ABSTRACT
This paper explores the nature of Americans' vacations from the perspective of current trends in social and symbolic anthropology. Taking the viewpoint of the vacationers themselves, it suggests that there are two polar types of vacations that are recognized by Americans which are termed "Peasant for a Day" and "Queen (King) for a Day." Each of these types inverts an aspect of American society, but depending on the class of the vacationer involved, the inversion takes on one of two forms: either dissolution or accentuation of the social hierarchy. Examples and variations of these two basic types of vacation are presented; both domestic and overseas holidays are discussed. Keywords: American social structure and political ideology; symbolic anthropology.

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AMERICANS' VACATIONS

RÉSUMÉ

Les vacances des Américains. Cet essai emploie des tendances actuelles de l'anthropologie sociale et symbolique en analysant le fond des vacances que prennent les Américains. En examinant le point de vue des voyageurs eux-mêmes, il suggère qu'il y a deux types polaires de vacances que reconnaissent les Américains qui sont nommés "Paysan pour une journée" et "Reine (roi) pour une journée." Tous les deux types renversent un aspect de la société américaine, mais selon la classe des voyageurs, l'inversion prend l'une des deux formes: ou elle dissoud ou elle accentue l'hierarchie sociale. On présente des exemples et des variations des deux types de vacances; et les vacances domestiques et les vacances d'outre-mer sont analysées. Mots cléf: La structure sociale et l'idéologie politique de l'Amérique; l'anthropologie symbolique.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the nature of Americans' vacations from the perspective of current trends in social and symbolic anthropology. Surprisingly, little has been written by anthropologists on American vacations or on vacations in general, despite the growing interest in popular and American culture. The majority of what has been written by anthropologists (Smith 1977) tends to borrow the sociologists' and economists' perspectives by focusing on the sociocultural and economic effects that tourism has on the country or culture visited (Cohen 1971; Forster 1964; Ouma 1970; Young 1975). In other disciplines, Williams and Zelinsky (1970) focus on the factors, mostly economic and political, behind the choice of country visited; and Sutton (1967) provides a psychosocial analysis of the interactions between tourists and hosts. Numerous writers lament the superficiality of Americans' vacations, without inquiring why they nevertheless continue to draw increasing participants (e.g. Boorstin 1962); and few authors attempt to explore the vacationers' own perspectives on the nature of a vacation.

One of the few important works to attempt to sociologically explain the nature of vacationers' experiences is MacCannell (1976). Yet he does not concentrate on Americans' vacations, instead arguing that all vacationers, largely middle-class, have analogous experiences, and that the experience of the vacation is itself a denationalizing one, cutting across (and therefore irrelevant to) inter-
national boundaries. Specifically, MacCannell argues that tourism is an essentially modern phenomenon, expressing the basic problems the modern person must experience as a result of post-industrial alienation. Social fragmentation ("differentiation") in personal relationships is seen by him to be echoed in middle-class vacations, where tourist attractions, in their pathetic attempts to replicate authentic experiences and transcend this social alienation, have a similar alienated quality to them:

> Sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of a society... a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience. Of course, it is doomed to failure; even as it tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differentiation (MacCannell 1976:13).

Taking MacCannell's analysis one step further, Cohen (1979) argues that although some vacations are expressions of alienation and merely create the illusion of experiencing another culture, other travelers actually manage to experience "existentially" other cultures: Cohen thus makes the distinction between authentic and illusory experiences of other cultures, along with the degree and type of alienation from the travelers' own society, the basis for his fivefold typology of vacation styles.

In contrast to MacCannell, it will be proposed here that Americans' vacations form a distinct subset of the set of all people's vacations; that class differences—specifically the differences between middle class and upper class—are a crucial factor in Americans' experiences of travel; that rather than merely reflecting a critical aspect of modern society, vacations invert an essential aspect of American socioeconomic ideology and experience, thus underscoring their basically contradictory nature; and, paradoxically enough, that in underscoring this contradiction, rather than expressing alienation from the modern social process, vacations provide renewed faith in that process.

This perspective is a departure from MacCannell's and Cohen's view that the touristic experience can be "meaningless," "superficial" or, worse, based on "false consciousness." Instead, it proceeds from the premise that what the vacationer experiences is real, valid and fulfilling, no matter how "superficial" it may seem to the social scientist. Rather than basing a typology of vacations on the degree of "authenticity" as Cohen has done, the model proposed here will offer a typology based on the views of vacationers themselves: it assumes
that the vacationers' own feelings and views about vacations are "authentic," whether or not the observer judges them to match the host culture.

This essay is thus a theoretical one, proposing a model that offers a way of approaching the phenomenon of the vacation. The data are drawn from a combination of interviews and conversations with informants of both middle and upper class; and of literary, popular and journalistic writings. In other words, it is for the most part "folk data" which support the thesis of this essay. The precedent for using these types of data in a largely theoretical essay is well established: the paper follows, for example, in the tradition of Mary Douglas' "Deciphering a Meal" (1972) which also offers a theoretical perspective on folk concepts of a common subject—British ideas about what constitutes a "meal"—and thus uses "folk data" rather than data of a more statistical nature. Indeed, the aim itself of this type of essay is to provide a "folk definition" of a common phenomenon—a meal, or a vacation—by providing popular examples and statements. Thus a succinct, dictionary-type definition of "vacation" is eschewed in favor of seeking a more searching, elaborated series of concepts, which concepts indeed will constitute the heart of the essay.

These concepts, it will be argued, emerge from a culturally recognized ideal of what constitutes a "vacation." Thus it is not suggested that all forms of travel fall into the scope of those concepts proposed in this essay, since not all forms of travel are considered by informants to be vacations. For example, serious periods of study of various aspects of cultures abroad—museums for an art student, restaurants for a food reviewer, fish migration for an ecologist, tribal initiation rituals for an anthropologist, and so on—would not be considered "vacations" by those pursuing them. Likewise, certain domestic forms of travel and ways of passing leisure time such as serious bird watching, or investigating local town history, would not be considered "vacation time." Rather, it is suggested that the culturally recognized ideal of a "vacation" by definition centers around the notion of inversion: a strong contrast to what is normally done in the daily life "back home."

VACATIONS AS INVERSION

In suggesting that vacations invert certain aspects of American society, the work of Victor Turner (e.g. 1969) will partly be drawn upon. For Turner, inversion of a social situation generally takes the form of communitas—destruction of the social boundaries to achieve what he has in one publication (1977) termed "flow," which
might be metaphorically explained as a "liquidizing" of the "solid" social and economic distinctions which he calls societas. The conceptions of communitas and societas go a long way toward defining and understanding social situations, including reversals of the normal order via rituals and other symbolic means (Turner 1969, 1974, 1977). Graburn (1977) drawing on Van Gennep (1960) and Leach (1961), offers a compatible analysis of vacations as sacred time interrupting the flow of daily, profane time.

Turner (1969:177) feels it is incumbent upon every society to exhibit some form of communitas, however temporary and limited its scope or even appeal; all social situations must contain the possibility of their own obviation, as Wagner (1975) would put it, in order to make the arbitrariness of their configurations more bearable. But in the case of America, obviation of one model becomes creation of another, as American society, it will be argued, contains two contradictory ideologies which are perceived by native Americans to be mutually compatible; thus creating an alternate model while on vacation is a serious business—a means of fulfilling the whole ideological structure of the American dream.

Turner asserts that inversion by communitas occurs in a structured way in tribal societies, where it is normatively ritualized by and for the group, whereas in modern society, he holds that communitas takes the more haphazard form of small and exclusive groups which are not accessible to everyone: “street gangs, the Lion’s club, branches of the women’s movement, Catholics for Peace, the New Minyan movement, Rock Climbers’ clubs, poetry reading and writing groups…” (1977:48). In other words, for Americans, communitas does not take hold as a “collective representation,” according to Turner.

In this analysis, Turner’s work will be drawn upon but it will be significantly amended, and in two ways. Starting from Turner’s emphasis of inversion as communitas, it will then be suggested that there is another form of inversion which takes the form of accentuating rather than liquidizing societas. Secondly, the example in both cases is drawn from a social form which, while not available to all, is nevertheless as close as any to being a “collective representation” for American society as a whole—the vacation.

In addition, this analysis is a qualification of Schneider’s contention (1968:48) that vacations act as mediators, standing “midway between home and work.” Like “work,” Schneider argues, vacations are productive (“of many fish, or animals killed, or pictures painted, or books read”), but like “home,” they produce things with only marginal (and certainly not monetary) utility—“gratification.” In this
mediating sense, they could be said to be like windows, doors and hallways, which spatially rather than conceptually mediate between “home” and “work” (Hieb n.d.:14).

In contrast to Schneider, this analysis will focus not on the mediating quality of vacations but rather on their inverting character. One observes, in fact, a segmentary sort of system (Smith 1956). While not on vacation, “work” and “home” are inversions of one another; but while on vacation, “work” and “home” are seen as united to become “back home,” in opposition to the vacation.

In any case, it is clear that vacations as an ideal are the inversion of work, occurring during breaks in work (“vacation time”) (cf. Graburn 1977:18-19). A look at an American income tax manual clearly demonstrates that any “time off” period that might be considered “work”—including taking courses—can be considered tax-deductible work periods, not taxable vacations (Arch 1977:19-25), thus highlighting the opposition between popular concepts of “work” and “vacation.”

Lastly, the analysis also makes use of recent literature on the paradoxical nature of social life and institutions. In arguing that the American ideology of society contains contradictory propositions, this essay is in the tradition of Bateson (1936), Turner (1957), Crocker (1969), Shore (1978) and others, who take a similar view of tribal social institutions. In essence, this view of society proposes that rather than embodying a single, all-inclusive and smoothly functioning principle of social structure, a culture may exhibit two or more fundamental principles which, far from being mutually reinforcing, may be mutually contradictory at a basic structural level. It will soon become clear how this general view of society can be applied to American society and Americans' vacations.

GOING ON VACATION

Many Americans like to envision vacations as “time off”—in a sense, the denial of time as one conceives it. One should make love all day, or stay up all night and sleep in the day, denying the “normal” rituals of the temporal sequence. Some vacationers even leave their watches home as a clear symbol of adapting to a non-normal “schedule,” eating when they are hungry instead of when the clock tells them to, and so on. Relational time substitutes for absolute time (c.f., e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940:94–138; Whorf 1971): spontaneous emotion takes over planned rationality in varying degrees.

Parodying this possibility of a different time orientation while on holiday is a prose poem by Russell Edson, “The Great Journey...”
Blocked by Breakfast” (1976). A couple seems terrified of the lack of control over their lives inherent in the impending vacation and so they keep repeatedly indulging in the security of eating regular, home-cooked meals to avoid breaking into the vacation’s uncertain time sense:

Should they make an early start, or wait for breakfast? Perhaps they’d be more fortified if they took breakfast; and while they’re at it they might as well have lunch too: and since they’ve come this far, why not supper, also? Might just as well, since it’s grown so late, have a good night’s rest, and make an early start in the morning...

...certainly it doesn’t hurt to have something under one’s belt, no telling when one will eat so well again: might just as well stay on for lunch... Very well, supper, too:....

But again it’s breakfast, and so on...

If asked why they don’t do something with themselves, they answer that they are just on their way, they have only to start... it’s just a matter of getting past breakfast...

Most travelers, however, are not so apprehensive about the different sense of time they will experience during their own holidays and in fact may delight in it. The novelist Laurence Halley writes of his Mediterranean trip (1978:24):

Santorini in the Greek islands. The timetable had predicted arrival at 6:00 P.M., but Greek ferries, thank God, have nothing in common with Mussolini’s trains. Yanni, a deckhand, had gone ashore at the previous stop. We simply had to wait until his inalienable conjugal rights... had been properly exercised.

Needless to say, a delay of this sort would have prompted irate complaints rather than amused delight from Halley had it happened anywhere but on holiday (in other words, “back home,” particularly while going to “work”).

A recent article (Fadiman 1977:1) takes this delight in relational time almost to the point of absurdity. The author and her friend found the epitome of the “lazy” vacation time in Tortola, a Caribbean island where the locals have what the vacationers ethnocentrically perceive to be a firm philosophy of “doing nothing,” and in fact the island provides “unexcelled opportunities to do nothing in style.” After the two travelers spent a day sailing,

we felt our vacation was becoming almost energetic. As an antidote we decided to indulge in the laziest activity we could think of, window-shopping (Fadiman 1977:14).
After their "final burst of energy," climbing a mountain, "we knew we should start down soon, but the Tortola do-nothing habit was awfully hard to shake" (1977:14).

The complete detachment of the vacationers from any "normal" acts is revealed in a cartoon published in The New Yorker (1977). A couple is shown being asked questions by an interviewer taking a poll. They respond, "We don't have any opinions. We're just down here for a vacation." Probably the most extreme version of this type of vacation is the honeymoon. Brides' magazines are full of suggestions for out-of-the-way places where the honeymooners can truly "do nothing in style." But honeymoons are primarily rites of passage and thus deserve special consideration in a sketch of the American ritual cycle rather than in a discussion of vacations.

Another inverted form of time definition is one where, rather than going forward (as is done "back home") or being "static" or irrelevant (as with the preceding examples), the vacationer can go backwards in time. One popular version of this is to travel the paths of a famous historical figure's journey, such as Hollander did (1978), recreating Henry Stanley's trek to find David Livingstone in Central Africa.

In accordance with this changed time orientation may come a new socio-spatial setting: while back home the travelers were immersed in crowded social interactions, on vacation they may seek the inverted situation of sparsely populated, out-of-the-way spots:

There are still places in the world where one can go to be alone. Blissfully alone. Secure in a solitude that nothing threatens. One place offering such peace is the island of Inishore, off the west coast of Ireland (Coy 1978).

A different type of spatial inversion is found in the popular "Surprise Cruise" and "Cruise to Nowhere," advertised in major newspapers, where the traveler leaves home all normal cares and concerns to the extent that, when making the travel reservation, the trip's destination is unknown or "nowhere"—i.e. the ship may not touch land but just "drift" in the ocean.

TWO TYPES OF VACATIONS

Depending on both the class of vacationers and the type of holiday they select, it will be suggested that vacation inversions may take two separate forms. Thus the issue of class is crucial to the understanding of vacations, in this model. Sociologists of American society often note that it is difficult to define what constitutes each "class" since the two primary factors of salary level and "life style" ("culture")
may not accord with one another. A good example would be certain skilled blue-collar workers such as plumbers, electricians and construction workers whose salaries often put them in the upperclass range ($30–40,000/year) but whose life styles would be considered middle class by common cultural standards. These latter would include a variety of factors: clothes style, kinds of books, magazines and newspapers read, type of entertainment pursued, speech style (both lexical and grammatical), and so on. For the purposes of this article, then, upper class vacationers may be viewed broadly as those participating in both the cultural style as well as the financial rewards enjoyed by the white collar leadership. This would thus exclude, for example, those wealthy skilled blue collar workers who, on this analysis, would be considered culturally middle class. But in this essay, the relevant aspect of class is how these cultural styles are inverted while on vacation.

Thus depending on class, it is suggested that there are two basic cultural ideals for vacation styles held by Americans, which will be termed “Peasant for a Day” and “Queen (King) for a Day.” With the Peasant for a Day vacation, upper or uppermiddle class Americans obviate the social structural divisions of “back home” while on vacation, creating a temporary situation of communitas. While on vacation, these travelers may relate to the lower-class inhabitants of the host country on an equal basis, as they never do at home (where they are the authoritative bosses of companies, factories, and so on), going into locals’ bars, attending folk festivals, revivalist meetings, auctions. They may go to bullfights or cockfights, although back home they never attend the American equivalent of boxing or wrestling matches: see cheap popular movies in the native language, which they will struggle to understand, although at home they have season tickets to the opera or theatre and never see such popular movies and despise local, lower-class dialects (such as Black English); and adventurously eat in local cheap and dirty restaurants serving uncontrollably spicy food at outdoor rickety tables or even street stands, although back home they normally dine at expensive, immaculate indoor restaurants serving mild (or mildly spiced) food. In general, they “play at” getting into the lower-class natives’ culture as they normally do not at home.

During the Peasant for a Day vacation, the arbitrary divisions of social time and social space are radically and ritually (although only temporarily) broken down. These people feel they are being given the privilege of learning the different culture of their host country, seeing for a moment the arbitrariness of their own culture and its categories: hence they immerse themselves in the new place and consciously make the decision to not write home during the vacation.
ignoring mercilessly their friends and family, to forget about the "work-a-day" world back home for a week or two. They may temporarily take on blue-collar jobs, as with the Aran Island traveler who earned his room and board at a guesthouse by scrubbing floors and delivering beer to pubs (Coy 1978); other travelers may even playfully create fantasies that they will never return home and are part of this new culture. The extreme version of this is what Cohen (1972, 1973) terms "Drifter Tourism," where the temporary vacation becomes a limitless stay, without any immediate purpose other than escape from or rebellion against the home country (1973:91–92 and passim). But such "Drifter Tourists" cannot really be said to be on vacation because they hold no plans for return to the U.S. and indeed often settle down in "Drifter Communities" abroad (Cohen 1973:97 and passim) and therefore fall outside the scope of this paper. The heroes of Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* and Graham Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* might be considered borderline Drifter Tourists, each living in tropical Africa for extended periods to avoid unpleasant situations "back home."

The Peasant for a Day holiday concept would seem particularly congenial to a society such as the U.S., where belief in democracy and the fundamental equality of all people is seen to lie below the cloak of social stratification and the unfortunate divisions of class: the ideals of democracy and equality are contradicted by the facts of everyday capitalist life (cf. Dumont 1970). For the Peasant for a Day vacationers, "back home" only one side of the capitalist-democratic continuum is normally manifest: the former, with its hierarchy rigidly separating members of different social classes, placing themselves on top. It is only on vacation—which takes place geographically (literally) outside the social system—that this pattern can be fully inverted, and the idealist/optimist's firm conviction that democracy underlies capitalism can be realized, via the obviation of class and the institution of communitas. It will be seen later how the domestic vacation taken inside America accords with this model.

The other popular type of holiday, which has been termed in this essay Queen (King) for a Day, is the converse of that just described. Here, lower-middle to upper-middle class Americans go on vacation also to invert the existing social order, but instead of denying societas they accentuate it so as to raise themselves to a position of social superiority, rather than demoting themselves to one of equality. While back home they may be extremely practical and keep to stringent budgets, buying only essential goods and even those only on sale, on vacation they become wildly extravagant, paying inflated prices for luxury goods ("souvenirs") for which they may have little
use when they return, so far removed can their vacation experience and its "ethos" be to them when they return home. Adams terms this phenomenon of paying inflated prices abroad the "befuddlement effect"; he argues that it disproves the theory that "perfect knowledge illuminates demand behavior" (1972:203), in other words, that human beings act according to rationalist (market-oriented) principles. But paying such high prices itself becomes a form of upward mobility, with the vacationers temporarily adopting the buying patterns of the upper class.

While these vacationers were careful to choose a moderate house or apartment in America whose mortgage or rent they could easily afford (sacrificing, perhaps, space for economy), abroad they stay in luxury hotels with features that make them feel like Kings and Queens—breakfast delivered in bed, midnight champagne, perhaps satin sheets. Indeed, a recent vogue has been literally to live the life of royalty by staying overnight in actual castles once inhabited by the noble class and now converted to guest houses. An article by Blumenthal (1977) in The New York Times clearly demonstrates, by its emphasis on the moderateness of their prices, the middle-class audience to whom these castles are appealing. In other words, it may be either price or style (or of course both) which may be extravagantly appealing to this type of vacationer.

The social scale for these travelers is changed, but differently than it has been for the first group. Back home, the Queen (King) for a Day vacationers are fairly polite to "service people"—waiters, maids, bus drivers, etc.—perhaps even having some of their higher ranks (plumbers, electricians, restaurant managers) in their immediate families and circles of friends. While abroad, however, they are convinced that they are according the host country and its natives the privilege of bringing their tourist money to them and consequently they expect revered guest status. Thus they become embarrassingly "aristocratic"—enacting their perception of this concept by mistakenly ignoring the "Gentleman/Lady" ideal embodied in the original model of aristocratic behavior and instead emphasizing the "crass" privilege of constantly and even rudely demanding information and special ("upper class") treatment. Concomitantly, encounters with the lower-class natives are minimized for all but the "service" situations. Here is the image of the tourist, so stereotyped in the eyes of both upper class Americans and host country natives, being whisked via cab from hotel to restaurant to theatre and back again. Boorstin (1962:91–92), exaggerating the prevalence of this travel style by ignoring the Peasant for a Day vacation type, nevertheless accurately sums up the Queen (King) for a Day vacation in saying:
The traveler used to go about the world to encounter the natives. A function of travel agencies now is to prevent this encounter.

These vacationers' forays "outside" are similarly reversed from their normal "home" excursions, but again in an opposite manner from the first vacation group. While back home their form of entertainment includes the popular culture of sports (both spectator and participant), movies, etc., abroad they feel obliged to spend days in the museums, attend plays, perhaps even (suffer through) classical music and dance concerts, partaking of what they classify as "higher [class] culture." Indeed, the kinds of museums visited are often those which, in addition to (or instead of) displaying paintings or sculptures, feature domestic items of royal households:

Nowadays a visit to the best art museums in Europe is often a tour of the vacated residences of magnates, noblemen, and monarchs of the pre-democratic age: in Florence, the Uffizi and Pitti Palaces; in Venice, the Doge's Palace; in Paris, the Louvre; in Vienna, Schonbrunn. Beautiful objects, taken from scores of princely residences, are crowded together for public display in the grandest of defunct palaces. Painting, sculpture, tapestries, tableware, and other objets d'art (once part of the interior decoration or household equipment of the working aristocracy) were thus "liberated" by and for the people... Common people could now see treasures from the inner sanctums of palaces, treasures originally designed to adorn the intimate dining table, bedrooms, and bathrooms of a well-guarded aristocracy (Boorstin 1962:100; emphasis added).

All this is because, in contrast to the Peasant for a Day vacationer, the Queen (King) for a Day travelers believe (however unconsciously) that some people—hopefully themselves—are "more equal" than others and should consequently be offered the possibility of upward social mobility (Garretson 1976). Unable to join the upper class "back home," they pursue it abroad. As a result, this group writes numerous postcards and even letters to their friends and families at home while on holiday, to prove to them (and themselves) the possibility of enacting that dream of social mobility. Worse still are the dreaded slide shows presented when they are back home which, as Shaw (1977) observes, serve "to store up all the documentary evidence necessary to prove to some disbelieving stay-at-home that we were there." Thus the "Wish you were here" postcards can be interpreted as meaning, "Wish you were here to see us living as upper class." But again, as with the first type of vacationer, this enacting
of social reversal is confined to vacations which are, properly speaking (geographically) outside their own social system.

Here it must be noted that as this paper treats vacations from the perspective of the traveler, the nature of the host country's natives must be passed over, as the travelers themselves are viewed as "the natives." Nevertheless, it goes without saying that both types of holiday inversions described here may distort the host country's culture, producing what one author, discussing Western tourists among West African tribal groups, goes so far as to call "a new obscenity for our times" (Alland 1976:210). Cohen (1973:99) similarly states:

Like the mass tourist [similar to Queen (King) for a Day], the mass drifter [similar to Peasant for a Day] also gets a biased picture of the host country: the latter's perspective is diametrically opposed to that of the former: the one looks at the host country from the lofty highlights of an air-conditioned hotel room: the other from the depths of the dust bin.

Other writers make the question of relative openness to the vacation hosts and their culture on the part of the traveler a primary factor in classifying different types of vacationer (e.g. Cohen 1979; Kaplan 1975:300; Sutton 1967). This is not the concern of this essay, although it should certainly be of interest to social psychologists.

HYBRID VACATION TYPES

So far, Americans' vacations have been presented as belonging to one of two polar sociological types. Yet the question must present itself as to the inviolability of the boundaries between these two categories. Social life is rarely as neat as social scientists would have it be. In this case it will be seen that the two types that have been proposed are not mutually exclusive; other intermediary and marginal types to those which have been delineated can equally be imagined. For example, the recent popular travelogue *The Great Railway Bazaar* by Paul Theroux falls between classifications in a complex way. Clearly upper or upper-middle class in background, Theroux is often seated with peasants, workers, beggars and other lower class "natives" while traveling through Eurasia by train. Yet unlike the "pure" Peasant for a Day traveler, Theroux consciously avoids relating extensively to lower class natives by rarely debarking from the trains, and then generally only for as short a stop as the train schedule permits. Theroux's anomalous position, on the edge of the Peasant for a Day type, can serve to underscore the fact that the division
of travelers into two polar types, as suggested in this essay, is merely heuristic and can certainly accommodate marginal types such as Theroux.

While Theroux's travel style may be considered marginal to the Peasant for a Day type, there is another style of vacation which may be considered as intermediary between the Queen and the Peasant for a Day styles, at varying times partaking of each. Indeed it will be argued that the most socially prestigious vacation is that which combines the best of both types, alternatingly accentuating and liquidating the system of societas or social hierarchy. It is the most prestigious type of vacation precisely because its practitioner combines both types of luxury essential to the two main vacation styles: like the Queen for a Day traveler, she/he can enjoy the physical luxury of expensive hotels and restaurants, and like the Peasant for a Day traveler she/he can enjoy the social luxury of exploring local lower class or "peasant" culture. The ability to simultaneously indulge in both these opposing types of luxury is only available—and attractive—to the upper class: only an upper class traveler would be interested in inverting "back home culture" by exploring lower class culture abroad, but retaining an interest in familiar style upper class lodgings. Thus ironically, the upper class traveler, trying in some ways to invert the culture of "back home," ends up in this way reproducing it, by indulging in the most prestigious type of vacation just as, at home, she/he participates in the most prestigious types of other activities.

The travel literature provides telling examples of such hybrid vacation forms. Holiday magazine, for example, has an article by Joyce Winslow (1972a) on this type of travel in Andalusia. During the days Ms. Winslow goes off to the fish market where "the fishermen conduct their affairs with an earthy gusto" and she chats in the bull ring with young men training for the life of a matador, all the while photographing the bulls. But Ms. Winslow has decided to spend the nights in an old "magnificent restored castle gleaming with antique Spanish furniture, hand-painted urns, a private bar in each room, marble bath and sumptuous three-course breakfast...all for just $15 per double room per day." By day she plays the Peasant for a Day role but at night she switches to Queen for a Day, though in this case all the while paying peasant prices (Winslow 1972a:64,37,64). However, Ms. Winslow is clearly upper class as is seen by another of her articles (1977b) on a holiday in Monaco (the European capital for nobility), the highlight of which was a visit with Princess Grace.

A more extreme example is provided by Bryan (1977), writing for the same magazine about a trip to Mexico. The author stayed at what is apparently the "fanciest" resort in Acapulco, being a favorite
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with movie stars, presidents and other luminaries. Yet he ventured out into the “real” Mexico and was enchanted, having been especially drawn to a local (“Peasant”) church:

During our days in Puerto Vallarta, I found myself drifting often into that church. I would sit among the pious old ladies in their long black dresses, hear their faint murmurings over their beads; or I’d pause on the steps outside and listen to the small children chattering about the poor boxes. Sometimes I would stroll around trying to read the framed tributes to the saints, expressing gratitude to whoever had interceded to save Maria or Julio or Juan or Paolo from a grave fever, a grave operation, a grave infirmity, a grave injury. Or I would simply sit quietly in the back of the church remembering those close to me who had died; or I’d say a prayer for those of us still alive. I never seemed to do that at home (Bryan 1977:35).

Here again, the Peasant for a Day vacation is complemented by the King for a Night vacation.

The opposite model of Queen for a Day vacation combined with Peasant for a Night type is also found, although less commonly. An advertisement for a New York travel brochure published by the high-priced (“luxurious”) U.N. Plaza Hotel (The New York Times 1978b) states these attractive vacation opportunities offered by them: “Mix and match: A Night at the opera with a day at the zoo? Cloisters [Medieval art museum] by day and Harlem by night?”... though in both cases, the traveler will be sleeping in the upper class style U.N. Plaza Hotel.

This paradox of two extremes being combined should not be surprising. Anthropological analysis encounters it frequently: for example, in societies with age classes it is found in the common configuration of alternating generations being allied with one another, both emotionally and sociologically, while adjacent generations are opposed, competing for the same “goods” (including spouses). Kinship terms of tribal and other societies often include the same principle, with opposing generations (grandparents/grandchildren) reciprocally addressing each other by the same term. Similarly, one could cite the common African adage, “We marry our enemies.” Such examples of structural opposites being combined or allied abound. So it should not be surprising to discover that this paradoxical combination of Peasant and Queen for a Day vacation styles is related to another: the most prestigious vacation is also the one that combines the most exotic with the most familiar. In addition to the previous three examples, an advertisement which appeared in the same Holiday magazine (1977) is worth quoting. Pictured is a misty
Lake with a gondola type boat thoroughly lined and canopied with bright but intimate print cloths. Below this is a small photograph of a five-storey hotel with swimming pool which could have been taken in Miami. In bold-face type, one reads: “India. The most foreign country you can visit...speaks your language.” India is thus defined as follows:

It's a mysterious lake in Kashmir. And air-conditioned hotels. It's sari'd women, soothsayers, gurus. And credit cards (even in the smaller towns). . . . It's thousands of years ago. And very now.

Clearly those who vacation in India will be wealthy enough to stay in the air-conditioned hotels, playing Queen (King) for a Night, but their upper class background will lead them to invert their “back home” experience of society, by spending their days exploring the local “Peasant” culture.

The modern African “safari” contains a similar paradoxical combination of Peasant and Queen (King) for a Day. Daily activities highlight connections with the earthy animal life, interrupted by royal meals and pastimes at the lodges along the way. As told by one traveler:

[There were] elaborate lunchtime buffets full of fine-tasting food. . . . Dinners were often seven-course. . . . There was a swimming pool at nearly every lodge. . . . [Cullicott 1978:H4].

A newspaper advertisement (The New York Times Magazine 1978a:36) similarly reads: “Hilton in Kenya gives you luxury in the bush. . . . With swimming pool, tennis, bird walks and gardens, the lodge is a comfort-filled base for exploring the park.” A comparable advertisement for Indonesia reads: “We cruise you to ancient cultures in modern splendor.” The cruise features land entertainment of “wild bull races” [Peasant for a Day style] while “your hotel-ship is the luxurious m.s. Prinsendam [Queen (King) for a Night]” (The New York Times 1978c:220). In all these examples, the two sets of extremes (most and least foreign: most and least communitas) combine to form the most prestigious form of holiday, both affordable by and appealing to the upper class.

DOMESTIC VACATIONS

Lastly, those vacations which are conducted within America must be taken into consideration. At first glance, they would seem to contradict the thesis that vacations invert “back home” societas by
taking place in another culture/country. Yet on closer inspection, vacations inside America are found to be modified versions of either of the two types which we have outlined: the anomaly of inversion is weakened because the anomaly of travel is itself reduced when it is confined to the same culture. Yet it is apparent that America contains innumerable “subcultures” which can serve the traveler as suitable spots for a holiday that invert the structure and style of life “back home.”

An obvious means of inverting “back home” societas is to literally go to a different type of environment: city dwellers often go on vacation to the countryside (termed by Graburn [1977] “Environmental Tourism”), and vice versa. Informants stress that where rural people go hiking in the mountains for an extended period of time, they themselves do not consider this a “vacation.” On the other hand, it must be remembered that there are different kinds of non-urban environments. Mountain dwellers would consider visiting the seashore a vacation, and so on.

Similarly, there are different kinds of cities. A New Yorker would consider a trip to New Orleans a “vacation” but probably not a trip to Boston: regional cities partake in regional subcultures. Magazines are full of information about the inner workings of cities which make them seem rather like foreign cultures. An article entitled “Accent on Chicagow,” for example, treats that city as a foreign social system within America. The language is considered a separate dialect of standard English, complete with its own definitions of otherwise familiar words, while ethnic neighborhoods are discussed as foreign cultures (Powers 1977:46). Distinctive features of the city such as its weather, sports, and political (one-party) systems are all commented on ethnographically.

Another factor which gives other areas an aura of foreign culture is varying ethnicity, particularly popular as a subject for appreciation in recent years. Petrakis and Vinton (1977), for instance, provide an ethnic tour of subcultures through America; Greek, Polish, Scotch, German, and Swiss communities, with their “colorful” festival cycles, are all highlighted.

Domestic inversion can take place not only in space but, as in travel abroad, in time as well: eschewing the pleasures of the present, the vacationer can choose an excursion to the past. One author commends a tour of small Pennsylvania villages dating to the 18th century, with historical landmarks and stores to entertain the visitor. “For those who want to sample an older and more gracious kind of itinerant life” (Crossette 1978:18), she suggests spending the night in country inns that are two to three centuries old. A more personal form of traveling backwards in time is by celebrating one’s
own ethnicity, indulging in what has recently been called, after Alex Haley’s popular “journey,” the “roots vacation.” Using the Bureau of Records, all sorts of information can be obtained about ancestors’ habits and haunts:

Find out where great-great-grandfather was born, then walk down the lane he would have strolled, visit the brook he would have fished in, the church he attended. You might even dine where he dined…(Tonge 1978).

Lastly, there are many instances of what might be considered “mini-vacations” inside America. The opposition of “weekdays” to “weekend” may be homologous to that of “back home” to “vacation,” even to the point of class distinctions. Christopher Crocker (personal communication) has suggested that for both upper and lower classes, weekends invert weekdays, but in opposite ways. In many cases the upper class, fancily and formally dressed all week for the office, dons blue jeans and works in the garden all weekend—doing what they consider to be lower class activities and thus enacting a “natural” form of communitas, in contrast to the urban societas of the weekdays. Lower classes, on the other hand, informally dressed for blue-collar jobs during the week, may take much time to dress formally on the weekend, particularly on Sunday (for Church and Church related functions)—accentuating societas, by raising themselves on the scale of social hierarchy, literally “dressing up.”

Similarly, eating out in “ethnic” restaurants (or cooking “ethnic” food) takes on the “flavor” of a mini-vacation and is therefore appropriately done on weekends, serving as “reminders of vacations afar, or in lieu of such travel” (Clark 1975:201). Reading novels or seeing films with settings in foreign cultures are even more vicarious but nonetheless bonafide examples of mini-vacations (see Cohen 1972:170). One article in Glamour magazine (1978) sets out “Ten Ways to Take a ‘Vacation’ If You Don’t Have the Time or Money,” some of which are:

Eat at a French restaurant, or other foreign restaurant, see a foreign film with subtitles and wrap up the evening with espresso. Or throw your own ethnic dinner party, complete with appropriate music.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it must be emphasized that those periods of travel (inside America or abroad) that conciously seek only to reproduce and in no way invert the “back home” experience while in another
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(sub-) culture are not part of a recognized ideal model of American "vacations." Rather, for Americans, the definition of "vacation" must include inversion. Even those vacations that consist of well-organized and planned tourist groups (called by Cohen [1972] the "mass tourist" trip), seeing everything behind the windows of a tourist bus and minimizing direct contact with the foreign culture, stress the inversion inherent in the trip: if nothing else, what Cohen (1972:170) calls "the illusion of adventure" must be created and maintained, providing what he terms "controlled novelty" (Cohen 1972:171). In short, it is the ideology of vacations as American natives would and have put it that has been stressed in this essay. Deviations from such ideologies are to be expected, but they are always minimized when the tourist recalls and recounts the vacation experience—unless she/he is doing so cynically, denigrating the vacation experience because of its minimal contact with the foreign culture.

The American Dream contains two contradictory models: both ideological equality ("democracy") and economic inequality ("capitalism") (cf., e.g., Dumont [1970]; Milner [1972]). Thus.

Commentators on our society have always observed that Americans are unusually preoccupied with raising the level of their social status.... At the same time, America has been noted for being an unusually egalitarian society in the sense that we are relatively unconcerned about the status of others in our day-to-day interactions.... Ironically enough, for equality of opportunity to be emphasized, there must be a significant degree of inequality (Milner 1972:8-9).

While the two models of equality and inequality—democracy and capitalism—are mutually contradictory, the American Dream consists precisely in realizing whichever of the two models in which one does not normally participate: democratic equality for the upper class, who only participate in capitalist inequality from an advantaged position; and capitalist inequality (but in the form of upward mobility) for the middle class, who only participate in democratic equality from a disadvantaged position. It may therefore be necessary to locate the obviation—or fulfillment—of one or the other models to outside the physical and/or social sphere of the American native's immediate social system, though still using Americans as players (the "tourist") to keep the inversion meaningful to the American system. The anomaly of people from one culture staying in another (sub-) culture on vacation is thus conducive to the anomaly of the inversion of the original social system in which the tourist participates back home.

The two logical varieties of vacation inversion have been discussed
in terms of the social structure (class) of American society: communitas is appropriate as a vacation style for upper-middle or upper class people, while accentuation of societas is apposite for lower-middle to upper-middle class vacationers. The preceding analysis may be summed up in Figure 1.

The combination of these two extreme vacation models is the most prestigious of all vacations. The vacation itself is appropriate as a means to achieving one or the other type of inversion (or a combination of both) since it physically and/or socially removes the vacationers from their native social system. Through vacations, the polar aspects of American social structure and its paradoxically dualist ideology of capitalism combined with democracy can be realized. The “American Dream” can at least be fulfilled abroad (or elsewhere in America), if not at “home.” The American social system contains the seeds of its own obviation—or fulfillment—but it has assigned that obviation, or fulfillment, to a sphere outside of itself, in another (sub-)culture.

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