type of artificially produced world made for consumption, in comparison to the ‘naturally’ occurring world that the traveler invariably ‘discovers’. The romantic ideal of a spiritual connection with nature was predicated upon the idea of nature as a mirror image to the world of industrial urban modernity, which was also the place where the ‘masses’ were jostling for space on the same streets as the wealthy. ‘Nature’ was pictured as something that existed outside of the city, a place of rejuvenation, purity, and peace, where the modern romantic self could go and feel transformed in the process. Foucault describes these types of places as ‘heterotopias of compensation’ (1986: 27) that provide an idealized ‘counter-place’ to the noisy, crowded and profane metropolis. For the Romantics, solitude was one of the fundamental prerequisites for the proper appreciation of nature and the picturesque. Only through intimate and individual contact with the beauty and awe of nature could the romantic traveler properly cultivate his own sensibilities. In describing the Lake of Coniston in the Lake District, Wordsworth wistfully expresses such a sentiment: ‘The stranger, from the moment he sets foot on those sands, seems to leave the turmoil and traffic of the world behind him’ (Wordsworth 2004: 32). However, this capacity to appreciate such places fully was not something that was automatically available to anyone: it was considered by many Romantics as a sensibility that had to be cultivated over a long period of time, and in a space which was very much away from the ‘madding crowd’ of the tourist masses who increasingly began to frequent these places.
When Ruskin visited the Alps he travelled there in a horse-drawn carriage that could accommodate up to six people. In typical snobbish prose he sentimentalizes the horse-drawn carriage as a far superior form of transport that allows for intimacy to develop among those sharing the ride. Speaking about tourists traveling by rail, Ruskin sketches a somewhat bleak picture of people who mindlessly use the railway to travel around Europe:

The poor modern slaves and simpletons who let themselves be dragged like cattle or felled timber through the countries they imagine themselves visiting, can have no conception whatever of the complex joys, ingenious hopes, connected with the choice and arrangement of the travelling carriage in old times - the little apartment that was to be home for five or six months (Ruskin, quoted in Harrison 1920: 199-200)

In a familiar refrain, these infantile, underdeveloped and ‘poor modern slaves and simpletons’ are ‘dragged like cattle’ over ‘felled timber’ around Europe. What could be a more damning slur and metaphor of mindless docility than to compare a group of people to ‘cattle’ or an inanimate object? Ruskin critiques tourists for their inability to appreciate what they encounter, deluding themselves that they are fully knowledgeable about a place which they only ‘imagine themselves visiting’. They have ‘no conception whatever’ of what real travel is about and how essential is the appropriate form of transport (in this case a road carriage). What Ruskin assumes is that this method of transport allows for a more selective choice of company than on a railway car, and that a considerable financial fortune was required to travel in a carriage which Ruskin could call ‘home for five or six months’.

Of course, if we recall that the Grand Tour could take up to several years and that Wordsworth, Ruskin and Byron all spent several months in the Swiss Alps in search of the picturesque, then we can clearly see how the ideas of culture and cultivation that they spoke of were a direct expression of the wealth and privilege of those who could afford to ‘be cultured’ in the first place. For Romantics like Wordsworth and Ruskin, deriving ‘mere’ pleasure from
contact with nature in these picturesque places in fact exemplified a debased form of experience. The truly cultured person sought something far more sublime, transcendent, and transformative than those middle class ‘tourists’, those ‘swarms of pleasure-hunters...that do not fly fast enough through the country which they have come to see’ (Wordsworth 2004: 28).

Rural ‘peasants’, such as those in the Lake District of Northern England, were frequently idealized by the romantics for not having been corrupted by the forces of modern industrial life. The rural poor became objects of fascination and distant veneration for many Romantics. They were deemed to be somehow living more authentic, less corrupted and morally superior lives than those in the cities. These domestically focused discourses of Romantic primitivism were accompanied by the idea of the ‘noble savage’ that was gaining currency at the time in the early 19th century, further propagating the idea of a human nature that existed in perfect harmony with the environment, and more importantly, a human nature that had yet to endure the corruption of modern industrial life. As we will see in the following chapters, the trope of the noble savage as the embodiment of a more simple and morally pure state of humanity still remains a persistent lens through which western travelers see many of the ‘locals’ that they encounter on their backpacking trips in the ‘third world’. The Romantic Movement emerged in tandem with English colonial exploration and conquest, and debates about primitivism and the moral virtue of ‘the natives’ were very much part of this. As more and more places and peoples came within the orbit of European knowledge of the world, ‘primitives’ were held up by many proto-romantics such as Rousseau as examples of an uncorrupted human nature whose distance from European civilization had left them ‘untouched’ and in a state of innocence, more childlike than adult. Of course, also prevalent was the more Hobbesian perception of ‘primitives’ as barbaric, violent and savage, living in a ‘state of nature’. Tales of cannibalism, sorcery and general barbarism were as
popular as tales of a rediscovered lost humanity embodied in the ‘natives’. However, the ‘Noble Savage’ became one of the defining tropes through which colonized others were understood, and this idea potentially fuelled the imagination of many who went to places like India in the 19th century. In short, the idea of authenticity and the possibility of recovering a lost sense of humanity through encounters with this authentic human nature became established through Romanticism and this idea became a central organizing principle for the many leisure travelers that emerged in the early 19th century in England.

With the increasing incorporation of India into the British Empire, these romantic discourses helped to shape how India, Ireland, and Canada provided new arenas for the transformation of self through contact with people and geographies that were considered not yet to have been ‘contaminated’ or discovered by western modernity and progress. For example, in *Mapping Men and Empire*, Richard Phillips (1997) discusses the popularity of the Scottish writer Robert Ballanytane and his books *The Young Fur Traders* [1856] and *The Pioneers* [1872] where the cultivation of a ‘white masculinity’ (60) through colonial travel and trade constituted a central trope in narratives of exploration and discovery. Colonial Canada serves as a ‘terra incognita’ (58) providing ‘a setting defined by movement and freedom…where the hero defines himself through his actions’ (59). According to Richards, ‘the setting of the *Young Fur Traders* is a wild, primitive space in which the hero’s manhood is defined, physically, spiritually and racially’ (59). The racial and gender constraints on who could travel and take part in such transformative projects of self-cultivation illustrates how geographical mobility and self-cultivation were produced and realized within particular colonial, racial and gendered contexts.

Both the ‘rustic peasant’ and the ‘noble savage’ were in fact two different expressions of the same romantic perception of people who were deemed to exist outside of time and modernity.
and could provide a beacon of moral and social simplicity in the face of an industrial and ‘unnatural’ urban life (Ryle 1999). In *Journeys in Ireland* (1999) Martin Ryle discusses the literary writings of English travelers to Ireland in the 19th century. When discussing the West of Ireland he notes that travel helped ‘to constitute a specific cultural geographical tradition, in which English travelers, their scenic tastes formed by the literary and visual aesthetic of the picturesque and the sublime sought in the peripheral Celtic regions…the kinds of landscapes which best met those tastes…as a terrain of ‘tradition’ and a refuge from modernity’ (27). Here it is important to note the role played by literary novels in the textual mediation and cultural reproduction of a wide variety of tropes through which the English reading public ‘experienced’ foreign lands and peoples. The work of Edward Said has been important in bringing attention to how Orientalizing scenes and tropes in the English novel played a significant role in helping to cultivate and naturalize colonial rule and intervention in foreign lands (Said 1993, 1994).

British colonialism provided an abundance of places and peoples who could be looked upon as embodying a primitive simplicity and thus provided the European traveler with an important resource or wellspring, through which an authentic self could be recovered from the murk of industrial modernity. Discourses of Empire also provided an important political and ‘moral’ rationale for the more ‘enlightened’ and adult rule of those more ‘simple and childlike’ people who were deemed incapable of ruling themselves. In the context of travel, these ‘rural peasants’ and ‘noble savages’ were *objects* to be looked at rather than subjects with agency and subjectivity in their own right and thus were viewed as part of the scenery of picturesque landscapes which the romantic traveler could gaze upon for his own spiritual edification. In Chapters 2 and 3, I explore how these themes are replicated and transformed in the present with reference to a combination of guidebook analysis and interviews with backpackers.
Blackwood’s Magazine and ‘The Tourist’

I turn now to examine more popular and widespread articulations of the tourist/traveler distinction through the lens of Bildung as a practice of educational self-cultivation in the 19th century. I analyze three articles from Blackwood’s Magazine that illustrate different but interrelated criticisms of the tourist. The excerpts I focus on show how elite discourses of travel, from the educational ethos of the Grand Tour to the anti-tourist discourse of the Romantics, percolated into public discourse and helped to further entrench and naturalize the tourist/traveler distinction in the popular imagination. In short, these texts show how the tourist became understood as a type of person for whom the ‘Bildung of travel’ was out of reach. I suggest that in order for the ‘Bildung of travel’ to be upheld as an ideal, that is, for travel to retain its promise of social, cultural, and individual enlightenment and cultivation, it had to denigrate and minimize the cultural value of other forms of popular travel.

Over 150 years ago the pages of the Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, a popular conservative magazine published from 1817-1980, contained book reviews and political and social commentary which were replete with disparaging comments, vitriolic denouncements, and thinly concealed disgust for tourists and their habits. Why was the tourist such a hated, denigrated and lampooned figure in the popular press? Blackwood’s Magazine, well known for its satirical tone and barbed reviews, provides some important clues in helping us answer these questions. Here anti-tourist discourse was never articulated in precisely the same terms as it was by the Romantics but rather drew upon other aspects of travel to present a superior, cultivating practice:

The merits of the railroad and the steamboat have been prodigiously vaunted, and we have no desire to depreciate the advantages of either...but they have afflicted our generation with one desperate evil; they have covered Europe with tourists...If we are told that this is but a harmless impertinence after all we reply No - it does general mischief; it spoils all rational travel; it disgusts all intelligent curiosity; it repels the student, the
philosopher and the manly investigator from subjects which have been thus trampled into mire by the hoofs of a whole tribe of travelling bipeds who might rejoice to exchange brains with the animals which they ride (Blackwood’s Magazine 1848: 185)

The anonymous author of this article begins by carefully acknowledging the ‘merits of the railroad and the steamboat’, two very important inventions of the industrial revolution that were instrumental in reducing travel time between destinations. Although the steamboat had replaced the sail ship and the railway had replaced the horse drawn carriage, the author expresses a certain ambivalence regarding the social use of these time-saving inventions. The steamboat, and in particular the railroad, allowed for an increase both in the volume of people who could now travel and in the frequency of such travel so that more people could travel further, faster, and more often than previously. Just seven years previously (1848), Thomas Cook, described by many as the father of modern mass tourism (Brendon 1991), had successfully brought a party of over 500 teetotalers and temperance campaigners from Leicester to Loughborough (11 miles apart) by railway in what has been described as one of the first organized tours. Three years after the publication of the Blackwood’s Magazine article, The Thomas Cook Company organized the travel of over 150,000 people to the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, held in 1851 (Brendon 1991).

The reason for the ambivalence towards the new technologies is quickly revealed in the comment that: ‘they have covered Europe with tourists’, whom the author considers a ‘desperate evil’ which cannot be easily dismissed as a ‘harmless impertinence’. In his subsequent remarks, the author reveals his reasons for finding the presence of tourists so troubling and abhorrent in a way which introduces a theme which we can recognize in the present day. The author quips that tourism ‘spoils all rational travel’ and ‘disgusts all intelligent curiosity’. His polemic is therefore not against tourism per se, but rather that tourism threatens to scupper the sanctity of that form of
travel that is practiced by ‘the student, the philosopher and the manly investigator’. Here we have a list of three types of people that would have been easily identifiable as being key figures of European travel: the student, such as one taking part in The Grand Tour; philosophers such as Francis Bacon as well as others had published treatises on travel; and the manly investigator, probably representing scientific journeys typically done by men (see Justin Stagl (1995), A History of Curiosity). All three types share reason, intelligence, and curiosity. The gendered contours of this diatribe are unmistakable, and as Buzard (1993) notes, the tourist and traveler were frequently evoked as gendered figures. The author reserves his most acerbic words and unrelenting condemnation for tourists who are more akin to animals with ‘hoofs’ than to humans with brains. Here the ‘rational’ traveler is sharply contrasted to those who travel en masse, like animals in a herd. ‘Intelligent curiosity’ is contrasted with the stupidity of those who might actually be better off intellectually if they did ‘exchange brains with the animals which they ride’. In contrast to the individualized student, philosopher, and manly investigator, these ‘traveling bipeds’ form an undifferentiated ‘tribe’, who lack civility and pose a possible danger, or who may at least be an object of disgust and repulsion. Again we hear echoes of a gendered discourse of travel that reflects dominant ideas about the capacity of women to appreciate and participate in cultural life. Mainland Europe, once an exclusive destination for the gentry and upper classes of English society in the times of the Grand Tour, was being ‘invaded’ by masses of tourists. The symbolic and cultural capital of travel, once the exclusive preserve of the English upper classes, was being diluted by middle-class English tourists who could now travel to mainland Europe and back in a relatively short period of time. By virtue of their ever increasing numbers, tourists were automatically precluded from such individualistic pursuits as travel.
If tourists ruined serious travel for ‘students, philosophers and manly investigators’ by stampeding across Europe, they were also incapable of truly appreciating anything encountered while on tour. Another Blackwood’s Magazine article, published in 1847, gives us a less caustic but more precise indication of the kinds of ‘cultural sins’ that tourists were frequently admonished with.

“Well, I can say I have seen it,” says your routine tourist - whereby, if he knew the meaning of his own words, he would be aware that he conveyed to mankind a testimony to his folly in having made any effort to look at that which has produced no impression whatever on his mind, and in looking at which he would not be aware that he saw anything remarkable, unless the guidebook and the waiter at the inn had certified that it was an object of interest (Blackwood’s Magazine 1847:152)

Here the author castigates the ‘routine tourist’ for not having the right mind (or requisite cultural capital) to appreciate some important object or place encountered on holiday. The hypothetical tourist in question seems to be speaking defensively, as though anticipating the subsequent critique by the author. The ‘routine tourist’ claims that there is a certain value in having simply seen the object in question, and thus in the knowledge that many other people, especially the working classes, could not easily see such a thing: at least he has seen it, which is a lot more than others can say. However, the author of the article urges us not to accept such a defense. Simply to have ‘seen it’ is not enough since the object should also make an ‘impression’ on the mind, which it clearly fails to do so in this case. Just as the tourist is unaware that his words are ‘a testimony to his folly’, so too are his actions, which, in the context of sightseeing, are full of hidden meanings. Precisely because the tourist lacks a sensibility and mentality that can be moved by viewing such an object, he is ‘uncultivated’ and the potential educational effect of viewing a worthy object is lost on him. As the author concludes, the tourist is incapable of independently recognizing what is truly of value, unless it is pointed out to him: he is ‘culture blind’ and needs to be told what is significant, in contrast to the cultured traveler who
presumably would immediately know what is worth seeing. In theoretical terms, the tourist lacks the cultural capital to truly appreciate and really grasp or understand the cultural significance or worth of what he sees. Since he remains impervious to the ‘cultivating’ effect that objects can have, to state that he has at least ‘seen it’ is to miss the whole point and lesson of travel. The tourist remains unchanged as a result of his travels, the cultivating effects are lost on him, and he begins and ends his journey no more educated, cultured, or changed than before. This theme concerning the superficiality of touristic perception, and the inability of the tourist gaze to penetrate the depth of things, has remained common in the criticism of tourists. This cultural trope exhibits a distinctively class based criticism of the masses who lack individuality, good taste and cultural capital.

An important criticism that this author levels at the tourist is related to the use of guidebooks. For the Blackwood’s author, it is precisely due to a lack of cultivation that the tourist needs to be ‘told’ by the guidebook that the object he is looking at is an object of value and significance. Contrary to the more ‘cultured’ and ‘educated’ author, the tourist is characterized as a type of person who does not ‘naturally’ or automatically know the importance or meaning of what he or she encounters, a childish or culturally ‘under-developed’ figure who needs to be told by others what various objects in the world actually ‘mean’. Of course it is impossible not to recognize the class dimensions to these characterizations. In Bourdieu’s terms, the naturalizing and essentializing ideology of the tourist as a type of person who lacks the appropriate ability to grasp things is articulated in purely personalized terms of reference. By denigrating the need to rely on a guidebook, the author implicitly renders invisible the privileges of wealth and education that the more cultured traveler has accumulated throughout the course of his life, and expresses them simply as a naturally occurring phenomenon. the tourist does not
automatically and ‘naturally’ know what he is looking at, and thus requires some education from the guidebook by ‘blindly’ following sightseeing advice and information. As Koshar (1993) notes, although the Baedeker guidebooks which had become more widespread at the time had the goal of educating, cultivating and enlightening readers, and thereby distinguishing them from the mass tourist, cultural critics such as John Ruskin and the editors of Blackwood’s Magazine castigated guidebook use as symptomatic of a ‘slavish’ and ‘primitive’ mentality.

A typical feature in the denigration of tourists and their inability to appreciate culture is related to time. The tourist was frequently characterized as always in a rush, trying to cram as many sites into as short a time as possible. The growth of the middle classes in England meant that although they could afford leisure time for holidays, they by no means could afford several months or years in Europe as could many of the Grand Tour gentlemen or upper-class Romantics. This restricted itinerary was a common target of ridicule and scorn by commentators who also considered such lack of time as a contributing factor to the inability of tourists to appreciate what they saw while on tour. The following article from Blackwood’s Magazine, published in 1845, gives us a good idea of the style of ridicule that the frenetic tourist was subject to. It also echoes the previous criticisms of Wordsworth who had argued that ample time was a fundamental prerequisite for truly appreciating the world that was encountered.

Figure to yourself an energetic tourist, who protests everywhere that he comes only to see the lakes…simply in search of the picturesque. Yet this man adjures every landlord…which is the nearest road to Keswick…whether they are taking the shortest road. The author’s reply is to say “most excellent stranger, as you come to the lakes simply to see their loveliness, might it not be as well to ask after the most beautiful road rather than the shortest”. (Blackwood’s Magazine 1845: 273)

Here the author suggests that the ‘energetic tourist’ is a subtle hypocrite, who proclaims that his true purpose is to be ‘in search of the picturesque’, even as he tries to find the shortest and thus most economical route to the lakes. In the author’s mind the tourist illegitimately attempts to lay
claim to the symbolic capital of a romantic sensibility by way of a short-cut, thereby missing the entire point of coming in the first place. The tourist simply wants to go to the lakes, claim that he has ‘seen it’, and then leave in search of the next picturesque place. The final sarcastic question posed by the author is already answered: if the tourist really wanted to appreciate the scenery of the lakes then he would take ‘the most beautiful road rather than the shortest’.

The key ideas and general mood of these authors express how, in their eyes, tourism spoils the educative potential of ‘real travel’. ‘The tourist is happy simply to have seen something, remains somewhat at a distance, and is unchanged as a result. The tourist can sometimes espouse the same goals as the traveler, but is betrayed by the method of realizing these goals. The threat posed to the value of the symbolic and cultural capital of ‘real’ travel came from a perceived vulgarization and massification in the form of tourism. The democratization of travel through new means of transport such as the railway and steamship meant an ever increasing encroachment of the masses, deemed incapable of grasping the true cultural value of travel, and in fact were held responsible for actually eroding its value through their increased numbers. Although written over 150 years ago, these characterizations of the tourist, as a herd animal devoid of individuality, good taste, and enamored with the superficial, still persists today. Incapable of appreciating nature, since time and sensibility are needed to do so, and incapable of recognizing the value of cultural objects or being changed by gazing at them, the tourist is portrayed as ignorant, lacking in cultural capital, and satisfied with the superficial. Travel is thus reduced to frenetic sightseeing, pleasure seeking, and a mass stampede.

**Simmel, Romanticism and the ‘Work of Travel’**

If the Alps offered a place where Romantics such as Byron, Wordsworth, Ruskin and others could experience a sublime and picturesque nature in solitude, away from the madding crowd, they were also a place where the ‘manly’ romantic travelers with the same veneration of
the picturesque could encounter a physical and moral challenge. I now turn to a second important aspect of Romanticism that helped to shape the anti-tourist discourse and was also important in defining travel as a practice of individual effort and endurance. This second aspect of romantic travel, ‘the work of travel’, was increasingly defined against the apparent easiness and luxury of tourism in the late 19th century. The work of travel draws upon the etymological roots of the word travel as travail, which the romantic traveler in this context embodied as an ethos of hard work, endurance and asceticism. While the picturesque of the Alps was meant to cultivate the aesthetic sensibilities of the romantic traveler, this same landscape was also the stage where the traveler could overcome physical and psychological challenges, endure hardship, and be cultivated as a supremely individual and self-sufficient being. Georg Simmel offers an insightful analysis of what exactly the arrival of the tourist masses and their accompanying infrastructure meant for those who so clearly venerated a pristine and sublime Alpine nature. His brief essay illustrates how the relationship between solitude, place and ‘the work of travel’ emerged as an important aspect of anti-tourist discourse through Romantic critiques of the tourism industry. He writes:

I disagree with that foolish romanticism which saw difficult routes, prehistoric food and hard beds as an irremovable stimulus of the good old days of alpine travel: despite this it is still possible for those, who wish, to find solitude and quiet in the Alps (Simmel 1997a: 219)

Georg Simmel’s brief essay ‘The Alpine Journey’ from 1895 (1997a) can be considered one of the very first sociological commentaries on romantic travel in the way that he highlights and critiques the associations between the work of travel and romanticism. Furthermore, by virtue of the fact that it was published in 1895, the essay also serves as a key historical text that was produced at a time when mass tourism in Europe was at its height. The essay serves as a critical sociological commentary on Romantic travel while at the same time being a ‘product of its time’
in the context of debates about tourism and travel. In 1899 Thorsten Veblen had written on
tourism and leisure in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*. As Lawrence Culver notes:

Veblen’s formulations of “conspicuous consumption” and “conspicuous leisure” offered
a simple explanation for tourist behavior: recreational travel was merely a marker of class
status. One traveled in order to be seen traveling, and leisure was the “chief mark of
gentility”. (Culver 2010: 8)

Simmel, as always, takes a different approach by critically illustrating the inner meaning that
alpine travel had for a certain strata of the German upper middle class (*Burgertum*), the
transformations that tourism was bringing to the Swiss Alps, and by questioning the pedagogical
value that such transformations could have on the upper strata of German society who had
previously laid claim to Alpine travel as an ‘important element’ of their ‘psychic life’. His choice
of ‘destination’, the Swiss Alps, is by no means accidental. For several decades the Alps had
been increasingly established as one of the must-see destinations on the Grand Tour of Europe.
The Romantic Movement in particular had a special relationship with the Alps and saw the likes
of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Goethe and Herder all wax lyrical about their picturesque and
sublime qualities. The Alps became *the* European destination for those wishing to experience the
sublime in nature as an object of aesthetic pleasure. It is precisely the perceived threat that a
tourism infrastructure and masses of tourists present to those looking to encounter the sublime in
the Alps that Simmel focuses on and criticizes.

Simmel begins by observing that ‘destinations that were previously only accessible by
remote walks can now be reached by railways, which are appearing at an ever-increasing rate’
(219). Again, the railway is depicted as a literal ‘vehicle’ of social change and a new form of
mass transportation bringing significant changes to once relatively inaccessible places and as the
encroachment of a literal and metaphorical ‘beaten track’ in the Alps as well. Simmel implicitly
touches upon an important aspect of tourism here, namely, time. The ‘remote walks’ that were
once the only way to access distant places in the Alps would have entailed a significant time-investment for the traveler. Another important element of Alpine travel concerns the relative independence and hardiness of the traveler who would have taken these remote walks. The remoteness of the walks implies a degree of danger and self-sufficiency. Accidents happen and one must be prepared for all eventualities if one is stuck in the ‘middle of nowhere’. The act of walking suggests the epitome of self-reliance and independence. At one point in the essay, Simmel gives perhaps the ultimate example of the contrast between the luxury of tourism and the ‘work of travel’: ‘the railway-line up the Eiger appears to have been finalized and the same number of climbers who have scaled this difficult peak can now be brought up in a single day by rail’ (221). The first recorded ascent of the Eiger was in 1858 and just 40 years later those who could afford the railway ticket could catch the train up to the Eigergletscher Railway Station, bringing them to an altitude of 2320 meters, over halfway up the mountain. The sublime experience of high altitude and picturesque views of the mountains made available to the railway tourists were once the preserve of an elite alpine fraternity. There is a direct relationship here to the economic capital needed to afford such views and experiences in the first place: the time and expense it took to arrange a climbing party would have certainly been beyond the means of the middle class tourists who could now enjoy a comparable experience of the Eiger for the price of a railway ticket. Furthermore, the difficulty of getting there by ‘remote walks’, and the physical danger from avalanches, was now circumvented by the railroad. The experience of alpine travel was now available to more and more people in a way that was safer, cheaper, and quicker than before. But for the upper strata the educational value of such progressive forms of travel was highly questionable, simply because it was so easy to accomplish in the first place. Simmel is quick to note the consequences of these developments for the romantic alpine traveler: ‘The
Faustian wish ‘I stand before you nature a solitary individual’ is ever more rarely realized and so increasingly rarely declared’ (Simmel 1997a: 219).

The growing impossibility of solitude in light of the arrival of mass tourism, coupled with the physical transformation of once inaccessible areas, meant that the conditions necessary for the romantic appreciation of nature (solitude and the absence of symbols of modern industrial life such as railways) were under threat, along with the conditions necessary for dominating nature through feats such as mountain climbing which involved risk, difficulty and independence. The growing popularity of Alpine travel led to a potential devaluation of the symbolic capital of the Alps and of its pedagogic value for a certain stratum of the German upper class, as Simmel elaborates:

Now there is the lure of the ease of an open road and the concentration and convergence of the masses - colourful but therefore as a whole colourless - suggesting to us an average sensibility. Like all social averages this depresses those disposed to the higher and finer values without elevating those at the base to the same degree. (219)

Here Simmel articulates a common anxiety of the German educated middle classes surrounding the ‘leveling effect’ of mass tourism and its effects on the culture of the individual. On the one hand, Romanticism introduced new hierarchical categories of aesthetic perception such as the ‘picturesque’, which helped to distinguish the traveler as a figure of solitude, individuality and discerning taste from the tourist. One of the key aspects of Romanticism already discussed was the necessity for solitude as a prerequisite for the enjoyment of places and landscapes. However, this solitude was framed not so much in an exclusively positive way but rather as the absence of the tourist masses who, according to Romantics such as Ruskin and Wordsworth, sought a more debased and less valuable form of aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, the increasing ubiquity of mass tourism also helped to shape the perception of the romantic traveler as one who...
embodied a morality of endurance and effort as distinct from the more pampered and tame form of travel practiced by the tourist.

There is one other type in the history of European travel that has undoubtedly proved influential in the construction of the traveler as an adventurous, fearless explorer who journeys to dangerous and foreign lands, namely, the cultural figure and historical reality of the ‘colonial explorer’ in the 19th century. The colonial conquest of the ‘Dark Continent’ of Africa inspired innumerable novels, such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (2000), which recounted tales of the ‘discovery’ of lost and savage tribes and of places untouched by the hand of ‘modern civilization’. These stories of undiscovered peoples and places were by no means purely a literary affair; there was also an entire colonial apparatus of scientific experts, administrators, and others who documented, detailed, described, and (in cases like the Hottentot in Germany) actually displayed these people as living museum specimens to be gazed at, spoken about, and scientifically discussed by leading experts of the day. Figures like Dr Samuel Livingston, the British explorer of Africa in the 19th century, became enormously popular heroes with the British public. Although the vast history of European exploration and conquest cannot be adequately detailed here, it is instructive to note that the trope of the fearless explorer who ‘discovers’ and lays claim to exotic and foreign lands, and who encounters strange natives on his voyages, recurs in the backpacking discourse prevalent in the former colonies of the British Empire. As I show later in this chapter, the shared historical geography at work here is evident among predominantly white westerners who travel to third world countries and encounter racialized others can be understood as a modern-day reproduction and repetition under present day circumstances of what Mary Louise Pratt calls ‘contact zones’. Pratt conceptualizes contact zones as ‘the space of colonial encounters’ (2008: 25) where people who are usually geographically
separated from each other are ‘encountered’ and constituted spatially through unequal and asymmetrical power relations. Although today’s backpackers are not part of a colonial apparatus in the sense that the early modern explorers and administrators were, in places like India backpackers are encouraged to ‘discover’ untouched places and peoples in ‘contact zones’ constituted through historical relations of inequality and ‘picturesque’ modes of viewing.

In Chapter 3 ‘The Beaten Track’, I explore these themes through in depth interviews with backpackers and examine how the tourist continues to haunt and frustrate the quest for solitude, authenticity, and the picturesque that many backpackers so fervently desire. Despite, or perhaps because of, the incessant wave of criticism, rebuke, and general disrepute that the middle class tourist was faced with, all was not lost. Although Thomas Cook’s guided tours and guided tourists were the butt of endless jokes, cultural critiques, and relentless snobbery, a new genre of travel text emerged that promised a type of ‘salvation’ for their readers from the lowly status of the tourist.

‘Enlightened’ Travel Guidebooks and the Salvation of ‘The Tourist’

Although travel guidebooks had been popular in England and Europe since the middle of the 18th century, it was not until the arrival of John Murray and Karl Baedeker that those involved in leisure travel could avail themselves of the advice, expertise, and good taste of a learned and experienced traveler on the mass market. Primarily read and used by a middle class audience who were able to afford to travel and stay in accommodation in the first place, the guidebooks of Murray and Baedeker functioned as pedagogical texts that aimed to ‘teach’ readers valuable knowledge and to appreciate what they encountered on their travels. The guidebooks of Murray and Baedeker would ‘teach tourists how to become travelers’ by giving them the independence, knowledge, and security that was necessary if they were to venture ‘off the beaten track’ of tourism and to cultivate themselves as independent travelers who did not
have to depend upon guided tours. Despite the inevitable criticisms, some of which we have already encountered in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, these travel guidebooks occupied an interesting and ambivalent position in the tourist industry and in broader cultural debates about travel. If the tourist was one who was trapped in the confines of a narrow and limited worldview, then the guidebook promised a ‘way out’.

In his article ‘Baedeker’s Universe’ (1985), Edward Mendelson discusses the cultural significance and social importance of the Baedeker guidebooks. Mendelson begins with a definitive pronouncement: ‘for more than a hundred years, Karl Baedeker was Europe’s ideal parent’ (Mendelson 1985:1). As I note in the following chapter, the trope of the guidebook writer as father figure re-appears in Lonely Planet through the authority of Tony Wheeler. In each case, the relationship between guidebooks and travel is conceived as a kind of modern day, cultural and paternal ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault 2003), in which readers and users are guided from a state of relative ignorance and dependence to a more fully developed ‘adult’ state. As Rudy Koshar cogently writes:

> It is common in cultural criticism and scholarship to distinguish between the individual traveler, ripe for unexpected adventure, and the ‘mass tourist’, cowed by the triple hegemony of guidebook, itinerary and travel agency. The Baedeker goal--and the goal of many subsequent guidebooks--was to obliterate this distinction, to give every tourist the opportunity to become the traveler (Koshar 2000: 31)

Although Koshar includes guidebooks among the crutches that the mass tourist is ‘cowed by’, he rightly notes that, although ‘it is common in cultural criticism and scholarship’ (my emphasis) to make the distinction between the mass tourist and the individual traveler, it is not necessarily a *correct estimation* but rather a reflection of the anti-tourist sentiment (as well as class snobbery) at work *within* cultural criticism and scholarship. In the introductory chapter I noted such snobbery in the works of cultural critics and scholars such as Paul Fussell and Daniel Boorstin,
and above in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. In identifying the roots of this attitude, Koshar nicely highlights the prevailing ideal type of the traveler who is an *independent individual* ‘ripe for adventure’ in contrast to the ideal type of the *mass tourist* who lacks the individual autonomy and desire for adventure.

We have already seen how the tourist was frequently characterized as a somewhat childlike figure, constantly seeking pleasure, lacking autonomy, and ignorant of the surrounding world. Ruskin’s patronizing and caustic denouncement of tourists, denigrating them as ‘simpletons’ who having ‘no conception whatever of the complex joys, ingenious hopes, connected with the choice and arrangement of the travelling carriage’ (Ruskin, quoted in Harrison 1920: 199-200, my emphasis). Complexity and ingenuity are thus absent from the *mind* of the ‘simpleton’ tourist whose childish, pleasure-seeking *behavior* was endlessly berated by Ruskin: ‘the Alps themselves you look upon as soaped poles in a bear garden¹¹, which you set yourself to climb and slide down again with ‘shrieks of delight’’ (Ruskin quoted in de Botton 2002: 223). Wordsworth too patronizingly complains of the ‘swarms of pleasure-hunters...that do not fly fast enough through the country which they have come to see’ (Wordsworth 2004: 28), again evoking the idea of tourists as young children running around without direction, seeking fun and pleasure, and unaware of the adult world in which they play.

Mendelson makes a related comment about the role of Baedeker’s guidebook:

For every traveler who joined a guided tour, there were others - the many thousands who combined within themselves a romantic personality and a bourgeois character - who insisted on traveling alone. For these travelers Karl Baedeker perfected his wholly new kind of guidebook. “Its principal object,” he [Baedeker] wrote in the foreword to his guide to Germany and Austria, was “to keep the traveler at as great a distance as possible

¹¹ Bear Gardens were popular places of entertainment in England during the 17th and 18th century. The entertainment consisted of bears, dressed up in costumes, made to perform dance routines and tricks while standing on hot surfaces.
from the unpleasant, and often wholly invisible, tutelage of hired servants and guides (and in part from the aid of coachmen and hotelkeepers), to assist him in standing on his own feet, to render him independent, and to place him in a position from which he may receive his own impressions with clear eyes and lively heart (*Baedeker Deutschland*, eighth edition 1858, p.1, quoted in Mendelson 1985: 2)

In European discourse, the traveler has been consistently characterized as a more ‘enlightened’ and ‘adult’ figure in contradistinction to the tourist who apparently remains in a state of perpetual immaturity and self-imposed ignorance. The traveler is typically characterized as a type of person who is not afraid to strike out on his or her own and to leave behind the comfort of the guided tour and the safe predictability of timetables. The traveler is further celebrated as an ‘evolved’ and ‘mature’ figure that embodies independence, seriousness of intent, and wisdom. As Koshar notes, it is within the context of using a guidebook that such qualities and virtues can be most fully realized. We can also see how the tourist and the traveler are gendered types. In comparison to the ‘manly’ independent traveler who displays autonomy, self-reliance, and confidence in exercising spatial freedom, the tourist was often characterized in disparagingly feminine terms in requiring a protective chaperone like Thomas Cook who would insulate her from the dangers and vagaries of the world (Buzard 1993: 132). This anachronistic construction of the tourist and traveler reflects a commonplace idea in 19th century European public discourse in which women were consistently characterized as childlike, lacking reason, and bereft of intelligence in comparison to men (cf. Gilman 1989). The ‘evils’ of tourism decried in the *Blackwood’s Magazine* (1848: 185) clearly express this gendered aspect of anti-tourist sentiment: tourism ‘spoils all rational travel; it disgusts all intelligent curiosity; it repels the student, the philosopher and the manly investigator’ (my emphasis). In contrast to the ‘manly traveler’ who embodies autonomy of thought and movement, the movements of the tourist are characterized as strictly circumscribed and regulated through timetables and protective tours. Not
surprisingly, Mendelson claims the man ‘Karl Baedeker…was Europe’s ideal parent’ (1985), and sought ‘to give every tourist the opportunity to become the traveler’ (Koshar 2000: 31). The guidebook for independent travelers, conceived as an instrument for disciplining underdeveloped tourists was thus supported by European enlightenment discourses dating from the late 17th century and early eighteenth century.

Immanuel Kant’s well known and widely discussed essay on the question ‘what is enlightenment?’, published in the German periodical Berlinische Monatschrift in 1784, provides a revealing window into European enlightenment discourse at the turn of the 19th century. A short time later the first modern travel guidebooks were beginning to emerge and its most prominent guidebook authors hailed from Germany (Karl Baedeker) and England (John Murray), two countries that were centers of the European Enlightenment. As Michel Foucault notes, ‘Kant defines Aufklärung [Enlightenment] in an almost entirely negative way, as an Ausgang, an “exit”, a “way out”’ (Foucault 2003: 44). Considered within this historical and philosophical context, guidebooks can be understood as enlightenment texts which provide the reader with an Ausgang, an ‘exit’ and way out” of the immaturity associated with the tourist mentality but through paternal guidance and advice. In a telling passage, Kant evokes three authorities whom, he argues, help to explain why ‘it is so easy to be immature’:

If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me (Kant 1970: 2)

Here Kant touches upon a key criticism leveled against tourists and touched upon by Simmel in his essay on Alpine travel, namely, that tourists are pampered beings who can pay a travel agent to do all the work for them. He consequently touches upon a key idea in the ‘discourse of travel’,
namely, ‘the work of travel’. Travel should be difficult, and provide a challenge to the individual. In his 1784 essay Kant defines Enlightenment in the following terms:

Enlightenment is man's emergence [Ausgang] from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude! [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!" - that is the motto of enlightenment. (1970: 2 my emphasis)

Considered as paradigmatic Enlightenment texts in the sense evoked by Kant, the goal of these guidebooks was to facilitate a process of development by subsuming the ‘dependent’, uncultivated, and ‘cowardly’ tourist into the more mature, evolved and autonomous figure of the traveler. In this context, it is difficult not to consider how Kant’s text functions as a ‘guide’ for the relatively ‘unenlightened’ public he is addressing. Although Kant’s appeal is for the reader to use his own reason or understanding in matters of public debate and criticism, the theme of independence and autonomy is central to his exhortation. This ‘paradox’ of enlightenment can be similarly extended to guidebooks. According to Kant, people do not emerge from this self-imposed immaturity in so far as they ‘lack of courage and resolve’ (ibid), which leads them to depend on the guidance of others. Likewise the tourist is ‘cowed by the triple hegemony of guidebook, itinerary, and travel agent’ (Koshar 2000: 31, my emphasis).

Although Kant stresses the negative aspect of enlightenment as ‘man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity’ (1970), his text has a dual function. It is an analysis of this self-imposed immaturity, but also an intervention in and textual mediation of the very process of enlightenment. In this regard, both Kant’s editorial and the guidebook also function positively as ‘salvational texts’ that diagnose the problem of enlightenment while acting upon the problem they diagnose. The problem that both Kant’s text and the guidebook reveal and address concerns the relative ignorance of the reader (the guidebook reader is always assumed to be a first time
visitor to the place in question), the solution to which is instruction and education on a variety of subjects. In so far as the salvational texts of enlightenment help readers to ‘save’ themselves from a problem that they presumably ‘suffer’ from, they can also be described as ‘self-help’ texts. The irony of a self-help text is that the self-helping reader must depend on it for help in order to realize the goal of independence and autonomy, an irony and paradox of enlightenment that is also present for travel guidebook readers. In Koshar’s terms, the enlightening goal of the guidebooks of Baedeker and Murray, for example, consists in their quality as ‘self-help’ texts that espouse, embody, and encourage an ethos of independence, educational self-cultivation, and enlightenment in their readers. Such guidebooks promise a level of independence from the tourist industry for readers. By avoiding (or ‘exiting’ in Kant’s terms), the tourist industry and the type of guided tours sold by Thomas Cook and many others, readers of guidebooks can move towards the distinctive cultural goal of practicing travel rather than participating in a mass tourist industry. Whereas Samuel Smiles sought to cultivate the ‘Lutheran’ qualities of education, enlightenment, and character in his readers through the act of reading (as noted at the beginning of this chapter), both Murray and Baedeker sought to instill those same qualities in their readers not only through the reading but also by encouraging the pursuit of independent travel in which guidebooks ideally played an instrumental and necessary part. In the following chapter I examine how Lonely Planet guidebooks recalibrate and recode these themes through a discourse of cosmopolitan self-cultivation articulated in terms of the tourist/traveler distinction. It is interesting that Ulrich Beck directly draws upon and re-writes Kant’s essay in the preface of Cosmopolitan Vision, when he asks, ‘What is enlightenment? To have the courage to make use of one’s cosmopolitan vision’ (2006: ii). In the following chapter I examine how the
‘cosmopolitan vision’ of Lonely Planet guidebooks is articulated as a contemporary instance and vehicle of salvation for present day travelers.

Murray, Baedeker and the Genesis of the Modern Travel Guidebook

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to examine how John Murray and Karl Baedeker developed the mass produced travel guidebook as a distinctive genre in mid 19th century Europe by situating its emergence within a broader genealogy of European travel guides. If we briefly recall Francis Bacon’s advice to the young gentlemen of the Grand Tour, we can see how the travel ‘guide’ went from being an actual person who would accompany the grand tourist, to a mass-produced hand-book or manual in the days of Murray and Baedeker. While the guide for the Classical Grand Tour required knowledge and acumen to help the grand tourist fully appreciate and learn from his years on the continent, later on these human tutors/guides become textually mediated in the form of guide-books written by the likes of William Wordsworth. However, it is not until the handbooks of Murray and Baedeker that we find the beginning of the modern travel guidebook as an ‘active text’ proper (Smith 1990b), one explicitly designed for mass production and incorporating the rational planning and execution of limited time and space into its very design. The handbooks of Murray and Baedeker helped to organize the relations of ruling by textually mediating and reproducing the dominant discourses of travel I have discussed so far: education, cultivation and character formation with the view to enlightening the immature reader and helping him to become more a traveler than a tourist. In other words, these guidebooks were instrumental in ideologically codifying and further naturalizing the discourses of travel and tourism. Smith defines the ‘ideological code’ as ‘a schema that replicates its organization in multiple and various sites’, and ‘a generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary, written or spoken, ordered by it’ (Smith 1999: 159, my emphasis). In the context of guidebook use these codes were thus activated and reproduced across a range of
diverse and distinct geographical sites through the textual mediation of mass produced guidebooks.

William Wordsworth’s *Guide to the Lakes* (2004) was, of course, a very different type of guidebook from those published by Murray and Baedeker. Wordsworth’s guidebook was written for wealthy readers who had weeks and months of spare time to explore the Lake District, and thus could gradually appreciate the beauty and romantic benefits that such visits apparently produced. Wordsworth provided a detailed and practical guide to one area, interspersed with sonnets (many written by Wordsworth of course) and meandering descriptions of the landscape. Despite its literary aspirations, Wordsworth’s ‘guidebook’ retains a pedagogical focus and explicitly aims to help visitors to properly understand and appreciate what they experience and look at while in the Lake District. It aims to help teach its readers the ‘right’ taste in aesthetic sensibility necessary for authentically experiencing this area. It was precisely these modes of vision, taste, and sensibility, embodied and espoused by writers like Wordsworth and Byron, that were reproduced by both Murray and Baedeker in their guidebooks. In particular, the picturesque was a central theme in the Murray guidebook in the mid to late 19th century and was expressed as an important aesthetic goal in sightseeing and viewing natural landscapes. As Koshar (1998) notes, guidebooks played an important role in instructing tourists on ‘what ought to be seen’ (323). They recall Bacon’s advice to novices of The Grand Tour, whom a guide and tutor should accompany, so that ‘he may be able to tell them *what things are worthy to be seen*’ (1936: 24 my emphasis). ‘What ought to be seen’ was not simply based purely on the subjective recommendation of the author, but rather on a well prescribed agenda for helping tourists make the most of their time and money in a way that would ensure that their travels were educative, individually cultivating, as well as self transformative. In other words these mass-produced
guidebooks offer readers the promise of travel as a kind of *Bildungreise*, a journey that would serve the purposes of educational self-cultivation.

As Grewal (1996) notes, the guidebooks of both Murray and Baedeker claimed scientific accuracy, transparency, and legitimacy by excluding any superfluous description and concentrating on facts and figures. This feature further added to the authority of the guidebook. The guidebooks of Baedeker and Murray championed the principle of efficient reading and accessibility by selectively condensing much of the work already written on particular places but which would be simply too voluminous for one person to bring with him. In fact, it is historically incorrect to describe the Murray and Baedeker books as ‘guidebooks’ as they were called ‘handbooks’, a term used by Murray and later copied by Baedeker. Thus the handbook was designed as a supremely portable and instantly accessible text that could be pulled out at a moment’s notice.

Direct empirical observation and accuracy was of paramount importance in these early travel guides, in contrast to the more imaginative and evocative descriptions of Wordsworth examined above. Murray and Baedeker asked their readers to send in any extra information that would help to improve the accuracy of the information gathered. Their guidebooks guaranteed a degree of predictability and assurance for ‘the stranger’ in a foreign land. Many of the early Murray and Baedeker guidebooks claimed that the author has checked out every place himself and thus the reader could be assured of the first-hand veracity of the accounts given. For example, in the Preface to the *Handbook for Travelers in Ireland* (1878), Murray assures the reader that ‘the present edition of this handbook, like the last, has undergone careful revision, based in great parts on personal visits and research made by the editor on the spot in order to render it as trustworthy as possible’ (v, my emphasis). On the one hand, while guidebooks gave
the independent traveler freedom from the likes of Cook’s guided tours, on the other hand, they also provided a degree of security for travelers who go ‘off the beaten track’. In the same preface Murray provides a justification for the publication and use of his guidebook by noting: ‘how great are the attractions for travelers and visitors which Ireland possesses, and how little they have been explored’ (v). In the following chapter I will turn my attention to the most successful independent travel guidebook company in the world at the moment, Lonely Planet; in order to show how Murray’s enthusiastic sentiments about Ireland are expressed in similar ways over 100 years later.

In Murray’s and Baedeker’s guidebooks, new forms of textual representation and organization rely upon the presentation of a dispersed and heterogeneous assemblage of knowledge, which is collected and systematized and rationally presented. Murray’s Handbook for Travelers in Ireland includes a table of contents that outlines the various routes with the relevant page number as well as a list of maps and plans, also with the appropriate page number. Immediately following the table of contents, Murray inserts a lengthy ‘General Introduction’ (see Fig 2 below) which is subdivided into generic categories.

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<th>GENERAL INTRODUCTION.</th>
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<td>I. Routes to Ireland</td>
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<td>II. Scenery</td>
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<td>III. Travelling in Ireland</td>
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<td>IV. Pedestrianism in Ireland</td>
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<td>V. Irish Holidays</td>
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<td>VI. Geology</td>
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<td>X. Population</td>
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<td>XI. Guide to the Angling Waters in Ireland</td>
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<td>XII. Skeleton Routes</td>
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Figure 2: Introduction Page to Murray’s Handbook for Travelers in Ireland (1878: 1)
Murray and Baedeker draw upon the spirit of enlightenment texts, such as the Encyclopedia, and integrate emerging scientific methods for organizing and systematizing a vast and heterogeneous body of knowledge in ways that would also be efficient, accessible, and easy for readers to use. Obviously readers of Murray and Baedeker were the middle and upper-middle classes who did not have the free time available to spend several months away. Hence, the principle of efficiency at work in the references and presentation of information and in the breakdown of routes into daily segments emphasizes the need for more rational methods of time and space management. Furthermore, this feature also allows readers to selectively pick and choose according to their individual specific preferences and desires. Unlike the typical guided tourist who was, in a short time, lead from destination to destination, the independent travel guides of Murray and Baedeker were designed to ensure maximum flexibility and choice of personal preference for the reader.

Both the Murray and Baedeker guides appear to focus on generic subjects covered in the encyclopedia: geology, climate, agriculture, minerals, and so on. In this respect, their guidebooks are more modern than neo-classical, and looked to the future rather than the past for terms of reference while including such scientific information as census data, altitude heights, and other points of interest to the modern bourgeois traveler. Immediately following the ‘General Introduction’ (Fig 2) in Murray’s *Handbook for Travelers in Ireland* there follows a table that arranges the many skeleton routes numerically (Fig 3 below).
VII. SKELETON ROUTES.

I. A MONTH’S TOUR IN THE NORTH.

1. Dublin to Howth, St. Donlough’s, Malahide, and Lusk; sleep at Drogheda.
2. See Drogheda. Excursion to Mellifont and Monasterboice, and Duleek.
3. Rail to Navan, returning by road to Drogheda; see Slane, Newgrange, Battlefield of the Boyne, and Dowth.
4. Rail to Dundalk, Clones, Enniskillen; see Devenish.
5. Florence Court. Cuilcagh. Marble Arch. If time in evening, row up the lake to Lisgoole.
6. To Sligo; see Abbey and Knocknarea.
10. Ascend Slieve League; see Glen Coast.
12. To Doocharry Bridge, Dunglow, and Gweedore.
16. To Strabane. Derry; see Derry.
18. To Dunluce and Causeway. Sleep there.
21. Cliff Scenery in Island Magee; see Carrickfergus. To Belfast.
23. Excursion to Cave Hill, Antrim, Lough Neagh.
24. Excursion to Downpatrick, Saul, Inch, &c.
25. To Armagh; in afternoon to Dungannon.
29. Carlingford. Evening by rail to Dublin.
30. Excursion to Trim and Boettie.

Figure 3 Skeleton Routes in Murray’s *Handbook for Travelers in Ireland* (1878: 52)

Here Murray breaks down the ‘Month’s Tour in the North’ into 30 distinct and separate days. Each day covers things to do and see as well as all the necessary travel arrangements. These suggested routes give the reader the opportunity to efficiently plan every day of his itinerary as well as the flexibility to diverge from any of the listed options with his own preferences. Although in some ways these guidebooks resembled the type of preplanned package tour typical of the Thomas Cook Company, the crucial difference here is how the guidebook users must themselves plan all their own transport and sightseeing opportunities. The guidebook user also has far more flexibility to pick and choose what sights are worth seeing and the ability to individually customize trips and day trips. The inclusion of alternate routes and itineraries fosters
the multiplication of possibilities for the visitor through the development of new modes of rational organization and presentation.

As noted above, the relationship of the tourist to time was a frequent feature of anti-tourist discourse. The tourist is forever rushing places and cannot afford the requisite time considered necessary in order to fully appreciate the place in question. A central goal of the Murray and Baedeker guidebooks was thus to help the reader to organize and maximize time more efficiently in order to get the best ‘cultural’ return on the money invested. The Preface to the third edition of Baedeker’s Canada published in 1907 begins with the following ‘mission statement’:

The Handbook to Canada is intended to help the traveler in planning his tour and disposing of his time to the best advantage, and thus to enable him the more thoroughly to enjoy and appreciate the objects of interest he meets with (Baedeker 1907: v).

Here the handbook serves a dual function for its users. It is designed to help the reader to use his free time efficiently and economically and to ‘enable him’ to better ‘enjoy and appreciate’ the things he encounters on his trip. The emphasis on the efficient use of time in maximizing educational opportunities is important to note as both Murray and Baedeker were primarily used by working middle class tourists with limited time to spare. Although in 1907 only those with considerable savings could afford to travel to Canada for a two-week holiday, such a trip was a far cry from the four to seven years needed to take The Grand Tour of Europe. The guidebooks of Baedeker and Murray championed the principle of efficient reading and accessibility by selectively condensing much of what was already written on particular places but which would simply be too voluminous for one person to bring with him. Their handbooks were designed to be supremely portable and instantly accessible texts that could be pulled out at a moment’s notice. They therefore functioned as didactic texts, giving readers the requisite knowledge and
insight to allow them to appreciate what they encountered on their travels while presenting that knowledge in a thorough, efficient, economical and immediately accessible manner.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have examined the key historical ‘discourses of travel’ foundational to the development of travel and anti-tourist discourse. The Grand Tour of Europe helped to articulate travel through an elite discourse and practice of education. By examining key figures of the Romantic movement, I detailed how this notion of travel shifted through an emphasis on self-cultivation, and how romantic ideas about traveling to untouched places and gazing upon simple and morally pure ‘natives’ helped to establish the figure of the traveler as a person who could lay claim to a somewhat exalted sensibility. The heightened appreciation of the natural and authentic promoted by the Romantics, the keen eye for the picturesque and accompanying abhorrence of the ‘threat’ that mass tourism as well as mass tourists posed to such precious resources, inform many of the enduring modes of ‘taste’ that (as I will show later) are still prevalent among backpackers today. We have also seen how the trope of the colonial explorer has been crucial in establishing the traveler as an adventurous, risk-seeking type of individual who discovers untouched lands and encounters primitive people on his journeys. Throughout this chapter I have also noted how these themes were articulated through a gendered and at times racialized context.

The second thread of Romanticism I explored concerned the theme of the ‘work of travel’. Taking Simmel’s essay on Alpine travel as my starting point, I unpacked the key characteristics of the romantic traveler as a type of person who embodies an ethos of hard work, endurance, and rugged independence. By contrast, tourism was seen to provide people with an easy alternative that minimized the required effort to arrive at previously difficult destinations in the Alps. I argued that the anti-tourist discourse that emerged at the beginning of the 19th century
in Europe resulted from a mixture and crystallization of these discourses of travel that saw the tourist characterized at times as subhuman, lacking sophistication, education or the time needed to properly understand or appreciate what he encountered. At times the use of a guidebook was seen by many critics to be an unmistakable sign of an immature tourist mentality. However the guidebook was also analyzed as a prototypical type of ‘salvational’ and self help text that emerged in tandem with the development of the tourist industry. The guidebooks of Murray and Baedeker functioned to cultivate and enlighten their readers as independent travelers rather than as mass tourists. How these guidebooks were organized and written was key in establishing their authority as a more scientific and thus trustworthy type of travel text. But to what extent are the guidebooks of Lonely Planet comparable to those of Murray and Baedeker? And to what extent are the ideologically coded discourses of travel and tourism of the 19th century that we have encountered in this chapter relevant to the world of backpacking today? I offer some answers to these questions in the following chapter.
Chapter 2 Legends of Lonely Planet

[Liz] “How did you find this place?”

[Jeremy] “Oh - I’ve been here lots of times. Just dug it out I suppose. It’s not in the book or anything.”


[Liz] “We’ve got the Lonely Planet - is that the right one?” Her face was overcome with anxiety.

[Jeremy] “It’s not the right one”. He paused for effect. “It’s the only one”. Liz sighed with relief.

Are You Experienced? (William Sutcliffe 1997: 23)

The fictional novel Are You Experienced? tells the tale of David, a young English man who goes backpacking to India for three months with his friend Liz. It is a satirical and cynical lampooning of backpacking culture, yet for the main character David it is also ultimately an affirmation of the value of travel in India. Acting as parody and rhapsody, the above excerpt from Are You Experienced? helps to illustrate the ‘legendary’ renown of Lonely Planet guidebooks in India. As Jeremy, a smarmy know-it-all, reverently comments, it is ‘The Book, the only one worth having.’ Today Lonely Planet has an undeniable presence in backpacking culture generally, as is evident from the many references to it in popular backpacker movies such as The Beach (Garland 1996) and satirical backpacker travelogues such as Are You Experienced? as well as innumerable television travel shows. In this chapter, I critically examine how Lonely Planet guidebooks have attained such a prominent and visible place in the world of backpacking travel, and examine the different textual strategies and discourses it employs to maintain its status in the world of travel as the ‘only one worth having’. I argue that as ‘active texts’ (Smith 1999b) Lonely Planet guidebooks are a key to understanding how ideological codes of the
tourist/traveler distinction and ‘the beaten track’ and ‘off the beaten track’ are articulated and reproduced in contemporary form. In the previous chapter I outlined the historical genesis of these ideological codes and how they were constituted in significant national and colonial contexts in the period 1800-1900. In this chapter I examine how these codes are taken up, reworked, and reproduced through the Lonely Planet guidebooks. Furthermore, unlike the previous chapter, I do not examine the social and cultural milieu (such as 1960s counter-culture) out of which contemporary backpacking culture and the Lonely Planet ethos emerged.

**The Changing Culture of Travel: Experiential Learning**

One of the most significant differences between the Murray and Baedeker guidebooks on the one hand, and the Lonely Planet guidebooks on the other, consists of the changing ideas and understanding of culture within the two historical contexts of travel. In the 1970s young travelers were far less likely to be interested in the ‘high culture’ of ancient ruins, classical architecture or the political systems of a particular country (Baedeker spends several pages explaining the parliamentary system of Canada and system of voting), and they were much more interested in an idea of culture that focused on the individual’s experience of the everyday world. Culture became an individual experience that ‘happened’ when one went traveling. One’s own experience in another, typically ‘foreign’ culture was now deemed to have an essentially educational and enlightening value for the traveler. Although people still visit ancient ruins, religious temples and museums, a more important goal has become the experience of authentic ‘local’ culture as it happens before your eyes. Events like taking a local bus or train journey mean that the traveler is ideally seeing and experiencing the everyday culture as it is for the ordinary, local people. It is *their* worlds that can serve as playgrounds and classrooms in a ‘university of life’ education for western travelers. This ‘ethnographic’ approach to culture is hardly new. As Judith Adler (1985) notes, the practice of ‘tramping’ in the US and Europe in the
previous century was a popular way for upper middle class young people to ‘slum it’ with the urban poor and experience a world of adventure, danger and otherness while traveling on a meager budget. Furthermore, for these ‘proto-backpackers’, traveling on a meager budget, rather than as a pampered and wealthy tourist, was seen as a sure way of experiencing the authentic local culture as the tramping mode of travel was considered to be by far the best method for maintaining proximity to the locals. Although Adler (1985) has pointed out that ‘tramping’, a type of middle class youth travel popular in Europe and the U.S. at the turn of the century, was an important precursor to backpacking as we know it today, there is no historical evidence to suggest that these young ‘tramps’ were part of a relatively distinct group of like-minded people who travelled together in the same places, in the same way, or to the same degree that backpackers do today.

Backpacking in places like India can in some ways be seen as a continuation of this practice, but nowadays the third world provides the adventurous edge. By contrast, tourism offers a cocoon and undesirable distance from authentic local culture. Tour buses, fancy hotels, and guided tours on planned itineraries are all perceived as providing a false or inauthentic experience of a foreign culture when it is ‘served up’ rather than ‘discovered’ in vivo and unmediated. Thus what is considered valuable currency in the accumulation of cultural capital today has changed considerably since the 19th century. Although Lonely Planet guidebooks provide plenty of readable cultural and historical context in their opening chapters, a personal experience of a place and its culture is considered the defining aspect and goal of travel. For example, the back cover of *Lonely Planet India 7th edition* (1997) offers the following description:
India saturates the senses... Immerse yourself in the teeming bazaars, holy cities, Moghul forts, and the vast array of jostling cultures and religions - make India an experience you’ll always remember.

Here India is represented as a place that will fully ‘saturate the senses’ of the traveler, a place where the traveler is ‘immersed’ in ‘teeming bazaars’ and ‘jostling cultures’. This frenetic and wholly sensory experience promises to be ‘an experience you’ll always remember’. This aim, to make Indian culture accessible or knowable to the reader primarily as a personal experience and memory, animates much of the Lonely Planet discourse of travel. Of course, if culture is now something to be experienced personally through travel then such experiences are intimately tied to into the cultivation, education, enlightenment and character of the contemporary traveler self.

Following the Second World War, a discourse of travel and culture emerged in Europe that posited travel and tourism as an important vehicle for the avoidance of future conflict. The eradication of inter-cultural ‘ignorance’ and misunderstanding through enlightening exposure to other cultural contexts was seen as an important goal for the avoidance of future conflict. For example, the United Nations declared 1967 as the ‘International Year of Tourism’ and the 21st session of the U.N. General Assembly announced that such a move would lead to:

Recognizing the importance of international tourism, and particularly of the designation of an international tourist year, in fostering better understanding among people everywhere, in leading to a greater awareness of the rich heritage of various civilizations and in bringing about a better appreciation of the inherent values of different cultures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of peace in the world. (UN.org)

In a similar vein, Tad Friend in an online article in the New Yorker (April 2005) recalls the words of some Lonely Planet authors that capture this civic and humanitarian ideal: ‘more than one Lonely Planet author told me that had George W. Bush ever really travelled abroad the United States would not have invaded Iraq’. Despite the utopian naiveté of such an idea, it nonetheless illustrates the belief in civic virtue and cosmopolitanism that travel apparently
automatically bestows upon its practitioners. These Lonely Planet writers may have had the American author Mark Twain in mind. Twain’s oft-quoted ode to travel, which appears in innumerable travel blogs and travel guides, echoes the very sentiment expressed by Lord Byron concerning the educative and cosmopolitan potential of travel (which I discussed in the previous chapter). Twain states that: ‘travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness… and many of our people need it solely on these accounts’ (Twain 2003: 35). Even while berating the ‘prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness’ of his fellow Americans back home, Twain saw no apparent contradiction between his noble platitudes and his racist descriptions of the ‘locals’ of Tangier in his Orientalist travelogue *Innocents Abroad: A New Pilgrim’s Progress*:

Original, genuine Negroes as black as Moses; and howling dervishes and a hundred breeds of Arabs, all sorts and descriptions of people that are foreign and curious to look upon… They all resemble each other so much that one could almost believe they were of one family (Twain 1879: 73).

An exquisite but troubling irony is at work here, one that exposes the myth that, at least for Americans, travel is an automatic and self-evident vehicle of beneficent and tolerant cosmopolitanism. Unfortunately for the people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, the notion that ‘one could almost believe they were of one family’ has been a staple and stable trope of western colonial domination in the Middle East for many centuries. Thus, in light of the claim by the Wheelers (the co-founders of Lonely Planet discussed below) that ‘people are the same wherever they’re from’ we must critically examine how guidebooks such as the Lonely Planet help reproduce such modes of ‘imperial vision’. Later on in this chapter I examine how the Lonely Planet India guidebook instructs readers in how to gaze at ‘people that are foreign and curious to look upon’.

For Tony and Maureen Wheeler, travel is not simply one possible vehicle, but rather the *only* vehicle through which people (who can afford to travel Lonely Planet style in the first
place) can come together and realize their common humanity and collective responsibility. The Wheelers elaborate further on the cosmopolitan and educative potential of travel:

It's when you make those cross-cultural connections - even though initially you may have thought you had nothing in common - that it hits you again: people are the same wherever they're from; we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections. Revelling in that realisation is the holy grail of travelling.\(^{12}\)

Here Lonely Planet attempts to mediate and capitalize on the supposed relationship between travel and universal brotherhood (or simply humanity). The realization of the universal truth of a shared and common humanity is considered ‘the holy grail of travelling’ (ibid). However, this ‘holy grail’ is made possible only by traveling to (or making ‘pilgrimages’ to) different cultures in the first place. According to Tony Wheeler, the co-founder of Lonely Planet along with his wife Maureen, among the most important aspects of ‘travel’ is that it can be a powerful force for the good of humanity, a vehicle of global communion whereby ‘we’ discover that ‘we’ are all part of a universal humanity. Here we can find a re-articulation of one of Ulrich Beck’s ‘five…constitutive principles of the cosmopolitan outlook’ (Beck 2006: 7). Beck outlines the fourth principle as ‘the principle of cosmopolitan empathy and of perspective taking and the virtual inter-changeability of situations’ (ibid). Lonely Planet guidebooks promise to make this idealistic goal \textit{practically possible}. In the ‘Responsible Travel’ section of the Lonely Planet website, Tony and Maureen explain why travel is so important:

It's only through travelling, through meeting people that \textit{we begin to understand} that we're all sharing this world. We are all coming along for the ride, despite the barriers which governments, religions and economic and political beliefs often seem to build up between us.\(^{13}\)

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \(^{12}\) http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
\item \(^{13}\) http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/responsible-travel
\end{itemize}
Here again travel is construed as a vehicle of universal human emancipation, in particular from the ‘artificial’ confines of political and economic systems that are apparently imposed on ‘us’ from the outside. This echoes Beck’s first principle of the cosmopolitan vision where ‘the awareness of interdependence and the resulting ‘civilizational community of fate’… overcomes the boundaries between…us and them, the national and the international’ (Beck 2006: 7). The Wheelers maintain that through travel such a cosmopolitan sensibility is engendered. The world, it seems, is ‘our’ collective property, a ‘gift’ that ‘we’ all share and have a mutual responsibility for maintaining. In Chapter 4, I explore in detail the ideal of travel as ‘gift giving’ and mutual reciprocity with reference to interviews with backpackers about their personal experiences ‘on the road’. However, the ‘gift of travel’ can only be found in authentic places and with locals who remain outside of the orbit of the mass tourist industry.

Lonely Planet presents its guides as important mediators through which ‘cosmopolitan enlightenment’ can be practically achieved. In the ‘About Lonely Planet Guidebooks’ section included in the ‘Foreword’ of their guidebooks, Lonely Planet is quite clear about its aspirations: ‘the main aim is still to help make it possible for adventurous travelers to get out there - to explore and better understand the world’ (Lonely Planet Vancouver 2002: 6, my emphasis). Lonely Planet guidebooks aim to help readers to ‘better understand the world’, thereby implicitly acknowledging the relative ignorance of the reader in comparison to the expertise of the writers of the text. Lonely Planet guidebooks are thus construed as an essential educational aid to enlightenment that renders the world more intelligible and comprehensible by developing the understanding of its readers. Echoing Kant’s motto that it takes courage and resolve to emerge from immaturity, Lonely Planet guidebooks also aim to ‘make it possible for adventurous travelers to get out there’ and ‘explore’ rather than remaining fettered to, and dependent on,
travel agencies, predictable timetables and itineraries. Finally, it is interesting to note how guidebook discourse constructs ‘the cosmopolitan traveler’ as somehow outside of the social categories of gender, ‘race’, and class and as appearing to be from nowhere in particular. The traveler tends to be constructed as a de-territorialized subject, without history and biography. Below I highlight some of the ways in which this discourse of ‘cosmopolitan travel’ articulated by both backpackers and the ‘travel industry’, of which Lonely Planet is an outstanding example, tends to naturalize and individualize the social privileges and global inequalities that are at work in the world of backpacking. This discourse masks privileges of mobility and global inequality through an individualizing and naturalizing discourse that locates the ability and desire to travel within the personality of the individual rather than within social structures of class and status and in geopolitical relations of domination.

**Geographies of Repulsion and Desire: The Beaten Track and its Discontents**

One of the most frequently used expressions in the travel and tourism industry today, ‘off-the-beaten-track’, has become a catchword for all that is new, different, exciting and authentic. If, in the words of one *Blackwood’s Magazine* reviewer over a century and a half ago, ‘the tourist’ ‘has a track in space to which he is bound’ (1843: 551), then the traveler is forever trying to get off that beaten track. The following definitions of ‘beaten’ from the *Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary* provides some important semantic and conceptual directions for better understanding what ‘the beaten track’ and its antithesis denote.

Beaten 1: hammered into a desired shape <beaten gold>2: much trodden and worn smooth; also familiar<a beaten path>3: being in a state of exhaustion: exhausted

With these definitions in mind, we can say that ‘the beaten track’ suggests a well-worn track of standardized tourist *desire*: the tacky souvenirs, the overcrowded and over-rated ‘must see’ sights and the consumption of food that is not ‘local’ but rather specifically tailored for the domestic taste of visiting tourists. If the beaten track has been ‘hammered into a desired shape’ this is because the type of tourist desire that is operative there demands a prepackaged, *familiar* and easily consumable type of experience. As a *much trodden* track we can see how the desire that is operative on the beaten track is clearly a type of ‘taste’ that is shared by many people. It is in this sense ‘common’, undifferentiated and symptomatic of mass desire rather than of individual desire. The ‘beaten’ track denotes a *smooth* and uneventful journey through a predictable monotony of sameness (yet ever more safe because of its predictability). The beaten track has an *exhausted* quality to it. It is worn out from overuse by the ‘masses’ that frequent it. As a symbolic resource we can say that for the traveler the beaten track is a ‘spent’ or exhausted resource, a non-renewable form of symbolic and cultural capital. As Bourdieu notes in ‘Forms of Capital’: ‘the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and *symbolic profits* for the possessors of a large cultural capital: any given cultural competence…derives a *scarcity value* from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and *yields profits of distinction* for its owner’ (1986: 245). As an alternative to such a spent resource, backpacking is a way to make the world renewable and sustainable for those who practice travel rather than tourism. Why would the traveler want to journey along such predicable lines? The traffic congestion, the conformity, the lack of challenge and immense predictability of it all! As a spatial metaphor ‘off the beaten track’ denotes a route *away from* the crowds of mass tourist traffic, whose standardized and undifferentiated tastes have etched out predictable and familiar circuits of travel. Travel ‘should be’ an unpredictable and challenging *adventure*, undertaken by
individuals whose cultivated tastes are distinguished from the masses. One feature of this discourse of travel is that it tends to be articulated in terms of how the prototypically male solitary traveler must work hard and take risks if he is to legitimately earn the ‘rewards’ such challenges provide. In contrast, tourism has generally tended to emphasize how organized groups of tourists pursue leisure and luxury in an attempt to escape from the workaday world. Although there are important differences between a two week holiday and the kind of long haul budget travel typically practiced by backpackers, each has become a well established industry with well-beaten tracks of its own.

For backpackers to escape from ‘the beaten track’ and to experience the solitude of their ‘lonely’ planet, coveted places must ever-increasingly be found around the next corner. Like mass tourism, backpacking is inexorably implicated in a game whereby places become ‘loved to death’\textsuperscript{15}. That is, they become popular with backpackers until they become too ‘touristic’ and the search for the next ‘unspoiled’ place must begin again. This heightened condition of global mobility and consumption contributes to the distinctiveness of the backpacking style of travel. As we will see in the following chapters, real life backpackers are by no means bound exclusively to either track. Instead, ‘the backpacker as traveler’ moves between and along both tracks in his or her real world travel; experiences places and has interactions with people which are never fully and exclusively authentic or in-authentic; and is never fully a traveler or a tourist. Through ‘the work of travel’ backpackers must align their subjectivity, practices and experiences further away from the beaten track frequented by tourists. As travelers these backpackers must have experiences of authentic places that are off-the-beaten-track of tourism and that provide the setting for authentic interactions with the people there.

\textsuperscript{15} http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/responsible-travel
Off The Beaten Track: The Lonely Planet Guidebook as a Cartographic Legend

Every map has a legend. The legend explains what the various symbols on the map mean. For example, when viewing a map of Ireland, I can check the legend to know that the squiggly line I am looking at is in fact a secondary road or that a green triangle indicates where a campground is situated. Although Lonely Planet provides geographical maps of various places around the world in their guidebooks, more importantly Lonely Planet guidebooks also ‘map’ the world for their readers. In this sense we can say that Lonely Planet guidebooks act as a cartographic legend, according to the first definition of ‘legend’: ‘an explanatory list of the symbols on a map or chart’ (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). Lonely Planet guidebooks map the world as a relatively objective ‘fact’ that exists independently of the guidebook, as something that it discovered and simply documented, at the same time as they produce the world as an ‘imaginary geography’ (Said 1994: 15). In other words, the guidebook helps the reader to see the world but it is a world that the guidebook has already mapped and thus seen for you. The world that the guidebook presents, as a relatively objective and observable ‘fact’, is already one that has undergone considerable work of signification and interpretation. In Roland Barthes’ terms, the world that is both spoken about and visually displayed in Lonely Planet guidebooks is already a form of ‘mythical speech’, and it ‘is a type of speech chosen by history, it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things (1993: 110) but paradoxically ‘transforms history into nature’ (129)

Barthes’ ideas about myth and mythic speech provide an important analytical and interpretive method for understanding how the ideological voice of Lonely Planet speaks through its guidebooks. For Barthes myth can be anything that has already been worked on by humans if it is used as a sign to convey meaning: ‘speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing, or of representations, not only
written discourse but also photography, cinema, reporting, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythic speech’ (1993: 110). As Barthes argues, ‘mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication’ (ibid).

Utilizing Barthes’ analyses in *Mythologies* and his less well known essay ‘Rhetoric of the Image’ (1985), I analyze written and visual aspects of Lonely Planet guidebooks as examples of mythic speech. In the previous chapter I outlined the common cultural codes which have become taken for granted as natural in the world of travel, including the difference and distinction between the traveler and the tourist, the romantic and adventurous sensibility of the traveler, as well as places off-the-beaten-track that are considered free from the scourge of tourism. These codes are represented as naturally occurring and self-evident through the mythic speech of Lonely Planet brand of travel and reproduced in their guidebooks and website.

The first ‘place’ that the Wheelers ‘discovered’, mapped, and subsequently sold through their Lonely Planet guidebooks was Asia in *Across Asia on the Cheap*, first published in 1973. Shortly afterwards what became popularly known as the ‘yellow bible’ (after its yellow cover, but the racist connotations are unmistakable) *South East Asia on a Shoestring* (1975) was published. However according to Tony Wheeler, it was not until 1981 with the publication of *Lonely Planet India: A travel survival kit* that international success was secured (Wheeler 2000). Describing their *India* guidebook as a ‘travel survival kit’ suggests that it contains all the necessary supplies one would need to successfully ‘survive’ traveling in India. ‘Developing’ countries such as India and regions such as South East Asia were deemed by Lonely Planet to be particularly appropriate places for living out the traveler dream of discovering ‘untouched’ lands, courting danger and risk, and venturing off the beaten track. Of course, not simply ‘imagined geographies’ (Said 1994: 15) are at work here. The primary attraction and utility of third world
countries like India was that the western budget traveler could *afford* to spend months in these places. Budget backpacking in the third world allowed the traveler to efficiently convert a minimum amount of economic capital accumulated back home into valuable cultural and symbolic capital accrued through several months travel in cheaper countries. One of the main goals of the Murray and Baedeker guidebooks was to help readers make the most efficient use of their time in order to maximize the cultivation and educational value of their trip. A similar logic at work regarding the relationship between time and cultivation exists in the context of backpacking. Today’s travelers can take advantage of global economic inequalities and ‘buy’ more time and culture from countries like India. Local food, local transport, and accommodation can all be bought at a cheaper price if one avoids the tourist infrastructure, and what is more, they are considered more valuable and authentic cultural experiences. The Lonely Planet guidebook originally promised a budget approach which would help readers to maximize the amount of time spent in a particular place by minimizing the cost to travel there.

**In Loco Parentis**\(^{16}\)

Tad Friend of *The New Yorker* writes of his own early relationship with Lonely Planet guidebooks as a backpacker in Asia. His comments suggest that an inverse relationship of ‘development’ is at work as the western traveler develops his own self into a more adult state by travelling in ‘underdeveloped’ places which serve as a kind of ‘school playground’ with the requisite challenges and trials necessary for a successful maturation.

In the late nineteen-eighties, I travelled in Asia for a year, and the Lonely Planet guides were my lifeline. I ate and slept where they told me to, on Khao San Road in Bangkok [a popular backpacker enclave] and Angina Beach in Goa [famous as a hippy destination in India in the 1960s and still popular as a destination today]. I oriented myself by their scrupulous if naively drawn maps; and on long bus rides I immersed myself in the

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\(^{16}\) Literally translated as ‘in the place of parents’. Commonly understood as ‘a substitute for parents’.
Indonesia book’s explanation of the Ramayana story. The guides didn’t tell me to wear drawstring pants and Tintin T-shirts [a popular comic book character who traveled the world for adventure] or to crash my moped—I picked that up on my own—but they did teach me, as they taught a whole generation, how to move through the world alone and with confidence (Friend 2005).

Friend’s description of his relationship to Lonely Planet guides echoes the parental role of guidebooks I discussed in Chapter 1, and their function as educational ‘travel survival kits’. He writes that ‘Lonely Planet guides were my lifeline’, suggesting that without them survival would simply have been impossible. When a guidebook becomes a ‘lifeline’, its authoritative voice must be followed unquestioningly. Thus, Friend ‘ate and slept where they told me too’, avoided disorientation by following ‘their scrupulous if naively drawn maps’, and he was able to far better understand Indonesian culture by immersing himself in the ‘Ramayana Story’ provided in his Lonely Planet guidebook. Friend’s comments are instructive in that they illustrate how Lonely Planet guidebooks provide practical advice on the basics of eating and sleeping as well as geographical and cultural orientation. For a Lonely Planet ‘pupil’ like Friend in a ‘foreign’ place like Asia, they helped to provide safety and value for money by telling him where to eat and sleep through the practical information they provided, orientation or reassurance through their maps, and educational lessons about Indonesian culture and religion through their stories. As Friend acknowledges, their guidebooks were not all-encompassing, and he was able to learn many things by himself such as wearing ‘drawstring pants’, ‘Tintin t-shirts’, and crashing his moped. Wearing pull-up drawstring pants (without those difficult buttons), t-shirts of children’s cartoon characters, and crashing bikes all suggest a more childlike world in which Asia becomes the ‘playground’. Interestingly, the adventures of Tintin might serve as a familiar trope to the white western traveler in Asia who is surrounded by racialized ‘others’ in a strange and somewhat dangerous foreign land. Without the ‘lifeline’ of the Lonely Planet guidebook, what
might befall such a traveler? The idea of ‘finding oneself’ in a foreign land would seem to be a lot more desirable to the western traveler than the reality of actually getting lost in a foreign land.

Lonely Planet, it seems, has been the parental, educational voice for a nascent mobile generation, teaching its readers how to stand, walk, and travel on their own and to ‘move through the world alone and with confidence’ (Friend 2005). In a similar vein, on the back cover of *Lonely Planet India 7th* edition (1997), the same lifeline attitude and existential reassurance is at work: ‘From the tropical backwaters of Kerala, to the towering Himalayan peaks, India’s diversity and size can be overwhelming - this outstanding guide will help you create the journey you want’ (*Lonely Planet India* 1997 back cover). The text evocatively suggests that because of India’s ‘diversity and size’, portrayed through the dual images of frightening and secluded ‘tropical backwaters’ and the intimidating and ‘towering Himalayan peaks’, the traveler is in danger of being psychologically scared and physically overwhelmed while in India. Immediately following this fear-inducing description, we receive a reassuring lifeline: ‘this outstanding guide will help you’. Who would not trust or want an ‘outstanding guide’, one that will give you control over what happens and help ‘create the journey you want’? Of course, there is also the further danger of missing out on valuable experiences too if one does not have a proper guide at hand to identify what is worth seeing and what is not.

Lonely Planet has thus been very successful in resurrecting and *reconfiguring* the mythological figure of the traveler for the baby boom generation through a new market of ‘third world’ countries that were ‘off the beaten track’ of mainstream tourist destinations in the 1970s and 1980s. The ‘third world’, and more precisely ‘Asia’, was the first ‘place’ that Lonely Planet mapped and made legible for a university of life education for its travelers. By mapping these ‘third world places’, Lonely Planet established itself as a legendary guidebook *in* the world of
travel, while also reproducing older colonial legends about these places in contemporary form. Despite their ‘promise’ of discovering untouched places ‘off the beaten track’, Lonely Planet guidebooks have helped to safely guide its readers along some already well worn paths of the old British Empire.

As Gillian Kenny (2002) remarks, Lonely Planet was considered by many travelers as an authentic, trustworthy and expert guidebook that provided a strong sense of identity for many young travelers, especially in the seventies and eighties. For example, in the *Lonely Planet India* 2nd edition (1984), the company extends a ‘very special thanks to those most important people – ‘our travelers’. For two years you’ve swamped us with letters and cards from India’ (5). Having received various accolades, beginning with the prestigious Thomas Cook Guidebook of the Year Award in 1983 for its *India* edition (Wheeler 2005), Lonely Planet was subsequently assured of its commercial success. By the late 1980s, Lonely Planet had gained a reputation for being the most reliable and trustworthy authority for travel guidebooks. It is precisely the ‘travel authority’ and expertise of Lonely Planet guidebooks, built upon their reputation and expert credentials, that ensures the company’s continued success and that its voice is heard in an already overcrowded guidebook market.

The authority of Lonely Planet is central to its legendary reputation as a trustworthy guide that leads its readers beyond the relatively ‘inauthentic’, shallow, and mass-produced experiences characteristic of the mass tourism industry. The Lonely Planet guidebook sells itself on the promise of providing a more expert and penetrating hermeneutics for revealing the depths of authentic culture for the traveler. In promoting authentic and independent travel the public voice of Lonely Planet, which echoes the private conversations of backpackers, can be considered a form of ‘mythic speech’ in the sense that Barthes uses the concept. In what follows
I develop this argument by examining Lonely Planet’s anti-tourist discourse as a contemporary and exemplary instance of the ‘mythology of travel’. In Chapters 3 and 4, I examine, through in-depth interviews with backpackers, how the mythical speech of backpackers echoes, re-enforces and at times challenges and contradicts the mythical speech of Lonely Planet. Lonely Planet and backpackers identify with, and celebrate, the ‘self evident superiority’ of travel and the traveler as an authentic and meaningful cultural alternative to mainstream mass tourism.

**Lonely Planet’s Mythologies of Travel**

In *Mythologies* Roland Barthes introduces the idea that travel guides are part of a machinery of mystification in which bourgeois values are symbolically imposed through the ‘naturalizing’ techniques of ostensibly popular and mass culture. For Barthes, images are a crucial aspect of the mystifying techniques of popular culture. Barthes analyses a variety of images and visual displays, such as a Citroen car advertisement, a wrestling scene, and ‘the face of Garbo’ as well as the famous *Guide Bleu* (Blue Guide), a prominent travel guidebook that was popular in France from the 1920s to the 1960s, especially among upper class tourists. He writes:

> What is to be seen is thus constantly in the process of vanishing, and The Guide becomes, through an operation common to all mystifications, the very opposite of what it advertises - an agent of blindness. (Barthes 1993: 76)

Barthes’ analysis is particularly apt in capturing the paradoxical and contradictory logic at work in present-day guidebooks. However, he does not quite make explicit *how* the guidebook practically works as both an agent of vision and ‘an agent of blindness’. The Lonely Planet guidebook can therefore be thought of as an *ocular device* that ‘makes visible’, through photography, description and practical recommendation, where authenticity can be located and how inauthenticity can be found. Lonely Planet guidebooks cultivate the ‘taste’ of readers by making visible the beaten track of inauthenticity as well as the authenticity which lies ‘off-the beaten-track’.
Barthes argues that mythologies are understood and shaped against a backdrop of common cultural codes. In the previous chapter, I examined the genesis of the mythology of travel that provided some of the most enduring cultural codes of travel versus tourism. Discourses of Romanticism and Bildung were among the most prominent cultural codes that shaped the modern mythology of travel in the 19th century. Lonely Planet provides an updated version of these older codes while giving them a new voice. By directing readers to places that are ‘off the beaten track’, by signifying where the beaten track is and where it is not, and what it looks like, Lonely Planet guidebooks promise to make visible where travel experiences that are authentic, unique and more rewarding can be found.

The romantic idea of the ‘picturesque’ is articulated by Lonely Planet as a mode of vision which offers an alternative to tourism and its beaten track. The Lonely Planet ‘gaze’, so to speak, presents places and people in terms of a binary code which separates authentic from inauthentic culture. The ‘eyes’ of Lonely Planet function as an ‘agent of vision’ for the reader by framing a ‘picturesque vision’ which sees the ‘truths’ of a culture and informs the ‘taste’ of travelers. According to the Wheelers:

Unless we shift our attitudes to tourism and travel we'll lose the wild places, the traditions and the eccentricities of the world. Life will be far more homogenized and far less surprising, and our spirit will be the poorer for it. 17

The Wheelers make an interesting connection between the destructive march of tourism, which they themselves had made careers out of promoting, and the increasing cultural homogenization, standardization, and spiritual atrophy spreading across the world. If the world becomes too homogenized, the ‘wild places’ will be lost and life will become a flat monotone of predictability, unable to enrich the ‘spirit’ of the western cosmopolitan traveler. Through

17 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
responsible travel and by avoiding the trappings of the tourist industry, the third world may thus be renewable as a cultural resource for the ‘salvation’ of the cosmopolitan self. It would appear that tourism represents a direct threat to Ulrich Beck’s fifth principle of cosmopolitan vision, ‘the mélange principle’. He defines the mélange principle as ‘the principle that local national, ethnic, religious and cosmopolitan cultures and traditions interpenetrate, interconnect and intermingle’ (Beck 2006: 7, my emphasis). Diversity, cultural difference and distance from international tourism are presumed to be essential for the traveler’s soul, which are enriched by visiting unspoiled and ‘eccentric’ places that have not yet become flattened by the juggernaut of global homogenization. In other words, tourism contributes to a homogenous and standardized global culture where the conditions for mélange are presumably absent. Salvation from ‘spiritual poverty’, and thus from cultural homogeneity, standardization, and the commercialization of culture is thus in part promised through the use of Lonely Planet guidebooks. Only the kind of independent travel practiced by backpackers will provide cultural difference, authenticity and a wealth of experiences to sustain the cosmopolitan soul. In the following chapter I examine interviews with backpackers in India in order to explore how the material wealth and ‘spiritual poverty’ of the western traveler collides with the ‘spiritual wealth’ and material poverty of Indian ‘locals’ is played out on the ground.

Among backpackers and the Lonely Planet guidebooks they read, this fear of the destruction of local particularity and cultural diversity makes further sense when conceptualized in terms of ‘the consumption of difference’. The focus of Lonely Planet guidebooks is to guide readers to places that have not yet been ‘killed’ by an insatiable mass tourist industry and thus to acquire experiences which are more authentic, and thus more valuable, than the mass-produced
and packaged kind found in big international tourist resorts. This connection between death and tourism is made explicit by Tony and Maureen Wheeler:

“Loved to death”. These days it’s a phrase that more and more travel possibilities get tarnished with. We scratch our heads and wonder just when Bali’s Kuta or India’s Goa morphed from quiet surfer escapes or laid back hippy hangouts into international resorts of wall to wall shops, restaurants and package hotels. *18*

‘Loved to death’ is an interesting expression. It conjures up the image of hugging someone until he or she can no longer breathe. The Wheelers’ perplexity over the transformation of once idyllic ‘hangouts’ and ‘escapes’ into international tourist destinations arises from the nature of the question they ask: *when* did it happen? The ‘escapes’ of Kuta and ‘hangouts’ of Goa (both popular destinations in the 1960s and 1970s) are further lionized by evoking two iconic figures of 1960s counter-cultural alterity, surfers and hippies, and these once idyllic places are now turned into large scale international resorts that offer ‘package hotels’ for those on a two week holiday and the accompanying ‘wall to wall shops’ and restaurants for convenient and efficient shopping. The solitude of ‘quiet escapes’ and ‘laid back hangouts’ is thus destroyed through their transformation into international resorts that now cater more to the holiday tourist concerned with shopping than to the independent traveler who apparently just wants to ‘escape’ from it all and ‘hang out’. But we can pose a different question than the one asked by the Wheelers, namely, *how and why* does this transformation occur? In part the answer requires us to unearth the power of guidebooks as mediating agents, that is, as ‘active texts’ which contribute to the process of change while at the same time mystifying their contribution to those changes. Of course, guidebooks are just one of many ‘divining rods’ through which places ‘off the beaten track’ become popular destinations, and thus their influence should not be overstated.

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*18* http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
Furthermore, it is important to question the mythological logic which privileges the ‘death’ of a place such as Goa or Kuta as an especially tragic or even apocalyptic sign. Instead, I want to understand why the transformation of such ‘laid back hippy hangouts’ are considered a form of ‘death’ in the first place.

‘Seeing Through’ Lonely Planet Guidebooks

Tourism is consistently portrayed in Lonely Planet guidebooks and websites as a destructive force that irrevocably changes the unique character of a place. More specifically, tourism is construed as a force of standardization and homogenization that destroys a locale’s particularity, reducing its unique beauty and replacing it with prepackaged uniformity. The following example from *Lonely Planet India* illustrates this idea:

An independent kingdom until 1975, Sikkim has long been considered one of the last Himalayan Shangri Las. But hurry. In the last few years a tourist boom has seen ever multiplying numbers of visitors, mostly middle-class Bengalis escaping the Kolkota heat. Every year more concrete hotels protrude from once-idyllic villagescapes and most towns are already architecturally lackluster huddles of multistory box-homes (2007: 568)

A once paradisiacal place, one of the ‘last Himalayan Shangri Las’ no less, is under threat from tourist development. The ‘once-idyllic villagescapes’, are disappearing, ensuring that the days of these Shangri Las are numbered. The ‘tourist boom’ is seen to destroy the local landscape with concrete hotels that ‘protrude’ in providing accommodation for tourists who are ‘ever multiplying’. The irony here lies in the complaint about ‘mostly middle class Bengalis’: so the threat is actually home-grown! The apparent destruction of Sikkim is therefore constructed from the point of view of the visiting traveler. The aesthetic pleasure of the traveler consists in gazing upon and visually consuming foreign and picturesque landscapes. Signs of authentic local difference and diversity are being threatened, and thus the consumption of difference and possibility for *mélange* is made all the more difficult. Instead, the feast for the traveler’s soul is rapaciously consumed by tourism. The traveler is in a race against time to gaze upon a rapidly
disappearing landscape. ‘Hurry!’ urges the Lonely Planet, before it is all gone. The beaten track is rapidly appearing before their very eyes and before long this place too will be destroyed, swallowed under the debris of the ‘already architecturally lackluster huddles of multistory box homes’ that ‘protrude’ and ‘jab’ at the aesthetic eye of the traveler.

Nevertheless, for the Lonely Planet reader in India many ‘paradises’ can still be found, if one looks in the right place:

For travellers, Jharkhand’s prime attractions are its national parks, a few waterfalls around the capital Ranchi and the chance to explore a tourist-free northern India – with Jharkhand off most visitors’ radars, you may well be the only foreigner in the state (2007: 565).

Here the attraction for ‘travelers’ is to ‘explore a ‘tourist-free’ place. It is the absence of other tourists, and thus the authenticity of the place as an untouched destination, that provides maximum pleasure in framing the picturesque. The promise of exotic exploration is also heightened through the possibility of being the ‘only foreigner in the state’. Similarly, Gujarat is a state that for the Lonely Planet traveler ‘reveals treasures hidden from the tourist hordes’ (2007: 715). Even Goa, which has a reputation for mass tourism, can still can be enjoyed if one is willing to put in the work necessary to find the hidden treasures that, like Gujarat, are hidden from the ‘tourist hordes’.

Other entries in Lonely Planet India guidebook (2007) express the complaint that middle class Indian tourists are spoiling the pleasure of the foreign traveler:

Calangute and Baga were the first beaches to attract hippies travelling overland in the ’60s, then the first to secure the rampant package and charter tourist market in the ’90s. Today they are India’s ‘kiss me quick’ hat capital and the most popular beach resorts in the country with holidaying Indians. For many people it’s just a busy, noisy and tacky Indian Costa del Sol and the thought of spending a single night here is enough to make them shudder. For others, the very fact that it is so alien to anything else in India is an attraction in itself, there’s certainly no denying that the town has a certain character to it and, if you’re searching for a glimpse of how the much-hyped ‘New India’ holidays, then here she is in all her glory. (2007: 856)
This description recalls the ‘loved to death’ comments made by the Wheelers who puzzle over how ‘India's Goa morphed from…laid back hippy hangouts into international resorts of wall to wall shops, restaurants and package hotels’. Here, in Calangute and Baga (both well-known beaches in Northern Goa), there seems to be no trace of Lonely Planet’s previous footsteps, nor any mention of how *Lonely Planet India* (2nd Edition 1984) had presented Calagunte and especially Baga as desirable places:

Baga, about two km north, is far superior [to Calagunte] and still a pleasant place to stay despite its proximity to Calagunte. It still clings to its charm, the beach is much better and it remains fairly laid back. If you are thinking of staying at Calagunte, try Baga first (581).

Earlier I suggested that Lonely Planet itself is an invisible agent of change whose agency has been mystified through a travel mythology. This mystification is reinforced through how Lonely Planet repeatedly writes about these places as newly discovered while erasing any historical trace of its own footsteps there. By using different guidebook editions we can provide a more historical view of the presence of Lonely Planet, since typically people read them in their more recent editions. In part, this absence can be explained by the mobility of the guidebook format. Unlike a regular travel agency which might have relatively permanent and visible offices in popular places like Calagunte or Baga, Lonely Planet guidebooks, like their readers, are forever on the move. The books travel as much as their readers. Just as Empire, in the formulation of Hardt and Negri, is both appearing and disappearing before our eyes, so too do Lonely Planet guidebooks maintain a pervasive, highly visible and legendary presence in the world of travel and tourism while also keeping their own history in these places relatively invisible.

The 2nd Edition (1984) also notes the fact that Calagunte was already declining in popularity with western travelers and was emerging as an important destination for Indian
holiday-makers: ‘Indeed it isn’t that popular anymore-except with middle class Indian holiday-makers’ (581). In the 2nd edition the popularity of Calagunte as an Indian holiday resort is stated in a straightforward and matter-of-fact way, without any of the exoticizing and mocking that pervades the 12th edition entry. The later edition is interesting in another way. Again, the repetition of the destructive tide of tourism is noted, but as in the Shangri La entry quoted above, it is now Indian tourists who are spoiling the atmosphere for the western traveler. The suggestion here is that, although for some these places are simply tacky and soulless, for others these Indian tourist resorts might now be a possible source of exotic pleasure and curiosity. By characterizing these places as ‘so alien to anything else in India’, the guidebook subtly suggests that the arrival of modernity in the rest of India is only a matter of time. In the following chapter, I explore (through my analysis of interviews with backpackers) how India is seen through the dual lens of traditional and modern, and how tourism is considered a sign of an unwelcome and foreign modernity there. In the guidebooks, despite the arrival of modernity, tourism in India is presented as a potential source of exotic fun and curiosity for the western traveler.

Another aspect of Lonely Planet concerns how its recommendations and descriptions of certain places help to expand the backpacker map of India. The second edition of Lonely Planet India comes to a total of 792 pages, whereas the 12th edition runs to a hefty 1,236 pages: the longer Lonely Planet stays in India, the more places will be drawn into its orbit as desirable and knowable destinations for its readers. What constitutes the beaten track and its antithesis shifts and changes over time as is evident when comparing how current and older versions offer a degree of ‘indexicality’ (cf Garfinkel in Heritage 1984) regarding the changing nature of ‘taste’. Such comparisons illustrate how the Lonely Planet India is designed to guide and inform the
good taste of travelers to places that are now considered by its writers to be more appropriate for traveling away from certain places and towards others.

The guidebook helps to inscribe new routes in old places even as it ‘discovers’ new places on old routes. It makes both the beaten track and off-the-beaten-track visible to the taste of backpackers through its descriptions, evaluations and recommendations, which favor certain places over others. Through a variety of textual strategies it positions itself and its readers outside of the tourist industry, and within the supposedly more ideologically and ethically ‘neutral’ world of travelers. By constantly placing itself outside of the tourist industry, Lonely Planet discourse projects its brand status as alternative, by appealing to those who wish to do things differently and get ‘off the beaten track’, while simultaneously reaping the rewards from a booming ‘alternative tourist industry’ which has itself become more mainstream. Below is the Lonely Planet entry for the Paharganj area in the second edition of *Lonely Planet India-a travel survival kit* (1984). As it will become clear in a moment, there is an irony in the fact that Tony Wheeler, a co-founder of Lonely Planet, was one of the three authors for this edition:

Directly opposite New Delhi Railway Station is the start of Main Bazaar which stretches due west for about a kilometer. There are any number of cheap hotels along this road, offering varying degrees of quality. Many are very popular with budget travelers. Other than the general air of decay and neglect, the problem with the ultra cheap places here is that they are subject to police raids. Don’t let this put you off - there are plenty of places offering excellent value for money without the indignity of being searched for narcotics. It can also provide some amusement too as one traveler reported ‘while being raided by the drug squad no amount of warnings could stop them from tasting the desiccating crystals I used to keep my films dry which had poison written all over them. They took them away and we promptly checked out in case any of them croaked’ (1984: 148-149)

Compare now the following excerpt for Paharganj in the latest edition of Lonely Planet *India* (2007) (which is no longer labeled a ‘travel survival kit’) and written over 20 years later when Tony Wheeler had become CEO of Lonely Planet International and is no longer an author:
Bumper to bumper with budget lodgings, Paharganj - with its reputation for drugs and seedy characters - isn’t everyone’s cup of tea. On the plus side it’s walking distance to the New Delhi Railway Station and it’s the place to tap into the backpacker grapevine. Although Paharganj has some of Delhi’s cheapest places to sleep, be prepared for cooped up, sun starved rooms with insipid interiors. Most hotels are in the main drag of Main Bazaar with many freckling the numerous (nameless) alleys that tentacle off it (2007: 140)

From this edition it seems that Tony Wheeler himself would no longer cut the cloth for the new cadre of Lonely Planet travelers! Perhaps his earlier self would now be seen as one of those seedy characters to be avoided. The guide’s mention that ‘Paharganj…isn’t everyone’s cup of tea’ leaves open the option of not wanting to go there. In part, due to the stellar success of publicity from guides like *Lonely Planet India*, Paharganj has undergone development, and is now ‘bumper to bumper’ with hotels and congestion in the Main Bazaar which spread out like monstrous ‘tentacles’ in ‘nameless alleys’, and where cheap rooms are ‘cooped up, sun starved and insipid’. However, the drugs and seediness anticipated by the earlier edition may be exactly what a later reader might consider as going ‘off the beaten track’.

Standardization and homogenization has been one of the most enduring critiques of the tourist industry for many years. As Urry (1990) points out, a defining aspect of the ‘tourist gaze’ is structured by the difference between what is considered ordinary, mundane, versus what is considered extraordinary and unusual. In effect, what the producers of Lonely Planet guidebooks promise readers is the discovery of ‘authentic difference’ in unique places rather than the sameness and inauthenticity of tourist destinations. The paradox here is that while the guidebook laments places that are being ‘killed’ by mass tourism, it also venerates, actively desires, and guides readers to places that are relatively untarnished by the tourist industry. Of course, Lonely Planet says readers should individually practice responsible travel that does not lead to the malign effects that accompany the mass tourist industry. However, the individualizing discourse
that interpellates the traveler as autonomous also deflects and erases the mass effects of the industry that it promotes. By cultivating the authentic and independent taste of the traveler, the guidebooks ‘save’ the reader from the standardized taste of the tourist. In the examples cited above, however, a further extension of this idea is evident in relation to geography. Only by guiding its readers to authentic places which have not yet been ‘ruined’ by tourism can the traveler encounter and experience authenticity. The symbolic and cultural capital accumulated via these authentic encounters thus becomes all the more valuable for the traveler, and also confirms the value of a guidebook that can direct readers to these very places.

It is not just third world places that fall under the ‘authentic’ gaze of Lonely Planet. A recent newspaper article in The Irish Times, one of the biggest national daily newspapers, entitled ‘Say hello to the Ireland developed in between double decaf lattes and spa treatments’ (Healy 2010), chronicles Lonely Planet’s scathing critique of contemporary Ireland in its latest guidebook (9th edition 2010). Healy reports that, according to Lonely Planet, ‘Ireland is becoming indistinguishable from other European countries and needs to draw more on its unique culture if it is to continue to attract tourists’ (Healy 2010). Like Tony Wheeler earlier, the article bemoans the destruction of cultural difference and its replacement by an ersatz homogenization. Healy quotes the guide’s description of Ireland as ‘a land of motorways and multiculturalism, planned and developed in between double decaf lattes and time out at the latest spa for a thermal mud treatment’ (ibid). Despite being a land of ‘multiculturalism’, promising difference and diversity, Ireland is also a land of ‘motorways’. What could be a more bland and monotonous form of travel than motorway travel? Ireland is ‘planned and developed’, suggesting that the chances for spontaneous discovery are slim and that Irish culture is fast becoming as predictable as the motorways that now traverse it. A subtle anti-tourist sentiment is suggested in the
reference to the pampering and over-indulgence of ‘double decaf lattes’ and ‘thermal mud spas’. Here, a ‘yuppy’, urban, and seemingly vacuous lifestyle is indirectly criticized, while certain areas around Dublin are described as ‘blighted with soulless housing estates’ (ibid). Temple Bar, a popular tourist area in Dublin, is also blighted with ‘characterless bars . . . crappy tourist shops . . . bland, overpriced food’ (ibid).

The columnist then notes this ominous warning from the guide: ‘Traditional Ireland of the large family, closely linked to church and community, is quickly disappearing’ (ibid). Ireland is thus depicted as a country that is rapidly losing its ‘soul’, where tradition is vanishing and with it the kernel of authenticity that once made it such an attractive and compelling destination. The pop-cultural analysis in Lonely Planet Ireland waxes nostalgic by skimming over enormous cultural and demographic changes. While Irish society has undergone monumental changes in the previous 20-30 years, only a nostalgic economy of desire pervades the Lonely Planet excerpts quoted in the newspaper article. The real ‘soul’ of Irish culture is located in a past that is rapidly disappearing, and being replaced by a standardized and homogenous version which is shallow, empty, and without much appeal to the conscientious consumer of difference and authenticity. Why visit Ireland if all that awaits you are the same motorways, cafes and spas that already fill your everyday life back home? However, the authentic has not completely disappeared: it can still be found with the right guide.

Of course the precise function of the guidebook is to guide the reader to those places where this ‘real Ireland’ can still be found, a version of Ireland that has apparently managed to escape the clutches of a standardizing and monotonous globalization. Discerning travelers can still find the ‘beauty of the lakes of Roscommon and the villages of Waterford, of rarely visited counties like Westmeath . . . where you can come into contact with a more genuine Ireland’
(ibid), where cities like Belfast still remain relatively undiscovered, and so travelers must ‘get here early and enjoy it before the rest of the world arrives’ (ibid). According to the article, one of the places where this authenticity can now be seen is along the far reaches of the West Coast of Ireland. Here the guidebook serves as an ocular device which helps the reader to look upon this disappearing world with a nostalgic gaze. In this context the mythic speech of Lonely Planet naturalizes Ireland as a place that can or should be exempt from historical, cultural, social change. As an agent of blindness, the guidebook must also lead masses of people to the very places that have thus far ‘escaped’ the standardizing and homogenizing effect of mass tourism, thus functioning as an ‘unreflective window’ through which it maintains its ‘objectivity’ and distance.

**Subjects and Objects of Lonely Planet Photographs**

A more literal way in which Lonely Planet guidebooks function as an ocular device is through the medium of photography itself. To recall Koshar’s comments about the transparent communication of guidebooks, photographic images introduce a powerful medium of ‘objective representation’ insofar as they ostensibly ‘record’ what is there. Thus, photographs can serve to increase the documentary power of the guidebook as a ‘performative genre’, and through the use of photography, the guidebook can thus make truth claims about its object. Although photographs are presented as demystifying agents, as Barthes notes ‘mythical speech [which includes photographs] is made of a material which has already been worked on so to make it suitable for communication’ (1993: 110 my emphasis). Specifically, Barthes, in his essay ‘Rhetoric of the Image’ highlights what he refers to as the ‘photographic paradox’ in which the image appears as a ‘message without a code’ (1985: 5). In other words because of their assumed transparency and objectivity photographs are especially powerful media through which
ideological codes operate, are reproduced, and help to further naturalize the gaze of the guidebook and its readers.

A consistent feature of Lonely Planet photographic landscapes, especially those presented in the guidebooks on Canada and Ireland, is that they typically do not represent humans, especially other visitors and tourists. This emptiness helps to produce the landscape as something that is ‘just there’ for the viewer’s consumption alone while reproducing the landscape for mass consumption. The picturing or painting of empty landscapes was discussed in the previous chapter in the context of Romanticism and the importance these practices placed on the solitude of the traveler. In order to have an individual experience of a ‘natural’ landscape, according to Romantics such as Wordsworth, the absence of others is an essential prerequisite. Photographs are an ideal way of reproducing and multiplying the romantic taste of the picturesque by framing the landscape as a ‘thing’, an ‘objective reality’ that is privately consumed by the viewer. A place may be continually consumed as a first-time experience if the viewer is to achieve maximum pleasure, thereby increasing the value of the symbolic capital that the guidebook is promising and selling for its readers. The illusion of emptiness or absence of others, achieved through photographs, thus plays a central role in the production of the reader’s desire and in increasing the mystifying power of the guidebook as an ocular device. By erasing the presence of other tourists from the photograph the guidebook can perpetuate or visualize the mythology that a place may appear untouched by tourism or even by change. This emphasis on empty landscapes draws attention to the company name itself ‘Lonely Planet’ (my emphasis). In light of the enormous popularity and success of Lonely Planet guidebooks, the obvious irony of the name has been commented upon in a variety of contexts. For example, in the popular backpacker novel The Beach, one of the characters exclaims: ‘one of these days I'm going to find one of those
Lonely Planet writers and I'm going to ask him, what's so fucking lonely about the Khao San Road?¹⁹ (Garland 1996: 12) Nonetheless it is precisely the photographic promise of places and landscapes devoid or empty of others that forms an important textual and ocular strategy in reproducing the mythology of travel ‘off-the-beaten-track’.

Dorothy Smith’s work on ‘active texts’ (1990b) provides a useful theoretical approach which can help us understand how guidebooks have been able to sustain a position of ‘invisibility’ in the ‘relations of ruling’, in so far as a guidebook is presented as an ‘objective’ and thus neutral text. In purporting to simply report and comment on what it sees ‘out there’, it appears to be mostly a transparent window onto the world, offering an unmediated perspective as reality. As Koshar (2000) argues ‘whereas the best travel accounts make no mistake of their status as works of interpretation, the travel guide represents itself as unmediated ‘transparent’ communication’ (15). Smith argues that texts are ‘active’ in the ongoing production and mediation of social relations and the reproduction of what she calls the ‘relations of ruling’ (1990b). In other words, and within the context of my research, the ruling relations of global capital and Empire are reproduced and mediated through texts such as Lonely Planet guidebooks. For Smith, ‘the text itself is to be seen as organizing a course of concerted social action. As an operative part of a social relation it is activated of course by the reader but its structuring effects are its own’ (Smith 1990b: 121). This can be further extended to include non-verbal, visual texts such as photographs.

Against claims on behalf of the objective and neutral knowledge of the social world, Smith critiques the ‘inactive’ and ‘objective’ texts of social science which simultaneously deny people (especially women), agency and subjectivity, by transforming them into ‘data’ through

¹⁹ Khao San Road is a well known and popular backpacker enclave in Bangkok, Thailand.
the ‘conceptual practices of power’. In *Writing the Social* (1999), she pays particular attention to the largely invisible processes through which sociology is written and how texts situate themselves as active devices in the reproduction of the social world. As I note below, one of the most interesting textual strategies performed by Lonely Planet consists of securing the authority of authors as independent, expert, and trustworthy travelers. At the same time the subjectivity of author and reader is written out of the guidebook and replaced with the disembodied corporate voice or image of the Lonely Planet brand.

As Smith argues, the disappearance of the lived experience of subjects in the everyday world through the conceptual practices of power, whether they are inscribed in political, official or popular texts, transforms them into ‘things’ without history. In a similar vein Edward Said begins his seminal work, *Orientalism* (1994), with a quote from Marx which also makes this point: ‘they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented’ (Marx, quoted in Said 1994: ii). Although Smith invokes the idea from Marx to begin a critique of the capitalist relations of ruling, and Said to introduce the problematic of Orientalist and imperialist ruling relations, both make a significant point by drawing attention to how texts actively function within a variety of institutional and social contexts and are therefore implicated in relations of power and agency. Following Smith’s notion of how ‘conceptual practices of power’ suppress or transfer the lived experience of the everyday world by transforming subjects into objects, I want to briefly consider how photographic images objectify subjects by presenting them as reified spectacles for the pleasure of the viewer and visitor before looking more closely at how particular discursive (i.e. conventionally textual) strategies attempt to achieve similar aims.

The preponderance of photos in *Lonely Planet India* (2007) compared with *Canada* (2008) suggest that India is a relatively ‘special’ place that can be photographically produced for
visual consumption. In contrast to the Canada guidebook, Lonely Planet India features a disproportionate number of photographs relative to the number of pages. Lonely Planet Canada (2008) features 17 pages of photographs, 6 of which are a combination of substantial text and photos, out of a total of 912 pages. Lonely Planet India (2007) has 33 pages of photos out of a total of 1,236 pages. Although Canada is certainly a photogenic country, with its remarkable geographical and cultural diversity, a more expansive photographic gaze falls on India and the Indian people. A major difference between Lonely Planet guidebooks for Ireland, Canada, and India is that the ‘locals’ in the India guidebooks are featured far more prominently and are typically presented as a part of the rural or urban landscape. There are rarely close up shots of Canadian or Irish ‘locals’ in Lonely Planet guidebooks, but many such close-ups feature in Lonely Planet India guidebooks. In fact Lonely Planet Ireland (2008) includes no close-up shots of locals, two of a large crowd outside pubs and a third crowd-shot inside a pub. By contrast, the numerous close-up shots of locals in Lonely Planet India show scenes from everyday life and of the people engaged in a variety of activities, such as fruit selling and taxi driving. The effect of a ‘living museum’ in these photographs is to portray Indian ‘locals’ as quaint or exotic spectacles from the perspective of the photographer, and by extension, the reader. Like a museum exhibit the photograph allows the reader to closely examine, without embarrassment, the exotic ‘specimen’ of Indian culture, which the guidebook typically presents to the western viewer, and for whom India remains a strange and foreign land.

A pervasive and paradoxical aspect of Lonely Planet guidebooks is that although many photographs of ‘locals’ are depicted as engaged in a variety of activities, these locals are portrayed generically, that is, without individual subjectivity or personal characteristics in the guidebook. The only identifiable subjects who appear in the guidebook and who have a voice
with a picture are those of the authors (a theme I discuss in the following section). No names are given to the ‘locals’ with their photographs. Instead they are presented simply as ‘locals’ whom the reader will encounter on his or her travels. In this sense, the part is substituted for the whole, as the individuality of these people is erased so that they can stand in as representative examples of what ‘local’ looks like to the visitor. Since the Lonely Planet guidebooks typically deal with particular countries such as India, Ireland and Canada, rather than geographical regions, each photographic portrait of a ‘local’ can somehow signify and represent the national culture. Here the photograph evokes an intimate proximity to a local woman. As discussed in the introductory chapter proximity to the local was a defining feature of the discourse of travel. Furthermore, the Wheelers’ discourse of travel discussed above advocates interaction and connection with different cultures in order to realize the cosmopolitan promise of travel.

Figure 4 Indian Woman *Lonely Planet India* (1997:16-17)  Figure 5 Local Woman in India *Lonely Planet India* (2007:205)
The picture in Figure 4 is one of the many glossy color photographic insets of *Lonely Planet India* 1997 edition. This particular photograph appears on the very first page of the photograph section, without any context whatsoever. Since there is no reference to where the photographs were taken or any titles underneath to provide more context, it, along with several other photographs provide a kind of introductory montage to India for the viewer. The ‘nose jewelry woman’ (as I will call this type of photograph) reappears in many of the issues of *Lonely Planet India*, and has become one of the staple visual signifiers of Indian difference that Lonely Planet projects and magnifies. What is particularly noticeable about these images, and especially the first two, is that they are represented as largely inscrutable, despite their direct gaze at the camera (and by extension at the reader). The manner in which their expressions are represented, combined with the lack of context, invites the viewer to encounter an exotic and culturally ‘other’ India in the form of a direct encounter.

The 2007 edition of *Lonely Planet India* features yet another ‘nose jewelry woman’ (Figure 5) This very close up shot of a young smiling woman illustrates one of the ambiguities with photography, namely, that it is impossible to tell just how far the subject is from the photographer. It is possible that she was unaware, but in any case the effect is of extreme proximity of viewer and subject which would be impossible under normal circumstances. In this photograph, the woman’s subjectivity is reduced to her smile, and her adornment of that smile and her exoticism is highlighted through her nose jewelry, as well as the covering on her head and ‘bindi’ dot on her forehead. Recalling Barthes’ point that the photographic image is ‘message without a code’ (1985: 5), in the context of these photographs we can see how these images as instances of mythic speech. In other words, they appear as transparent and natural
images through which the reader can encounter the local authenticity of India but at the same time rearticulate and reproduce the coded discourse of off-the-beaten-track travel.

So far I have shown how Lonely Planet guidebooks are ‘active texts’ in the enlightenment and education of readers through the reproduction of the ideological codes of travel and tourism. They have become instrumental in the ‘discovery’ of new places off the beaten track, where a ‘university of life’ education and the cultural enlightenment of its readers can take place. Lonely Planet guidebooks help to cultivate the taste of readers by functioning in part as an ‘ocular device’ through which the romantic ideal of the picturesque is textually reproduced and activated in contemporary times. I have also examined how photographs of locals from Lonely Planet guidebooks help to reinforce its ocular power and visual authenticity as a guide to places ‘off-the-beaten-track’. In the remainder of this chapter I analyze how specific textual strategies employed in Lonely Planet guidebooks contribute to maintaining the expertise, authenticity, and independence of its brand name. In contrast to the preceding examination of an apparently anonymous viewer and objective perspective, here I turn to the producers of the guidebook itself: what are the authorial strategies at work in the guidebook that help to create Lonely Planet as a trustworthy and reliable guide in the first place? As travelers, why should we listen to Lonely Planet? My aim is to show how the corporate voice of Lonely Planet, as a voice of authenticity, local expertise and personal freedom from commercial relations is articulated in ways that establish its authority as a trusted guide with backpackers, and how this most popular and well-known of contemporary independent travel guidebooks has become such a respected name in the world of backpacking.
Authorial Legends: The Lonely Planet Story, A ‘Legend’ from the Past

In the ‘Lonely Planet Story’, told by Tony and Maureen Wheeler, Lonely Planet is represented as an authentic and reliable voice in a way that ensures its own authenticity as an expert travel guide. The back of every Lonely Planet guidebook features the ‘official story’ of Lonely Planet, a narrative that is reproduced in both guidebooks and websites. ‘The Lonely Planet Story’ tells the tale of the company’s humble but inspirational beginnings and its gradual rise to the very top of the guidebook food chain. It thus presents a kind of origin story or legend, that is, ‘a story coming down from the past; especially: one popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable’ (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). Many versions of this tale are written in their guidebooks, but all of them recount the original travel adventures of Tony and Maureen Wheeler. For the purposes of up-to-date-ness, I have used the story available on the Lonely Planet website version although the essentials are not significantly different from the ones found in the guidebooks:

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket, and a sense of adventure. That's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime. They met on a park bench in Regent's Park and married a year later. For their honeymoon, they decided to attempt what few people thought possible - crossing Europe and Asia overland, all the way to Australia. It took them several months and all the money they could earn, beg or borrow, but they made it. And at the end of it all, they were flat broke… and couldn't have been happier. It was too amazing an experience to keep to themselves. Urged on by their friends, they stayed up nights at their kitchen table writing, typing and stapling together their very first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies and Lonely Planet was born. Two years later, their second journey led to South-East Asia on a Shoestring, which led to books on Nepal, Australia, Africa, and India, which led to… you get the picture. Fast-forward over 30 years. Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with over 500 staff members and 300 authors. Tony and Maureen are still actively involved with Lonely Planet. They're travelling more often than ever, and they're devoting their spare time to charitable projects. And the company is still driven by the philosophy in Across Asia on the Cheap: 'All you've got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!'20 (retrieved April 21st, 2010)

20 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/company-history
Since Tony and Maureen Wheeler’s first trip across Europe and Asia was their honeymoon, then Lonely Planet can certainly be considered their ‘textual offspring’. The above story functions like a ‘creation myth’ in which the spirit of travel is now shared with the world. The Lonely Planet story is important as it helps to reinforce the authority of Lonely Planet as a legitimate and trustworthy guide, written by those who understand first-hand what independent travel to unfamiliar places is all about: few material possessions, a limited budget, and a ‘sense of adventure’. As the back cover of the 1977 Lonely Planet Australia 1st Edition declares, these were guidebooks written ‘by travelers, for travelers’.

The honeymoon of this newly married couple was obviously a far cry from the typical honeymoon of most middle class newlyweds, which might typically involve a prepackaged two week holiday at a tourist resort. This aspect of the story subtly introduces independent travel as a viable alternative to the standard (honeymoon) holiday. Even before their journey begins they decided to attempt what ‘few people thought possible’. Like generations of travelers before them, they are represented as courageous risk takers, defying convention and exhibiting a spirit of adventure since, after all, few people thought it was possible. The story continues by emphasizing their shoe-string budget and how they show financial ingenuity and frugality as they ‘earn, beg or borrow’ their way across Asia. When they ‘finally made it’, the result was that most valuable of western pursuits, one which surpasses wealth: happiness. In this alternative narrative to the standard two week holiday/honeymoon, which would emphasize relaxation, predictability, and convenience, the Wheelers tell the story of the courage, determination, love, and ultimate happiness of two young travelers.

The next part of the Lonely Planet story is concerned with how the first guidebook ‘was born’. The subtext is that this birth naturally happened (it was their honeymoon after all!) as a
result of their travels, and that their experiences were ‘too amazing to keep to themselves’. According to the tale, they were not establishing a company with the intention of selling guidebooks; rather, they were ‘compelled’ to share their amazing experiences with others. The first guidebook is thus conceived of as a gift which gave much to them and emphasizes the importance of thinking of travel as a form of reciprocity. This element of the mythology of travel as a ‘gift relationship’ stands in opposition to the commercially-driven, instrumental, and inauthentic relationships that characterize the tourist industry (a theme I return to in Chapter 3).

We are subsequently told that Tony and Maureen ‘stayed up nights’ as if attending to the ‘birth’. The authenticity of Lonely Planet as a guidebook that was the antithesis of mass produced ones is highlighted in the description of the production (midwife) process: it was ‘written’, ‘typed’ and ‘stapled together’ by them. The first guidebook was thus very much a labor of love; it was born, not manufactured, and this offspring was an immediate success.

When the story ‘fast forwards’ 30 years into the future, we are quickly reminded that despite the global success of Lonely Planet, the original travelers who started it all remain ‘actively involved’. In fact, they are travelling ‘more often than ever’ and are bringing the original ‘gift’ of Lonely Planet full circle by ‘devoting their spare time to charitable projects’. Finally we are told that, despite its global dominance over the guidebook market, Lonely Planet is, in spirit at least, still the very same company that wrote Across Asia on the Cheap, urging its readers to adopt the very same attitude that Tony and Maureen did when they decided to conquer their fears, confound the odds on their honeymoon trip all those years ago, and ‘just go!’ ‘The Lonely Planet Story’ thus establishes an important aspect of Lonely Planet’s credibility as a legendary brand among backpackers which promotes certain values of freedom, independence, hard work, authenticity, and experience-based ‘know how’. What ‘The Lonely Planet Story’ also
Authorial Legends: Contemporary Lonely Planet Writers and Readers

Not only does the Lonely Planet story function as a legend or origin story; it also serves to posit the traveler as the type of legendary person who could undertake such difficult and challenging adventures, thus illustrating the third definition of ‘legend’: ‘a person or thing that inspires legends’ (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). ‘The Lonely Planet Story’ certainly helps to establish the authenticity of Lonely Planet as a guidebook that was born out of the experiences of two intrepid travelers, but its authors and readers also play an important role in helping to reproduce the Lonely Planet mythology of travel as something that conveys authenticity, expertise, and independence, the very values embodied by Tony and Maureen Wheeler as prototypical travelers. In this connection I want to examine three strategies through which the contemporary authors of Lonely Planet guidebooks emulate the travel mythology of the Lonely Planet founders and thus further underwrite the expertise and authority of the Lonely Planet guidebook. I begin with an examination of how its author policy attempts to maintain the company’s independence from commercial influence and thus helps to retain its veracity, trustworthiness, and authenticity. Providing an analysis of several authorial strategies in Lonely Planet guidebooks allows us to better grasp how Lonely Planet has become and remains such a popular guidebook for backpackers.

However, at this point it is vital to state that the following analysis does not assume that readers of Lonely Planet guidebooks necessarily read them in the same way. In fact, one of the most striking aspects of my interviews in relation to guidebook reading and use among
backpackers (explored in Chapter 3) was precisely the contradictory readings - or non-readings - of Lonely Planet guidebooks reported by many backpackers on the road. Therefore the following is my theoretical reading and examination of these authorial strategies at work in Lonely Planet in an attempt to theoretically examine how ideological codes are at work in the authorial strategies of Lonely Planet guidebooks. It is an ‘ideal-typical’ reading of guidebooks as ideological texts. For Dorothy Smith, texts, especially official texts, have ideological intention, i.e. they are meant to be read in a certain way, as if they have a preferred reading, so to speak. She notes that this ideological intention is realized ‘if we treat the reader in the course of reading as wholly claimed by the text she reads’ (1990b: 140, my emphasis). In the introductory chapter, I emphasized that my initial fieldwork findings (discussed in Chapter 3) led me subsequently to consider the history of independent travel guidebooks and then to develop a critical textual analysis of how these coded distinctions operate in particular ways in Lonely Planet guidebooks themselves in order to theorize how the ideological codes of the tourist/traveler distinction and the beaten track and off-the-beaten-track are textually reproduced. Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet help to textually constitute the field of tourism and the habitus of backpackers and therefore we can say that the ideological codes operate and are reproduced through a dual logic of textual and oral mediation. They intersect and interpenetrate on the road but do not necessarily function in a causal or direct way.

**Strategy 1: Keeping the voice pure: the author’s moral code**

The following is an excerpt from the ‘Authors’ Section’ of the *Lonely Planet India* guidebook:

> Why is our travel information the best in the world? It’s simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travelers. They don’t research using just the internet or phone, and they don’t take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more - and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is (2008:19)
Not only is Lonely Planet read by travelers it is also written by travelers. ‘The Lonely Planet Story’, which tells the legendary tale of Tony and Maureen Wheeler backpacking across Asia, helps to establish that the authors are travelers first and foremost and Lonely Planet authors second. The traveler credentials of the Lonely Planet authors are thus instrumental in establishing the authenticity and independence of Lonely Planet’s voice and distinguishing it from the stigma of tourism, while at the same time forging an identity between authors and readers. Although Lonely Planet does not make claims of scientific objectivity, one way it does ensure objectivity or neutrality with respect to market influences involves insisting that its writers do not personally benefit from writing favorable reviews. This claim echoes the mythology of travel in an important way, especially with respect to the notion that authenticity is destroyed through commercial relations. The authenticity and veracity of the authors’ advice and recommendations are protected by this Lonely Planet ethos. Every Lonely Planet guidebook features the following statement, usually at the beginning or end of the book:

Lonely Planet books provide independent advice. Lonely Planet does not accept advertising in guidebooks, nor do we accept payment in exchange for listing or endorsing any place or business. Lonely Planet writers do not accept discounts or payments in exchange for positive coverage of any sort (Lonely Planet Vancouver 2005:4).

Although Lonely Planet writers’ recommendations do not appear to be influenced by any monetary gain, their advice regarding what ‘ought to be seen’ is influenced by a ‘mythology of travel’ which emphatically declares independence from commercial influence, while at least implicitly invoking a strong anti-tourist sentiment, a preference for off-the-beaten-track locations, and a nostalgic economy of desire. By assuring readers of the independence of their authors from commercial interests, and the expert traveler credentials of their authors, Lonely
Planet claims important symbolic capital which may indirectly but powerfully contribute to its economic success as an independent travel guide.

Lonely Planet establishes its expertise and authority by fostering a relationship of trust between readers and authors. First, its guidebooks provide travel not tourist information. Second, although Lonely Planet guidebooks provide plenty of factual information, they offer a lot of evaluation, translation, and interpretation too. Authors are ‘independent dedicated travelers’, just like readers. The authors remain independent through a policy which forbids commercial ‘freebies’ which would compromise the trustworthiness of recommendations. Furthermore authors are not lazy researchers, they do not just use the phone or internet, they ‘travel widely’ and they ‘personally visit’ a myriad of places. They are attentive and scrupulous, they get ‘all the details right’ and the security and integrity of their knowledge is copper-fastened because ‘they tell it how it is’. This last phrase is ambiguous but revealing. On the one hand it suggests a brave honesty is at work; they do not dress things up. On the other hand, ‘telling it how it is’ suggests that authors simply report what is there, implying a degree of objectivity and immediacy as well as freedom from the commercial influence of outside advertising. In fact, Lonely Planet does not need to accept outside advertising in so far as it incessantly advertises itself, while also recruiting its readers to advertise for it.

The general information about the authors and the Lonely Planet policy is reproduced in exactly the same way throughout all of its guidebooks. However, when we begin to read about the specific authors of specific guidebooks, another element of mythic speech emerges. In order to show how well individual authors intimately and individually know the country or region, every Lonely Planet guidebook includes an ‘About the Authors’ section. A key aspect of the mythology of travel already mentioned is captured in the formula: the closer the proximity to the
local, the more authentic and trustworthy the knowledge. The ‘About the Authors’ section allows Lonely Planet to establish the authors’ credentials, but these credentials are very much coded within the broader mythology of travel articulated by Lonely Planet and shared by its readers.

**Strategy 2: Keeping the voice local**

In the Lonely Planet *Vancouver City Guide* (2005), the main author, Karla Zimmerman, although not a local, is said to have intimate knowledge of places ‘off the beaten track’ in Vancouver. Zimmerman’s voice of local knowledge is written in the third person singular rather than the first person:

> Years ago, during Karla’s first visit to Vancouver, she met a gentleman wearing a visor, a money belt and nothing else. Yes Karla had wandered onto the nudist Wreck Beach during a hike, and it is this incident she was referring to when she convinced Lonely Planet editors that she knew Vancouver intimately. (4)

What it interesting about this comment is that it shows how even singular, intimate encounters are able to stand in for the whole. Lonely Planet uses the textual strategy of ‘synecdoche’ whereby the part or individual element is taken as a reflection of the whole (*pars pro toto*).

When we meet Karla Zimmerman again (this time as coordinating author for the 2008 edition Lonely Planet *Canada*), we find Karla is no longer merely an author who knows Vancouver intimately but also an author who has been ‘bestowed’ perhaps the ultimate ‘honor’, that of ‘Honorary Canadian’:

> During her years covering Canada coast-to-coast for Lonely Planet, Karla has become an Honorary Newfoundlander (with a rum soaked certificate to prove it), an Honorary Vancouverite (with a sushi addiction to prove it) and some would say an Honorary Canadian (with a donut fixation to prove it). When she’s not north of the border, Karla lives in Chicago where the doughnuts are good, but not Canadian good (888)

Karla has thus collected the credentials to actually ‘prove’ her profound knowledge of local life and her intimate knowledge of all things Canadian and even when she is back home in Chicago, she still recognizes, via her doughnut fixation, that her Canadian good taste is still at work.

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The authors’ bios are also interesting in view of how the lives of each author are shown to revolve intimately around the country in question. Thus, for example, the James Bainbridge bio in *Lonely Planet Ireland* (2008) tells us something about his personal motivation to travel:

James’s first encounter with Ireland was a teenage jaunt to a music festival held in Tipperary and nicknamed ‘Trip to Tip’. It was there that he learnt the ways of the trad session…and those of peach schnapps, unfortunately. Nonetheless he has been a regular visitor to Ireland ever since, covering all the important spots: Dublin, Belfast and Ballycastle, County Antrim. Having researched some far flung destinations, this time the Shropshire lad happily took a shorter trip to a land closer to his English home. He was well prepared for a month among the blarney-prone Celts by four years at the University of Glasgow, where most of his friends hailed from County Tyrone. (734)

In *Lonely Planet Canada* (2008) the bio for the same James Bainbridge reads this way:

The first time James reached the end of a Canadian road was on Galiano Island, while on exchange at the University of British Columbia. When Lonely Planet dispatched him to Quebec, he had to drive considerably further to repeat the experience of Rte 138. In the intervening decade he completed a literature and history degree in Glasgow, worked on magazines in London and Sydney and contributed to Lonely Planet guides. (888)

And here is James’s bio for *Lonely Planet India* (2007):

James’s first visit to India, as a long haired student en route to Nepal, was halted by a missed connection in Frankfurt. A decade later, with a shorter fringe and more experience, his task for Lonely Planet was more successful. He got a taste for chai and philosophical conversation among the Sikhs in Punjab before searching for temples, tigers and tribes in the forest of Madhya Pradesh. Having begun his career as a nomadic journalist with stints on magazines in London and Sydney, James has contributed to half a dozen Lonely Planet books. (19)

What is remarkable is how the facts of this author’s life and career are described differently in each bio, depending on the country, in order to establish a fit between the author and the place in question, all with a tone of intimate familiarity. Whereas in *Lonely Planet India* James is described as a ‘nomadic journalist’, leading a kind of ‘hippy’ lifestyle, in *Lonely Planet Canada* he simply ‘worked on magazines in London and Sydney’. The former characterization is further reinforced with descriptions of him as a ‘long haired student en route to Nepal (a favorite destination on the once famed hippy trail), and with reference to his ‘philosophical
conversations’ with Sikhs. Of course, although he may have started out as a hippy, by the time he is employed by Lonely Planet, with the appropriate ‘shorter fringe’, he is able to catch his flight the second time around and to complete his assignment with ‘more experience’. For *Lonely Planet Canada*, his educational credentials are highlighted, in particular his exchange year at UBC and his having successfully completed degrees in literature and history. Gone is the ‘long haired student’ on his way to India, and in his place steps the well traveled and accomplished university graduate. Finally, for *Lonely Planet Ireland*, James’s bio morphs into a story of youthful revelry, combining traditional Irish music and getting drunk, the quintessential traditional Irish pub experience. In this bio James’ closeness to Ireland is firmly established: in geographical terms with respect to his English home, and in social terms with respect to his time spent with his friends from Tyrone, presumably similar to those ‘blarney-prone Celts’ he met in Ireland.

This brief comparative analysis of authors’ bios in Lonely Planet guidebooks shows how forging an intimate relationship with the place in question helps to establish an author’s travel credentials, and cultural fit, with the place with reference to his or her ‘personality’ and career path. These strategies underwrite the credibility and expertise of Lonely Planet authors by reinforcing the certainty and authority of their knowledge and opinions about particular places. They also solicit the presumed typical desires of intended readers in relation to the place in question. In India, the hippy appeal, especially the aim of finding oneself, seems central. In Canada, it is the cross-country road trip, from Quebec to Galliano Island in British Columbia, as well as possible work study experiences. And who could come to Ireland without getting drunk and having a bit of ‘craic’ with the locals in the pub?
A recent variation on this strategy has included using ‘local’ authors from the place in question, who then write the introductory chapters on history, culture, food, etc. However these authors are not identified in the actual chapters. For example, Fionn Davenport, the coordinating author for *Lonely Planet Ireland* (2008) who is identified as a Dublin local in ‘The Authors’ section (734), is credited with writing the vast majority of the introductory chapters that appear before the ‘main body’ of the guidebook, which contains all the destinations in Ireland to visit.

One aspect of this ingenious strategy is that it allows Lonely Planet to more confidently present its remarks on the ‘National Psyche’ in the Culture section ‘The National Psyche’ section is also a relatively new aspect of Lonely Planet guidebooks) by dissecting the ‘Irish mentality’ for the stranger. The logic seems to be that when an Irish person or local writes about his or her own culture then it cannot possibly be considered inaccurate, but instead is presumably all the more insightful for being ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’. So when Fionn Davenport analyzes the Irish national psyche, he reveals that:

> Beneath all of the garrulous sociability and self-deprecating twaddle lurks a dark secret, which is that, at heart, the Irish are low on self-esteem…This goes some way toward explaining the peculiar relationship Ireland has with alcohol. The country regularly tops the list of the world’s biggest binge drinkers (2008: 49).

This piece of pseudo-psychology exemplifies how Lonely Planet is able to spin out its own version of ‘expert’ cultural analysis through the obviously more penetrating insight of a local.

There is an interesting play with the different voices at work here. We find an authoritative/objective voice at work as well as a local subjective voice. In the next section, I note how tourism is portrayed with reference to claims in *Lonely Planet India* (2008) and *Lonely Planet Ireland* (2008 2010) of ‘discovering’ relatively ‘secret’ places ‘off the beaten track’. In the case of Davenport, a Lonely Planet author is revealing a whole host of other secrets hidden not in the geography but in the cultural psychology of the ‘locals’.
A puzzling aspect of Lonely Planet guidebooks is how the visibility and individuality of the authors exist and function simultaneously with the anonymous, authoritative, invisible but instantly recognizable voice of Lonely Planet. Apart from ‘The Lonely Planet Story’ of Tony and Maureen Wheeler, the authors are the only ‘real’ people in the entire guidebook in that we are given pictures of their faces, their names and some biographical information. Each guidebook begins as a highly individualized and human enterprise as we meet the authors ‘personally’, get to know a little about their background, and find out where their favorite places are. Far from being strangers to the place, the authors have an intimate and profound knowledge of it.

Although Lonely Planet does mention which author writes which specific section of the guidebook (there are typically multiple authors and a co-coordinating editor for the larger guidebooks), in the various sections of the guidebooks the individual authors are no longer mentioned or visible, and instead each geographical chapter is presented anonymously. This anonymous, standardized, mythological voice of Lonely Planet subsumes and replaces the voice of individual authors in order to achieve a degree of branded standardization and homogeneity across over 650 guidebook titles. This anonymous but personalized voice of Lonely Planet performs an important function for the reader and potential traveler. On the one hand, the individualized and visible pictures of the authors of Lonely Planet guides help to establish the credibility and expertise of the company through a strategy of intimacy with the reader. This strategy of intimacy is also used to establish the authors’ credibility as experts. On the other hand, a strategy of distance and anonymity is also at work, insofar as the subjectivity, individuality, and specificity of the authors’ voices are subsumed and replaced with the monolithic voice of Lonely Planet.
By eliminating the judgments, opinions and perspectives of individual authors, the various written sections of the guidebook take on a distinct, but consistently anonymous ‘voice’. Unless the reader takes the time at the beginning to note which parts are written by whom, it is stylistically impossible to distinguish between the remaining written entries. As the individual voices of the ‘authors’ are standardized and subsumed into a homogenous and consistent Lonely Planet authorial voice, the ‘real author’ of the guidebook, ‘the Lonely Planet mythical voice’, becomes simultaneously absent yet ever-present even as it encourages the reader to identify with it. Consequently, the journey that is eventually undertaken by the reader will always be a part of the bigger travel story of Lonely Planet and it will involve an intimate and personal relationship with the voice of Lonely Planet rather than with the subjective and individual voices of particular ‘authors’.

Lonely Planet guidebooks are written in the absence of a singular narrator and without a discernible temporal structure. There is no individual subject on a unique journey who sees each day passing under different circumstances. Expunging the speaking subject from the guidebook does not mean that the guidebook does not have a voice, or a journey: rather, the guidebook’s voice is dispersed across the surface of the entire text. Like the corporate voice of the guidebooks by Murray and Baedeker, Lonely Planet replaces the idiosyncratic voice of the travelogue with the systematic and generic uniformity of the guidebook. As the everyday journey is exteriorized and reworked as a necessary part of the reading process, the speaking subject becomes the reading subject of the guidebook and incorporated into the work of consumption which the book promotes. ‘You’, the reader, write the subjective ‘script’ through reading and traveling, and ideally you become the important final element in the reproduction of all three legends of Lonely
Planet. In this sense, when the reader writes the script the legends of Lonely Planet become ‘auto-productive’.

**Strategy 3: ‘You write the script’: or the auto-productive legends of Lonely Planet**

The final aspect of the branded authority of Lonely Planet guidebooks I shall focus on arises not from the actual encryption of the Lonely Planet voice but rather from the potential speech of readers themselves. By expunging the subjectivity of authors and replacing their voices with a monolithic authorial voice, readers can potentially identify with the voice of Lonely Planet in a more direct and unmediated way. This ultimate strategy of authorship entails examining how Lonely Planet speaks directly to the subjectivity of readers and how readers learn to speak for Lonely Planet.

The Lonely Planet brand carefully cultivates its readers as ‘travelers’. In this way its readers, who are also users of guidebooks, are called upon to assume this identity while rejecting any association with tourism. To draw from a concept popularized by Louis Althusser (1971), the guidebook addresses, hails, or ‘interpellates’ readers by speaking directly to them. Althusser argues that ‘interpellation’ is effective when ideology, or what I (following Barthes), have been calling the mythical speech of Lonely Planet, ‘calls out’ to an individual and catches his or her attention as a subject of its discourse by identifying them individually and collectively as subjects.

Another recent feature of Lonely Planet guidebooks lies in how they interpellate readers through the ‘Highlights’ section. Rudy Koshar argues, ‘whereas the former [the travelogue] was written as a record of a journey already taken and digested, the latter [the guidebook] anticipated future travel’ (2000: 15). Following the same logic, the Lonely Planet guidebook anticipates the itinerary of travelers and scripts the response of its readers. For example, in *Lonely Planet India*
(2007: 2-3), the ‘Highlights Map’ page features 15 focus points distributed across a map of India, each with a 3-4 line blurb. I have edited and reproduced the contents of the highlights map in the following list:

1. Leh - ‘get lost in the old towns alleyways’
2. Agra - ‘Imbibe the legendary beauty of the milky white Taj Mahal’
3. Khajuraho - ‘Blush at the erotic sculptures’
4. Varanasi - ‘Take a soul soothing dawn boat ride’
5. Darjeeling - ‘Wrap your chilly hands around a hot cuppa’
6. Kahna - National Park ‘Scout for big jungle cats’
7. Ajanta - Caves ‘Gasp at the glorious Buddhist art’
8. Hampi - ‘Ramble around this once might Hindu empire’
9. Pondicherry - ‘Stroll the beachside promenade’
10. Keralan - Backwaters ‘Kick back on a languid boat cruise’
11. Goa’s beaches - ‘Toss up between chilled-out relaxing or charged up partying’
12. Mumbai - ‘Dive into India’s most cosmopolitan city’
13. Jaisalmer - ‘Explore the honey coloured fort’
14. Udaipur - ‘Be bewitched by this fairytale city’
15. Attari - ‘Gawk at soldiers’

This emphasis on active imperative verbs encourages readers to have an immediate and direct experience of India, and even anticipates their emotional reactions to certain places: ‘kick back, gawk, blush, and gasp’. Despite Lonely Planet’s promise of adventures off the beaten track, this text anticipates or even programs the experiences and responses of readers. A striking aspect of the above list is the strong emphasis on bodily sensations rather than simply ‘gazing’. In the introductory chapter I noted that an important aspect of my research was to understand tourism and travel as a corporeal and embodied practice that emphasizes ‘being, doing touching and seeing, rather than just seeing’ (Cloke and Perkins 1998: 189). From the above list we can clearly sense how readers’ perceptions of India are expected to be mediated through an entire range of emotional, physical and psychological experiences. Visitors will not simply ‘gaze’ at the Taj Mahal but rather ‘imbibe the legendary beauty of the milky white Taj Mahal’. Visitors will not look disinterestedly at cultural artifacts but ‘gasp at the glorious Buddhist art’. Diving,
exploring, kicking back, blushing, rambling and scouting are part and parcel of the anticipated experience of India.

As mentioned previously, one of the signature tunes of the Lonely Planet voice takes the form of an anti-tourist discourse. As a guidebook company that prides itself on providing a more authentic form of travel than what is made available through mainstream tourism, Lonely Planet has long been a voice for ‘real travel’ that promises to lead readers to destinations that are frequently outside of the mainstream tourist industry. Lonely Planet has also been an interminable critic of mainstream tourism, and for a long time it has presented itself as a spokesperson and guide for the traveler community. Lonely Planet guidebooks are ostensibly about travel, not tourism, and their readers are travelers, not tourists. Many of the Lonely Planet guides express a constant criticism of how tourism can ruin places through over-development and standardization. By asserting its separateness from tourism, while documenting and commenting on how tourism is destroying certain places, the Lonely Planet brand of travel can remain uncontaminated from the stigma of tourism.

Across a wide spectrum of Lonely Planet texts the tourist/traveler distinction is at work. The ‘India Highlights’ section states that ‘travelers, Lonely Planet staff and authors share their top experiences of India’ (4 my emphasis). Further on in the ‘Destination India’ section we read that ‘demystifying India is a perpetual work in progress and for many travelers that’s what makes her so deeply addictive’ (22 my emphasis). This gendered personification of India is itself a mystification achieved in the very act of apparently demystifying it. Finally, from the ‘Culture’ section we read: ‘one of the first thing travelers are likely to observe about India is how everyday life is intertwined with the spiritual’ (56, my emphasis). At the back of the Lonely Planet guidebook to Canada, the ‘Behind the Scenes’ section states that ‘travelers snapped up the
guides’ (893, my emphasis). The same section includes a long list of readers’ names (those who submitted various tips and other useful information) followed by acknowledgements: ‘many thanks to the travelers who used the last edition and wrote to us with helpful hints’ (894 my emphasis). The ‘Send us your Feedback’ section reads ‘we love to hear from travelers, your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better’ (895 my emphasis). Guidebooks readers are thus encouraged to work for Lonely Planet by submitting comments, helpful hints, and useful information. By interpelling readers of its guidebooks as ‘travelers’, Lonely Planet distinguishes them apart from a mass tourist industry. Thus the traveler is a type of mythological code that tends to reconfigure the tourist under a new guise. By interpelling readers as ‘our travelers’ Lonely Planet invokes a mythological triangle, consisting firstly of itself, then discourse of travel and finally backpackers as readers of its guidebooks. In this way, Lonely Planet seeks to capitalize on an already existing mythology of travel while representing itself as a spokesperson or re-inventor of a contemporary mythology of travel, as a member of the travel ‘community’, and as a trusted parental guide to unfamiliar places that are ‘off the beaten track’.

Conclusion

A recent article entitled ‘Lunch with M’ by John Colapinto in The New Yorker (2009) discusses the fame and controversy surrounding the famous Michelin Guide, considered by many to be the guide to the finest restaurants in Europe. The much coveted, and rarely granted, Michelin three-star rating system designates those restaurants which meet the very highest and most stringent criteria of excellence. As Colapinto writes, ‘Bernard Loiseau, the chef and owner of La Côte d’Or, once told a fellow chef that if he ever lost one of his Michelin stars he would kill himself. Loiseau had made a life’s ambition of becoming a three star chef, a goal he achieved in 1991’ (46). Colapinto goes on to describe how one food critic in particular, Francois Simon, wrote two pieces in the magazine Le Figaro, suggesting that Chef Loiseau was in serious danger
of losing his Michelin three-star rating, despite assurances by Michelin to the contrary. The story ends tragically, as Colapinto writes: ‘two and a half weeks later [following the publication of the second Francis Simon article], after a day at work in the kitchen, Loiseau killed himself with a shotgun blast to the head. He was fifty two’ (ibid.).

Although Colapinto does mention that Chef Loiseau was prone to lifelong bouts of depression and despair, a trait that, for anyone who has ever worked in restaurant kitchens, seems to be endemic to chefs worldwide, the article does help to illustrate, albeit in an extreme and tragic way, the importance and power of guidebooks in their capacity to bestow either their blessings or their condemnation on particular places. In many ways, the most popular travel guidebooks have become so influential that, when a country, city or place receives a particularly damning review, or an especially ebullient review, the city hall, the tourism board and the media sit up and take notice. The ‘anxious’ Irish Times article examined earlier regarding the latest Lonely Planet guidebook to Ireland is but just one of many which have been written in the Irish national newspapers. Clearly, the expert voice and opinion of Lonely Planet can provoke a slew of soul-searching opinion columnists to reflect anxiously on the state of Irish culture. A recent newspaper article about a particularly negative review of the city of Wolverhampton in England by Lonely Planet in their ‘World Worst Cities poll’ caused consternation among locals as they recognized that such bad press from Lonely Planet meant an important threat to its symbolic capital as a destination, and the economic consequences that might follow from such a ‘downgrading’. The story made national headlines on the BBC as well as in several national newspapers21. Similarly when Cork City, Ireland was rated by Lonely Planet as one of the ‘ten best cities in Europe to visit’ there was considerable local jubilation, as well as heated

21 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/west_midlands/8435823.stm
contestation from naysayers in Dublin. In short, the recommendations of travel guidebooks carry considerable cultural and economic weight in today’s ever-growing international travel and tourism industry.

One of the most powerful aspects of a Lonely Planet guidebook lies in how it helps to create new ‘beaten tracks’ through recommendation while simultaneously creating alternatives to the beaten track with ever new discoveries of ‘untouched places’, a theme I return to in Chapters 3 and 4. This self perpetuating or ‘auto-productive’ aspect of the guidebook is illustrated by how the Lonely Planet and others like it do not simply and objectively document transformations in the tourist landscape but are an integral part of those very changes. Although guidebooks are but one means by which people may visit a particular place, there is, after all, a formidable domestic tourism industry, both publicly and privately driven, which advertises a host of different places for visitors. In addition to powerful ‘word of mouth’ recommendations that proliferate on the internet as well as among friends and family who swap holiday tales and photos, the authority of the most popular guides such as Lonely Planet remains central.

Through the power of recommendation, guidebooks have the capacity to direct and redirect embodied capital (in the form of spending visitors) to various locations around the world and to various locations within a particular region. The guidebook is thus an agent of change in guiding flows of people to certain destinations which were previously off the tourist radar, which can then be expected to accommodate higher volumes of visitors. William Wordsworth faced a similar dilemma with the publication of his Guide to the Lakes. His guide became so popular that it brought thousands of new visitors to the Lake District every year, and a public railway into the district itself emerged as a logical development stemming from such increased volume. The Lonely Planet guides promise readers ‘real’ places, places that are not produced for mass
consumption, but are simply ‘there’, waiting to be discovered by the curious traveler, and thus retaining their authenticity. Thus, a paradoxical and mythological logic is at work, a logic of visibility and invisibility. On the one hand, guidebooks render visible to the reader a dual picture of any destination. One is mired in homogeneity, soullessness, and predictability and yet also retains places relatively uncontaminated from the destructive stigma of tourism and homogeneity. On the other hand, guidebooks promote a mythology of travel, in which they remain invisible as an integral part of a process in which destinations off-the-beaten-track lose their original charm, and develop into popular resorts catering to large volumes of people, and thus degenerate into symptoms of mass tourism. We can now finally begin to appreciate how and why Lonely Planet guidebooks are such an important and powerful ‘voice’ in the world of independent travel. Its ever-increasing popularity and market share is bolstered by a variety of strategies which secure its expertise as the most trusted name in travel, and which allow it to be taken as a more serious, knowledgeable and authoritative text in the backpacking world.

The success and popularity of the Lonely Planet guidebooks has in no small part contributed to the immense growth of backpacker enclaves around the world and the exponential growth of the backpacker niche market since the 1970s. The Lonely Planet corporation commands a 35-40% share in the travel guidebook market worldwide (Wheeler 2008) and has indeed become a Goliath of sorts with over 650 guidebook titles which now cover practically every country and region in the world. In a recent article in The Guardian entitled ‘Big brands drive BBC Worldwide profits’, Lonely Planet was named a ‘mega-brand’, and so despite its humble beginnings and anti-mass tourism mythology, it is now undeniably an integral part of a global tourism and travel industry. Although guidebook publishing remains its primary market, 

22 http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/jul/06/top-gear-bbc-worldwide-profit
Lonely Planet Corporation has been expanding and diversifying its market share of destinations and products, including city guides, country guides, regional guides, travel literature, photographic books, and a hugely popular website. Recently it has begun to expand its website to provide hotel and flight bookings. Despite this enormous success, global visibility, and popularity as a ‘super brand’ Lonely Planet remains the most popular guidebook among backpackers and still sells itself as the voice of travel (rather than tourism) that guides readers to places that are ‘off-the-beaten-track’.

Nowadays mobile backpackers who read and use these guidebooks are at the very centre of the expansion of a burgeoning ‘travel’ industry. The outstanding (but by no means unique) example of the growth and success of Lonely Planet since the mid 1970s is also an important index of the re-organization of tourism for a new generation of travelers who do not consider themselves tourists at all, a theme I explore through interviews with backpackers in the following chapters. The growth and popularity of independent travel (backpacking) that is celebrated and mediated through these guides can be fruitfully theorized as an example of a post-fordist tourism industry. Lonely Planet guidebooks ostensibly ‘liberate’ consumers from the constraints of prepackaged holidays, travel agents, and itineraries and allow them to customize their trips according to individual itineraries, tastes, and budgets, and in doing so they help to produce a form of tourism that is far more flexible, mobile, fluid, and mystifying than that of preceding generations.

However, as I argue in the following chapter, its legendary renown and authority is far from monolithic amongst backpackers themselves. Those travelers who buy and use Lonely Planet guidebooks are not necessarily the kind of cultural dupes that Horkheimer and Adorno describe in their essay ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ (1976), nor are
they a mindless mass of consumers, devoid of agency and the power to discriminate. We therefore must be careful to avoid portraying these real-life readers as subjects without agency or critical discernment. In the following chapter I ask backpackers: how they read and use their guidebooks. This question, and the responses it generates, shed light on how the legendary renown and biblical authority of Lonely Planet guidebooks is also a contested and disputed issue among backpackers.

In the following two chapters I turn my attention to the people who are on the road travelling, and to the places they visit. This discussion constitutes the ethnographic half of the thesis, where I move from a textually and historically focused analysis into the ‘everyday world’. Since the previous discussion has provided a clearer picture of how travel, tourism, guidebooks and geography are constituted and made ‘active’ within a historically situated and textually mediated discursive field, it is now time to examine how these discourses and ‘technologies of self’ are actively practiced and constituted in the ethnographic field. Of course, the challenge is to show and explicate how these discursive and ethnographic fields are interconnected and mutually constitute one another.
Chapter 3 The Beaten Track: Moving Between Texts and the ‘Real World’

In Chapter 1, I examined how the ideal types of the traveler and the tourist became crystallized through the emergence of a burgeoning tourism industry in 19th century Europe, with John Murray and Karl Baedeker leading the way as early entrepreneurs of bourgeois travel. I examined how the Murray and Baedeker guidebooks consciously sought to distinguish their style of ‘independent travel’ from the type of mass tourism promoted by Thomas Cook and his guided tours. In that context they functioned as ‘salvational’ texts to ‘help’ readers, through guidance, to ‘evolve’ from their immature, unenlightened state, and lowly cultural status into a more mature, educated, and cultivated traveler. In today’s world, backpackers, as self-identified travelers, face a similar dilemma as the readers of the Murray and Baedeker guidebooks did a century before. They too are encouraged to distinguish themselves as travelers from the mass tourist and travel as qualitatively different from the ‘beaten track’ of tourism.

In Chapter 1, I also outlined the dominant discourses of Romanticism, Enlightenment and colonialism that have historically shaped the present-day contours of travel as an educative, cultivating, and authentic social and cultural institution of Bildung. The discourse of travel helped to more clearly define and delineate an anti-tourist discourse, one that has historically shaped the characterization of the tourist, and the ‘degeneracy’ of mass tourism as a failed project of Bildung. In Chapter 2, travel was evoked by Tony and Maureen Wheeler as a somewhat humanitarian, and conservationist practice, which saw Lonely Planet guidebooks continue the salvational and enlightenment goal of earlier guidebooks in the present day. Although travel is evoked by backpackers as superior and distinctive in contrast to mass tourism, ‘discourses of travel’ today are articulated as solutions to contemporary problems. For example, Lonely Planet Corporation emphasizes the need for ecological sustainability which was not part
of earlier discourses. In Chapter 2, Lonely Planet’s discourse of travel was, in part, about global consumption and the preservation of cultural difference. Cultural difference and authenticity were essential ingredients for the successful development of the cosmopolitan sensibility and enlightenment of the traveler. The Lonely Planet reader was evoked as a conservationist of local culture, authentic places, and a bulwark or counter-force to the malign and destructive forces of mass tourism. These two chapters outline the contours of an anti-tourist discourse articulated by Romantics such as Wordsworth, Ruskin, and the cultural critics of Blackwood’s Magazine as well as the authors of Lonely Planet literature. These elements of anti-tourist discourse include the destruction of ‘natural’ and ‘picturesque’ places, and the inability of the ‘infantile’, pleasure-seeking, and ‘time strapped’ tourists to fully comprehend what they encounter on their travels due to their lack of cultivation.

In the remaining two chapters there is a fundamental shift of focus and methodology. We move from a largely historical and textual based analysis of the ideological codes of travel and tourism to a more ethnographic examination of how these codes are orally mediated and reproduced through the discourse of backpackers on the road. Smith defines the ‘ideological code’ as ‘a schema that replicates its organization in multiple and various sites’ (Smith 1999: 159) and ‘a generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary, written or spoken, ordered by it’ (ibid, my emphasis). In the remaining two chapters I examine the tourist/traveler distinction and the beaten track and off-the beaten-track as ‘ideological codes’ that regulate, organize, and give meaning to the oral or verbal discourses of backpackers. These ideological codes are important organizers of discourses of distinction. In the context of these two chapters I show how discourses of authenticity, ‘off the beaten track’ and the tourist/traveler
distinction serve as important sources of cultural and symbolic capital for backpackers, and are constitutive of a distinctive backpacker ‘habitus’ in the ‘field’ of tourism.

In particular, I examine how these ideological codes are replicated ‘in multiple and various sites’, while at the same time paying attention to how they are also articulated differently in India, Canada, and Ireland. The two central analytical themes and axes of the work of travel versus the holiday of tourism, on the one hand, and the educational self-cultivation of authenticity, on the other, play out in different and uneven ways in all three destinations in Canada, India, and Ireland. In particular, the following two chapters provide a geographically based examination of how such themes play out ‘on the ground’ by illustrating the importance of geography and ‘place’ in shaping and differentially constituting the distinctive contours of backpackers’ off-the-beaten-track experiences in all three destinations.

In *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* Bourdieu defines habitus as ‘classificatory schemes, principles of vision and division’ (1994: 10). The tourist/traveler distinction is one such classificatory scheme which acts as a ‘generative and unifying principle’ allowing backpackers to actively distinguish themselves and what they do, or more generally, to differentiate their style of travel from mass tourism. Thus, although backpackers occupy a distinctive position within the broader ‘field’ of tourism, their distinctive discourse and style of off-the-beaten-track travel marks them as different from and in opposition to the practices of mainstream mass tourism. In other words, for the purposes of this study, I consider the ‘field’ of tourism to be bounded by how backpackers negotiate the borders between the beaten track of tourism and off the beaten track of backpacker travel. I pay particular attention in my interviews with backpackers to their stories and comments regarding their off the beaten track experiences, their distance from
tourists, and their particular style of travel, which I consider to be examples and oral articulations of cultural capital that is symbolically expressed within their own communities of practice.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing and elaborating the methodological issues involved in doing ethnographic field work and interviews with people on the road. Then I analyze, through interviews, their thoughts about tourists, travelers and Lonely Planet guidebooks. Through interviews with backpackers and ethnographic observations in all three places, I analyze the experiences of backpackers and show how they strive to stay off and away from the beaten track, and to distance themselves from holidaying tourists. Focusing on India, I examine the ‘threat’ that tourists and tourism pose to the places these travelers visit and to the ‘locals’ that live there. Lonely Planet guidebooks occupy an ambiguous place in the discourse of my interviewees and I show how Lonely Planet guidebooks are used in the ethnographic field by these backpackers in ways that are often surprising, illuminating and contradictory.

**Canada, India and Ireland: Travelling Through the Ethnographic Field**

An important methodological question that I need to address first concerns how my research actually was accomplished and what part I played in doing the research. In June 2007, I began my research in Vancouver, Canada. I posted advertisements in three youth hostels in downtown Vancouver and within days two interviewees responded to my poster. At the beginning of July 2007 I then flew to India and spent a total of three weeks in Delhi and Leh (the provincial capital of Ladakh in Northern India approximately 1000km north from Delhi) where I conducted fourteen interviews. In India I solicited interviews through casual contact with backpackers rather than through advertized posters. I finally arrived in Cork, Ireland at the end of

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23 See Appendix IV Interview Recruitment Materials
July where I again advertised with posters in three youth hostels in the city center of Cork. I conducted four interviews in Cork and after spending some time in Ireland returned to Vancouver in June 2008 where I conducted three more interviews while staying at the Sunny Beach Hostel. I briefly describe the sites below with India taking center stage, using interview excerpts as well as passages from the Lonely Planet guidebook to highlight the commonalities and peculiarities of the three sites.

Vancouver, Canada

I began my ethnographic research in Vancouver, Canada, where I had been living as an international student from Ireland for over four years. Fieldwork in Vancouver posed several problems and interesting issues. Typically the ethnographer travels to the ‘field’ as a relative outsider or stranger, creates a productive friction which serves as a useful heuristic device through which the field itself is constituted and analyzed. In Vancouver I was in many ways already a stranger and a tourist in the field, although I had grown familiar with Vancouver and Canada as a home away from home. Because Vancouver is a city full of people from ‘somewhere else’, my own particularity as ‘the Irish guy’ is relatively normal and typical. However, as I began my fieldwork I was struck by how my interviewees and I, all in our own ways visitors to Vancouver, looked on both Vancouver and Canada as outsiders.

We thus shared what Urry refers to as the ‘tourist gaze’ (1990), since I was familiar with their discourses, their method of travel, and their desire for particular destinations. Nevertheless, despite our shared backpacker ‘habitus’, once I had told them the reason for my stay in the hostel many of my interviewees treated me as a local and I became a mine of both useful and useless information: do you know any cheap places to eat? Which bus do we catch to go to downtown?

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24 I use pseudonyms throughout this thesis for all hostels and people.
Do you know anyone who can sell me some weed? I spent just over one week at the Sunny Beach hostel in the western suburbs of Vancouver and I put up posters in hostels in downtown Vancouver where I managed to get three good interviews. I did a total of seven interviews in Vancouver. Since Sunny Beach Hostel featured a mix of travelers who could not always be easily identified as backpackers I simply had to determine (through casual conversation) if they were backpacking or not. While I was staying at the hostel, many young Irish people were in Canada working for the summer, along with many Canadians there on holiday in British Columbia as well as older men looking for work.

_Paharganj, Delhi and Leh, Ladakh in India_

I had spent over three months in India during my own backpacking trip over ten years ago, and my experiences there sparked my interest and curiosity about the high status and prestige attributed to travel and the ‘self-evident’ inferiority of tourists. Within hours of arriving in India I had already heard several discussions of the tourist/traveler distinction and throughout my backpacking trip this discourse was repeated time and time again. In those days I was decidedly a traveler and _not_ a tourist. India was my first port of call on a trip that lasted eight months and traversed several countries. I eventually returned to Ireland with a windswept feeling: I had at last ‘seen the world’, or at least a part of it! I did not realize then that India was considered by many other backpackers as a litmus test for travelers. When I subsequently arrived in places like Thailand and Malaysia, I began to realize, mainly through the ‘respect’ I received during the many meals and bus journeys I shared with other backpackers who were doing what were considered ‘easy’ countries like Thailand, that India was held in very high regard by other travelers as a ‘difficult’ place to travel. I recalled with modest bravery tales of harrowing and ‘dangerous’ bus journeys in India. If the Indian local bus stories were not going down that well
on any particular night then I would always produce a few harrowing tales of sickness and hospitalization that never failed to make an impression. And of course, there were the places I had visited: the Ganges at dawn, the mountains in Ladakh, and so on.

Returning to India ten years later for my fieldwork was quite a different experience. I stayed in the same backpacker enclave in Delhi (Paharganj) and found it easy to spend time hanging around at roadside cafes waiting for random backpackers to sit down beside me. Within seconds a conversation would start up. Like Cork and Vancouver, Paharganj is a transit hub for backpackers, acting as both the arrival and departure area for travelers flying into or out of Delhi and India. Paharganj is located between Old Delhi and New Delhi and is full of everything a visitor could need: bus, airline, train tickets, and plenty of cheap and convenient places to eat and sleep. Despite the frenetic pace of traffic, people, bikes, cars, and cows, it is a space of sociability and random encounter.

Since the late 1970s the Province of Ladakh in Northern India has become increasingly popular as a backpacker and mainstream tourist destination. The provincial capital city of Leh has developed a substantial infrastructure to cope with the ever-increasing numbers of visitors. Leh itself has become a central destination for tourists on short holidays and backpackers who typically stay longer in the area. Ladakh is a very mountainous area and the capital Leh sits at a breath-taking altitude of over 3,500 meters. Many of the European tourists I spoke to were taking part in hiking holidays, which typically last for one month. The fact that the tourist season in Ladakh (which runs from May/June to September) coincides with the European holiday season contributes to its desirability as a tourist destination. The substantial numbers of French and German tourists there is partly due to the popularity of mountain hiking in these countries. For many backpackers, Ladakh offers an escape from the stifling heat and humidity of the Indian
plains, and the opportunity to take the notorious two-day bus trip from Manali to Leh. This bus trip was frequently mentioned by my interviewees in Leh by virtue of its perceived difficulty, danger, and amazing views. Most of the tourists I spoke to flew directly from Delhi to Leh. I also flew, mainly due to time constraints and also because I had ‘done’ that particular bus trip many years previously, and this time my desire for four days of vertigo-inducing panic was not worth the astonishing mountain scenery. During my interviews with backpackers in Leh, I tended to emphasize my previous traveler experiences of endurance and thrift, rather than my more recent tourist experience of flying from Delhi to Leh in one hour. Because of its mix of tourists and backpackers and its burgeoning tourist infrastructure, Leh was a particularly provocative place to interview backpackers about the tourist/traveler distinction as well as their perceptions of a place that was, in the words of the Wheelers, in the process of becoming ‘loved to death’.

After looking at a few guesthouses I finally decided upon the Katmandu guesthouse. It was less than 10 minutes walk to the center of Leh and had a big garden that I correctly assumed would be an inviting place for other guests to hang out during their stay and thus make it easier for me to socialize, get to know people, and conduct interviews. In India it was far easier to spot a backpacker; they were clearly marked through their ‘race’, typically white, and clothing style, those drawstring pants and t-shirts mentioned by Tad Friend in the previous chapter. If he or she was not a backpacker then he or she was usually working for an NGO in development work. So my strategy was simple: find a westerner and chances are that person will either be a backpacker or an NGO worker. I spent 10 days there and conducted interviews with individual backpackers as well as a group interview with four other Israeli backpackers (three men and one woman)

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25 A popular, but often maligned destination with backpackers, infamous for its high quality charras or hashish and a well developed tourist infrastructure. It is generally maligned because it is perceived as very touristic, not because of its high quality charras.
whom I met through Henry\textsuperscript{26}, a friend of theirs who was also an Israeli backpacker and the first person that I interviewed in Leh.

\textit{Cork City, Ireland}

Ironically doing interviews in my hometown of Cork, Ireland was the strangest part of the entire fieldwork process. Being a ‘local’ and listening to how non-Irish visitors perceived ‘my country’ was at times frustrating ‘the Irish are so friendly’, at times astounding ‘you mean you were expecting thatched cottages and sheep everywhere?’ and always interesting. As in Vancouver, I was also the source of ‘highly valued’ local insight and information. One of my interviewees there asked me to check around for work with my friends for her as she was staying in Ireland for a full year, which I did to no avail. Situated in the centre of Cork City, McCurtain Street has become the main area for backpackers in Cork. With several hostels and cheap hotels in the area, bus and train stations minutes away, and several local pubs (that have plenty of traditional live music and beer specials) in the immediate vicinity, it is no surprise that McCurtain Street is popular with budget conscious backpackers. I interviewed four backpackers and spent time hanging out at the bar at one of the backpacker hostels with many people from Europe staying there. I eventually decided to ‘fly’ analytically between all three sites without following any temporal, spatial or geographical sequence with a view to elucidating the \textit{common themes} and \textit{comparative differences} between them. In this chapter I begin with the most ‘predictable’ of places, the beaten track of tourism, and I provide a brief travel biography for each interviewee in the appropriate context.

All of my interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. I received signed written consent\textsuperscript{27} from my interviewees and they understood that their individual identities would remain

\textsuperscript{26} I use pseudonyms for all my interviewees
anonymous for the purpose of the research. Overall I had four different but interrelated groups of questions and in total I asked on average 24 distinct questions. The first group of questions pertained to the ‘here and now’, including demographic information about where they were from, time spent travelling so far, reasons for visiting the particular country, and the activities done while here. The second group of questions, the ‘travel biography’, related to level of experience backpacking, previous trips etc, some of their favorite/least favorite places as well as their most memorable travel stories (if any). The third group of questions, on ‘tourism and travel’, related to how they identified themselves as travelers, tourists or something else. These questions sought a more reflexive response and asked them to think about how they see tourism, travel and so on in light of their own experiences. The final group of questions pertained to their use (or non-use) of guidebooks. Even for those interviewees who were not at that time using a Lonely Planet guidebook, nearly all had some previous experience of using one. These questions asked about whether or which guidebook they used, how they used it, which parts they found useful, and the amount of pre-departure reading or reviewing they did.

**Negotiating Local Legends: Lonely Planet Guidebooks in the Ethnographic Field**

In the previous chapter, I examined how textual strategies employed in Lonely Planet guidebooks assert its authority as a serious and expert text, and how its branded voice expresses its popularity and trustworthiness amongst backpackers. My aim in that chapter was to show how Asia, and India in particular, were instrumental to the early and continued success of Lonely Planet as the voice of independent travel for western travelers. I argued that the popularization of India, as a litmus test for travelers, was not a recent phenomenon, but part of a broader historical and colonial context of relations between West and East. This ‘rediscovery’ of India helped to

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27 See Appendix IV Interview Consent Form
resurrect and reify older ideas about India and other so-called ‘underdeveloped’ countries by becoming the object of a western gaze that keeps it discursively fixed in the past. In this regard the popularization of backpacking allows India to be rediscovered as a place that is still living in the past. Drawing upon examples from Lonely Planet Ireland, I was also able to show how Ireland is increasingly framed as a traditional culture, one that is disappearing under the weight of homogenization, and yet through the use of a guidebook the reader can find traces of that past in the present, if they know where to look. An interesting feature about Lonely Planet Canada is that Canadian culture is not seen as inherently threatened by such forces. Despite its anti-tourist discourse, the logic of cultural loss and cultural threat was largely absent from the Lonely Planet Canada guidebook.

An important role of guidebooks is to reduce travelers’ dependence on local information. The guidebook translates an unfamiliar locale into a more familiar, and thus more easily and efficiently navigable space for the reader. The guidebook thus functions as a type of ‘legend’ in the field, the purpose of which is to provide reference points of intelligibility and instructions for use. I interviewed Gabriel, a 28 year old Columbian woman, in Paharganj, New Delhi. She was a shoe designer and at the time of the interview she had been travelling in India for three weeks. She was planning to stay a further two to three weeks before returning to London where she was then living.

_Billy:_ Is this your first time backpacking and are you using a guidebook?

_Gabriel:_ This is my first backpacking trip and I find it quite useful having the guide but it’s funny because now I build a resistance to the Lonely Planet. I hate it as well. If you open one page and there is a beautiful picture, nice food, nice people, blah, blah, blah! And they say that for 90% of the places. Maybe for the author of the guide he hated that place because he was pissed off, hungry you know? Maybe you go to a guest house and there wasn’t any fresh food and the food wasn’t that good as the Lonely Planet says. You cannot, it’s not the bible.
Gabriel notes ‘I find it quite useful having the guide’ even though she has developed a ‘resistance to the Lonely Planet’ too. She criticizes Lonely Planet reviews as overwhelmingly positive to the point of being uncritical, noting that ‘they say that for 90% of the places’. Gabriel appears to notice a subtle shift in the Lonely Planet ‘voice’, from strongly anti-tourist to a more accommodating one of a larger, less off-the-beaten-track centered market and readership. Gabriel challenges the ‘Biblical’ status and credibility of Lonely Planet, arguing that ‘it’s not the bible’ and argues that the authors’ reviews may have more to do with wholly subjective and contingent factors instead of a more objective and impersonal evaluation. Her remarks help to illustrate that, despite how Lonely Planet guidebooks are constructed as expert texts, whose authors are expert insiders, for Gabriel the advice and reviews of the Lonely Planet are not to be taken as ‘gospel’.

However, despite her skepticism about the accuracy and ‘truth’ of its reviews and recommendations, she finds that the Lonely Planet guidebook is useful in other ways for her in India:

*Gabriel:* Lonely Planet is like your teddy bear. It is the teddy bear for backpackers! If you are fucked you can just open the Lonely Planet, but I think the word of mouth is much more powerful. When you talk to someone and that person tells you something about a place, great! And I’ve met three people in the last three days who have said the same thing for some reason. People that are going there are coming from there and have had a special experience and I said hold on maybe this is a place I could go. So I think it’s a security. I think that security is useful but is not the bible!

For Gabriel, the Lonely Planet is more an important source of security than it is a reliable guide to places. Her evocative expression, ‘Lonely Planet is like your teddy bear. It is the teddy bear for backpackers’, echoes the sentiments of Tad Friend when he describes Lonely Planet as a ‘lifeline’ that helped ‘a whole generation, how to move through the world alone and with confidence’ (2005). As Gabriel notes, ‘if you are fucked you can just open the Lonely Planet’, suggesting that the power of guidebooks like Lonely Planet is how they facilitate the ‘maturity’
and the mobility of the independent traveler, and act in loco parentis for the independent traveler. Gabriel comments that ‘the word of mouth is much more powerful’, and argues that the more recent advice and recommendations of other travelers who have recalled ‘a special experience’ in a particular place, is a better way for her to make decisions about where to go. In her concluding remarks she again reiterates that Lonely Planet ‘is not the bible’.

In Chapter 1, I noted that one of the common features of the tourist mentality is a slavish reliance on guidebooks. Despite the enlightenment goal of the guidebook, overuse by tourists was derided as symptomatic of a herd mentality. Gabriel’s comments also illustrate an anti-tourist discourse evoked in guidebooks. To treat the Lonely Planet like the Bible, as an unquestionable and ‘divine’ source of knowledge, signifies a tourist mentality.

*Billy:* Remember you were saying earlier it’s hard to find the Lonely Planet?

*Gabriel:* Ah, I was saying there’s no lonely planet with the Lonely Planet. Everyone meets in the same place, at the same time doing the same thing; it’s quite funny you know!

*Billy:* Do you try to find places that are not in the Lonely Planet?

*Gabriel:* It’s not my intention you know, but you have to take it shanty\textsuperscript{28} shanty and listen. Listen, listen a lot.

Here Gabriel perfectly captures one of the central criticisms leveled at tourists and their use of guidebooks, namely, that ‘there’s no lonely planet with the Lonely Planet’, exposing the irony in the company name. The desire for solitude, or the desire for a lonely planet of travel, is the very thing that Lonely Planet sells to readers in the millions to such a degree that the slogan ultimately becomes a parody of itself and an absurdity. However, as Gabriel and many other interviewees

\[28\text{A very commonly used expression by backpackers in India. Although it is the Hindi word for peace, backpackers use it to denote taking it easy, or not to get too upset about something.}\]
make clear, they tend to make decisions about places to visit based on the advice of other travelers.

Gabriel’s notes that ‘everyone meets in the same place, at the same time doing the same thing’, but this ‘fact’ does not detract from her self-perception as a traveler. She argues that ‘it’s not my intention’ to find places not in the guidebook. Instead her decisions are guided more by tips she gets from others. At times, the certainty and knowledge provided by the guidebook can be very useful for first-time visitors, as the following story of Gabriel’s second day in India illustrates:

Gabriel: I’m grateful for the Lonely Planet as well, as I was really fucked for the first few days. I arrived at twelve midnight, and I find it quite difficult to plan things. So my friends and parents were saying ‘you didn’t make any reservations! No one to pick you up at the airport! Blah, blah, blah!’ This is India, who am I going to call to pick me up? So I just said to a guy in the airport ‘take me to a hotel’. The next day I just checked out and they said I didn’t pay some taxes - 400 rupees [$10] more and I started getting quite pissed and I said I’m not paying anything else [she had earlier explained to me that she already paid double the normal price for the hotel room and the rickshaw from the airport]. I took my backpack and took the rickshaw and I opened my Lonely Planet and I pointed to him [the rickshaw driver] and said ‘take me here’. And he said ‘no, no, no!’ And I said ‘take me here!’ And he said ‘no, no, no’ and he called the other guy and said ‘this girl wants to go to another hotel’ and he said ‘for the rickshaw it will cost 200 rupees’ [$5]. So I said ‘ok’. I just paid him to leave me alone. So he took me to ‘The Everest Hotel’ which is where I’m staying. It’s the first hotel in Paharganj inside my budget option, it’s 250 rupees for a single room, it’s quite clean, the toilets are squat but that doesn’t bother me and then I started traveling by myself!

On this occasion, Gabriel’s decision not to use the guidebook to find a reliable hotel probably resulted in her paying extra ‘taxes’ for her hotel room, in a hotel that was decided upon by her rickshaw driver. When I arrived in Paharganj during my fieldwork I encountered the same overpricing in the first hotel I went to. Apparently, rickshaw drivers get a commission if they bring guests to hotels. Unlike Canada, in India there are no extra taxes to be paid on top of the price so I took my business elsewhere. For Gabriel, her guidebook came in very handy during her fracas with the hotel employee and rickshaw driver. As a reliable source of knowledge,
Gabriel was able to negotiate her way out of a fix and find a more affordable hotel in Paharganj. She comments, ‘I opened my Lonely Planet and… said ‘take me here’’. The guidebook can act as a trustworthy guide to an unfamiliar place like Delhi. Like many tourist destinations around the world, the opportunity to make quick cash from unwitting tourists is readily seized upon by less scrupulous individuals. Gabriel recounts the common experience of many backpackers, who upon arriving in India, get ‘ripped off’ when they first arrive.

The following comments are from an interview I conducted in Paharganj with Eleanor, a 28 year old female Belgian backpacker I met there. Eleanor had recently arrived in India, and so her experience of India as well as her use of guidebooks was limited. I interviewed Eleanor in Paharganj; she had been in India for one week after quitting her job as a graphic designer in Belgium, and was planning to spend six months in India, traveling alone. Her comments echo those of Gabriel:

Billy: Since you got here have you used your guidebook a lot?

Eleanor: No, I hadn’t read about it. I didn’t have time to read the Lonely Planet before I came here. I just bought it so I really didn’t have any plans. I’m just going along. The first thing I did was watching people in the streets, seeing what was happening, talking to people asking what they think, where they came from, where they have been, what they have been doing, what do you think of that place? It’s better to talk to people than to read the Lonely Planet. It might help for some objective information but talking to people influence you in another way.

Like Gabriel, Eleanor ‘didn’t have time to read the Lonely Planet’ before arriving in India. Instead, she opted for getting a feel for Paharganj by ‘watching people in the streets’ and talking to other backpackers about their experiences. Like Gabriel, she notes that ‘It’s better to talk to people than to read the Lonely Planet’ as they ‘influence you in another way’. Similar to how many other backpackers use the Lonely Planet, she notes that, ‘It might help for some objective information’, but in her estimation the opinions of others are more valuable.
Billy: Did you read the history and geography sections in the Lonely Planet?

Eleanor: I like to read that before I go to a city, where it comes from, who lives there, what’s their history. I read that before I go somewhere. What religion is there, things like that, so that you are not just watching like you go to the zoo or something. You have some understanding but basic info you get from the Lonely Planet. The rest you get out of people and the stories.

Eleanor was one of the few people I interviewed who read the history and background sections of the guidebook. She argues that reading this information provides a relative context, preventing one’s experiences from becoming a spectacle, like ‘watching like you go to the zoo or something’. Like Gabriel, she notes that it is ‘stories’ from other travelers that provide the most pertinent information and Lonely Planet is mainly for ‘basic info’.

In contrast to Eleanor and her rather limited experience, Henry had been traveling in India for four months. Henry is a 22 year old male Israeli backpacker I interviewed in the Kathmandu Guesthouse in Leh. When I interviewed Henry he had already been travelling in India for just over five months, including a one-month sojourn in Nepal. He was planning to spend one year travelling before returning to Israel. Like the vast majority of young Israeli backpackers his trip to India began shortly after he had finished his three-year compulsory national military service with the Israeli Defense Forces in Israel. He was travelling with an Israeli friend and was also friendly with a group of five other Israeli backpackers staying at a nearby guesthouse. Through my contact with Henry I was able to do a group interview with these backpackers at their guesthouse. Henry identified himself as a ‘traveler’ and he told me that, by staying in guesthouses like The Katmandu, which was not a guesthouse that was very well known or popular with other Israeli backpackers, he was able to avoid places where large groups of Israeli backpackers congregated.

Billy: Talk to me about your guidebook, the Lonely Planet.
Henry: I use it but mostly for in-between places, like how to get to somewhere, bus and train. Just to get an idea. Inside places I hardly use it; I talk to people. I found it full of bullshit, mostly for older people. Mostly like gompas and temples. Ok, but how many gompas can you experience? Enough is enough! They always write about post and mailing. I don’t need it. Prices? I find it myself. The best rate, guesthouses? The same: I will find it myself. A friend will say go to this place. Activities are the same so I use it for in-between.

Billy: Do you think it helps people to stay in the tourist bubble?

Henry: Yeah, definitely, and actually this way I can know about the places where not to go, if they recommend some place it will be full of tourists, so this is how I use it.

Like Eleanor, Henry mainly uses Lonely Planet ‘for in-between places, like how to get to somewhere, bus and train’, and like Gabriel, it is not the recommendations that are important, but rather how the guidebook facilitates the independence and mobility of his own decisions. Like Eleanor, Henry prefers to ‘talk to people’, but Henry rejects a lot of the Lonely Planet advice. He quips, ‘I found it full of bullshit, mostly for older people’. His criticism is interesting, as Lonely Planet appeals to a younger readership, precisely those people who have the time, and money, to spend several months traveling. His ‘old people’ remarks stem from what the Lonely Planet recommends for its readers, something that he sees as mainly consisting of ‘gompas and temples’. For Henry, it is more about the experience rather than the historical and cultural value that such ‘gompas and temples’ may hold. He views the advice of Lonely Planet as somewhat useless, such as the information on ‘post and mailing’. Henry relies exclusively on word-of-mouth and his own experience in order to find the best deals.

Apart from ‘in-between’ information, Henry asserts, ‘Prices? I find it myself. The best rate, guesthouses? The same, I will find it myself. A friend will say go to this place. Activities are the same so I use it for in-between’. Interestingly, Henry uses his Lonely Planet guidebook as

29 Buddhist mediation room or hall.
a sure way of finding out places to *avoid*, suggesting a somewhat ambiguous role of Lonely Planet guidebooks in the ethnographic field. Despite its off-the-beaten-track ethos as well as its promise to lead its readers to tourist-free places, Henry uses his Lonely Planet guidebook as a ‘legend’ to the beaten track of tourism. Despite his declarations of avoiding the beaten track of tourism, I met Henry in Leh at the height of the summer season. His favorite place was Rishikesh, one of the most popular backpacker destinations in India. He had spent time in the Parvati Valley, a very popular destination for Israeli backpackers in particular. Even though Henry rejects Lonely Planet recommendations, there are enough well-worn paths and popular backpacker destinations in India that do not require a Lonely Planet guidebook in order to be found. These beaten paths have been under construction for more than two decades already.

Oscar, an Austrian backpacker I interviewed in Leh, was also using a Lonely Planet. I met Oscar at the Kathmandu Guesthouse. He is a 33 year old Austrian man who is an artist and was travelling in India for over five months. Like Henry, this was his first time travelling in India and he identified himself as a ‘traveler’.

*Billy:* Do you use a guidebook here?

*Oscar:* Yes, I have a guidebook with me and sometimes I use it. Lonely Planet, it’s the popular one.

*Billy:* Did you use your Lonely Planet before you came to India?

*Oscar:* No, for me it was very important to move away without anything in my mind because many friends of mine give me tips, what to do. I was so bored by this and tried not to listen so I could come to India with nearly no information about where to stay. This was an important way for me to come for I knew that I was coming to a totally different world, so I thought I should make all out of my mind beforehand.

For Oscar, it was important for him to arrive in India ‘without anything in my mind’, in order to have a fresh and uninfluenced experience of India as possible. He mentions he was ‘coming to a totally different world’, and any advice or prior information would detract from this experience:
Billy: You got the guidebook when you got here?

Oscar: I bought it two days before I left, put it in my bag, and arrived in Mumbai. The first time I put it out of my bag was when I was in my first hotel room. I must say I take the travel book for the transport and to get knowledge about facilities that travelers could use because sometimes this is hard to find if you are in a village where there are no facilities. I had that experience, it’s very difficult sometimes. But, for example, I never choose one accommodation which was listed in this travel book because it is so easy in India to do without a travel book and so sometimes I use other times I don’t. There is no law about using it, but it is good that I have it with me. I always look in the travel book ‘where’s the public station’? And I go there as I found that this book the prices change, times, so you have to check it seriously.

Similar to the interviewees quoted above, Oscar primarily uses his Lonely Planet ‘for the transport and to get knowledge about facilities that travelers could use’. His comment, that ‘sometimes this [information] is hard to find if you are in a village where there are no facilities’, suggests that he uses his Lonely Planet to get that information, rather than relying on local sources of knowledge about available facilities. This is an aspect of guidebook use in India that was largely absent in Ireland and Canada. His reluctance to rely on local sources of information paradoxically keeps him at somewhat of a distance in relation to ‘the locals’. However, when we consider stories like Gabriel’s first night hotel experience, Lonely Planet can help to avoid those situations. Like Henry, Oscar does not see the need to have a guidebook in India, saying there are so many places to choose from. However, he does use it as a source of orientation, helping to find ‘the public station’ so that he can go and check in person the information he requires:

Oscar: The fun is I didn’t read everything in this guidebook. And when you are travelling, come on! There’s so much to do so in the end I did it on the way. This was important for me because it’s logical for me to get good experience out of this and it’s natural. But the other way it’s not so hard as you only have to choose movement to one place and then it’s always development. So I would answer maybe the other way around that I didn’t go there as the travel book said because there are going to be many tourists! Maybe the other way around as this is sometimes mentioned in the Lonely Planet.

Oscar mentions his own, more ‘natural’ way of traveling as an alternative to those who use the guidebook more regularly. Their way, in Oscar’s opinion, is ‘not so hard’ because ‘you only
have to choose movement to one place’ in contrast to his own more spontaneous approach to a
new place. Oscar also connects a more regimented use of guidebooks with the ‘development’ of
places, implying that guidebooks are partly responsible for the development of tourist
infrastructure in these places. Similar to Henry, Oscar uses his Lonely Planet guidebook as a way
of learning which places to avoid. He comments that ‘I didn’t go there as the travel book said
because there are going to be many tourists!’ What is instructive about the use of Lonely Planet
as a way of avoiding tourists is that for backpackers like Oscar and Henry, the guidebook is far
from having the kind of totalizing power that is sometimes ascribed to it. Nor is the desire for
places ‘off-the-beaten-track’ exclusively determined by Lonely Planet either. When I was in
Paharganj, a delectable tip was whispered to me by an older French man. He was speaking and
waxing lyrical about a town in Northern India he had recently visited. As final evidence of its
off-the-beaten-track status he turned to me and said ‘it’s not even in the guidebook!’

The following comments are from a group interview with Israeli backpackers in Leh,
Ladakh. Sally is 23, as are Anthony, Gary and Tony. All of the interviewees had spent three
months in India and were planning to spend six months there in total. In my group interview with
the four Israeli backpackers in Leh, all but one was using a Lonely Planet guidebook:

Billy: What kind of guidebook do you use?

Tony: The Lonely Planet in Hebrew. It’s older than the English one and it has no pictures.
Sometimes if you come at night and you want to have a nice cruise in, it is good. Also in
the beginning we were using the Lonely Planet in the first two weeks, and also using the
rickshaws as there were a lot of people trying to drag you into the guesthouse, but with
time I think India is not a place that you need a guidebook.

According to Tony, his guidebook was most beneficial at the beginning of the ‘trip, as it helped
them have ‘a nice cruise in’. By using the guidebook, they were able to prepare things in advance
and not get waylaid by the rickshaw drivers and their recommendation for hotels.
Anthony: I have the *Lonely Planet North India* and it’s helped us in many ways and situations. But it just helps you to get there and get a first idea about a place. But most of the stuff that’s written about it I take as nothing really because it’s your own experience and whoever wrote that it was their experience. And also other people that you talk to: they had a bad experience and you had an amazing experience. So basically things that are possible, buses and transportation. [ ] We use it as a reference book but not really as a guide or a bible.

Similar to Gabriel, Anthony sees Lonely Planet’s advice more as a reflection of the subjective perceptions of the author than as an objective guide. He notes that ‘it’s helped us in many ways and situations’ but in ways that mainly ‘helps you to get there and get a first idea about a place’, rather than as a definitive guide to be followed. Anthony makes an interesting distinction in his final comments. He notes that ‘We use it as a reference book but not really as a guide or a bible’. Again, a rejection of Lonely Planet’s biblical status, but interestingly Tony distinguishes using a guidebook for information about buses, trains and initial orientation as somehow not ‘guiding’ but more akin to utilizing a ‘reference book’, such as an encyclopedia. So although he may not use it in a direct and obvious way for deciding which places to visit, nonetheless he does use it to guide him in getting to those places, what Henry calls the ‘in-between places’.

Perhaps then it is accurate to say that a Lonely Planet guidebook functions most effectively, or most powerfully, as a guide to the in-between places, that is, the places that are passed through by the backpacker on his or her way from A to B. Marc Augé specifically notes the importance of texts in the *use* of non-places (1995: 56), which he treats as ‘instruction manuals’ that make non-places user-friendly and thus more efficiently navigated. His insight into how texts are instrumental for the efficient use and successful transit through non-places is particularly well illustrated by these backpackers’ use of guidebooks. The concept of non-places is useful in characterizing how these ‘in between’ places that become overused, bypassed, and eventually forgotten on the backpacker trail are negotiated on the road.
Billy: Do you think some people use it as a bible?

Gary: We met some! A few nights ago we met some Japanese or Korean ladies and they were just looking at the Lonely Planet and going there, so I think that many people follow the Lonely Planet.

Gary, the only member of the group who did not have a guidebook of his own (which does not mean that he never dipped into his friends’ guidebooks for useful information), suggests that the ‘Japanese or Korean ladies’ they met were ‘blindly’ following the Lonely Planet. His use of the word ‘follow’ is key here and suggests the attitude that many backpackers have with respect to their use of a guidebook. To follow a guide, and thus not to strike out on a path of one’s own, seems to signify the very essence of a tourist mentality. Not surprisingly, with many of these self-identified travelers, their use of their Lonely Planet guidebooks is not framed as a matter of being ‘guided’ (which suggests a lack of autonomy and individuality) but more in terms of practical use and reference. However, by virtue of the fact that they do not depend much on the guidebook to inform their decisions about places to visit (since there are so many other backpackers around to talk to, and who have already been to the places they may want to visit), it seems that India has been more or less thoroughly mapped by Lonely Planet as a destination for backpackers.

Sally adds an important point, one that is particularly pertinent for Israeli backpackers who travel in India, which demonstrates how word-of-mouth is a powerful force in directing people to places:

Sally: Also because we are Israelis and many Israelis have travelled here before, so even before we came to India we heard so much about many different places without ever reading about them in a book. People that have been there and they tell you. So it’s heard about a lot in Israel as lots of Israelis come to India in their early twenties.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Israeli backpackers are one of the largest national groups traveling in India. Not surprisingly, she and other Israelis had already heard many stories about
India, places to go, things to do and see ‘without ever reading about them in a book’. As Noy and Cohen (2005) have noted in their research on Israeli backpackers, this has led to the development of Israeli enclaves in India which reflect on a smaller scale the development of enclaves for backpackers in general in India.

This general point is made by Parshad, who was also using the Lonely Planet. I met and interviewed Parshad at the Katmandu Guesthouse in Leh. He was a 24 year old man from the U.S.A. who had been travelling in India for six weeks when I interviewed him. He told me that his original plan was to stay in India for two months, but he was also thinking of extending his stay for a further four months. Although it was his first time travelling alone in India, he had previously visited relatives there with his family in 1995. Because his family was from India, he spoke fluent Hindi and was the only backpacker I interviewed who could speak the national language. In the U.S.A. he was a software engineer and he told me that he had been granted a few months unpaid leave of absence from his job. Parshad also identified himself as a traveler, but not as sharply as Henry:

_Billy:_ Did you read parts of your Lonely Planet before coming to India?

_Parshad:_ Yeah, what I did was I went to the bookstore and compared the guides they had. They had Lonely Planet, Fodor and Rough Guide. Well Rough Guide has the same text as this but I found the others as geared towards people who are not doing adventure travelling. More like check out the scenery and hotels. But this one [Lonely Planet] I found most geared toward the independent traveler. I think it actually says that too.

Parshad was drawn towards Lonely Planet as he found it ‘most geared toward the independent traveler’. Parshad was the only backpacker in India I spoke to who also mentioned using the Lonely Planet website for information:

_Billy:_ Have you used your guidebook to plan your trip? For example before moving on to a new place?

_Parshad:_ Yes, what I do is I go through this and also ask the local people what they think. Most of the time I actually trust the book quite a bit. Maybe it’s happened once or
twice where the locals’ opinion has deviated from what the book suggests, so I take a combination of both.

Unlike some of my previous interviewees, Parshad mentions that he ‘trust[s] the book quite a bit’ and uses it in combination with local opinion. It is interesting to note that, even though he was the only Hindi speaking backpacker I interviewed, he tended to use his guidebook quite frequently for local information. For Parshad, speaking the local language does not necessarily mean that, as a backpacker in India, he is willing to trust local advice:

*Billy:* If you were to give some practical advice to someone who had just arrived in India for the first time, what would it be?

*Parshad:* Educate yourself on your options like where you are staying and if you are going somewhere. What options do you have of getting there and just what choices are available to you in whatever situation you are in.

*Billy:* How would I educate myself?

*Parshad:* Lonely Planet first of all and talking to local people. That’s easy for me as I speak Hindi but I still don’t trust them and I do speak Hindi. Or you can talk to other travelers. That’s possibly the best resource actually. You can trust them because they don’t want anything from you and they’ll tell you their own experience whereas a guidebook gets outdated from the moment it’s published. So travelers, guidebooks and locals.

As in his previous comments about his trust of Lonely Planet, Parshad argues that Lonely Planet is the best way to ‘educate oneself’ as a novice backpacker in India. Instead of trusting local advice, apart from certain kinds of information, he remarks that ‘other travelers’ are ‘possibly the best resource’ as they can ‘tell you their own experience’, in contrast to the more static guidebook that, he notes is ‘outdated from the moment it’s published’.

Perhaps the most mundane fact of all, but one that is perhaps the most telling, is that of the fifteen backpackers I interviewed, only one, Gary, did not own a Lonely Planet, although he was travelling in a group with three other friends who did have Lonely Planet guidebooks. My interviewees were ‘selected’ randomly in Paharganj, Delhi and Leh, although apart from one
interviewee Erika (discussed in the following chapter), all were staying at the ‘Kathmandu Guesthouse’ in Leh which was not mentioned in the *Lonely Planet India*. Lonely Planet was the only guidebook used among my interviewees. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the publication of Lonely Planet *India* launched Lonely Planet as a travel company with the most popular guidebook to India. Although my sample is very small, it is nonetheless symptomatic and indicative of the international presence and brand trust that this company and its guidebook to India still maintains. On a global or international scale, as indicated by sales, Lonely Planet is still seen by many backpackers as the most trustworthy guidebook to India, and thus on a micro or interpersonal scale, my interviews indicate that Lonely Planet mediates the consumption of India by western backpackers as a place of desire. Backpackers who self-identify as travelers speak of their ‘relationship’ with, and use of, the *Lonely Planet India* guidebook. Lonely Planet does not command any monolithic power but it does occupy an ambiguous position in the discourse of those traveler-backpackers I interviewed. This observation is largely consistent with the analytical distinction made by Rudy Koshar (1993), noted in Chapter 1, regarding the ideal goal of guidebooks. That is, guidebooks like Lonely Planet are designed to facilitate the ‘development’ and ‘enlightenment’ of readers from the lowly status of the tourist to the more cultivated sensibility of the traveler. Most importantly, their use of guidebooks suggests that it is most used as a method of negotiating the in-between or non-places of tourism, allowing these backpackers to more successfully plan and navigate their travels between places that are considered more authentic and off-the-beaten-track.

To rely exclusively upon or to ‘follow’ the guidebook is seen to be a sign of a tourist mentality. While some of my interviewees rejected it outright as a guide, others claimed there was no real need for their *Lonely Planet India* apart from getting basic information, and so
distanced themselves from an over-dependence on the guidebook. As Gabriel’s comments, her Lonely Planet guidebook is primarily a source of security, a ‘teddy bear for backpackers’. By contrast, most of my interviewees in Ireland and Canada were not using guidebooks; instead, many of them rely more upon local tourist information as well as word-of-mouth. Perceptions among western travelers about the more ‘dangerous’ world of India, an idea that has been in part cultivated in the successive editions of Lonely Planet India, induce many backpackers to bring guidebooks to India as a form of security. If things go wrong, as in the example of Gabriel’s first night in Delhi, then the Lonely Planet is there as a constant safety net.

The Holiday of Tourism: Traveling Distinctions in the Field

In the introductory chapter I outlined the conceptual and analytical framework through which the experiences of backpackers can be understood and analyzed. There I noted that ‘travel’ comes from the French root travail meaning ‘to work’, whereas ‘holiday’ comes from ‘holy day’ or ‘day of rest’. Therefore we must not forget that tourism is traditionally about taking ‘holidays’, and holidays are those times when the secular workaday world is apparently suspended. The original holiday was thus a holy day, a day of rest and re-creation from the travails of the working week. Although the modern word ‘holiday’ vaguely holds the same religious meaning, traces of these meanings and practices still surround ‘the holiday of tourism’. The association of leisure or recreation with the holiday as distinct and separate from the world of work still stands. Thus ‘the holiday’ is a socially structured phenomenon, which typically implies a limited time somewhere away from the workplace in which leisure and recreation can take place. The holiday is a time of rest and relaxation. It is a ‘vacation’, a ‘formal suspension of

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activity’ and a method through which the ‘shit’ that we all have to deal with our normal workaday life is, for a limited time, ‘vacated’ from our lives.

The beaten track of tourism’ and ‘off-the-beaten-track’ travel continue to function as mutually exclusive but interdependent categories in both the Lonely Planet discourse of travel and among backpackers I interviewed. Although expressions such as ‘the beaten track’ and ‘off the beaten track’ are frequently used in guidebooks like Lonely Planet, they are neither consistently nor pervasively used by backpackers. In this thesis I use these expressions as conceptual and analytical devices, that is, as ‘master tropes’ or ideal types. As Nancy Fraser notes, such master tropes are useful ‘for heuristic purposes [and] analytical distinctions are indispensible. Only by abstracting from the complexities of the real world can we devise a conceptual schema that can illuminate it’ (Fraser 1997: 12-13).

These conceptual ideal types are not at all as neatly separated and mutually exclusive in real life, as these themes are articulated in contradictory and messy ways by backpackers. Since the beaten track is typified by the ‘holiday of tourism’, in this chapter I examine what the beaten track of tourism and tourists ‘look like’ from the perspectives of the backpackers I interviewed and how it is recognized and used by my interviewees as a form of symbolic capital in differentiating their experiences from others. I also examine the distinct threats that the beaten track of tourism poses to the utopian promises of travel for backpackers. Because most backpackers I interviewed identified themselves as ‘travelers’, I also examine how their own mode of travel and identity exists in opposition to the beaten track, and I analyze the contradictions expressed by backpackers who occupy a contingent and interstitial position between the two tracks. Finally, in the following chapter, I focus on specific stories these

backpackers have told me about specific ‘utopian’ geographical places and interactions with locals that they consider as examples of ‘off-the-beaten-track experiences’. In particular, I analyze these off-the-beaten-track stories as themselves important forms of symbolic capital that are accumulated by backpackers and that help to further distinguish them from the mundane experiences of tourists who remain on the beaten track of tourism.

Here I want to analyze the tourist/traveler distinction as a work of ‘distinction’ in the sense that Bourdieu uses the concept. More specifically, distinction operates as a differentiating mark of symbolic capital, especially as it is embodied in people and places rather than solely in things and possessions, a point I explore more fully in Chapter 4. The tourist embodies and signifies to backpackers a particular mentality characterized by indulgence, educational recalcitrance, and an appetite for homogeneity. Anti-tourist discourse is important for backpackers in distinguishing and articulating their own antithetical traveler identity, symbolic and cultural capital, as well as the different kinds of experiences they have as travelers rather than as tourists. In other words, this work of distinction is not simply an intellectual or mental exercise but rather an active and practical accomplishment. Most of the backpackers I interviewed considered themselves, and their practices, as emphatically not tourism. This antipathy seems paradoxical at first. Surely sightseeing in unfamiliar places, taking photographs, and buying souvenirs are all the well-established and recognizable activities of tourists? However, as self-defined travelers, a variety of differences help to distance and separate backpackers from tourists. The importance of not being a tourist for backpackers is important to their sense of identity and to the practices and discourses through which they evaluate their experiences as distinctively different from (and typically better than) tourists. Therefore in the
following interviews I pay particular attention to how the ideological code of the tourist/traveler distinction is orally mediated and articulated through the discourse of my interviewees.

I begin with Henry, the 22 year old male Israeli backpacker I interviewed in the Kathmandu Guesthouse in Leh:

Billy: Do you think your experiences here [in India] have been different from that of other travelers?

Henry: I don’t know about other travelers but definitely from other tourists. It’s something I learned in India, the difference between tourists and travelers. I always try to define people and at the beginning I tried by smokers and not smokers but it doesn’t work like this. Then noisy people and quiet and then a thirty year-old Israeli girl made it simple for me: tourists and travelers. So I’m sure I had a different experience than other Israeli tourists, but other travelers, it’s personal, maybe I was in this village he was in another one, we both slept with families, same same but different.

The above comment illustrates one of the most pervasive and powerful distinctions at work in backpacking culture already discussed. As Henry notes, his experiences of India are *definitely* different from the experiences of tourists, a distinction which is by no means value-neutral. He mentions that his experience is different from Israeli *tourists*, that is, those Israeli backpackers who tended to travel in large groups, stay in guesthouses popular with other Israeli backpackers, and who generally stay within their own Israeli ‘bubble’, without really learning about India or interacting with travelers from other countries.

Henry articulates a strict division between travelers and tourists, a division that appears to be exclusive and definite, and which he compares to the division between smokers and non-smokers and noisy and quiet people. His differentiation between the experiences of travelers and Israeli tourists is illustrative as it shows that “Israeli tourists” who are also spending six months backpacking in India, visiting many of the same places as he does, traveling on a budget and so on, are judged as having quite different, and quite inferior experiences to his own experiences as a traveler. Henry provides two examples to illustrate how his experiences are similar to other
travelers: ‘maybe I was in this village he was in another one’. He further notes ‘we both slept with families’. His story of the commonality and difference of travelers’ experiences in India include authentic experiences: staying at a local family’s home and not a guesthouse, and exploring secluded villages. Finally, Henry comments that, even though his experiences may be similar to other travelers, they are nonetheless quite unique and individual. They are, in his words, ‘same same but different’. Henry mentions that he learned the tourist/traveler distinction from ‘an Israeli girl’ while traveling in India. The tourist/traveler distinction is reproduced through interactions among backpackers in a space of sociability where such distinctions are learned, reproduced, and multiplied.

Although Henry’s initial comments make a sharp distinction between the experiences of travelers and tourists, I asked him to flesh out further some of the differences between travelers and tourists as he saw them:

*Henry:* Tourists, they can allow themselves to be on a vacation for a month. They sit all day long in the restaurant or guesthouse doing touristic things, or smoking all the day because it’s India with a chillum\(^{32}\) stuck to their mouth, plugged in, so what do you see? I say to them ‘you think India and what?’ You can tell me what guesthouses you’ve been in but what else? You can tell me where to eat western food? I try to eat as much local food as I can, but other people they look for the easy way, the more secure, so that’s a major difference. [It’s] like they bring Israel with them, and they travel in groups so they stay in their own bubble. They don’t look for other people to meet.

Here Henry illustrates the distinctions at work between holidaying tourists and ‘real’ travelers. Traveler status must be earned through effort, unlike the luxury seeking tourists who have everything organized for them and travel the easy way, which is not really travel at all. For Henry, tourists ‘*can allow themselves* to be on vacation for a month’, implying that there is a moral choice involved. He contrasts the time between a one-month vacation to his five months of

\(^{32}\) Large cylindrical hashish pipe
travelling already done. So what do these tourists do on vacation? From Henry’s perspective, not much. They ‘sit all day long in the restaurant or guesthouse’ and smoke hashish through a ‘chillum’, implying their laziness and a lack of imagination and adventure, where entire days are spent within the tourist infrastructure. There is also the further association of laziness with smoking hashish. For Henry, tourists do undefined, but nonetheless ‘touristic things’, in comparison to travelers who apparently have more varied and focused pursuits. Henry elaborates on the consequences of tourists ‘allowing themselves to be on vacation for a month’, in the context of India. Posing a rhetorical question to these holidaying tourists, Henry asks ‘what do you see, you think India and what?’ His answer reveals how the holiday of tourism in India leads to standardized experiences that are not really experiences of India at all. To illustrate what he means by ‘doing tourist things’, the hypothetical tourist can answer that he or she has seen guesthouses and restaurants and only eaten ‘Western’ food. What is striking about Henry’s comments is the unambiguous distinction at work between the ‘cultural capital’ of the tourist and the traveler. Bourdieu’s conceptualization (initially quoted in the introductory chapter) is worth repeating again here in full. In ‘The Forms of Capital’, he notes that ‘the accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986: 244). In this sense, the practices of tourists (according to the perceptions of my interviewees) can be examined through what they do, how they spend their time, and how their touristic experiences do not all allow for the accumulation of distinctive types of ‘cultural capital’ particular to backpackers style of travel.
Throughout my interviews with backpackers in India, I found one of the main signifiers of ‘doing touristic things’, and thus not ‘tasting’ authentic local culture, related to the consumption of food. Eating Western food was a powerful signifier: those who ‘indulged’ in eating Western food while in India were seen to stay within the tourist bubble. As Henry comments: ‘I try to eat as much local food as I can’, and thus he strove to distinguish his traveler self as one which experiences real Indian culture rather than eating the same food from back home in the West. An important financial aspect to this argument is that Western food is generally more expensive than local food. Local food can be bought either on the street or at local Dhabas (eateries that primarily serve local people and do not have a ‘Western’ menu). By not frequenting touristic restaurants, backpackers increase their chances of interacting with ‘locals’ who typically eat there. According to Henry, tourists do not encounter cultural difference; they simply eat Western food on their ‘vacation’.

Henry also provides some reasons for why people would ‘allow themselves’ to do ‘touristic things’ while in India that evoke the moral character of the tourist. According to Henry, ‘they [tourists] look for the easy way, the more secure [way]’. ‘The tourist’, in Henry’s view, desires easiness and safety. To recall the disgust of those real Alpine travelers who scoffed at tourists’ railway trips into the Alps, noted by Simmel, the ‘work of travel’ requires the cultivation of moral character. For Henry, tourists never leave the comfort and familiarity of ‘home’, ‘they bring Israel with them’. Can ‘real’ travel occur if one never leaves home? According to Henry, the incubation of tourists is further compounded by the fact that ‘they travel in groups’, and consequently ‘don’t look for other people to meet’. Henry’s comments echo the comments in Blackwood’s Magazine, regarding the ‘herd mentality’ of tourists. Henry comments however, that the ‘herd mentality’ of tourists’ signals a desire to ‘stay in their own bubble’ and
remain removed from authentic experiences of India through interactions with non-Israeli backpackers.

Henry’s comments reveal the distinction at work between travelers and tourists in the ethnographic field. He compares the easiness, luxury, and at times, ignorance of tourists, with the more savvy, hardworking, and informed traveler. Despite his tirade against the laziness of tourists who just smoke charros (hashish) through their chillum and stay ‘all day’ in guesthouses and restaurants, Henry himself does not seem to have been the most active of travelers, and was quite partial to smoking chillums all day in the guesthouse too. He rejects the Lonely Planet as ‘bullshit’, as an insult to his ability to find the best deals for accommodation. He uses Hindi words to signal a greater proximity to and knowledge of all things local, and thus distances himself further from the ‘lazy tourists’ who apparently cannot be bothered to learn the local language.

For Henry, a barrier to realizing a traveler identity partly consists of the huge numbers of other Israeli backpackers in India. Travelling with a group of other Israelis for the entire trip epitomizes a quintessentially tourist mentality. Later on in the interview, however, he recalls a trip to Nepal, which he took to celebrate the Jewish Holiday of Passover with a group of friends from back home in Israel. Apparently contradicting his traveler ideal of leaving behind the comfort and familiarity of ‘life back home’, this incident also points to how, in the space of travel, life on the road can be entered and exited at will, but requires distinctions which allow the traveler to separate the space of travel from the space of tourism. In the next chapter I consider how Henry recalls a memorable story where he ‘discovers’ untouched and authentic places ‘off the beaten track’ with his fellow travelers in India.
At the Katmandu Guesthouse in Leh I also asked Parshad, the American backpacker who spoke Hindi, about the tourist/traveler distinction.

_Billy_: Do you make a distinction between travelers and tourists?

_Parshad_: Yeah, now that you mention it they both do carry connotations. Travelers are someone who’s independent who’s out trekking and not on a set itinerary. The tourist is on a short vacation, just getting away from work, going from hotel to hotel and has a tour guide taking him to set places. So that’s the distinction I would make.

Here Parshad makes the typical distinction between the holidaying tourist and the independent traveler. On the one hand, travelers are associated with greater independence and freedom and are ‘out trekking’ and ‘not on a set itinerary’. On the other hand, the tourist is someone who ‘is on a short vacation’, and ‘just getting away from work’. What is interesting about how Parshad makes this distinction is that his initial plan was for a two month trip to India within the context of an organized work break. Like Henry who spent several months in India, he notes the difference between a two month trip and a two week vacation, for both of them, what constitutes a vacation is harder to define.

According to Parshad, tourists move ‘from hotel to hotel’. Parshad was staying at the Kathmandu, a budget guesthouse and not one of the more expensive hotels in Leh. According to Parshad, the tourist ‘has a tour guide taking him to set places’, unlike Parshad who was travelling alone in India and deciding his own itinerary. However, Parshad frequently used the _Lonely Planet India_ guidebook, and did not associate his use as equivalent to a tour guide that would bring him to particular places. I explored this guidebook theme in more detail earlier in this chapter. I asked him a subsequent question about the tourist/traveler distinction in the hope that it might shed more light upon his identification as a traveler and the possible ambiguities that might arise:
Billy: Do you think that the distinction [between travelers and tourists] can become blurred sometimes for you?

Parshad: Yeah, absolutely, like when I was with my cousin earlier we were more like tourists. We were staying in nice hotels, going on tours and then I decided this isn’t the way I want to travel. I want to set out alone and be less planned, be less of a tourist and more of a traveler.

Parshad acknowledges that his earlier style of travel is more akin to his ideas of what constitutes a tourist. He was previously ‘staying in nice hotels’ rather than the more budget and lower end backpacker guesthouses that he was currently staying in. He was ‘going on tours’ rather than finding his own way around independently. However, in his final comments I got a better idea of why a more touristic style of travel was not appealing, and why independent travel offers a more valuable alternative. He notes that: ‘I want to set out alone’ and ‘be less planned’. Parshad initially distinguishes the tourist as someone who has an organized, planned, and more collective experience (by going on tours, presumably with other tourists). As a traveler, he seeks a more independent, and contingent type of experience. Parshad claims that he wants to ‘be less of a tourist and more of a traveler’. He does not seem to have difficulty with the beaten track of tourism as such, starting out as a tourist with his cousin and then striking out on his own. The somewhat similar characterizations of holidaying tourists and the beaten track or “bubble” of tourism by both Henry and Parshad are complicated through different individual practices and negotiations of these aspects of travel.

Some backpackers I interviewed in India spoke of ‘taking a holiday’ during their travel trip. As discussed in previous chapters, this idea of taking a holiday, and then returning to life ‘on the road’, illustrates how the narratives of risk and adventure that punctuate backpackers’ itineraries alternate with moving freely in and out of the space of travel. Like Henry, who takes a trip to Nepal in order to spend time with friends during Passover, Oscar recalls the following
episode where he too takes a ‘holiday’ while traveling in India. The following comments nicely illustrate the mixture of both travel and tourism in backpacking and how the space of travel is kept distinct and separate from the space of tourism:

Oscar: After one and a half months I reached Goa. Because of health problems, sickness because of food […] I wanted to go to Goa because of the different climate there and I wanted to regenerate there as I wasn’t feeling too good. I had experienced too much in Mumbai. So I stayed in Goa ten or twelve days, always on the beach side. Firstly Benalim, and then Paralayo. And there I made a little holiday. It was quite nice but I also missed a little bit India. After ten days I felt a little bit absurd, it reminded me of a place in Italy I don’t like! It was too touristic […] and it wasn’t what I was looking for in India. Goa was very comfortable, but I didn’t like it so much as this was not my main aim to come to India. So I got strong again and left and went to Kerala.

Here again we encounter the famous destination of Goa in India, famous for its balmy climate and miles of beaches. In Chapter 2, I noted how the Wheelers complain that ‘Bali’s Kuta or India’s Goa morphed from quiet surfer escapes or laid back hippy hangouts into international resorts of wall to wall shops, restaurants and package hotels’33. In particular Goa’s two beaches of Calangute and Baga are described in the Lonely Planet India guidebook described as ‘India’s “kiss me quick” hat capital and the most popular beach resorts in the country’ (2007: 856). In this space of mass tourism Oscar sought to have a period of rest and relaxation from his travails in India. As an international tourist destination in India, Goa offers Oscar a space where he can ‘take a break from it all’. He recalls that he spent ‘ten or twelve days’ in Goa, staying at two well known beach resorts, Benalim and Paralayo, where he ‘made a little holiday’. His subsequent comment that, he ‘missed a little bit India’, suggests that, as a space of tourism, Goa is somehow not part of India. Goa, as a touristic place of relaxation, is not part of the same India that he travels in. Oscar’s telling spatial distinction illustrates how ‘off-the-beaten-track India’ is deemed separate from, and different to, the ‘beaten track of tourism’. Although travel can be

33 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
difficult at times, with some travelers getting sick in a big city like Mumbai, there is always the option of escaping from the hard work and taking a holiday if the going gets too tough. However, for a committed traveler like Oscar, taking a holiday and thus ‘becoming a tourist’ poses some difficulties for him. He says ‘[a]fter 10 days I felt a little bit absurd’. As Oscar goes on to explain, ‘it reminded me of a place in Italy […] It was too touristic’. Here, for ‘a traveler’ to stay in overly touristic places like Goa defeats the main reason for coming to India in the first place. Like Henry’s Israeli tourists who stayed in a familiar bubble, Oscar realizes that by taking a holiday on the beaches in Goa, he had somehow travelled ‘outside’ of culturally different India and returned ‘home’. ‘It wasn’t what I was looking for in India’.

What travelers like Henry and Oscar are looking for is not the ease and safety that comes packaged on a two-week holiday, but rather the challenge of travelling independently, off-the-beaten-track in India. Oscar further elaborates that ‘Goa was very comfortable’ and therefore no real challenge. Here, the ‘holiday of tourism’, while at times desirable for travelers, does not provide the challenge, experiences and cultural authenticity that the ‘real’ India offers. Oscar’s status as a traveler is not put into question, as he ostensibly took a holiday in India that was not in India. Finally, he recalls that when he was sufficiently recuperated, he left this familiar, safe, and comfortable tourist bubble and returned to his travels, where the ‘real India’ was waiting for him.

I met and interviewed Franca, a 34 year old Yoga teacher from Chile, in Paharganj, Delhi. She told me it was her third time in India. For Franca the touristic areas may be initially sought out rather than automatically avoided:

_Franca:_ In the beginning it’s more safe if it’s your first time. You feel not so stressed out, at least you know there are white people [backpackers] walking around that you can talk to and ask questions […] So in the beginning it’s better to go in touristic places, and after, when you get more skilled, then move away from touristy areas. But as a woman I think it’s not good to
go to really lonely places, it’s better to go as a group or with a boyfriend. It’s a better way to travel here, less hassle if you tell everyone you are married. The men will leave you alone and they don’t understand the boyfriend thing.

On the one hand, Franca associates safety and familiarity with whiteness, in contrast to the threatening and untrustworthy locals. Franca’s comments illustrate an important racial aspect of tourist enclaves discussed by Arun Saldanha in *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and The Viscosity of Race* (2007). He notes that ‘physical characteristics are crucial to their clustering in space and time’ whereby ‘the rules for subcultural interaction in Anjuna correlate with the fact that there are very different bodies present…the reality of intensive differences means that they can and do mobilize bodies, making them tend towards aggregation in space in time’ (129-130)

On the one hand Franca’s comments help to make visible the important racial element in the spatial constitution or ‘aggregation’ of backpackers’ distinctive ‘subcultural interaction’. Similarly, Teo and Leong (2006) point out in their research on Asian women backpackers who go to Khao San Road (a backpacker enclave in Bangkok), racialized and Orientalist stereotypes abound in the white-dominated enclave where these women backpackers are presumed to be local Thai women. In their ethnographic study they show how the Khao San landscape is more welcoming to whites and males than non-whites and females and overall how the space of enclaves is constituted through racial and to a lesser extent gendered logics (Teo and Leong 2006). On the other hand, Franca’s comments illustrate how many aspects of travelling in a foreign country may not typically apply to the experiences of male backpackers. Thus the beaten track of tourist areas may be sought out rather than simply avoided. Like Oscar, the Austrian backpacker who went to Goa to recuperate, the beaten track offers safety and familiarity in times of difficulty for female and male travelers alike.
The negative perception of holidaying tourists is not unique to backpackers in India of course. The following comment is from Hans, a 25 year old German man whom I interviewed in Sunny Beach Hostel, Vancouver. It was his first time traveling outside Europe. He had flown direct from Germany to Vancouver. When I met him he had already spent over two weeks travelling around British Columbia. He was planning to spend another two weeks in B.C. before returning to Germany, where he was a university student. The fact that he was planning to spend just over one month traveling in British Columbia might be reason to think of Hans initially as someone who is ‘on a vacation’. After all, Henry’s comment about tourists ‘being on vacation for one month’ suggests that the duration of the trip is an important factor in separating travelers from tourists. However, whether one considers oneself a tourist or a traveler is not simply a matter of time spent in a particular place but rather one’s attitude and mode of travel while there.

As in my conversation with Henry, I asked Hans to flesh out some of the differences that he saw as important in distinguishing tourists from travelers.

_Hans:_ They [tourists] don’t want to learn new things, just relax at the beach with their drinks. Sometimes they take their car and drive a little bit around. Travelers want to learn about other people and the country. Tourists just look at a brochure and say ‘let’s go to Lanzarotte’. They don’t make up their minds, they don’t think about the people living there. The beach and the water is the same [for them] as anywhere else in the world.

According to Hans, the tourist is not interested in anything that exists outside of the beach and the water. As with my interviewees in India, the cultural capital of tourists, what they do, how they do it, what they desire is perceived in an almost wholly negative light and is central in distinguishing tourists from travelers. The desire of the tourist is almost exclusively for relaxation and pleasure, and not learning anything new or encountering local people. The laziness of the tourist body and mind is quite pronounced in his comments. Hans characterizes

\[\text{34} \] A very popular package holiday destination for Europeans in the Canary Islands
tourists as unthinking, as not caring about where they go since everywhere they go is the same anyway. According to Hans, tourists ‘don’t want to learn’; instead they indulge themselves by relaxing and drinking at the beach. He juxtaposes travelers as active learners, in comparison with tourists, who simply want to ‘relax at the beach with their drinks’. For Hans, the tourist is a type of person more interested in self-indulgence and relaxation than the serious work of self-cultivation. Hans evokes a typical trope of tourism used in innumerable advertisements around the world to denote the essence of a holiday: relaxing at a beach with a drink in hand. According to Hans, tourists on holiday occasionally ‘take their car and drive a little bit around’ suggesting a half-hearted effort and a desire not to stray too far away from the relaxing allure of the beach. Furthermore, tourists use their (presumably rented) cars rather than walking or using public transportation, suggesting an enclosed, lazy, and far-removed type of cultural experience. In contrast to the lazy and recalcitrant holidaying tourist, Hans evokes the traveler who, ‘want[s] to learn about other people and the country’ and who thus has a different type of desire, one that urges him to get off-the-beaten-track.

Similar to Henry, Hans perceives the holidaying tourist as one who does not learn something new about the country, and instead remains within a bubble of ease, predictability and familiarity. Hans quips, ‘[t]ourists just look at a brochure and say let’s go to Lanzarotte’, echoing a characteristic of anti-tourist discourse identified in Chapter 1, namely that the tourist is enamored with the superficial and cannot penetrate the depths of culture. The tourists simply look at (rather than read) a brochure (and not even at a guidebook or other ‘educational’ reading material), suggesting that images of relaxing beaches are the deciding factor. Hans notes that, ‘[t]hey don’t make up their minds, they don’t think about the people living there’. Tourists are portrayed as unthinking pleasure seekers, uninterested in learning about the ‘locals’ who live
there. According to Hans, ‘the beach and the water is the same [for them] as anywhere else in the world’. His comments echo the anxiety expressed by the Wheelers: ‘unless we shift our attitudes to tourism and travel we'll lose the wild places, the traditions and the eccentricities of the world. Life will be far more homogenized and far less surprising.’ The threat of mass tourism and package holidays is that they offer a standardized and homogenous experience that, according to Hans, can be replicated at any beach-side tourist resort in the world.

When I asked Hans to elaborate further on what he saw as some other differences between the experiences of tourists on holiday he gave the following answer.

Billy: Do you think tourists have a different experience of the country?

Hans: I think that tourists just want to take pictures and say ‘yes I have been there’. And then their friends say ‘I have already been to Canada’. But it’s kind of materialistic as it shows how rich I am and for me it’s not to say ‘I was in Canada’, it’s for my own experiences. I cannot tell you that I stayed in a five star hotel and had good cuisine, but I can tell you that I ate the crabs, the crabs out of a lake. This was an experience for me; it’s a nice story for me to tell.

Here tourism represents a type of ‘moral trap’ for the traveler, and the consequence of staying in such a trap is a greater distance from the local culture as well an experience that is closer to a holiday than to the more distinctive experiences of a traveler. The distance of the tourist from local culture is suggested through the use of photography; the tourist ‘just wants to take pictures’ to show to friends back home. Once again, the tourist is characterized as not being interested in learning about the country but simply in ‘showing off’ to friends back home. Here, the wealthy ‘five-star’ tourist is portrayed as a superficial status-seeker, one who does not really care about the country, and is more concerned with impressing friends, who, according to Hans, might even be bored and unimpressed with the Canadian holiday photographs as they ‘have already been to

35 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
Canada’. Implicit in Hans’s comments is the idea that the experiences of tourists on holiday tend to be quite standardized and ‘more of the same’. Why else would their friends back home be unimpressed with the Canadian holiday shots? According to Hans, tourists ‘just want to take pictures’ that is, to acquire photographic mementos which attest to their having been there.

In contrast, Hans narrates a more unique, individual, and involved experience of eating crabs from a lake, an experience that, for him, doesn’t involve status. However, it does involve status, but of a different kind. The ‘eating crabs from a lake story’ provides Hans with a story about Canada which is equivalent to the stories and photographs tourists tell about their trip to Canada. The difference between the two stories concerns the degree of involvement and proximity achieved that he attributes to his experience. For Hans, the tourist remains on the outside of things, taking photos, and staying in luxurious five-star hotels. He travels ‘into’ the culture of Canada, and in doing so transforms Canada from an object of distant and standardized pleasure into an immediate and unique object of embodied and experiential pleasure. The tourist story about Canada involves ‘external’ things: pictures, landscapes, wealth, and status. His story is about individual solitude, and contact with nature, and it is through the methods of recording and retelling his respective experiences of Canada that he differentiates tourists from travelers. The tourist takes photographs that thousands of other tourists might have, possibly replicating the same stock of images of Canada found on postcards and in holiday brochures. Although Hans considers his experience unique, his assertion is questionable in light of the fact that his ‘crab story’ happened when he was doing the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island. A popular part of the West Coast trail involves a section where there is a burger shack run by First Nations people next to a lake, and where fresh crabs are caught and cooked for hungry hikers. I heard the same
crab story from two other Dutch backpackers (discussed in the following chapter) I interviewed in Vancouver which was also a ‘nice story’ for them to recall.

According to Hans, Oscar, and Henry tourists are identifiable through their distinct practices and shared places. For Henry it involves eating western food and spending time in restaurants and generally not seeing much of what the real India has to offer. For Hans and Oscar too, tourists have drinks on the beach, rent cars, take photographs and generally have a relaxing and entertaining time. However, the following question about how Hans self-identifies provoked an interesting answer:

_Billy_: Would you call yourself a tourist or something else?

_Hans_: Interesting question. On the one hand, I am a tourist because I am a German and I’m in Canada, but on the other hand I don’t want people to know that I’m a tourist. I want to know how people live here. Most of the Germans, when they go on holidays, they want their German beer, German food. They want it like it is in Germany. I think I want to see other things that I don’t already know from at home. So I am a tourist, but I don’t want to be a tourist.

In answering my question, Hans identifies a number of issues relevant to the tourist/traveler distinction, anti-tourist discourse, and discourses of travel generally. He first acknowledges that he is in fact, technically a tourist: ‘because I am a German and I’m in Canada’. What could be a more straightforward definition of a tourist, namely, someone who is a foreigner visiting a different country? However, what appears as an initially straightforward and common sense admission becomes more complicated and tricky to negotiate. Hans subsequently admits: ‘I don’t want people to know that I’m a tourist’. Why would he not want people to know that he is a tourist when he so evidently _is_ a tourist, judging by his initial definition? In Chapter 1, I noted that the tourist was denounced as a vile creature: in the words of Ruskin tourists were ‘poor modern slaves and simpletons’ (Ruskin, quoted in Harrison 1920: 199-200), a culturally debased _type of person_ who makes a mockery of ‘real travel’. Perhaps this helps to explain why Hans
does not want people to know he is a tourist? He may not want other people to judge *him* by the very same standards by which he judges tourists: they are lazy, uninterested in learning about culture, and are content with generic ‘McHoliday’ experiences.

Hans then elaborates about what his fellow German tourists actually do, and the things they desire, on their holidays: ‘most of the Germans when they go on holidays they want their German beer, German food. They want it like it is in Germany’. Similar to Henry’s critique of his fellow Israeli tourists on vacation who eat western food in India, Hans levels the same complaint about German tourists: ‘they want their German beer, German food’. For Hans, the tourist desire for, and consumption of, *domestic* food and drink seems to defeat the entire point of visiting another country in the first place. He implies that if things remain culturally the same on holiday, as they do back home in Germany, then authentic encounters and cultural difference are difficult if not impossible. How can the tourist learn anything new if what he or she encounters is fundamentally the same? How is it possible then for tourists to be challenged by new and different experiences when, according to Hans they ‘want it like it is in Germany’. In the eyes of Hans and Henry, the holiday of tourism is an extension of a national domestic space in terms of consumption and experiences. In other words, it is the tourist ‘bubble’ Henry mentioned earlier, one that tourists choose to remain within. Consequently Hans articulates a clear distinction between a tourist (in the strict sense of the word) and a traveler. Hans ‘want[s] to know how people live here [in Canada]’. He is more interested in learning about a local, and therefore different, Canadian culture and he ‘want[s] to see other things that I don’t already know from at home’. In other words, he wants to encounter difference on his trip and to learn new things from those experiences as a result. Hans’ final comments perfectly illustrate what lies at the very heart of the tourist/traveler distinction for many backpackers, and what animates and
structures the travel discourses of these self-styled travelers and their anti-tourist discourse: ‘I am a tourist but I don’t want to be a tourist’. As a traveler who is also technically a tourist, Hans does not want to be a tourist. In other words, he wants to travel away from the beaten track of tourism, the domesticated bubble that envelops and defines the holiday of tourism. He wants to travel outside of this safe and familiar bubble in order to consume and encounter cultural difference. He wants to leave the safety and familiarity of the beaten track, where he must rely upon his own resources, and be challenged, educated and transformed as a result. He maximizes the value of the cultural and symbolic capital accumulated while travelling off-the-beaten-track. He will gather ‘nice stories’ to tell about his unique and intimate encounters with Canada and Canadian people and learn about a culture that is quite different from his own.

However, in order to realize the ‘cosmopolitan promises of travel’ he must not be a tourist or embody the same mentality he so emphatically disapproves of in other Germans who visit Canada. By not wanting to be a tourist, Hans’ comments illustrate how, as a traveler, he ‘does’ tourism differently in a way that is not really ‘tourism’. By getting away from the beaten track of tourism, a traveler identity is therefore practically accomplished. It is thus not simply a straightforward matter of ‘choosing an identity’. Rather, becoming a traveler requires a subjectivity that must be actively worked on. The tourist mentality must be actively resisted if certain experiences and modes of travel can be deemed to be authentically off-the-beaten-track of tourism.

Paulo is a 35 year old Italian man that I interviewed in Cork City. He was staying at one of the budget hostels on Mac Curtain Street where he saw one of the posters I had put up to

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36 See Appendix IV Interview Recruitment Materials
advertise my research project. Paulo was living in another part of Ireland when I interviewed him but was spending some time in Cork City. His occupation was ‘casual trader’ working at local markets. Even though he had already spent several years in Ireland, he responded to my poster. I was quite surprised at this, as I had explicitly asked for backpackers who were currently travelling around Ireland. However, I soon learnt that even though Paulo was a long-term resident in Ireland, he had extensive backpacking experiences in Ireland and around the world and very much identified as a ‘traveler’. He did not fit my picture of the ideal interview candidate. He had already spent several years in Ireland and was not in the middle of a backpacking trip when I interviewed him. However, he self-identified as a traveler and emphatically not a tourist. He was Italian, and so I reasoned he would have an outsider’s gaze from his extensive travel experiences. Paulo comments on how tourists experience Ireland and the kind of stereotypical things they expect:

*Paulo:* They [tourists] all come to Ireland to experience it a certain way – the leprechauns and fairy-tale land and they all end up really disappointed with what they see, because they see Dublin you know. If you go there with a stream, the tourists and the sun and the fiddlers, we [travelers] don’t accept that in a way, because we want the real experience.

Paulo is well aware of the typical and stereotypical images of Ireland that tourists arrive with, the ‘leprechauns and fairy-tale land’. But he is also aware that Dublin is a post-modern metropolis which quickly dispels such notions. In Paulo’s opinion, tourists who come to Ireland with such ideas are inevitably disappointed (a theme I explore in more detail in the following chapter). Here the beaten track entails a lack of choice and autonomy in which tourists go ‘with a stream’, along with other ‘tourists and the sun and the fiddlers’, an evocative turn of phrase which conjures up a carnivalesque collection of clichés, undifferentiated individuals, and holiday-
brochure promises that simply ‘go with the flow’. The implication is that the more pampered tourists, who come during the nice summer weather, would not be willing to make such sacrifices to find the ‘real Ireland’. His narrative suggests that, as a savvy traveler, he knows the time to go: in winter time when Beara isn’t full of tourists and the possibility of ‘chatting with the men in the local pub’ is all the more realizable.

So far we have seen that, according to the travelers I interviewed, the tourist on holiday on the beaten track does not have the same type of experiences as travelers. Tourists are characterized as lazy, self-indulgent and relatively uninterested in learning about local culture, exhibiting a standardized and domesticated form of desire that revolves more around superficial appearances and clichés than the kind of unique and meaningful cultural experiences of these travelers. Finally, despite the somewhat strict separation they make between the holidaying tourist and the hard-working, adventurous traveler, the experiences of travelers such as Henry, Oscar, and Hans tended to exhibit a mixture of the holiday of tourism with D.I.Y. travel. To borrow and rework the well-known concept ‘McDonaldization’ (1993), packaged and popularized by George Ritzer, ‘the tourist’ buys a ‘McHoliday’ experience. In other words, the tourist consumes a generically produced holiday experience, one that is standardized, rationalized, and available in the same form throughout the world and which is predictable and easily consumable. For many backpackers, denigrating the holiday of tourism in favor of independent travel is more than a purely descriptive evaluation based upon temporal distinctions. It also denotes their self conception as a type of person who can choose between taking a holiday and going traveling. The distinction made by backpackers between travelers and tourists can be best understood as a strategy that capitalizes on the historically important cultural status of travel as intrinsically better than tourism, rather solely than as an expression of the intrinsic quality of
individual travelers who are ‘naturally’ better equipped to successfully encounter authentic culture, as well as realize the promises of a ‘university-of-life’ education. This distinction is thus one of the most important ways through which the cultural capital of backpackers as middle class tourists is protected and monopolized despite the massification and popularization of backpacking travel.

In important ways backpackers are ‘anti-tourists’ (Fussell 1980) and it is through this ethos of anti-tourism that their identities and practices as travelers are formed and given meaning. According to Fussell, ‘anti-tourists’ are typically middle class tourists who consciously distance themselves from all things touristic. He argues that they are aware of many of the class based negative associations surrounding tourism and thus try to distance themselves from this ‘vulgar’ tourism through distinctive practices and ideologies that portray them as travelers rather than tourists in ways which better reflect their personal ability to appreciate culture and develop a cosmopolitan sensibility. This ‘superior’ traveler sensibility ostensibly facilitates a more meaningful and deep contact with the culture of the place in question and more ‘authentic’ interactions with locals.

**Threatening ‘Travel’ in India: The Touristic Destruction of Local Authenticity**

The following excerpt is taken from the personal journal I kept during my backpacking trip to India in June 2000.

It was my third day in India and I had booked a seat from Delhi to Dharmasala about 1 days travel north of Paharganj. It was a bus full of backpackers and about halfway through the journey I heard from the seats in front of me an unmistakable Oxford accent “The tourists are destroying India! The tourists are destroying India!!” Her plaintive cries became more audible the more she reiterated the point to her now besieged and beleaguered companion and as I peeked between the seats I then understood the nature of her dilemma, and as I was to later find out the nature of my own dilemma. She wore a sari and like many backpackers who wore saris they tended to embrace the ‘going native’ thing to an extreme. I concluded, with some relief, that judging by her complaints we, her fellow travelers weren’t the people she was angry with. It was they, the tourists who were screwing everything up for us. ‘Our’ enjoyment of India was being ruined by those feckless tourists. From then on I knew whom exactly to blame.
What exactly do tourists ruin and how do they go about ruining things? The above excerpt illustrates some pertinent aspects of the backpacking subculture. A paradox is at work in her statement in light of the context in which it was made. I had booked this bus trip in Paharganj, the backpacker enclave. It was not a local bus but a chartered bus, full of backpackers, and it cost double the price of a local bus to Dharmasala. In my mind it was very much a tourist bus yet from her cries it seemed as though the tourists she was referring to existed outside of the bus, somewhere else, in contrast to the rest of us inside whom she considered fellow travelers.

Although there were plenty of Indian women dressed in jeans and t-shirts, she was wearing a sari, perhaps in an attempt to dress in a more authentically local way. During that same trip but several days later in Ladakh, I met an Australian man who wore jeans and t-shirts every day. He told me that he was constantly asked by backpackers why he wore ‘western’ clothes in India and why he was not trying to ‘blend in’ more. For many backpackers it seems that signifiers of the ‘West’ such as jeans should be left behind if they are to blend in with the local non-Western culture. As McGregor (2001) notes in his study of backpackers in Indonesia, the modernity of the locals tends to be filtered out of the gaze of backpackers, who want to see authentic Indonesian culture. Among the backpackers I interviewed in India, the modernity of India was never really discussed. Indian culture existed outside and apart from modernity, with tourism seen by many as a harbinger of a corrosive and externally imposed force. Indian culture was being threatened by the Western tourist, who was ‘helping’ to destroy authentic (and non-western) India.

A central concern among backpackers I interviewed was with the destructive nature of tourism in India, the encroaching Westernization and destruction of Indian culture by tourists who were unwilling to leave the trappings of modern life at home. Since the authentic culture of
India is being destroyed by tourism and tourists, this logic of inevitable destruction turns authentic Indian culture into a scarce commodity and precious experience. This ‘destructive logic’ is an element of finding off-the-beaten-track places, places that have not yet been ‘touched’ by the destructive forces of change (a theme discussed in more depth in the following chapter). Consequently there is an increased value to the cultural and symbolic capital accumulated by travelers as a result of having such authentic experiences off-the-beaten-track. Bourdieu notes that symbolic capital becomes a kind of literacy that people learn in order to read and utilize distinctions. In ‘The Forms of Capital’ Bourdieu notes that ‘symbolic capital, that is to say capital in whatever form…is represented i.e. apprehended symbolically’ (Bourdieu 1986: 255). The use of stories by backpackers is one such way in which cultural capital is ‘represented’ in a symbolic form. Bourdieu notes that all forms of capital - economic, social, and cultural, and so on - can be symbolically represented and reproduced through oral discourse and in everyday speech. Different forms of cultural and symbolic capital are used and circulated by backpackers to differentiate them from mass tourists in their practices and discourse. In particular, their ‘off the beaten track’ stories serve as an important type of symbolic capital which conveys authenticity, difference and distinction.

Tourism is perceived as a social force that introduces the seeds of unwelcome change whereas travel is seen as a practice of cultural conservation: blending in, using local transport, eating local food and generally not doing things as tourists are seen to do. In the following interviews, backpackers espouse an ethos of balance, harmony and mutual respect for Indian culture as a way of distancing themselves from tourists and the destructive forces that the tourists bring to India. Henry, the Israeli backpacker, spoke about the differences between tourists and travelers:
**Billy:** Do you think there is enough room in India for everybody?

**Henry:** There is enough room but the problem is that the place is being corrupted. I can skip Kasul\(^{37}\), I have enough places to see, but I missed the real Kasul the way it was five years ago. That’s the bad thing. It’s a shame to miss a place that was once nice, there was something behind Kasul originally and what it became. People came there for a certain reason and it’s corrupted the place, so the original reason disappears. People make room for the tourist shops and restaurants, you can see this in Old Manali\(^{38}\) also. I’m sure there were dhabas ten years ago but now it’s all restaurants. But that’s commercial for you. It is better to rent the place for a restaurant that will make more money, just like in every other place. It’s not what I came for.

**Billy:** Places are disappearing?

**Henry:** Yeah and becoming the same: people are doing the same thing, only the scenery is different.

**Billy:** What about the people there?

**Henry:** Yeah those too, touristic locals, all the shopkeepers, taxi drivers. Many times I see tourists asking the taxi driver ‘when is the bus going here?’ and he says ‘today no bus!’ So it’s a shame because even they have been corrupted.

Henry’s answers to my questions illustrate the relationship between the destructive logic of tourism and the disappearance of cultural authenticity. He mentions that the ‘real Kasul’ somehow existed several years before his arrival, arguing that there was an ‘original reason’ why people visited there in the first place. According to Henry, this original reason has long since disappeared, mainly due to a burgeoning infrastructure of ‘tourist shops [and] restaurants’. Henry notes that the change in Kasul is due to understandable, but regrettable, commercial interests: ‘it is better to rent the place for a restaurant that will make more money’. However, for Henry it is ‘not what I came for’. Henry’s comments about Kasul, and the disappearance of authenticity by a commercially driven, tourist economy, illustrate how divisions between the beaten track and off-the-beaten-track are structured by a logic of temporal decay. Henry’s logic implicitly

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\(^{37}\) A popular backpacker destination in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

\(^{38}\) Old Manali is a popular town with backpackers and is the main transit point for buses to Leh.
suggests that the traveler is in a race against time in his or her search for authentic places not yet corrupted by tourism. He notes that places ‘are becoming the same, people are doing the same thing, only the scenery is different’. The value of distinct and authentic experiences increases within an economy of scarcity. For Henry, it is not simply that the authenticity of a place is corroded through contact with tourism. In his opinion, tourism has corrosive effects upon the moral character of local people too. He notes that, as a result of tourist commercialization in Kasul and Old Manali ‘touristic locals’ have become prevalent. In the following chapter, I explore the experiences of travelers with these purportedly authentic and uncorrupted locals. Apparently, the corrosion that tourism involves also works its way into the moral character of locals, like the taxi driver he mentions who, in order to get a fare, pretends there is no bus available. For Henry, when money and profit enter the equation in the form of a tourism economy, places as well as people end up corrupted.

The following comments are from my group interview with four Israeli backpackers in Leh, Ladakh. Sally, Anthony, Gary, and Tony all had spent three months in India and were planning to spend six months there in total:

*Billy:* Do you think tourists here [in India] disrupt or change things?

*Sally:* Of course, Ladakh is only changing only because of tourists.

*Anthony:* They bring money.

*Tony:* I wouldn’t want it, people coming to ruin the country but it’s money, so it’s everywhere. They [Indians] know Hebrew now, they put out signs in Hebrew because it’s money, they develop three or four places that a few years ago there was nothing there because people want to go to new places, people who have been here a few times, so it’s all money driven, everything. It’s understandable but sad. For them and for us.

In these comments, tourism is posited as the only agent of change in Ladakh. If not for tourism then Ladakh would forever stay the same. Ironically, when I was there, according to a local
newspaper I read, the number of domestic Indian tourists in Ladakh was double that of foreign tourists. As Tony implies, tourism ‘ruins the country’ both for Indians and for international travelers like them. As a necessary and inevitable force of economic development, mass tourism comes with a price; places lose their ‘natural’ attraction. The sadness he mentions presumably derives from the loss of their own culture as well as the loss of pleasure for those who now have fewer ‘real’ places to visit because of this change. Although Sally, Anthony, and Tony specifically mention that it is in part because of Israeli tourism that the place is being ruined, as Israeli travelers they situate themselves outside of the destructive impact of tourism. It is western tourists who change India, and in their eyes tourism acts as a metonym for ‘the west’ and modernization. However, this logic posits India as essentially oriental, and in the case of these backpackers, India’s Orientalism is under threat from an incipient western tourism which undermines its particularity as an oriental place. India is considered to have an unchanging culture and it is this stasis that should be preserved. Through the search for ‘the real’ India, the traveler remains outside of the tourist industry, and even helps to reanimate the old Orientalist construction of India as a non-modern and unchanging place. Without its eternal Orientalism or otherness, in contrast to the destructive progress of the modern West, India loses its value in the backpacker imaginary as a place that holds transformative and educational potential for the western traveler. If real difference has disappeared then the cosmopolitan promise of travel fails, as it is supposedly through encounters with difference that cosmopolitanism can thrive. The paradox is that, in order for the traveler to encounter a real India and thus be transformed and educated in the process, India must stay the same, as Parshad suggests:

Billy: Do you think that places are disappearing to a certain extent, take Leh here and the way tourism had taken off?
Parshad: That’s what it seems like and I’m hardly the best judge for this as it’s my first time here. But I’ve talked to other tourists who have been here before many years ago and they all seem to agree that the place does seem to be deteriorating in the sense of pristine and purity. I see new roads being built where there were none before. It comes down to that balance thing because I’m using those roads to explore these places and yet I also don’t want them there to destroy the place; it’s kind of a contradiction.

Parshad, the American backpacker who speaks Hindi, offers a similar, but more nuanced opinion than Henry about the disappearance of authentic places like Leh. Parshad is aware that as a result of his presence there, a tourist infrastructure is necessary in order to make places like Leh more accessible to visitors. He acknowledges that ‘it’s kind of a contradiction’. However, similar to Henry’s remarks, Parshad notes a temporal logic at work. He comments that he has ‘talked to other tourists who have been here before many years ago’ and that ‘they all seem to agree that the place does seem to be deteriorating in the sense of pristine and purity’. Parshad’s comments are not framed in terms of a discourse of moral corrosion but rather of picturesque destruction. Authentic places that are ‘pristine’ and ‘pure’ are an increasingly scarce commodity in the world of travel, which encourages constant movement of people from place to place. As Parshad admits, his very presence is an integral part of this process in the first place, and he is thus aware of the contradiction at work.

Judging from the above comments by my interviewees it would appear that a paradoxical logic is at work in the world of backpacking. In the context of the cosmopolitan promise of travel, one enunciated in the previous chapter in Lonely Planet guidebooks, in light of the ever-encroaching presence of mass tourism the possibility of cultivating a cosmopolitan vision through travel appears fraught with contradictions. It would appear that tourism represents a direct threat to Ulrich Beck’s fifth principle of cosmopolitan vision, ‘the mélange principle’. He defines the mélange principle as ‘the principle that local national, ethnic, religious and cosmopolitan cultures and traditions interpenetrate, interconnect and intermingle’ (Beck 2006: 7,
my emphasis). Diversity, cultural difference and distance from international tourism are presumed to be essential for the traveler’s soul, which are enriched by visiting unspoiled and ‘eccentric’ places that have not yet become flattened by the juggernaut of global homogenization. In other words, tourism contributes to a homogenous and standardized global culture where the conditions for mélange are presumably absent. However, in light of the perceived standardization of places by a homogenizing force of mass tourism in India, it appears that such a logic would provide an increased impetus and value to experiences and places at a distance from the beaten track of tourism. In this respect, the world that the traveler discovers ‘off the beaten track’ is an imagined geography with routes that potentially go everywhere, a smooth surface of open possibilities. Hardt and Negri (2000: 202, 235) claim that Empire is both everywhere and nowhere, it is ‘a non-place or Utopia’ and yet ‘Empire is materializing before our eyes’. The travel of backpackers helps to constitute a ‘roaming’ Empire’. travel off-the-beaten-track does not arrive at a final terminus but rather spirals in a perpetual circulation which reflects this new form of power. In order to function effectively as an imagined but not imaginary geography, the coded binaries of ‘the-beaten-track’ and ‘off-the-beaten-track’ work together to produce ever new circuits of desire and repulsion around the world. In the following section we will see how backpackers and tourists help to produce and negotiate these ‘non-places’.

Disciplining the Threat of Tourism: Haggling and Budget Travel

As the titles of the first two Lonely Planet publications indicate, Across Asia on the Cheap (1973) and South East Asia on a Shoestring (1975) emphasize the budget aspect of backpacking on the cheap. Lonely Planet now has a set of guidebooks in the ‘shoestring’ category. The conversion of economically cheap travels into culturally valuable experiences has been a defining feature of backpacking. How to spend and manage money over a long period of
time is a common topic of conversation among backpackers, and the length of their trip will ultimately be determined by how successful they are in budgeting their money. Spending money is by no means a purely instrumental and logistical question for many backpackers. It was an important indicator of the character of the person. It indicates a traveler who is a more ethically discerning and disciplined subject with respect to spending money, in contrast to the undisciplined tourist (a theme I explore in more depth in the following chapter).

As every Lonely Planet guidebook cautions, travelers should ‘spend their money wisely’ (Lonely Planet Vancouver 2007: 27), which requires demonstrating that one has acquired a certain savvy on the road by recognizing a scam from a genuine opportunity. Why pay tourist prices, since as a backpacker ‘in the know’ you should also know and get the local price? Simply paying without haggling invites mild extortion and signifies that one is more of a tourist than a traveler. If the holiday of tourism is considered a time of excess spending, unrestrained self indulgence, and general ‘splurging’, then the travel denotes asceticism, frugality, and penny-pinching as the name of the game. The aim is to keep that money belt tight, and as invisible as possible. The centrality of traveling on a budget, of getting the best deals for accommodation, food and transport, and in the case of India, of not getting ripped off or conned, were daily concerns for all my interviewees.

Haggling is one of the most common practices and highly valued skills among backpackers in India, and also a key practice that backpackers consider indicative of the differences between tourists and travelers. In their quest for ever greater proximity to all things local, many backpackers practice haggling as a way of demonstrating their knowledge of local prices and of distancing themselves from the more ‘ignorant’ or naïve tourists. Because of their limited time and immersion in the local culture, as well as their more flamboyant spending
habits, tourists were seen by many backpackers I interviewed to be paying unnecessarily higher prices and getting ‘ripped off’ more often.

Jan, a 33 year old Swiss backpacker I interviewed in Paharganj, describes an incident with some other Swiss tourists in the Philippines. Jan had been travelling for over 8 months. His trip had begun in the Philippines, and had taken him through Thailand, Laos, China and Tibet, Nepal, and finally to India where I met him in Paharganj. In Jan’s view, not spending one’s money wisely can have cataclysmic effects on the world of backpackers, locals, and the places in question.

Jan: In the Philippines once there were two Swiss tourists who wanted to go from Vagil to Manila [a six hour bus trip] […] and I asked how much did you pay? And he said I pay this and this. And I said what bloody shit do you do? Who gives in one night a local salary for six months? It’s just crazy! They are crazy to do things like this! Because people in the Philippines think we all have money like on trees. If you can spend in one night what they earn in six months its clear they think we must all have this money. Imagine. And it’s something really not good if you do that because it makes these people think we are rich. Of course we are rich, we are more rich than they are but you don’t spend it every day like on this taxi. The image of it is really bad, it’s a bloody shit image.

As a backpacker, Jan is concerned with the behavior of tourists who don’t spend their money wisely. He connects this behavior to the level of hassle from the locals (or unwanted attention) he received in the Philippines and in India, and to the destruction of the local equilibrium and moral character. He believes that flamboyant tourist spending ruins things for backpackers who go there on a tight budget, and according to his logic, are then inundated with unreasonable requests from locals for money. At the same time, he believes unwise spending ruin the local people by encouraging ‘bad habits’. Overspending also ruins the Philippines as it has become a place where the backpacker can no longer go and expect to find natural, that is, non-commercial and authentic relationships between travelers and locals, a point elaborated by Jan in the following comment:
Jan: That’s why everybody now goes to Laos because this image [the ‘bloody shit image’ he found in the Philippines] is not there […] That’s why we always find some new places to go because once the big tourists are coming it’s finished, it’s broken!

In the eyes of travelers, tourists, the unregulated and ‘ignorant’ spending habits of tourists, are destroying the local equilibrium and ruining the place for backpackers. When places get ‘ruined’, the search is on to find places that have managed to avoid the corrosive hand of tourism. Unsurprisingly, Laos was Jan’s favorite place as it had yet to lose its ‘naturalness’ in the global space of travel. The idea of an eternally shrinking world of ‘natural’ places to experience was a pervasive one among my interviews in all three sites, but in India it was particularly pronounced.

Marc Augé’s concept of ‘non-places’ (1995) helps us to examine how mobility and consumption are key factors that help produce the experience of both place and non-place. Augé focuses on what he characterizes as the non-places of airports, supermarkets and highways by emphasizing their character as transit sites which travelers must pass through in order to arrive at their eventual destination. The concept of ‘non-place’ is useful in characterizing those places that become overused, bypassed, and eventually forgotten on the backpacker trail. In other words, non-places can be characterized as those inauthentic places that backpackers typically seek to avoid or pass through on their travels which have become too touristic and over-commercialized.

The above comments from Jan help to explain how, in the words of Marc Augé, ‘place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities; the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed’ (Augé 1995: 79). That is, as off-the-beaten-track destinations become popular, they attract ever-greater amounts of visitors. As the volume of people increases, so too does the backpacker service industry in the form of hostels and restaurants. Consequently, places of solitude begin to resemble mass-produced tourist destinations, and in the eyes of backpackers they take on a standardized quality. Jan’s comments also help to illustrate how backpackers
negotiate the contradictions that emerge in an increasingly commercialized and massified travel industry.

In Jan’s opinion, tourists have no idea about how the local economy works, and as a result they ruin things for backpackers on a tight budget. In this context, haggling is a regulatory mechanism practiced by backpackers to ensure that destinations will remain cheap for the ‘budget’ pleasures of backpackers. Although the Lonely Planet website does mention that a dollar means a lot more for the person selling than the person buying, in the field many backpackers take haggling as a matter of life or death and live in constant fear of getting ripped off or duped by locals. The apparently ludic aspects of practices like haggling can mean something very different for those selling their goods (a point nicely illustrated in the documentary *Cannibal Tours* (O’Rourke 1998) which shows the other’s side of haggling).

Jan was particularly adamant about not giving money to any of the locals in Paharganj, insisting that doing so taught them ‘bad habits’ and contributed to their ‘underdevelopment’. And giving them money would lead to other forms of moral corruption.

*Jan:* Who can go in Switzerland like this man [a middle aged Indian man who was standing at our table asking for money] and say ‘give me’? If today some man sits down and takes his chai [tea] it wouldn’t be normal that I pay chai for him. He did not even say hello: he just say[s] “chai”. To me I say where do you find this idea? They [the locals] just think ‘four rupees are nothing for him so why should he not pay a chai for me?’ It’s true that it’s nothing but the idea that you can just go up and get something, it’s just a bloody idea; it’s no education and then they don’t start really to work. They are not willing to do something. It’s true that they don’t want to work if they can earn so easy money. I would not work too! But then they have the desire to earn a lot and this you can only get if you really work! I think it’s good for the children if I do it this way [not give them money].

For Jan, tourists create a situation with locals which encourages them not to work, and to ‘sponge off’ the westerners. A consistent connection is made by backpackers and in guidebooks about the negative and destructive effects of tourism both on a place and on the character of tourists. As
Jan’s comments suggest, an individual’s actions can have cataclysmic consequences for the character of a place and its people. If tourism is an ever-expanding bubble of sameness, it buffers authentic culture with safe and unnecessary western luxuries, and then only the ethically disciplined traveler can resist the temptations and fully realize the ‘utopian promises of travel’, namely self-cultivation, education, and cosmopolitanism. Consider this comment, again from Jan:

*Jan:* I had a first time experience. I went to a hotel [in Paharganj] and they wanted 400 [rupees] and I bargained it down to 150 and they did not want to and they just said ‘go, go away!’ and that was a new experience for me, really new!

The fact that during eight months of travel around Asia Jan had never experienced a time when he did not get the lowest price possible illustrates the buying power of backpackers when traveling in poorer countries. Backpackers learn that if they continue to haggle then they can get a cheaper price. If not then they simply go somewhere else. Of course, Jan was in Paharganj in June, when the tourist season in Northern India is in full swing. During the off-season he may not have been so quickly dispatched. The extra time and mobility of backpackers allow them to shop around more than the tourist who may be stuck with a prepaid packaged trip. Backpackers can travel to out-of-season places in order to get the cheapest and best deals, and generally the flexibility that their mobility provides them with allows them to haggle without fear of being left without a room.

**Conclusion**

In the next chapter, I focus on the *authentic places and interactions* that backpackers’ experience. There I detail three stories that focus on how Lonely Planet guidebooks help to facilitate the off-the-beaten-track experiences of three travelers. The different and ‘better’ experiences of the traveler are in part predicated upon an ethic of hard work, fiscal frugality, and openness to difference. In contrast to the tourist who is unwilling to leave behind the luxury and
comfort of life back home, the traveler sees him or herself as one who can shake off such comforts and reject the tourist bubble. Although some researchers like Cohen (2004) have tended to dismiss the importance of authenticity to tourism studies, I argue that for backpackers the authenticity of their experiences is vitally important as it serves to legitimate travel as a more ‘real’ way of experiencing other cultures. In my interviews with backpackers, having authentic encounters with locals and experiencing the ‘real’ India, an India that lies beyond the tourism bubble, were repeatedly cited as important and defining aspects of their trip. Among the main criteria used by backpackers to judge the authenticity of their experience was the absence of tourists and of all things touristic.

In light of backpackers’ positive valuation of eating local food, dressing local, and having authentic interactions with locals, travelers can claim that their presence does not disturb or significantly change the places or peoples to visit. They blend in and are in harmony with their local surroundings. By contrast, tourists and tourism are perceived as a destructive force, erasing the authenticity of the local culture, as well as introducing an element of homogeneity and standardization. Backpackers perceive tourists as arriving en masse and as unwilling to leave the luxury and ease of life back home behind them. Travelers, on the other hand, are perceived as individuals who are not part of a mass industry. In their eyes, travelers are simply ‘curious’, they want to learn about the local culture, rather than buy tacky and inauthentic representations of it. Here we can see how cultural capital is expressed as practice rather than possession, and thus in terms of individual competencies, attitudes and tastes that are learned by backpackers. Travelers seek to escape or exist outside of the instrumental commercial relations that characterize tourism. As Cohen (2004) notes, and as my fieldwork confirms, the backpacker infrastructure in place is not perceived as a touristic infrastructure by many backpackers. Backpackers who consider
themselves travelers, and what they do as travel, are thus able to draw upon the positive values and meanings which are collectively celebrated, circulated and reproduced amongst other backpackers ‘on the road’.

In the final chapter, my interviews and ethnographic observations explore the kinds of authentic places, people, and interactions experienced by backpackers in all three sites when they do get away from ‘the beaten track of tourism’, and I examine instances when the beaten track and its antithesis are experienced in paradoxical and contradictory ways by these travelers. In particular I focus on the many stories that my interviewees tell about their experiences and I examine these stories as valuable forms of symbolic capital at work in the habitus of backpackers.
Chapter 4 Off the Beaten Track: The Utopian Promises of Travel

In the previous chapter I explored through interviews and ethnographic observation how backpackers on the road typically characterize the tourist as a type of person who has qualitatively different experiences from the traveler. Tourists are typically characterized as people who want to remain within a ‘bubble’ that is in large part an extension of their life back home, consuming food and cultural experiences that are in no way unique or authentic, and who seek out largely standardized and homogenous experiences. To explain why the tourist prefers this type of ‘bubble’ experience, the interviewees emphasize the moral character of the tourist. The tourist is considered lazy, self indulgent and easily seduced by clichéd and inauthentic cultural representations. The tourist is unwilling to learn anything new or be challenged by new situations, and consequently has an inferior type of cultural experience and so remains unchanged and uneducated. The short holiday or vacation is one indication of why the tourist is considered to have an inferior type of experience. As many backpackers argue, the reduced time available to those on holiday or vacation leaves them with little opportunity to get to know the local context. In theoretical terms, the types of ‘cultural capital’ that tourists embody and practice sharply distinguished from that of self-identified travelers. The ideological code of the tourist/traveler distinction articulated in the oral discourses of my interviewees helped to organize and mediate their discourses and practices as distinctively different from those of holidaying tourists.

Most of the backpackers I interviewed also spoke positively about the benefits and advantages they gained from independent travel and the challenge of organizing things themselves, as well as learning to cope with unexpected events on a daily basis. Differences between travelers and tourists are articulated as a moral distinction that centers on a type of
person who decides to travel in a particular way. This moral distinction between travelers and tourists has important implications for how my interviewees perceive and evaluate their own experiences as superior to those of tourists. Because backpackers identify themselves as travelers rather than as tourists, and actively embrace and celebrate the ‘work of travel’ while denouncing the ‘holiday of tourism’, they lay claim to a more authentic, and self-transformative cultural experience for themselves. In the case of India, tourism and tourists are seen by backpackers to have an almost exclusively negative and destructive impact on authentic Indian culture. Within the context of India, I explored how tourism is characterized as a destructive force, one that many backpackers see as an engine of unwelcome, standardizing change. In short, tourism is helping to mold India in the image of the west, but a modern west that many backpackers see as unnatural, inauthentic, and morally questionable.

By situating themselves on one side of the tourist/traveler divide, and by evaluating their own perceptions of India as somehow more penetrating and ‘real’, their anti-tourist and pro-travel discourse tends to reinforce the superiority and accuracy of their own perceptions of Indian culture. The symbolic and cultural capital that is attained and legitimated through this anti-tourist discourse implicitly affirms the traveler as a more cosmopolitan and knowledgeable figure than the more pedestrian tourist. The ‘natural ability’ of the traveler to penetrate the depths of culture is thus largely taken-for-granted and remains outside of, and resistant to, critical reflection. The taken-for-granted superiority of perceptions among backpackers echoes the demystifying discourse of the Lonely Planet guidebook, which functions as a textual corollary to these perceptions. I also examined how Lonely Planet guidebooks function in the ethnographic field. Contrary to my initial expectations, most of the backpackers I interviewed who possess a copy of a Lonely Planet guidebook tend to use it for practical information rather than read it in-depth.
Word of mouth is a more popular and reliable way of garnering up-to-date information about places to visit. Nevertheless, Lonely Planet guidebooks provide backpackers with back-up support, and help them to negotiate uncertain situations. Thus although the authority of Lonely Planet as a text certainly helped to popularize Asia and India as ideal places, where ‘off the beaten track’ adventures could be had for the western traveler, on a more mundane level, its power lies in providing practical information, and recommendations to its readers about places to stay which are typically on the beaten track. In this way, Lonely Planet is very much part of a travel and tourism industry that helps direct people to certain places rather than others, and thus creates beaten tracks of its own. As I demonstrated with the excerpts on Paharganj from *Lonely Planet India*, its taste changes over time and thus helps to direct people to other places. As such, I begin this chapter with three stories from my interviewees that help to illustrate the role of Lonely Planet guidebooks in facilitating the off-the-beaten-track experiences of backpackers.

Furthermore, in this chapter I focus more directly on what constitutes ‘off-the-beaten-track’ experiences for backpackers, in particular, the importance of *authenticity* that lies above and beyond the realm of a tourist industry and a western march of progress. Here I conceptualize ‘authenticity’ as a characteristic of particular places and of particular types of interactions that occur between backpackers and locals, rather than as a self-evident truth, or as a value imposed from without. However, the authentic quality of places is usually intertwined with the authentic quality of the people there and so these two aspects or tracks are usually interconnected. Thus by travelling ‘off-the-beaten-track of tourism’ backpackers can find places and interactions that, in their eyes, are not yet tarnished by the over-commercialized and destructive influence of the tourist industry. These kinds of authentic and ‘human’ experiences are highly prized by my interviewees. In particular, the value of accumulating authentic ‘off-the-beaten-track’
experiences which are subsequently retold and shared through stories with other people on the road serve to illustrate how such experiences are intimately connected to the cultivation of the traveler’s self. By travelling ‘off the beaten track’ and encountering authenticity, travelers can claim to have found the ‘real’ culture that lies beyond the destructive reach of the tourist industry. In the introductory chapter and Chapter 3, I noted that ‘the beaten track’ is an ‘exhausted’ symbolic and cultural resource. It has been ‘loved to death’ by the sheer volume of visitors and authenticity is irrevocably altered as a result. By finding and encountering the ‘real’ culture and people, the symbolic resource of travel is renewed and the utopian promises of travel are kept alive. Although researchers such as Erik Cohen (2004) downplay the importance of authenticity in travel and tourism studies, I argue that, for backpackers, the question of authenticity remains centrally important. Authenticity is a key distinction-operator in negotiating the tourist/traveler divide and a valuable symbolic currency. By getting ‘off the beaten track’, the moral character and body of the traveler is cultivated through the ‘work of travel’, in contrast to the more pampered experiences of the tourist, through which the cosmopolitan promise of travel can be more fully realized and the traveler can avoid the ‘superficial’ and ‘fake’ bubble of the tourist industry.

The authentic quality of ‘the local’ maintains a powerful hold on the cultural compasses of many backpackers that in some ways parallels early debates on globalization in which ‘the local’ is conceptualized as a moral and cultural antidote to the homogenous, standardized and in many ways destructive appetite of ‘the global’. Many of the backpackers I interviewed conceive of tourism as inevitably homogenizing, standardizing and westernizing, and thus as an inherently corrosive force that eats away at the authenticity of local particularity and cultural difference. Places on the beaten track are inauthentic, ‘loved to death’ and inhabited by people who simply
want to make money from interactions. Places ‘off-the-beaten-track’ are ‘real’ and somehow untouched by the tide of progress and the destructive blight of tourism. The locals who inhabit these places are not interested in making money from the visitor but are instead interested in genuine human relationships characterized by a ‘gift’ relationship (Mauss 1990).

For many backpackers ‘the local’ acts as a reliable signifier of difference and authenticity through which their traveler credentials can be evaluated and understood as off-the-beaten-track experiences. However, the local and the locals take on very different meanings depending on where backpackers are situated. For backpackers there is a heightened emphasis on eating local food and getting local prices as a way of distinguishing themselves and what they do from tourists. The attraction of the local as a site of authenticity is pronounced and pervasive in the backpackers I interviewed and typically expressed in conversations to register both a distance from mainstream tourism and a more authentic travel which is close to the real culture of a place.

It would appear that the local has become the new site of the real that lies hidden behind the staged theatrics of tourism. Meeting and befriending the locals, eating local food, and using local transport are just some of the desirable local accomplishments that preoccupy backpackers. Compared to the highly mobile traveler the locals do not move; they are like a ‘local’ anesthetic, frozen in time and space. One of the related tensions animating contemporary backpacking is the ‘discovery’ of local places and people that are considered ‘unspoiled’ or ‘untouched’ by the forces of ‘modern life’, an aspect of travel that Johannes Fabian (1983) aptly describes as a form of ‘time-space substitution’. This discourse of authenticity can be understood in part as constituted through a nostalgia for ‘untouched’ places and ‘pre-modern’ peoples which posits the traveler as a latter day explorer, seeking out the “terra nullius” or ‘empty land’ of the new ‘lonely planet’. In this context, contemporary backpacking as a social and cultural institution of western
travel can be viewed as producing specific ‘knowledges’ of places and peoples that allow for the constitution and reconstitution of global relations of domination. With its ubiquitous culture of guidebooks, backpacking is a particularly pertinent example in which the reconstitution and reification of East-West and North-South relations can be critically explored. Thus the question of ‘Empire’ (Hardt and Negri 2000) and the growth and spread of global capitalism can be addressed by retracing the tracks of backpackers.

**Backpackers and Off-The-Beaten-Track Stories**

The world of backpacking travel is not just a space of mobility but also a space of sociability. Contrary to talk among backpackers about meeting the locals, or about solitary adventures ‘in the middle of nowhere’ they typically spend most of their time with each other, meeting people from other countries and sharing their travel experiences. It is in this space of sociability that the off-the-beaten-track experiences of backpackers can be retold to other backpackers, such as the amazing and perfect places, the unforgettable encounters with locals, and so on. How backpackers narrate their experiences through travel *stories*, both to themselves and other backpackers, is of prime importance in allowing them to successfully use and convert the various forms of capital they have acquired ‘on the road’. I pay particular attention in my interviews with backpackers to their stories and comments regarding their off the beaten track experiences, their distance from tourists, and their particular style of travel, which I consider to be examples and oral articulations of cultural capital that is symbolically expressed. Bourdieu notes that symbolic capital becomes a kind of literacy that people learn in order to read and utilize distinctions in the social world. He further notes that different forms of capital are symbolically represented through language and speech (Bourdieu 1986: 255). The use of stories by backpackers is one such way in which cultural capital is ‘represented’ in a symbolic form. He notes that all forms of capital, economic, social and cultural, can be symbolically represented and
reproduced through oral discourse and in everyday speech. I therefore pay particular attention to 
the different forms of cultural and symbolic capital that are used and circulated by backpackers 
to differentiate them from mass tourists in their practices and discourse. In particular, I examine 
how their ‘off the beaten track’ stories serve as an important type of symbolic capital which 
conveys authenticity, difference and distinction. The embellishment of stories for dramatic 
purposes is a significant part of backpacking culture and tend to be grounded in truth but also to 
have an imaginary and entertaining value. The stories of the backpackers I interviewed are not 
objectively ‘verifiable’ by me or anyone else, but nonetheless they refer to real historical events 
in their lives which have importance and value for *them* and others.

It is primarily through these interactions with each other that the backpacking ‘communities of practice’ (Currie et al 2009: 14) are constantly reinvigorated and the traveler identity is *accomplished* socially. Using Paechter’s concept of ‘communities of practice’, and in 
a very different context, Currie argues that these communities can be defined as “an aggregate of 
people, who united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of 
talking, beliefs and values-in short practices” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 186, quoted in 
Currie et al 2009: 14). Backpackers form ‘communities of practice’ and identify themselves in 
opposition to mainstream tourists. It is a self conscious form of identification and distinction. 
These communities of practice are the sites (or in Bourdieu’s terms ‘fields’) for the production 
and accumulation, circulation and consumption of symbolic capital in the form of storytelling.

I (re)inserted myself into this space in order to meet backpackers and to figure out how 
this traveler identity is accomplished both through their actions and by the sharing of those 
experiences through interaction with other people. Although the space of travel and tourism is 
historically and materially produced, it is always a space that is inhabited by people who narrate
their experiences and identities and thus tell stories that weave together people, places and experiences. Michel de Certeau (1984) artfully illustrates this point in the following passage:

In modern Athens the vehicles of modern transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home one takes a ‘metaphor’, a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: everyday they transverse and organize places: they select and link them together: they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories (de Certeau, 1984: 115 original emphases).

To conceive of the travel stories of backpackers as ‘spatial trajectories’ suggests a powerful way of understanding how the tracks of tourism and travel are ‘metaphorically’ sutured together, and thus how the space of travel and tourism is always constituted by peopled places. Of course we must recognize and analyze how other people, especially the locals in India, become a ‘sedentary’ resource for the theatrical adventures, legendary stories, and character-building experiences of backpackers in the process. Understanding stories as spatial trajectories also provides a useful way of understanding how new places ‘off the beaten track’ get ‘discovered’ through the narratives or the retold experiences of other backpackers. Thus, while I address how the space of travel and tourism is textually produced and mediated by the ‘travel industry’ through guidebooks like Lonely Planet, I also focus on how the space of travel is narratively and materially produced through the discursive practices of those travelling through it. Following de Certeau, we can say that the space of travel and tourism is always ‘under construction’. The travel stories of backpackers thus act as the ‘narrative architecture’ of old and new imagined geographies through which the beaten track of tourism’ and the ‘off-the-beaten-track of travel’ are discursively made and unmade over and over again. Thus, although backpackers occupy a distinctive position within the broader ‘field’ of tourism, their distinctive discourse and style of off-the-beaten-track travel marks them as different from and in opposition to the practices of mainstream mass tourism. In other words, for the purposes of this study, I consider the ‘field’ of
tourism to be bounded by how backpackers negotiate the borders between the beaten track of tourism and off the beaten track of backpacker travel. In this sense I examine backpackers’ distinctive habitus within the field of tourism as a recognizable ‘community of practice’, that is, ‘an aggregate of people, who united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs and values -- in short, practices’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 186, quoted in Currie et al 2009: 14). I examine experiences and stories of ‘off-the-beaten-track travel’ as the defining practice which unites backpackers as a community of practice and it is in this community of practice where backpackers ‘learn’ to become travelers.

Legends of Lonely Planet Revisited

In the previous chapter, ‘The Beaten Track’, I examined how guidebooks were used in various ways as cartographic legends in the ethnographic field by backpackers. In this section I want to illustrate through three stories how the Lonely Planet guidebook plays a part in helping travelers get off-the-beaten-track. I met Anton and Rick through their response to a poster I had put up in a downtown hostel in Vancouver. They were my very first interviewees and seemed very eager to share their experiences of Canada with me. Anton was 35 and a financial manager. Rick was 22 and in the army. Both were Dutch men. They had been in Vancouver for three weeks when I met them and were returning home within a week. Similar to Hans who was not spending a lengthy period of time in Canada, I asked Anton and Rick about their length of stay in Canada and whether this qualified them as tourists:

Billy: Do you see yourselves as travelers? Do you do tourist things here or something different to that?

Rick: [gesturing towards other people in the room] They are tourists, the people who come here but we are backpackers, not exactly low budget. We are not going to cook here every night and we like to eat in town some nights. We are backpackers, we fly budget.

Anton: I think I’m a tourist with a backpack. Technically I’m on a holiday but I have the spirit of a backpacker.
During my interview with Anton and Rick they discovered that I am Irish, and vividly recalled a story about getting ‘off-the-beaten-track’ in the West of Ireland, a few years previously. Their comments help to illustrate how stories about off-the-beaten-track travel around the world are circulated and retold outside of the context of their origin.

*Rick*: We did the Burren, and we saw the cliffs of Moher.

*Billy*: They’re a bit touristy, the cliffs now?

*Anton*: Yes, but we did the other part. We had a guidebook and it said there was an old part beyond the Visitors Centre but that part was closed because it was too dangerous. But then we read another guidebook in the hostel, a Lonely Planet and it said it was discouraged but not forbidden so we said ‘let’s do it!’ When we got there, there was a big sign saying ‘don’t do this, extremely dangerous!’ and we said “if it’s too dangerous we’ll turn back”. So we went on the trail and it was the most beautiful of all. There was a path very close to the cliff and the cliffs go straight down. It took us about 2-3 hours to do those 4-5 kilometers. There were cows all around. There wasn’t anyone else there! It was the most beautiful part, the closed and dangerous part.

Their story is instructive for how the Lonely Planet guidebook, compared to the other guidebook they use, allows them to have experiences out of reach for the more rule-bound tourists. Both the Burren and The Cliffs of Moher are two popular tourist spots in the West of Ireland. By following the advice of Lonely Planet, advice that seemed at odds with the local authority’s signs, they end up having a memorable and enjoyable experience. The absence of other people makes the experience all the more worthwhile, as they had the place all to themselves. As Anton remarks, ‘There wasn’t anyone else there! It was the most beautiful part’. Finding places of solitude in the crowded tourist space of the West of Ireland is still possible for these travelers but it means taking risks and going off the beaten path, with the help of Lonely Planet guidebook. As they note, it is precisely because they take that risk and get-off-the-beaten-track that they are rewarded with a unique experience, a four to five kilometer walk around the Cliffs of Moher without anyone else in sight. As Anton remarks, ‘It was the most beautiful part, the closed and
dangerous part’. The fact that this story stands out in their minds as exceptional, and is presumably retold to many people in multiple geographical contexts (in this instance to me in Vancouver) illustrates how the adventurous status of travelers is reiterated and reproduced. In this way the space of travel is sutured through the telling and retelling of stories of journeys taken off the beaten track. ‘Stories’ are therefore key to the symbolic capital of distinction which backpackers accumulate and evaluate during and after they travel.

I met and interviewed Erika from Finland in Leh. She was not staying at the ‘Kathmandu Guesthouse’ but in another one nearby. I met her at a local café and we did the interview at the Kathmandu Guesthouse. She was a 27 year old teacher at the time and had been travelling alone in India for five months. Erika had a bus story from Ladakh, about the trip from Leh to the Nubra Valley which lies about four hours north of Leh.

*Erika:* I must tell you this one. I was going to the Nubra Valley with some friends I met in Leh. In the Lonely Planet it said that the Nubra Valley road is the highest in the world and I really wanted to do it because it’s the highest in the world, you understand? We wanted to see the camels up there and see how close we could get to the Chinese border. We got up early and took the local bus from the station in Leh. It cost nothing, a few rupees, but it was *really* packed with people. So we had our seats right at the back of the bus, you know what I’m talking about! [ ] The bus, it wasn’t too bad for a local bus but there was so much stuff on the roof, gas bottles, lots of luggage, everything and it was stacked up *really* high which made [me] a little nervous about the balance. So the bus is slowly, slowly chugging up the mountain road. The pass is 6000 meters! Nearer the top the bus engine started coughing a lot without the oxygen, you know? It was so slow but I was sitting at the window-biggest mistake of my life! I could see all the way down the side of the mountain and the bus wheel was millimeters from the edge! Crazy shit! The road was terrible too, huge potholes and when the bus would go into a pothole the whole bus would rock side to side! Like this see [gestures]. I was getting really, *really* nervous and my friend who had travelled all over the world said that it even was worse than the road of death in Bolivia! Now that’s saying something. Have you heard of it? [the road of death]. And the bus was so full of people! It was impossible to move. Some of the younger girls at the front of the bus were puking out of the window! We were slowly getting to the top of the pass and it was coming up to the top that was the worst. The road is cut through the glacier and the potholes are *huge!* [ ] so there was this moment when we had gone over one or two potholes and the whole bus was swaying and rocking from side to side. A Ladakhi woman grabbed me by the arm really hard and said ‘much much danger!’ Now that put really the worries in me! I say to myself ‘If the locals were scared
then it really must be dangerous’ and even Don [her friend who had travelled on the road of death] looked really white and nervous. So anyway we got over and go to the Nubra Valley and we even saw some camels! I said to Don when we got there ‘I’m getting a helicopter back, no way am I doing that again!’

Billy: How did you get back?

Erika: We got the bus back of course! I wasn’t going to chicken out on a bus trip!

Erika, who seems to have a penchant for dangerous bus trip in Northern India, seems inspired to travel by bus along ‘the highest [road] in the world’, suggesting that her inspiration for doing such a trip came from reading the Lonely Planet, and thus she ‘really wanted to do it’. This time she gets her wish of travelling in a local bus, which she says ‘cost nothing, a few rupees’, but ‘was really packed with people’. Because of the high numbers of people in the bus, and goods on the roof of the bus which were ‘stacked up really high’, she begins to have second thoughts about her trip. She remarks that it made her: ‘a little nervous about the balance’. She mentions the height of the pass, 6,000 meters, which emphasizes the severity and extremity of the task she has taken on. Similar to her experience on the Manali to Leh road (discussed further on in this chapter), she ‘could see all the way down the side of the mountain’, with even worse road conditions on this bus trip that any she had taken before. She describes the road as having ‘huge potholes’ that make the ‘whole bus rock side to side’. At other times ‘the bus wheel was millimeters from the edge!’ She notes that, because of the high altitude, the bus does not sound too healthy either. As she describes the unfolding drama, she recalls: ‘I was getting really, really nervous’, a situation that is not helped by her kind friend’s timely evaluation of that particular
road as ‘worse than the Road of Death\textsuperscript{39} in Bolivia!’ Her rising panic is further exacerbated by the tightly packed people inside which made it ‘impossible to move’.

Her tale is one of utter entrapment and rising terror. She is unable to move inside the bus and the bus itself seems to be squeezing, wheezing, and dangerously rocking its way along on a road worse than the Road of Death! Amazingly Erika recalls that things get even worse. As the bus nears the top of the pass at 6,000 meters, where it is ‘swaying and rocking from side to side’, she recalls the worst (but for the dramatic purpose of the story, clearly the best) part of the trip when a local woman grabs her arm and says ‘much much danger’. Erika remarks that if the locals think it is really dangerous then it really must be dangerous. Here the authenticity of a local woman’s evaluation of the situation is a valuable element in her story. The evaluation of the danger and risk of the situation by a foreign backpacker is no longer necessary at this point. The authenticity of the danger that Erika confronts is doubly confirmed. On the one hand, the local Ladakh woman is scared, and on the other hand her friend Don (whose worldly travel credentials have already been established through his Road of Death experience) was ‘really white and nervous’. Arriving in the Nubra Valley, the full extent of the danger she felt is vividly illustrated. Despite her budget travel ethos, she tells Don that she is willing to take a helicopter back to Leh and vows ‘no way am I doing that again!’ However, when I ask her about the return journey she dismisses and minimizes the danger and risk of her previous trip. It is a matter of not being seen to ‘chicken out’ on the return trip. This particular bus trip, which occurred after the previously narrated one, might be seen as Erika’s way of having a real ‘local bus trip experience’ in light of her previous tourist bus trip to Leh. All of the elements of risk and danger are present but in this story these dangers and risks are all the more real due to the ‘confirmation’ by a local

\textsuperscript{39} The Road of Death in Bolivia is notorious for its incredibly high casualty and fatality rates.
and by Don, the well travelled veteran. There is also an important performative element to Erika’s story, one that helps illustrate how interviews are not simply a matter of a research subject recalling their experiences to a researcher but also illustrate how the symbolic capital of stories circulate among backpackers. Throughout her story Erika, and others too, address me as a fellow traveler. For example, when talking about taking seats at the back of the bus she exclaims ‘you know what I am talking about!’ This comment suggests that she does not need to further explain what this means in the context to traveling in India as I already know the implications of taking seats in the back of the bus. She also asks me ‘have you heard of it’ (the road of death in Bolivia), again assuming that as a fellow traveler I might have some knowledge of such an infamous road.

We must remember that despite the deceptive idea that life on the road is one of spontaneous adventure and freedom, epitomizing the ideal of Simmel’s ‘Adventurer’ (1997) who, like a summer dandelion, is blown hither and thither by the winds of chance and fate, life on the road for contemporary backpackers can be said to resemble more of an extended and increasingly prescribed detour from the luxurious beaten track. Like any detour it’s a pain in the ass and in one way having a pain in their asses is precisely what they come for. Unlike the more padded luxury interior of a deluxe tourist bus, backpackers tend to prefer the more ‘disciplinary’ forms of transport available such as rickety local buses, preferably driven recklessly at high speeds through which their bodies can be happily punished for hours, and sometimes days, on end. The more overcrowded, hot and generally unbearable the entire journey is, the more exquisite, detailed and sublime the retelling of such experiences are later on. These stories, like the public transport (metaphorai) of de Certeau’s Athens, get extensive use ‘on the road’.
A third Lonely Planet-related ‘off the beaten track’ story from my interviewees, involves Paulo, the Italian backpacker I interviewed in Cork. His story concerns a bike trip he took in Mongolia and helps to bring some of the central themes I have explored throughout this thesis into focus: distinctions between tourists and travelers; the necessity for effort and hard work in order to have authentic and unique cultural experiences; the use of guidebooks as a cartographic legend to places off-the-beaten-track; and finally, the importance of authentic interactions with locals in exotic places. In particular, I imagine this story as a humorous but illuminating rebuttal to many of the comments I heard in the interviews about ‘the locals’ existing in a different time and space to ‘us’, white moderns. Finally, this story is a good example of one of the central paradoxes at work in the mythology of travel, namely, that every traveler is, in Ali Bedhad’s words, a ‘belated traveler’ (1994: 17), one who always arrives just a little too late, and for whom where authenticity, uncontaminated by western progress or tourism, is always just a step around the next corner:

**Paulo:** Two years ago I was doing a bike trip in Western Mongolia with a Spanish friend of mine. We were going in some pretty wild areas, no paved road. We were going there to see the area and find out how people lived there. We read in the Lonely Planet that there were nomadic tribes who were there and some of the maps were useful enough. They are mainly nomads so we were cycling all day long and then trying to camp beside their tents [ ]. So we were in such a rough area and they literally saw no white people [ ]. In a way the places and locals were not polluted, there were no white men in sight, they hardly see them, it was fantastic! They had a genuine approach, they were genuinely curious. It wasn’t about money you know? We were invited into some tents and the first thing the nomads showed us, they had these solar panels, so they can power TVs and VCRs which was funny, you know because we didn’t give a damn. And then it’s a black and white TV, poor quality and you want to see something completely different but they are pointing to their new TVs. You pretend you are interested because it’s part of the interaction, but then you think ‘Jesus they want to become the way we are and we are stupid because we want to go back – this is ridiculous!’

Paulo’s story about cycling with a Spanish friend in Western Mongolia echoes Tony Wheeler’s desire and fear that the ‘wild places’ will be lost. Paulo recalls that they were cycling in an area
with ‘no paved roads’. His tale is a combination of geographical exploration (‘to see the area’) and anthropological curiosity (to ‘find out how people lived there’). Unlike the tourist, who desires the luxury and predictability of the beaten track, Paulo narrates an experience characterized by geographical isolation, a lack of any track at all, and populated by ‘nomadic tribes’. Interestingly, he acknowledges that it was partly through the use of Lonely Planet maps as well as information found in the guidebook about the nomadic tribes that made this experience possible in the first place. Like my experience with Erika, there is a noticeable performative aspect at work in my interview with Paulo. When talking about the authenticity of the Mongolian locals he asks/tells me ‘it wasn’t about the money you know?’ Similar to Erika, Paulo occasionally takes it for granted that I implicitly know what he means. Furthermore, at the end of his story when he expresses his frustration with the entire endeavor he again assumes a shared standpoint. He exclaims ‘they want to become the way we are’ (my emphasis). In this instance it is that of the ‘modern’ western traveler traveling in a ‘backward’ area of the world.

Central to Paulo’s claim about the ‘uncontaminated’ nature of the nomads is that ‘they [the nomads] literally saw no white people’: ‘they hardly see them’ and thus had not yet become corrupted through contact with the ‘modern’ (white) world. Paulo reiterates the ‘off-the-beaten-track’ status of the area and of the nomads when he notes that ‘there were no white men in sight’, which highlights the uniqueness and almost ‘first contact’ aspect of the encounter. He remarks that ‘the places and locals were not polluted’ adding ‘it was fantastic!’, and that ‘they had a genuine approach, they were genuinely curious, it wasn’t about money you know?’ According to Paulo, it is the genuine curiosity of the nomads, and their lack of interest in treating Paulo and his friend like wealthy western tourists, that signals to Paulo that the exchange was a true meeting of cultural difference. In order for travelers to receive the proper educational experiences from
‘other’ cultures, certain conditions first have to be met. The ‘purity’ of the other culture is a prerequisite. If ‘they’ have already been polluted by ‘the West’, then the value of the experience is reduced. The absolute otherness of the other is required in order for us to learn from their culture. In many respects Paulo’s moment of authentic contact is a perfect example of the elusive ‘holy grail’ of travel evoked by Tony Wheeler, which I discussed in Chapter 2:

It’s when you make those cross-cultural connections - even though initially you may have thought you had nothing in common - that it hits you again: people are the same wherever they’re from; we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections.\(^{40}\)

In Paulo’s story two white men from Europe encounter a group of Mongolian nomads, not in the interest of money or profit but as part of a shared sense of curiosity and desire to learn from each other. However, in an ironic twist to Tony Wheeler’s ‘holy grail of travel’, Paulo soon discovers that, much to his disappointment, the idea that ‘we are all the same’ turns out to be true in another sense. Perhaps expecting a display of Mongolian nomadic culture, ‘something completely different’, instead Paulo is treated to a display of Mongolian nomadic culture of ‘solar panels, TVs and VCRs’, clearly not what he expected. He even goes so far to admit ‘we didn’t give a damn’. Even in their modernity, the Mongolian nomads are, in Paulo’s eyes, still lagging behind. They are not ‘fully’ modern; they have ‘black and white TVs’. Ironically, it is now Paulo and his Spanish friend who are having inauthentic interaction with the locals, feigning curiosity and ‘pretend[ing] you are interested because it’s part of the interaction’. Paulo remarks that their initial curiosity turns into disappointment over not meeting traditional nomadic tribes in tents who ‘should’ be living a pre-modern existence \textit{sans} electricity and isolated from the outside world. Paulo illustrates the logic of his disappointment, as well as the logic at work in travelers’ desire to encounter authentic third world locals, when he concludes, ‘Jesus they want to become

\(^{40}\) http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
the way we are and we are stupid because we want to go back – this is ridiculous!’ Paulo’s botched encounter was not a meeting of two different worlds after all, where the western traveler goes back in time to encounter a world which remains eternally the same. It was a moment when the time-travelling westerner briefly rubbed up against the contradictions inherent in the search for places and people that are thought to exist outside of the temporal scope of modernity.

The three stories of Anton and Rick, Erika, and Paulo can also be considered from the perspective of their performative character. In the case of Anton and Rick they address me as a fellow traveler from Ireland; Erika introduces and punctuates her story in ways that encourage my continued interest as a listener and credible witness and how Paulo uses pronouns like ‘we’ and ‘you’. Taken together, the performative aspects of these stories suggest and illustrate how my interviewees were performing for me as a fellow traveler who implicitly shared the same values, knowledge and standpoint on the world of travel. Furthermore they were also performing for the researcher with the digital recorder that was present for every interview. In drawing attention to the performative aspects of these stories it is possible to better understand how the work of distinction is an active process, one that requires the participation and presence of other travelers on the road in order to ‘complete’ the circuit in which off-the-beaten-track stories as forms of symbolic capital are produced, circulated and recycled.

The Work of Travel

In the previous chapter I identified how the ‘holiday of tourism’ and the moral character of the tourist was understood and typically characterized by backpackers who self-identify as travelers. In contrast to the leisurely and standardized holiday of the tourist, the ‘work of travel’ denotes the difficulties and challenges the traveler must experience if he or she is to be considered more of a traveler than a tourist. Travel ‘should’ be hard work, experiences ‘should’ be hard earned and the rewards will be all the more valuable as a result.
As a type of post-fordist travel industry backpacking promises a custom-built, ‘Do It Yourself’ type of experience which allows individual travelers to assemble, organize, and execute the entire trip themselves. Ritzer notes that, in the transition from fordist to post-fordist systems of production and consumption, the ‘consumer is the laborer’ (1998: 65). Under post-fordist conditions, work that was once carried out on the production side of things is now performed for free on the consumption side of things. However, Ritzer fails to appreciate the full value of this unpaid labor or ‘work of consumption’ as John O’Neill refers to it (O’Neill 2004: 61). Such work has become an integral part of the moral economy of independent travel and thus an indispensable aspect of the pleasure derived from travelling ‘off the beaten track’. The ‘work of travel’ can be theorized as a form of ‘productive power’ (Foucault 2003: 130), one that operates within the realm of consumption whereby subjects of this discourse actively seek and derive pleasure from the extra work needed to individually assemble their own unique travel experiences. Although many backpackers I interviewed spoke of travel as an individually transformative experience, as an important vehicle for cultivating particular qualities in the individual. Travel facilitates the pleasurable incorporation of post-fordist work regimes by cultivating the subjectivity of the hard working traveler.

Here is an excerpt from my notes from the field, recorded during my stay in Leh, India July 2007

When I was in Ladakh, I went to a popular tourist café. It was around 10 a.m. and I ordered one of my favorite meals: a banana and chocolate pancake and a coffee. A man about my age sat across from me and seemed to scowl at me when I had ordered my breakfast. He was dusty and dressed in the usual backpacker uniform of locally bought cotton pants and wore an old t-shirt that had something about Katmandu written in faded letters. When my order arrived he leaned forward slightly and asked ‘what have you done today?’ I found it a strange question but answered nonetheless: ‘I just got up, so basically nothing’. His scowl quickly turned to a look of barely concealed disgust as he said ‘do you want to know what I did? ‘I went up to the Shanti Stupa at sunrise and only now am I
having my breakfast!’ Pointing at my breakfast (which was going cold) he said sharply ‘you don’t deserve that!’ and then got up and left.

This vignette is illustrative of a common aspect of how the tourist/traveler distinction operates in practice, namely, that whereas the traveler must work hard to deserve such luxuries as a banana and chocolate pancake for breakfast, the tourist simply indulges his or her desires without the requisite hard work. Without the necessary work of travel, such a breakfast is indulgent, lazy, and touristic. As a result of his hard work the traveler sees more of Leh. By climbing up to the Shanti Stupa at sunrise (a grueling climb as I later discovered through my own experience), he had had a valuable experience (perhaps viewing an amazing sunrise with few people around) attainable only to those willing to make the sacrifice. In order to stay away from the beaten track of tourism travelers must work hard. They are then able to experience the real place, one that arises spontaneously rather than being prepared especially for them within a commercial tourist industry. They get to experience real culture and not arranged culture. They are not on vacation; they are ‘always working’, as Paulo suggests:

_Paulo:_ To see Ireland in a real way for me is to end up in some place in the Beara peninsula [West Cork] in the middle of winter with miserable weather and going to a local pub and just chatting with the men in the bar. But that implies the effort of being there at the right time.

Paulo’s travel experiences provide him with a more authentic and less clichéd version of Ireland, a place where he can find solitude from the tourist ‘stream’ and encounter the ‘real’ Ireland in the Beara Peninsula in West Cork. In order to find these off-the-beaten-track experiences, Paulo must endure the hardship of ‘miserable weather’ and go there ‘in the middle of winter’. The implication is that the more pampered tourists, who come during the nicer summer weather, would not be willing to make such sacrifices in order to find the ‘real Ireland’.
Both Henry and Hans also suggest that, because of a more pampered style of travel and predilection for predictability in ‘five-star hotels’ and ‘tourist guesthouses and restaurants’, tourists do not show the requisite moral courage and work ethic of the traveler. As Paulo notes, getting off-the-beaten-track and experiencing ‘Ireland in a real way’ means making the effort of swimming against the tourist tide, and having the know-how for deciding the best time to go. He argues that the possibility of having authentic experiences with locals ‘implies the effort of being there at the right time’. Again we find the characterization of tourists as lazy and unwilling to make the effort for unique experiences. Recall how both Henry and Hans suggested it was because of a lazy *mentality* that the tourist inevitably has experiences which are less valuable; less educational, less authentic, and less unique experiences than those of the hardworking traveler. Paulo’s narrative also suggests that as a savvy traveler, he knows the best time to go: in winter time when Beara isn’t full of tourists and the possibility of ‘chatting with the men in the local pub’ is all the more realizable.

Paulo also speaks about getting to know a country well and how ‘the people’ offer the best possible route to understanding the local culture, a theme that is repeated by backpackers in both Vancouver and India:

*Paulo:* If you are interested in a stimulating human experience and human approach to a country, then you have to stay with people and try to understand the culture. You have to approach the people, chat to the bricklayers. I think that could be a possible way, otherwise every country is a cliché.

If he were to stay on the beaten track with the stream of tourists, the possibility that Paulo may learn something new about Irish culture appears diminished. The possibility of a ‘stimulating human experience’ is compromised. In contrast to the tourists who are looking for ‘cliché[d]’ representations of Ireland, Paulo insists chatting with the ‘people’, ‘the bricklayers’ holds the promise for getting to the heart of Irish culture. By talking to them, and approaching the culture
in a more ‘human’ way, the traveler can (ideally) circumvent inauthentic versions of ‘Irishness’ (the clichés of ‘leprechauns and fairy tale lands’ he notes elsewhere in the interview). Instead, as a traveler, he finds an authentic kernel of cultural truth, one that remains invisible to the tourists who are immersed in a superficial and stereotyped semiotic economy of Irishness. His frequent use of the word ‘human’ to describe his mode of travel is instructive, and not unique to him. Several backpackers I interviewed also used this same word to denote the authenticity of their interactions with locals in comparison with the more ‘inhuman,’ that is, materialistic interactions, that occur between tourists and locals. This echoes the discourse of travel articulated by the Wheelers” ‘[i]t's when you make those cross-cultural connections…that it hits you again: people are the same wherever they're from; we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections’41. We hear a similar discourse and sentiment from Paulo in his advocacy of a more ethnographic and ‘human’ approach to learning about and experiencing different cultures. According to Paulo, the price paid for not taking such a down-to-earth approach and getting outside the summer stream of tourists, fiddlers, and leprechaun-hunters, is that one remains very much on the beaten track and in his words ‘every country is a “cliché”. Fiddlers, leprechauns, fairy-tale lands and more, every place has its clichés but traveling off-the-beaten-track allows the traveler to go beyond such stereotypes and learn about the real culture through authentic interaction with local people.

Paulo elaborates on how the ‘work of travel’ and the adventurous status of backpackers are intricately linked.

*Paulo:* If I make the effort I can be my own hero, I can step up and I can learn. Everybody could have a better experience if they made the effort but it requires a lot of effort to gain so little these days.

41 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
Paulo’s comments develop a leitmotif of ‘the work of travel’. In contrast to the ‘herd mentality’ of those tourists who ‘go…with a stream’ as he noted, Paulo equates effort and hard work with an ability to stand on one’s own two feet, and become a role model. He notes that, through his effort he can ‘be [his] own hero’, and learn more in the process. Paulo makes an explicit connection between the value of experiences and the requisite amount of effort necessary for having such experiences. In contrast to the relatively easier and less unique experiences of tourists, Paulo argues that ‘it requires a lot of effort to gain so little these days’. Here, he acknowledges the difficulty of having unique experiences in off-the-beaten track places in light of an ever-encroaching tourist industry where authentic experiences are more difficult to find.

Hans provides a further contrast between tourists and travelers in this comment:

_Hans:_ Travelers think more about what they are doing and it’s not as planned. Of course you have to plan: buses, but you don’t plan five weeks ahead. You don’t know what’s happening tomorrow. You have to learn to handle a lot of different situations you haven’t been in before. You can see other lifestyles and learn positive and negative things.

In comparison to the tourist, who can plan a two-week holiday months in advance, Hans comments that the traveler is a type of person who does not need to plan ‘five weeks ahead’. In contrast to the tourist, whose holiday experiences offer nothing new, Hans argues that travelers ‘don’t know what’s happening tomorrow’ and as a result have to ‘learn to handle a lot of different situations you haven’t been in before’.

Although Hans does note that planning is important, what is most important for him is how such planning is an integral part of the educational value and moral challenge of independent travel. As a D.I.Y. independent traveler, only Hans decides the challenges on a daily basis, which in turn helps him (in the words of Tad Friend quoted earlier) to ‘move through the world alone and with confidence’ (2005). For Hans, it is thus travel rather than tourism that can
provide him with a university of life education, one that allows him to develop a more independent and autonomous type of personality than the tourist and who, like the innumerable and identical beaches and resorts that capture his desire, remains unchanged as a result of his holiday:

*Billy:* What do you like about meeting the local people here?

*Hans:* You get a lot of impressions of their way of living, their mentality. I think people are very different all over the world […] When you hitchhike people tell you stories so it’s very interesting and you get impression of the way they live, their society, how they think about things. So for me it’s better to learn about [these things]. When you visit a country it is important to see things but for me it’s more important to learn about the people living there, and if you know the people you know the country. If nobody lived in Canada you could see everything, but you would not know the country.

*Billy:* You said earlier that you like to hitchhike in order to meet local people. Why do you travel this way?

*Hans:* It’s a cheaper way to travel, it’s more interesting. If you don’t get a ride then you have to stay at the village and ask for water. I think it’s better to travel the countryside.

By hitchhiking rather than use public transport, Hans is able to save money on his transportation costs, but more importantly, it allows him to get closer to local people and get a better picture of what the ‘real’ Canada is about. Many interviewees noted using local transportation (instead of a tour bus) as a means of meeting local people, illustrating how backpackers convert economically cheap travel into valuable cultural experiences, as well as how, for many travelers, knowing the country is about getting to know the people. Unlike tourism, with its typical focus on monuments, museums, and ‘things to see’ in general (which you usually end up paying to see anyway), meeting the locals is a far more economically efficient and culturally valuable way to learn about the country. The traveler with time to spare can spend time with the locals and learn about Canadian culture. Hitchhiking involves relying on one’s own resources rather than being dependent on a tourist industry infrastructure.
Emile is a 22 year old man from Quebec. His occupation at the time of the interview was waiter. He was travelling in a car with his friend Marie-Claude and when I met them at the Sunny Beach Hostel they had just arrived in Vancouver. They had spent the previous week driving from Quebec City to Vancouver on a classic trans-Canada road trip. Although his friend Marie-Claude was present at the interview it was Emile who could speak enough English to do the interview. Although Quebec is a Canadian province, the population of Quebec is roughly 80% Francophone and for many of the people living there, their identity as Quebecois is of primary significance and they see themselves as a distinct cultural, ethnic group that is very much not Canadian. As I learned in the course of the interview Emile’s distinct cultural identity and the fact that it was his first time traveling outside of Quebec in Canada I assumed that his gaze and experiences could still be considered somewhat ‘foreign’ in the context of Vancouver, not unlike the non-Canadian travelers I met there. He added some further thoughts about the value of travel for education and self cultivation:

*Emile:* That is the thing about travel, you never know. You use your brain and experience but you always have to learn again. You are alone, it is a challenge. You have to push beyond your own limits. You have to put yourself in the situation and be challenged [ ]

Everyday something is wrong or nice: we meet some new people or there’s something wrong with the car, or we laugh at ourselves, or sometime we see something we will never see again. It’s just the experience. I like learning about the nature and the mode of life, how people live, everything. It is always a new discovery. It’s amazing, the liberty!

Here Emile discusses an important element of the work of travel. For Emile, travel is a ‘technology of the self’ that allows him to ‘always have to learn again’. In part, this is due to the unpredictability and lack of structured planning in situations where you have to ‘push beyond your own limits. You have to put yourself in the situation and be challenged’. For Emile, it is ‘always a new discovery’, and as a lone individual he is constantly challenged. Emile’s comments illustrate how the work of travel is a desirable and pleasurable experience. It is a type
of experience that offers ample opportunity to cultivate his character, and be educated about a variety of different things, such as ‘the nature and the mode of life, how people live, everything’.

Wilhelm is a 26 year old life-guard from Germany. I met and interviewed him at Sunny Beach Hostel in June 2008. He was traveling with his girlfriend. They had both purchased round the world tickets and were planning to go to Fiji after Vancouver. They had already spent two months in Canada and had traveled across Canada to Vancouver in a car. Wilhelm shares a similar view with Emile concerning the challenges that traveling bring:

**Billy:** Do you think that travelling is difficult compared to tourism?

**Wilhelm:** Yes. It’s difficult as you have to search on your own, find places to sleep. You must organize everything by yourself so it’s not like in a guided tour where they only want to make money. They show you the factory and they hope you buy the stuff afterwards. I hate that.

For Wilhelm, the difficulty is not being dependent on the tourist industry, an industry whose only motive is profit. By maintaining their independence from the industry, travelers are not lured into tourist traps full of ‘stuff’. One of the consistent distinctions made by travelers is that, whereas tourism is about consumption, travel is something beyond that, an occasion for the testing of individual character:

**Billy:** Has travelling given you a different perspective on things?

**Wilhelm:** Yes. When you go on vacation for only two weeks you don’t have time to really meet people, you don’t find out about how people are living. When you travel you are not the same person because you have seen many different places and countries so you have a different perspective. You must do everything yourself, and by doing things yourself you learn many things.

Similar to Emile, Wilhelm makes an explicit connection between having ‘to do everything yourself’ and the opportunity to ‘learn many things’. Wilhelm notes that, due to the time restraints of a two-week vacation, tourists cannot have the same kind of experiences as those who travel. Consequently, tourists do not learn as much about the local culture, ‘about how
people are living’. He suggests that the opportunities for self-cultivation and transformation are thus limited, if not entirely absent. According to Wilhelm, travelling provides those different experiences, with a multiplicity of contrasts and perspectives.

Franca, the female backpacker from Chile on her second trip to India, talks about the difference between the ‘work of travel’ necessary to get ‘off-the-beaten-track’, and the leisure of a holiday ‘on the beaten track’:

_Franca:_ It looks like a holiday but for me its work, a very enjoyable work. But it depends, because if you are travelling through India, it’s a tough time, but it depends on the way you take it. You discover that you have a bad time, but if you relax in this hard journey it can be very good. But if you go to Goa and lie under the sun it’s more like a holiday.

When Franca comments that travel is ‘a very enjoyable work’, she illustrates an important element of the work of travel, and the pleasure gained from travelling off the beaten track. Although backpackers are typically concerned with avoiding and escaping from the beaten track of tourism, with its luxurious connotations, it does not mean that travel is devoid of pleasure or leisure. It is a space where the logic of desire and repulsion operate simultaneously and in different and complex ways.

The ‘work of travel’ suggests that the traveler must invest significant effort and individual time if he or she is to ensure more memorable and unique experiences on the road. From the above interviews we find that the work of travel is intimately connected to the cultivation of the traveler self. In the previous chapter I outlined how the cultural capital of tourists was perceived by backpackers as a less valuable form of capital. From the above interviews it is clear that these travelers distinguish the cultural capital they accumulate on the road as intrinsically more valuable for a number of reasons. The extra effort and time these backpackers invest in planning and executing their trip stands in stark contrast to the less ‘time
rich’ tourist. Furthermore this investment has a substantial payoff. The cultivation of the traveler self is more successfully achieved through independent travel than organized tourism. What is interesting here is the conversion ratio at work. As a result of practicing ‘DIY travel’ where the consumer must invest more labor in the production of the finished product, the ‘payoff’ is that this extra labor and investment, in the opinions of my interviewees, is essential to cultivating an independent sense of self. In other words their economically cheap budget travels are converted into culturally valuable experiences.

Another way in which the valuable cultivation of the traveler self is achieved is also through bodily experiences of risk and danger. We have already heard how Erika’s terrifying bus story was in large part due to the fact that she took a cheap local bus to the Nubra Valle rather than the more expensive 4x4 jeeps or tourist buses, allowing her to convert economically cheap travel into a culturally valuable experience (which then becomes valuable symbolic capital in the form of an exciting off-the-beaten-track story). In the following section I pay close attention to how, through off the beaten track stories of risk, adventure and sickness, the body of the traveler is further ‘incorporated’ through the ‘work of travel’. In contrast to the perceived luxurious and safe bubble inhabited by tourists, the following interviews attest to how the absence of this protective bubble is considered essential to the cultivation of the traveler self.

**The Embodied Traveler**

In this section I want to contrast the examination of travelers’ stories about the West Coast Trail in British Columbia Canada along with illness and bus stories told by travelers in India by focusing on ‘the body’ of the traveler. Previously I have touched upon whiteness as a supposedly invisible form of backpacker solidarity in places like India, and on perceptions of race in India and Vancouver here I explore how ‘the body’ is central to the cultivation of the traveler’s sense of a self which encounters danger and risk off the beaten track. Travel is clearly
an embodied practice. The body has only recently become a central topic in tourism studies, despite having been an important topic in sociology and anthropology for some years now. John Urry’s concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ (1990) has been critiqued as a disembodied and disembodifying gaze. Part of my task here is to ‘incorporate’ the tourist gaze and to bring the travelling body back into social theory. Backpackers are embodied subjects and their bodies are an important element of their travel experiences. Some travelling bodies are freer than others, some get stopped at the airport, others do not. Some bodies get harassed, groped and pinched, others do not. Bodies get sick, but can be immunized against sickness. Some bodies can move freely across borders, others are prevented from doing so.

Even before a trip to a ‘third world’ country like India, the body of the western traveler undergoes a variety of regimes in preparation for departure. The most important and pervasive of these is that of the medical body of the traveler as it prepares for world travel. The risks for the westerner travelling to the third world are numerous and the bodily preparations undertaken beforehand help the traveler to avoid painful ordeals and dangers that may arise. The most common of these precautions are the inoculations: typhoid, rabies, cholera, meningitis, hepatitis, polio and others. The body of the traveler is punctured with needles even before he or she leaves. Anti-malaria tablets might also be taken. Specially designed sun-resistant clothing might be purchased, as well as mosquito nets, water purifying tablets and other protective items. Travelers might purchase travel insurance, sometimes with optional medical helicopter evacuation. All of these safeguards help to protect the western body that comes into contact with local third world bodies and to manage perceived risks on the road. My interviewees recall incidents during their interviews which illustrate how places off the beaten track are constituted through narratives of risk and danger. In these stories, the bodies of travelers become the center of discussion. Every
backpacker in India seems to have a sickness story, and like all good stories, they are embellished for dramatic purposes. How do these stories function within the mythology of travel? On the one hand, they function as ‘badges of honor’ which constitute an important aspect of the *travails* of the work of travel. Although for some getting sick can be a genuinely serious trauma, for the most part these are relatively minor events. Paradoxically, courting danger for the backpacker goes hand in hand with acquiring insurance against such danger. Sickness stories and experiences of sickness on the road add to the risky character of travel, and show how the western traveler, usually alone, must cope with innumerable obstacles along the way.

Richard, an English traveler I met and interviewed in Paharganj, was a 23 year old university student at the time, who planned to stay in India for five months in total. When I met him he told me that he had already been traveling for two months, and had recently arrived in Paharganj following a trip to the Taj Mahal in Agra, where he had been admitted to hospital for suspected E-Coli poisoning. He identifies himself as a traveler. Like Erika’s story, the detail and precision, as well as the drama of Richard’s story all heighten its value as symbolic capital. It is also important to note the substantial length of this story. Lengthy storytelling is quite common among backpackers. In many ways these long and detailed stories are an important way for backpackers to symbolically reproduce and perform their cultural capital as travelers in the company of others. Because I had previous backpacking experience in India I too had many stories that I would share with my interviewees and it was very easy to get people to speak since we had a lot in common. Although technically I was the interviewer and the researcher during these interviews, I was a fellow-backpacker who had also experienced many things in India. In light of this ‘dual identity’ at work, I found that my interviewees could reasonably be considered
as performing their stories for another backpacker, as easily as retelling their experiences to an ‘outsider’:

Billy: Have you had any experiences here [in India] that stick out in your mind?

Richard: (laughs) Quite a few actually! I just got back from Agra where I was in hospital for 7 days with E-Coli!

Billy: Are you okay now?

Richard: Yes, a lot better now, thanks.

Billy: Can you tell me what happened?

Richard: I had gone to see the Taj Mahal[42] I met a French traveler back at the hotel and we planned on going to Fatahpur Sikri[43] the next day. It was very hot in Agra, even hotter than here in Delhi now, so I got back to my room and felt really cold! So I was in my room with a duvet over me and I still couldn’t get warm! And it was over 40c outside! I was feeling really dizzy so I went to the manager at the front desk and asked him to ring me a doctor [ ] He didn’t want to! I don’t know if you have heard about this but if they ring a doctor in Agra then the police come with the doctor and there’s an investigation to see if the guest has been the victim of food poisoning. Anyway the manager refused to ring me a doctor, can you believe that? I mean I was sick for Gods sake! So Gilles, my French friend, got the name and address of a local doctor that we could see. I was feeling quite ill by then, dizzy and faint and I was starting to see spots before my eyes! [ ] We went to the doctor and after banging on his door for 15 minutes he eventually showed up. He didn’t even have a thermometer! Christ! And when he asked me my symptoms he told me I needed to see an eye specialist because of the spots I was seeing! An eye specialist, can you believe that? So he wrote down the address of this eye specialist and we grabbed a rickshaw. The driver just drove us around in circles for about 45 minutes [ ] We never got to the eye specialist and Gilles was getting really pissed off with the driver and started shouting at him to bring us back to our hotel which he did. It was a nightmare you know? I had read in my Lonely Planet on the flight over that the top hotels usually have a good doctor on call so I rang a five star hotel and asked to speak to their doctor. The 5 star hotel doctor gave me the address of a private clinic and said the doctor there was good. So off we went again and thankfully the [private] clinic wasn’t too far away. This time Gilles found another rickshaw driver and I’m sure he was ready to clobber him if he didn’t bring us to the clinic! When I got there, I can tell you, I felt better the minute I walked in the door. There was a nurse dressed in white at a desk and everywhere there were medical charts and medical smells, just like the doctors back home, you know? The doctor was really nice, very professional, and his office was just like the doctor’s office

[42] Which is in the City of Agra, about 4-5 hours by train outside of Delhi
[43] An abandoned city that is one hour bus drive from Agra
back home, nice, clean and medical looking. I was running a very high fever and so the
doctor hospitalized me for several days on suspicion of E-Coli. The tests showed E-Coli
which made sense as I had just been in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan a few days before and did a
camel safari in the Thar Desert and I think the water and food wasn’t the cleanest. So I
stayed in hospital for about 6 or 7 days which to be honest was a very nice rest, the chaos
of travelling in India and all that. I had a private room, with a TV and the best thing was
that the insurance company called me in my room to confirm my symptoms and let me
know that I was covered!

Richard’s story was the most serious of the sickness stories I heard in my interviews with
backpackers in India as reflected in its length and detail. Agra has a reputation for the large
number of scams that happen there. Although Richard was not the victim of a scam, his
experiences act as a good illustration of how risk and dangers are constructed by western
travelers. In Richard’s narrative, he is surrounded in a world of unhelpful and deceitful locals:
the hotel desk manager who refuses to call a doctor, the local and incompetent doctor who
misdiagnoses his illness, and the rickshaw driver who drives around in circles, presumably to get
a higher fare. In contrast to this swarthy local world, it is a fellow traveler from Europe, Gilles,
who helps Richard to find the doctors and who eventually finds a trustworthy rickshaw driver to
bring them to the clinic. In contrast to the local doctor, who, according to Richard, ‘didn’t even
have a thermometer’, misdiagnosed his illness as an eye problem, and took 15 minutes to answer
the door, the private clinic where Richard was eventually hospitalized, stands out in his story as a
beacon of safety, trust and familiarity. Interestingly, it was a tip Richard remembers from the
Lonely Planet guidebook that prompts him to call the five-star hotel where he eventually gets
directions to the private clinic. Upon arrival at the private clinic Richard recalls ‘I felt better the
minute I walked in the door’. Despite the discourse of many travelers who regularly shun the
familiarity, safety and domesticity of the tourist industry, in certain circumstances it is precisely

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44 A city that is very popular with backpackers.
such familiarity and certainty that is sought out when things go wrong. In contrast to the local
doctor, the private clinic offers a world of reassurance to Richard. The reception nurse is‘dressed in white’ and thus ‘looks like’ a nurse. The ‘medical charts and medical smells like the
doctors back home’ further enhance his sense of relief and wellbeing. The office of the ‘very
professional’ doctor serves to further reinforcement that he is in the ‘right place’ as it is ‘clean
and medical looking… just like a doctor’s office back home’. An interesting feature of his
lengthy narrative is the recognizable visual and olfactory signs of ‘medical professionalism’ that
appear to make him feel better even before any medical intervention happens. Nurses in white
uniform, medical charts, medical smells and clean offices provide Richard with a growing sense
of relief in stark contrast to his experiences prior to arriving at a private clinic. Also interesting to
note is that he attributes his E-Coli problem to a ‘camel safari in the Thar Desert’, adding that
‘the water and food wasn’t the cleanest’. This subtext provides his already dramatic story of
sickness with a further element of adventure ‘off-the-beaten-track’. The apparent isolation of
doing a ‘camel safari in the Thar Desert, where the city of Jaisalmer is situated, combined with
eating food that ‘wasn’t the cleanest’, gives the impression of extreme isolation and hardship.
Camel safaris in the Thar Desert that surrounds Jaisalmer are a common and popular service
available to visitors there. Like Oscar’s story about his 12-day recuperation in Goa quoted in the
previous chapter, Richard too enjoyed taking advantage of his hospitalization as a welcome
break from ‘the chaos of travelling in India’. His private room had a TV and even his insurance
company was able to ring him and reassure him of his insurance coverage.

Richard’s story helps to illuminate several important points. First is the fact that his
extensive travel insurance allowed him to go to a private clinic where he had a private room,
receiving top quality treatment (judging by the speed of his diagnosis) and the benefit of having
the insurance company call him while he was staying there. By contrast, the local doctor did not even have a thermometer and misdiagnosed his illness. All of the travelers I interviewed had purchased travel insurance, and although Richards’s story is initially one of danger, foreboding, and risk, it has a happy ending as a result of the risk-management provided by his insurance policy. Even though his story of the off-the-beaten-track camel safari in Rajasthan provides a dramatic backdrop of isolation and danger, he is nonetheless in safe hands by the end of it. Richard’s story illustrates how, despite the budgeting and frugality of the traveler who rejects the comforts of tourism, he can opt out if things go wrong. In spite of the dangers and risks which are celebrated as part of the Indian travel adventure, these risks are carefully mitigated through measures such as travel insurance and pre-departure inoculations. Finally, it is worth noting that this particular story was one that Richard retold in response to my open-ended question of ‘have you had any experiences here [in India] that stick out in your mind?’ As a story that clearly sticks out in his mind, it will presumably be retold again and again in different contexts with different people. Despite his entry into a private clinic paid for by his travel insurance, Richard’s ‘Taj Mahal’ story is certainly a lot more captivating than the other Taj Mahal stories I heard, where nothing really happens apart from the narrator’s string of exclamations, adjectives and superlatives. As a story about the danger and risk that befalls the body of a western traveler when getting off the beaten track, it is also a story of redemption for a traveler who overcomes all obstacles in the ‘dangerous’ world of India.

I also met Marcos in Paharganj. He is a 25 year old Spanish man who had been travelling in India for just over four months. He was in Paharganj waiting out the final days before his flight back to London where he was currently living. He is a software designer who self-identified as a traveler. I asked Marcos the same question I asked Richard:
Billy: Have you had any experiences here [in India] that stick out in your mind?

Marcos: Yes, many experiences I had in India, good and bad, but mostly good.

Billy: Can you tell me about some of those experiences?

Marcos: Yes, it was a bad experience at the time but also a very good one for me. I was in Rishikesh, you know Rishikesh? Maybe three months ago, almost at the start of my travels [ ] I found a really nice guesthouse [ ] I woke up in the night thinking ‘I am going to explode!’ I run, run, really fast to the toilet and it just came out! I started to shit like it was hot acid and when I stop shitting I start to vomit. First I puke, then I shit, unbelievable! You cannot imagine this! For a long time this happened! I have never had such a sickness in my body in my life! I think I woke up everyone in the guesthouse; it was so late at night, maybe 2 or 3 a.m. you know? So at last it stopped, thank god! I was empty and sore, my ass, my stomach. I crawled into the bed. [The] next day I go to the local doctor, he was really nice and sympathetic [ ] didn’t even charge me any money and [gave] me a few pills to take that would help my stomach. He said it was just the food I ate and I would be better really soon. Many people in India I meet have got sick, mainly the shits probably from dirty water or food here. When it’s happening to you it’s hell, especially if you travel on your own, but usually other travelers will help you out if you are seriously fucked!

Billy: You said it was also a good experience for you?

Marcos: Yes, you know it made me feel stronger inside. Before I came to India my friends told me about getting really sick in India. I was a bit scared you know? It was my first time travelling outside of Europe. But after it happened I felt inside that “I can do this”. So if you come to India and stay on the tours buses, nice hotels, eat nice food you will probably be fine with no sickness. When you travel and eat local food it’s more risky but I don’t want to stay just in the nice way. I want to experience the real India, shit and all!

This particular story by Marcos refers to a well-known and discussed illness by backpackers in India, the notorious ‘Delhi Belly’, a colloquial term used to describe the experience of many western travelers have in India in which they endure a day or two of vomiting and diarrhea, usually caused by either contaminated food or water. Marco’s vivid story offers a step-by-step account of the entire night, vividly dramatized by his use of evocative language. He recalls his thoughts from that night ‘I am going to explode’ and that he ‘started to shit like it was hot acid’. Although he appears to have a relatively mundane dose of ‘Delhi Belly’, the experience is
animated with gusto and theatricality in Marco’s retelling of it. He declares ‘I have never had such a sickness in my body in my life’. Apparently his ‘vacation’ is so violent he fears he may have ‘woke up everyone in the guesthouse’. Like Richard’s experience with the local doctor, Marcos also visits a local doctor who is ‘really nice and sympathetic’, and does not charge him money for the visit or medication. Significantly, Marcos remarks that he has heard of many tales of sickness from other travelers, indicating how such stories are common and popular among backpackers in India. He remarks that although his sickness ‘was a bad experience at the time [it was] also a very good one for me’. When I asked him to elaborate, he replies, ‘it made me feel stronger inside’. From this comment it appears that his brief illness was also a way of shoring up some ‘inner strength’. To explain the source of his nervousness he adds that ‘it was my first time travelling outside of Europe’ and that he had heard of many other people who became ‘really sick in India’. For Marcos, the daunting prospect of traveling alone for the first time outside of the ‘safety’ of Europe to a place like India where Europeans got ‘really sick’ is finally exorcised by his personal experience with illness. He recalls his internal monologue where he thinks ‘I can do this’, presumably referring to him traveling alone outside of Europe in the more ‘dangerous’ world of India. Finally, he connects his own travel experience of illness with the kinds of dangers and risks that are apparently neutralized for those who stay within the more sanitized tourist bubble of ‘tours buses…nice hotels and…nice food’. In contrast he argues that ‘when you travel and eat local food it’s more risky’ (my emphasis), but apparently such risks are more worthwhile and meaningful compared to the ‘nice way’ of tourism. His concluding emphatic remarks help to contextualize the entire story as one where his more risky off-the-beaten-track way of travel allows him to ‘experience the real India, shit and all!’ It is not clear if he is referring to his own ‘shit’ or the ‘shit’ of the ‘real India’. In any case his concluding comments suggest that the
traveler must be willing to experience and properly handle ‘shit’ on the road if she or he is to have a real, un-sanitized experience of India.

When I asked Erika the same question that I asked Richard and Marcos, she ended up telling me a long story about her bus trip from Manali to Leh, a two day trip across the mountains to Leh:

Billy: Have you had any experiences here [in India] that stick out in your mind?

Erika: Yes, lots! I have been here [in Leh] for one week now so I want to tell you about how I got here last week. I will never forget it! Two weeks ago I was in Manali for a few days after Dharmasala. New Manali was really touristy, you know what I mean, you have been there too no? So I decide to get the local bus from Manali to Leh but some other travelers, I think they were German, told us not to. They said the local buses weren’t as good as the tourist buses and the drivers weren’t well paid, overworked you know? So we got the [tourist] bus but now I’m happy that we did! We started from Manali at 6 in the morning and we didn’t get to the overnight stop until 11pm that night! I couldn’t believe it! The same driver able to do all that driving! The road there was just a dirt road cut out of the mountain, no barriers, no signs, no nothing! I was terrified going around those bends. When you look out the window you see the burned out cars, jeeps and sometimes buses lying at the bottom of the mountain! Holy shit! I was thinking ‘that could be us, I could actually die on this bus trip!’ We had to go over some mountain passes that were over 5000 meters! 5000 meters! Can you believe it? On the first pass the air brakes wouldn’t work on the bus! Some of the other passengers seemed scared too but I think everyone was putting on a tough face. Anyway after the first day we were coming up to the sleepover tent village, it was at 4000 metres! Everyone starting talking and feeling happy, we had been travelling all day long! But before we got there we had to cross a bridge and the bus just went straight into the front of the bridge, it was metal so we were fine but there was complete silence in the bus, everyone got scared. I think the driver was just so tired that he probably misjudged it. It was very dark but when you travel in the mountains at 4000 meters you don’t want the driver to be making those kind of mistakes, you know what I mean? Anyway we go to camp and the next day we did it all over again. We didn’t arrive in Leh until 9pm the following night! The driver had swapped at the camp so we had a fresh driver which was good. I thought that I would never pray to a god for help but honestly that is exactly what I did on that bus trip! But why come to India if you are going to hire a 4x4 jeep to bring you places? I made some good friends on that bus trip. We could have died but that’s traveling in India for you. You never know what will happen next.

45 A very popular backpacker town in Uttar Pradesh and home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile.
At the beginning of her story Erika describes how her stay in ‘New Manali’ led her to seek out less ‘touristy’ places. Although Leh is in some ways less touristy than New Manali, it is by no means considered off-the-beaten-track on the backpacker circuit in India. Despite her wish to get a ‘local bus’ to Leh, she seems glad that she took the tourist bus on the advice of ‘some other travelers’ as the local bus was a seemingly more dangerous option. While Erika’s decision to get a tourist bus is perfectly reasonable in light of the advice she received from other backpackers, her decision also reveals that many backpackers make the decision to get off-the-beaten-track on the basis of available information, and therefore must carefully consider the risks and dangers. In light of her subsequent experiences she remarks that she was ‘happy that we did’, which is odd considering that her bus was the one that actually crashed into the bridge late at night!

The phantasmagoria of Erika’s bus trip is punctuated with constant references to the danger and risk she encounters. The bus travels on a ‘dirt road’, ‘cut out of the mountain’, and had ‘no barriers, no signs, no nothing’. The danger is further heightened through her evocation of unlucky vehicles that did not make it. She describes ‘burned out cars, jeeps’ as well as buses ‘lying at the bottom of the mountain’. Her comment that the bus driver was driving from morning to night, further heightens the atmosphere of impending doom. At one point she recalls telling herself that, ‘I could actually die on this bus trip’. Although the journey finished safely for everyone, her ‘brush with death’ ensures that what started out as a long two-day trip is, by the end of the first day, a story about a bus trip so risky and dangerous that the possibility of dying becomes a reality in her mind. She notes that the air-brakes failed at the top of a 5,000 meter pass, adding to the drama of the existential gamble she was taking on this trip. Her worst fear is realized when the bus crashes into a bridge, and even though the bridge ‘was metal so we were fine’, the incident further evokes and emphasizes the risks and dangers literally around every
corner. Apparently her fear is so great that she is forced to ‘pray to a god for help’. Despite her terrifying ordeal, by the end of the story she nonchalantly affirms the value of such experiences, despite the crises they provoked in her. She asks, ‘why come to India if you are going to hire a 4x4 jeep to bring you places?’, referring to the numerous four-wheel drive (4x4) jeeps available for hire in Manali and Leh that will, for a far higher price than the tourist bus, transport people between the two towns. The smaller size, and the off-road capability of the 4x4 jeep, is considered safer, but for many travelers, a far more ‘touristy’ way to go to Leh. She tells me that ‘I made some good friends on that bus trip’. More importantly, in contrast to the terror and danger she evokes throughout the story, she accepts that travelling in India is necessarily dangerous and one should accept that these risks come with the territory. She remarks, ‘We could have died but that’s traveling in India for you’. Her final comment can be contextualized as a more general symptom of the unpredictability of travel in India, an unpredictability that she embraces when she says: ‘You never know what will happen next’.

As in Marco’s account, Erika’s story demonstrates a progression that begins with her initial desire to escape on a local bus from the touristy town of New Manali and ends with experiences which are terrifying, risky and dangerous. Erika’s story ends with her more ‘mature’ acceptance of the ‘reality’ of traveling by bus in India, and her rejection of more touristy forms of transport like 4x4 jeeps. Although her choice of a tourist bus could be considered by other backpackers as an easier and less off-the-beaten-track option, her own evaluation considers these buses as a more edgy option, compared to the easier and more expensive 4x4 jeep. In this instance, the beaten track and off-the-beaten-track are not rigidly demarcated types of experiences in and of themselves, but are constructed and evaluated within shifting and sliding contexts of an individual’s experiences.
Working the Body in Canada: The Desire for ‘Blisters and Bliss’ in a Civilized Land

In India, the activities of everyday life such as getting a bus and going from A to B provide ample material for stories of danger and life-threatening situations on the road. In Canada, with its reputation for safety, backpackers must look elsewhere to find this risky aspect of travel. Accordingly one of the most ‘dangerous’ and challenging things to do in Vancouver is to hike the West Coast Trail, which has an international reputation for difficulty and potential for experiencing serious injury and remoteness. Lonely Planet Canada (2008) offers the following description:

The Legendary 75km West Coast Trail was first completed in 1907 and is one of Canada’s best known and toughest hiking routes. There are two things you need to know before tackling this rite of passage: it will hurt and you will want to do it again (2008: 720).

The West Coast Trail provides a condensed version of sweat and toil that can be done in seven days. Why were so many backpackers I spoke to attracted to it? Hiking is an activity that fits in well with the travel ethos of self-reliance, autonomy, and mobility. One obvious absence from travelers’ stories in Canada and Ireland was danger and risk. Compared to India, where sickness and danger stories are common, in Ireland and Canada there was little mention of such inherent ‘dangers’. Among the backpackers I interviewed, bus trips, car trips and travelling in general were narrated as generally uneventful tales compared to the comments and dramatic stories of travelers in India. However, during my interviews in Vancouver, the ‘risk and danger’ stories that kept popping up all concerned the West Coast Trail. On the West Coast Trail travelers are looking for a ‘wilderness experience’ in Canada generally and British Columbia in particular.

The wilderness is a legendary place of danger and adventure, and in a country like Canada, renowned for its natural beauty, vast parks, and wild areas, the wilderness experience - where wildlife is encountered, where danger and death lurks, and where solitude can be found -
is highly esteemed among many backpackers. Hiking and trekking are common backpacker activities. In Ladakh, India there is a growing hiking industry, and in Nepal one can find thousands of trekkers hiking the famous Annapurna Circuit. Hiking is integral to the ethos of backpacking and it is no surprise that modern backpacks evolved from those earlier designs used by hikers and mountaineers. Self-reliance, escaping the urban crowds, solitude in nature and related romantic ideas are shared with backpacking and hiking, a point raised by Simmel’s ‘Alpine Travel’ essay examined in Chapter 1.

_Blisters and Bliss_ (Foster and Aitken 2007) is the title of the most well known guidebook to the West Coast Trail which captures perfectly the tension and logic between the ‘work of travel’ that must be endured if the sublime moment of pleasure is to be attained. Among the backpackers I interviewed in Vancouver it emerged as a basic experience and source of off-the-beaten-track stories. The following comments are from my interviews with the two Dutch backpackers, Anton and Rick, whom I interviewed at a downtown Vancouver youth hostel. Anton was 35 year old financial manager and Rick who was 22, and served in the military police. They had been in Vancouver for three weeks and were soon to return home:

_Billy:_ How was doing the West Coast Trail?

_Anton:_ Very cool, it was a good year, it was very beautiful. It was mainly individuals hiking the trail but there were some groups as well. We met a man in his 50s and a man in his 60s doing the trail.

_Billy:_ I hear it is famous for being a difficult trail?

_Anton:_ Yes. The two days of rain were pretty tough and one day on the muddiest part. The first day we had mud up to our knees and the other day of rain we had to do two river crossings without bridges so we had to wade it and after constant rain for thirty hours previously the rivers were swelled up. It’s a real challenge, you are out there in the wilderness and you really have to rely on your own self.
Rick: It’s a world famous trek, one of the most difficult and most beautiful. The landscape is amazing! You are walking in a rainforest. A part of it is old growth with some huge trees! Sometimes you get surprised with beautiful views of the ocean.

The West Coast Trail offers Anton and Rick a combination of sublime beauty along with punishing, but ultimately enjoyable physical challenges. Rick comments that the trek is ‘one of the most difficult and most beautiful’. Anton remarks that they had ‘mud up to our knees’ and the atmosphere of risk and danger is further highlighted by their recalling of ‘two river crossings without bridges’. Adding to this danger, Anton notes there had been ‘constant rain for thirty hours previously’. For both Anton and Rick, the fact that they were ‘out there in the wilderness’ heightened the challenge and risk and thus added to their enjoyment of the challenge:

Billy: Do you think that doing the West Coast Trail has changed you in any way?

Anton: I don’t know if it changed me but I accomplished a lot […] I’m going to bring back a lot of very nice memories, pictures as well, the nights at the campfire with all the same people. It was an adventure. Sometimes we were pretty close to being evacuated. There is a sign called ‘the board of shame’, saying how many people were evacuated from the trail. At the start there were five but in 2005 there were 157! If something happens to you there you have to be medivac-ed out by helicopter because there is nothing there, no roads, no civilization. It’s pretty intense. But everyone who goes there can say they were pretty close to being evacuated. Everybody slipped once and it was so easy to fall off the slippery boards and it’s so easy to injure yourself, break your leg. When you plan it good, have the right equipment and experience you can minimize the risk but it can happen to anyone. Afterwards we were relieved not to have ended up on the board […] Once you start the trail unless you injure yourself you have to do it. When you get on the ferry at the start, that’s the point of no return. But there are others on the trail too, so you are not alone and if you do need help it’s there. We didn’t need help!

Rick: It’s about the things you learn about yourself, the way you can handle people, events and have independence when you are out there. These are skills you can use in work environments too. Everybody learns more there but it’s up to you.

For Anton, an important aspect of doing the West Coast Trail is for the ‘adventure’. He initially notes that ‘sometimes we were pretty close to being evacuated’, highlighting the danger, isolation, and more importantly, their resilience in successfully completing it. He mentions that
those who are evacuated are listed on the ‘board of shame’, and the 157 people evacuated in 2005 (two years previously) demonstrating both the difficulty and danger of the trail and their accomplishment in finishing it. Anton remarks that helicopter evacuation offers the only possible option of getting off the trail because ‘there is nothing there, no roads, no civilization’. These comments which paint a picture of a place that is utterly isolated, in the middle of nowhere, subsequently add to the sense of risk and adventure on the trek. Anton notes ‘when you get on the ferry at the start that’s the point of no return’, and that ‘once you start the trail unless you injure yourself you have to do it’, further heightening the isolation of the West Coast Trail. The impossibility of changing one’s mind once the ferry has been taken indicates the resolve and courage needed to do it. Anton suggests that, even with the best equipment and proper planning, the danger and risks cannot be totally managed: ‘it can happen to anyone’, again highlighting the uncertainty and danger involved. Anton’s final comment emphasizes that, although help from other hikers is available, as is a ‘heli-vac’ (helicopter evacuation), at the end of the day they ‘didn’t need help’. This assertion stresses their independence and resilience in doing the trail. They did not end up on the ‘board of shame’. Rick general reflections help to illuminate how perceptions of isolation and danger ‘when you are out there’ contribute to the heightened sense of learning and accomplishment. Rick notes: ‘It’s about the things you learn about yourself, the way you can handle people, events’, further illustrating how the liminality of the trail, with its isolation and risk, provided a condensed but powerful learning experience for him. He also notes how such skills may applicable to the workplace. Although it is outside of the scope of this research, it is worth noting the potential conversion of cultural capital accumulated through travel into economic capital in the domestic labor marketplace, but in the reverse direction. Overall, their story of risk and danger helps take stock of how their moral character has been
shaped through a seven-day experience, away from the comforts of the hostel and the conveniences of Vancouver.

The following story is also from an interview in Vancouver. Ernesto is 41, originally from Argentina but has been living and working in Vancouver for several years. Similar to Paulo whom I Interviewed in Ireland, Ernesto was not backpacking when I met him through a mutual friend who had told him about my research, but had undertaken many backpacking trips which he recalled during the interview. I was particularly interested in his experiences of the West Coast Trail. During the interview he told me he was an avid hiker:

_Billy:_ In terms of travelling in Vancouver when you first came here you said you did the West Coast Trail. How did you find out about that?

_Ernesto:_ I did it last summer but that was four years after I arrived [in Vancouver]. I had heard about the West Coast Trail from friends orally. I’ve always been really keen on trekking and hiking. I did many treks in Patagonia so when I heard there was a seven day trek on Vancouver Island I was very excited. I didn’t use a guidebook for the trek. I have to say it was amazing but I was a little disappointed. It’s too civilized, it’s very Canadian. You’re not in the wilderness! Everything is so well taken care of with boardwalks everywhere and they have people stationed along the trek to repair the boardwalks and you can only camp on camping sites. There are bathrooms as well […] so it makes the whole thing more comfortable. It’s kind of a turn off. I’m used to camping in Patagonia where you never see a toilet. You pee or poo in the bush. It’s funny because I have the map and if you look at the map carefully you have the trail following the coast and you think you are in the wilderness, but if you go five or ten kilometers inland and its all logged. So it’s second growth or logging companies and you don’t see that. The scenery is breathtaking, you see the ocean and whales but the thing is if you walk 30 minutes inland you would see logging trucks. There were so many people on the trail, I was there in July, the busiest time of the year, and there are a couple of times where you can buy beer. I was expecting more of a wilderness experience. You have to register and they give you a trail map so it takes away from the experience of it, at least for somebody like me, but at the same time it does make it more accessible to people who otherwise wouldn’t be able to enjoy these places.

Although Ernesto comments that the West Coast Trail ‘was amazing’, in many respects, contrary to the experiences of Anton and Rick, the hike left Ernesto feeling ‘a little disappointed’. Contrary to Anton and Rick’s graphic evocation of the West Coast Trail as a dangerous place ‘in
the middle of nowhere’, Ernesto argues it was quite the opposite. In comparison to his experiences of hiking in Patagonia, Southern Argentina, where he notes ‘you pee or poo in the bush’, he quips that the West Coast Trail is ‘too civilized’ and ‘very Canadian’. Unlike Anton and Rick’s off-the-beaten-track experiences, Ernesto encounters a place where ‘everything is so well taken care’, with well maintained boardwalks, bathrooms and camping sites. He declares: ‘you’re not in the wilderness!’ Interestingly, apart from the lived experience of the trail, Ernesto also uses maps to demystify the ‘wilderness experience’ of the West Coast Trail. Rather than experiencing utter isolation in the wilderness, Ernesto notes: ‘if you go five or ten kilometers inland it’s all logged’ and ‘if you walk thirty minutes inland you would see logging trucks’. He complains that: ‘you have to register and they give you a trail map so it takes away from the experience of it’. In contrast to Anton and Rick, Ernesto experiences a well run and bureaucratically-managed hiking trail which, for Ernesto, ‘makes the whole thing more comfortable. It’s kind of a turn-off’.

These stories of two quite different experiences of the same place are instructive. When I interviewed Anton and Rick they had completed the trail only one or two weeks previously, which may help to explain their more detailed focus on the challenges and hardships endured. More likely however, it is because Anton and Rick were in the midst of their travels, that their experiences are narrated quite differently. In response to one of my questions Anton notes: ‘I’m going to bring back a lot of very nice memories’, presumably many of which will center on their experiences of the West Coast Trail. In many ways both Anton and Rick are constructing the quintessential ‘Canadian wilderness experience’ through stories that tell of hardy men who must battle the elements in a wild and distant land, with danger lurking everywhere. In many ways Anton’s and Rick’s story increases their traveler credentials. They travel ‘off the beaten track’ to
a place of risk and danger, a place of isolation and authenticity and most of all, a place where despite all these obstacles, they persevere and learn important lessons about themselves in the process.

Ernesto’s comments about the logging roads that lay a few kilometers inland illustrate how the mythology surrounding the West Coast Trail is easily demystified with the help of some in-depth ‘local knowledge’. Without such maps, Anton and Rick could not possibly have known how close they were to ‘civilization’. What the narration of their experiences reveal is that, regardless of how isolated the West Coast Trail ‘really’ is, they could truthfully construct a narrative which tells the story of their wilderness experience and the dangers, risks, and challenges they faced. The contrast between Ernesto’s evaluation of the West Coast Trail as being ‘too civilized’ and Anton and Rick’s estimation of it as an ‘adventure… out there in the wilderness’ also illustrates that what are considered off-the-beaten-track experiences is not just a matter of objective judgment, but also a more subjective and typically comparative assessment. How people narrate these experiences through many stories is integral to the construction of their identities as travelers as well as their own evaluations of risk and danger.

The ‘Gift’ of Travel: Authentic Relations and Mutual Reciprocity

Among the utopian promises of travel is the formation of relationships based on mutual exchange and reciprocity, a theme touched upon in all Lonely Planet literature. Not to be treated like a tourist, that is, as a customer in an economic transaction, implies a utopian, transcendent moment when ‘guest and host’ can look beyond their cultural differences and share the pleasure of being equals in a common humanity, a sublime idea echoed by the sentiments of the Wheelers, worth reiterating again for our present purposes:

It’s only through travelling, through meeting people that we begin to understand that we’re all sharing this world…It’s when you make those cross-cultural connections - even though initially you may have thought you had nothing in common - that it hits you
again: people are the same wherever they're from; we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections.\textsuperscript{46}

One of the utopian promises of travel is to find places and people that treat the traveler as a \textit{guest}, rather than as a \textit{customer}. Ideally, these ‘cross cultural connections’ are not mediated through the commercial logic of the marketplace, but take place beyond such interactions. These places and interactions, seen by many backpackers as existing apart from, and outside of, the commercialized ‘tourist traps’, are characterized as instrumental, inauthentic and exploitative. Take for example, the distinction made by Wilhelm (the round-the-world German backpacker I interviewed in Vancouver), who noted that ‘it’s not like in a guided tour where they only want to make money. They show you the factory and they hope you buy the stuff afterwards’. Or in the words of Oscar, the Austrian backpacker, ‘In tourist facilities you get this [cultural] exchange in an artificial way because that’s business you know’. My interviewees expressed a strong desire to get away from relationships that are commercialized, instrumental, and ‘all about money’. Ironically this desire was especially strong in India, where economic inequalities between ‘hosts and guests’ are most evident. To meet real locals and be treated as a guest is a powerful prize in backpacking. However, as other researchers have noted (Richards and Wilson 2004), backpackers tend to spend a lot of time interacting with other backpackers, and the majority of their interactions with ‘locals’ tend to be financial interactions. In my interviews, many backpackers cited the possibility of meeting other backpackers as one of the most enjoyable aspects of traveling, and it also struck me how much time backpackers tend to spend in one another’s company.

\textsuperscript{46} http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
The traveler imaginary, expressed in part by the Wheelers’ somewhat ‘Catholic’ characterization of travel, is structured by the idea of ‘the gift’ (Mauss 1990) in which interactions, or cross-cultural exchanges takes place through the obligation to give, receive and reciprocate in mutually beneficial ways that enhance the solidarity between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’. For my interviewees, if tourism represents the commercialization and commodification of social relations, then travel promises something different. Simply put, many travelers ideally seek gift exchange rather than commodity exchange. As many backpackers emphasize, they seek genuine hospitality and not the sort of commercialized interactions of the tourist industry that typify the predominant ethos of life and social relations back home, which they see as materially driven, impersonal, and inauthentic. Rather, backpackers seek ‘meaningful cultural exchange’, as Oscar remarks in his interview. Lonely Planet also emphasizes this aspect of travel on its website with the idea that behind and beyond all this cultural diversity, ‘we’ are all the same underneath, and share a common humanity, and should therefore be treated as equals and not simply as sources of income. Meaningful cultural exchange between guests and hosts is an element of the mythology of travel, in which the curious traveler wants to learn from other cultures and neglects to take into account the economic inequalities that help constitute interaction in these ‘contact zones’ (Pratt 2008: 25) On the one hand, the affluence of the backpacker who ‘dresses down’ when travelling is symbolically erased. The frugal and penny-pinching budget traveler abides by a moral injunction of ‘spending money wisely’, ensuring that flagrant expenditure is not immediately visible. The globally mediated, commercial inequality between backpackers and locals is also erased. The backpacker wants the time and space to enjoy everything India has to offer but the ‘materialistic’ locals steal this enjoyment by pestering him or her for rupees, pens or anything else. The question of whose country it is never really enters the mind of backpackers;
the country is there for them, it is there for their enjoyment since they have purchased their time in it.

Many backpackers seem to operate on the basis of Ferdinand Tönnies’ distinction between *Gemeinschaft* or ‘community’ and *Gesellschaft* or ‘society’, from his 1887 classic *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tönnies argued that friendship, kinship and place are the three constitutive elements of the symbolic exchange that make up the traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*), and are threatened by the rise of the impersonal forces of industrialization, urbanization and capitalism that constitute modern society (*Gesellschaft*) (Harris 2001: 18).

Although Tönnies was writing over a century ago, Marc Augé’s concept of ‘non-places’ (1995), re-articulates and reformulates these older ideas. For Auge, ‘non-place’ is typically characterized by contractually based, instrumental relations, and those who pass through non-places experience nothing but ‘solitude and similitude’ (1995: 103). Augé’s characterization of ‘non-place’ is particularly suited to understanding backpacking as a relation between people in transit. The distinction between place and non-place provides a way of theorizing backpackers’ relationship to people and perceptions of places, in contrast to the experiences and perceptions of those who live or work in these very same places. One of my primary aims in this research has been to explore backpackers’ experience of ‘place’ and geography rather than to develop a more traditional and long term ethnography.

According to the ideal of backpacking and its logic of ‘the gift’ real locals do not ostensibly seek to gain financially from backpackers, they do not treat them like tourists but rather like ‘real’ people, as Jan elaborates in the following story:

*Jan:* The Chinese town in Tibet was the only eating place and sleeping place, just for making money. It’s not really a town, it’s all commercial. Then we arrived at the end of the town and there was a Tibetan place and I thought this could be a guesthouse, and there was a woman smiling and I asked can we sleep here and she said ‘yes, yes’, so we
asked how much and we went to see. Then in the evening I went back to the guesthouse […] and they invited me to eat. They had like a Mongolian pot […] They put meat and everything in it. I wanted to pay but they said ‘no! no!’ It was really nice.

Jan makes a contrast between the Chinese town, which is not ‘really a town’ at all, but a tourist trap, ‘all commercial’ and ‘just for making money’, and the Tibetan guesthouse, where the smiling and friendly owners invited him to eat and did not charge money. It is interesting to note that Jan does not even consider the Chinese town a proper place, since its primary purpose was commercial enterprise. The exchange between Jan and the Tibetans at their guesthouse evokes a transcendent and authentic moment in his travels. Although he is technically a tourist, and paying money to sleep at their guesthouse, they don’t charge him money for the meal despite his offer. Their hospitality shows Jan that they have not been corrupted by materialism, unlike the people back home in the West, who are the same as people in the Chinese town. As he notes, ‘In the developed countries everyone is looking [out] for himself, he don’t care about others, so you don’t speak, you don’t meet and it was really like this in this [Chinese] town’. In contrast, the Tibetan guesthouse owners were not interested in charging Jan for the meal. In a similar vein, Henry recalls an authentic relationship he developed with a local Indian businessman:

*Henry:* We met an Indian guy and became really good friends and I know it was like friendship because he helped us. He also bought us ‘sim’ cards\(^\text{47}\), not just for money but as a friend […] He recommended good places to go and it’s the best to ask local people because the good places, not just the touristic places where everybody goes. He was renting motorbikes and we rented a bike from him and he gave us a good price […] Yeah so before we left we wanted to rent a bicycle and he gave it to us for free and he was renting them. It was my first days in India and to make friends with an Indian guy, they are amazing people!

Here Henry enthusiastically extols the moral virtues of real Indian people. Henry discerns that his relationship with the Indian guy is real because ‘he helped us’ and bought them ‘sim cards’

\(^{47}\) Cell/mobile phone electronic chips that enable the phone to be used in different countries.
for their cell phones without profiting from the transaction. The genuineness of the relationship is put into starker relief because, similar to the Tibetan guesthouse owners in Jan’s story, the ‘Indian guy’ too is in the tourist business: renting bikes to Henry and his friends. The fairness of the relationship is further highlighted when he gives Henry and his friends ‘a good price’ for rented motorbikes. When Henry returns to rent a bike, he notes that the Indian guy ‘gave it to us for free’. For Henry, this seems like a genuine moment of reciprocity. Instead of renting bikes to them, the ‘Indian guy’ gives them a gift, free use of the bikes that under normal circumstances would be rented.

Henry comments that the ‘Indian guy’ also provided him with trustworthy local advice about the ‘good places to go’, implying his advice is more trustworthy, an ‘uncontaminated’ source unlike those in the tourist industry who may have profit as their motive when giving advice. Despite the fact that the Indian guy was part of the tourist industry, providing rental bikes for people, Henry considers him a real local, someone who can direct him away from the ‘touristic places where everybody goes’. Although I do not question the veracity of Henry’s story concerning the free bike rental and the friendly feelings he had for this Indian guy, if one were to cast a more skeptical eye on the transactions then one could also argue that the free bike rentals could also be taken as a shrewd commercial strategy by the Indian guy. It is also possible that the freely given gift was also a way of ensuring future business from other Israeli travelers. From Henry’s comments, the traveler is treated more as a friend than as a paying customer, and the local’s gesture illustrates the presence of uncorrupted Indian people who have not yet succumbed to the instrumental materialism of modern progress.
Henry recalls another episode from his first days in India. He told me that he and some friends had taken a local bus from Delhi to Rishikesh, a popular backpacker town approximately four to five hours by road from Paharganj, New Delhi, when the following exchange occurred:

Billy: What kind of things were you talking about to the Indian guy in the bus?

Henry: I got straight into business so I asked him how do you make cheapest calls to Israel, is it better from a cell phone, how do I do it? He was a good source of information, local guy with no interest in making money from me, not these STD guys. Also general stuff about India and Israel.

Here Henry garners valuable and trustworthy information from a bus passenger. Because they met on a local bus, he was in Henry’s eyes a ‘local guy with no interest in making money from me’. The trust element in the relationship is important. Since this local guy has no self interest in making money, Henry considers his advice all the more trustworthy. The ‘S.T.D. guys’ Henry mentions are a common sight in Paharganj, and across India. S.T.D. shops offer cheap calls but the price varies tremendously. Judging by Henry’s comments, the uncorrupted locals are also an excellent and trustworthy source of valuable and free information.

Tony, one of the Israeli backpackers in the group interview I conducted in Leh, offered the following comments to illustrate the virtue of real Indian people:

Tony: The real Indian people, they keep surprising you with what they are willing to do for you. For example, you ask someone in the street where to go and he will walk with you to the place, he was in the middle of something and he stops and takes you. You don’t see that in everyday life in western society […] they are better persons. You can see it here. Only in India where you can have a guesthouse owner, one minute ago we just negotiated with them with the price of the room and then afterwards they sit with you, laugh and become your friends, give you charras for free. It’s different you know, it’s like you are together.

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48 STD here means ‘Standard Trunk Dialling’ and ‘STD’ is a sign commonly seen in India advertizing international phone calls.
Tony makes an important distinction between real Indian people and ‘corrupted touristic locals’ that Henry refers to elsewhere in his interview. Here, their virtue is illustrated by Tony as he is personally escorted to the place by someone who was ‘in the middle of something’. Tony’s example of real Indian hospitality, of unselfishness on the part of a busy person, is further elevated in contrast to his evaluation of ‘everyday life in Western society’, where, he argues, ‘you don’t see that’. According to Tony, people in Western societies are too busy and self-interested to ever perform such acts of hospitality. Hospitality is common throughout the world, but in the context of Tony’s narrative and his experience of India, such acts make a big impression on him, strengthening his conclusion that ‘they [real Indians] are better persons’.

Romantics like Wordsworth and others idealized rural peasants and foreign ‘primitive’ people for retaining a simple and pure moral virtue as a result of their supposed distance and separation from a corrosive industrial modernity. We find a similar logic at work in the discourse of many backpackers in India.

It is largely in the context of such gift economies that we can better understand the passionate dislike articulated by many backpackers for what they perceive as an ever-encroaching and destructive tourism industry, one which irrevocably alters the ‘natural balance’ of a place such as India. Tony gives an example of how ‘real Indian people’ are not interested in having commercial and instrumental relations with visiting backpackers. The theme of friendship is again evoked as a sign of an authentic and equitable relationship, and, as in Henry’s story of the free bike rentals, here we have another example of a ‘guesthouse owner’ who is part of a tourist industry that rents rooms to backpackers. The contrast here is illustrated first by Tony haggling over the price of a room: a strictly commercial transaction. Once that transaction ends, the guesthouse owner and Tony become friends through a gift exchange. Tony recalls that upon
completing the deal, the guesthouse owner can ‘sit with you, laugh and become your friends.’ Furthermore, he evokes the relationship as a friendship rather than a business transaction when he mentions that the guesthouse owner ‘give[s] you charras for free.’ It is the ‘free gift’ of charras that, like Henry, signals to Tony that the relationship is genuine rather than strictly instrumental. The traveler who seeks hospitality on the road wants to be treated not like a tourist, a wealthy outsider who is a constant source of money, but as a guest who can have ‘human’ interactions and relationships with locals outside of a market economy. It is these types of gift-relations Tony Wheeler speaks of as the ‘holy grail of traveling’, and provides ‘those cross-cultural connections’, which in turn help travelers realize that ‘people are the same wherever they're from’ and that “we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections’. In Tönnies’ terms, the somewhat utopian concept of Gemeinschaft is used to compare a European industrial urban modernity of Gesellschaft that produces self-interested actors unfavorably with a rural, community-based world where social relations are determined by kinship, friendship and a fond attachment to place. The Lonely Planet discourse of travel offers a more contemporary global articulation of this desire.

By traveling to these ‘third world’ places the western traveler is promised a type of authentic place as a counterfoil to life in the West. Although tourism has largely been discussed in the literature primarily as a form of consumption, it is also important to remember that the package tourist is immersed in commercial relations. Everything must be paid for and backpacking is no different in this respect. The backpacker too must pay for meals, accommodation, and transport. Nevertheless, many of the backpackers I interviewed sought

49 Hashish
50 http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm
moments like those recalled by both Henry and Tony where free hospitality could be garnered from the locals. As Tony concludes, ‘it’s different you know, it’s like you are together’.

These ‘authentic’ interactions with locals are precisely those that many backpackers compare to the artificial and commercially-driven relationships that characterize the tourist industry. Although a tourist on a two-week vacation at a popular resort would certainly experience instances of local hospitality, from the perspectives of these traveler-backpackers, authentic interactions with locals are not defined by an economic logic which governs commercial transaction between tourists buying a service and locals selling a service. These types of experiences help to reassure the traveler that genuine hospitality is still available, despite a voracious tourist industry. Re-enchantment is still possible in India for many Western travelers, if only from authentic interactions with locals that can somehow go beyond an instrumental tourist economy. These kinds of stories convey powerful truths for many travelers that, despite an incipient tourism industry and western ‘progress’ across the globe, places and people still exist where genuine hospitality acts as a valuable moral resource for the western traveler which provide a kind of ‘moral resource’ beyond the beaten track of tourism. By encountering ‘real’ Indian people rather than ‘corrupted touristic locals’, travelers lay claim to culturally valuable experiences that testify to their ability to travel beyond the beaten track of tourism and to discover an authentic existence that lays forever out of reach of the tourist on holiday.

In the following section I explore in more depth how India and other places in the third world acts as a ‘heterotopia of compensation’ (Foucault 1986:27) for western travelers. I use Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopia of compensation’ to theorize and conceptualize how older colonial and romantic ideas of the noble savage have been situated and extended not just through
discourse but also through distinct spaces, histories, and geographies traversed by the western traveler.

**Travelling East: India and the University of Life**

In the previous section, I quoted Tony who remarks that the real Indian people ‘are better persons’ and their hospitality is something ‘you don’t see… in everyday life in western society’. Although he mentions this in passing, the contrast between the moral virtue of real Indians and the moral decay of Westerners was a persistent theme in my interviews with backpackers in India. I also briefly encountered this sentiment in an interview with two backpackers in Ireland but in Canada there was a notable absence of such a discourse. Why was the theme of ‘moral virtue’ so prevalent in the discourse of backpackers in India? Rather than dismiss or endorse the suggestion that certain moral traits are inherently more prevalent in any particular group of people anywhere in the world, I wish to understand backpackers’ discourse within the historical context of European colonial relations and in terms of discourses of romantic primitivism I explored in Chapter 1.

The idea of time travel and ‘the other’ (Fabian 1983) is central to the ‘salvational’ project of travel. The theme of the moral and existential decay of modern western society is pervasive in the narratives of backpackers. The West is finished, the ‘corrosion of character’ (Sennett 1998) is almost complete, and so called ‘traditional’ societies now offer but a rapidly disappearing glimpse of a prelapsarian past that will inevitably be corroded and destroyed in the face of relentless western progress. The backpacker thus tours a ‘dying’ cultural landscape. The backpacker inhabits the strange temporal position of being in-between the past and the future. From their largely western platform backpackers see the past of modern society before their eyes, how people lived ‘before’ it all goes wrong. And they also see the future in this living past, the seeds of destruction that their very presence as moderns confirms as truth, that tourism as a
synonym for the destructive powers of modernity has arrived and is unstoppable, and it presents an image to other cultures of what awaits them. If, as Marx states in the *Communist Manifesto*, the bourgeoisie “creates a world after its own image” (2003: 129) then the melancholic gaze of the western traveler in India, or any other third world country, would seem to merely confirm the inevitability of the decline and decay of this world.

The following comments are from the group interview I did in Leh with the four Israeli backpackers. I asked them why they had such a high opinion of India and why they were critical of life back home:

*Sally:* If you look at your own world, it’s development and progress and it’s not really always progress.

*Tony:* But it’s good to come and see it [India] before it gets totally wrecked.

*Sally:* Yeah, and then you have to find a new place to go see as you always want to look for authentic places and so-called progress goes to everywhere, so everywhere is the same. It’s western progress and it’s shitty.

Sally characterizes her ‘own world’ in terms of ‘development and progress’ but she quickly adds ‘it’s not really always progress’. She sheds further light on her thoughts on life back home by saying ‘It’s western progress and it’s shitty’. Sally’s remarks are typical of the perception of life ‘back home’ for many backpackers. She presumably questions the teleological equation that evaluates progress and development in exclusively technological and material terms. She appears to be articulating the romantic idea that, even though the West is the ‘first world’, it is underdeveloped in other ways. Here it is the equation of ‘spiritual poverty with material wealth’.

Tony interjects and provides a more direct link to Sally’s perception of western progress and the situation of India in relation to this. His comment that ‘it’s good to come and see it [India] before it gets totally wrecked’ illustrates several points. India’s seemingly inevitable destruction assumes that the West is dynamic and ever-changing, whereas India is static and without a path
of its own. In Tony’s eyes western progress will inevitably change India for the worse; it will get ‘totally wrecked’. Judging by Sally’s subsequent comments, it is clearly the authenticity of India that is at stake. Once Western progress has its way in India, it will no longer retain the same degree of authenticity as it once did.

But why should progress somehow been seen as emanating solely from the West? And why should India been seen as a place where progress, western or otherwise, is somehow absent? Sally’s and Tony’s sentiments and fears echo those of Tony Wheeler, examined in Chapter 2, that ‘we’ll lose the wild places, the traditions and the eccentricities of the world. Life will be far more homogenized and far less surprising’\(^5\). The consumption of cultural difference is seen to be a harbinger of western progress as the force that will eventually destroy authentic Indian culture. Sally explains the logic of authenticity that animates the traveler’s endless search for new places in light of the march of western progress: ‘then you have to find a new place to go see as you always want to look for authentic places and so-called progress goes to everywhere, so everywhere is the same’. Her words echo those of Tony Wheeler, according to which a standardized world is being created and the consumption of difference is rendered increasingly impossible. However, these perceptions are articulated by backpackers interested in experiencing a real or authentic India that lies forever beyond the beaten track of tourism.

For travelers and tourists alike, authentic culture is a ‘thing’ which is there for the enjoyment, appreciation, and cultivation of visitors but remains bound within a social relationship of consumption and commodification that perpetuates the myth of the traveler as driven not by the commercial dictates of a tourist industry, but by the more noble aims of education, cultivation, and the discovery of a universal human nature. Once a place has been

\(^5\) [http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm)
‘wrecked’ by progress it no longer holds any real value. As Sally laments, it has lost its authenticity and thus the search begins again for places that have not been touched by progress. Tony sees progress as an insatiable process that is forever colonizing authentic worlds and transforming India into a standardized landscape in which the traveler must stay ahead of the game and get to places before they are ‘totally wrecked’.

Jan, the Swiss backpacker I interviewed in Paharganj, spoke in similar terms about one of the ‘third world’ countries he had traveled in before arriving in India:

*Jan:* I don’t know, the people there [Laos] had something natural that we have lost. It’s like they smile, say hello and you are a human being.

*Billy:* People are more genuine there?

*Jan:* Of course they ask [for money] too, but then they carry on doing other things, they are not in the education that you have to earn money all the time, like us, like it started here [in India], like in China. It’s starting in Laos too but the majority of the population don’t have this.

Like Tony and Henry, Jan compares the superior moral virtue of the ‘third world’ locals with the less desirable position of ‘us’ westerners. Jan laments that ‘the people there [Laos] had something natural that we have lost’. He distinguishes a third world that remains in a state of natural purity to a corrupted western world disconnected from our ‘natural’ human nature. According to Jan, people in Laos ‘smile, say hello and you are a human being’. He says, ‘of course they ask [for money] too but then they carry on doing other things’. Jan suggests that the people he met in Laos did not have making money as their primary goal in life. He notes ‘they are not in the education that you have to earn money all the time’, and have therefore not departed from a natural moral state of goodness. Jan mentions that this ‘unnatural’ state of affairs has already afflicted ‘us’ in the West, and is beginning to take hold in India, China, and elsewhere. Jan concludes, ‘It’s starting in Laos too but the majority of the population don’t have
this’. Like Sally, Jan distinguishes East and West in morally opposed, teleological terms. According to Jan, the ‘de-naturalization’ of human nature that ‘the majority of the population’ in Laos have yet to experience is ‘starting in Laos’, but for Jan, his experience of being treated like ‘a human being’ rather than a source of income is as a direct consequence of Laos being so far off the beaten track.

Henry too comments on life, and human relations in western societies:

Billy: Do you think that people treat each other differently in western societies than in India?

Henry: Yeah, people are less nicer, less trustful with each other; people are not nice in general. Everyone has their interest behind what they are saying; everybody wants to gain something from you. Money can blind people you know? They can forget how to be human. In India it’s not like this! People need your money of course but it’s not the main issue.

Social relations in western societies are again characterized here as overwhelmingly instrumental, materialistic, and self interested. According to Henry, trust and genuine relations are impossible since there is always a hidden agenda of instrumental interests and self-serving gain behind the actions that structure social relations. Henry comments, ‘everyone has their interest behind what they are saying’ and ‘everybody wants to gain something from you’. For Henry, the auri sacra fames, the ‘accursed greed for gold’, is the main cause of the moral decline of the west. Echoing Jan’s sentiments, Henry notes that ‘[m]oney can blind people you know?’, and people in western societies ‘can forget how to be human’. Henry, Jan, and Tony each repeat the same distinction between a morally corrupt and ‘lost’ western world versus a more virtuous, human, eastern, third world. Travel implicitly offers salvation for the soul of the western traveler. The further one travels from the centre of the western world, the more likely one is to encounter those who have been untouched by such progress. Within a discourse of authenticity these apparently untouched locals then represent an authentic human nature; they signify a
prelapsarian moral state for the western traveler. As in Jan’s estimation of the locals in Laos, Henry too sees Indians as radically different from people back home. He notes, ‘people need your money of course but it’s not the main issue’. He suggests that people in India are more interested in making money than people in the West.

In this following comment, Eleanor, the female Belgium backpacker I interviewed in Paharganj, describes the differences between life back home in Belgium and life in India:

*Eleanor:* In Belgium everybody is rushing around the streets, nobody is talking to each other, nobody says hello, nobody is laughing […] But here it’s just life you know, the way life is supposed to be. Not like ‘we’re human and we’re better than the rest and we’re living in four walls and not talking to other people’. This is my life and the cage I’m living in. It’s more like a prison! Here everything is open, everything is on the street, it’s amazing. In Belgium, people have become afraid of everything. Here the mosquitoes, dogs, cows are walking free so everything can mix together. It’s possible and it’s more natural!

In stark contrast to her bleak appraisal of her ‘prison cage’ life in Belgium, where ‘everybody is rushing around’ and ‘nobody is talking to each other, nobody says hello, nobody is laughing’, life in India appears as the polar opposite, ‘the way life is supposed to be’. In contrast to Belgium, where, she argues, people think ‘we’re better than the rest’ but at the same time are ‘living in four walls’ and have ‘become afraid of everything’, India is perceived as a space of freedom and mixture and all the more ‘natural’ as a result. She claims that in India ‘everything is open, everything is on the street’ in contrast to the more prison and cage-like social space in Belgium. In her comments the oppressive and ‘unnatural’ structure of life in Belgium is juxtaposed to the liminality and fluidity of life in India where genuine human relations are possible. She notes that in India, the ‘mosquitoes, dogs, cows are walking free so everything can mix together’. Apparently this freedom is what facilitates a fluid and egalitarian social space in India to emerge, which, in her opinion, is a ‘more natural’ form of sociability. In her description of life in Belgium she mentions how people do not interact with each other, causing her feelings
of isolation and alienation. However, in her comments on India she refers to animals rather than humans to evoke an image of freedom and unimpeded mixing. The street life in Delhi and other Indian cities looks chaotic to a westerner. Paharganj and the main bazaar is a busy thoroughfare: on one end of Paharganj is the New Delhi Railway Station and main bazaar is a useful short cut around the busy main roads. Cycle rickshaws, auto rickshaws, cars, jeeps, a few brave trucks, motorbikes, and a seemingly endless flow of pedestrians, cows, and dogs all vie for passage along the narrow street of the main bazaar.

While Eleanor is clearly impressed by the evident differences between a busy city street in Belgium and a busy city street in India, her attribution of naturalness to life in India echoes the sentiments of Henry, Tony and Jan. In third world countries like India, a way of life can be ‘discovered’ that does not have the same type of ‘unnatural’ restrictions that people in the west are encumbered with. She attributes the alienating effect of her life back home to fear, noting ‘people have become afraid of everything’, and thus in her opinion, India is a place where this ‘unnatural’ fear has not yet taken root in people. In one sense Eleanor describes the anonymity of life in the metropolis, a type of ‘mental life’ captured so well by Simmel in his now famous essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ [1903] (1971). People are rushing around, time is more strictly regulated and largely precludes any extraneous activities such as having the time of day to sit and talk with other people in the street.

What exactly is the ‘real’ India these travelers have ‘discovered’? The real India discovered by travelers contains important lessons for the traveler who can learn about a way of life and a human nature that has not yet been lost to the destructive force of tourism. By moving beyond the beaten track, the educative and cosmopolitan promise of travel can be realized for backpackers. Traveling in India offers them an alternative vision of human society and human
nature where modernization had not yet fully taken hold. Among the backpackers I spoke to
India represented a place where the individual backpacker can find ‘redemption’ for the
disenchantment they feel living in the modern world, as the following story from Henry reveals:

Billy: Have you had any experiences here [in India] that stick out in your mind?

Henry: It was my second week in India. We had motorbikes and went on a three day trip.
We took a tent and sleeping bags, food, everything. So we kept on driving in the same
direction and we met amazing people on the way, and we came into a village where
nobody spoke English, so we were trying with sign language you know? So the next
morning there was one guy who knew English and he told us we were the first foreigners
to come to the village! And when we arrived there everyone came and helped us, brought
wood for the fire, all this for nothing, everyone was so helpful and friendly. And it wasn’t
that far from Rishikesh, about two days driving and we were the first foreigners, not just
Israelis but foreigners, wow, amazing. So if you want these places you will find them.
We needed to drive for two days so if you’re lazy and like to stay inside you won’t see it.

Henry’s ‘first contact’ with the locals has required the extra effort taken to escape from the
beaten track of tourism. In order to get away from the beaten track, Henry recalls that ‘we took a
tent and sleeping bags, food, everything’. His ‘prize’ is a very rare form of experience in the
congested space of travel in India, meeting with people who had never seen a foreigner. Henry
recalls that they arrive at ‘a village where nobody spoke English’ and had to use ‘sign language’
to communicate. He paints a rosy picture of the village where ‘everyone came and helped us,
brought wood for the fire’ and where ‘everyone was so helpful and friendly’. What’s more, the
villagers provide all these supplies and help to them ‘for nothing’, signifying in Henry’s eyes, a
place where they were treated and received as guests rather than wealthy tourists. Despite his
initial comment that this was a village where ‘nobody spoke English’, the following day there are
villagers who speak English. Henry recalls that the English speaking local told them ‘we were
the first foreigners to come to the village’ and not just ‘Israelis, but foreigners’. The ‘purity’ of
his first contact is heightened further when he adds that they are not just the first Israelis but the
first foreigners. What could be a more unexplored place and a unique experience than a village
where they are the first foreigners to arrive? The key to such experiences for Henry lies in the
desire and hard work of the traveler who is willing to go off-the-beaten-track. As he notes, ‘if you want these places you will find them’ but he warns that ‘if you’re lazy and like to stay inside you won’t see it’.

These kinds of stories are particularly valuable in articulating the mythology of travel insofar as they perpetuate the idea of ‘undiscovered’ places that have yet to encounter foreigners. For the backpacker, who partly follows in the footsteps of colonial travelers, these experiences are a rare and valuable find, and worth all the more as an exemplary story that illustrates an adventurous and hard working spirit. Nevertheless they reproduce the imperial myth of the terra nullius, of a land waiting to be discovered by the hardy adventurer. The locals in this story are similar to the locals Henry described earlier on in the interview: they help him ‘for nothing’, they are ‘so helpful and friendly’, and they ask for nothing in return, a sign of ‘pure’ hospitality and that for Henry at least, first contact with locals is still possible in India.

However, as the following comment by Gary (from the Israeli group interview) attest, western identity is reiterated in other ways through the discovery of an Oriental India that lies beyond the beaten track. I asked him ‘what do you find interesting about Indian culture?’ to which he replied ‘It’s not western’. Gary’s comment echoes those made by other interviewees, which emphasize that it is the ‘not-western’ character of India that makes it such an appealing and interesting place. Most of my interviewees spoke in disparaging terms about their lives in the West, often comparing it to the utopian image of India and the third world. Gary’s remarks indicate a thoroughly antithetical and mutually exclusive construction of a modern and progressive West versus a more primitive and developing India. The following comments from Anthony (also form the Israeli group interview) suggest that India, despite the ever-increasing
beaten track of tourism, still has many places that provide travelers with experiences and stories of a more ‘natural’ world and way of life untouched by the ravages of progress:

*Anthony:* I like also how they preserve their culture. They are a very ancient culture. They been around for a long time, especially what I’ve found out about them. They have been around since the beginning of mankind and pretty much preserved their way. The country and how it blends in so well with this amazing nature they have. The way they do that is really admirable.

Anthony sees an India that has ‘been around since the beginning of mankind’, and has still managed to remain relatively unchanged. According to Anthony, Indians have ‘pretty much preserved their way’, but what exactly then is this monolithic Indian culture that has been around since the beginning of mankind? The connection he makes between India and nature, and how the people ‘blend in so well’, implies a sense of natural balance and harmony. The Lonely Planet ‘Sikkim’ entry, discussed in Chapter 2, evoked the destruction of a picturesque and natural landscape by modern tourism and by the building of protruding concrete hotels. Anthony mentions that ‘they respect the land and the land respects them back, they have a good relationship, they have balance’. Here, the theme of a harmonious and balanced relationship with the land is more clearly evoked by Anthony. This idea of balance and a non-exploitative relationship with the land illustrates and mirrors the relationship that many backpackers seek with local Indian culture and people. It also functions as an ideal model of human relationships and a way of life that has yet to be corrupted by progress.

In the following exchange, a local way of life is idealized for its insularity and predictability.

*Tony:* It seems as though they don’t care about politics or anything like this. They care about what’s going on with their crops, the weather, and the rumors in the village. Every day they have the same dinner, every day; it’s amazing, rice and vegetables, whatever they grow basically and rice.

*Anthony:* They have their problems obviously, but it’s much more simple living.
According to Tony and Anthony, the problems of the broader world are of no concern to the locals. In their vision of a self-contained world, there is no apparent need for the locals to venture beyond it, as they have everything they need right there. The simplicity of this world is contrasted harshly with the multitude of choices and options that are available to my interviewees, as can be seen in the following exchange:

Billy: What do you find interesting about Indian culture?

Gary: They have time and they do things that way. You see people working, mostly women [...] there is a job to get done but still they have time.

For Gary the idea that Indian people ‘have time’ is key to the desirability of their lives, just as Eleanor’s comments also criticize the scarcity of time in her life in Belgium, where everybody is ‘rushing around the streets’ and wrapped up in their own lives.

Tony: It’s also they don’t have the aspirations we have, the dreams. Western people think they can do everything they want. We have options so we can do whatever we want. Also the caste system, they work in their field and that’s it. She’s the mother and she knows what to do and that’s it.

Anthony: That’s why they are so good at it because they have been so enclosed for so long. His father did it and it’s passed on.

Tony: They don’t think too much about so many options and needs, and this and that.

Gary: Go to university and buy a house.

Anthony: It’s what Sally said, the simplicity, their whole culture and how everything is so simple.

Sally: We have a lot to learn from them.

Tony: No one gets angry or frustrated. It’s okay. Everything is okay. It’s a way of thinking.

Here, an unchanging and traditional way of life is seen as a powerful antidote to the ills of modern living. Indian culture is perceived as a template for living in the modern world: nobody
gets angry or frustrated and ‘everything is okay’. Lack of choice and opportunity is perceived as desirable, where the only things local people have to worry about are the crops and the weather. The continuity of tradition and the caste system, combined with the apparent isolation of the locals to the forces of change, ensures the locals are ‘so good at it’. Apparently the locals do not have many decisions to make in their lives. As Tony remarks, ‘they don’t think too much about so many options and needs’. Tony’s previous argument about the land providing them with everything they need implies that since they do not think about anything outside of this then their lives are idyllic. Anthony refers to Sally’s comment about ‘the simplicity, their whole culture and how everything is so simple’, in order to encapsulate and express the essence of life in India. The complexity of life back home, where people have to buy houses and go to university, apparently does not happen in India.

Almost 80% of India’s population lives in rural settings, and according to a 2008 World Bank report, roughly 42% live below the poverty line (Chen and Ravallion 2008). In this light, the simplicity of life that seems so appealing to these ‘nomads from affluence’ appears romantic and utopian. As Sally remarks, ‘we have a lot to learn from them’. These comments suggest that lack of choice and simplicity exist among all people living in India. The material conditions of peoples’ lives seem to offer these backpackers a model for their own lives and culture back home. These comments show how, in the experiences of these backpackers, India becomes what Michel Foucault calls ‘heterotopias of compensation’ (1986) by functioning as an idealized mirror-image to life back home. In his essay ‘Of Other Spaces’, Foucault notes that these ‘heterotopias of compensation’ function in an interdependent and symbiotic fashion. As idealized spaces operating in a functional juxtaposition with more mundane spaces, heterotopias can provide and serve as ideal models of social organization. In the context of backpacking in India, I
argue that the West and East in some circumstances also function within a symbiotic and interdependent relationship whereby the East now acts as an ideal model for social organization. By encountering difference the traveler can thus learn important ‘lessons’ about simplicity, self-sufficiency, and natural harmony.

With many important lessons India teaches the western traveler, it is not surprising that cultural conservation in tandem with anti-tourist discourse seems so prevalent in backpacker discourse. Henry concisely summarizes these themes in the following remark:

*Henry:* Indians are not going with the flow of the modern things, modernization, westernization. They have their own style and traditions [...] These times when everybody is embracing the western culture and modernization so yeah, people need to wake up and India wakes you up, it gives you a slap about the way people should live and can live.

For Henry, Indian culture serves as an important educational resource for western travelers, since ‘people need to wake up’, and learn how to live differently. In Henry’s eyes it is India that ‘wakes you up’ and can provide a model ‘about the way people should live and can live’.

Henry’s sentiments and comments about Indian culture are echoed by many other interviewees. The modernity of India was seen as somehow not Indian. In Chapter 2, I noted how *Lonely Planet Ireland* (2010) saw a homogenous land of lattes, motorways and spas devouring real Irish culture. Henry’s comments too do not recognize Indian society as one of change and dynamism.

In the race to consume authentic and essentially different Indian culture, such a logic helps to maintain rather than challenge the idea of a hermetically sealed national, territorialized culture, one that is further compounded through a temporal logic of first and third worlds, advanced and traditional societies. Backpackers gaze upon India as a ‘prelapsarian utopia’ that offers an uncorrupted view of how life should be and how people should live. Backpackers gaze into ‘their own past’ before it was destroyed by progress and modernization. Despite the ideal of leaving all
the cultural baggage at home, backpackers tend to bring some very old ideas with them on their travels. Travel becomes a type of time-travel. The modern traveler begins in the west, in the present day, and travels ‘backwards’ in search of places and peoples that have yet to be corrupted.

As noted in Chapter 2, Lonely Planet argues that ‘responsible travel’ ensures that these places will remain for future generations to enjoy. A central aspect of responsible travel is centered on the moral character of the traveler who can ‘spend money wisely’, unlike those spendthrift tourists in Laos that Jan so vehemently complains about. By spending money wisely, the traveler helps to conserve the authenticity and natural balance of ‘the local culture’ from the destructive effects of tourism and on behalf of the continued pleasure of other travelers in future generations. In short, the budget ethos of backpackers, which is a practical strategy, is also connected to romantic and conservationist ideas about the simplicity and natural balance of the local culture. The backpackers’ strange temporal position involves living in between the past and the future. The future of India is already laid out before them, in the image of its inevitable destruction by the forces of progress, development, and modernity. Since the West has already been corrupted, they must ‘leave’ it behind, and go on a journey of cultural salvation on a difficult, yet more authentic path. In this section I noted how a discourse of the East was constructed by backpackers on the road in India; below I turn my attention to constructions of the West, again within relations of post-colonial rule and through encounters which take place off-the-beaten-track.

**Travelling West in Ireland and Canada**

The majority of backpackers I spoke to in India tended to characterize Indian culture as well as other third world cultures as largely traditional and pre-modern, and considered the locals there as possessing a kind of ‘pre-contact’ moral virtue. I also encountered versions of these
views in my interviews in Ireland and Canada, although to a far lesser extent. For example, during an interview with two Canadian backpackers in Cork, I asked them about their perceptions of Ireland and Irish culture. From my own experience as an Irishman who had been living in Vancouver for several years, I was aware that my Irish-ness was often a source of exotic appeal for some Canadians and Americans. In many ways, I found through my own experience of living in Vancouver that some people tended to have romantic views of Ireland and the Irish people. A recent article by Brian O’Connell in the 24th August 2010 issue of The Irish Times titled ‘Hooked On Irish Men’\(^{52}\) explores non-Irish women’s perceptions of Irish men. After briefly surveying some online dating sites, O’Connell writes: ‘generally the stereotyping of the Irish male is stuck somewhere in the 1950s, a land where the men are tall, quiet and gentle, and excel in a natural chivalry’. Although his argument focuses solely on female perceptions of Irish men, O’Connell mentions the perception of a ‘natural chivalry’ (my emphasis). As the following interview with Sarah and Mary illustrate, it is not just the uncorrupted locals in India who are perceived to have retained an untouched moral virtue. Both sisters were only paying a short visit to Ireland before they returned to Canada. They had already spent over two months travelling around France and in many ways this short trip of two weeks was something of a holiday from their main travel itinerary:

*Billy:* So it is your first time to Ireland. Did you have any expectations of what it would be like?

*Sarah:* Well, we read online that Irish people were supposed to restore your faith in humanity.

*Billy:* So have they done that yet?

*Sarah:* Well they did all right. We did get our passport returned!

Mary: Yeah, she lost her passport.

Sarah: Yeah, and in the next 12 hours it was returned to the police station so that was pretty sweet. I was surprised!

Although in this particular exchange these sisters were given a good reason to celebrate moral virtue, they imply that retrieving a lost passport is something that could only happen in Ireland. Sarah comments that ‘we read online that Irish people were supposed to restore your faith in humanity’, echoing the salvational and redemptive logic of travel which sees locals as a model of moral virtue. Similar to the ‘natural chivalry’ that shapes the perceptions of Irish men among online daters, Sarah’s comments reinforce the idea that Irish people have not been corrupted and lost their moral virtue. In his book Journeys in Ireland (1999), Martin Ryle notes that within the colonial context of Irish history there has been a recurring representation of Irish people as more primitive, childlike and naïve, reiterated in part by British travelers from the metropolis.

The West of Ireland has long been a place that has stoked the imagination of visitors. It is in some ways a mythic place, conjuring up images of a world that has yet to be destroyed by the ‘juggernaut of modernity’ (Giddens 2002: 55). If Dublin is the hyper-modern new capital of a post-modern Ireland, then the West of Ireland is its counterfoil. With images of stone walls, thatched cottages, wild and rugged scenery, populated by people who still retain an untouched quality, the West of Ireland has long been a major attraction for those in search of a more ‘traditional’ version of Ireland. The following comments from Mary and Sally evoke a common perception of Ireland, one that mirrors the criticisms that Paulo, the Italian traveler, directed towards tourists.

Billy: Did you have any other expectations of what it [Ireland] would be like?

Mary: I think I expected something more magical.
Sarah: Green and sheep running around.

Billy: (sarcastically) Leprechauns and lucky charms?

Mary: Yeah, I hate to admit it!

Billy: Where did you get those impressions of the place?

Mary: From people we knew, a teacher of ours, people I know who went to Galway and said it was an amazing place. Partly we thought it would be cheesier here, people dressing in Aran sweaters, walking around with a sheep under their arms.

Billy: So were you expecting it to be a bit more traditional?

Sarah: Maybe.

Mary: I didn’t come in with that many expectations.

The idea of Ireland as a fairy-tale ‘magical’ place is also echoed in the Lonely Planet Ireland description of the Beara Peninsula in West Cork: ‘there’s a truly magical air about the Beara Peninsula’ (2008: 239). Not coincidentally, it is also a myth that is attributed more to the West of Ireland than to any other place in the nation. Irish writers such as William Butler Yeats also portrayed the West of Ireland as a place where a Celtic, nationalist creation myth was founded furthest from the colonial metropolitan center of Dublin. Mary and Sarah’s comments suggest that they were expecting an Ireland that was essentially rural. My sarcastic question about leprechauns and lucky charms was meant to reflect back to them that their expectations were shaped by an essentially North American popular culture idea of Ireland as the land of the ‘little people’. I was curious about the source of their ideas and was surprised by their answer: that their expectations derived from people who had actually been to Ireland.

As I noted from the Israeli backpackers I interviewed in Ladakh, perceptions about the ‘simplicity’, insularity, and quaintness of life in India are happily retold in stories by those
returning from places like India and Ireland, and help to inform the expectations of those yet to travel to these countries. Despite their stereotypical expectations of a magical, rural Ireland, where everyone wears ‘Aran sweaters’; their romantic notions are quickly dispelled when they arrive in Galway City (the main city in the West of Ireland, and like Cork City, the main urban gateway for visitors):

Billy: What was Galway City like?

Mary: When we got there we were like where the fuck are we? We were wondering if we got off at the right spot. We went online straight away to get out of there, it was so industrial!

Billy: Were you expecting something more rural?

Mary: Yeah, rural and quaint, thatched roofs you know?

Billy: Did you see any of that when you were here?

Sarah: Yeah we did take one tour.

Their de-mystifying experience of Galway is humorous, as it illustrates how their expectations of a magical land of sheep, Aran sweaters, and leprechauns led them to ‘wondering if we got off at the right spot’. In contrast to their more idealized expectations of finding a land that was ‘rural and quaint’, where all the houses had ‘thatched roofs’ Mary exclaims ‘it was so industrial!’ prompting them to go ‘online straight away to get out of there’. The collision of myth and reality takes a further ironic twist when asked if they had managed to encounter the world they were expecting. Sarah answers ‘Yeah we did take one tour’. Despite W.B. Yeats lament that ‘romantic Ireland is dead and gone’ in his poem September 1913, it is still available through a guided tour!

_A knitted, woolen sweater that is for sale in practically every tourist outlet in Ireland. It has become a recognizable signifier of Ireland. The sweater originated in the Aran Islands off the West Coast of Galway and although they are still worn by people in Ireland their sales are driven primarily by the tourist economy in Ireland and the U.S.A._

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This form of ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell 1989) offers perhaps the only way of satisfying the desire to experience ‘the real’, or here, the quaint and rural Ireland of thatched roofs, green pastures and Aran sweater-wearing locals.

In the case of Canada, and in particular Vancouver where I conducted interviews, I found traces of the same perception centered on First Nations cultures. For example, when I asked Anton (one of the two Dutch backpackers who did the West Coast Trail) about his visit to the Totem Poles in Stanley Park, a popular tourist attraction for visitors to Vancouver, he remarked in dismay and disappointment:

*Anton:* I thought they were a big disappointment! I was reading the signs and it said 1987! There’s nothing fun about something from 1987! I was expecting them to be older, something really native! That’s what I wanted to see, not something my sister’s age!

Anton’s comments temporally situate the First Nations culture of which the Totem Poles are a signifier of an ancient past. He is surprised that the poles were made in 1987, and remarks with disappointment: ‘there’s nothing fun about something from 1987’. Mullet hairdos, parachute pants, and *Duran Duran* aside, Anton explains the source of his disappointment: ‘I was expecting them to be older-something really native!’ Why would a Totem Pole that dates from the 1920s somehow be considered ‘really native’ and not one from the 1980’s? It would appear that something ‘really native’ should somehow be old and not new or contemporary. Perhaps a more convincing explanation of his disappointment is the common equation that sees First Nations or ‘natives’ as not living in the contemporary or modern world. In her 2004 article ‘From Colonialism to Multiculturalism: Totem Poles, Tourism and National Identity in Vancouver’s Stanley Park’, Mawani argues that: ‘although totem poles and other Northwest Coast designs and images signify an authentic Native Otherness in mainstream Canada, it is important to recognize that this perceived authenticity is premised on an inauthenticity: on a
singular, homogenized, and fixed Aboriginal identity that does not adequately capture the complicated and diverse histories and experiences of First Nations communities in the province of British Columbia’ (2004: 32). Anton’s comments suggest that one defining aspect of this ‘inauthenticity’ relates to the perception of First Nations identity and culture as temporally ‘fixed’ in a pre-colonial past (ibid).

Hans, the German backpacker I interviewed in Vancouver, offers a clue about the equation of ‘native’ and ‘modern’. After telling me about his experience on the West Coast Trail, Hans recalls a moment when he met a native person whom he had encountered there, but in a very different context:

_Hans:_ When we came back on the bus he recognized us, and so we had a conversation. But I was surprised, because he was a really native person but he has the same clothes as we have. He stays in Vancouver so it was a little bit crazy.

Here the collision between the idea of ‘natives’ as belonging both to the present and to a different, less modern time is particularly striking as Hans remarks: ‘he was a really native person but he has the same clothes as we have’. The ‘we’ in this context is supposedly me and Hans, white moderns who live in a modern time whereas ‘natives’ wearing ‘the same clothes as we have’ appears anachronistic to Hans. The fact that this native man was also living in Vancouver, a modern metropolis, seems to add further to Hans’ confusion. It would appear that natives ‘should’ more appropriately be living in nature than a modern city. Both Anton’s and Han’s comments illustrate how some travelers perceive modern and native culture as mutually exclusive and incompatible categories. What First Nations people in Vancouver, ‘real Indians’ in India and Irish people in Ireland share is a common history of British colonial rule. In Chapter 1, I examined the discourse of romantic primitivism prevalent in 19th century Europe and Britain, a discourse that was also instrumental for justifying the continued ‘help’ that the British Imperial
Government provided these childlike people on their path to ‘adulthood’. These processes of racialization and primitivization constitute an important part of the ruling relations of the British Empire. My own travelling research along former paths of the British Empire can be conceptualized as travelling in the ‘wake’ of Empire that have allowed me to find traces of the old Empire in India, Ireland and Canada while also finding how Empire is newly constituted across all three sites in both ‘the East’ and ‘the West’.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated through interviews with travelers the importance of stories as a powerful form of travel currency in the accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital ‘on the road’. To begin with, I returned to my examination of Lonely Planet guidebooks where I provided three stories that demonstrated how guidebooks helped readers get ‘off-the-beaten-track’ and have memorable travel experiences. In this way, the Lonely Planet guidebooks play an important role in the mediation of off-the-beaten-track experiences for these travelers. Focusing on the bodily dangers of sickness and scary bus stories that my interviews narrated, I argued that despite the veracity of the experiences or the subjective intensity of the experiences, what was most important was how these stories were narrated and how these stories served as a narrative platform for establishing a traveler’s credentials expressed as symbolic capital. Their stories illustrate how experiences of risk and danger are mediated by financial resources. These stories also illustrate how, for the western traveler, the ‘dangerous’ world of India served as a type of crucial test in the cultivation of a traveler self.

Through my analysis of these stories I have shown how travelers distinguish themselves from pedestrian tourists who crowd along the beaten track. The story of Paulo and his experiences in Mongolia helped to crystallize many of the contradictions at work in the mythology of travel and the type of desire that animate the western traveler. I explored how ‘the
gift’ was a powerful sign of authentic relations between backpackers and locals. In contrast to the commercially-driven tourist industry, and the artificially arranged relations between tourist and locals, aspects of which I detailed in Chapter 3, in this chapter I found that many travelers spoke of instances where, rather than being treated by locals purely as a source of money, were instead treated with ‘genuine hospitality’. I argued that these moments, characterized and structured by a gift economy rather than a commodity economy, were taken as signs that as travelers they had managed to go beyond the beaten track of tourism and to find the ‘real’ India that lies outside of instrumental tourist relations. I then explored how, in contrast to their life back home in the west (characterized as a place of mistrust and alienation and full of self serving individuals, devoid of moral virtue), the real India, Ireland, and Canada was perceived.

With India as my main focus, I used Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopias of compensation’ to theorize how the third world and India in particular was seen as a utopian counterfoil to life in the West. I argued that the western travelers I interviewed were in part thus animated by a salvational or redemptive logic, one that has its roots in older European discourses of romantic primitivism and colonialism, and the colonial trope of the noble savage is resurrected through a contemporary mythology of travel which now serves as a valuable resource in the consumption of difference by the western traveler. The moral virtue of third world locals and the ‘simplicity’ of their lives is a powerful sign of their authenticity. This authenticity was articulated by many travelers through a Eurocentric temporal logic that sees authentic Indian culture as not yet destroyed by, and not yet part of, a corrosive Western modernity. I argued that what was most important was the terms under which the encounter with and consumption of difference was taken up by travelers in India, and how these have enduring historical and geographical features. I then examined how, through their off-the-beaten-track discovery of the
real India, my interviewees were able to learn about the real culture of India rather than the ‘fake’ or inauthentic tourist versions of it. As a result, they were also able to learn how life in India provided them with a moral model for how humankind should live. In other words if India and the third world function as ‘heterotopias of compensation’ then as part of travelers’ educational cultivation they should learn how to use Indian and other cultures as a way of compensating for the lack of simplicity, moral virtue, and authenticity of life back home. In my interviews with travelers in both Ireland and Canada, I was able to explore the same temporal logic at work in the discourses of some backpackers. In particular I showed how First Nations culture in Vancouver was perceived as belonging to a distant past world rather than the contemporary world of Canada. Similarly in Ireland, I showed how the country is perceived as a magical place, shrouded in a time-warp. Traveling through these post-colonial landscapes, and interviewing backpackers I encountered there, powerfully illustrate how new articulations of attraction and repulsion are possible in the ‘wake’ of the former British Empire.
Conclusion: Past Reflections and Future Directions

Before I conclude this dissertation with a review of the main findings and an acknowledgment of its limitations, I want to reflect upon my own past experiences as a backpacker traveler and how these experiences helped to shape and guide the key problematics of this research. Below I provide a stylized autobiographical narrative of my own ‘first contact’ with India from my backpacking trip several years ago as a way of highlighting, in a humorous fashion, some of the key themes of this thesis. This is a factual story, based on entries from the travel journal which I kept during my travels in India after I completed my B.A. degree, and which I have put into dramatic, narrative form for the present purpose. After reflecting upon these experiences I offer a review of the preceding chapters and examine the key themes and issues that have emerged throughout this thesis. Finally I indicate some directions for future research.

India June 1st 2000
I had meticulously planned for this trip. As the British Airways jumbo jet cruised over the never-ending brown, flat land below me I felt quietly confident that I was prepared. Somewhere in the bowels of this Boeing 747 my recently purchased backpack was stuffed with everything I needed:

One khaki shirt with wicking technology designed for hiking in hot weather ($100).
One khaki pants with zip off shorts ($100).
One lightweight pants with a zip-able (and thus pick-pocket proof) pocket ($100).
One Australian outback style sun-hat ($100).
Mosquito net ($40), mosquito repellent and torch ($50).
Oakley sunglasses, specially designed for high altitudes ($300).
Two pair of hiking socks ($50).
One pair of Gore-Tex ‘Mennell’ hiking boots ($150).
One red ‘Lowe Alpine’ Rucksack ($200) and one blue ‘Lowe Alpine’ day pack ($100).
One camera ($250).
One cotton bed sheet ($10).

Six months supply of ‘Larium’ – the most potent anti-malaria tablets on the market, but with the most terrifying side-effects including psychosis and hair loss ($150).

Anti-diarrhea tablets, rehydration sachets and iodine (for purifying water) as well one water bottle with special device for purifying water ($100)

One pair of ‘Birkenstock’ sandals - the sales assistant assured me they were ergonomically designed ($120).

One Lonely Planet India (7th edition 1997) and Lonely Planet South East Asia on a Shoestring (1997). I had already digested and ditched my Lonely Planet ‘Before You Go-India and Asia’ pre-departure guidebook ($100).

Total: $1,670

And I had also all my shots:

Rabies (well you never know!),

Meningitis A and C,

Hepatitis A and B,

Polio, Typhus, Cholera, Tetanus- (I now felt immune to virtually every known disease under the sun).

Total cost of inoculations: ($400).

Comprehensive travel insurance for one year, including emergency helicopter evacuation ($400)

One money belt with $3,000 in travelers cheques, and a return ticket ($1000) all wrapped in plastic to prevent deterioration from sweat

Thanks Lonely Planet Pre Departure Guide!

Yes, I was now ready to risk life and limb exploring the subcontinent, to leave behind the trappings of my comfortable life back home, to venture forth and see the world. I scoffed at those who would not dare leave their 9-5 desk jobs, abandon material comforts for a life on the road and do something really different rather than head to Ibiza for another dull and predictable holiday. I was on the cusp of becoming a traveler, someone who was windswept and interesting, with exotic tales of adventure, daring, and exploration. I would do it differently. The small world of Cork had choked me for too long, I had dared to dream, to realize my thirst for freedom.
As the 747 touched down on the runway of the ‘Indira Ghandi International Airport’ outside Delhi I was gripped with paranoia. Warnings and advice from the Lonely Planet Pre-Departure Guide assaulted my cortex, a menagerie of cautionary tales, culture shock and medical horror stories. But one warning rose above the clamor in my mind and seized hold of my newly born traveler consciousness: ‘don’t get ripped off!’ I felt armed to the teeth, ready for any eventuality, but if my new-found traveler acumen was to grow in fertile ground then the first test was to make it to Paharganj without getting ripped off. I had US $50 in my pocket to change at the airport. (Don’t take out travelers checks in front of others at the airport). Thanks Lonely Planet Pre Departure Guide.

As I exited customs I had to walk past an array of currency exchanges with suspicious looking men, whose smiles made them look even more suspicious. They tapped on the window ‘change money sir, taxi sir, hotel accommodation?’ I was a modern day Odysseus resisting the call of the sirens as they tried to lure me to my doom on the rocks of deception. I changed my US$50 and from within the airport I waited for the crowds to disperse. (The Pre-Departure guide mentioned this as a good tactic as it allows the other people to get mobbed outside the airport door). I met an English guy, Ron, who had just discovered that his camera had been stolen. He had put it into the top pocket of his rucksack and it had gone missing somewhere between London and Delhi. (Thanks again to the Pre-Departure Guide, mine was safely in my daypack on board the flight). We agreed to share a cab. Initially I did want to get a local bus but, since it was a stifling 43 degrees Celsius sharing a cab was a reasonable compromise on my first day in India. It cost 400 rupees to go to Paharganj and we bargained him down from 600 rupees so it felt somewhat like a deal. As we got into the tiny cab I kept my rucksack with me but was wondering why there were two men in the front seat, are they going to rob us? The friendly passenger asked me ‘first time in India?’ No I replied, second time (Thanks Pre-Departure Guide!). Never let the locals know that you’re a clueless beginner). I was already soaked in sweat. It was midday, in Delhi, in June, and I felt disappointed that my specially designed khaki clothes with wicking technology weren’t keeping me bone dry. As I chain-smoked in the back of the cab my mouth became even drier. The friendly passenger offered me some bottled water – ‘drink drink’ he implored. It was sound advice considering the sweltering heat and my parched tongue, but the advice of my Pre-Departure guide reminded me not to accept bottled water from strangers. What if the water is spiked, full of drugs, I could wake up several hours later in some
back-alley, the unwitting victim of a scam with my trip ruined before it had even begun. My pride
destroyed in one fell swoop, I politely declined, but he must have thought I was mad. I was
drenched in sweat, my eyes were stinging and I could barely talk with my parched palate.

We were let out at the side of the road about a 15 minute walk from Paharganj. We
meekly protested but the driver and his friendly passenger assured us that Paharganj was just
around the corner. So we humped it down the road, wondering why every rickshaw driver was
pulling up next to us and asking us if we wanted a rickshaw. Why won’t they leave us alone I
thought, what do they want from me? I had my Australian outback hat on, and with my khaki
clothes they must have thought the British were staging a colonial comeback. I resembled a cross
between Indiana Jones and Sir David Livingston. When we got to Paharganj one boy asked me
whether I was from Hollywood. Jesus! Did I look that conspicuous? I thought that the clothes I
bought in the specially designated travelers’ section of the sports shop back home would be
perfectly suitable, but maybe I had to reassess things. We stopped to get a coke. I was parched
but reluctantly paid the 10 rupees for my coke. I must be getting overcharged, I thought. I had
the name of a guesthouse my friend Jenny gave me back in Cork, Hotel Delhi, the cheapest place
to stay in Paharganj, but I couldn’t tell when the street ended and the ‘Hotel’ began. They
seemed to merge into each other a sort of ‘third world’ version of Umberto Boccioni’s painting
‘La Strada Entra Nella Casa’. Me and Dave shared a room. It was a dark hotel and the room
had a tiny window with thick iron bars. By this stage Dave was so hot that he was convinced he
had already contracted malaria. The street outside terrified me: skinny children, cows, chaotic
traffic, and an inescapable feeling that one was a shining beacon of whiteness which acted as a
magnet to those brown skinned people who all seemed to want something from you. As I sat
down for some dinner in the hotel, I saw some Snickers bars and they seemed to satisfy my desire
for safe familiarity. Dave’s malaria panic had abated somewhat when he read the thermometer:
the temperature had dipped to a mild 38C by evening. As I began to collect my senses I realized
I was in the midst of cool people, their clothes looked ragged, yet stylish, dreadlocks were in,
tattoos too and I quickly realized that if I were to fit in here and be taken seriously as a traveler
then I needed to go shopping!
In one of the opening paragraphs of this dissertation I argued that the idea of taking a year out to travel suggests an almost ontological separation between ‘real’ life back home and life ‘on the road’, one which animates and informs contemporary constructions and practices of backpacking as a form of travel. Furthermore, I argued that by examining backpacking travel as one way of accumulating and consuming cultural and symbolic capital apart from the usual settings of home and work rather than as some necessary ‘break’ from it all, I could consider the off-the-beaten-track travel as one way in which a certain lifestyle is produced, consumed, and accumulated away from home and apart from their everyday lives of work and leisure. As the above narrative illustrates clearly, taking time out to travel the world is an expensive and costly endeavor and thus there must be an acknowledgement of the pre-departure investment at play. I was lucky to have a good paying job where I could save quite a lot of money over the course of one year. Regardless of whether one’s travel experiences can engender what Beck refers to as a ‘cosmopolitan vision’, the more important question pertains to who can afford to travel in the first place.

The discourse of travel employed by both backpackers and the ‘travel industry’, of which Lonely Planet is an outstanding example, tend to naturalize and individualize social privileges and global inequalities. The desire and ability to travel and see the world is not a spontaneously occurring thing but rather a socially and culturally engineered desire that is intimately connected to an extensive post-fordist tourist economy and to historically well-beaten tracks of the former British Empire. My research and personal experiences shows that the discourse of travel masks privileges of mobility and global inequality through an individualizing and naturalizing discourse that locates the ability and desire to travel within the personality of the individual rather than within social structures of class and status and geopolitical relations of domination. According to
Judith Adler (1989), for example, the expression ‘wanderlust’ originated in Germany in the 1920s as a psychiatric label to identify the class anxiety surrounding the mobility of the unemployed and was used by the state to medically regulate and control their movement. Today the term ‘wanderlust’ is a common expression found in popular discourse, as we have just seen above, to describe the ‘natural’ desire of people to travel the world. Although there is a world of difference between the two groups in question, the relevant commonality between them consists of how ‘wanderlust’, understood as a sign of an individual pathology or an individual ‘normal’ desire to travel, articulates how the socially mediated mobility of groups of people can be reworked and recoded through individualizing strategies. The discourse and practice of a consumer-based ‘lifestyle’ forms the largely invisible material and discursive foundation through which travel is typically understood both by backpackers and Lonely Planet as the expression and realization of ‘individual’ desire. This lifestyle ethos allows the context of unequal global relations in which backpacking takes place to be re-coded as individual decisions that are made by backpackers around the ethical consumption of culture and the negotiation of difference between travelers and tourists. An interesting illustration of this idea of travel as lifestyle is captured in a recent article by Nupur Gogia (2006) which compares the travel experiences of a group of Canadian backpackers from Toronto who travel to Mexico to a group of Mexican seasonal workers who travel to Toronto. Of course, there is a world of difference between the two groups’ experiences of travel: when discussing travel it is important to recognize that who travels where and under what circumstances makes all the difference. Backpackers and the travel industry celebrate travel as unimpeded and leisurely because the world really is open to them in every way.
Revisiting Central Themes and Findings

In Chapter 1 ‘The Historical Genesis of the Tourist/Traveler Distinction’, I explored the cultural and discursive foundations of the tourist/traveler distinction using key historical texts in order to better understand why and how backpacking today as a form of ‘travel’ is typically articulated as an _educative, authentic, and cultivating_ practice. Rather than conceptualize backpacking and its culture of travel as an entirely new phenomenon, as the latest niche market in a heterogeneous tourism industry, I historicized the most pertinent aspects of a backpacking culture, whose adherents _practice travel rather than tourism_. Focusing mainly on the period between 1800 and 1900, when modern tourism emerged as a discrete and culturally identifiable practice in Europe, I drew upon the most pertinent discourses that helped to shape European ideas about travel. In particular, I examined European discourses of Romanticism, including romantic primitivism, Enlightenment, and education. By examining the historical genesis of the tourist/traveler distinction, I argued that we can better understand how the identities and practices of contemporary backpackers, as self-defined travelers, draw upon well-established cultural repertoires of ‘anti-tourist’ discourse and discourses of travel that allow for the distinction between travelers and tourists to be meaningfully utilized and recognized by backpackers today, a theme further examined developed in Chapter 2 ‘Legends of Lonely Planet’. The centrality and ubiquity of the tourist/traveler distinction allowed me to better understand how guidebook companies like Lonely Planet have drawn upon and used these discourses in order to brand what it does as travel rather than as tourism, and thus to further enhance and legitimate its authority and symbolic capital as ‘travel experts’ with respect to its readers. In Chapter 1, I also examined and analyzed two of the most well-known and popular brand of guidebooks, those of John Murray and Karl Baedeker who were both early entrepreneurs of independent travel. I argued that the guidebooks of both Murray and Baedeker were instrumental in helping to popularize and
institutionalize discourses of cultivation as well as particular modes of seeing that signaled the emergence of the independent traveler as a recognizable and antithetical figure to the tourist, themes exemplified further in Chapter 3 ‘The Beaten Track’, and Chapter 4, ‘Off the Beaten Track’, through in-depth interviews with backpackers ‘on the road’.

The primary focus of Chapter 2 ‘Legends of Lonely Planet’ was on the emergence of the Lonely Planet guidebook and the different textual strategies employed to secure its authority and popularity among independent travelers. More specifically, employing the work of Dorothy Smith and Roland Barthes, I examined why and how the Lonely Planet guidebook, *as a specific type of ‘active text’ or ‘performative genre,’* became such an authoritative voice in the travel industry and a popular choice of travel within the backpacker world. I examined how, as ‘enlightenment texts’, both the encyclopedia and guidebook share the same goals of education, enlightenment and civic cultivation for their readers and then I provided a detailed analysis of how Lonely Planet guidebooks pursue these goals by reproducing these ideological codes of the tourist/traveler distinction and educational self cultivation. I examined how the Lonely Planet guidebook represent people and places as objects of knowledge rather than subjects of history and explored how these guidebooks make knowable and comprehensible these places and people through a variety of means. I conceptualized Lonely Planet guidebooks as ‘cartographic legends’ to places which are off-the-beaten-track by acting as ‘ocular devices’ that render visible the distinction between authentic and inauthentic places. I contextualized these cartographic legends within broader historical and geographical forms of mapping and knowing colonies of the former British Empire. I explored the discourse of travel and the anti-tourist discourse articulated by Lonely Planet and how these discourses provide further authority and legitimacy to Lonely
Planet’s brand of travel through the deployment of various writing and reading strategies in their guidebooks.

In Chapter 3 ‘The Beaten Track’, I focused on the dominant characterizations of tourists and tourism narrated by my interviewees. I explored how their discourses of travel are tied into their perceptions of tourists and locals across all three sites. Through interviews with backpackers, and ethnographic observations in all three sites, I examined how the tourist and the beaten track of tourism that they travel on were spoken about, experienced, and characterized by backpackers. Then I examined how these travelers attempted to stay off and away from the beaten track of tourism by differentiating and distancing themselves from holidaying tourists.

Focusing on India in particular, I examined the ‘threat’ that tourists and tourism posed both to the places that these travelers were travelling through as well as to the ‘locals’ that lived there. I also analyzed how Lonely Planet guidebooks occupied an ambiguous and contingent place in the discourse of my interviewees, and how Lonely Planet guidebooks help to facilitate the independence and cultivation of their travel experiences. I explored how Lonely Planet guidebooks are used and read in the ethnographic field by many of these backpackers in ways that were often surprising, illuminating and contradictory. I found that my interviewees used the guidebook as much to navigate through ‘non-places’ as to guide them to authentic places.

Finally in Chapter 4 ‘Off the Beaten Track’, I drew upon my interviews and ethnographic observations to examine what kinds of ‘off the beaten track’ places and interactions were actually experienced by travelers in all three sites. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu in particular, I detailed and examined the types of cultural and symbolic capital accumulated, circulated and produced within a backpacking ‘community of practice’. Employing Marcel Mauss’s concept of ‘the gift’ (1990) I analyzed stories they told me of their traveler experiences.
of authentic interactions with locals. Again the primary focus of that chapter was India, my main ethnographic site. I examined how these western backpackers narrated their experiences and situated their own geographical subjectivity as westerners within broader historical discourses of India. I argued that for these western travelers India acted as a ‘heterotopia of compensation’ (Foucault 1986), a place that offered ‘salvation’ through the problematic consumption of difference. The terms under which this difference is articulated were also addressed. I examined instances when ‘the beaten track’ and its antithesis were experienced in paradoxical and contradictory ways by these travelers. In this chapter I also attempted to bring the travelling body back into tourist theory. Through stories of risk and danger, I analyzed why India continued to be constructed and experienced as the litmus test for the western traveler, here drawing comparisons with stories of experiences off-the-beaten-track in Ireland and Canada. Finally I analyzed three stories narrated by my interviewees in each of the three sites where their Lonely Planet guidebook has facilitated their own off-the-beaten-track adventures.

This thesis began by questioning the taken-for-granted status of travel among both backpackers and independent guidebooks such as Lonely Planet. In an attempt to develop a more in-depth understanding of the meaning and value of travel for backpackers I have brought historical, geographical and theoretical perspectives to bear on the discourses emphasized by both guidebooks and backpackers on the road. Within the context of backpacking, ‘travel’ is a complex, shifting and at times contradictory discourse and practice. I have argued that despite this complexity, it is possible to identify several predominant characteristics that have historically congealed in making travel such a valuable and esteemed practice in the West. Paradoxically, travel has accrued high status in contradistinction to its apparent antithesis, tourism. It was this initial paradox that provided the central problematic for this thesis, namely,
how do backpackers manage and maintain this distinction in light on an ever increasing massification of backpacking?

Partly inspired by my own experiences of backpacking in India several years ago, I wanted to provide a more informed historical and geographical contextualization of the above problematic, in an attempt to better understand how particular geographies are considered ‘better’ and more challenging to travel in than others. By having a multi-sited ethnography in three different but nonetheless popular backpacker destinations, I sought to answer the question of what makes India in particular such a special place in the world of backpacking travel. By developing a geographically comparative study that interviewed backpackers who self-identify as ‘travelers’ in Canada and Ireland as well, I was able to paint a more complete picture of why India is still considered a ‘litmus test’ for off-the-beaten-track travel as well as to demonstrate the ubiquity of the tourist/traveler distinction in diverse geographical sites. Consequently, I sought to explore how discourses of travel, in this case the discourse of travel of contemporary backpackers and travel companies like Lonely Planet, are intimately connected with the production and consumption of particular geographies where the promise of travel as an institution of Bildung, a university of life education, could most favorably be realized. In doing so, I argued that backpacking travel off the beaten track, in the ‘third world’, and in particular in India, is not just a matter of economics and budget but also a continuation and reproduction, as well as a modification and variation of dominant ideas and tropes about these places and the ‘locals’ who live there. In short, I examined how, in the process of ‘rediscovering’ India as an ideal travel destination, both Lonely Planet and the multitudes of backpackers who visit there actively reproduce ‘ruling relations’ in the form of unequal economic relations as well as some old fashioned colonial tropes about the locals. Backpacking travel is not simply an example of a
post-fordist tourist industry but also a continuation and reconfiguration of historical and geographical forms of textually and discursively mediated power.

Although Ireland and Canada were considered here as distinct destinations in their own right, my primary analytical purpose in examining these sites was to shed comparative light upon India as one of the most enduring and popular backpacker destinations. On the one hand, backpackers in both Ireland and Canada were also seeking out off-the-beaten-track experiences in the same way as those travelling in India. The primary lens through which I examined these ideas was provided by the tourist/traveler distinction along with the historical discourse of travel that I argued was the primary mechanism through which the perceptions of backpackers in India in particular were shaped. Through in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation, I wanted to show how the tourist/traveler distinction becomes a mechanism through which the more ‘authentic’ travel experiences of backpackers in opposition to the more fake and shallow experiences of tourists provide valuable forms of cultural and symbolic capital which can be produced, accumulated and circulated during their trips. This distinction allowed many backpackers to understand their own experiences of places like India to be conceived of a more penetrating and real in contrast to those of tourists and as a consequence to inform a prestigious evaluation of their own status as travelers. By analyzing backpacking as an example of a post-fordist tourism industry I have tried to retain an analysis of backpacking as inherently a tourist phenomenon while also trying to understand how, despite its decidedly anti-tourist discourse, it attempts to renew the world as a symbolic and cultural resource that can be accumulated and articulated by backpackers. Also I argued that this tourist/traveler distinction, with its anti-tourist discourse, has helped to situate both the Lonely Planet as well as the practices of backpackers outside of, and apart from, a much maligned tourism industry.
In taking a historical approach, I argued that the discourse of travel today, articulated by both backpackers and travel companies such as Lonely Planet, rely and draw upon older predominantly European discourses of travel and tourism that have helped to shape the meaning and significance of self-identified travelers, and structure how they interact with and navigate the places and people they encounter. I argued that when backpackers today evoke ‘travel’ and the figure of the traveler they are relying upon historically well established codes, meanings, and practices that have become relatively stabilized over the course of the previous two centuries and beyond. It is precisely the historical precursors to and contemporary articulation of these discourses of travel that articulate the central problematic of this thesis. Contrary to the claims that travel is an ethically superior practice which requires a particular type of person, backpacking has become a well established travel industry with well-beaten tracks of its own, but which remain largely invisible through a branded mythology of individualized travel. I argue that the distinction made by backpackers between travelers and tourists should be understood as a struggle to define and monopolize the value of certain experiences and practices as intrinsically better than other tourists, rather than an expression of the intrinsic quality of individual travelers who are ‘naturally’ better equipped to appreciate and understand culture. The traveler/tourist distinction is thus one of the ways that the cultural capital of backpackers as middle class tourists is kept intact despite the massification of backpacking.

To fully understand the tourist/traveler distinction, I examined the contemporary discourse and practice of backpacking travel as both an expression and an example of a post-fordist tourism phenomenon which is mediated through consumption. Backpacking must also be understood as a discourse of travel, with all of its accompanying historical meanings about education, self-cultivation, and individuality. The paradoxical contradiction that backpackers
face is that they are tourists in many of their practices, yet also travelers who consider what they do and who they are as the very opposite of tourism and the tourist. In other words, backpackers are ‘travelers’ who are always also post-fordist tourists. Of course, I do not use ‘tourist’ and ‘tourism’ here in quite the same way that it is used as a rhetorical strategy of denigration by backpackers. Instead I use these terms as theoretical and methodological tools and thus without any of the attendant moral baggage that they typically carry. As someone who went ‘travelling’ when I was in my early twenties, and who was then very much not a tourist too, I want to maintain a distance from these kinds of rhetorical strategies so commonly heard among backpackers, cultural critics, and in some instances, scholars of tourism as well.

**Directions for Future Research**

This thesis started out with questions that grew out of my own experiences of travel and travails in India, Ireland and Canada. In one respect, my research is a return ticket to each place in that I was able to revisit India and backpacking almost 10 years after I had begun my own backpacking trip, and also to see my hometown of Cork and my adopted city of Vancouver with new eyes. Several questions stayed with me after I had finished my own trip, unanswered or unanswerable at the time. Having read much of the literature on tourism and independent travel, I consider this thesis as an attempt to find a more intellectually satisfying answer to these questions. My research is qualitative and interpretive, and thus I make no claims of providing a statistically representative sample of backpackers. However, I do make general claims about backpacking and travel culture which are based in part on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the textual analysis of travel literature (especially guidebooks); although I accept that my thoughts and view of these worlds are as mediated and partial as those people whom I interview. In accepting the partiality of this vision and the multiplicity of possible perspectives, (and thus rejecting the possibility and desirability of absolute objectivity in qualitative
investigations) I consider my task as a writer is to collect these fragments, to recognize the commonalities and differences that exist in a heterogeneous and messy ‘field’. My aim has been to somehow piece them together in an imperfect jigsaw that can show how they do not fit easily together in some places even as common themes emerge when they are assembled in a particular way. I have gained a different perspective on my own experiences as a result of this research through biographical hindsight, intellectual reflection, and a wide reading of diverse literatures and multi-disciplinary research that deal with many of the same problems that I encountered in a ‘raw’ form while travelling.

When I originally went backpacking in 2000 the internet was only then beginning to develop into the global media leviathan it is today. Although a mere seven to eight years had passed since I was in India, when I returned in 2007 I saw how vast and pervasive access to the internet had become. When I originally outlined my research proposal in 2007, I was unaware of how the internet had changed many aspects of backpacking, not in the least Lonely Planet as a company. Although there was internet access in Paharganj and Ladakh, in 2000 it was slower, more expensive, and less pervasive than in 2007. I especially remember Leh, where there were just two internet cafes and the dial-up connection was periodic at best. On one occasion it took me over one hour to write and send just one email to a friend in Ireland! Internet use and cell phone access has certainly changed how backpackers interact with each other, as well as how information is circulated. Nowadays, if you meet someone it is very easy to stay in touch and arrange to meet up again in another place somewhere in India or elsewhere. Another change I noticed was in the use of cell phones and laptop computers by backpackers. I met many backpackers who had their own cell phones and thus could maintain a more constant contact.
with friends and family back home, as well as with friends who were traveling in other parts of India.

Apart from these changes the most significant change is in relation to Lonely Planet itself as a guidebook company. Particularly interesting is that the guides can be purchased and downloaded in discreet sections. So, for example, to plan a trip to India that includes only the major cities of Delhi and Mumbai, one can purchase and download just those two sections without having to waste time and money on an entire guidebook. In some respects my own focus on the textual mediation of travel through guidebooks already seems slightly outdated. However, in light of the fact that virtually all of my interviewees in India had purchased a Lonely Planet guidebook, I can say with some confidence that the printed guidebook is here to stay for the foreseeable future. The inside back cover of the *Lonely Planet India* (2007) guidebook is interesting, as it is an advertisement for Lonely Planet’s website. Almost the entire page is covered with little snippets of advice with several highlighted in bold. The following is a sequential list of highlighted snippets, beginning from the top left of the page.

Read hotel reviews, buy books, get the lowdown, share a story, get inspired, check warnings, book flights, meet the locals, get DVDs, wrestle monkeys! download guides, read hints, make lists, find road trip buddies, sell stuff, brag to mates, talk to travelers, take the plunge, save some money, recommend, buy a gift, get advice (on everything), plan adventures, book a bed, download guides. (*Lonely Planet India*, Inside back cover 2007)

Underneath this list is ‘Lonely Planet.com’ with the caption ‘Almost too much information’.

Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis to fully explore the textual mediation of travel via websites, this caption is especially interesting. Judging by the above list of possibilities Lonely Planet is now trying to encompass the entire range and scope of possible consumer desires, including wrestling monkeys! One can now make bookings via the Lonely Planet website which is a significant departure for them. In future research about backpacking it would
be interesting to examine how the textual mediation of off-the-beaten-track destinations have moved from guidebooks and word of mouth based to an increasingly digitally mediated phenomenon.

Although not a focus of this thesis, the now booming industry at work in universities and elsewhere places more and more importance on the long-term educational civic and professional value of travel for educated young people. Advocates of the value of travel, especially those who travel and work in the third world in volunteer programs, often uncritically assume that such experiences are inherently beneficial, both to those university students who partake in such projects and the local communities who are said to benefit in return. Many of these programs explicitly promise a personally transformative and socially beneficial experience for those students involved which is structured through a discourse of ‘the gift’. For example, in one postcard brochure advertizing the Go Global program at UBC we find the following comment from a past participant: ‘I met a lot of people in Europe. I even encountered myself’. On another postcard a quote from Robert Maynard Hutchins (a famous educator) states ‘A world community can exist only with world communication…this means common understanding, common tradition, common ideas, and common ideals’ (UBC Go Global 2008). The students get valuable work and volunteer experience that can be used on their CV and the local community receives extra help in a variety of ways. One final example from the Go Global Website appears to closely reiterate the cosmopolitan promise of travel discussed earlier by Tony Wheeler: ‘Our programs offer students transformational, experiential learning experiences that promote global awareness, meaningful engagement and cross-cultural understanding’. Although I did not explicitly address and explore the occupational background of my interviewees, the research

54 http://www.students.ubc.ca/global/index.cfm
findings of O’Reilly (2006) suggest that such an exploration would support the argument about
the value of the symbolic and cultural capital accumulated by backpackers on the road when
backpackers return home, a point already suggested by Rick, the Dutch backpacker I interviewed
in Vancouver, when he noted the potential value of his travel skills in the labor marketplace.
Important to note that in the more recent editions of Lonely Planet, Let’s Go, and Rough Guide
guidebooks, we also find an increasing amount of information on volunteer programs and
charities.

In view of the taken-for-granted higher cultural status of travel and the accompanying
meanings that orbit around established ideas of educational self-cultivation, self-transformation,
enlightenment, and character formation, it may come as no surprise to see how universities in
particular seek to capitalize on the value of travel within an educational context. One of the most
common catchphrases in Canadian universities today in relation to travel is ‘global citizenship’.
The combination of volunteering in a typically third world country as a practice of cultivating
global citizens is initially a seductive one. However in light of the critique of this thesis I would
ask: what exactly do these aspiring global citizens learn when they are on their six week trips in
places like Guatemala? In this context, is travel, study and volunteer work in third world
countries an automatically educational and enlightening experience, or does it also reproduce
ingrained ideas and discourses about the ‘help’ needed by others? An interesting feature of these
global citizen programs is that they too draw upon many of the discourses of travel that I have
explored in this thesis, and that in a more direct and obvious fashion these travel experiences are
then converted into valuable forms of cultural capital in the labor and lifestyle marketplace. In
other words independence, flexibility and open-ness to difference are increasingly desirable traits
within certain sectors of the labor market today. For example, the UBC Go Global program
states that its ambassadors can ‘reveal the academic and personal benefits of learning abroad’\textsuperscript{55} to potential Go Global applicants. Furthermore, leadership positions are available to those who have already completed the Go Global program where ‘we offer a variety of volunteer and leadership opportunities for you to get involved and gain resume-building skills’\textsuperscript{56}. Although I have hinted that backpacking and travel are a more implicit and indirect institution of cosmopolitanism, a more institutionally focused research project could place greater emphasis on these themes. Specifically, students might be interviewed before, during, and after their trip as a way of more precisely analyzing what they learned while volunteering abroad. Because many of these countries are characterized as ‘developing’ nations, the discourse and practice of national development rather than individual development could be the primary focus.

As I noted in the introduction the idea of taking a year out to travel suggests an almost ontological separation between ‘real’ life back home and life ‘on the road’, one which animates and informs contemporary constructions and practices of backpacking as a form of travel. I have consequently examined backpacking travel as one way of accumulating and consuming cultural and symbolic capital apart from the usual settings of home and work rather than as some necessary ‘break’ from it all. However, while I have examined how the off-the-beaten-track travel experiences of backpackers are one way in which a certain lifestyle is produced, consumed, and accumulated away from home and apart from their everyday lives of work and leisure, in light of my comments above regarding the possible connections between travel, education and the labor marketplace, it is possible that those backpackers who are on the road

\textsuperscript{55} http://www.students.ubc.ca/global/learning-abroad/leadership-opportunities/ambassador-program/

\textsuperscript{56} http://www.students.ubc.ca/global/learning-abroad/leadership-opportunities/
may find that their culturally valuable experiences may, in turn, become important potential sources of economic capital when they return home.
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# Appendix I: Summary and Breakdown of Interviewee Information

## India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Time Spent Travelling at time of interview/planned overall time</th>
<th>Guidebook</th>
<th>Travelling Alone or With Others</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Shoe Designer</td>
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<td>5 months/1 year</td>
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<td>Alone</td>
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<td>3 months/6 months</td>
<td>Lonely Planet India</td>
<td>Anthony, Sally and Gary</td>
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<td>3 months/6 months</td>
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<td>Guidebook</td>
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<td>Parshad</td>
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<td>U.S.A.</td>
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<td>Franca</td>
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<td>Chile</td>
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<td>One month/ 4 months</td>
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<td>U.K.</td>
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<td>2 months/5 months</td>
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<td>Marcos</td>
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<td>Software Design</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Anton</td>
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<td>Financial Manager</td>
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<td>1 month/1 month</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>University student</td>
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**Ireland**

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<td>Sarah</td>
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<td>2 months/3 months</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Jenny</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Quebec, Canada</td>
<td>University Student</td>
<td>1 week/1 year working</td>
<td>Rough Guide to Ireland</td>
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Appendix II: Ethics and Consent

Script for Initial Contact

My name is William Flynn and I am a PhD student in Sociology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I am conducting research on backpacking and guidebooks. I would like to talk with you about your experiences of backpacking and your use of guidebooks. If you are willing, I would also like to conduct a formal, tape-recorded interview at a later date. I will ask questions about your personal history, your travel experiences, the places you have visited as well as the reasons that led you to engage in backpacking. I will make every effort to keep your identity and your participation in this project confidential.

While I hope you will assist me with this project, you are under no obligation to do so. If you do decide to participate and later change your mind, you may withdraw entirely from the project without consequences. I will destroy any written or taped interviews if you request me to do so. I would like to meet with you in a location in which you feel the most comfortable: this could be the lobby of the hostel where you are staying, a coffee shop or a restaurant.

If you agree to a formal interview, you will need to sign a consent form. This consent form sets out your rights and provides contact information for the professor in charge of my study and officials at my university if you have questions about this research project. If you wish, I can provide a copy of the consent form now so that you have a clearer idea of the project and your involvement.

Please take a day or two to consider whether you want to participate in my project. We can meet at a later date, so that you can tell me whether you accept or not, or I can give you my email address and you can contact me to let me know what you have decided. Do you have any questions?
Appendix III: Interview Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Sociology
6303 N. W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, B.C. Canada: V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604-822-2878
Fax: 604-822-6161
www.soci.ubc.ca

Consent Form:

Title: The ‘Work’ of Travel: Backpackers, Guidebooks and the Production of Place and Non-Place

Principal Investigator: Thomas Kemple, Associate Professor
Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia
Telephone: (604) 822 3579
Email: kemple@interchange.ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: William Flynn, PhD Student
Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia
Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Purpose:
I, William Flynn, graduate student at the University of British Columbia, am conducting research for the completion of my PhD thesis on the topic of backpacking in Vancouver, Canada, New Delhi, India and Cork, Republic of Ireland. The purpose of this study is: to understand the role that guidebooks play for backpackers who are using them during their travels.

Study Procedures:
You are invited to participate in my research. Should you agree to participate I, William Flynn, will conduct an interview with you. The interview should take one to two hours approximately, and will include questions about your personal experiences, as well as the motivations that led you to begin backpacking. If you agree the interview will be tape-recorded, and you may ask that the voice recorder be turned off at any time. You will be given the opportunity to review the interview transcript. Your participation in this study is voluntary, you may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
Confidentiality:
Every effort will be made to keep the confidentiality of your identity. Your name will not be recorded in my notes and I will instead use a pseudonym, both in my notes and thesis. All voice recordings and notes will be kept in my password secured computer hard disk. Only my supervisor, Dr. Thomas Kemple and I will have access to the raw data and notes. The transcripts of the interviews will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in my supervisor’s office, Dr. Thomas Kemple, at UBC, data that I will keep only for use in further academic research relating exclusively with backpacking I will use the data for my PhD thesis, and potentially for scholarly publications.

Remuneration/Compensation:
Your participation and time will not be monetarily compensated.

Contact for Information about the Study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please contact William Flynn at [email protected]. You may also want to contact my thesis supervisor, Professor Thomas Kemple, at kemple@interchange.ubc.ca

Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services in Canada by phone at 1.604.822.8598 or by email at rsil@ors.ubc.ca

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences to your employment, class standing, or reputation.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

__________________________________________
Subject Signature   Date

__________________________________________
Printed Name of the Subject Signing Above
Appendix IV: Interview Recruitment Materials

Poster for Vancouver

Backpackers/Travelers!

Have you ever wanted to share your thoughts, experiences and stories about traveling?

❖ My name is Billy Flynn and I am a sociologist doing my doctoral research on backpacking/independent travel

❖ My study is based in three countries, Canada, India and Ireland, so if you want your travel experiences to be part of an international research project, well, here’s your opportunity!

So, if you are currently traveling through Vancouver and you are using a guidebook as part of your trip and think you might be interested in being interviewed about your travel experiences then...

I will be doing interviews, here in Vancouver, from the 20\textsuperscript{th} - 28\textsuperscript{th} of June 2007

Interested? Then email me: to arrange an interview time and place of your convenience.

Your participation would require a maximum of 1-2 hours of your time and would involve a tape-recorded interview in a location of your choice. All interviews are confidential and your anonymity is assured. I will be more than happy to answer any questions or concerns you have concerning any aspect of the above info.

Unfortunately I cannot offer any payment for your time (I’m on a tight budget too!) but I would be more than happy to email you a copy of the interview. \textit{This research is not in any way connected to any commercial uses}, it is done through The Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia, right here in Vancouver.
Travellers!!

- If you are travelling in Ireland and are using a guidebook as part of your travels then you could participate in an interview about your experiences here (as well as your experiences of other countries you have travelled in).

- I am writing my sociology thesis about peoples’ experiences of travel and I am looking for travelers to interview about their thoughts and experiences of travelling.

- I have already interviewed travellers in Canada and India and my final stop is in Ireland so if you have an hour or so to spare then email me: All interviews would be at a place of your choice. Feel free to email me with any questions you have.

- I’m from Cork so I can give some good local tips about Cork and Ireland too!

A complimentary coffee or beer to all participants!

(I WILL BE AVAILABLE UNTIL THE 15TH JANUARY 2008)
Appendix V: Interview Schedule

Here and Now

1. First Name, Age, Gender, Country of Origin, Occupation
2. Time spent in Vancouver/Canada, Cork/Ireland, India
3. First Time Here?
4. What brought you to Ireland/Canada/India?
5. Where did you go when you were here?
6. What did you do?

Travel Biography

1. First time travel experience
2. How long have you (and will you be) travelling for?
3. Favorite/least favorite places
4. Which countries have you travelled in?
5. Plans for future travel?
6. What’s your favorite travel story and why?

Backpacking, Tourism and Travel

1. Do you see yourself as different/the same as tourists?
2. How is backpacking different/the same as tourism?
3. Do you think traveling involves, or must involve a lot of hardship?
4. Are there any ‘essential’ skills backpackers should learn when backpacking?
5. Do you view, or do you anticipate viewing, life back home in a different light after traveling?
6. Do you think that backpacking/traveling has any negative aspects to it?
7. Do you think that ‘the locals’ might have problems with their town becoming popular with backpackers?

Guidebooks/Internet

1. Which guidebook are you currently using?
2. Have you used other series of guidebooks? If so how do they compare?
3. What parts of the guidebook have you read/used? What sections are most/least useful/of interest to you?
4. When was the first time you used a guidebook and why?
5. Have you consulted guidebooks/websites before you began travelling? If so which ones and were they useful/not useful?
6. Do guidebooks influence your decision to go somewhere specific?
7. Do you think the internet helps to facilitate traveling? If so in what ways exactly?