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The museum of the personal- the souvenir and nostalgia

*The museum*

*Of the personal –*

*Souvenirs and nostalgia*

A thesis for submission to the degree of  
Masters of Arts (Research)  
Queensland University of Technology  
Tracey Benson, 2001

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my supervisors—Donal Fitzpatrick, Toni Ross (in the initial stages) and Andrew McNamara—their opinions, encouragement and support have been invaluable to the process of mapping this project.

Thank you to my family, particularly my partner John and my son Lukas for their patience, especially when I seemed continually attached to the computer. Linda Carroli has also been a continual source of support, as well as a springboard for ideas, through our ongoing discussions on various topics. Other people who have also encouraged my focus on these pursuits have been JM John Armstrong, Paul Carter, Margaret Maynard and Paul Brown.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers—Mary and Alice, who have both shared with me many stories of their past, as a way of encouraging and inspiring me to follow my dreams. I feel immensely privileged to have shared these times with these amazing women and have gained much from learning from their experiences.

**Keywords:**

Souvenir, keepsake, memento, nostalgia, fetishism, commodity fetishism, memory, identity, autobiography, home, diaspora, tourism, travel

**Abstract:**

This research paper examines the role of the souvenir in terms of social relations and notions of self-identity and/or autobiography. Many types of souvenir objects (commercial and non-commercial) are explored as being agents that participate in the construction of identity.

Commodity fetishism, nostalgia and fetishism are examined as key elements that define the social relations surrounding the souvenir. The notion of home and family is also explored as a fundamental aspect of how identity is constructed.

**Statement of original ownership:**

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge or belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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## Introduction

The word souvenir conjures immediately images of snow domes and key rings, tea towels and coasters, replications of monuments and sites resized and made portable and available for purchase—a testimony of your visit and experiences. Souvenirs are available wherever tourism and its destinations may be found. Their replicated forms appear in a multitude of contexts that predominately represent sites and events situated away from the everyday domestic space of home. It is widely assumed that souvenirs, (in the systems that give a hierarchy to objects) occupy as position as merely kitsch: the 'bad' and artificial counterpart of tourist art.

In this study, I intend to focus on the souvenir as both the object and subject of inquiry. I will outline the relationship between the mass produced tourist souvenir and its subsequent role as an object of nostalgia, belonging to the private realm of the individual, operating as part of the chronicle of personal history. This essay focuses on the transformation of an object from the state of mass produced consumer item, to occupying a privileged status as a personal possession.

Through an investigation into the social relations that distinguish the souvenir, it is my intention to investigate and define these characteristics to theoretically position the object in relation to its possessor or owner.

Although I am concentrating on the area of personal artifacts or talismans, the phenomena of nostalgia and souvenir culture is not bound by an emphasis on the personal and private context —discussions of their relation to collections, national culture, colonialism and state systems are plentiful.

What we dealing with in the context of this research project is the contingency, which exists between notions of self-identity, temporality and the reality perceived by an individual's experience of a site, which is later represented or substantiated by an object deemed significant. Any number of agents or objects are able to mediate a connection between self and place informs these circumstances. Tim Dant<sup>1</sup> describes the role of the object in these circumstances as a mediating object; "one that carries communications between people—information, emotions, ideas and expressions that could have been communicated by speech, gesture, touch or expression—if the people had been with each other."<sup>2</sup>

In effect, this is both a study of the material and the sociological attributes of these generic souvenir objects. Focus and concentration will be given to how these objects are magically transformed into precious belongings, becoming from that moment, a pathway for the owner to create stories and

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<sup>1</sup> Dant, Tim *Material culture in the social world* Open University Press: Buckingham 1999

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p.153

narratives around their experiences of the past. The origins of the object - its 'creation' as a mediating object, is also taken into account as having a part to play in the sequence of events that occurs in the process of commodity exchange. The role of the fetish in such relations is also a concern in this paper, as there are many implications of fetishism being evident in this strange mix of consumerism, myth, memory and desire.

I am concerned with the transference of signification that occurs at the point of contact, a process that is represented by the financial exchange, and the resulting array of meanings that are attached to these objects, after their status is shifted from commonplace to exclusive by the owner/purchaser. These meanings arise as a result of a complex web of social relations that result in a range of codes and meanings of significance exchanged between objects and individuals.

This project draws its information from a wide range of sources and disciplines including—cultural studies, psychoanalysis, semiotics, aesthetics, Marxism and postcolonial discourse, amongst others. This is due to the diverse proliferation of issues in which this topic is entrenched. My purpose is to present a number of generic tourist objects and experiences as examples, and provide an analysis of the significance of such to the owner or possessor. These examples, presented in the course

of this research will be compared with souvenirs that are acquired through noncommercial means.

This is necessary to successfully deal with the complexity of issues surrounding the souvenir object. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner<sup>3</sup> provide a very useful example of the plethora of issues and discourses in which the souvenir may be addressed from a cultural and historical perspective:

We examine the formation of three parallel discourses about objects, formalised during the second half of the nineteenth century, which continue to inform the thinking of both scholars and consumers about these arts. These three discourses arose from (1) the art historical classification system of fine and applied arts, (2) anthropological theories of the evolution and origins of art, and (3) Victorian responses to the individual production and commoditization (sic) of art.<sup>4</sup>

It is my proposition that though the commodity souvenir and its owner have a relationship that is personal, intimate and invariably nostalgic, it is ultimately tied to economic globalisation through the commodity exchange process. On the one hand, the object is the product of someone's work or labour. Whether modeled in a factory or by hand, it is transformed in the exchange process of capitalism (cash economy)—emerging as having the propensity to present a narrative to the purchaser, as a memento of their holiday away. Once safely home from the tour, the owner can reminisce

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<sup>3</sup> Phillips, R and Steiner, C (Eds.) *Unpacking Culture: art and commodity in the Colonial and postcolonial worlds* (1999) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p.5-6

about their holiday when gazing at, or touching the object, narrating to others the adventures had whilst away. In this state of reverie, the social origins by which it came to be in their possession—the labour, transport and negotiations that defined it as a commodity are oblivious. This history is erased upon the point of exchange.

Souvenirs purchased in the context of mass tourism exemplify, under this axiom, exactly what the tourist on holiday wishes to escape from—work. In other words, whilst the object purchased on holiday is the product of someone else's labour, this meaning is rendered invisible after the point of purchase, only the narrative constructed by the tourist/purchaser survives this process of exchange. The remaining story, which calls the object into being as a mediating object, is an outsider's experience and perception of the experience of a site, though it does still has the capacity to carry communications, constructed by the contact made whilst on the tour.

Phillips and Steiner argue that:

Throughout history, the evidence of objects has been central to the telling of cross-cultural encounters with distant worlds or remote others. The materiality and physical presence of the object make it a uniquely persuasive witness to the existence of realities outside the compass of an individual's or a community's experience.<sup>5</sup>

What people bring to these inanimate objects in terms of meaning is a prime focus of concentration in this inquiry. By corresponding to these

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid p.3

social relationships, it is my intention to prove that the souvenir is incapable, beyond its material history, of having significance or meaning without a connection to an owner. As time goes on its importance will always be relation to that moment in the context of memory, as this is the point of origin.

In terms of where this project is situated in relation to other scholarly inquiries, besides the previously mentioned Unpacking culture and Material Culture in the social world, Susan Stewart provided the most in-depth analysis of the souvenir in On longing. Stewart applies a variety of methods to outline the position and function of the souvenir. She relies most heavily on two methodologies in her analysis of the souvenir, phenomenology and psychoanalysis. By her use of phenomenology, she is able to chart a course for the relation of the body to time, experience and memory; by utilizing psychoanalysis, she is able to bring to the fore notions of the fetish and desire. Stewart also refers to Hegel and Marx in relation to the materiality of such objects and follows through with a materialist approach to outlining the relationship between self and commodity and the implicit position of this relationship under capitalism. This text would, at this stage, form the most in depth discussion of the souvenir.

Other relevant discussions include Umberto Eco's Travels into Hyperreality, Dean MacCannell's Empty Meeting Grounds: the tourist papers and John

Urry's The tourist gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies. These texts focus more on the processes of tourism rather than exploring the particular aspect of the souvenir and its relationship to the tourist. Other writers such as Meaghan Morris, Stephen Muecke, Paul Carter, Anne McClintock, Homi Bhaba, Gytari Spivak and Benedict Anderson explore processes of colonisation, ownership, identity, commodification and land in a variety of contexts. Many of the essays read during this study also owe their debts to Baudrillard, Virilio, Bachelard, Benjamin and Barthes.

The paper is laid out in the following areas of investigation:

Chapter one: Nostalgia, fetishism and the souvenir

Chapter two: The impact of nostalgia.

Chapter three: Moment of contact - or modern alchemy?

Chapter four: What is a souvenir?

## Chapter 1 - Nostalgia, fetishism and the souvenir

In this initial chapter, I intend to explore the role of the souvenir and nostalgia as it is related to fetishism. My focus will be directed toward the manifestation of various narratives or relationships that are attached to souvenir objects, which may be described as fetishistic. To begin this examination, I will initially define the various meanings of fetishism by calling upon two of the best-known interpretations—Marx's commodity fetishism and Freudian notions of the sexual or psychological fetish.

By analysing these examples, I will be able to underpin this section of the paper in terms of materialist and psychoanalytic epistemologies, both of which are crucial to this topic. The term fetishism, as it is generally understood, has three distinctly separate contexts. Gammon and Makinen describe these as— 'commodity fetishism', 'anthropological fetishism' and 'pathological' or 'sexual fetishism.'<sup>6</sup>

The first of these types depend on a financial exchange to sate the desire of the subject, who fetishises after particular commodity objects. The other two forms have significance attached by the personal or community context of the object. In brief, the homily paid to fetish objects in a traditional sense, is largely religious, and can also expanded to include the rituals which

manifest in individual spiritual beliefs, particularly in a contemporary Western consciousness. For instance, the new age found its roots in a fascination for 'exotic' cultures in the late nineteenth century. Many followers of philosophical movements including Theosophy and Jungian psychology appropriated Hindu and Buddhist icons and beliefs. These ideologies reflected a yearning for desiring higher 'truth' and 'authentic' communication with the universe, through paying homage to various deities or, by purchasing artifacts whilst taking pilgrimages to sacred sites.

Not surprisingly, the development of tourism started to escalate around the same time that trade corridors were opened to places such as Japan, India and Nepal—all of which were defined as the 'East'. The Western public was starting to locate these objects as exotic and they operated as authentic signposts of that culture. Meaghan Morris, cites MacCannell in her well known essay "At Henry Parkes Hotel"<sup>7</sup>, by making this statement in regards to the 'markers' or signposts of tourism:

Both tourist and theorist can be caught up in a metaphysical quest. Each is motivated by desire "to make present to himself a conceptual schema which would give him immediate access to a certain authenticity (the 'real nature' of his object of study).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter One (p.14-50) Gammon, Lorriane & Makinen, Merja *Female fetishism : a new look* Laurence & Wishart Ltd: London 1994, provides an excellent overview of the three types of fetishism

<sup>7</sup> This version of the essay was located in *Too Soon, Too late, an anthology of Morris's* essay's published in 1998. An earlier version of this essay was originally published in *Cultural Studies* 2/1 (1988)

<sup>8</sup> Morris, M *Too Soon, Too Late* Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1998 p.27

This notion of authenticity forms part of the subjective relationship between the object and the encounter. The Shroud of Turin has long been heralded as a relic of Christianity – signifying the trace or connection to Jesus Christ. The imprint of his body on the cloth acted as the evidence of Jesus Christ's existence as a living person. The authenticity of this 'historical evidence' was called into question some years ago and x-rays of the shroud have dated it to around 1350 AD. The carbon-dating results from three different internationally known laboratories agreed with the date: 1355 by microscopy and 1325 by C-14 dating<sup>9</sup>.

Ironically, many people still associate the shroud with Christ, and there are many web sites that proclaim that the shroud is authentic, regardless of the scientific evidence. This tendency to pay homage to an object also encompasses the rituals that accompany local community landmarks, for instance war memorials, in the quest to memorialise the past.

Whilst all three of these above-mentioned categories of the fetish define an obsession for an inanimate object, only the first is dependent on monetary

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<sup>9</sup> According to Dr. Walter McCrone and his colleagues at McCrone Associates, the 3+ by 14+ foot cloth depicting Christ's crucified body is an inspired painting produced by a Medieval artist just before its first appearance in recorded history in 1356. The faint sepia image is made up of billions of submicron pigment particles (red ochre and vermilion) in a collagen tempera medium. Dr. McCrone determined this by polarized light microscopy in 1979. This included careful inspection of thousands of linen fibers from 32 different areas ([Shroud and sample points](#)), characterization of the only colored image-forming particles by color, refractive indices, polarized light microscopy, size, shape, and microchemical tests for iron, mercury, and body fluids. The paint pigments were dispersed in a collagen tempera (produced in medieval times, perhaps, from parchment). It is chemically distinctly different in composition from blood but readily detected and identified microscopically by microchemical staining reactions. Forensic

transactions. However, for the object this is only a transitive state - a waiting period. Its status as a potential fetish object in the context of the other types is displayed after the purchase. In some ways, this type of commodity preempts its state as future treasure in much the same way as contrived commercialised forms of nostalgia, because in essence they operate in the same way as these objects by anticipating their future as collectible forms of culture.

In the field of anthropology, the term fetishism refers to a mode of defining and identifying the concept of beliefs systems dependant on the devotion to objects. It is applied to beliefs and religious practices where supernatural attributes are centered on material, inanimate objects, which are described as fetishes. These objects are usually figurative and modeled from a range of media including; stone, wood, clay, glass or any other “material in imitation of a deified animal or other object.”<sup>10</sup>

In psychology, “the term applies to sexual urges and fantasies that persistently involve the use of non living objects by themselves or, at times, the use of such objects with a sexual partner. Common fetishes include feet, shoes, and articles of intimate female apparel.”<sup>11</sup> In Freud’s original interpretation of the fetish, we see it as a substitute for the penis: “the

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tests for blood were uniformly negative on fibers from the blood-image tapes.  
<http://www.mcri.org/Shroud.html>

<sup>10</sup> Gammon & Makinen, op. cit. p.14

woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and does not want to give up. The fetish achieves a token of triumph over the threat of castration and serves as a protection against it.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Freud, after having the opportunity of studying a number of men with a fascination to particular objects that, “in every instance, the meaning and the purpose of the fetish turned out, in analysis, to be the same.”<sup>13</sup> He noted that these conditions were often related to childhood events and that “the choice of the fetish object seems determined by the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one.”<sup>14</sup> Arguing that “in very subtle instances both the disavowal and the affirmation of the castration have found their way into the construction of the fetish itself.”<sup>15</sup> Concluding “that the normal prototype of fetishes is a man's penis, just as the normal prototype of interior organ is a woman's real small penis, the clitoris.”<sup>16</sup>

Earlier he contended that women did not have fetishes because of this association with the fear of castration. Freud never studied any women patients with fetishes, although he did later mention the possibility of female

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<sup>11</sup> <http://encarta.msn.com/find/Concise.asp?ti=06727000>

<sup>12</sup> Gammon & Makinen, op. cit. p.14

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Freud, Sigmund *The future of an illusion: civilisation and its discontents and other works 1927-1931*. This was located at [http://nyfreudian.org/abstracts/abs\\_volumes/21~152.html](http://nyfreudian.org/abstracts/abs_volumes/21~152.html) (New York Freudian Society)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

fetishism in a 1909 lecture. There are a number of later discussions that challenge Freud's assertion by specifically focusing on examples of female fetishes. The most common forms of female fetishism apparently do relate to shopping and food—Ann Friedberg, Meagan Morris, Elizabeth Grosz and Lorraine Gammon and Merja Makinen are all very useful for further reading in this particular area.

Gammon and Makinen closely examine Freud's 1909 paper titled 'On the genesis of fetishism', presented at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, where Freud went as far as to state that *all* women are clothes fetishists. "It is a question again of the repression of the same drive, this time however in the passive form of allowing oneself to be seen, which is repressed by the clothes, and of account of which clothes are raised to a fetish."<sup>17</sup>

Also in this paper, Freud also relates fetishism to the scopic drive - the repression of the desire to look. The tourist averts their gaze from the unsightly realities of their site of consumption, only focusing on the attractions of the site. For instance, in the example of the Disney theme park, all waste is removed, all tours highly orchestrated, with the gaze being directed to only see the wonders of Disney. When tourists yearn for a distant place, they desire to extend their gaze to see only what existed

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<sup>17</sup> Gammon & Makinen, op. cit. p.41

previously, as what Baudrillard would call 'simulacra'. These familiar signposts validate their experience and make it authentic in their eyes.

By 1927 Freud, in an article auspiciously titled 'Fetishism,' moves away from the process of documenting the clinical practice, undertaken by the examination of patients, to offering a psychoanalytic reading—stating categorically that the fetish stands in for the lost phallus of the mother. The fetishist needs the fetish object to carry out the sexual act to protect from the horror of female castration and perceptions of lack. Gammon and Makinen observe from Freud's 1937 lecture 'An outline of Psycho-Analysis', that he clearly identifies that the "choice of fetish is either metaphorical -a symbolic representation of the phallus, or metonymic and contiguous to the revelations of female genitals."<sup>18</sup> According to Freud, the last moment before the trauma signifies and characterises the object's meaning and the subsequent desire towards such an object. From that point on, that moment is frozen, represented by an inanimate object that defines a pathway to the past and memory.

Faith in memory retrieval is a well-known feature of Freudian psychology. He believed that "impressions are preserved, not only in the same form in which they were first received, but also in all the forms which they have

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid p.43

adopted in their further development.”<sup>19</sup> Although the fetish object itself may have no relevance to the processing of time -its source, connecting point or trace is in the past. Just as nostalgia explicitly relies on the linearity of time to forge its connection to the owner, so do the origins of the sexual fetish. What these objects both inherently represent is the subject’s partiality, which is conveyed through a personal syntax of signs that are represented by the souvenir/fetish object.

On the other hand, Karl Marx’s treatise on the commodity fetish is dependent on the interaction arising from certain sets of social relations pertaining to commodity exchange and trade. His is a scenario driven by the obsession and need for the consumer fetishist to attend to their obsession or desire via a financial transaction. In this particular discourse on the object, there is present a phenomenon that characterises the consuming nature of capitalism. Although, ultimately in the end, the importance of the souvenir is relative to the meaning inherited from the owner. The creation of an object through the labour of a person, which is then exchanged or sold in a market economy, is seen as a contributing factor in the notion of the commodity fetish. Marx argues that:

Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our

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<sup>19</sup> Freud, S *Psychopathology of everyday life* Fisher Unwin: London (1914) p.275

natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange-values.<sup>20</sup>

This assertion by Marx is essentially grounded and connected with his theory of alienation, which contends that what arises through the process of commodity exchange is a removal from the process of production. In other words, the labour involved in the manufacturing of such commodities is ours as workers, but we do not directly benefit from our production. He believed that: “the total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence.”<sup>21</sup> By making this statement he defines the difference between consuming for need and consuming for desire. He also states that: “Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself.”<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the relationship between a person and these commodity objects is related to the objects' purpose, or use value. For instance, a potato would rarely be part of a personal chronicle of the past—the nature of its form does not give much room for nostalgic inscription as it is recognised generally as a food source. However, it is possible for a psychologically driven fetishistic attachment to be made, if appropriate to

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<sup>20</sup> Marx, K 'Commodity fetishism' *Capital* Section 4, Vol 1. (1867)  
[http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/cap1\\_1\\_4.htm](http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/cap1_1_4.htm)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

the fetishist. It is this social context of commodity fetishism that characterises it from other forms of consumption involving the necessity to sustain life. The commodity fetishist purchases goods because they are drawn to, or fascinated by the object, they consume for desire, not for need. John Rees<sup>23</sup> states that Marx and later commentators such as Georg Lukacs, also acknowledge the contingent relationship between commodity fetishism and alienation. Marx believed that:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.<sup>24</sup>

Marx also noted that:

This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.<sup>25</sup>

Also, he contends that "the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself."<sup>26</sup>

Again, what appears here is a relationship between the role of spectatorship and fetishism, one that exists by separating the subject from the object of

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<sup>23</sup> Rees, J *The Algebra of Revolution* Routledge: London 1998 p.210

<sup>24</sup> Marx, K 'Commodity fetishism' *Capital* Section 4, Vol 1. (1867)  
[http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/cap1\\_1\\_4.htm](http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/cap1_1_4.htm)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

desire. Marx contended that the objectification that arises from such commodity exchanges is evident because of the alienation that exists in the process of creating such commodities as a worker. Rees cites Lukacs response to Marx in regard to the commodity fetish that:

There is both an objective and subjective side to this phenomena. Objectively a world of objects and relations between things springs into being (the world of commodities and their movement on the market). The laws governing these objects are indeed gradually discovered by man, but even so they confront him as invisible forces that generate their own power.....Subjectively.....a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article.<sup>27</sup>

The word *fetish* can be traced to the Portuguese *feitico*, a name given to popular talismans in the Middle Ages, which were often heretical and/or illegal. Subsequently the word in popular usage developed to mean bewitched, fated and charmed. The word 'feitico' originally "came from the Latin 'facticum', which meant 'artificial', before it came to mean 'witchcraft.'" <sup>28</sup> This term also signifies practices that involve the theft or procurement of another's belongings for the purpose of making magic. Voodoo and other forms of folk magic may be applied in this instance. Obviously, these objects are not dependent on any type of commodity exchange nor do they have any economic value as such. They are predominately trophies procured from the person who becomes the subject of fixation by the

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<sup>27</sup> Rees, J, op.cit. p.210

<sup>28</sup> Gammon & Makinen op.cit. p.14

collector, possessor or fetishist. For example, a sinister version of this type of collecting pertains to the common practice of serial murderers to collect souvenirs from their victims.

At this point, I would like to expand on the symbolic differences between commercial and non-commercial fetish, nostalgia and souvenir objects. The object purchased is only a commodity until the point of exchange, whereupon it then emerges as a possession. A noncommercial souvenir can arise from many different types of encounters - the offering of a gift, the finding of a significant object (treasure), and items which symbolise loved ones, are but a few examples. Also, theft is another, more covert means of securing a trophy of either category (as every object tells a story), and is usually identified as related to either arcane religious practices such as voodoo and witchcraft, or psycho/sexual obsessions, traumas and illness.

A braid of hair in the film *Golden Braid*, featuring Chris Hayward will serve as an example of the combined elements of fetishism and nostalgia in a personal souvenir. This obscure 1990 drama focuses on Hayward's character Bernard, a quiet, reserved clock maker who sleeps with a plait of blonde hair, keeping it locked in the chimes cabinet of a grandfather clock during the day. His ever-growing obsession with the object leads him gradually to a total denial of the present, forgoing his lover in favour of the mysterious braid. Bernard's connection with the braid is mostly illusive to

the viewer, the narrative being composed visually of snatches of the past and scenes of Bernard crying, his obsession growing out of control. This particular example demonstrates not only the difference between the commercially available souvenir and personal talisman, but also outlines the distinctive difference between psychological or sexual fetishism and commodity fetishism.

This film presents the type of fetishism that is much more aligned with Freud's model of the proxy for the castrated mother's penis—an attachment to an object which is representative of past traumatic or significant experience. In the case of the manufactured souvenir however, it is unlikely that the fetishistic relationship is sexual. The issue of commodity fetishism is intrinsic to the character of souvenir products. However, the braid of hair and the souvenir which originated as a commodity do have similarities—they are mediating objects which have powerful meanings on the level of the individual—regardless of the circumstances in which it was procured. By this, I mean that the object mediates or communicates a relationship between people and places, significant to the owner. Both have the ever increasing weight of nostalgia bearing down on their role as belonging to the 'history' of the individual as time moves on. But where does this need come from, is it an inherited desire to collect objects of sentimental value? Perhaps, but it is unlikely that this is an innate or

genetically coded behaviour. More possibly it is a process which has arisen from our social conditioning, and the effects of the modern world.

My grandmother is a great hoarder and has amongst her most precious possessions, items from her childhood in Yorkshire—a wooden toy and a report card from her school. When Mary knew she was moving to Australia, she could only take the bare minimum on the boat, and was forced to decide what would accompany her to her new home across the ocean. As each of these items survives the yearly excavation, recategorisation and de-accessioning of her personal belongings (the annual spring clean), their value and status increases, becoming more precious as time magnifies and distances experience from the object. The capacity of these objects ability to exist in a collection further act as signifiers of identity, experience and the past, all of which function as a chronological measuring of time. Also, these objects often rely on a context to the remainder of the collection, hence the similarity between the art/museum collection and personal memorabilia.

Phillips and Steiner comment in the regard to the contextualising and categorising of art objects that:

The solution to defining the authenticity of an object circulating in the networks of world art exchange lies not in the properties of the object itself, but in the very process of collection which inscribes, at the moment of acquisition, the characteristics and qualities that are associated in both individual and collective memories.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Phillips, R & Steiner, C, op.cit. p.19

This process of inscription locates the object as belonging to a particular type or family, mapped, defined and fixed in a particular category. The moment of purchase and the means to which it becomes available in itself has the potential to be fetishistic and colonising, a process that emanates from a desire to own. This scenario operates as a means to claim legitimacy to a perceived encounter with another culture or nation, in terms of the tourism industry or, to have access to a ideological, community, or personally driven movement. For a tourist, this purchase potentially involves a certain level of colonisation—a taming of the cultural other via the process of financial exchange, whether or not they are conscious of this process. It is akin to the practices of commodity fetishism that are evident in the everyday existence of the ‘modern’ world composed of shopping malls and museum exhibits. From that magical transitive moment the fetish/souvenir object is transformed—claimed into the realm of the personal. Its fetishistic appeal leads its future owner to the cash register to claim their trophy prize. At that moment, the objects state of transcendence is at an epoch, as it its context shifts from non-specific and mass produced, to occupying the intimate space which is the terrain of the personal.

The self in relation to these social constructs then appears in the process of generating the subsequent stories of attachment to the souvenir object. Its partiality as an object renders it as a proxy for that experience, by representing that part or aspect of the self. As identity is ever shifting and

evolving as we move through time, the priority of certain objects will wax and wane in accordance with the ongoing construction of self. However, their significance usually increases with age in response to the significance of the event (remember young Mary leaving her homeland). Because the objects relation or point of contact or significance with the owner is in the past, this relationship is controlled and imaginary because the retrieval of such memories amplifies the removal and distance from present experience. This concept is in keeping with Freudian notions of the fetish as the objects ensuing purpose is, as a stand in or partial aspect of the self, as a means of preserving or repressing memory.

Susan Stewart pursues the role of the body in relation to its perceived surroundings, by outlining the difficulty in simultaneously imagining self as place, object and agent. She utilises the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his discussion of the carnival grotesque as an example of the unification of these three elements of self. Stewart also establishes the role of performance as a catalyst in this scenario, acting as a signifier of the present, focusing specifically on how it operates as a temporal zone that includes all three aspects of self. This is an impossible space for a fetish or souvenir to occupy beyond the moment of transcendence and contact, primarily because this is the moment of transformation for the tourist/possessor and object, after that the object and its meaning are rendered nostalgic. Beyond this experience, time is captured or mediated

by way of the object, as the moment is gone. The argument that time is invisible follows Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque—a theory of social relations and performance situated in the temporal space of the phenomenological world. Nostalgia and fetishism are both reliant on a past event to define their existence: in the case of nostalgia that transcribed moment is signified by feelings of longing, in the fetish we see manifested in the object feelings of desire.

In terms of a temporal positioning of the subject, Bakhtin is dealing with the present, hence the experiential context of subjectivity in his writings on the carnival and the grotesque. The process of nostalgia is perpetually deferred, as is the future dream world of utopia. What is beginning to present itself through this study is the multitude of psychological spaces which nostalgia impacts upon—home, tour, work, religion, not to mention the great museum repositories of Western arts and sciences. Whilst all of these sites are physically tangible, they are also overloaded with symbolic meanings which are manifested through the psyche, via the system or language of referents which characterises or defines the object.

The realm of the grotesque as described by Bakhtin, is one of the immediacy of lived experience, the here and now, addressing the phenomenological world rather than the musty corridors of the past. Stewart is very clear in differentiating this state of the grotesque from the distancing

and objectification of the freak show, by stating that the freak show operates as an inversion of the ideal. The process of time operates in a mode that forever distances the self and lived experience from the scale of measurement that perceives the body somewhere between the ideal and the freakish. The subsequent objectification of the body also renders it as a potential commodity—incapable of experiencing life or death as it exists in a state of transcendence, forever represented by the symbols, objects and images which identify the self. Or, as I assert through the course of this paper, that contemporary Western identity is dependent, controlled and constructed by such qualitative and quantitative assessments.

The cult of the individual is a phenomenon that became widely popularised during the Age of Enlightenment. This was a time when romanticism for the past (the exotic and primitive) and the landscape appeared as traces to humanity's ties with nature and the spirit (the self). Darwinian theories of evolution and pseudo sciences such as Phrenology all focused on gathering knowledge and histories related to the development of civilisation and humanity. At this time the academy grew and branched off into the divergent disciplines that later constituted the arts and sciences.

As the transference from experience to memory takes place, the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world becomes abstracted. As such, the association with the object/event ultimately belongs to the

mythological domain of nostalgia. By having its moment translated into a fetish object; the object replaces (in material form) the memory of the body. As much as the souvenir and its nostalgia is removed from the bodily experience of now, it acts as a proxy for the body, a stand in, presented as an extension of the subject, connecting them to the past. Because the object (souvenir) exists outside of the self, its materiality alone can never disclose its meanings and narrative. It relies completely on its partiality and social relation to the owner to actually be of any significance or meaning.

These objects hold no use value in this state even if having a 'useful' purpose (think of tea towels used as wall hangings) only sentimental value is apparent due to its position as the trace of past experience. Through the process of time, the souvenir moves from origin to trace, going from event to memory to desire, desire committing the event to memory, where it becomes idealised and nostalgic. The object can only be animated via the narrative of the possessor, and upon such revelations in the course of storytelling the object is further projected to the realm of the nostalgic, as it (the object) alone cannot reveal its stories. This distance created is seen as a loss as it recalls the past, but it is also represents a surplus - of signification. It is in this state that we see fetishism come to play. This in turn demonstrates how environment shapes the construction of identity in a Marxian context rather than identity being constrained to the parameters of

genetic coding and inherited traits. Katherine Platt, author of the essay

“Places of experience and the experience of place”<sup>30</sup> comments that:

Bachelard emphasises two important points. One is that we create and recreate ourselves out of our experiences. A second is that the boundary between the outside and inside is vital and active: it expands and contracts. It is permeable and plastic.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of its meaning, the nature of an object is shaped by those experiences, as the present can impact on how we in turn perceive the past. In other words, the desire for the ideal is also the desire for closure and stasis, the present cannot be contained like the past. This is a process where, as Bachelard comments, we do not remain static as we are constantly reinventing ourselves to suit the occasion or the necessity. Stewart also sees this scenario as the process whereby an object substituting the body in part or wholly is representative of the partial double. This is because the object can never revive the experience, it can only evoke or rekindle the memory of an event or experience. Paul Riceour also links the construction of historical narratives to the processes of fiction and states:

We have tried to give meaning to the idea of the reality of the past by our analyses of the reinscription of the trace, then by the dialectic of reeffectuation, of the gap and the analogical assimilation. A similar task is indicated on the side of fiction which would give a plausible meaning to the idea of cross-reference between history and fiction.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Leroy S. (Ed) *The longing for home* Notre Dame, Ind. : University of Notre Dame Press 1996

<sup>31</sup> Ibid p.115

<sup>32</sup> Riceour, Paul ‘Narrative time’ (Philosophy today: Winter 1985)

These processes of assimilation act as a form of translation, to make the syntax understandable. What I also think Riceour is dealing with here is the rationality of Western systems of categorisation which ultimately code and locate objects and relationships as belonging to discrete branches of knowledge, all claiming legitimacy to the past. Once these branches are held to scrutiny, as in the case of the souvenir in this essay, we are exposed to a plethora of ideas and theories which seek to situate it within a specific object relation. For instance such categories as memorabilia, art, ethnography, kitsch, have to a certain extent a mind set or psychology related to nostalgia and fetishism. This in turn brings into question the position or role of the status of these objects, as examples of transcultural contact and cultural representation. There have been many examples of the discovery of mass produced 'artifacts' held in numerous collections under the auspices of traditional ethnography and fine art. These types of categorisations or systems of naming are mostly exempt from the rationale of a personal collection, where the value of an object is always seen as authentic and therefore not exposed to any external process of scrutiny.

## Chapter 2 - The impact of Nostalgia

When you live in the past, you're never lonely.<sup>33</sup>

In this chapter, the role of nostalgia is to be explored to investigate and confirm the relevance of the nostalgia to souvenir. To undertake this task it is necessary to provide a thorough interpretation of this term. Nostalgia is defined in the Wordsworth dictionary as: "homesickness-: a sentimental longing for past times."<sup>34</sup> Anne Friedberg, author of Window shopping affirms this interpretation and defines the condition of nostalgia is "from the Greek, nostos = a return; algos= painful means a painful return, a longing for something far away or long ago, separated by distance and time."<sup>35</sup> She also asserts that:

An etymological history of the word nostalgia demonstrates that its first usage in the late seventeenth century was to describe the longing for a space, a technical term for "home sickness".<sup>36</sup>

There is also a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that the etymological history of the word, nostalgia, not only refers to an emotional or a psychological state related to feelings of loss, but also has a history related to physical aspects of the body. This presented as a form of illness, which was the result of extended periods away from home. Nostalgia had the propensity to be life endangering if one was to leave home for too long. David Lowenthal also researched the etymological roots of the word

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<sup>33</sup> Sandman, *Good News Week* 20/5/99

<sup>34</sup> Davison G.W, Seaton M.W and Simpson J. (Eds.) *Concise English Dictionary* Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. P.659

nostalgia, locating it primarily in medical history, “where it had been originally regarded as a disease with physical symptoms that were the result of homesickness.”<sup>37</sup> Lowenthal refers to the 17<sup>th</sup> century description of nostalgia, as described in 1688 by Johannes Hofer as an illness where the “ continuous vibration of animal spirits through the fibers of the middle brain in which the impressed traces of ideas of the Fatherland still cling.”<sup>38</sup> He comments further that “a physician found the lungs of nostalgia victims tightly adhered to the pleura of the thorax, the tissue of the lobe thickened and purulent...To leave home for long was to risk death.”<sup>39</sup>

In some ways, this analogy resembles Foucault’s analysis of the physical symptoms apparent in the condition of melancholia around the same era, which he loosely defines as the classical age. In the case of melancholia, the afflicted suffer from a blackness of spirit that eventually spread throughout the body, affecting their mobility and making them lethargic. Ian Douglas refers to Foucault’s text Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, where Foucault believed that the “problem of mobility”<sup>40</sup> and its effects on the body was central to the identification and diagnosis of madness and insanity during this time. Mania was related to an

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<sup>35</sup> Freidberg, A *Window Shopping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p.188

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Lowenthal, D *The past is a foreign country* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985 (1997 edition) p.10

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

"excessive mobility of the fibres, leading to a lightness in disposition, and melancholia to a congestion and thickening of the blood, and subsequent dullness of character."<sup>41</sup> Taking this into account, the relationship between notions of mobility and mania, and the perception of nostalgia as being related to absence from home, could possibly indicate why nostalgia first emerged as a medical condition.

As time shifts, so do the meanings and contexts of certain words. Language is a fluid phenomenon and is always subtly shifting in meaning, the syntax continually expanding and contracting to accommodate the current usage of words. Foucault refers to this process of shifting contextuality, with specific reference to his studies into the discourses of madness in the text, The archeology of knowledge stating that:

One might, perhaps one should, conclude from this multiplicity of objects that it is not possible to accept, as a valid unity forming a group of statements, a 'discourse, concerning madness'. Perhaps one should confine one's attention to those groups of statements that have one and the same object: the discourses on melancholia, or neurosis, for example. But one would soon realise that each of these discourses in turn constituted its object and worked it to the point of transforming it altogether.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, potentially any type or mode of interpretation can plot this process of transformation onto any object of inquiry. In Foucault's example

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<sup>40</sup> Ian R. Douglas 'The calm before the storm: Virilio's debt to Foucault, and some notes on contemporary global capital'  
[http://proxy.arts.uci.edu/~nideffer/\\_SPEED\\_/1.4/articles/douglas.html](http://proxy.arts.uci.edu/~nideffer/_SPEED_/1.4/articles/douglas.html)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, M The archeology of knowledge, 1969  
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/foucault.htm>

the subject is melancholia, in this project the focus is the social relationships which characterise the identity of souvenirs, with nostalgia acting as one of them. Nostalgia's physical and psychological effects may be similar to that of melancholia, though nostalgia has a direct relation or causal relationship to being absent from and longing for home. Melancholia apparently arises from lethargy, perhaps a result of being stuck at home.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is no longer a connection between the medical and emotive aspects of nostalgia, just as melancholia is now predominately seen as an emotive state which has no physical characteristics beyond that of a psychological condition. Nostalgia as we now understand it, has emerged in our consciousness as only relative to a state of mind, without a locating device such as a geographical pinpoint defined as home to posit these feelings of alienation and longing. In our contemporary understanding of the world, the notion of home is multilayered, diasporic and fragmented—a result of the development of transmigration and globalisation. Otherwise, nostalgia is completely manufactured as a genre of merchandise from the souvenir entrepreneurs of history who manufacture and market anything from memorable events to old movies, advertising, products, national and provincial culture. Nostalgia, it could be argued in contemporary culture is the cornerstone of the tourism, national culture, fashion, film and antique industry. In other words, we can

potentially plot feelings of nostalgia on whatever is worthy of remembering and yearning for in our past—be it place or event.

The context of souvenir objects appears as relational to notions of the home and domestic space through their manifestations as nostalgic and material 'evidence' of time spent on holidays. Also, the prospect of home incurs a connection to everyday experience and the mundane, rather than the experience of the holiday and tour, which refer to the context of being 'away' or absent from home. There is an implicit engagement with notions of the body, the self and the construction of identity, primarily because home is the main arena where people create their reality and sense of self on a day to day level through the familiar objects and images in which they surround themselves. The objects gathered whilst away also act as a form of embellishment on a physical level, as the object is an addition to the home environment. This is the museum of the personal, where visitors are either willing or unwitting audiences to the hosts memorial 'evidence' and narration's of the past, co-opted as second-hand witnesses to the events.

These objects have the propensity to operate on a notion of the 'partial double'—a Freudian term which deals with the manifestations of representation and desire which accompany such conditions as fetishism, with the object standing in for feelings of loss. This relationship between object and possessor is potentially sacred, with the object being imbrued

with a power almost magical—by having the capability to communicate and by having the power to tangibly occupy one space whilst symbolising another temporal and geographical site. Fiske, Hodge and Turner argue in Myths of Oz that the holiday can have this effect because it is an event away from the context of home:

The most obvious point about a holiday trip is that it moves the family away from home and from work. It interrupts the normal secular life and transfers it into the abnormal or the 'sacred', the 'magic'.<sup>43</sup>

They go on to comment that “holidays are breaks from the normal construction of identity by work and home.”<sup>44</sup> The social origins of such a phenomenon as 'holidays' which arose in the development of class societies had a great impact on defining a psychological and physical space external to the normal, everyday world of home and work:

The word holiday was originally 'holy day', a day in which neither wage-labour nor domestic-labour was allowed its usual dominance over the thinking, behavior and therefore social identities of the people.<sup>45</sup>

Holy days were marked as important in the community, and often were occasions for festivals and events, celebrating religious days and festivals around the agricultural calendar —Bakhtin's discussion on the carnival grotesque concentrates specifically of these occurrences. The desire to create history whether personal/national/corporate is consciously forged on

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<sup>43</sup> Fiske, J., Hodge, B. and Turner, G. *Myths of oz: reading popular culture* Sydney: Allen and Unwin p.117

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

any number of levels; from the state, to advertising, to communities, schools, families, and the personal sphere of the individual.

In the context of this research paper, the focus is, of course, on the realm of the individual. Nostalgic desire, as opposed to other forms of desire, lies somewhere between resemblance and identity, because it is enamored by or attracted to substance - being the souvenir. The past is constructed and made whole by piecing together the remaining fragmented memories—there is no resemblance, no continuous identity beyond this existence. A gap appears from that moment of contact widens as time distances the past from the present. Susan Stewart attributes these desires to reanimate the past to the development and expansion of capitalist interests.

Within the development of culture under an exchange economy, the search for authentic experience and, correlatively, the search for the authentic object become critical. As experience is mediated and abstracted, the lived relation to the body to the phenomenological world is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence.<sup>46</sup>

The tourist souvenir represents the past to the owner—and is significant because of that past moment of transference and contact. Combined with the importance or significance of the site, this object is loved regardless of whether it is a gift, merchandise or found object. This is why nostalgia may be thought of as a transcendent experience—as it is idealised and removed

from bodily experience. Lived experience, in the present context of the phenomenological world assists nostalgia to the goal of closure as it cancels out nostalgia's reason for existence. This is because you can simultaneously be in the present while remembering a past experience. Often these recollections come when something in the present reminds us, or is similar to that past event/site. Whilst living in the mental space of the past, the present is often deemed as less important or special.

The souvenir becomes the object of desire because it can serve these purposes for the possessor, by representing in concrete form that past moment in time. Nostalgia is a primary motive for keeping and hoarding such objects, a condition arising from the need to identify the self through experiences absent from the context of 'now'. Because of the varying meanings of the term nostalgia depending on the usage, it is not simply just a desire for the past, it is a license to embellish, idealise and recreate a moment according to the narrator's perception of the truth. The notion of time is of the essence here, as the past is mythologised and distanced from the present.

In regard to the placement of time in the case of nostalgia, Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase state in The dimensions of nostalgia: The imagined past: history and nostalgia that nostalgia is possible at the same

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<sup>46</sup> Stewart, S *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the*

time as utopia. They also recognise that nostalgia does not always only relate to events in the past by making this comment: "The counterpart to the imagined future is the imagined past. But there is one crucial respect in which the power of the past is different. It has generated objects, images and texts which can be seen as powerful talismans of how things used to be."<sup>47</sup> Conceding that the development of such object repositories has exploded over the last century they state that we are "not short of such reminders for the volume of text and image available seems to have grown at an almost exponential rate this century."<sup>48</sup>

Also, they make the observation that the most potent of all objects in the quest for enshrining the past is the photograph. "Of all these emblems of how we were, the photograph has been identified as the paradigm case of the moment of nostalgia."<sup>49</sup> Believing that photography is "an elegiac art, a twilight zone.... All photographs are memento mori."<sup>50</sup> They argue that to take a photograph "is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to times relentless melt."<sup>51</sup>

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*collection* Durham: Duke University Press p.133

<sup>47</sup> Shaw, Christopher and Chase, Malcom (Eds.) "The dimensions of nostalgia" *The imagined past: history and nostalgia* Manchester University Press : Manchester 1989 p.9

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

Shaw and Chase make the conclusion that “such variations of meaning and emphasis were evidence that nostalgia was not a one-dimensional concept with clean-cut edges. This is not necessarily a reflection of anything so dull as mere confusion surrounding the word. Rather it suggests that the concept is protean and pervasive, a site occupied by ideas and structures of feeling which have a family resemblance.”<sup>52</sup>

This argument was not without precedence, in 1985 David Lowenthal also commented thus on nostalgia and its relationship to familial ties: “If nostalgia is a symptom of malaise, it also has compensating virtues. Attachment to familiar places may buffer social upheaval attachment to familiar faces may be necessary for enduring association.”<sup>53</sup> This family resemblance has its roots based in the home and what the home represents. But the position of temporality in this association to nostalgic desire may vary—from imagining a future holiday or reminiscing about a past journey. However, does nostalgia for the souvenir set in before the purchase, because the tourist misses home, or, does it take place when the souvenir is installed at the home of the possessor? It is commonplace for people to buy souvenirs for others when they are on holidays, friends and family - who the tourist may be thinking of whilst away. Once the tourist returns home, the souvenirs kept of the holiday nostalgically memorialise their time away, acting as a reminder and testimonial of that time. These

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<sup>52</sup> Shaw, C. & Chase, M. *op.cit.*, p.2

souvenirs may also be located as symbolising the 'exotic' and the 'other' as they are objects which are unfamiliar and not from home. Fiske, Hodge and Turner rightly argue that "the house may have become a metaphor for the self and the body, but unlike the body it is fixed and immovable."<sup>54</sup>

Souvenirs are objects that stand in for those experiences occurring external to the domestic space of the home.

The perception of home is a feeling, which we inscribe on particular sites and locations, without necessarily being geographically fixed, or focused spatially or concretely— potentially we all have the capacity to create our own notion of home. The shift in society to a more de-centred model has created these alienated feelings of longing— the tourists search for authenticity often involves making contact with cultural others who are seen as having a sense of community which has been lost on the home front. David Lowenthal states that "those who lack links with a place must forge an identity through other pasts. Immigrants cut off from their roots remain dislocated; discontinuity impels many who grow up in pioneer lands either to exaggerate attachments to romanticised homelands or stridently to assert an adoptive belonging."<sup>55</sup> Christopher Shaw, and Malcolm Chase state that

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<sup>53</sup> Lowenthal, D. op.cit., p.13

<sup>54</sup> Fiske, J., Hodge, B. & Turner, G. op.cit., p.119

<sup>55</sup> Lowenthal, D. op.cit., p.42

“the home we miss is no longer a geographically defined place but rather a state of mind.”<sup>56</sup> They also make the statement that:

By the late nineteenth century, as the discourses of history produced a con commit (sic) idealisation of the past, nostalgia also came to mean a longing for a time past. Late nineteenth century revival styles and museology encouraged a return to the past, as if to compensate for the “threat” of the modern and the shock of the new. Nostalgia can hide the discontinuities between the present and the past; it falsifies, turning the past into a safe, familiar place.<sup>57</sup>

As we become a more transient society, the influence of the family has gradually been eroded in favour of state-imposed values regarding home and country. Symbols of family and clan (for instance coats of arms) have been overtaken by generalised ideas about nationhood—in Australia we have images like the kangaroo and Uluru, as well as symbolic archetypes like the bushies, Anzacs and bronzed Aussie to affirm a sense of national identity. Steiner refers to Umberto Eco’s argument that “we have returned to an appreciation of the familiar as it is expressed in inter textual dialogue and to the ‘aesthetics of seriality’ in popular art and mass media.”<sup>58</sup> The rules and modes of conduct as described by ancestral ties link to various notions of the past, has shifted because of the migration which occurred in the 20th century. What eventuates is a notion of identity set forth by the state and repeated constantly to remind citizens of who they are. Lowenthal states in relation to this scenario that:

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<sup>56</sup> Shaw, C. and Chase, M. op.cit., p.1

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

Various social modalities - family, peers, neighbourhood, ethnicity, state —validate various pasts, their custodial roles waxing and waning. As education becomes more centralised and parents increasingly reluctant or impotent consciously to impose beliefs on their offspring, the family has grown less and the state more significant as a transmitter of tradition.<sup>59</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the souvenir relates also specifically to notions of the exotic, as well as having the propensity to include the childlike realm of the primitive. Baudrillard's proposition in La systeme des objets is that the exotic object, like the antique, functions to lend authority and authenticity to abstract systems of modern objects. Stewart comments in response that “the authenticity of the exotic object arises not in the conditions authored by the primitive culture itself but from the analogy between the primitive/exotic and the origin of the possessor, the authentic ‘nature’ of that radical otherness which is the possessor’s own childhood.”<sup>60</sup>

Baudrillard also considers the modern 'cold' and the exotic 'warm' because contemporary mythology places the latter in a childhood remote and abstract from the capitalist world. Tourist art and merchandise conforms to the demands of the market, its objects molded to the wishes of the tourist en masse, created in response to a market need as identified by the tourism industry, in collaboration with local entrepreneurs and state authorities. This

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<sup>58</sup> Steiner, C. “Authenticity, Repetition and the Aesthetics of Seriality: the work of tourist art in the age of mechanical reproduction” *Unpacking culture: art and commodity in colonial and postcolonial worlds* Berkley: University of California Press 1999 p.99

<sup>59</sup> Lowenthal, D. op.cit., p.41

<sup>60</sup> Stewart, S. op.cit., p.133

is a very ironic scenario as the desire of the tourist to consume such objects is to identify that object for its authentic context to a place or an event.

Nostalgia (something to take home) is the agent for securing such merchandise for future warm and fuzzy memories. Stewart acknowledges this process as symptomatic of the more general cultural imperialism that is tourism's stock in trade. Phillips and Steiner make the following observation about the process of acquiring objects from unfamiliar sources and places by stating that:

Consumers were motivated both by a genuine admiration for the technical expertise and aesthetic ability of non western artists and, like the anthropologists, by a romantic and nostalgic desire for the 'primitive' induced by the experience of modernization.<sup>61</sup>

Again, we see a desire to escape from the world of the present and the everyday, by the level of appreciation for cultural objects seen to represent a connection with a pre modern existence. They also comment that "just as all 'ethnic' worlds are thought somehow to be closer to nature than their 'modern' counterpart, so too these ethnic worlds are thought to share attributes that bond them together in a 'fraternity of otherness'."<sup>62</sup> A process which defined a means of "making them mutually intelligible to one another while remaining uniformly foreign, and sometimes wondrous, to those who inhabit the West."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Phillips, R. and Steiner, C. op.cit., p.12

<sup>62</sup> Ibid p.18

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

The ownership of such an item is deemed as a way of capturing and colonising the cultural other, as a means to validate the tourists contact with the local culture. Phillips and Steiner propose that the “possession of an exotic object offers, too, access to an imagined world of difference, often constituted as an enhancement of the new owner’s knowledge, power, or wealth.”<sup>64</sup> They also recognise, in line with Stewart that “the exotic object may be variously labeled trophy or talisman, relic or specimen, rarity or trade sample, souvenir or kitsch, art or craft.”<sup>65</sup> In the context of collecting culture over the last one hundred and fifty years or so, these categories have been the linchpin of defining material culture. They go on to comment that “for the last century or so, the objects of cultural others have been appropriated primarily into two of these categories: the artifact or ethnographic specimen or the work of art.”<sup>66</sup>

It is also recognised by Steiner et al how problematic the process of delineating categories for material from other cultures. They state that “as a construction however, this binary pair has almost always been unstable, for both classifications masks what had, by the late nineteenth century, become one of the most important factors of objects: their operation as

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid p.3

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

commodities circulating in the discursive space of an emergent capitalist economy.”<sup>67</sup>

These types of objects, particularly those associated with the Indigenous culture of a site, have also evolved and changed from a process of engagement with the West. Steiner and Phillips ultimately concede to acknowledging the ironic position of art historical and anthropological collections in their attempts to determine these items as ‘authentic’ and traditional, as being somehow removed from the alienating chain of industry. To maintain this type of thinking highlights the power nostalgia holds in the construction of cultural identity. They also argue that “the makers of objects have frequently manipulated commodity production in order to serve economic needs as well as new demands for the self-representation and self-identification made urgent by the establishment of colonial hegemonies.”<sup>68</sup>

Because the present post-industrial world and its objects are often not seen as having as much cultural value or significance, it is not surprising that developing links to the past via nostalgia is a viable alternative to the cold reality of now. The alienation and search for security in a postmodern world of displacement and anxiety is definitely a catalyst for the manifestation of desires to collect souvenirs for the impending benefit of nostalgia. Bryan S.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

Turner, author of Orientalism, postmodernism and globalism, states that there are several solutions for the problem of modernism, all of which draw on some aspect of nostalgia. Drawing largely on Nietzsche he contends that there are “four primary solutions to the problem of modernism. First, there is the aesthetic solution through artistic creation which Nietzsche regarded as a particularly powerful expression of all yeas-saying practices, since art, especially in the pure form of music, was free of the immediate constraints of nihilism and resentment.”<sup>69</sup> It is fair to argue that in terms of a capacity to evoke nostalgia, music has a major capacity to capture the afflicted in a state of transcendent reverie for past events; nostalgia has the ability to affect all senses. Turner argues later that:

There is a genuinely nostalgic negation of the present in favour of some imaginary place constituted prior to the devastating consequences of urban industrial rational capitalism. Within the paradigm, the modern is totally rejected by a nostalgic reconstitution of communities.<sup>70</sup> He further acknowledges that “this nostalgic paradigm was particularly significant in the emergence of sociology as a nostalgic analysis of communal relations.”<sup>71</sup> But it was not only the emergence of sociology as a discipline but also the emergence of all the other arts and sciences of the academy which examined the past, all creating their discrete systems for the naming of objects.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid p.4

<sup>69</sup> Turner, Bryan S. *Orientalism, postmodernism and globalism*. Routledge: London 1994 p. 124-125

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

Such reminders of the good old days have the propensity to act as agents to carry traditions which have bearing on social and cultural etiquette's to the next generation. As possibly one of the most potent ways of dealing with the alienation of contemporary world, religion serves well to divert attention away from the reality of the everyday and the present moment, in favour of a better time in the future. Organised religion is also a way of satiating such yearning feelings very similar to nostalgia, because it will all be better (perfect) in heaven; again we see a denial of the present in favour of a distant elsewhere. Turner states that the third solution of modernity comes via Max Weber, by stating that he "identified a flight into the arms of the church as a typically nostalgic response to modernity."<sup>72</sup>

These material forms which represent feelings of nostalgia are not only a denial of the present they act as a denial of the body, because they are partial objects that exist beyond corporeal and phenomenological experience. Turner in summing up states that lastly, "there is Nietzsche's solution, which was in two parts. Rejecting nostalgia, Nietzsche argued that we have no substitute for 'God' and therefore we should develop new values that would express rather than deny the body, emotion and feeling.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

Nietzsche may have wanted us to embrace the new, but I doubt he would have been prepared for the resulting values of this 'new' world, despite his rejection of nostalgia. Now there are more contrived forms of nostalgia—for instance commercialised, mass produced souvenirs have the capacity to represent a manufactured notion of nostalgia. However, this is still a process that intersects with personal nostalgia on a temporal basis, although appearing forced or duplicated by way of its status as merchandise. The issue more specifically is how these objects operate as tenets of 'authenticity' to the owner. For instance, tourism relies on the desire of the tourist to ultimately consume the product, which is portrayed and offered at point of sale. If this mission is successful, tourists spend more money on the merchandise which has been pre constructed and developed in anticipation of the tourists desire to take home a memento of the journey. In the purchase of merchandise, the moment of exchange guarantees the objects future as a memento and souvenir. This interchange transfers signification from the contrived to the personal, it is the moment of truth for both owner and the object. After that the relationship is which inscribed between the two is ultimately a nostalgic one.

## Chapter 3 – Moment of contact or modern alchemy?

Karl Marx saw the moment of financial transaction as magical, one that fulfilled the need to consume which resulted from commodity fetishism. This in short, emanated from a desire created by the 'alienation' people experience, as a result of the modern capitalist system. This alienation is triggered from the fact that workers are largely removed from the financial benefits that are the result of their labour. The distance between workers and the products of their labour is the catalyst for commodity fetishism argues Marx. Primarily because of this removal or separation between the creator (worker) and the product, and also because they do not own or have control of the result of their labour. However for the souvenir, only moments before the item is purchased it is deemed as generic merchandise with no specific characteristics, waiting in anticipation of its future as a talisman of its owners experience, and as a means of witnessing the site of consumption. The scenario before the encounter has no specific personal attributes of nostalgia, primarily because nostalgia is always regarding and representing loss on some level, because its relevance to the past. It is evident, in the scene before the 'moment of truth' of contact and exchange, we are dealing with Baudrillard's exposition of a cold modernity, and only after that moment does the context change.

Theme parks are major tourist destinations that encourage the purchase of souvenir merchandise, as well as catering to the nostalgia market. Disney has a long history of creating merchandising opportunities of all kinds from its various endeavors. Also, there is inherent a mode similar to the process of tourism, the evidence of a perpetually closed system of signs which represent the “Disney experience.” Alan Bryma<sup>74</sup> comments that:

Walt's vision was for a park which adults would want to visit as much as children and which therefore would be required to exhibit characteristics, such as the vestiges of nostalgia, cleanliness, good quality and safety, that would appeal personally to adults and yet be suitable destinations for their children.<sup>75</sup>

For such a place to exist reality must take a sidestep, this is the stuff of dreams and imagination, imagining and idealising the future, as well as reconstructing a rose coloured and novel image of the past. A past, which would create feelings of yearning and desire, emotions that can be sated via the purchase of memorabilia and the like from the Disney shop. Don't worry about the fact the characters are only paid minimum wage and membership to a union is illegal<sup>76</sup>. Given that Disney (amongst others) also has available to their audience shops like the one on Seventh Avenue, New York City, it is vital how important these places are for the future development of Disney's business interests. This area of the city is devoted to shopping and attracts many tourists; Coca-Cola and Warner Brothers are

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<sup>74</sup> Bryma, Alan, "Theme parks and McDonaldization" *Resisting McDonaldization*, Barry Smart (Ed.) Sage Books: London 1999

<sup>75</sup> Ibid p.102

also represented at this famous site devoted to pop cultures icons of consumerism and its objects. Bryma goes on to comment that the capacity of the Disney theme parks to create a utopian world centered on the glorious mythology of nationhood:

The theming would allow a celebration of America -its past, its present, its culture, its achievements and its future - through a heady mix of utopian planning, self referential illusions to the movies, a transparent motif of progress.<sup>77</sup>

Significantly, there are common threads existing between the contrived, organised tourist experience and the experience of a theme park. Both need to be predictable to comply with the desires of the tourist, who want their expectations fulfilled—their desires fueled by the images they see in advertisements and brochures. Tourists expect what the brochures advertise, they will not be satisfied with any imitations, they believe that the image presented is 'real' and authentic. Bryma recognised these traits in Disney theme parks and makes the following observations:

The immense popularity of Disney theme parks and of other parks in the same mould is in large part due to their predictability. You simply know what you are going to get before you depart on your vacation. You know that you will encounter a safe, litter free, traffic free, immaculately landscaped fantasy world. You know that Disney staff will be helpful and seek to enhance your vacation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Moore investigated Disney's treatment of workers in a 1995 episode of *TV Nation*.

<sup>77</sup> Bryma, Alan, *Theme parks and McDonaldization (Resisting McDonaldization*, Barry Smart Ed.) Sage Books: London 1999.p.102

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* p.106

This is not an isolated experience. These familiar reminders give over to feelings of safety and security. Steiner comments in Unpacking Culture in reference to the African tourist art market that:

I suggest that tourist arts, like popular narratives, are structures around heavily redundant messages. In their consumption of African artworks, tourists are not looking for the new, but for the obvious and familiar. This pattern of consumption is indeed part of the more general phenomenon in the structuring of tourist experience.<sup>79</sup>

Steiner asserted that these heavily codified objects have the capacity to operate not only as catalysts to aid transcultural contact but also as a rediscovery of the already known and anticipated, stating that:

The visual redundancy of tourist artworks is intended to rise above the 'noise' of transcultural exchange - communicating via the sobering force of repetition with relative clarity and precision across the disorder of the volatile, hyper sensory state. In the midst of the social and aesthetic chaos, tourist consumers may quickly seize upon the orthodoxy of the already known, grasping for the creature comforts of the canonical.<sup>80</sup>

Again, what is at work here in the process of tourism, is the reliance upon the recognisable traits of a culture to be already imprinted on the psyche to further develop the identity of a site. We as consumers only have a limited idea of a particular place until we visit. Informed by a plethora of information before we depart, we hope to find our way. We might know what is already there, what galleries, sites, restaurants, streets and culture, but this kind of cultural mapping is mediated via the media and advertising. Tourism creates the context in which we can lay claim to this bounty of the site for

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<sup>79</sup> Phillips, R. and Steiner, c. op.cit., p.99

ourselves, seizing it for our own treasure chest of identity. Turner et al.

argue that:

The media do not merely give us the global village, telling us that the rest of the world is our backyard; they construct for us a position of power in that village. Their Western-centred discourses, their white-eyed cameras, construct the rest of the world as there for **us**.<sup>81</sup>

They see the process of tourism as the last bastion of colonialism, one which exists without reprieve or accountability to the cultures it describes and objectifies, stating that:

But the colonisation by looking, possession by the gaze is continuing unabated, and tourism is merely an individualised extension of the symbolic colonisation by the media.<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned previously, Disney attempts to appeal to adults as well as children, capitalising on the capacity nostalgia has for creating yearnings for childhood experiences. Yearning for the past or wishing for the future gives over to a compulsion on the part of the tourist to purchase tokens of their visit. Beyond the moment of transaction, the processes of modernity (industry) virtually become invisible to the onlooker once they have secured their trophy. Nostalgia manifests as desire, the desire to remember and reanimate a past place and/or event, and in so doing discredit the present and deny body. If an object can stand in for experience later, then its story can be changed to suit the owners various adaptations. As previously mentioned home and childhood are significant in this situation. Lucy Lippard

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid p.101

<sup>81</sup> Fiske, J. Hodge, B. and Turner, G. op cit., p.121

states regarding the importance of site in the construction of identity in The lure of the local that “place for me is the locus of desire.”<sup>83</sup>

The desire felt when one experiences nostalgia is always for a place which is absent, the spoken about place rather than the space of here and now. This is not about space specifically, it is invested in the temporality of the object. Even if the site is the same as the one yearned for, there is something that characterises the place as different, altered because of an event that occurred or some material change in the appearance of the site. For instance, one might be nostalgic for a place which has changed over time, like my childhood memories of the bush surrounding my childhood home, which has now been replaced by a major road and shopping centre.

A souvenir is material evidence of such a time, though nostalgia may be experienced without such concrete forms of evidence. Feelings of nostalgia may be evoked by say the senses of smell are one such example.

Whenever I smell clove cigarettes, I am immediately back in the hills of Java. Music as mentioned earlier, can also be a powerful trigger for such desires to capture the past. Moreover, these wistful yearnings for the past are often characterised by their relationship to childhood and the family, through notions of safety and security, which are ultimately represented by the home. These are the places that escape Baudrillard’s notion of a ‘cold’

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid p.121

modernity. Frederick Beuchner, author of the essay “The longing for home” published in The longing for home, makes the statement that:

What the word **home** brings to mind before anything else, I believe, is a place, and in its fullest sense not just the place where you happen to be living at the time, but a very special place with very special attributes which make it clearly distinguishable from all other places. The word **home** summons up a place- more specifically a house within that place- which you have rich and complex feeling about, a place where you feel, or did feel once, uniquely **at home**.<sup>84</sup>

He continues his discussion by centering the notion of home on concepts of belonging and ownership of self. It is “a place where you feel you belong and which in some sense belongs to you, a place where you feel that all is ultimately well even if things aren’t going that well at any given moment.”<sup>85</sup>

Beuchner decides that the process of thinking about home,

eventually leads you to think back to your childhood home, the place where your life started, the place which off and on throughout your life you keep going back to if only in dreams and memories and which is apt to determine the kind of place, perhaps a place inside yourself, that you spend the rest of your life searching for even if you are not aware that you are searching.<sup>86</sup>

The tug of childhood dreams is a major feature in the thematic make up of the theme park. They market not only to the kiddy market, otherwise known as the hassle factor, (for instance think of McDonalds<sup>87</sup> tactics), they also appeal to an adult audience by encouraging a return to childhood, through

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<sup>83</sup> Lippard, L. *Lure of the local* New York: New Press 1997 p.4

<sup>84</sup> Beuchner, Frederick “The longing for home” Rouner, Leroy S. (Ed) *The longing for home* University of Notre Dame: Indiana 1996 p.63

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

such processes like manufactured nostalgia. There is a certain amount of reliability and safety in the construction of contrived nostalgia in tourism. For instance, just like the 'good ol' days' and 'just like home' are common statements aimed to reassure the tourist. In the seventeenth century when people supposedly died from nostalgia they did not often travel far from where they and their kin and ancestors were born and bred. With the rise of the industrial age more means of travel became available from boat, to train and car and then of course plane. People started to go further not only on holiday but also moving permanently to other countries and regions. Lippard comments that:

We are living today on the threshold between a history of alienated displacement from and longing for home and the possibility of a multcentred society that understands the reciprocal relationship between the two.<sup>88</sup>

So nostalgia is not only longing for a time past, but a place belonging to the past, a space activated through memory and desire, signified by the souvenir. How this is informed is a key issue in the case of tourist souvenirs. As earlier mentioned, by acting out this narrative we concede to falsifying the present in favour of authenticating the past. Susan Stewart believes the souvenir serves a double function - to substantiate a past or otherwise distant experience, and to discredit the present, deeming that the present is alienating, looming or impersonal compared to the intimacy of the

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<sup>87</sup> In the McLibel court case, it was proved that McDonalds openly use the 'hassle factor' as a means of getting consumers of their product. For instance, most children I know can't stand the food but want it because of the 'free' toy.

“experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent.”<sup>89</sup> This referent is defined as authentic and what lies between here and there and now and then is a gap, “a void marking a radical separation between the past and the present.”<sup>90</sup>

According to Stewart “the nostalgia of the souvenir plays in the distance between the past and the present.”<sup>91</sup> As this memorialised albeit lived experience enters into a void between past and present, it is relegated to the realm of nostalgia. This scenario also impinges upon notions of the antique and the exotic, primarily as site of contact is distanced from the present. “The antique as souvenir bears the burden of nostalgia for experience impossibly distant in time: the experience of the family, the village, the firsthand community.”<sup>92</sup>

As earlier contended, the souvenir in the personal context consequentially has strong links to issues of identity, memory and difference. Regardless of its material composition, it shifts the meta-narrative of official and historical time, into the private space of time. In other words, instead of time operating on an axis that incorporates the marking of memorable events on a world or national scale, it takes the form of personal history—a context that only

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<sup>88</sup> Lippard, L. op.cit., p.20

<sup>89</sup> Stewart, S. op.cit., p.139

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Ibid p.140

marks significant events for the individual. Through the acquisition of souvenirs the owner/possessor chronicle their personal history; this is actualised by the narrative assigned to specific objects. This does not mean that the meta-narrative that constitutes historical time is cast aside; it may indeed form part of the personal history of the owner, or perhaps also be totally subsumed by the personal context. Rather, its place is not to override the place of personal past; it is to reinforce the authenticity of that past to whoever may be exposed to this history of the individual. Katherine Platt states that: "Home, of course, is the penultimate place of experience, second only to the body."<sup>93</sup> She later states that Gaston Bachelard claimed that the house is "one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, the memories and dreams of mankind."<sup>94</sup> Platt also maintains that: "the home is a tool for the process of creating or becoming an identity. It has both a hidden, private, recuperative aspect and an open presentational, hospitable aspect. It conceals and reveals."<sup>95</sup>

Perceptions of time—personal, leisure, home, public, national and colonial all play a significant role to the process of constructing a discussion on the souvenir, particularly in the context of structuring identities. We all have multiple selves who evolve from various relationships to these agents—the tourist, the daughter, the worker, the citizen, and the writer. All these types

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<sup>93</sup> Platt, K. "Places of experience and the experience of place" Rouner, Leroy S. (Ed) *The longing for home* University of Notre Dame: Indiana 1996 p.112

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

have a discrete set of signs and references for the purpose of articulating that particular identity. However, limiting this analysis to a semiotic approach that only engages the object and its significance as a language of signs would undermine the complexity of this subject, though it is relevant to manufacturing such relationships. Regardless of our multiplicity of roles, time is of the essence in the process of structuring these separations and restorations of self. Their effects are virtually invisible, only able to be inscribed upon other forms of matter external to the self. Paul Riceour reminds us that Kant reconised that time is invisible and manifests as thus:

It is from Kant that we learned that time as such is invisible, that it could not appear in any living experience, that it is always presupposed as the condition of experience, and from this fact could only appear indirectly on objects apprehended in space and according to the schemata and the categories of objectivity.<sup>96</sup>

In other words, this process may be applied not only to the objects/souvenirs collected by an individual, but to other forms of measuring time which require a foundation in narrative, i.e. national history and cultural history. This is why Susan Stewart indicates in that the role of the souvenir is almost identical to the role of the antique.

General affectation or respect for the antique, and its fashionable appeal, became more widespread in the upper classes during the eighteenth century, trickling down to middle class as an idealisation of any old 'old' in the 19th century.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Burnett, R *Camera Lucida: Roland Barthes, Jean-Paul Sartre and the photographic image* (Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture, vol. 6 No. 21991) located at <http://kali.murdoch.edu.au/~continuum/6.2/Burnett.html>

The culture of the collection has developed over the last century in line with the rise of a global capitalist culture. The relationship between the culture of the souvenir and history is concentrated in the field of antiquarianism, as it represents a history that is informed by the aesthetics of souvenirs. This is evident as commercialism and industrialisation rose, the artefacts and architecture of a disintegrating rural culture became nostalgic objects for the upper and middle classes. In this example the souvenir acts as a marker of obsolescence—of what is no longer useful as an instrument of work.

Stewart maintains that there is a separation or hierarchy existing between material culture and oral traditions, where ironically, oral traditions are seen as an abstract equivalent to material culture. I would contend not only are they both abstractions from culture and reality, but also adjuncts to its possibility in the first instance. For such a theory to exist a distinction would have been made between dialect and standard, between centralised and decentralised languages, with one having power over the other, coloniser and colonised. Oral traditions are seen in this binary hierarchical structure to be the lesser or more primitive of the two, when held under the rubric of museology and art history. Stewart comments that: “what had begun to develop was the abstract language of science and the state.”<sup>98</sup>

It is also evident that while a multifaceted occurrence, the process of nostalgia lends itself readily to Western, linear perceptions of time, hence

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<sup>97</sup> Riceour, P ‘Narrative time’ (Philosophy today: Winter 1985)

the desire to collect material to mark chronologically the passage of time. Shaw states that “for different reasons, a cyclical perception of time makes nostalgia unattractive: eventually time lost will be instituted once again.”<sup>99</sup> Contending that “redemptive histories are infertile grounds for nostalgia.”<sup>100</sup> Further considering that “if the unsatisfactory present is merely the antechamber to some better state, whether religious salvation or the achievement of the logic of history in Hegelian philosophy, its deficiencies are tolerable because they are part of the process of becoming different and better.”<sup>101</sup> Finally he argues that “in short, it is western societies, with a view to time and history that is linear and secular, which should be especially prone to the syndrome of nostalgia.”<sup>102</sup> What is established here is that such perceptions of time are linear and therefore have the potential to be hierarchical.

Stewart states that the antiquarian seeks to both distance and appropriate the past, as the passing of time is concomitant with a loss of understanding. She sees this as a scenario that is only animated through the awakening of the objects and therefore the associated narratives.

Hence his or her search is primarily an aesthetic one, an attempt to erase the actual past in order to create an imagined past which available for consumption.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Stewart, S. op.cit., p.142

<sup>99</sup> Shaw, C. and Chase, M. op.cit., p.3

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Stewart, s. op.cit., p.143

This quest of the antiquarian gave rise to the objectification of the rural, peasant classes, as their lifestyle becomes the subject of spectatorship and made novel through this process. This is why therefore, the antiquarian's search is an aesthetic one which attempts to erase a real past in order to create an imagined past for the purpose of consumption. "Accompanying this awakening of objects is the objectification of the peasant classes, the aestheticization of rural life which makes that life "quaint," a survival of an elusive and purer, yet diminished, past."<sup>104</sup>

Stewart states that in order for the antiquarian to succeed in their mission to awaken the dead, they must first manage to kill them. In such an aesthetic mode, "Lacan's formulation that the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing and this death then constitutes in the subject the externalising of his or her desire."<sup>105</sup> is consequently repeated. By capturing or consuming the site, the tourist is only gaining control over what is already only symbolic to the language of tourism, what exists external to this evades the gaze of the tourist, and the transcultural noise Steiner mentions earlier remains unintelligible.

The personal history and past of the individual may be represented by an assortment of objects which hold significance to a time and place; but this

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid

representation is lost without the input of the possessor. Without the assigned narrative, the objects have no worth because the value of these souvenirs is not tied up with monetary value. The preciousness imparted to these objects evolves from the level of nostalgic significance attributed to them by the owner. This is why the souvenir has a cogent relationship with notions of identity; as the narrative, which signifies personal time, can do so without totally disbanding official agents of historical, cultural and national time. These aspects can be added or subtracted from the equation. Once the issues of identity are implicated, the role of difference becomes apparent, with the end result of many voices, at times overlapping and participating with other agents in a variety of contexts, whilst still having the capacity to remain separate, discrete and isolated. Identity is never static, it, like the notion of the home, shifts and changes in response to the determinants of self-awareness. Stephen Muecke summarises the role of identity and difference in regard to temporal and spatial impetus by stating that:

Identity, that old chestnut is compounded as a problem for those living in a 'new country' obsessed with its identity. Identity is the relationship between inside and outside, 'my' stories clashing with 'their' stories, where 'they' can at various times be the British, Americans, Asians, or even one's colleagues. Identity palpitates, like breathing in and out, even while walking along. Both space and time are involved, pause and movement.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Muecke, S *No road: bitumen all the way* South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997 p.78

How nostalgia impacts on notions of the family and home via the souvenir object has been a main concern in this chapter. The moment of transaction and the issue of diminishing use value that appears with the rise of the nostalgic value of an object have also been addressed. Contrived souvenirs or commercially available nostalgia versus the personal souvenir as material evidence of the past presents a complex interplay of exchanges and meanings. These exchanges are inherent not only in the purchaser possessor, but also in the history of the object in terms of its production and dissemination throughout the global tourism process. It is a play on time—past, present and future—all contained within the realm of an experience worth remembering and symbolised by the souvenir.

## Chapter 4 - What is a souvenir?

So far many aspects which characterise the social relations of the souvenir have been presented, with the key aspects bearing meaning are identified as—fetishism, nostalgia, the processes of exchange or transaction and the significance of memory and time. In this final chapter, the souvenir object is addressed in terms of its material characteristics and its specific context to tourism. The definition of the word souvenir appears in most dictionaries as “a memento, a keepsake.”<sup>107</sup> This description does not refer to its material composition, its mode of production, or its origins as an object. Instead, these definitions allude to the importance of the souvenir as memento mori, a memorialisation or symbol of past experience—an event and/or place.

It would be simple to merely allude to the realm of kitsch, and this is a concern when dealing with the aesthetics of the commercially produced souvenir. The interpretation offered in this analysis of the souvenir is defined by a relationship to the possessor. It represents to the owner a symbol or talisman of the past that has meanings and narratives constructed around it. Because of this, it is inherently nostalgic as it represents a connection to a past moment in time. This is not to say that all relations to the past are nostalgic, but as demonstrated there are great

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<sup>107</sup> Davison G.W, Seaton M.W and Simpson J. (Eds.) *Concise English Dictionary* Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. p.953

implications for the role of nostalgia, in terms of the souvenir object—regardless of its material ‘origins’.

Souvenirs generally fall into two distinct types: a souvenir of a place, or a souvenir of an event. These types sometimes overlap, and once purchased both aspects are considered intrinsic to the narrative of the object. For instance, someone may say ‘I bought this key ring at Stonehenge last summer’ or ‘I bought this tee-shirt at Big Day Out last year.’ As contended earlier, it is obvious that a mass-produced kitsch materiality limited to the realm of tourism does not bound the souvenir as an object. Souvenirs can also be precious objects from the start—for instance souvenir commodities from jewelry factories and gem fields. Rather, the souvenir can take any material form as long as the relationship with the possessor is intact. By this, I mean that there is no separation or rupture of the narrative cast by the possessor regarding the object. This relationship is at once fetishistic, nostalgic and above all capable of generating a narrative or discourse with the aid of the owner. Without the narrative, the objects meaning is invisible, not able to be articulated without the possessor’s input, its role as a stand in or partial object is lost.

Mass produced souvenirs take many forms, many of which are replicated and available anywhere where mass tourism is found. Take for instance, the humble Snow Dome, it can be found in Alice Springs and Amsterdam,

London, Paris and New York, anywhere where there is a souvenir shop. It can commemorate the changing of a century, represent a landscape, building or monument and celebrate a royal wedding. Inside the dome we see the subject of interest - the place intended for future memorial, be it the Eiffel Tower, Buckingham Palace, Uluru or the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Many souvenirs like the snow dome, post card and teaspoon lend themselves readily to a process of collection. These items provide a legitimate reason to desire to travel to other tourist destinations, or, to procure gifts from family and friends. In this case, I am looking primarily at the social circumstances that lead the tourist to their destination, and the compulsion that motives them to purchase such commodities. Steiner argues that:

Viewed in the context of other modes of mass production - the circulation of popular printed iconography, the proliferation of cheap cotton fabrics in the industrial revolution, or the seriality characteristic of post modern networks of cultural expression - the logic of the tourist at industry may be seen to be grounded in broader discourses of cultural truths and authenticities typically forged in the nexus of production and consumption in mass cultural and economic markets.<sup>108</sup>

Aside from that logic, this type of collecting expands the narrative assigned to the singular object to belonging to a personal grand tour of sorts. Within the context of the collection each object has its history of provenance, one etched into memories of the collector. Even if not recorded categorically, as

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<sup>108</sup> Steiner, C. 'Authenticity, Repetition, and the aesthetics of seriality: the work of tourist art in the age of mechanical reproduction' *Unpacking culture: art and commodity in colonial and postcolonial worlds* p.101

are the official metaphors of history and culture, these processes are apparent in the documentation and accessioning of museum exhibits belonging to the personal realm. The process of prioritisation and privilege that exists on a grand scale in state and privately owned collections is virtually replicated in the accessioning of objects into a personal collection. These acquisition determinants depend on a number of variants, these being budget constraints, individual tastes and a sense of aesthetics. Also, to a certain extent patronage (as gifts can qualify here), and last but not least, the relevance to the remainder of collection.

Arguably, the photograph would have to be the most common form of souvenir collected by the tourist (and possibly overall) as a medium to document significant events and places for future reference. The photograph itself carries much theoretical baggage with it when considered as an object of discursive analysis, particularly in relationship to 'seeing' and the role of the viewer. For the purpose of this research project, the photograph will not be analysed in these terms, or indeed in regard to the endless proliferation of discussions regarding the photographs status as an 'original' or 'copy'. These are indeed issues within this project, but they present themselves through the subject —the relevance to the owner rather than the object of inquiry, the souvenir. Also, the role of spectacle and spectatorship is embedded in discussions regarding the photograph is valuable, and though relevant to this discussion may only be mentioned

briefly, as it is of peripheral concern. It is the processes of spectatorship and the gaze in the tourist, which is a focus of this paper.

A photograph in some ways is doubly powerful in the scenario of tourism, as it is a representation, perceived and visualised through the eyes of the tourist - a witnessing of a site which extends beyond the vernacular of everyday context of home. The role of the tourist is defined as cultural voyeur, arriving with a list of expectations arising from the anticipation of the journey, and preconceived notions of the site constructed from his/her desire (with help from the travel agency and media). John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner make this observation regarding the process of tourist photography in Myths of Oz: reading popular culture, stating that:

The photograph is a symbolic enactment of this: each slide or print is a piece of our world which we take home with us. The camera may be the final agent of colonisation that constructs the rest of the world and its people as the picturesque to be captured and possessed by the photographer/tourist.<sup>109</sup>

The photograph, in the case of this research paper is to be pursued primarily within its role as a souvenir - a keepsake. It is what the tourist wants to remember when they return home, not the clashes and collusion with reality, those are forgotten - edited out of the image and story. This is to say that the photograph is not exempt from various notions of desire and fetishism, which allude to a discussion of, or perception of the real, which arises from discussions on spectatorship. Essentially, I am interested in

dealing with photography's capacity to hold nostalgic significance for the possessor. These photographic objects comprise of holiday happy snaps, family photographs and of course the postcard. Fiske, Hodge and Turner also assert that "the family album is so much more than a collection of images of a visually colonised landscape: it is an imaginative statement of pleasure, pride, possession and identity."<sup>110</sup> Also, they claim that "the view constructs and possesses the viewer just as much as it is constructed by him or her."<sup>111</sup> Further contending that "looking is both enactment of possession and a construction of identity for the looker."<sup>112</sup>

The issue of spectacle is not reserved to the form of the photograph or the desire for souvenir objects it is also, as I mentioned, complicit in the notion of tourism. Tourism as it is understood in contemporary society developed en masse with the rise of the middle class (bourgeois) and the industrial revolution, which made consumption central to bourgeois identity and that which characterises the 'modern age.' As time has moved on, and as the world has become increasingly pervaded and manipulated by capitalist ideals, the holiday has become the flip side of working life. As such, the holiday is an occurrence which has spread to the lives of ordinary workers in industrialised countries, with the only limits to the possibility of travel being limited to either financial or time constraints. It has been well

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<sup>109</sup> Fiske, J. Hodge, B. and Turner, G. op.cit., p.122

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Ibid p.123

documented that the more technologically advanced and affluent (generally speaking) a nation is, the more capacity its citizens have to travel.

It needs to be clearly stated that, the business of mass produced souvenirs is totally reliant on the demands of the tourism industry. Its objects are molded to the desires of the tourist and are seemingly often made away from the site of tourist consumption. It is not uncommon to go to a range of tourist destinations, only to discover that the souvenirs are identical and produced in places which have no relation to the tourist site, beyond the image represented in the object.

The tourist as a demographic is not overly concerned with the industrial history of the object. Mainly because, tourism is a global process which ironically, does not impinge on the power or authority of the souvenir to generate stories of that captured moment. The apprehension of the object by the tourist effectively silences the other end of its reality- its materiality as a mass-produced and generic product, once purchased and claimed into the possession of the tourist. Even in cases where souvenirs are locally manufactured handicrafts, the market is factored not by a need to preserve culture, but to comply with the demands and desires of the tourist who becomes the possessor of these objects and future narrators of their material importance. This is of course, motivated by the desire of tourism to

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid p.121

maintain a profitable industry. It is also normal practice for events and cultural displays, produced for the benefit of tourism to exist separately to the customs and rituals that are only for the eyes of the community. This has been well documented in a diverse range of texts primarily investigating Aboriginal and American Indian cultures. There are pros and cons in this cultural and financial exchange, with one of the benefits being that the fostering of culture assists not only financial gain, but also self-esteem for the community.

The role of the gaze is paramount to understanding the process of mass tourism, as is the relationship of the souvenir to notions of desire and fetishism. John Urry's text, The Tourist Gaze is an investigation into the tourist gaze and its objects. He defines the activity of tourism as a separate existence from the mundane and everyday work environment. Stating that "the gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which locate particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices particularly those based within the home and paid work."<sup>113</sup> These spaces are distanced from the everyday, which is why they are ultimately objectified. He goes on to argue:

Such practices involve the notion of 'departure', of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the

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<sup>113</sup> Urry, J. *The tourist gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies* Sage: London 1990, p.2

everyday and the mundane. By considering the typical objects of the tourist gaze one can use these to make sense of elements of the wider society with which they are contrasted.<sup>114</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that what be at play here are varying notions and perceptions of time—work and leisure, home and away. But the experience of the tourist is not a great leap into the unknown, the unchartable. This is not the experience of the adventurer or explorer who seeks out what has not been represented or named. This traveler’s interest in the journey, is the process of the journey itself—a journal would perhaps be the main form of souvenir for these types of travelers. What also appears in this context of travel is a far more literal approach to documenting experience. These days there are also available tours for adventure travelers—remember that tragic incident in Switzerland last year? However, this distinction between types of tourism is rather dubious, considering the following quote from Steiner in *Unpacking Culture*:

“Anti-tourism” as defined by Buzard, corresponds almost exactly to the discourse of authenticity that cleaved the community of consumers of art commodities into two opposing camps of fine arts cognoscenti and populist collections of tourist art. The irony here, however, is that the possibility of evading commoditization (sic) was as illusionary as the efforts of Victorian intellectuals to identify themselves as ‘travelers’ rather than ‘tourists’.<sup>115</sup>

What the tourist desires is an affirmation of the site they are witnessing via a previously constructed identity of the place encountered, one that has

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Phillip, R. and Steiner, C. op.cit., p.12

been idealised, marketed and propagated by tourism. For instance, Urry comments that “the gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’. When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the ‘real olde England’”<sup>116</sup>

Before the tourist arrives at a site they are bombarded by a plethora of texts, images and assumptions about the place - they are decidedly expectant on recognising these things. Without witnessing these signifiers of place, the tourist’s experience is somehow devalued, because it is not considered to be a ‘true’ acquaintance with the location, not to mention disorientating with no markers to signify the site. It could be argued that there is a notion of the universal understanding in certain images or symbols of a place. When I went to New York several years ago, other travelers at the hostel where I stayed were surprised that I didn’t go to the Statue of Liberty or to the top of the Empire State Building. For some reason my lack of enthusiasm for such sites bothered these people - as if I wasn’t really seeing the ‘real’ New York City. I found this ironic as, in my opinion I saw the fundamental ‘New York’—steam coming out of the pavements, Times Square, the Whitney, Metropolitan and Guggenheim museums. This type of validating process, evident in discourses on travel brings into question the ‘authenticity’ of such orchestrated tourist

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<sup>116</sup> Urry, J. *op.cit.*, p.2

experiences, and, signifies the importance of the tourist gaze to the constructed identities of such sites. Fiske, Hodge and Turner argue in

Myths of Oz that:

But besides finding their meaning in what they reject, or leave behind, holidays must also be understood in terms of what they promise. A trip is both a trip away and a trip towards.<sup>117</sup>

These recognisable images play out a complex array of signs and signifiers to the tourist, who are heavily reliant on and burdened with information, already received to compare and map their experiences. The question here is, are they actually engaging with the object of their desire, say Paris or merely recognising a poor copy - a national and provincial stereotype, especially manufactured for their consumption by the state, aided by the tourism industry for the benefit of economic globalisation? It would be fair to suggest the affirmative in light of the promotion and hype surrounding the Olympic Games in Sydney. For around two years now there has been a barrage of images intended to 'sell' Australia as a tourist destination for the Olympic Games. It is a calculated strategy employed by the tourism industry to capitalise on whatever devices it can, as it invents the narrative of national and regional identity to the would-be tourist. In The tourist gaze, Urry argues:

The tourist is interested in everything as a sign in itself.... All over the world the unsung armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of the signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behavior,

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<sup>117</sup> Fiske, J. Hodge, B. and Turner, G. p.117

exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways (sic),  
traditional English pubs'.<sup>118</sup>

Urry firmly locates this practice as originating from the tourist industry as a means of securing business:

An array of tourist professionals attempt to reproduce ever-new objects of the tourist gaze. These objects are located in a complex and ever changing hierarchy. This depends upon the interplay between, on the one hand, competition between interests involved in the provision of such objects and, on the other hand, changing class, gender, generational distinctions of taste within the potential population of visitors.<sup>119</sup>

The question of authenticity is crucial on such processes as the accumulation of souvenirs, as the constructed reality of such sites remove the consumer from the everyday reality of such places. The mass tourist experience is very different to that of an independent traveler who does not need to attend souvenir shops to validate the experience of site. It (the process of tourism) is artificially constructed from the start, from the glossy pages of travel brochures to the special group charters to the specific localities. Throughout this type journey the experience is continually mediated, legitimised and controlled by the tour operator who guides their clientele through the bevy of signs which are representative of the site. Scholars often refer to this scenario as the 'pseudo-event.' Boorstin's analysis was one of the earliest formulations of the pseudo-event. He

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<sup>118</sup> Urry, J. op.cit., p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

contested, partly anticipating Baudrillard that contemporary Americans “cannot experience ‘reality’ directly but thrive on pseudo-events.”<sup>120</sup>

These phenomena leads to a system where the site itself becomes less relevant to the constructed and idealised image brought about by tourism. One only has to witness advertising for the Olympic games, to see how attracting tourists incurs a ‘responsibility’ to represent what the perceived tourist desires. It is a well documented fact that most tourists come to Australia to see native flora and fauna and the outback, a theme repeated in the publicity for Olympic tours, aside from sport of course. The pseudo-event is a highly contrived form of entertainment, as well as a critical element of tourism.

Isolated from the lived reality of the site and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying the pseudo-events and disregarding the ‘real’ world outside. As a result tourist entrepreneurs and the indigenous populations are induced to ever-more extravagant displays for the gullible observer who is thereby further removed from the local people. Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated of different tourist gazes come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions which provide the tourist with the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit.<sup>121</sup>

The issue of authenticity is vexed in this situation. This closed system of illusions or signs evident in tourism is, of course, removed from reality. But the souvenir represents a talisman of the event and as such authenticates

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid p.3-4

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

the object as a signifier, validating the experience and site for the tourist because of their present inhabitation of the site. This appears regardless how in any terms, removed they may be from the everyday reality in such places. It is ironic that whilst the tourist desires 'authenticity' of a place, this is the exact thing which is perpetually deferred and absent through the process of tourism, ultimately creating an experience of yearning for that missing thing, substituted by the souvenir. John Urry comments that:

All tourists for MacCannell embody a quest for authenticity, and this quest is a modern version of the universal human concern with the sacred. The tourist is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in other 'times' and other 'places' away from that person's everyday life. Particular fascination is shown by tourists in the 'real lives' of others which somehow possess a reality which is hard to discover in people's own experiences.<sup>122</sup>

Objectifying the working life of others in the case of tourism offer points of commonality and difference to the tourist. The process of spectatorship offers a mode for the tourist to ultimately analyse their own identity, in contrast to that of the cultures being scrutinised. The purchase of a souvenir affirms to the tourist that they are not currently existing within the parameters of the normative and mundane associated with the home and work environment. Souvenir commodities embody that imagined space of desire, the nostalgic memento of what was a previously process of marketing, packaging and advertising. This is quite a different process of collecting souvenirs which are not commercially available, say for instance a

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122 Ibid

piece of dirt from the ground of the world final ground, or keeping every postcard you receive, or writing down everything you do and see in your travels.

This type of souvenir is perhaps closer to “authentic” experience because not only it is still tangible evidence, it has the added benefit of having some sort of sentimental and autobiographical attachment, all of which are rendered as nostalgic in the duration of time. To some tourists however, this type of documenting and diarising of events is considered equally as significant as the acquisition of commercially available souvenirs. For example many holiday makers collect the coasters from pubs and hotels, primarily because they are free but also because the object represents good times spent out and about whilst away.

For the tourist the experience of time is one of leisure, which possibly assists in developing the fascination they have for the everyday working life of the local people. Their curiosity ultimately leads to the creation of sites designed specifically to cater for their desire to observe the labour of others. For example - sites such as the Big Pineapple and Big Banana both have farms on the site which provide for some of the merchandise, though much of the souvenir shops are still crammed with kitsch spoons, trays and pencils. There are endless examples of these sorts of places everywhere from Batik factories in Java, to tours of breweries the world over. Even

though the tourist gains admission to such sites, the real inner working of the factory, farm and its workers remains largely anonymous and invisible to these visitors, their vision guided. This is especially interesting given the role of commodity fetishism in the tourist - souvenir relationship.

Given that the persona of commodity fetishism is reliant on certain social behaviors it is not surprising to find that Dean MacCannell focuses on the character of these social relations that emerge from the fascination people have for the work of others. He also notes that “such ‘real lives’ can only be found backstage and are not immediately evident to us.”<sup>123</sup> This is because “the gaze of the tourist will involve an obvious intrusion into people’s lives, which would be generally unacceptable.”<sup>124</sup> In order for this all to succeed as a venture, “the people being observed and local tourist entrepreneurs gradually come to construct backstage in a contrived and artificial manner. These ‘Tourist spaces’ are thus organised around what MacCannell calls ‘staged authenticity’ (1973).”<sup>125</sup> This description acts in contrast to Boorstin’s notion of the ‘pseudo event’, primarily because in MacCannell’s version of this scenario, the artificiality of the site of the constructed tourist attraction is a direct result of the collaboration between communities and tourism in the mutual interests of profit and investment. He argues in

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid p.9

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

contrast with Boorstin that, “pseudo-events result from the social relations of tourism and not from an individual search for the inauthentic.”<sup>126</sup>

The social relations evident in tourism and the souvenir are particularly significant when you also add the heady scent of nostalgia to this already over signified recipe. Quite often these objects are collected to aid the future and ongoing expansion of the personal museum. David Lowenthal comments that although people are normally aware that the actual past is irrecoverable, “memory and history, relic and replica leave impressions so vivid, so tantalizingly, that we cannot help but feel deprived.”<sup>127</sup> He goes on to state that “this discontent takes many forms: a devotion to relics, the treasuring of antiques and souvenirs, a tendency to value what is old simply because it is old, the rejection of change.”<sup>128</sup> Maintaining the links to the past has an array of purposes and benefits to the collector though “the surviving past’s most essential and pervasive benefit is to render the present familiar.”<sup>129</sup> By signifying the past we are able to discern the present and, as Lowenthal suggests “the perceived identity of each scene and object stems from past acts and expectations, from a history of involvement.”<sup>130</sup> For Lowenthal this is because “every object, every grouping, every view, every view is intelligible largely because previous

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Lowenthal, D. op.cit., p.33

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Ibid p.39

<sup>130</sup> Ibid

encounters and tales heard, books read, pictures seen, have made them familiar.”<sup>131</sup> Objects which are not familiar and recognisable, those that “lack any familiar elements or configurations remain incomprehensible,”<sup>132</sup> cannot be described or located as part of the construction of narrative, as it exists beyond the vernacular of the particular collector or tourist.

As much as tourism depends and expects tourists to consume and produce its commodities, souvenirs and sites, it is relying on these sets of social relations to realise its goal of profitable business and investment. Boorstin in his analysis of the pseudo-event may have touched on the contrived nature of such sites and events, but overlooked why such systems come into being in the first place. Whilst MacCannell does centre on aspects of social relations inherent in tourism, it is Lowenthal in his treatise on the past, who recognises the important of souvenirs to the formulation of identity and home. The contingent elements of loss, embellishment, memory and the idealisation of the past are all significant in terms of the role assigned to souvenir by the possessor.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid p.33

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## Conclusion

My interest in the topic of the souvenir was initially sparked from my practice as a visual artist. I have always had a strong interest in “the land” as a theme and issue in my work. Some six years ago, I dealt with aspects of the changing landscape, memory and self-identity in a performance titled “Scalpland.” This work involved a narrative text which spoke about my past home and its change, accompanied by me clipping off my hair. At this time, I began to look closely at the landscape surrounding the Sunshine Coast, a place where I had also spent time on childhood vacations. My memories of the Big Pineapple and the Big Cow sent me on a journey, revisiting those sights, giving me the opportunity to think about what drives people to create such monuments. About the same time, I began to question the various roles of exhibition and display of art, and the hierarchy of art objects from a more critical position as a curator and artist. What resulted from that convergence of ideas is a continuing project titled “Big Banana Time Inc.” which still firing after five years.

Through this inquiry, it is has been my contention that the tourist souvenir object itself carries no stories except for the reminder of its mass-produced origins. This is of course true, but as I have discussed, it does have a role as a partial object that stands in for personal experiences. It is an object that mediates communication between people about past experiences

which were shared or otherwise, by generating a story that is narrated by its owner—who endows authority to the object because it has a social context and meaning of significance to a place or event.

The social relationships defined in both material and emotive or psychological terms are initially investigated in Chapter One, where the discussion focuses on the character of fetishism. The role of consumerism, represented by the commodity fetish is presented as part of the process of establishing the context of souvenir, as well as its relation to psychological and anthropological descriptions of fetishism are issues presented in this part of the discussion. All of these relationships have impacts related to the past it is argued, and it is my contention that connections between nostalgia and fetishism act as joint symbiotic agents for defining the souvenir in any number of capacities. It is only when external forces impact on such associations, like proving the provenance of a museum collection, that such onerous disputes regarding authenticity are presented.

The relationship to nostalgia and home and family is also considered as a context for the souvenir. Familial ties, nostalgia and the home are argued here as the key identifying characteristics of identity and reflexive notions of the self. Nostalgia is a key-identifying characteristic of a souvenir, it is argued in Chapters Two and Three, because to hold on to objects is to make a connection to the past, whether it is to a site or an event. Also, the

home is the absent part of the self whilst on holidays; when one is away, desires for home can also mitigate and aid consumption, with the results being the purchase of 'something to take home.'

In Chapter Four, the souvenir was defined primarily as a possession or a keepsake in the broad sense, as well as specifically in the context of tourism, where it appears firstly as a commodity, and then in terms of its transformation into a possession. The relationship between tourism and its objects locates practices of tourist consumption as having many contingent effects on a site. Encounters with cultural Others and notions of self, all operate as differing aspects of social relations. The role of the gaze and spectatorship is also considered as integral to the role of the tourist, acting as creating scenario which distances the tourist from the object of their desire - 'authentic' experiences of culture and its objects. It is then noted that authenticity is a feature that is ultimately created by the tourist, who acts a curator of objects, classifying them to a code that is valid only to them. These issues are becoming more crucial in critical discussions pertaining to objects, for instance, only last week I read a recently published text titled Souvenirs: the material culture of tourism (2000) which addresses many of the themes discussed in this research project.

In conclusion, it is not necessarily the type of contact one has with an object, it is its significance in the future after that object has been found, subjectivity is tied to the commodity object as well as non-commercial

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souvenirs. The object does not outwardly signify loss, as it is a “found object” of sorts—but its narrative is distinctively bound to the past, making it representative of loss through the processes of fetishism and nostalgia.

Memories of the past reclaimed via souvenirs enable us to tell the story of ourselves, an object autobiography, ultimately leading us to create the museum of the personal.

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