CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As for us
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little,
And become confident
As the rock and the ocean that we were made from
(Jeffers quoted in Winton, 1997: 1).

1.1 Thesis Rationale and Content

It is a sunny weekend in Melbourne and a queue of people snake along the Yarra River, dwarfed by the gaming and retail extravaganza of Southbank.\(^1\) They shuffle towards the latest attraction in the city’s array of consumption and leisure facilities, the new Melbourne Aquarium. It would seem that in the year 2000 the call of the deep is as strong as ever. Of course, the viewing of marine animals has changed considerably since the Aquaria craze of the 1800s. Now visitors increasingly seek marine animal\(^2\) interaction in that border zone we call the coast. It is the framing of marine animals within an Australian tourism context and the consumption of these animals that is the key focus of this thesis.

Located within cultural geography, the thesis draws upon two case studies of touristically packaged animals, the Penguin Parade on Phillip Island and Wild Dolphin Tours in Port Phillip Bay. At a more general level these case studies serve as devices for better understanding the nature/culture binary and the way this binary is constituted in and through modern tourism practices. The thesis takes as its starting point Val Plumwood’s (1993) idea of the social separation of humans from “earth others” (Plumwood, 1993: 113),

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\(^1\) Southbank is a complex of redeveloped wharves which now house an immense range of leisure opportunities. It includes retail, food, cinema, nightclub and sideshow areas as well as the Crown Casino and is set within the vicinity of other leisure sites such as the early trading ketch, the Polly Woodside and the Exhibition Building.

\(^2\) For the sake of convenience, I use the term ‘animal’ in the thesis to differentiate between humans and all other animals.
including animals. Such "hyperseparation", as Plumwood (1993: 155) calls it, can account for many contemporary environmental ills, leading geographers such as Wolch and Emel (1995) to call for a remapping of our moral landscape. This thesis specifically explores the potential of one kind of environmental or nature tourism, marine animal tourism, to contribute to the reshaping of this moral landscape. It suggests that through the act of environmental marine tourism humans may be presented with experiences which may variously reinforce the culture/nature dualism or challenge it. In critically assessing the phenomenon of marine ecotourism, the thesis in part addresses the question of whether this type of tourism really moves us beyond these dualisms. While this binary has thus far been widely analysed and criticised in cultural geography (see Chapter 2), few suggestions have been posited as to how it may be challenged. In this way my thesis extends the discussion in this area.

The relatively new field of animal geography has offered a more precise intellectual framework for this thesis. Through the work of Wolch and Emel (1998a), and that of Anderson (1995) which preceded it, animals have come to be afforded attention within geography which some are claiming to be a radical new turn within the discipline. Although it is acknowledged that, "[a]nimals are the ultimate Other" (Wolch and Emel, 1995: 632), social theory remains strongly anthropocentric. This has serious implications for the ways in which we then [mis]treat nature. According to Wolch and Emel (1995) animals should be included in social analysis because they are, "central to environmental sustainability, economic and social order, personal relations and individual identity, and conceptions of justice and morality" (1995: 632). Until environmental caretakers practically consider the problem of "speciesism" (Singer, 1975: 235) then these issues of justice and sustainability are likely to remain. The term 'speciesism' was popularised by animal liberationist Professor Peter Singer and refers to a form of discrimination based upon species as opposed to race, sex or any other difference. These developments have led contemporary geographers to begin to re-think the hybrid state of human and animal relations (Whatmore, 1999). In a similar vein, this thesis asserts that the Cartesian dualisms between culture and nature (Plumwood, 1993) may be challenged through the
environmental education of tourists. Such activity, it is hoped, might contribute to the reimagining of a more socially complete world, one that also includes animals.

Cultural Geography has had an interest in the way in which nature is constructed for some time but it is only very recently that it has begun to think about the place of animals in our lives (Anderson and Gale, 1999). Human consumption of nature has a long history. One of the clearest instances of this has been through zoos (e.g. Anderson, 1995; de Courcy, 1995). What has received less attention is the ways in which we consume nature in the modern world and indeed why people are so keen to do this. Certainly, it is only relatively recently that animals have become more of a focus in social research, along with the rise in activities associated with the watching of cetacean and other marine animals as a touristic encounter. Another key focus of this thesis is the reasons why people travel to see marine animals.

The thesis is, in part, concerned with the ways in which marine animals are displayed in a postmodern world, where the emphasis on consumption industries has transformed many landscapes into sites of spectacle (Urry, 1995; Shurmer-Smith and Hannam, 1994; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1991; Hopkins, 1990; Jackson, 1988; Jameson, 1984). Such transformation has even occurred to the Australian seascapes as they too have increasingly been absorbed into reinvigorated coastal-based touristic and leisure development. The geographer Shelagh Squire (1994: 1) has suggested that tourism can act as “a useful vehicle through which to examine social and cultural questions”. In this way, tourism as a tool for viewing animals, may simultaneously perform as a means of learning about them. Williams (1998: 7) suggests that “the question of why people travel is...fundamental to any understanding of the practice of tourism and its consequences, including the geography of tourism”. Tourism is a major economic earner for Australia. A growing industry, tourism involves most short-term travel away from a person’s usual place of residence for the purpose of leisure (Australian Bureau of Statistics (A.B.S.), 1998). In 1996-97 international tourism to Australia contributed $15.5 billion in export earnings, accounting for some 13.3% of the nation’s total export earnings (A.B.S., 1999: 107). In 1989-90, tourism made up 5.7% of the Australian workforce (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991: 4). The Australian tourism
boom parallels the general rise in the tourism industry world-wide. For instance, between 1970 and 1990 world tourism grew by 260% and in coming years is expected to contribute 10.9% of world GDP (Wearing and Neil, 1999: xiii-xiv). Urry (1990) provides an account of this growth. In the First World, not only is there greater purchasing power and more disposable incomes, people have also experienced an increase in the amount of leisure time (and see Commonwealth of Australia, 1991: 1; Wearing and Neil, 1999: xiv). For Urry (1990) tourism is a part of the modern world of increased leisure opportunities where work and holidays are strictly regulated and separated. In addition, more people over the age of 55 are retired than was the case in the past (Martin and Mason, 1993). Notably, this is largely a First World phenomenon although the Third World is routinely incorporated via tourist destinations.

It is widely acknowledged that one of the key reasons for the rapid rise in international and domestic tourism in Australia has been an attraction to the country’s natural and cultural environment (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991; Herath, 1997; Bureau of Tourism Research, 1996). As Harris and Leiper (1995) argue, this attraction may in part be due to the increasing concern about the environmental impact of industrialisation and population growth throughout the world. Since the late 1980s, the tourism industry in Australia has established several organisations reflecting the interest in nature. For instance the industry’s main association, the Tourism Council of Australia, established the Environmental Advisory Group (1988), appointed an environmentalist to the board of the Australian Tourist Commission (1988) and developed an Environmental Code of Practice for the Tourism Industry (1990). Victoria, the locale that is the empirical focus of this thesis, was the recipient of one million visitors in 1997 and their most popular destination was the Penguin Parade on Phillip Island (A.B.S., 1999). The role of animals in nature tourism in Australia is discussed further later in the chapter. Since the 1980s, there has been a sharp increase in demand for permits for commercial nature tourism ventures in Australia (Fortesque, 1995), further illustrating both tourists’ interests in such attractions and operators’ keenness to capitalise on this interest.
The long tradition of animal tourism has, in recent years, sought to reinvent itself by way of an ecotourism lens. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis, the history of touring marine animals traces back to the confinement of species in aquaria as objects of curiosity. Nineteenth century seaside tours, discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis, also played a role in peoples’ fascination with the sea and its creatures. Today in Australia, aquaria and similar organised marine animal encounters still exist but sit alongside ‘free-range’ marine animal displays based in ‘natural’ settings.

Tourist encounters offer one way in which people and animals might interact. For the geographer Stephen Williams (1998: 2) tourism can be seen as a “pervasive and powerful force for change in the world in which we live”. This is nowhere more evident than in the new field of ecotourism which claims to contain an inherent element of environmental education, more so than for other kinds of tourism. Of course, the long tradition of animal tourism has not always existed within a ecotourism frame: think of the zoo visit, the safari, or the aquarium (see Chapter 4). But in recent years animal tourism in many contexts has sought to reinvent itself by way of an ecotourism logic. Although education potential is often claimed to be a defining feature of ecotourism, there is a surprising lack of substantial work relating to why tourists choose to visit marine animals in a range of contexts and their experiences at these places. Further, there appears to be a dearth of empirical work regarding the possibility of a connection between visitation to wild marine animals and environmental education. Studies have been conducted in relation to learning in zoos, although this has largely been confined to school group learning (Gutierrez de White and Jacobson, 1994; Ford, 1995). Similarly, there is little work relating to education within animal theme parks, such as Sea World. As Broad and Weiler (1997) point out there is a “lack of discussion as to whether other attractions that exhibit animals, such as theme parks, are bound by or are achieving...educational objectives”. To an extent my thesis sets out to address this silence but, more prominently, attempts to uncover the multiple motivations for ecomarine animal visitation in this country.

3 A critique of the term ‘ecotourism’ is presented in Chapter 2 of the thesis.
4 A notable exception is a PhD being undertaken by Elizabeth Reid at the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Adelaide. Reid’s thesis is a close examination of whale watching in southern Australia and the environmental education opportunities this offers tourists.
The objectives of this thesis are achieved through the application of a case study method directed at two marine animal tourist attractions. Ley and Olds (1992) have suggested in the context of (non-nature) spectacular sites of consumption, that public ways of seeing is an important but under-researched theme. The visitor survey which I conducted for my thesis was intended in part to contribute to the need to take account of visitors' views in interpreting such sites of consumption (including nature sites). Hence, the central empirical project of the thesis is an examination of tourists' reasons for visiting marine animals in Australia and their experiences at these sites. The next part of this chapter introduces the case studies used in the thesis.

1.2 The Case Studies

Close to Melbourne, the second largest city in Australia, are the borderlands of Western Port and Port Phillip Bays\(^5\) (Figure 1.1). It is within these waterways that the two case studies of my thesis are set, these being the Phillip Island Penguin Parade on Phillip Island in Victoria, Australia and the Wild Dolphin Tours operating from Sorrento in the southern reaches of Port Phillip Bay. These places were chosen as representative of two disparate ways in which marine life may be visited. I spent the 1996-97 summer at the sites, a total of over sixty visits, unravelling the layers of meaning upon which they are built as well as surveying and observing tourists. In examining the degrees of discursive embodiment of these animal others, the thesis uses Little (formerly Fairy) Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) and Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) to explore the production and consumption of animals through the ecomarine experience. As a means of illustrating the development of marine animal tourism over time and its historical context, the thesis also examines the rise of the aquaria industry and the existence of the marine theme park as a space of fantasy about and control over marine animals. The rationale for the selection of the case studies is explained in what follows.

\(^5\) Port Phillip Bay has a coastline of 264km and is under pressure from the impact of the 3.2 million people who live around it (C.S.I.R.O., 1996). Commercial fishers take $32 million worth of seafood from the Bay
The empirical project of the thesis is concerned with the reasons why people are drawn to marine animal tourism sites in Australia. From the outset the thesis sought to use case studies as a device to display a range of distinctive marine tourism sites involving human/animal interaction. In deciding on possible marine animal tourism sites in Australia, it was found that these could be classified in terms of the varying degrees to which the animal attractions are presented in an environment mediated by humans.\(^6\) This spectrum (Figure 1.2) can be thought of as a continuum of experiences which, to varying degrees, reinforce or challenge the culture/nature binary. At the same time, it is important to note that while all sites are examples of a socially constructed nature, they variously attempt to give the appearance of a more or a less ‘natural’ environment and experience. Clearly, in each instance, the human factor works to invent a palatable landscape for consumption by various types of tourists. This process of naturalising the nature attraction for tourist consumption is a theme within the analysis of the case studies.

The case studies, elaborated upon below, are set within three main bodies of literature namely social constructions of nature, animal geographies and theories of tourism. When interwoven, these disparate fields of thought act to show that the culturally constructed dualism between humans and other animals can perhaps be challenged by the act of touring, of spending time in the company of the non-captive other. The spectrum of ecomarine touristic experience will be explained before a more detailed description of the case studies is given.

The two sites in Australia used in the study to illuminate the ways in which tourists may experience marine animals fit within the spectrum of marine animal production and consumption. This spectrum provides a contextual place from which the case studies can be more clearly understood. As Figure 1.2 shows, animals can be seen to be variously produced and consumed across a range of mediated environments. At one end of the

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\(^6\) In this context 'mediated' is seen as the degree to which the immediate environment surrounding the tourists and animals has been built and the level to which the behaviour and image of the animals is determined by the Institutions 'selling' them. The term does not intend to imply that the actions of humans are 'unnatural' or apart from nature.
Figure 1.1 Location map of Port Phillip Bay, Western Port Bay and case study locations.
TOURIST INTERACTIONS WITH ANIMALS

Extreme Mediation
- Production Features
  - Animals may be trained to entertain (tricks etc)
  - Animals removed from own habitat and in captivity
- Consumption Features
  - Visitors marshalled in specific ways
  - Visual is dominant means of interacting with animals (emphasis on spectacle)
  - Minimum educational interpretation
- Examples
  - Traditional Zoological Gardens and Aquaria
  - Some Nature Theme Parks
- Thesis Case
  - Sea World

Moderate Mediation
- Production Features
  - Animals rarely trained to entertain
  - Animals in natural habitat, or close recreation, possibly not captive
  - Some infrastructure to assist visitor access (e.g. boardwalks)
- Consumption Features
  - Visitors and animals allowed to be in close proximity but with physical barriers
  - Visual may be supplemented by other ways of interacting e.g. feeding/touching
  - Possible Visitor Centre with education facilities
- Examples
  - Some zoo experiences
  - Some safari tours and wildlife parks
- Thesis Case
  - Penguin Parade

Minimum Mediation
- Production Features
  - Animals in own habitat
  - Low surrounding infrastructure
  - Emphasis on animals' 'natural' behaviour
- Consumption Features
  - Physical barriers minimal or absent between visitor and animals
  - High proximity between visitor and animal, seemingly at discretion of animal
- Examples
  - Boat tours to observe marine animals
  - Tours to see Antarctic wildlife
- Thesis Case
  - Wild Dolphin Tours

Figure 1.2: Spectrum of Ecomarine Touristic Experience
spectrum, captive animals are used to entertain tourists who in turn are kept at a distance from them, such as in early Zoological Gardens and Aquaria. Here at a point of extreme mediation tourists are held completely separate from ‘nature’. Using the example of Sea World as a Nature Theme Park, the thesis will show that animals are used as a form of entertainment and escapism, intertwined as they are with funfair rides and a retail extravaganza (see Chapter 4). Modern day aquaria, or “Blue Zoos” (Melbourne Aquarium, n.d.) such as UnderWater World and the new Melbourne Aquarium, also display captive animals for tourist enjoyment. Critically, however, these sites work to incorporate environmental education into their interpretation. Here, as tourists dwell in the underwater tunnels, they can feel in a safe, sanitised simulacra, that they are part of the ocean domain.

At the central point of the spectrum, moderate mediation, animals are in their own habitat, or a close recreation of this, and are rarely trained for human entertainment. Here, tourists can consume the animal in close proximity to themselves, such as on safari tours and in some zoos. The midpoint in the continuum indicates a critical shift in which the marine animal attraction allows the tourists to become partially immersed in the animal world. At this point, infrastructural barriers remain between the tourist and the animal. However, possible on-site interpretation in the form of a Visitor Centre functions to project similarities between the human and the non-human animal worlds. In this thesis the example used to delve into this point on the continuum is the Penguin Parade on Phillip Island. This case study details the ways in which animals are framed for the touristic encounter as special. In this “reverse zoo” (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger, 1996), captive tourists view wild animals in situ but from behind fences and within the confines of concrete stands, bright lights and wooden walkways.

The other pole of the spectrum of ecomarine touristic experience encapsulates those attractions where the animals are presented as ‘wild’ in a non-captive environment at a point of minimum mediation. Visitors may come in close contact with them at the discretion of the animal, such as on boat tours to see cetacea and on wildlife tours to Antarctica. Here the focus is on the ‘natural’ behaviours of the animals. In this thesis, the example of Wild Dolphin Swimming and Sightseeing Tours are used to illustrate a point
where tourists can watch non-captive marine animals in close proximity. Here tourists can ultimately participate in the lives of the animals, even if only for a few, fleeting moments as they encounter the animals in the absence of material barriers. Using the examples of three tour vessels (the Looking Good, the Moonraker and the Polperro), the thesis looks at the ways in which individual tour operators produce dolphins for visitors using various forms of promotion and interpretation (see Chapters 7 and 8). As will be shown, at the time of my fieldwork, the Moonraker tours did not actively engage in interpretation for their tourists. As such, although this vessel works in close proximity with non-captive animals, the lack of environmental education offered suggests it functions primarily to frame the dolphin as a subject of entertainment. On the Polperro, tourists choosing to slip into the cool blue of Port Phillip Bay, can come face-to-face with a dolphin, the only barrier between them being the conservation-based commentary provided by the operators of this vessel. Here, the dolphin is produced as a sacred animal, at once similar to and apart from humans. Finally, the sightseeing vessel, the Looking Good seeks to produce the dolphin as an animal deserving of distance and respect from tourists. The interpretation offered here attempts to educate tourists near the animals but without the infrastructural spectacle and obvious mediation of the Penguin Parade.

The first case study of the thesis finds us on the sandy, southern beaches of Phillip Island (Figure 1.3). Phillip Island is an area of some 10,000 hectares and consists of a central basalt section connected to two smaller granite islands, Cape Woolamai and Point Grant, by sandy tie bars. Located across the mouth of Westernport Bay, 120km from Melbourne, Phillip Island has been a popular tourist site for over 100 years. Today, residents number 3,000 a figure that grows to 40,000 in peak holiday periods (Edgecombe, 1989: 3). Initially people were drawn to the site because of its mild climate and proximity to Australia’s second largest capital city. Gradually, a range of agricultural industries were introduced and in 1928 the first Australian Grand Prix car race was held on the island, an event which further promoted it as a tourist destination. Today, Phillip Island is marketed as a destination for national and international tourists where they can “get back to nature” by gazing at a range of Australian flora and fauna. In 1996, Jeff Kennett, the then Premier of

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7 This is a marketing term used to promote Phillip Island as discussed in Chapter 5 of the thesis.
Figure 1.3 Map of Phillip Island showing places referred in the thesis.
Victoria, proclaimed Phillip Island as a 'Nature Park'\(^8\) (Winkler, 1996: 4), clearly aware of the site's earning potential. As a Nature Park the Island is now publicly presented as a place where the environment is valued and worthy of protection.

From the 1920s when a few tourists trampled penguin habitat to obtain a closer view of the animals by torchlight (Figure 1.4), to the present where thousands each night watch the penguins from boardwalks or the large concrete viewing stand, the site has undergone dramatic changes in infrastructure and visitor interpretation. The history of the Penguin Parade is in part a complex story of changes in the way Managers have perceived the value of the animals (see Chapter 5). As I discuss in Chapter 2, tourism to particular sites has been likened to the act of paying homage (Cohen, 1988; Lett, 1983, Shields, 1990). At the Penguin Parade, the birds have been increasingly spectacularised, objectified and at the same time protected, as tourists from around the world arrive, pilgrim-like, to see them each evening.

The nightly 'parade' of the penguins from the sea to their dune burrows attracted over 500,000 paying customers in 1995 (Winkler, 1996: 4) and contributed A$50 million to the Victorian economy in 1993 (Scrass, 1995: 25). Here, visitors wander through the terrestrial world of the penguin, albeit behind fences, having first applauded the arrival of the birds on the beach. The Parade itself takes place under powerful floodlights, entertaining up to approximately three thousand people seated on a grandstand-like structure. The Penguin Parade provides an opportunity to visit marine animals in situ in an environment mediated to appear less human-centred than is often the case, say, in captive animal tourist developments. The animals are, to a large extent, allowed to behave in ways they would were humans not present. That is, the attraction of the animals is their nightly routine, and not their ability to entertain on command.

The creation of the penguin spectacle has ensured that, where the birds once anonymously

\(^8\) A 'Nature Park' differs from a 'State Park' in that the former allows a higher level of development and encourages a significant proportion of the associated infrastructure. The concept has been criticised for providing an inadequate level of conservation for the Island's ecosystems (Winkler, 1996: 4). It is possible that the development of a Nature Park on Phillip Island may simply illustrate the efforts of a regional government to combat the ills of economic recession and unemployment.
Fig 1.4: Tourists Watching Penguins On Summerland Beach, 1920s

(Source: P.I.P.R.C.M., 1992: 2)
carried out their lives, they are now the focus of lights and cameras, souvenirs and displays and several hundred thousand tourists a year. Through popular culture, Phillip Island’s Little Penguins have been transported from obscurity to the tourism Hall of Fame where each night the details of their terrestrial lives are closely scrutinised by visitors. As will be shown in Chapter 5 of the thesis, current Management tries to manipulate this consumption of a wild animal in such a way as to balance between capturing the imagination of the tourist masses and ensuring the long-term survival of the birds. In this humanised funscape the penguin has been differentially framed so as to appear recognisable and palatable to tourists who in turn fund the conservation of the birds’ habitat through entrance fees to the site.

The second case study in the thesis presents tourists’ experiences of visiting wild dolphins, both in a sightseeing and a swimming capacity, from Sorrento on Victoria’s Port Phillip Bay (Figure 1.1). These are not animals in captivity, taken from their usual habitat to a human built setting where they can be more conveniently and safely viewed. Nor are these animals who, although visited in situ, remain separated from us, placed centre stage by the surrounding tourism infrastructure. These are wild creatures who, for reasons unknown, at times interact with humans encountered in their ocean domain (Figure 1.5). On the wild dolphin tours, the level of human interference is usually comparatively small.9

Importantly, tours to visit a population of wild bottlenose dolphins were included because of the low levels of mediation associated with this touristic experience. Whereas the Sea World animals are captive and the Phillip Island penguins get presented to tourists because they need to return to their burrows, the Port Phillip Bay dolphins have more opportunity to accept or reject human interaction. Obviously infrastructure is confined to the vessels and visitors may experience an ultimate interaction with the dolphins by becoming immersed in the animals’ environment. Additionally, the attraction of cetacea may in part be due to the construction of these animals through popular scientific and environmental discourses (see Chapter 7).

9 However, this is not always so. For example, on 23.1.00 the owner of a Queenscliff boat charter company was charged under the Wildlife (Whales) Regulations 1998 with interfering with the dolphins. He was fined A$4000 and $5191 in costs (Butcher, 2000).
Figure 1.5: Subjects of Fascination: Bottlenose Dolphins in Port Phillip Bay
(Source: Capt. A. Troy Muir, 1996)
1.3 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 2 in the thesis examines the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Beginning with key features of the social construction of nature literature, the chapter moves to examine the animal geographies literature before considering facets of tourism writing relevant to peoples’ growing desire to interact with nature. In choosing to investigate these interactions, Chapter 3 presents the methodological tools by which these marine tourism experiences were interpreted: including an analysis of their production and packaging as well as an investigation of peoples’ motivations for seeking out such touristic experiences. Here the specific methodological processes implemented in relation to the case studies are explained. In order to bridge my theoretical wanderings with the sunny days of Victoria’s 1996-97 summer, the fourth chapter provides an historical understanding of our fascination with the marine and explores the development of public interest in marine animals as a source of leisure over time. Stemming from the early private collectors, through to the display of ocean animals for entertainment and profit at Australia’s Sea World, the chapter arrives finally in the highly mediated safety of the modern aquaria experience.

In Chapter 5 the ways in which the Phillip Island penguin has been socially constructed during the twentieth century are examined. In particular, this chapter investigates the framing of the animal over time as a novelty attraction, as a threatened species and as a link to ‘the wild’. This is done as a means of contextualising Chapter 6, which presents the story of tourist experiences of the Penguin Parade during the summer of 1996-97. Specifically, this chapter considers why people wanted to see the animals, how they responded to them and the ways they may have learnt about the birds on site. Chapter 7 presents the second case study, the wild dolphin tours in Port Phillip Bay. Here I begin with an analysis of five popular texts as a way of explaining the social construction and modern re-mythologisation of this creature as a humanised and utopian being, before moving on to detail the site and educational opportunities of the Port Phillip Bay experience. Chapter 8 records the experiences of some tourists on the tour boats during my fieldwork and the interpretation they are offered. Chapter 9 summarises the thesis, presents recommendations for my case sites, and offers conclusions about the culture/nature divide and animal geography.
This thesis is a journey from the controlled viewing of marine animals in captivity, to watching them insitu from behind fences, to diving into what is seen as their world. As readers travel with tourists from the fun of Sea World into the coastal interface of the Penguin Parade they are transported from an environment representing separation and difference towards one of closer observation and understanding. In then leaving the philosophical safety of the beach and sliding into the world of the dolphin, the thesis carries us into the uncharted waters of ultimate culture/nature defiance within the cool depths of Port Phillip Bay. Enjoy the tour.
CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGING THE HUMAN-ANIMAL DIVIDE:
THEORIES OF NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM

Theory—the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees—theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to the earth over and over. But if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth (Rich quoted in Gaard, 1993: 1).

2.1 Introduction

Through its examination of the construction and consumption of animals in the context of marine tourism in Australia, this thesis intends to contribute to the new field of animal geography. It does so by drawing attention to the viewing of animals 'in the wild' as opposed to those in domestic situations, in zoos and in wildlife and theme parks. A thesis investigating the packaging and consumption of marine animals in tourist settings has a diverse body of literature on which to draw. There are extensive fields of literature which I could have consulted more widely, such as those in anthropology, animal rights, environmental philosophy and psychology. While these are not referred to here, they certainly have influenced the development of my ideas over time. In this chapter I have chosen to confine myself to those pieces of work directly relevant to an explanation of my thesis topic within the field of cultural geography.

The chapter is a review of the cultural geography and related literatures that deal with the social construction of animals, their incorporation into a tourism industry, and the implications of this for our moral landscape. It will précis relevant texts and, in doing so, combine a range of texts that have thus far remained separate. Specifically, I seek to blend the literature on the culture/nature dualism, tourism and environmental education in order to more fully illuminate the relationships between tourism and the socially constructed marine animal. This discussion will show that within a geographical context, the study of humans’ cultural interactions with non-human animals is an emerging area of academic
interest. In particular, this review demonstrates that the socially constructed marine animal, the specific focus of this thesis, remains enigmatic in much academic literature, despite its immense attraction in popular culture.

Initially, the review will consider the ways in which nature has been socially constructed. It will then examine the human/nature dualism which lies at the centre of western, Eurocentric ideas of social relations with nature. Here, nature is examined as the antithesis of human, as the hyperseparated realm of the other (Plumwood, 1993: 155). For a thesis concerned, in part, with uncovering the meanings behind the complex relationships between humans and the animal other, the exciting and relatively new area of animal geography is particularly useful. Here, animals are presented as subjects worthy of serious scholarship and attention in relation to their often poor treatment by humanity and the reasons behind this. As such, the review then considers critical studies of animal/society relations both within and outside of geography. As this is a thesis concerned with tourist encounters with marine animals in the modern day, the next section of the chapter turns to existing literature on tourism. Here it is suggested that the gaze of the tourist has particular characteristics and that it is historically and geographically specific. Further, it argues that the objects of interest to the tourists are socially constructed and contain multiple layers of meaning. This part of the chapter touches especially on the literature exploring seaside tourism before examining the literature on the modern-day phenomenon of ecotourism. The final part of the chapter looks at the use and effectiveness of interpretation at ecotour sites. In order to better understand the relationships between tourism and education a range of literatures were consulted, specifically in the area of environmental education at tourism sites. These are discussed below and throughout the thesis and include areas such as literature on the display of marine animals over time, on how tourists learn and an examination of empirical work carried out in relation to interpretation studies.
2.2. A Socially Constructed Nature

The approach this thesis takes towards the marine animal/human relationship is grounded in the idea of a socially constructed reality. The social constructionist view posits that a reality is created in relation to peoples’ view of it, that reality does not have meaning outside of that view. This is the “process by which people create their understanding of the nature of their environment” (Robertson, 1987: 160). The idea of a socially constructed reality can be traced to the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1963). They suggested that the process of constructing reality has three stages which have been usefully summarised by Robertson (1987: 160). Firstly, as they interact, people are responsible for creating products, both material and nonmaterial, such as cities, landscapes, and constructs like days of the week. Secondly, reality comes to be constituted by these cultural constructs. Over time these constructs take on a reality of their own and are accepted as if a naturally given reality. Finally, through the process of socialisation, people learn about their society’s naturalised constructions of reality.

This assumption of a socially constructed reality is an almost foundational idea in the New Cultural Geography (see Jackson, 1989; Anderson and Gale, 1999). Robertson (1987: 153) contributes that “[p]eople do not perceive a reality ‘out there’ directly; they create shared interpretations of reality”. Critical examinations of these social constructions are essential because:

far from being irresistible truths, they are the cultural stuff out of which broad moral and material systems are made. They are ‘maps of meaning’ that whether ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ are picked up by people, groups and institutions. They are acted upon, reproduced and hardened into seeming ‘fact’ (Anderson and Gale, 1992: 3).

This is what Jackson (1989: 3) refers to as ‘naturalization’, a process whereby certain views “become part of everyday common sense”. Such a process is an essential step in certain ideas and meanings becoming dominant or hegemonic. As Tuan (1984: 1) succinctly put it, “[a]ny attempt to account for human reality seems to call for an understanding of the nature of power”.

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Generally, this notion of a socially constructed world has been applied to social identities, like racialised groups. But the notion is also applicable to non-human identities and categories including nature. For example, Anderson and Gale (1999: 2) note how the environmental movement is "forging new ways of seeing and relating to nature". Recent approaches in cultural geography seek to explore these socially constructed non-human categories, and one area where this has occurred is through the new animal geographies.

To argue that nature is a social construction is not to say that the non-human world does not exist, or that it only exists in our imagination. Rather, it is to suggest, as Cronon (1996: 25) does, that "the way we describe and understand the world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated". Haraway, in her primate-based critique of "endlessly socially enforced dualisms", asks, "[w]hat may count as nature for late industrial people?" (Haraway, 1989: 1-3). Generally, when people use the term 'nature' to refer to all of creation, "they are echoing a long semantic history that tracks backwards to the medieval church and even to classical antiquity, implying without much reflection that nature is One Thing with One Name" (Cronon, 1996: 35).

A social constructionist perspective would argue that there is no natural place that has not, in at least one sense, been constructed by humans. As Williams (1980: 67) writes "the idea of nature contains, although often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history". Such is clearly the case for the 'nature' of highly constructed experiences such as we might find in Zoological Gardens (hereafter 'zoos') or Marine Parks or in the apparently 'untouched' cases of the Antarctic or so called 'wilderness' areas. This apparent lack of human influence is itself entangled with certain social constructions of these places as, for example, 'pristine environments' or 'the last great wilderness'.

Understanding the ways in which nature has been socially mediated necessarily involves considering the influence of accepted paradigms within western capitalist-based societies in relation to resources and the natural world. Marx effectively outlined the deleterious connections between the capitalist social system and nature. His work has allowed people
to more carefully rethink the often unquestioned dialectic of human/nature relations. In Marx’s mind, non-human nature should be seen as “man’s inorganic body” (Dickens, 1992: 64), where society and nature are inextricably interwoven. Capitalism, Marx espoused, worked to take benefits from the earth for profit, without ensuring protection for that source of wealth. Fitzsimmons (1989: 118) echoed such an idea by calling on human geographers concerned with understanding and changing the world to, “address capitalism in its hidden moments, its reproduction of disguising abstractions such as ‘nature’”.

Through the process of privatisation and ‘property’ nature has become a foundational resource within a capitalist, market system which is necessarily driven by the accumulation of money and assets. For Raymond Williams (1980) the transfer of nature from common to private hands is foundational in understanding current meanings of the term. In his mind:

once we begin to speak of men (sic) mixing their labour with the earth, we are in a whole world of new relations between man and nature, and to separate natural history from social history becomes extremely problematic (Williams, 1980: 76).

The ability of the market to transform nature into a commodity is ever present and nowhere more clearly than in the Late Capitalist touristic developments discussed in this thesis.

Val Plumwood’s (1993) *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* is a comprehensive analysis of the reasons behind human domination over non-humans. Central to her explanation is the argument that western, European societies have a particular social construction of nature vis-à-vis themselves. In particular, she argues that nature has been constructed as other to the social, in a dualistic way. She points out that there is a basal and longstanding aspect of western ideas of nature, which see it as radically other to society. According to Plumwood, “[d]ualism is the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (Plumwood, 1993: 31). She notes that, “the logical structure of dualism forms a basis for the connections between forms of oppression” (Plumwood, 1993: 2) and has provided ideological permission for the exploitation of nature. In relation to environmental issues, Simmons (1993: 12) puts it simply when he
defines dualism as being a state of affairs where “the human species is different from everything else on the Earth and thus acquires certain rights and powers over everything else”.

Historically humans, because of their ability to reason, have seen themselves as separate from the rest of nature. Animals, who were assumed to lack reasoning ability, were placed into the blanket category of ‘nature’ along with plants, stones and the like. This is what Plumwood calls “hyperseparation” (1993: 49). This theme has been taken up by Kay Anderson (1995; 1998) in relation to her work on Zoological Gardens to which I return in the section on animal geographies. This separation has implicit within it the assumption that humans have a right to dominate nature. This cultural lens in turn has led to various forms of exploitative relations between humans and nature over time, such as the processes of domestication and commodification to which I return later in the chapter.

According to Plumwood, the fundamental components of western dualistic thinking can be envisaged as a set of opposing pairs, as displayed in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: The Components of Western Dualistic Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>culture</th>
<th>nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mind</td>
<td>body (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master</td>
<td>slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>matter (physicality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationality</td>
<td>animality (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>emotion (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mind, spirit</td>
<td>nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freedom</td>
<td>necessity (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal</td>
<td>particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>nature (non-human)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civilised</td>
<td>primitive (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production</td>
<td>reproduction (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public</td>
<td>private</td>
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<tr>
<td>subject</td>
<td>object</td>
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<tr>
<td>self</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Plumwood, 1993: 43.
The components shown in Table 2.1 form the basis of unequal power relations within society, including between humans and nature. The western idea that humans are a part of culture whereas all other beings and inanimate things are only nature has long historical roots. For instance, in ancient Greece, Plato was one of the first western philosophers to propound that the chaos of nature should come under the control of the reasoned logic of humanity. Later, Descartes saw nature as a machine created by God and humans were to manage this machine. It was this elaboration of a rationalist logic which laid the foundations for the reason/nature dualism. A Cartesian perspective placed animals as bodies only and without any form of soul, mind, feelings or language. Under this logic, they also could not suffer or feel any pain, as sensations caused by the body were different than those caused by the mind. This conceptualisation of animals by Descartes reflects the broader hyperseparation assumed between humans and nature. The Cartesian view relegated animals to the realm of unconscious nature, and provided a critical context for the domestication of nature and its status as private property.

Carl Linne’s *Systema Naturae*, a method of classifying plants, is a useful illustrative example of the way in which, in this case, eighteenth century European society tried to order and understand chaotic new landscapes encountered during imperial expansion. This labelling and naming of nature was a way of laying claim to the land and of attempting a mastery over this new found nature and its resources. It also provided Europeans with a way of making sense of their place in these ‘new worlds’. As Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 31) explained:

> The eighteenth-century classificatory systems created the task of locating every species on the planet, extracting it from its particular, arbitrary surroundings (the chaos), and placing it in its appropriate spot in the system (the order—the book, collection, garden or zoo).

Coinciding with the publication of Linnaeus’ work in 1735, Europe’s first international scientific expedition commenced, resulting in a new “planetary consciousness” (Pratt, 1992: 15). Indeed as these new natural worlds were being discovered, the system of classification was used as a way to audit their resource value for future exploitation.
In 1997, the cultural geographer Kay Anderson published a critical examination of the process of animal and other nature domestication drawing on a substantial body of literature in this field. She describes domestication as “a process of hereditary reorganisation of animals into new forms according to human interests” (Anderson, 1997: 477). Anderson (1997) explains that early records of the domestication of animals can be traced to the Roman period in 500BC. Developing the ideas of Plumwood (discussed earlier) she asserts that domestication is a political activity which shares historical roots with “ideas of human uniqueness and domination, savagery and civilization” (Anderson, 1997: 470). In Anderson’s (1997) view, domestication was a process which was pivotal in the constructing of nature as other, pitted as it was against the increasing view of the human as ‘culture’. With the rise of the practice of domestication, animals were brought under the control of humans, who simultaneously rejected their own animality. However, this assertion of dominance was not homogenous across the human race. Indeed, Anderson (1997) clarifies that concepts of wildness and civility worked to ensure differentiation in colonial and gendered relations amongst human communities.

Anderson (1997) also argues that domestication is a fundamental facet of constructing nature as separate from humans and as a resource for our benefit. Her work extends Val Plumwood’s view that the west has “instrumentalised” nature for human ends. This, Plumwood asserts, is based upon:

the application of a moral dualism that treats humans as the only proper objects of moral consideration and defines ‘the rest’ as part of the sphere of expediency (Plumwood, 1993: 69).

Anderson’s (1997) paper on domestication was an extension of earlier work on animals in the setting of the Zoological Garden. I return to this work later in the chapter.

Anderson’s (1997) work highlighted the Cartesian dualistic boundaries, which encoded nature as other, as a place of ‘the wild’, and the antithesis of human civility. Williams (1980) had similarly argued that nature in such a framework was seen as “all that was not man: all that was not touched by man, spoilt by man: nature as the lonely places, the
wilderness" (Williams, 1980: 77). Dean MacCannell (1992) makes a similar point in his relevant discussion of Yosemite National Park in the contemporary moment. Here, nature has been "museumized" as a gift of industrial society but at the same time "[i]t quietly affirms the power of industrial civilisation to stage, situate, limit, and control nature" (MacCannell, 1992: 115).

Thus the ways in which the human/nature dualism has been created and widely accepted provides a key insight into Western/Eurocentric constructions of nature. Drawing on geographical and other literature, the chapter has so far provided an examination of this dualism, a foundational example within the social construction of nature. The chapter now moves on to suggest that the basic tenets of the social construction idea may be challenged by the act of touring. As I will show in the thesis, as tourists increasingly choose to visit nature sites in Australia, it is possible that some do so with the intention of subsuming the human/nature divide so much a basal feature of modern social relations with nature.

The term hegemony and its inference of political supremacy has long been used by geographers in relation to inequality between classes of humans. Here, the dominant class has held sway over the subordinates ensuring that their political, cultural and moral values were accepted as the norm (Jackson, 1989). The same may be said for power inequalities between species. The dominant class (humans) have created an ideology of oppression over all species other than themselves, including animals. Because animals cannot speak,¹ this status quo has long enjoyed dominance, intermittently challenged by some people who have chosen to speak on behalf of animals.² It is here that the 'ways of seeing' animals differs so greatly from the other struggles such as those associated with gender and race. It is one thing for people to call for justice for their own class or race, for instance, for they are likely to be able to see a direct personal reward (such as better working or living conditions). It is quite another to 'go in to bat' as it were for a species other than your own. The rewards are less tangible and indeed the economic costs may be great.

¹ We know that animals do indeed communicate (Griffin, 1992) and it is thought some may have their own languages (Connor and Micklethwait-Peterson, 1994; Lily, 1972).
² This "social closure" (Jackson, 1989: 73) often contains resistance to the realm of the symbolic though structures such as the judicial system.
In numerous ways, exploitative relations between humans and nature have been played out over time and modern Western society continues to focus on the otherness of non-humans. A growing body of literature discussing animal/society relations has appeared in geography and other disciplines over the past decade. The dualism between humans and nature is central to the continued domination of what Plumwood (1993) refers to as ‘earth others’, those beings on the planet besides humans. In order for us to more fully understand domination, Plumwood (1993) suggests nature is the missing piece in the analysis of the oppression of gender, class and race. This idea is taken up in the new area of animal geography to which this literature review now turns.

2.3 Critical Studies in Animal/Society Relations

The human/animal dualism, as discussed earlier in this chapter, and the positioning of animals at the outskirts of social imaginaries, is being challenged with the new animal geography. Noske (1989: viii) claims that the social sciences have long being anthropocentric. She observes that, “[a]nimals are usually ignored as socially irrelevant or at best figure as raw material for human practice and human thought”. Yet, animals are everywhere. They are our companions at home and frequently the objects of our leisure time through zoos, fishing and so on. We eat them, wear them, trade them as commodities on the stock market and have developed national economies based upon them. Within the capitalist world, animals are absorbed into the production process (Smith, 1984; Dickens, 1992; Fitzsimmons, 1989; Noske, 1989). They are used in a range of productive areas such as for pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, experimental science, and in tourism. Yet until very recently animals have been kept in the borderlands of our critical intellectual efforts. That this is the case in geography, a discipline specifically concerned with the human/nature relationship, is even more remarkable. This state of affairs has slowly begun to change. The “animal turn” (Anderson and Gale, 1999: 16) in human geography has sought to upset the long held boundaries between culture and nature (see for example Willems-Braun, 1997). It
is the developing field of animal geographies that has opened out this area and relevant contributions are discussed below.

Yi-Fu Tuan’s (1984) landmark book *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* was the first in geography to critically analyse the power relations between humans and animals and as such is an important contribution to this thesis. Using case studies of gardens, pets and othered humans, Tuan (1984) proposed that the relationship between humans and their pets is an unequal one, where the animal simply acts as, “part of one’s personal entourage” (Tuan, 1984: 162). Of particular relevance to my thesis, Tuan (1984) explains that it has been the domination of animals through domestication which has helped define us as the dominant species on the planet. Importantly, Tuan (1984) introduces the idea of animals as being a part of social groups, and as being historically in conflict with their paternalistic, if well meaning owners. This is a critical point in the development of the new animal geography as it is in the pursuit of a more animal inclusive society. In relation to my thesis, Tuan does not specifically talk about visiting animals in a touristic setting. He refers to the display of animals in museums, circuses, zoos and menageries, reflecting as they do the “trait of high civilization” (Tuan, 1984: 75). Nor does he discuss in any detail human relationships with animals who are not in captivity. The focus of attention is on animals within the urban setting who have been domesticated as human companions or those used for entertainment. His work does not, for example, discuss animals ‘in the wild’ who are incorporated into tourist consumption processes.

Some aspects of Tuan’s work have been built upon by more recent writers in animal geography. For example, Philo (1998) has contributed to the theme of uneven power relations between the human and animal worlds. Philo advocates, “a social-cultural perspective in geographical work on animals” (Philo, 1998: 52). He likens the past treatment of animals in the geographical literature to that of women, the poor, gays, people of colour and people with disabilities. He goes on to point out that, with the exception of biogeography, the discipline has previously subsumed animals into “broader discussions of nature and environment, rarely making them into a special issue deserving of special consideration” (Philo, 1998: 53). Animals have rarely been discussed in terms of agency
and out of the context of the role they play within the lives of humanity. Even the physical branches of the discipline have failed to see animals as animals; as creatures with lives and needs, rather than objects to simply be trapped and counted. Taking a wider perspective and a more overtly political tone, Wolch and Emel (1998a) analyse the role animals have played in the modern world such as in globalisation and biotechnology. Animals, historically considered part of a homogenous ‘nature’, (Wolch and Emel, 1998b) are increasingly being placed centre-stage in efforts to question and redress past truths.

As noted, Kay Anderson has contributed significantly to the field of critical geographies of animal/society relations. Her work thus far has largely been based upon the domestication of animals, particularly in the context of the Zoological Garden (Anderson, 1995; 1997; 1998). Anderson argues that nature, as a social construction, has encoded meanings and the zoo, being a place where folk in the metropolitan centres and animals meet, can tell us about these meanings. The zoo gave clear expression to Linnaen ideas of classification and systematic study and ordering of animals and other species (Anderson, 1995; 1998). The exhibition of animals in zoos throughout Europe from the 1800s on was based on this systematic knowledge of species. These exhibits were also displays of the mastery of new worlds and the power of imperial expansion. Using the example of the Adelaide Zoo, Anderson traces the history of such spaces and the way animals were constructed by imperial ideologies. Zoos, according to Anderson (1995: 278), were (and continue to be) places where nature was, “crafted into an iconic representation of human capacity for order and control”. Indeed, the animal exhibits functioned as, “emblems of colonial mastery over the animal world” (Anderson, 1995: 281). In somewhat contradictory ways, animals in zoos were both hyperseparated and subject to anthropomorphising through say, naming them (eg. Miss Siam the elephant and her ‘furnished’ enclosure) or teaching them human activities (eg. monkeys were a source of much amusement as they held tea parties).

Anderson’s research is an important contribution to the discussion on human/animal relations and has offered a template for this research. My thesis builds on her work based in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by looking at the ways in which marine animals are similarly produced in the late twentieth century. Importantly, my work is
concerned with tourist experiences with non-captive, non-domesticated animals thus providing a different perspective from other geographers such as Anderson (1995) and Tuan (1984).

In addition, Anderson’s work has left two specific issues tantalisingly underdeveloped. The first of these is the issue of the way the zoo presents the captured animal as a spectacle for touristic consumption. This becomes a central theme of the thesis. A second dimension also left undeveloped by Anderson is the experience of the people who visit the animals. Her field of interest is more about the constructions of the animals than the ways in which they are consumed by the visitors. Anderson (1995: 276) suggests that there is a need for further research into human responses to zoos. Similarly Squire (1994: 8) has pointed out that geographers have paid little attention “to the ways that ‘ordinary’ visitors read the changing texts of postindustrial or postmodern tourism” (and see Burgess, 1990). My thesis, in its attainment of tourists’ impressions of their experiences in the ecomarine tourist environment moves, in small part, to address this gap. Notably, Chris Philo’s (1998) work on livestock in cities encourages the investigation of how different human groups experience animals. Specifically, Philo (1998: 51-52) proposes that it is worth considering that:

how different human communities think, feel, and talk...about the animals nearby will obviously shape their socio-spatial practices towards these beings on an everyday basis, with important consequences for the extent to which the different animal species present are either included or excluded from common sites of human activity.

Although Philo is talking about a very specific historical and urbanistic movement (meat markets of the nineteenth century), his emphasis on attending to human responses to animals suggests an alternate focus that has been important for this thesis and its emphasis on tourist experiences.

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3 Although not specifically about animals, Jacquelin Burgess (1990; 1992) has carried out work in relation to human consumption of socially constructed nature.
In 1995 a special issue of *Society and Space* entitled "The world of animals" was devoted to the problematic of the anthropocentrism of social theory. In an attempt to 'bring the animals back in', the articles in the issue argue for a "transspecies social theory" (Wolch and Emel, 1995: 632). For example, in this issue, Wolch, West and Gaines (1995) propose that a new urban theory should incorporate wild animals as city dwellers, recognising the impact of the process of urbanisation on animal habitat. Emel's (1995) important paper on wolf eradication in Nebraska works from an ecofeminist perspective to draw upon themes used earlier by Tuan (1984) such as slavery and domination. Interestingly, Wescoat's (1995) contribution to the issue examines animals in a non-western context, that of the treatment of animals under Islamic law. With reference to the Qur'an, Wescoat (1995) explains that animals are seen as spiritual, community minded beings, although still subordinate to humans. This journal issue consolidated an emerging field in geography which was further added to by Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel's edited book, *Animal Geographies* (1998a). In introducing their work, Wolch and Emel (1998b: xi) consider that "we have an intellectual responsibility as well as an ethical duty to consider the lives of animals closely". Wolch and Emel (1998b) are clear about their political motive, which is to make space for animals in the world. As they state, "[a]nimals may be the last group to be brought into the circle of morality and subjectivity" (Wolch and Emel, 1998b: xii).

The new animal geographies have brought into view animal subjectivities previously ignored within cultural geography. But the passage of the animal subject into the critical view of new cultural geography has opened out additional theoretical questions, the most vexed of which is that of animal agency. It is one thing to recognise the socially constructed animal subject, it is quite another to credit that subjectivity with certain levels of agency. Animals have long been recognised in geography for their participation in the economic development of human society. Chris Philo's (1998) deliberation on animal geography noted that Carl Sauer's Berkeley school of cultural geography did consider animals and indeed it afforded them an agency previously denied them. Their studies of the impacts of animal-based agriculture brought 'the animal' into view in our understanding of human-environment relations. And their historical accounts of human development and animal domestication drew "[a]ttention...to the unequal power relations between animals and
humans, and this one-sided struggle was opened up to scrutiny (rather than simply being assumed)” (Philo, 1998: 56-57). It was also the Sauerian view which suggested that animals could be seen in more than simply economic terms. The domestication of animals was also understood in light of myth, legend and ceremony (Philo, 1998).

Increasingly, writers are proposing that animals have their own agency, their own needs and reasons for being, independent of the human world. As John Berger (1980) has noted humans are seen by animals as much as we are watching them. Geographer Suzanne Michel also acknowledged this point in her work:

For myself, the greatest enjoyment of my research was spending time with golden eagles—just watching them preen, fly, or even scuffle over a dead rabbit. One afternoon, after I felt like I was being sized up by an eagle’s piercing gaze (try to out-stare an eagle sometime), I wondered if it was really she who was studying me and trying to decide whether humans should be allowed to coexist with her species (Michel, 1998: 183).

The matter of animal agency, and specifically how cultural geographers might recognise it, theorise it, and integrate it into their animal geographies, remains a troubling issue. This is evident in work which comes from a clearly animal rights perspective. A relevant example is Berger’s (1980) account of the zoo. His perspective is far more attuned to the animals’ experience of the zoo. He argues that zoos are places where animals are spectacularised and commodified. Further, the viewing of animals in a zoo setting does not provide the human-animal connection necessary for the spiritual well-being of the human race. Confrontingly for some, Berger interprets the zoo through the eyes of the animal:

[N]owhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal. At the most, the animal’s gaze flickers and passes on. They have been immunised to encounter...Therein lies the ultimate consequence of their marginalisation. That look between animal and man, which may have played a crucial role in the development of human society...has been extinguished. Looking at each animal, the unaccompanied zoo visitor is alone...This
historic loss, to which zoos are a monument, is now irredeemable for the culture of capitalism (Berger, 1980: 26).

As mentioned earlier, previous work in critical studies of animal/society relations have not considered the example of ways in which tourists encounter wild marine animals. Kay Anderson’s work on zoos mentioned previously has gone a long way in advancing the animal in cultural geography. My thesis builds on her earlier projects by contributing examples of tourists’ interactions with non-domestic marine animals. In diverging from Anderson’s contributions, my work looks at tourists in the contemporary moment where, as I will show later in the thesis, the desire is to see animals in situ in their natural habitats rather than in captivity. As such, the thesis deals specifically with human encounters with marine animals via the tourist experience in locations marketed under a nature tourism flag. For this reason, the work of some of the recent theorists on tourism is a necessary part of the theoretical context of this work. Much of this literature deals with touristic encounters with human others, but my thesis can draw on this material in that the touristic experience with marine animals is an encounter with non-human otherness. The chapter now turns to examine relevant literature on nature tourism at the seaside. It does so with a particular emphasis on Australia, the context for the thesis.

2.4 Tourism

2.4.1 A bridge to the other side?

As a term, tourism is diversely defined. Broadly, within geography it can be seen as an activity which involves travel and the temporary relocation of people, which may be initiated as a result of pleasure motives, but also because of business, education, religion or health and which involves supportive infrastructure such as transport, accommodation, marketing and entertainment. Increasingly, people on day outings for entertainment and so on may also be seen as tourists (Williams, 1998). In geography, an interest in tourism and recreation can be traced to the 1930s (see for example McMurray, 1930; Jones, 1933) although tourism studies did not appear as a subfield until the 1960s (see for example
Murphy, 1963, Mitchell, 1969; Mercer, 1970, Stansfield and Rickert, 1970; Cosgrove and Jackson, 1972; Robinson, 1976). For Hall and Lew (1998b) in their comprehensive analysis of the interest in sustainable tourism development, the study of tourism in geography has been fragmented and draws on a number of fields within the discipline. In particular geographers have been interested in areas associated with environmental, regional, evolutionary and spatial aspects of tourism (Mitchell and Murphy, 1991) as well as in rural and urban tourism issues (Hall and Lew, 1998b). That geographers within academia have shown a growing interest in tourism research and teaching (see for example Boniface and Cooper, 1999) is not surprising given the impact of the industry across the globe and the ways in which it has provided a challenge for sustainable development.

An examination of the new literature on tourism shows it is asking challenging questions and has adopted an interdisciplinary approach in areas including sociology and geography. Some authors in the sociology of tourism (see for example Crick, 1996) have been critical of disciplines purporting to write tourism theory, and geography has been no exception here. In the past, such work has been seen as methodologically weak, descriptive and emotive. It is not the purpose of this thesis to tackle this flaw in the discipline, although it is an area requiring redress. As such, only some key tourism writers relevant to this thesis will be briefly referred to.

One author who has written extensively on the theory of tourism is John Urry. The Tourist Gaze (Urry, 1990) is a seminal text exploring the nature and meaning of tourism across time and space. Urry’s (1990) fascination is with why people travel and hence he is an important source for a thesis interested in tourists’ motivations for accessing marine animals. Tourism research concerns itself in part with why people ‘go away’ to see new landscapes and the pleasure they derive from consuming goods and services during their travel. To Urry (1990), the tour is about departure, it is leaving the norm and deviating away from mundane and established routines. In some instance it is also seen to be a mark of status and Feifer (1985) has argued that it is good for health. Urry outlines the history of tourism, reaching back to Imperial Rome, the pilgrimages of the thirteenth and fourteenth
centuries, and the educational Grand Tour beginning in the late 1600s (and see Towner, 1985).

Urry’s (1990) claim is that the way tourists see landscapes is highly organised and constructed and that it is authorised by professional experts in varying degrees. Interestingly, he suggests that by looking at how social groups have constructed the objects of the tourist gaze, much can be learnt about the state of society. Similarly, Dean MacCannell (1976: 5) has said that “[b]y following tourists, we may be able to arrive at a better understanding of ourselves”. Urry (1990: 2) importantly argues that “rather than being a trivial subject tourism is significant in its ability to reveal aspects of…[societal] practices which might otherwise remain opaque”. A notable feature of modern tourism is that in at least some forms, it is accessible to a range of social classes. This is in contrast with earlier times when, perhaps with the exception of the early pilgrimages, touring was often an activity of the elite only (see Towner, 1988). In fact MacCannell (1976: 3) goes as far as to say “the empirical and ideological expansion of modern society…[is] intimately linked in diverse ways to modern mass leisure”. He bases these ideas on work by Thorstein Veblen (1912) who developed the idea that social structure can be mirrored in an activity like leisure.

It is useful to briefly consider exactly what it is that makes up a distinctive ‘tourist gaze’. For instance, there should be characteristics of the place which distinguish it from everyday life. As Urry explains, “[t]ourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary” (Urry, 1990: 11). People should experience pleasurable elements which are apart from their everyday lives (see Robinson, 1976: 157). In some ways, the production of the tourist experience should make people feel ‘at home’, but at the same time the tourist should experience something different, something involving new senses and scales than previously encountered. Tourism may involve seeing certain sites as if they are signs representative of a broader thing or idea. Urry uses the example of the typical English cottage which comes to stand for an idea of the nation. In this way, tourists are “semioticians, reading the landscape for signifiers of certain pre-established notions or signs derived from various discourses of travel and tourism” (Urry, 1990: 12).
For Urry (1990), the extraordinary status of the tourist attraction is embellished through a range of non-tourist means such as television and film, literature, especially popular magazines, records and videos. That is, the tourist attraction is mediated by and often has its significance amplified by a range of representational passages that it makes. In this sense the tourist, as Culler has noted, often imagines they are consuming the authentic object but they are seeing “everything as a sign of itself” (Culler, 1981: 127). Urry explains that “all sorts of places (indeed almost everywhere) have come to construct themselves as objects of the tourist gaze; in other words, not as centres of production or as symbols of power but as sites of pleasure” (Urry, 1990: 125). These sites are of some relevance to the present thesis. As will be discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), and throughout the thesis, places of animal tourism present images to tourists in a variety of ways. They construct not only places with meaning, but also animals who, like the example of the English cottage, come to stand for so much more than their own self.

Daniel Boorstin’s (1964) analysis of the ‘pseudo-event’ (and see Cohen, 1988) and his lament for the lost art of travel is of direct application to the modern-day tourist. He notes that people traditionally travelled out of curiosity, a desire for adventure, and to renew their minds. Such tourism has become increasingly accessible with the increasing affordability of travel. The popularity of tourism has produced a contradiction: as numbers of tourists increase and access to places increases so does the tourist desire for authentic and exotic experiences. Boorstin’s point is that tourists are increasingly unable to experience the sought after ‘reality’ directly. They instead must satisfy their tourist desires with ‘pseudo-events’ offered by the tourism industry. In this way, “mass tourist[s]” of guided tours find “pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying the ‘pseudo-events’ and disregarding the ‘real’ world outside” (Urry, 1990: 7). This system, according to Boorstin, is self-perpetuating, with the advertising-dazed, gullible tourists demanding ever-more extravagant experiences yet always wanting to retreat to the safe cocoon of their hotel. This “system of illusions” (Urry, 1990: 7) further isolates the tourist from the experience they had supposedly sought out. This is a rather cynical account of modern mass tourism which conforms with broader arguments about the inauthenticity and homogenising effects of
globalisation and advanced capitalism. Although Boorstin's analysis may fit much mass tourism, it does not necessarily do justice to the variety of logics — both in terms of production and consumption — which are evident in contemporary tourism. Most notably, this analysis gives little credence to the apparently 'duped' tourist and the varied ways they make sense of and take meaning from the mass tourist experience.

Dean MacCannell (1976) has offered an alternative to what he sees as Boorstin's somewhat elitist conclusions. MacCannell (1976) admits that much of today's mass tourism is to sites which have a certain superficiality and inauthenticity. But, he is less critical than Boorstin, noting that the tourist may still encounter an 'authentic' tourist experience when visiting these contrived sites. For MacCannell (1976), the modern tourist is a pilgrim in search of the sacred and authenticity in other times and places. The tourist hopes to find enlightenment in the 'real lives' of other species, people and places. MacCannell (1976) suggests that modern individuals' relationships with society are limited and incomplete in that they are simply one in a mass of society. The individual tourist, on the other hand, "may step out into the universal drama of modernity" (MacCannell, 1976: 7) and somehow find liberation in experiences that are outside of the norm. Other writers have also made an analogy between pilgrims and tourists (see for example Cohen, 1988; Lett, 1983, Shields, 1990). For instance, both are moving from the familiar to the far place, and both 'worship' a type of 'shrine', and both may obtain an uplifting experience from doing so. Urry (1990: 11), in extending MacCannell's ideas, argues that tourism should not be judged on the basis of the authenticity of the destination or the experience. Rather, he proposes a kind of post-touristic experience which includes a postmodern tourist who actively seeks out the inauthentic, knowing that there is no authentic tourist experience, just a range of touristic texts that can be read and enjoyed.

Clearly nature has long been an object of the tourist gaze — and in particular coastal and marine nature which is the central focus of this thesis. In trying to understand the roots of present day fascination with nature tourism and marine animals, I began by looking at

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4 MacCannell (1976) observes that such 'real lives' are usually backstage offering the labour which constructs the staged authenticity consumed by tourists.
writers who had specifically considered the subject of seaside tourism. It seemed likely that an interest in marine animals may come from a wider interest in the coast as a site of leisure and recreation. As such, the chapter now considers the literature that bears on how and why tourists have become interested in the seaside over time.

2.4.2 Touring the Marine World

With the rise of the Romantic Movement in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a greater interest in the scenic and poetic values of place. Urry (1990: 20) points out that, “[t]he effects of romanticism were to suggest that one could feel emotional about the natural world and that scenery was something that one could gaze at with delight”. The value of aesthetics in relation to conservation is currently being discussed within the field of environmental ethics (see Lynch, 1996). One of the implicit assumptions of romanticism was that city dwellers could benefit greatly from time spent away, looking at nature. In particular, the ocean was seen to have been beneficial to health (see for example Meethan, 1996).

There has been a long development of nature tourism at the coast; from a health-seeking activity of the elite, to a leisure pastime of the masses and to a niche ecotour experience in more recent times. I have already noted the reasons why tourism grew in modern times. As Urry notes, as work became more organised and routinised, there was a simultaneous, “rationalisation of leisure” (Urry, 1990:19). During the nineteenth century the working week became shorter and public holidays more common allowing for middle and working class people to venture to the coast as part of that leisure time (Towner, 1996).

The coast was already an attractive destination for some. It was in the early to mid-1600s that bathing in artificial salt water spas with medicinal herbs became popular in Britain,\(^5\) and set in motion trends that would lead to the “discovery of the seaside” (Pimlott, 1977:

\(^5\) It appears that Britain led the way in the race to the sea and bathing culture in the early 1700s. However, France followed during the 1780s, with Germany and the United States of America a decade later and Spain in the 1830s (Walton and Smith, 1995).
In the 1730s, following the popularity of the spas and coastal areas the first references to resorts for seabathing appear. In 1796, the Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary was established at Margate where ill people could undertake a sea-water cure involving cold and warm salt baths (Pimlott, 1977). Thus it appears that initially, people were drawn to the sea for its supposed health benefits rather than to participate in an activity conceived as ‘leisure’. It was not until the 1700s and 1800s that seaside resorts of varying degrees of opulence sprung up around the British coastline (Walton, 1983). By the mid-nineteenth century the medicinal properties of ‘the beach’ had been replaced with a concept of it as a zone of pleasure where one could escape the dull normality of everyday life. Within this scene, the pier played a central role as a sign of culture and of a seaside resort that had come of age (Pimlott, 1977). In the case of Britain, it was Brighton which became “the first resort in which the beach became constructed as a site for pleasure, for social mixing, for status reversals, for carnival” (Urry, 1990: 31). The fun fairs that developed at the seaside added to the sense of the carnival at the coast. On occasion, the more prestigious resorts such as Brighton were visited by Royalty, further attracting other members of the public to the area (Pimlott, 1977). Another feature, in the context of this thesis, was that the spas and the early seaside health resorts were designed with adults in mind. In contrast, the pleasure-based seaside “was admirably adapted for children’s holidays” (Pimlott, 1977: 121). Towner (1996: 171) asserts that “[t]he seaside may have been one of the first places that catered especially for children and their leisure”.

Hence, visitors to these emerging seaside attractions chose them partially for the social opportunities they provided. As Walton (1983: 156) records:

[a] minority of visitors expressly preferred quiet and seclusion, or put natural attributes above all other consideration in choosing a resort; but most wanted artificial amusements and opportunities for carefully-regulated social mixing.

One aspect of these ‘artificial amusements’ were the Aquaria that developed as a part of what were called coastal Winter Gardens. Here, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, “wonders of the deep were displayed with musical accompaniment for the rational recreation of a respectable public” (Walton, 1983: 157). Although seen as a source of
entertainment, Aquaria were also designed as family-centred spaces, and initially as sites where one might 'improve' oneself through close observation of nature. Within a short time however, the growing number of visitors demanded more spectacular and lively entertainment that owed more to the logic of circuses and side-shows than to education. The 'Aquaria Craze', as it became known, is elaborated upon in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

As is clear from the above, much of the accounting of seaside (nature) tourism is about European experiences and histories. Australia has a similar seaside tourism history incorporating various seaside destinations. There is, to date, limited attention to these developments outside of the frame of local histories. The sociologist, Ann Game (1991) has provided a useful analysis of the beach in the Australian imaginary using Sydney's Bondi beach. Game (1991: 169) asserts that with Australia's rejection of Britain, we have "turn[ed] to nature for what makes us distinctive". Similarly, the architect Philip Drew (1994) suggests that it is the coast which is fundamental to Australian identity, a beach veranda to which we have been drawn over the last century for relaxation and recreation, a safe interface from which we can watch the outside world. Today, this love of visiting the sea and its animals exists in many forms in Australia, including that of nature tourism.

Contemporary marine or seaside tourism has features of both the amusement park and more environmentally sensitive touring. Throughout the world, the seaside is such an attraction for leisure that mass tourism resorts have developed, such as at Honolulu and the Gold Coast. But in recent years another type of tourism has developed alongside of this mass seaside tourism. This is the smaller scale, nature-based marine tourism of the kind this thesis takes as its focus. These experiences require tourists to move well out of their physical comfort zones to observe something outside their everyday experience. In the example of the marine animal tours discussed in this thesis the animals at the centre of the tourist experience are variously presented for tourist consumption by humans with vested interests, be they environmental, financial or otherwise. In light of the above discussion this thesis brings into view those people who engage in specific kinds of marine animal tourism today in Australia. Are people who visit marine areas and especially areas with marine
animals motivated by the same variables as earlier European tourists to the seaside? Or are different factors at play?

2.4.3 Ecotourism and the Marine

Shaw and Williams (1994) have suggested that as with other industries, tourism is about production and consumption, a theme actively tackled in Chapters 5 to 8 of the thesis. They also argue that there is an "increasingly rapid change in the social construction of what constitutes the (more attractive) objects of the tourism gaze" (Shaw and Williams, 1994: 16). Reflecting on the fact that in 1999, five of the winning entries in the Tourism Council of Australia Awards involved animals, Kuiper (1999: 8) suggested that, "if you aim to win a tourism award in Victoria, it will help if you can recruit a few animals". My thesis proposes that marine animals are being increasingly seen as attractive objects by tourists in part because of the way these animals have been constructed by certain segments of society. As Butler (1995) notes, "[t]he public’s apparent increased interest in and concern for the environment has been more than matched by the ability of the tourism industry to provide ‘green’ or nature-related opportunities". This astute response by the industry has seen a dramatic rise in ecotourism (Hall and Weiler, 1992). In short, a new type of seaside tourism has emerged which is more ‘green’, and more likely to promote itself as being about the environment than the fun fair. Martin and Mason (1993: 36) assert that in recent decades:

- a number of new trends have emerged to influence lifestyles, and leisure and tourism choices. Most evident is perhaps the growth in the ‘green’ movement and the general concern about the impact of modern industry, including tourism development, on the physical and social environment.

Ecotourism is the name currently given to these ‘green’ tourism experiences. Ecotourism is partly about the nature tourism industry modifying its operations in order to diminish its impacts on the nature resource it relies upon. But it is also a new sector which responds to new tourist consumption requirements, notably the increased desire among tourists to
experience ‘untouched’ nature. It is variously referred to as a subset of nature tourism, a kind of niche tourism for those with a special interest in nature. It is seen as a form of alternative tourism in contrast with mass tourism with a specific interest in nature and its conservation (Wearing and Neil, 1999). This initiative has been seen by some as offering a bright future for tourism and by others as a new name for a type of tourism that has always existed. Some authors challenge the idea that ecotourism is the economic and environmental saviour that it is often portrayed.

Ecotourism is diversely defined and has been open to misinterpretation. The Australian Government defines it thus:

Ecotourism is nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable (Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994: 17).

Generally, ecotourism is comprised of the following elements:

- It is focussed on the natural environment
- It is about ecological and cultural sustainability
- It contains an element of environmental education and interpretation
- It provides benefits for local and regional communities

(Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

According to Lane (1989: 2), ecotourism is better referred to as “ecologically sustainable tourism” (E.S.T.). This is a form of tourism which does not degrade the natural environment, is beneficial to a wider area than the immediate community, and provides the tourist with an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the area so as they may then contribute to the conservation of that area.

The Australian government sees ecotourism as a complementary part of the country’s mass tourism industry rather than as an alternative to it. It can provide a model of environmental care that other forms of tourism could also adopt. However, this form of leisure has not been left uncriticised. Generally, ecotourism has been widely questioned in relation to its potential adverse impact on the environment (for critiques of ecotourism see Boo, 1990; Figgis, 1993; Berle, 1990, and for examples of the environmental impact of the industry see
Mellor, 1990; Laylock, 1991). Ways to reduce the impact of ecotourists’ activities have been put forward by several writers (see Beckmann, 1988; Boo, 1990; Orams, 1994). An additional way of looking at the industry is perhaps timely. Therefore my thesis is particularly interested in the impact of an ‘eco-framed’ nature experience on the tourists rather than the impact of the industry on the non-human environment.

In recent times in the context of tourism, the prefix ‘eco’ has been used and misused as a way to commodify and sell nature attractions. Ecotourism is often sold as a sustainable alternative to other types of tourism and even other industries which potentially cause high levels of environmental degradation. Of concern to some observers is the idea that ecotourism is really just niche tourism for the rich and contains few if any of the environmental accolades with which it has been adorned. Tuting (1994) is one writer concerned with the overuse of the term ‘eco’ to the extent where it has essentially been rendered meaningless in a conservation sense. The author argues that most of the time the environmental credentials of products are at best superficial.⁶ The author outlines ecologically altruistic statements by leading global tourist organisations before questioning if it is viable to “still talk about a commitment to the environment if, with a few exceptions, such efforts are restricted to waste disposal, environmentally friendly cleaning products and catalogue supplements on recycled paper?” (Tuting, 1994: 21).

Other recent developments in the sustainable tourism literature are similarly critical of the overuse of ‘eco’ as a means by which places and experiences can be sold. Hall (1995) raises concerns in relation to his explanation of ecotourism as the antithesis of sustainability. He is explicitly concerned with tourism as a form of contemporary imperialism. He points out that western notions of conservation contain inherent assumptions about the human/nature divide, a feature absent from indigenous knowledge and understanding of ecology. Both Hall (1995) and Wheeller (1993; 1994) argue that ecotourism is less about the environment than it is about reducing the guilt of wealthy travellers and feeding the human ego. In this way, the term ‘egotourism’ has been coined.

⁶ The case of hotel notices printed on recycled paper stating that “towels are not washed daily, only when guests drop them on the floor” (Tuting, 1994: 20) is an example of this.
This play on words intends to reflect the idea that people undertake these activities willingly believing that in doing so they are contributing to the well being of the area. However, it has been argued that low impact tourism and the high consumption desires of elite tourists are necessarily in conflict. It seems perhaps that a tourism lightly shaded with green can preserve capitalism and calm the hearts of travellers but continue to degrade natural and cultural resources on a local, regional and global scale. Some such as Wight (1993b) argue that ecotourism is little more than a continuation of exploitative behaviour albeit with a ‘green’ label.

In terms of the interests of this thesis, it is the emphasis of the ecotourism venture on education that is of note. The acquisition of in depth understanding through interpretation of the eco-nature experience has been the subject of several papers on E.S.T. (see for example Gunn, 1994; the United Nations Environment Program, 1992; Visser and Njugana, 1992). Education is also frequently a component of the tourism industry’s Codes of Practice (for example see Green, 1992). As Lane (1989) suggested, one aim of ecotourism is that it take visitors beyond enjoyment and fun towards the facilitation of learning and associated changes in attitude and behaviour (see also Orams, 1994; Forrestell, 1990; Valentine, 1992). In this way, Orams (1996) argues, the habitat and animals on which ecotourism is based may in fact begin to indirectly benefit from the industry. A discussion of environmental education literature within an ecotourism context takes place later in the chapter.

Critics of ecotourism have made special mention of the new types of marine tourism which are the focus of this thesis. Discussing the new trend in whale watching, some have suggested that tourism should use resources in a way that is less exploitative and damaging than has been done in the past. A case for the whale watching industry can be argued here. However, Wheeller (1994) is clearly not convinced when in relation to the whale tourism industry he questions:

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7 Elizabeth Reid’s work at the University of Adelaide (mentioned in Chapter 1) is seeking to address this point.
danger that too many ecotourists eager to witness the whales off New Zealand, Chile or wherever, are disrupting the mammals mating behaviour? Given the imbalance in world economies the ideals of sustainable principles and of sustainable tourism in a global arena are impossible to achieve (Wheeler, 1994: 652).

The same author considers that the attention ecotourism draws is out of proportion to the benefits it provides as a management tool. He notes that this impotence is part of its attraction by stating:

The perfect political fob, it soothes consciences, demands no sacrifices and allows extended holiday choice while providing an ideal shield, doubling as a marketing ploy, for the tourism industry. Lurking behind a ‘management’ façade, green ecotourism is simply a policy of growth (Wheeler, 1994: 653).

Wheeler (1993) concluded that the wrong questions are being asked of the new ecotourism initiatives. Tourism is a large, global movement, and so, he argues, our hopes of dealing with its effects by developing a localised and sustainable version are misplaced. The development of small-scale experiences will not possibly be able to satisfy the needs of mass tourism. Wheeller does not offer any solutions. However, he provokes stimulating thought about how all sorts of places are created and sold as eco-locations.

Of critical relevance to a thesis on constructions of nature and marine ecotourism consumption is a consideration of the potential positive effects of tourists encountering and experiencing certain types of nature. Clearly, Tuting (1994) and Wheeller’s (1993) emphasis on the ‘ego’ of ecotourism tends to lock the whole experience into one of visitor consumption of and tourist industry and appropriation of nature for our own self interested human ends. That is, it assumes that ecotourism (or any nature tourism) works fully in the logic of Plumwood’s (1993) binary and its associated relation of human domination over nature. My thesis questions the stability of this binary within the touristic encounter and the associated assumption of human domination. Structurally, it is true that the tourism industry exploits and appropriates nature, but what of the experience of the tourist in these
ecotourist events? That is, are there points of recognition, of sympathy, empathy and new awareness? Is it possible that, in encounters with non-domestic marine animals, the tourist may connect with the animal other across the aforementioned abyss between social and animal relations? Clearly, an increasing number of people are choosing to visit ecological attractions. The potential that this holds for environmentally positive long-term ideological and behavioural shifts remains unknown. As Game (1991: 175) noted in her paper on Australia’s most famous beach, Bondi, at this site, the logic of the culture/nature dualism is challenged by the fact that here the beach visitor feels a special “identification with nature”.

To conclude, much of the ecotourism and sustainable tourism literature deals with impacts on the environment of these new tourism initiatives. Clearly, this is a relevant and important issue. However, it can lead to a debilitating cynicism as evidenced in the work of Tuting (1994) and Wheeler (1993). This thesis wants to pause briefly in the space between the ‘tourist consumer’ and ‘consumed nature’. It does so in order to see if the ‘impacts’ of an ecotourist experience may also go the other way, to see if there is a significant and meaningful impact on the tourist. Perhaps it is timely to recognise some of nature’s ‘agency’ in the touristic encounter, and to question the effect of this encounter on the tourists’ points of view.

2.4.4 Environmental Education

It is the area of tourist education that has long recognised this point and the role of pedagogical tools in lessening environmental impacts via a modification of visitors’ detrimental behaviours, and by enhancing the positive educational and attitudinal transforming impacts of the nature encounter on visitors. Nature interpretation at ecotour sites is therefore the subject of the next part of the chapter. The section begins by defining interpretation before considering its use as a management tool. As will be shown, much of the literature cited below is drawn from the relevant example of tourists’ experiences with animals. Although most of these studies deal with animals in captivity, their findings can be usefully applied to my thesis in seeking people’s reasons for visiting animals ‘in the wild’.

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In 1957, Freeman Tilden the American heritage and conservation advocate, proposed this template for tourist education in his landmark book *Interpreting our Heritage* (1957):

> Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection (Freeman Tilden, 1957, quoted in P. Davis 1996: 101).

The meaning and significance of a place may not be obvious without interpretation and therefore it can be used to increase visitor understanding and appreciation of a place. McArthur and Hall (1993: 18) suggest that visitor management through education and interpretation is a practice which “ensur[es] that the visitor achieves a quality experience in an environmentally sustainable manner”. The most often used definition of interpretation in the literature is from Tilden (1957, in McArthur and Hall, 1993: 20) who referred to it as:

> an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

According to Tilden (1957) interpretation is about the use of educational activities to show meanings and relationships. It should aim to provoke ideas and raise questions rather than to dictate truths. Importantly, he asserts that interpretation best serves visitors when it is applied to their own personalities and experiences. In this way, interpretation can be seen less as the imparting of facts and more as a communication of ideas and concepts which results in a greater appreciation for the natural environment (Orams, 1996). Interpretation can also be an effective tool in behaviour modification. Various educative mechanisms can be applied with the knowledge that “[i]ncreasingly it is being realised that people are less likely to damage a site if they are aware of its value” (Jacobs and Gale, 1994: 115). Managers of tourist sites, and especially natural and cultural resources, use interpretation to achieve various results such as:

- To enrich the visitor’s experience;
- To assist the visitor to develop a keener awareness, appreciation and understanding of the area being visited;
To accomplish management goals through encouragement of thoughtful use of the resource by the visitor, thereby:
- reducing the need for regulation and enforcement
- enabling careful distribution of visitor pressure so that environmental impacts on fragile natural resources are minimised; and

To promote public understanding of the agency and its programs (McArthur and Hall, 1993: 27).

Used appropriately, interpretation is considered important for the control of visitor pressure on natural and cultural sites (see Moscardo, 1996; Orams, 1996; Jacobs and Gale, 1994; Olson et al., 1984 and for an alternative perspective, see Wheeller, 1994). Pearson and Sullivan (1995: 277) have stated that one way to manage visitors is through “planned approaches to the presentation of interpretive materials and activities”. Interpretation in the form of publicity and promotion brochures, maps, guides, and on-site interpretation signs can all work to reinforce the value of a place and influence the behaviour of its visitors (Jacobs and Gale, 1994). However, the provision of interpretation at nature attractions can be problematic. For instance, on-site interpretation in the form of guided interpretive talks are an expensive option. At a more advanced level, near- or off-site interpretation facilities in the form of a Visitor Centre can be provided incorporating concentrated interpretive structures near the attraction. As at the Penguin Parade, this latter method works by the siphoning of all tourists through the Visitor Interpretation Centre (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6).

With the great changes in technology, particularly multi-media, and with a move by zoos away from entertainment to education in the late part of the twentieth century (Whitehead, 1984), a trip to the zoo and many other similar sites provides many new educational opportunities. For example, a study by Marshdoyle, Bowman and Mullins (1982) looked at the degree to which children learnt about animals and the environment through excursions to a major zoo in Ohio. Their results showed that learning did take place during the trip and that cognitive knowledge did increase in many areas. Further, the trip motivated the
students to learn about wildlife. Similarly, Gutierres De White and Jacobson (1994: 18) in their work claim that:

Zoological parks, nature centres, natural history museums, and related institutions can play an important role in environmental education by improving our understanding of human relationships with the natural world, fostering positive attitudes toward the environment, and promoting environmental action.

Fleming and Levie (1978) discuss multiple theories of education which support the idea that information retention is accompanied by the learner experiencing enjoyment and being able to interact with what is being taught. As Hooper-Greenhill (1994: 114) notes:

in recent years, education itself has become closer to leisure. Progressive educational theory has always maintained that we learn while we are involved, committed and enjoying ourselves.

Hence a further form of interpretation is that undertaken by the visitors through observation of the animals first hand. Birney (1986) noted that children in particular experience a sense of fun and other positive responses in their observation of the behaviour of living animals. Can it be that a closer experience of nature, a journey into ‘the world of the animals’, will result in another kind of learning? As Anderson (1992: 3) writes of the zoo experience, “it is many visitors’ pronounced wish to get close to the animals”. It is the immediacy of this proximity, these “close-contact experiences” (Anderson, 1992: 3) which are considered to be central to the interpretation work that goes on at nature sites. Further, it is generally accepted that active animals are of more interest to tourists and people stay longer at enclosures where animals are in motion (Bitgood et al., 1986; Bitgood and Benefield, 1987; Bitgood, 1987). Importantly, not all contributors to the literature on interpretation at nature tourism sites agree that it is an effective way to manage visitor behaviour. It is to these concerns that the chapter briefly turns.

McArthur and Hall (1993) have made the observation that the recent emphasis on interpretation schemes has stemmed from the desire to change behaviour. However, they note that changing behaviour through interpretation is difficult as people experience many
stages in this process (McArthur and Hall, 1993). Notably, the presentation of an interpretive experience goes only part of the way towards changing behaviour and other variables can influence behaviour. Ryan (1991: 34) has addressed the issue to some extent and in his study found that “neither levels of participation in outdoor activities nor enjoyment from those activities lead to significantly different attitudes towards the environment”. Moscardo (1988) notes that “no clear evidence exists that learning is associated with various preferred elements of exhibits because the results indicate only weak relationships” (Moscardo, 1988: 30). She goes on to cite a British study using 3000 respondents which found there was not a correlation between visitor learning and visitor enjoyment. This presents as a contrast to the studies cited earlier which indicated that visitors learn from exhibits that they find enjoyable. In addition, the British findings do not support the commonly held theory in education that people learn best when they are interested in the topic and when they find the experience fun.

As stated earlier in the chapter, a key component of ecotourism is that it incorporates an element of education about the environment. Duffus and Dearden (1993) have suggested that tourists' observations of cetacea\(^8\) can lead to changes in peoples' attitudes about conservation in the longer term. However, it is unlikely that observation alone can enact this change. From the perspective of the tourists, simply seeing the animals was not enough in itself to increase their understanding, a point expanded upon in Chapter 8. Orams (1995; 1996) and Orams and Hill (1998) are continuing to examine these issues in their research. Orams and Hill (1998) (and see Spanner, 1996) have carried out work at Tangalooma on Morton Island in Queensland which specifically looked at the relationship between tourists' behaviour near dolphins and the environmental information they are provided with. It is mentioned here as an example of the role formal education programs can play in determining visitors' attitudes. As well, the study provides an example of ways dolphins in Australia are being increasingly framed as subjects, worthy of scientific interpretation and visitor respect.

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\(^8\) Whales, dolphins and porpoises belong to the order of mammals known as cetaceans. At times in the thesis I refer to whales and dolphins as cetacea.
The Tangalooma study involved collecting data relating to tourists' behaviour towards the animals during feeding sessions prior to and post the introduction of an education program. Although it is increasingly accepted that education is a key factor in positive tourist-dolphin interactions (see Forestell, 1993; Forestell and Kaufman, 1990; Wilson, 1994, Orams, 1994), Orams and Hill (1998) argue that there is a lack of empirical work thus far conducted to validate this claim. Hence their study was designed to assess the impact of an education policy which had been established for a feeding program for wild dolphins. Their work tested whether or not education was effective in increasing visitor co-operation with management strategy and its ability to control visitor behaviour during interactions with marine mammals.

The education program was established at Tangalooma in 1994 and involved three features. Firstly, a Dolphin Education Centre was built which included information on cetacea, various displays and a video theatre. People intending to feed the dolphins were required to visit the Centre before the event. Having been through the Centre people wishing to feed the dolphins were issued with a token. Secondly, immediately before the feeding session, token holders were gathered on the beach and given a presentation about the dolphins including the procedure for the evening. Reasons for rules associated with behaviour around the animals, such as not touching them, were explained. Thirdly, a public address system was set up to allow staff to talk to feeders and observers during the feeding sessions. In this way, information about dolphin behaviour and biology was given and people were encouraged to become more environmentally responsible in their own lives.

Generally, the study by Orams and Hill (1998) found that the introduction of the education program resulted in fewer people attempting to touch the dolphins, a fall in the need for staff to caution people about adverse behaviour and a reduction in all other behaviours deemed detrimental to the dolphins. In particular, the authors highlight the significant problems with people touching the dolphins and found that “education convinced the vast majority of tourists to overcome this natural desire...[which] illustrates that it can be a powerful component in management of ecotourist sites” (Orams and Hill, 1998: 37). Clearly, however, this study is very site specific in that it shows that providing education on
site can lead to changes in impacts on site. What remains unknown (and is acknowledged by the authors) is the degree to which off site impacts may be altered. That is, to what extent can the ecomarine experience work to change tourists’ environmental attitudes across species more generally?

Most of the studies mentioned above have been carried out in relation to visitors and captive animals, particularly in relation to cause and effect issues of touristic encounters with animals. The chapter has noted that the relationship between tourists’ proximity to wild animals and subsequent increase in learning appears to be an under-researched subject area (see Broad and Weiler (1997) for an examination of animals and interpretation in a free-range, albeit captive, zoo setting). Importantly, my thesis seeks to explore the experience of touristic dwelling in the hybrid space between the human and non-human binary. Particularly, the thesis considers the meanings and transformations for people in this zone of contact produced by the close touristic encounter with animals ‘in the wild’.

2.5 Conclusion

The division between humans and the rest of nature, including animals, is a deep and longstanding one. However, the ways in which nature is constructed by societies is dynamic and so there remains the possibility that human views of non-human animals may grow to encompass more inclusive concepts of morality and justice which have thus far remained elusive. In cultural geography, the current leap into animal geographies is a welcome and timely development, opening the way for a re-evaluation of traditional ideas of community and society.

The literature presented in this chapter was intended to draw together some disparate fields of thought in order to offer a new way of thinking about animals in the context of animal, especially marine animal, tourism. Wolch and Emel’s (1998) overt political project on animal geographies has been enthusiastically embraced in the chapter as a context for considering interactions between tourists and marine animals in Australia.
The thesis goes on to illuminate and provide examples of themes discussed in the above literature. As examined throughout the thesis, marine animals (and others) are increasingly being displayed in less obviously captive settings. Indeed, the trend is towards seeing these animals ‘in the wild’ as opposed to in nature parks. In this way tourists are persuaded to visit the animal ‘on their own terms’ rather than having it appear that the animals are there against their will. But perhaps things are not quite as they seem even in this context. The lack of physical force to contain these animals viewed ‘in the wild’ may be kinder on the tourist eye but may not symbolise unlimited freedom for the observed.

Along with considering the social construction of marine animals in Australia, the thesis also presents findings from my months spent at two ecomarine sites in order to explain tourists’ motivations for wanting to see the animals and the educational opportunities they experienced there. As Ford (1995) has suggested, interpretive techniques require more thorough evaluation to determine their effectiveness. Subsequently, this thesis seeks to address this empirical gap by concerning itself with the expectations and desires of a tourist sample and determining, from their perspectives, the ways that they learnt about the animals they had come to see. At the same time, the thesis is interested in discovering a deeper understanding of the marine hybrid space where the culture/nature binary may be challenged.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Wherever the wind blows
When it blows over the sea...
Wherever you are...
There’s a place where you can throw it all away
There’s a place where you can forget
You get wet, it’s free...you’re alive
Surf’s up tonight
(Midnight Oil, 1997).

3.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the production and consumption of specific marine tourism experiences, in particular the Penguin Parade and Wild Dolphin Tours. Both cases deal with how marine animal tourist spaces are packaged and staged for tourist consumption. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are relevant to such a study and the combination of these techniques is consistent with tourism studies more generally. In the case of tourism, statistics are often gathered and analysed to explain the scale and characteristics of tourist populations. At the same time, tourism studies have had a long tradition of considering the symbolic and experiential dimensions of tourism. For example, Dean MacCannell notes that much of tourism’s research, like social science more generally, concerns itself with:

the gap between statistical and symbolic significance. The condition of their existence is to struggle endlessly with the question of the possibility of a convergence of the symbolic and statistical orders on more than a superficial level (MacCannell, 1992: 92).

In an attempt to ascertain who and why tourists visited the selected marine animal tourist sites, this thesis used a visitor survey which consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. It is a common feature of research into the behaviour of tourists to use surveys as
a method of information collection about their perceptions of attractions and experiences (Ryan, 1995). This systematic survey provided useful information on characteristics of the sample tourist population, as well as insights into their motivations and experiences. This part of the research method also provided information which was considered desirable by the tourism bodies that associated themselves with and kindly hosted my research. In agreeing to allow me access to their tourist populations and their practices, the managers of my field sites required that my surveys in some way fulfil their need for information about their visitors. This information, revolving around tourist volumes and characteristics as well as tourist expectations and satisfaction levels, was most effectively gained through the use of a systematic survey (see Appendices 3.1 and 3.2). Much of the data gathered through this survey is quantitative in nature. Some of this data has been relevant to the final analysis contained within the thesis. However, as the study progressed and my depth of understanding of the case studies increased (both through historical analysis and long-term participant observation), much of the more systematic data collected in the survey came to be less relevant to the overall story being told in this thesis. As such, findings from some quantitative questions are only referred to briefly in the thesis, their main function being to inform tour managers of their visitor populations through a separate study.¹

In his relevant discussion of qualitative and quantitative methods in tourist research, Ryan (1995: 28) notes that qualitative methods:

   can produce a richness of information and feeling about attractions, travel, places and the experience of holidays. Given that holidays can be cathartic experiences which have the potential to change people’s lives, the reduction of such an experience to a few ticks on a five-point scale is obviously insufficient.

It is well understood that the findings of qualitative research are difficult to replicate, interpret and generalise. By the same token, it is also accepted that qualitative methods provide depth and quality of data that is often lacking in large, statistically-based surveys. In a study such as this which is in part concerned with peoples’ impressions and experience

¹ The format in which this data was collected remains highly replicable and allows for further analysis at a later date.
of a nature tour, the advantage of integrating qualitative methods of data collection should
be clear. Most notably, as Ryan (1995) explains, the depth of qualitative data adds a
different measure of reliability and validity than quantitative data.

Having a methodology which is sensitive to issues of relativity and subjectivity is
extremely important in understanding any complex phenomenon, including tourism. As
such, I hoped that my understanding would be advanced if I were immersed in the
experience as well as measuring and observing the events from a more neutral position
(Ryan, 1995). In light of this, the thesis has utilised three methods to ascertain a greater
understanding as to the ways in which nature is produced and consumed as a touristic
experience at ecomarine sites: a socio-semiotic of landscape; a visitor survey; participant
observation. These methods are applied to two case studies as outlined in the introduction
to the thesis (Chapter 1), the Penguin Parade and Wild Dolphin Tours. Firstly, the chapter
introduces landscape semiotics, used as a tool to explain the way these sites are
constructed—both materially and symbolically. Secondly, the chapter discusses the use of a
visitor survey in determining visitors’ ideas and experiences of the marine case sites.
Thirdly, my use of participant observation is discussed in terms of its usefulness in
understanding tourism behaviour at each site. The final part of the chapter considers the
limitations of the study and ethical questions related to the research.

3.2 Finding Stories in the Landscape

As stated, one important dimension of this study has been the production of marine animal
tourist spaces. That is, I have wanted to understand the ways in which marine animals and
nature more generally are packaged, staged, promoted and interpreted for visitor
consumption. There is no clear-cut methodology for understanding this dimension of the
touristic experience. On the one hand, it is important to understand structures of
management and funding. On the other, it is equally important to comprehend the visual,
textual and symbolic language around which these places, and the animals they depend
upon, are built.
In order to examine the production of environmental knowledge and the way in which marine animals are constructed by the tourism ventures, a socio-semiotic (Gottdiener and Lagopoulous, 1986) reading of the study sites was carried out. Reading the landscape is a well established tradition in cultural geography stemming from the work of the Berkeley School in the early 1900s and then undergoing a critical reinvention through the New Cultural Geography since the 1980s. The resurgence of interest in this approach to landscapes and places can be attributed to the rise of postmodernism and its emphasis on deconstruction. In essence, deconstruction implies that on close examination, a text may be interpreted as presenting an array of meanings, perhaps in contrast to the intentions of the writer. As such, text, in any medium, can not be seen to present one ‘meaning’, but is open to endless possibilities of interpretation. By examining the gaps and the supplements in a text, the meanings of the writer may become subverted, and quite different from the author’s initial intention (Poole, 1988). Winchester (1992: 140) has explained that certain methods are particularly useful in uncovering the “cultural significance of a landscape” such as a combination of deconstruction and semiotics, that is, the language of signs. In using these techniques, I have been careful to contextualise them within the historical and political background of each of the sites, in deference to the knowledge that signs comprise just one part of the story. W.J.T. Mitchell (1986, in Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988: 7) has stated that:

language and images have become enigmas...The commonplace of modern studies of images, in fact, is that they must be understood as a kind of language; instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparence concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification.

Landscape as with all places including, of course, tourist spaces is socially constructed. Through this process certain social and cultural values are often naturalised in and through landscapes. Thus the term landscape can be explained by understanding that landscape is not a given. That is, it is a particular way of seeing the material world and it is imbued with values, meanings and ideologies. These encoded meanings within landscapes can be read
(Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). Notably, although ‘landscape as text’ is a strongly argued approach in current cultural geography, few have made explicit the ways in which this task should be approached. A good example of this is iconography which is an approach to decoding meanings but which is an interpretive method with no specified technique (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988: 8). Much of the work in geography in this area is historical and so draws upon archives, paintings, literary and other representations as key materials through which the socially constructed landscape is read as a social text (Duncan and Duncan, 1988; Crang, 1998). Rather than discussing an often variable set of procedures for constructing landscape readings, I will discuss the ways I specifically ‘read’ my chosen touristic landscapes.

3.2.1 The Penguin Parade

My reading the Penguin Parade involved drawing on a range of sources. Penguin Parade management were immensely supportive of my research and gave me access to their archives out of which the following documents were of particular importance: Annual Reports; Management Plan; past visitor surveys; tourism award submissions. Using a combination of information from the Historical Society and other secondary sources a picture of the site as a touristic experience was created. Importantly, this involved an examination of the changes to the built environment over time which were seen to reflect changes in public and government attitudes to nature tourism. In addition, a wealth of promotional and publicity material in the form of glossy brochures is on sale in the souvenir shop while complimentary pamphlets and maps are provided. The educational discourse exists mainly in the displays in the Visitor Interpretation Centre. It is presented in a range of media, catering for people of varying ages and nationalities. In addition, several secondary sources exist regarding the site’s development and the social and economic context of its development.

In much of the historical geographic work on reading the landscape, surprisingly little attention is given to the actual built or material form of the landscapes being read. In the
case of a contemporary, working site like the Penguin Parade Visitor Interpretation Centre such an oversight would result in much valuable information being lost to analysis. The internal and external features of the Visitor Interpretation Centre were ‘read’, such as the interpretation material and displays and the way in which landscaping is used to manage tourist movement through the site. The Visitor Interpretation Centre offered three specific types of information, namely publicity material (promotional documents, media releases, entries submitted for State tourism awards), educational material (interpretation material and displays, press clippings) and management material (Annual reports, Management Plans). In addition, secondary sources and archival material from the Phillip Island Historical Society were used. These discourses combine to package nature and the various animals for tourists. I felt it was important to read the contemporary touristic setting comprising its displays (visual and text), and its layouts for guiding visitors (landscaping, boardwalks). In this way I have sought to take the material and discursive features of the attraction seriously, opening them up for investigation in relation to meanings, values and ideologies articulated therein.

Data was also obtained through informal personal communication with staff at the Penguin Parade. In addition, extensive non-formal interaction with key players regarding management issues, funding and operating philosophies was undertaken. In particular, ongoing communication took place with David Scrase (Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Operations Manager) and Sally O’Neill (Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Interpretation Ranger).

3.2.2 Wild Dolphin Tours

The way in which the dolphin tourism industry operates in Victoria is quite distinctive compared to the Penguin Parade. Unlike this other example of marine animal tourism, dolphin tours are based around multiple private operators who, on the whole, work independently of one another. In effect, they compete for the tourist dollar, a situation which engenders its own set of politics (see Chapters 7 and 8). The result is a high degree
of variability in the way in which the activity of visiting dolphins is sold to the public as well as the type of on-board interpretations offered. In comparison to the Penguin Parade, pre-visit promotion is limited and relatively low budget. It exists at the level of publicity brochures and signage within the local area of Sorrento. Educational material is almost entirely oral, in the form of a commentary given to the passengers on the boats. The commentary itself varies widely between the businesses that formed the focus of the dolphin case study. In addition to these sources, I drew upon general secondary sources in order to provide an understanding of the growing public interest in the remythologising of cetacea (see Chapters 4 and 7). At the time of my fieldwork, management material existed in the form of a voluntary Code of Practice created by the tour operators as well as Federal Whale Watching Guidelines (see Chapter 7 and Appendices 7.2 and 7.3). Recent government debates have referred to the potential problems involved in human-dolphin tourism ventures. In some instances, tour operators have also entered Tourism Awards, submissions which provided me with some insight into the aims and philosophies of these players.

As with the case of the Penguin Parade, data were collected through ongoing informal personal communication with staff managing the Wild Dolphin Tours and their crew. In addition, extensive discussions were held with key players regarding management issues, and the operating philosophies of individual businesses. In particular I held ongoing discussions with Judy, Tony and Troy Muir of Polperro Charters, Martin and Sandy Mackinnon of Moonraker Charters and Phillip Tubb and Jim Godfrey of Looking Good Charters. These people gave me access to their archives, including publicity material (entries submitted for State tourism awards, publicity brochures), educational documents (access to the oral commentary provided to tourists aboard the vessels, press clippings), and management documents (government and non-government reports regarding dolphin management for tourism in Victoria and elsewhere). In addition, secondary sources on dolphins (books, films) were widely consulted. Importantly, the reading of the landscape was supplemented with the visitor survey and participant observation techniques which contributed to my investigation of the social construction and visitor experience of marine animals in tourism. It is to these methods I now turn.
3.3 The Visitor Survey

In order to discover visitors' experiences of the sites a visitor survey was implemented at the Penguin Parade (Appendix 3.1) and on the Wild Dolphin Tours (Appendix 3.2). The research design structure for the survey was a simple longitudinal design.² Pilot surveys were conducted at both sites.³ Considerable time was spent at each of the sites before writing the final draft of the survey. This helped to hone the content of the survey in terms of wording and number of questions. The running of pilot surveys also gave me an opportunity to find out how I would engage in participant observation and distribute the surveys during the same tour at each of the sites. In the case of the Penguin Parade, I consulted with staff in order to develop an understanding of how the Institution operated and what staff saw as key issues involved in tourists’ experiences and education at the site. At the same time, important logistical issues about how and when to administer the survey were tackled. At the Penguin Parade where there was a high number of visitors each evening (up to 3100), it became apparent that surveys would be most efficiently distributed with a take-with clipboard after visitors had bought their entry ticket to the site and then collected as they passed through the exit doors at the end of the evening.

The dolphin tours involved a similar process of preparation although discussions were necessarily held with a range of operators and their staff. I met with those who agreed to engage in the project and time was spent discussing the nature of the trips, the feasibility and logistics of running the surveys and the questions to be included. As at the Penguin Parade, dolphin tour operators were given the opportunity to add questions relevant to their businesses and to omit questions they deemed to be detrimental. Securing permission to

² That is, surveys were administered to tourists at the same site at different times. Details of the number of surveys administered appear in Section 3.5 of the chapter.
³ The first pilot surveys were conducted at the Penguin Parade. Initially, I administered the pilot survey however this proved to be inefficient, yielding only about seven responses per night. Allowing tourists to self-administer the survey yielded forty responses per night. In addition, it was found that considering some questions may have been perceived as 'right or wrong' an anonymous response was more satisfactory to avoid feelings of embarrassment on behalf of the interviewee.
access tourists on the boats was sometimes difficult. On the dolphin tours survey administration proved easier than was the case at the Penguin Parade, the visitor groups being relatively small and confined to the boats. This allowed the operators to introduce me and my research to the groups. Minor changes to the surveys followed the pilot studies held on the dolphin tours, generally associated with a need to clarify wording of some questions. Following the pilot work, the survey was finally implemented at the Penguin Parade and on three of the four boats running dolphin tours from Sorrento Pier in the 1996-97 summer.

In writing the open-ended section of the survey, reference was made to Berg's (1995) work on qualitative research, especially in relation to schedule development (see especially Berg, 1995; Walker, 1985; Yin, 1984). Other survey design texts were used in the formation of the quantitative aspects of the survey design (Rosenbaum, 1979; Converse, 1986; Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). In addition, I consulted a previous study on visitor use of the Penguin Parade (Varcoe, et al, 1985). The survey sought to provide information on who visited the marine animal sites, why they visited particular sites, and their responses to these sites and the animals they encountered there. In particular, the survey sought to understand the educational opportunities at the sites and the nature of visitor interaction with them.

For my study, the visitor survey was divided into four parts:

- Part one consisted of questions relating to visitor demographics, how the visitor knew of the attraction, the existence of previous visits to the site as well as the type and frequency of other nature-based activities they had undertaken previously.
- Part two examined visitor's previous knowledge of the animals they were visiting as well as some expectations they may have held about the site they were visiting and the sort of experience they anticipated having there.
- Part three was concerned with visitor satisfaction in terms of the value they placed on available interpretive material, the interaction they had with the animals and the quality of services provided by the organisation responsible for the tour. This latter aspect was

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4 Some operators were initially reluctant to participate for reasons associated with the politically sensitive nature of human interactions with wild dolphins. In particular, one operator was unconvinced of my University affiliation, believing the Ph.D. was a front for government-funded research which may in turn have
investigated as part of an arrangement with some of the tour operators as a way to benefit their businesses.\footnote{It is common for tourism bodies to be the focus of student research. My work involved close contact with tour operators and I was reliant on them to provide me with background information, use of their resources and access to their staff. In addition, I required access to their sites and interaction with their visitor populations over an extended period of time. There is a very real chance that visitors are faced with being asked to participate in surveys in their everyday lives, such as at the supermarket or by telephone. As mentioned the assistance given to me by operators was reciprocated in the form of a series of questions relevant to the efficiency of the businesses and the expectations and degrees of satisfaction felt by visitors. As such the results of these questions were provided to the tour operators and do not appear in the thesis.} While the operators were interested in the collection of such data it should also be noted that on the whole their primary interest in the research lay in the potential benefits that may eventually be fed back to the animals.

- Part four involved the collection of purely qualitative material. These open-ended questions aimed to determine tourists’ reasons for visiting the animals, and the best and worst features of the experience. Tourists were also asked to consider if the experience of the tour equated to any other experience they had had. This latter point was deemed relevant as a means of assessing the importance of seeing the animals to the visitors. It was hoped that the question would illuminate whether or not the trip was a particularly significant event or not.

Part three of the survey consists of a model of attitude measurement as it attempts to determine how visitors rate certain aspects of the ecotour. In contrast, questions in part four are open-ended allowing for personal and varied reasons as to why people visited the animals and how they felt about the experience. There was another reason for allowing freedom here. A primary question of the thesis is why do tourists visit marine animals? As such, I hoped that open-ended questions on this topic would provide the most valuable data and help avoid the problem of prioritization of variables thought to be important but which may not necessarily be so.
3.3.1 The Penguin Parade

In the case of the Penguin Parade, I administered the survey using judgement and opportunistic sampling. That is, I was able to interact with those tourists who wished to participate. This process involved the use of forty clipboards each containing a copy of the questionnaire and a pencil. On the evenings when the surveys were to be run, I arrived at the Penguin Parade Visitor Centre two hours before sunset. Clipboards were subsequently handed out using the ‘next to pass’ method. That is, as visitors entered the Visitor Centre and bought tickets, they were approached and asked if they would like to participate in the research. This involved individuals taking a clipboard and filling in the questionnaire over the course of the evening as some questions needed to be filled in prior to viewing the penguins and some afterwards. If visitors agreed to participate, they were given a folder and were asked to return it to a box at the exit doors at the end of the evening. If the visitor declined to participate the next person to pass was approached. Similarly, if an individual accepted a folder, the next people through the entrance were then approached.

At the Penguin Parade I estimated that more than 50% of approached visitors declined to accept the survey. Reasons for this may be various. At this site there is a sense of urgency and distraction within the visitor population. The large numbers of people (3000+ on a busy night) invariably leads to a concern about obtaining a good viewing position for the evening. Further, a common reason for refusal at the Penguin Parade was that the parents were too busy keeping an eye on their children in the big crowds. Also, people may be at the site for two or three hours and were reluctant to carry and fill in a survey during that time. Finally, the stands where the penguins are viewed from are often subject to cold winds that can make writing uncomfortable. The decision to use a set number of clipboards was based on the need to know when all distributed surveys had been returned at the end of the night. The pilot studies indicated that even on a night of high visitor numbers, it was unlikely that more than forty surveys would be filled. The clipboards also proved successful in that they reminded people to hand the surveys back in before they left the Visitor Centre. During the time spent at the Penguin Parade, only two clipboards (and so two surveys) were not returned.
The Penguin Parade experiences a high level of overseas patrons who arrive largely by way of organised tours (see also Chapter 6). Due to limitations on resources for translation costs, this study was confined to interviewing English-speaking tourists only. I return to this issue in section 3.6 of this chapter which discusses the limitations of the study. Excluding this subset of visitors, the ‘next to pass’ method insured a random sample of visitors in terms of age, gender and ethnicity from the remainder surveyed. Non-English speaking people often visit the site as part of guided bus tours and use a separate entrance for this. As such, visitors through the main entrance tended to be fluent in English.

3.3.2 Wild Dolphin Tours

The setting of the dolphin tours is quite different from that of the Penguin Parade. Not least, the tours occur on boats and the volume of tourists on any one tour was much less than that a night at the Penguin Parade. In their introductory talks, the tour operators nearly always introduced my research to visitors and explained who I was and why I was on the boat. In distributing surveys, the same forty clipboards were used. For the dolphins the size of each boat trip was such that all participants could be approached. Thus the sample for these surveys was in part predetermined by the bookings for each trip. As such, I was able to ask every member of the tour if they would like to participate.

Not surprisingly, the dolphin tours proved to have a much higher success rate of visitor participation in the survey than at the Penguin Parade. Usually there was about a half-hour ride back to the pier after people had swum with/observed the dolphins. At this point tourists had time to fill in the survey. Several factors may have facilitated a higher response rate at this site. The setting was less stressful in that people were out on usually gentle seas in relatively small groups and children were restricted to a small area. They were offered complimentary hot drinks and food after their swim with and observation of animals. The wind chill was rarely as great as at the Penguin Parade at night. Because the groups were
small, peer pressure to participate may have put people off refusing the survey. In all, only one family declined to participate during the survey period on the dolphin tours.

3.4 Participant Observation

A final key source of information for this study was through participant observation. This involved recording in a diary my observations of visitor behaviour at the Penguin Parade and on the dolphin tours. This technique was also used at other marine tourism sites referred to in the thesis, such as Sea World, which are used to provide a social and historical context for the current trend in experiencing marine animals ‘in the wild’ (Chapter 4). The diary served as a record of tourist behaviour in terms of the comments they made about the animals and the trips as well as their behaviour around the animals. In addition, it was possible at times for me to engage in less formal conversations with tourists that were subsequently recorded in the diary.

The observer-participant model is a common methodology in tourism research (see for example Ryan, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Crang, 1998; Willems-Braun, 1997). For example, Hebditch went on coach tours to famous sites in Britain to better comprehend how tourists themselves felt about the touring experience. Following this, I elected to participate in the dolphin trips and in the nightly penguin tours which gave me the opportunity to converse with tourists and to observe how people behaved in relation to the animals and the site infrastructure. At both sites I wore an identification badge. Hence, in this “unstructured situation” (Ryan, 1995: 98), I joined in the normal social processes of the experience, but did not pretend to be another participant, or tourist. In some ways this is likely to have

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6 One problem with the participant observer method is the danger of becoming overly familiar with the experience so as to miss the details of those visiting a site for the first time. Also, at times I felt that due to the significant number of hours I was spending in the field over a relatively short time, my levels of concentration and observation were not as high as they should have been. At these times, I chose to take a day or a weekend out of data collection to ensure I was as focussed as I wanted to be. My schedule usually began with running surveys at the Penguin Parade on Thursday nights. On Friday mornings I would drive for about two and a half-hours to Sorrento to participate in the 8am dolphin tours, before driving back to Phillip Island at about 2pm. I would then collate the day’s surveys from the clipboards before re-filling them with surveys for the Penguin Parade. I would be at the Penguin Parade on Friday nights from about 6pm until closing, usually about 10.30pm. I repeated this pattern each Saturday. On Sundays I participated in the dolphin tours in the morning and the afternoon and often spent the night in Sorrento so as to run the surveys on Mondays as well.
influenced the informal conversations I had with tourists and perhaps their behaviour around me. However, this was a necessary condition of my work in light of the ethical importance for the status of a researcher to be known in such a case. The application of participant observation took a similar form at both of the case sites and as such is discussed together below.

3.4.1 The Penguin Parade and Wild Dolphin Tours.

As a participant at the Penguin Parade I walked around the Interpretation Centre and on the boardwalks making note of visitor behaviour and comments when not engaged in survey distribution and collection. As explained previously, as a passenger on the dolphin boats I was usually introduced to tourists as a researcher at the start of the trips. A diary was kept describing the day's events, including variables such as weather conditions, number of tourists, and number of animals at both sites. In the case of the Penguin Parade, the birds appear reliably at sunset and are evident on the beach for about one hour. They can also be viewed in the dunes until closing time, typically an hour and a half after sunset. I was also able to observe visitor behaviour in relation to the exhibits inside the Visitor Centre. As an observer on the dolphin vessels I was able to determine responses of people who were in the water looking at the animals or viewing them from the boat while at the same time record activities around the vessel I was on. In both cases the diary was also used to record visitor comments, quotes, conversations with their own groups and reactions to particular aspects of the marine animal experiences.

On the dolphin tours, it was tempting to lean towards being more of a participant than an observer! At the start of the season, tour operators running swim tours encouraged me to enter the water with the animals in order for me to better understand the experience of the tourists I was studying. I did so on two occasions and was fortunate enough to find myself in fairly close proximity to some adult dolphins. However in the following weeks it was evident that it was difficult to both swim with the dolphins and tourists and record their activities at the same time. As such, I remained on board, monitoring swimmers and
dolphins and chatting with people who had elected to observe the animals from the boat only. In order to ‘pull my weight’ on the boats, I helped staff prepare and serve food and drinks for the visitors.

3.5 Time Frame for Data Collection

The surveys were administered at both sites during the summer of 1996-97. This was because trips to visit the dolphins are not run over winter. Additionally, visitor numbers to the Penguin Parade are higher in warmer months. In order to collect data between sites that might be in some way comparable, the research was carried out over a similar time period. As mentioned, the sites are over two hours apart by car, and as such the dolphin tour operators administered the survey in the afternoons on occasion.

Textual readings of the sites took place prior to and during the 1996-97 summer. Surveys and participant observation were undertaken at the Penguin Parade from 20/12/96 through to 28/3/97 and on 9/5/97 and included a total of 14 visits. These tended to be on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights when English-speaking visitor numbers are high. Surveys at the dolphin tour sites were run from 16/1/97 through to 8/3/97, a total of 24 visits and 46 boat trips. This discrepancy is due to the fact that at the time the tour boats may have run up to three trips per day. Also, as stated, tour operators on some boats administered the surveys concurrently while I was involved with another tour or at the Penguin Parade. The period of sampling at the Penguin Parade is slightly longer than that at the dolphin site in an attempt to increase sample size there. In all, 325 surveys were collected at the Penguin Parade and 992 on the dolphin tours, a total of 1,317 surveys overall. Much of the wealth of detail contained in these surveys was not used in the final analysis presented herein. Clearly, “research based on questionnaires alone that are subjected to statistical analysis is unlikely to uncover all of the nuances of such situations” (Ryan, 1995: 98). As such, it is data that will be analysed for the express purpose of giving feedback to the tour operators who so kindly offered of their time and resources.
There is an ethical element to be addressed when using a method such as participant observation. Such a strategy necessitates, in part, eavesdropping on other peoples’ conversations and recording some of their comments and behaviours. While I wore an identification badge, this may not have been immediately obvious at all times, such as in the darkness of the Penguin Parade. As such I have been careful not to attribute any actions or quotes to particular members of the visitor population. As shown in Chapters 6 and 8, individual survey participants are identified in terms of their survey number only. Accepting this ethical dilemma, the method remains invaluable as a means of recording visitors’ impressions and gauging the mood of the occasion.

Because the thesis is also concerned with the nature of the institutions producing the ecomarine experience and subsequent educational output, I formed attachments to staff working at the various sites. While this may invariably lead to degrees of subjectivity on my part, in order for the processes to be understood it may be argued that “the hegemony of rationality as a process of understanding and undertaking research needs to be carefully questioned” (Ryan, 1995: 98). As such, the time I spent with the people I met while on fieldwork invariably led to several strong friendships being formed.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

As with all research projects, financial limitations were acknowledged and subsequently catered for. For instance, case sites were confined to my home State of Victoria. Resource limitations were felt in other areas also. Initially, the thesis plan included a series of focus groups to be undertaken with interested visitors following their tours of the animals. However, I underestimated the time it would take to enter data and analyse the results and unfortunately the focus groups could not be performed.

In addition, one of the most notable features of the visitor population to the Penguin Parade is the number of non-English speaking Asian tourists. The main languages spoken by this group are Japanese and Mandarin and so in order to gauge their impressions of the Penguin
Parade, I had my visitor survey translated accordingly. However, as alluded to earlier in the chapter, the implementation of these surveys proved problematic. Most of this sector of the visitor population had their trip to the island organised from their homeland. They are most often taken to the Island as part of a day trip around Melbourne and Victoria, with the Penguin Parade being the last event of the day. As such, involvement in the survey would have required the co-operation of hotels, bus tour companies, and their translators who had little to gain from my work. Further, the time spent at the Penguin Parade site by these bus tours is very short compared with non-tour members. The people would not have had time to fill in the survey while at the Penguin Parade. They are generally moved around in their groups, listening to their interpreters, before briefly viewing the penguins and then leaving to drive back to Melbourne. I considered participating in these day tours if I was granted permission but then was confronted with the further problem that at night after the Penguin Parade, the buses return to Melbourne with their interior lights off making completion of the surveys impossible.

I eventually accepted that gathering survey responses from such a transient group was beyond the resource limitations of my thesis. This was regrettable because the interest in Australian nature by our Asian neighbours is an important part of a venture such as the Penguin Parade. And from a global perspective I consider it important to more fully document views on the Australian seascape held by people from areas which experience more concentrated environmental problems. Surely this is a valid area for future research.

3.7 Conclusion

In determining tourists’ experiences of marine animals in Australia the thesis has employed a range of qualitative methods. These include a reading of the ecomarine landscapes, a visitor survey with a series of open-ended questions and the use of participant observation in the field. At the same time, quantitative methods were also used in the visitor survey, as part of an agreement with tourism operators at the thesis’ case sites. Initially, it was expected that this data would supplement that accrued through qualitative means. However,
in analysing the information it became apparent that the positivist paradigm in which the quantitative data was set did not compliment the more subjective, humanist nature of the qualitative data. As a result, data collected for the tour operators has been made available for their use but has not in any significant way contributed to the overall story of the thesis. This also reflects a shift in my own interests in the course of the thesis. I began the research imagining that the explanation for tourist values in relation to the animals they visited could be adequately accessed by way of their attitudes and opinions as expressed on-site. But as I proceeded I realised that these attitudes were formed in a wider context than the ‘visit’ itself. To understand visitor values in relation to marine animals I decided it was necessary to have a more broadly historical and social fix on the constitution of the value and desirability of these creatures. This led me to add to the survey and observation work the analysis of the framing of marine animals in secondary sources, as specified earlier.

Deconstruction of landscape, qualitative questioning and participant observation set within a methodological framework common in the New Cultural Geography have been used in the thesis to illuminate the ways in which marine nature is at once produced for and consumed by the tourist. The application of these techniques has taken place at two sites, the Phillip Island Penguin Parade and Wild Dolphin Tours in Sorrento. Pilot surveys made clear initial problems with various methods which where subsequently rectified. Consequently, empirical data collection for the thesis took place over the 1996-97 summer. In addition, other marine tourism sites were visited, such as Sea World, these providing a contextual backdrop for the current trend in experiencing ‘wild’ marine animals as is expanded upon in the next chapter (Chapter 4).
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