DEAN MACCANNELL BEGAN RESEARCH in British Columbia for his study on tourism and mass culture, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, first published in 1976 and still in print. To gather material for the book, he travelled from Vancouver to Baja California, across the United States, and then through Europe to Istanbul.¹ He stopped at the Bosporus, the ancient geographical divide between Europe and Asia. If MacCannell’s intention had been to write a travelogue of his experiences rather than to develop a theory of tourism and its relationship to postwar modernization and leisure, then I suppose he might have entitled the book From Vancouver to Istanbul: A Journey from West to East, or something of the sort. But that was not his intention, and, were it so, the book would likely be long forgotten.

Over the past twenty-five years, The Tourist has become a classic study on the institutionalization of

John O’Brian.
global tourism.² The book employs a combination of ethnographic reporting and theoretical speculation to formulate ideas about travel and sightseeing in the present age of mass spectacle. Its success derives in part from its provocative mix of detailed analysis and sweeping generalization. At the level of detail MacCannell quotes a 1969 Canadian government report on tourism, for example, which complains that “Canada’s swinging modern character [is] being obscured at home and abroad” by the country’s reputation as a “land of ice and snow, Mounties, Eskimos and not much else.” The clichés, the report argues, are “irritating to Canadians and hardy as a weed”; they need to be corrected.³ Quickly moving from example to conclusion, MacCannell predicts they will be corrected. The growth of modern mass tourism will make the image of Canada as home to Mounties and Rose Marie both more complex and more comprehensive, just as a similar realignment of outside consciousness to inside consciousness will occur in other countries of the world subject to the pressures of tourism. The accuracy of MacCannell’s prediction is debatable, but its fearlessness is one of the reasons for the book’s ongoing attraction among readers sympathetic to the tradition of the grand narrative. That same fearlessness also accounts for the book’s cautious reception by readers who are working from a poststructuralist perspective and who are critical of the certainties it so confidently expresses.⁴ Truth is not a stable item for the poststructuralist and is rarely considered to be universal.

In this essay I want to hold on to MacCannell’s insights into tourism while trying to unravel them around the edges. I have chosen

³ Quoted by MacCannell from an article in The New York Times, 5 November 1969 (The Tourist, 141). It is worth observing in hindsight that the government report proposed to substitute one cliché, that of “swinging” Canada (these were the early years of the Trudeau administration, after all), for another cliché, the well established snowy one.
⁴ Most poststructuralist readers of MacCannell, such as John Frow in Time and Commodity Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Meaghan Morris in Too Soon, Too Late (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), are respectful of the book. However, Daniel Naegele’s review of the 1999 edition of The Tourist in Harvard Design Magazine (no. 12, Fall 2000), 81-3, is dismissive. “Today, when the authority of science and of the grand narrative have each been so profoundly challenged,” writes Naegele, “such an approach seems not only unconvincing but also oddly quaint.” MacCannell remains unrepentant about the structuralist approach of the book. In his “Introduction to the 1989 Edition,” xiv, he takes issue with the ideas of Fredric Jameson, reserving his greatest scorn for “Professor Derrida [whose] philosophy need not await the results of ethnographic investigations ... an answer is always only a pen-stroke away.”
to restrict my unravelling to what can be said about postcards, a famously ephemeral medium of communication largely ignored in *The Tourist*. For MacCannell the photographic postcard is just one souvenir commodity among many, part of the minutiae of tourist material culture and not substantially different from an ashtray representing the leaning tower of Pisa or a matchbook cover representing the hollow tree in Stanley Park.\(^5\) This accounts for the disjunctive temper of my title, the first part of which refers to one of MacCannell’s broad formulations, and the second part of which alludes to my transient subject matter. Beginning in the 1950s, he argues, “the dominant activity *shaping world culture* [emphasis added] was the movement of institutional capital and tourists to remote regions, and the preparation of the periphery for their arrival.”\(^6\) If the formulation seems somewhat overstated – it makes no allowance for the impact of the Cold War on “world culture,” for example – it also seems largely right. The continuing onslaught of global corporatization, along with the spread of mass tourism, does nothing to diminish the persuasiveness of the claim.

I do not know if MacCannell began his ethnographic odyssey in British Columbia because he considered it to be, in his own words, on “the periphery.”\(^7\) Writing from an American point of view, he may have deliberately chosen Vancouver over Seattle, the outside over the inside, as his starting point. Canada conducts an asymmetrical relationship with the United States, the American artist Allan Sekula has remarked, in which “Canada is typically neither here nor there” for Americans, and “the United States is both here and there” for Canadians.\(^8\) For many Americans, Canada is the *almost* familiar. Nor do I know if MacCannell explored British Columbia beyond the Lower Mainland. I like to imagine him driving some distance into the Interior, along the Fraser Valley and up to Merritt and the Nicola Valley, for example, then zigzagging through the Okanagan to the Kootenay and Slocan Lake, before swinging back to Vancouver along a southerly route. (This was more or less the route followed by the editorial board of *BC Studies*.)

I also like to imagine him purchasing postcards to keep as ethnographic souvenirs or to send home to friends as evidence of where he

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\(^6\) Ibid., xvi.

\(^7\) Ibid.

has been. There is well documented evidence that scholars have often accumulated postcards for research purposes, impressed with their efficacy as a ready-made medium of visual record. “All the ethnologists collected Indian postcards while in the field,” Ruth Phillips observes in an article about tourist artefacts and museum collecting practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What is more, they frequently used the postcards as facsimile depictions capable of representing past Aboriginal life. Frank G. Speck included a studio postcard of a Native American, in feathered headdress and shooting a bow and arrow, as an illustration in his book *Penobscot Man* (1940). It is clear that Speck did not distinguish between various forms of photographic practice any more than he questioned the ability of the photograph to regulate appearances and thereby to represent reality; a postcard was as good as any other kind of photograph as an analogue of the past. There is no evidence that Speck thought the same thing about ashtrays and matchbooks.

Let us assume that MacCannell bought postcards only to send home. To be complete, a postcard mailed to friends and family always requires a handwritten message. Without a supplemental written narrative it remains partial and impoverished, a homeless object rather than an item of memory and desire capable of marking an experience. On the back of the card illustrated as Figure 1, convention would have MacCannell write: “Stopped at this lookout point over Kalamalka Lake, with the Coldstream Valley behind. Sunny skies and clear blue water. Wish you were here,” or possibly, “Blue skies, sparkling lakes and cherry-laden orchards ... the promised land.” The second of the two messages is an actual quotation, written around the time of MacCannell’s visit, but not on a postcard and not by him. It is a description of W.A.C. Bennett’s reaction to the Okanagan after he arrived there from Alberta in 1930, as recounted by his daughter in the 1970s. It is characteristic of Bennett fille’s reminiscences – of her souvenirs, if you like – that she chooses to write in the approved language of the postcard. Messages on the backs of cards are almost

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10 Ibid., 113.

invariably sunny, like the photographic images on the front of them. Fronts and backs, rectos and versos in postcard lingo, tend to reinforce each other in their optimism. Even postcards mailed from the edge, so to speak, rarely stray from a lingua franca of mandated cheerfulness. Both speak in the nostalgic language of longing.¹²

What else might MacCannell have encountered during his sojourn? Given his deliberations in the book on the growing separation of the modern from the non-modern—he argues that touristic demands for such a separation represent the search for truth among tourists trying to overcome modernity’s regime of inauthenticity—it would be instructive to know if he visited a First Nation band while in British Columbia. Did he puzzle over the texts of colonialism he found there and pause to ask how, despite a continuing program of geographical displacement by the state and a process of acculturation hastened by the imperatives of global capital, the inhabitants were able to survive without assimilating? Perhaps not, for in the book he holds out little hope for societal groups trying to resist the incursions of modernity. For him modernity is a totalizing idea, a “mentality that sets modern society in opposition both to its own past and to those societies of the present that are premodern or un(der)developed.”¹³ Modernity is at war with non-modern social arrangements, he argues, a position that accords with the views presented in another classic investigation of tourism and ethnicity first published in 1976, Nelson H.H. Graburn’s Ethnic and Tourist Arts.¹⁴

World’s Tallest Totem Pole, a postcard manufactured in the late 1950s representing the pole situated in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, is an instance of how modernity wages war on the premodern by reordering memory and perception (Figure 2). The reordering occurs by means of representation, in this case by means of the visual effectiveness of a widely circulated photographic image. The postcard was first published shortly after the totem pole was erected in 1956 and, like many best-selling cards, remained in print for years. On its message side, the postcard bears this caption: “A memento of the nation’s infancy, a symbol of a proud race.” The linking of Canada’s “infancy” to its Aboriginal inhabitants infantilizes the latter, of course,

¹³ MacCannell, The Tourist, 7-8.
at the same time as it aggrandizes the nation for which a past has been provided by “a proud race.” The Aboriginal imagery is made to serve unstated nationalist interests, while the reference to the pole as a “memento” suggests that the Aboriginal peoples themselves no longer exist. Aboriginal representatives are nowhere to be seen in the postcard image. They have been displaced by a late-model automobile carefully positioned not only to demonstrate the height of the pole, but also to symbolize the industrialized modernity that has supplanted the non-modernity of Canada at the time of the country’s inception. Aboriginal objects may serve the interests of tourism and nationalism, in other words, but the First Nations may not serve their own interests by being visible or vocal (i.e., by being modern). Agency lies with what is seen to be modern, with the postcard and the automobile, rather than with its perceived antithesis, the pole and the people who made it.

The same sort of erasure is evident in Kwakiutl Bear Pole, Sidney and Jantzen (Figures 3 and 4). Both cards are heavily loaded with visual signifiers. In the first card, two White female models, vogueishly miniskirted in the fashion of the late 1960s, stare up from the roadside at Tony Hunt’s newly erected pole. The women perform the same modernizing (not to mention eroticizing) role as did the automobile in Figure 1; it is beside the point that Hunt’s pole was recently carved and as new as were the women’s clothes. In the second photographic image, a promotional postcard from 1957, two White male models, wearing red and green Jantzen sweaters, pose in front of a sports car parked beside a totem pole in Stanley Park. One of the models holds a Rolleiflex camera, a sign of modernity deftly cued to the reproductive technology of the postcard itself. The sweaters are colour-coordinated – red and green to green and red – to match the primary hues of the pole.

When MacCannell wrote about the power of institutional capital to open up remote regions, he could have been referring to the Interior of British Columbia. Following the war capital investment, much of it from the United States, poured into the province. By the mid-1950s more than half the amount invested in the forest products industry came from American sources. At the same time, the new Social Credit government focused its energies on building up the

15 In an ironic turnaround, the First Nations in British Columbia have recently become more visible as the City of Vancouver has become less visible. As a popular site of movie and television production, Vancouver is usually not permitted to play itself on the screen; instead, it functions as a stand-in city for other cities. See Reid Shier, “Rumble in the Bronx/Woodward’s Back Alley 1999,” Collapse 5 (2000): 185–9.

16 Barman, The West beyond the West, 281.
physical infrastructure of the province to support the growth of the primary resource industries as well as to make possible new development projects, such as those in hydro-electric power. It was a period of economic boom in British Columbia, as it was in most other parts of North America. “During the first six years of Bennett’s tenure,” observes Jean Barman in *The West beyond the West*, “more money was spent building highways than in the entire history of the province.” Much of the highway money was invested in the hinterland, which had been previously neglected in favour of southwestern urban areas. When Cyril Shelford, soon to become an elected member of the Social Credit government, returned from the war to the central interior, he found the dirt roads in his area impassable in spring and fall. Bennett’s 1952 campaign promise “to develop roads and rail to open up the province” struck him as a necessary plank in the Socred platform. Bennett easily persuaded him to run as a candidate in the election. To this day, road construction carries heavy political weight in the Interior. The new Liberal government, armed with Social Credit credentials, has reinvigorated the Bennett platform by promising accelerated road construction in the Peace River District.

By extending British Columbia’s network of highways, the Bennett government helped to prepare “the periphery” not only for greater natural resource extraction, but also for the holiday business of sightseeing. In *Forestry Camp, Okanagan Lake* (Figure 5), tents, trailers, cars, and picnic tables are shown lined up with military precision. The postcard provides evidence from an unlikely quarter that the war was not long over and that those who had returned from it now possessed the leisure time and the prosperity to go camping. It also provides evidence that the automobile was replacing rail as the primary form of transportation between city and country. A crucial point in MacCannell’s argument is that the extension of modern mass leisure and sightseeing into the farthest nooks and crannies of the world is intimately linked to the dictates of capital. The extension follows centuries of foreplay by explorers, missionaries, and anthropologists. And also by utopians, MacCannell might have added.

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17 Ibid., 281.
18 Cyril Shelford, quoted in Barman, *The West beyond the West*, 275.
19 Stephen Hume, “It’s Booming in the Peace’ and Residents Want Their Share,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 June 2001, Section A, reports that “without adequate roads – even rough ones – the oilfield contractors can’t function. This explains the apparent obsession across the Peace River district with the past, present and future state of the roads.”
The car and the road form the leitmotif of this essay. The five postcards so far illustrated all feature some aspect of automobilism. They are souvenirs of the road, a collection of macadamized signs that give me licence to go “botanizing on the ashphalt,” in Walter Benjamin’s memorable phrase.\textsuperscript{20} The scope of the cards is limited in other ways, too. Each card dates from the period of the 1950s to the 1970s, and each was produced in colour using up-to-date colour-printing technologies. In the postcard business such cards are called “chromes,” or “modern” cards, to distinguish them from postcards employing less advanced manufacturing technologies. The location of the subject matter in the postcards is equally circumscribed, limited to the geographical segment of the province travelled by the \textit{BC Studies} editorial board and a stretch of the Saanich peninsula on Vancouver Island. The same restrictions apply to the remaining illustrations.

This delimitation of subject matter is not capricious. The representation of roads and automobility figures prominently in a large percentage of postcards produced in British Columbia after the Second World War. From the 1950s through the 1970s, the production of postcards with road imagery rose exponentially, as quickly as the construction of new highways in the province and the purchase of new automobiles to drive on them. In Peter White’s \textit{It Pays to Play: British Columbia in Postcards, 1950s – 1980s}, the most thorough and sophisticated study of the subject to date, half the cards illustrated fall in some way or another into an automotive category.\textsuperscript{21} In order to prepare his book, and the exhibition at Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver that preceded it, White assembled an archive of 10,000 postwar colour postcards. Cars run in and out of the archive in all directions. Along with landscape views, they form its principal subject matter.

At first glance, \textit{Osoyoos Lake} (Figure 6) might seem to require special pleading for inclusion as an “automotive” postcard. It depicts a man squatting beside a black standard poodle (postcards are full of oddities that unintentionally call attention to the discrepant side of tourist fantasies; what in the world is the black poodle doing in the image?)


\textsuperscript{21} Peter White, \textit{It Pays to Play: British Columbia in Postcards, 1950s – 1980s} (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery and Arsenal Pulp, 1997). The exhibition, for which the book served as a catalogue, travelled across Canada. It was shown in Kamloops, Regina, and Montreal.
under a cloudless blue sky, with Osoyoos Lake stretched out horizontally behind. The curving blacktop represented in the lower right corner of the card does not immediately register in the viewer's field of vision, which is first drawn to the posed couple, the man and his dog, and then to the view behind them. But it is a crucial feature of the composition. On the verso of the card, a caption informs us that the view of Osoyoos Lake is seen from the brand-new Richter Pass Highway. The highway, in other words, is as important to our understanding of the image as is the lake. Before being transformed into a cultural artefact – into a postcard, that is – the lake and the road have been composed in the lens of a camera as laminated together. In this case, the so-called divide between nature and culture, so much debated in academic circles in recent decades, has not been conceived by the photographer as a divide at all.22 Road and lake are viewed as part of the same scenic continuum. The postcard was distributed by the Osoyoos Drug Store, the verso also tells us, which may or may not explain the presence of the poodle in the image.

Given MacCannell's fixation on the relationship of global capital to tourism, it is peculiar that The Tourist says no more about automobility than it does about postcards. MacCannell does observe that mass travel is abetted by expanding networks of highways and roads, and he does present the tourist as a particular kind of consumer, a collector of experiences for which souvenirs such as postcards are required, which act as "markers." But he fails to recognize the degree to which tourism and travelling during the postwar years was a fully mediated activity related not only to automobility, but also to the experience of photographs, film, television, and radio. The impact of new technologies and electronic communication is the terrain of Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, first published in 1964. It was hardly news by the mid-1970s, when The Tourist was being prepared, that Western culture had become saturated with imagery and that this proliferation of visual stimuli had profoundly reshaped the experience of everyday life.23 In a

22 A popular study on the putative nature/culture fork is Alexander Wilson, The Culture of Nature: North American Landscapes from Disney to the Exxon Valdez (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992). Wilson describes how extremes of nature and artifice in the Far West have often reinforced one another, especially when brought together in the form of representations.

23 MacCannell acknowledges the importance of McLuhan's ideas but adds that his position "probably accords the media too much primacy and independence" (The Tourist, 191, n. 12). In the BBC television series Ways of Seeing (1972), John Berger agrees with McLuhan and visually demonstrates many of his written insights into electronic media and everyday experience.
telecommunicating age of faxes and factoids – not to mention digitalized camcorders and the World Wide Web – the virtuality of modern life was forcibly restructuring sociocultural relations.

One way of defining the character of the electronic age is to examine the idea of transportation as a mediating form of communication. The term “communication” was used in connection with sea routes and roads, rivers and bridges, long before it was associated with the information highway. It referred to various kinds of transportation – various mediums of transportation, in the lexicon of McLuhan – all of which had the effect of transforming the content of the messages carried along them. On the subject of postwar highways, McLuhan offers some counter-intuitive insights that are typical of his way of thinking. “Great improvements in roads brought the city more and more to the country,” he writes. “The road became a substitute for the country by the time people began to talk about ‘taking a spin in the country.’ With superhighways the road became a wall between man and the country.”

24 Postcards aided in this process of substitution. For $1.25, tourists could purchase a book of twelve Map Postcards, advertised as a collector’s item (START YOUR SET NOW), and use the “maps” to head up the “grandeurous” Fraser Canyon (Figures 7 and 8). The miniaturized maps show the approved route from Hope to Spences Bridge, and the miniaturized photographs show the approved sights – Hell’s Gate, the China Bar Tunnel, and the Fraser River near Yale – all visible from the car window. The book of cards was distributed by Vancouver Magazine.

If tourists stuck to the main roads during holiday excursions, they would not run short of gas stations to fill up at, diners to eat at, or motor inns to sleep in. Businesses catering to the leisure needs of touring families and groups sprang up along all the major highways, frequently promoting their establishments by commissioning postcards to sell to their customers. 25 The commissioning of “chromes”

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was easy and inexpensive. Many of the commissions from Okanagan establishments in the 1960s were given to E. Hopp, a photographer who forwarded the commissioned images to Grant-Mann Lithographers Ltd. in Vancouver, where they were mass produced into salable items. Multiple replication of a tourist commodity is a prerequisite for commercial viability; there must always be a ready supply of products to sell. The postcard Cache Creek depicts the Bar BX department store, restaurant, and service station (Figure 9). The photographic image emphasizes the arrangement of flashing neon signs that beckons to passing motorists. Peebles Motor Inn, Nelson depicts “one of B.C.’s most distinctive accommodation centres,” with a high-finned Cadillac parked in front of the building to guarantee the boast (Figure 10).

Tourism in British Columbia, like almost everywhere else in North America in the postwar period, was learning from Las Vegas, throwing up box-shaped buildings and topping them with eye-catching multi-coloured signage. It was also learning to flood the marketplace with photographic images, to use them as instruments of mediation to

would be known as deltiology. The term, Hendricks told Evans, derived from the Greek word Deltion, meaning “[a] small illustrated tablet or card.”

Hopp gives his name and address on the back of the postcards as 1005 Pine Street, Kamloops. Grant-Mann, until it closed down in Vancouver in the late 1990s, was the largest manufacturer of cards in British Columbia. It printed its own line and produced postcards for others, often under the “Traveltime” imprint. White, It Pays to Play, 110, lists the names under which Grant-Mann operated — they changed several times — as well as the names of other printers.

attract visitors. First came the capital investment, then came the roads, then came the tourists and the postcards. On the iconic food chain, postcards occupy a place somewhere in the middle ranks, below the mesmerizing screen images of television, film and the Web, but above the butt-end images on ashtrays and matchbook covers. Postcards help to fulfill the desire of tourists to “collect” their travel experiences, to mark them with images that say “I was here.” MacCannell was among those “here” in British Columbia, “collecting” experiences and information for his study of global tourism.
Figure 1: Lookout Point and Kalamalka Lake from the Kelowna-Vernon Highway. Published and distributed by Monahan Agency, Vernon.
Figure 2: World's Tallest Totem Pole, Beacon Hill Park, Victoria. Published by Natural Color Productions, Ltd., Vancouver.
Figure 3: Kwakiutl Bear Pole, Sydney. Published and distributed by Stan V. Wright Ltd., Victoria. Photograph by Dave Campbell.
Figure 4: Jantzen. Manufactured by Grant-Mann Lithographers Ltd., Vancouver, and distrib Jantzen, Vancouver.

Figure 5: Forestry Camp, Okanagan Lake. Manufactured by Grant-Mann Lithographers Ltd., Va
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Figure 6: Osoyoos Lake. Distributed by Osoyoos Drug Store, Ltd.
MAP POSTCARD

12 FOR $1.25

OVER 40 PICTURES

THESE CARDS ARE IN A SERIES DEPICTING
VARIOUS AREAS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

☆ COLLECTORS ITEM – START YOUR SET NOW ☆

LIST OF TITLES PRESENTLY PRODUCED OR IN THE STAGES OF PRODUCTION – SEE INSIDE OF BACK COVER

Figure 7: Map Postcards book cover. Manufactured by Natural Color Productions, Ltd., Vancouver and distributed by Vancouver Magazine Service Ltd., Burnaby.
Figure 8: Grandeurous Fraser Canyon. Manufactured by Natural Color Productions, Ltd., Vancouver, distributed by Vancouver Magazine Service Ltd., Burnaby.
Figure 9: *Cache Creek*. Manufactured by Grant-Mann Lithographers Ltd., Vancouver.

Figure 10: *Peebles Motor Inn, Nelson*. Manufactured by Grant-Mann Lithographers Ltd., Van