

New Age Travellers: Uproarious or Uprooted?

Greg Martin

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Contents

Freedom to Choose? 3
Overturning the Rules of Society? 7
Community or Conflict? 8
Conclusion 10
Acknowledgements 10
References 10

In his recent book, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity*, Kevin Hetherington (2000) provides us with a highly stimulating account of a social group who have for some time lived on the roads in Britain. However, in this article I argue that it has certain flaws. I argue that it is overly voluntaristic and does not take seriously the issues surrounding the question of whether Travellers have been forced to move onto the road, having previously faced social and economic hardship through, for example, unemployment and/or homelessness. In the conclusion, I liken Travellers to Bauman's (1998) vagabonds who have been uprooted from a place that holds little promise. Hetherington's account of Travellers, on the other hand, resembles more the experience of the tourist which is lived as postmodern freedom.

I argue below that this stress on individual freedom of choice has political overtones. Importantly, though, Hetherington's account also has implications for the discipline of sociology. Thus, I suggest that it might be considered part of the trend towards 'decorative sociology' (Rojek and Turner, 2000); as exemplified by the subheading of the book which conjures up images of playfulness, fun and the carnivalesque (Hetherington, 1998b). Hetherington's work also romanticizes Travellers who are depicted as epic figures transgressing the rules of society. His portrayal of their lifestyle as tranquil and harmonious is regarded as romantic as well.

Freedom to Choose?

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

(Marx, 1972/1852: 15)

What Marx says in this now famous passage is pertinent to the question of whether New Age Travellers have *chosen* to live on the road or have been *forced* to do so for want of any feasible or reasonable alternative. This issue also has wider implications for both policy and politics. For example, those believing that they have been forced onto the road having been homeless or having faced homelessness, could point to deficiencies in social policy which need addressing. The idea that Travellers have chosen to adopt this lifestyle, on the other hand, could be used in one of two ways. It could be used either to celebrate and affirm their freedom of choice or to demonstrate their unwillingness to participate fully in society. Such has been the rhetoric of politicians and the press through the 1980s and 1990s. As Margaret Thatcher once memorably said of Travellers, 'they accept all of the advantages of a free society, but refuse to rise to any of its responsibilities' (Rojek, 1988: 28). However, Rojek goes on to ask whether this is '[t]he freedom to choose, or the freedom to be like everybody else?' A simple answer to this question is manifest in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which effectively criminalizes all those – including traditional Travellers – who lead a nomadic life (Clements and Campbell, 1997).

Towards the beginning of his book on Travellers, Hetherington (2000) makes a series of statements clearly setting out his view that they have ultimately chosen to live on the road (cf. Bennett, 1999: 607). He claims that, up until the late 1980s, Travellers chose this lifestyle 'as a deliberate rejection of house dwelling' (Hetherington, 2000: 6). However, a number of Conservative government initiatives (e.g. the Poll Tax) during the late 1980s meant that 'many young people were unable to claim benefits and subsequently latched on to the idea of becoming a New Age Traveller as an alternative to remaining in the parental home or living on the streets' (Hetherington, 2000: 8). Thus, the balance between choice and necessity shifted but 'while one does not usually choose homelessness, becoming a Traveller and identifying with a particular way of life is never entirely forced' (Hetherington, 2000: 8).

While Hetherington grapples with this problem, he seems to favour the view that Travellers have chosen largely to live on the road and does not consider what might be the negative implications of holding such a view. Indeed, his arguments seem strangely commensurate with the 'official' line which

has, in the past, been used to discriminate against Travellers by contrasting their lifestyle to that of true nomads who are on the road ‘for legitimate reasons and not out of choice’ (Hetherington, 2000: 101). Moreover, this is an example of how, despite his best efforts to avoid doing so (Hetherington, 2000: 104), he ends up reinforcing the stereotypical view of Travellers as middle class dropouts. It is also symptomatic of his general position.

In his book, *Expressions of Identity*, Hetherington (1998a) provides the theoretical underpinnings for his analysis of Travellers (Hetherington, 2000: vii). What is of most significance here is his desire not to look at what expressive identities *denote*, or what they are supposed to mean in the grand scheme of things. Instead of seeing alternative lifestyles and so on as indicative of wider cultural shifts and social transformations, Hetherington is concerned with what they *connote*. He says that he wishes to ‘just accept them and find them interesting’ (Hetherington, 1998a: 36). However, this reluctance to work at the macro level militates against his dealing with the possible ways in which people’s lives are subject to various structural–historical constraints. Rather, Hetherington appears to champion the idea of free choice and individual agency.

Thus, he argues that through nomadism and New Age religion, the lifestyle of Travellers stresses the importance of individual freedom and growth (Hetherington, 2000: 13). Yet he fails to recognize the reactionary way in which the notion of freedom of choice might be, and indeed has been, applied to Travellers. Furthermore, by overstating individual freedom of choice, he has underestimated the extent to which a large section of the travelling population in Britain have been forced onto the road.

A study conducted on behalf of The Children’s Society confirms this view and gainsays Hetherington’s arguments (Davis et al., 1994). Out of a survey of 98 Travellers, two-thirds said that they had been forced into travelling. And 29 out of 98 interviewed gave homelessness as the major factor leading to their decision to travel – which was often seen as the only alternative and proved also to be both a positive and constructive move. Only one-third of Travellers claimed to have made a deliberate choice to move onto the road. However, some of these said that they had chosen to travel rather than continuing to squat, which suggests their opportunities were already pretty limited. The authors conclude:

The image of the typical Traveller as a middle class, educated person who chooses to travel as an alternative to other viable options was therefore not borne out by the study. Travellers of this type were a small minority.

(Davis et al., 1994: 6).

While it is clear from these findings that a great many Travellers have been forced onto the road, it would be a mistake to insist that they have not had some choice. Indeed, Hutson and Liddiard (1994: 141) have found that the two factors will often combine. While researching youth homelessness, they discovered that many Travellers distinguished themselves from people who were homeless as they had exercised some degree of choice over *where* they lived, i.e. many would rather live in the countryside than in grim urban environs.

When I conducted my study in 1993 (Martin, 1997), I discovered that there is also a sense in which Travellers are enamoured by the rural idyll (Halfacree, 1996). However, this is often a consequence of their negative experiences of urban life, which many rationalize in terms of seeking authenticity by living in the countryside. Nevertheless, Hetherington sees this quest for authenticity as a form of lower-middle class angst. He argues that those who come from this class location disdain it. They have rejected both their lower middle class origins (a non-identity) and suburbia (a non-place) and have chosen to live in a place and adopt an identity that they deem more authentic (Hetherington, 2000: 106–10). On the one hand, they reject their class identity and create a hybrid ethnicity which borrows eclectically from various ethnic sources. Identification with marginalized and oppressed ethnic groups (Hetherington, 2000: 105) is one reason why they, unlike (genuine) gypsies, have chosen to live in exile (Hetherington, 2000: 130). On the other hand, they reject the banality of suburban life and seek authenticity in the

myth of the English countryside which is part of a wider ‘romantic structure of feeling’ (Hetherington, 2000: 120–1).

It seems peculiar that Hetherington talks about Travellers’ quests for authenticity in class terms especially when he says, ‘there is no survey evidence to help us describe and classify the economic backgrounds of Travellers’ (Hetherington, 2000: 106). In fact, the work of Davis et al. (1994) does provide us with some indication as to Travellers’ backgrounds. However, what is equally remarkable, given the apparent lack of survey data, is Hetherington’s subsequent assertion that ‘it has been those from lower middle-class backgrounds that have remained a significant majority group among Travellers’ (Hetherington, 2000: 107). These comments must be taken as conjectural but they also weaken, even undermine, Hetherington’s claims regarding the connection between lower-middle class values and Travellers’ pursuit of authenticity. Moreover, they expose the following fundamental contradiction in his argument.

Much of Hetherington’s work on Travellers is premised on the view that elective and affectual forms of association are coming increasingly to replace ascribed forms (Hetherington, 1994: 14). Using the concepts of *Bünde* and neotribes *à la* Schmalenbach and Maffesoli respectively, he claims that Travellers represent one example of this process (cf. Bennett, 1999). Hence, he says, ‘[t]he New Age Traveller identity is a chosen one, it is an elective identity’ (Hetherington, 2000: 65). However if this is the case, why does he also claim that social class – an ascribed category – is such an important factor in drawing Travellers to life on the road? Surely, this would indicate that, to paraphrase Hetherington (2000: 8) himself, becoming a traveller and identifying with a particular way of life is never entirely chosen?

Other studies of Travellers have explored these issues and come up with similar findings. For example, Webster and Millar (2001: 3), who examine the implications that Travellers’ way of life has for social exclusion and social security, note, as do Hutson and Liddiard above, ‘there is some element of choice in how they live, if not why they live as they do’. Colin Clark (1997) identifies three generations of new Travellers. The first were associated with the free festival circuit and the Peace Convoy which came into prominence during the 1970s. These people largely chose to become Travellers. The second and third generation consist of Travellers and their young families who were born on the road. Clark suggests that many of these people became Travellers after suffering the adverse social effects of Thatcherism in the 1980s. In this sense, they were forced to move onto the road, ‘seeking refuge from unemployment, hostile government policies and bleak inner-city environments’ (Clark, 1997: 130).

Many of these findings are also present in my own work on New Age Travellers. I produce a similar assessment of the generational differences amongst Travellers to Clark, but link the Travellers phenomenon to discussions about ‘new’ social movements (NSMs). I show how the older generation of Travellers were tied to NSMs such as the peace, green and New Age movements and were thus concerned with ‘post-material’ struggles over the meaning and quality of life, since NSM theory is predicated on the idea that we now live in a world of pluralized opportunities and choices and an excess of available resources (Martin, 1998: 742). Therefore, Hetherington’s arguments are very apt to this generation of Travellers who made a conscious decision to move onto the road, giving up secure jobs and accommodation in order to do so (cf. Scott and Street, 2000: 237).

Critics of NSM theory dispute the idea that ‘affluence [has] made it feasible to stop worrying about the old economic issues and take up these new concerns’ (Calhoun, 1995: 187). They argue instead that we are moving into a postFordist era which is not replete with opportunities and surplus resources, but is characterized by social and economic restructuring which, amongst other things, has led to fiscal crises and retrenchment as well as increased flexibility, casualization and polarization of the workforce (Martin, 2001: 369–72). NSM theory ignores the negative effects of post-Fordist restructuring processes and those movements that reflect and develop their collective identities around newly relevant survival issues such as homelessness or unemployment (Bartholomew and Mayer, 1992: 150).

In Britain, the crisis of Fordism elicited a neo-liberal response in the form of Thatcherism, which reversed many of the achievements of the labour movement and meant that a growing number of

‘marginalised groups [were] no longer socially incorporated in traditional (i.e. welfare state) ways’ (Mayer, 1991: 109). Under Thatcherism, the Social Security Act 1986 and part III of the Housing Act 1985 were two specific pieces of legislation that penalized young people, and were instrumental in driving a large number of ‘economic refugees’ onto the road during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Martin, 1998: 745–6). As a result of these laws, many of this younger generation of Travellers had formerly been, or were unemployed, had lived in substandard accommodation, been homeless or faced the prospect of being homeless. They were thus part of the less-than-privileged contemporary movement that NSM theorists do not consider; although there is now evidence to suggest that the younger Travellers have become caught up in ‘new’ movements such as the DiY movement (see McKay, 1998).

The denotative move that I perform, here, is anathema to Hetherington (1998a) who sets out to challenge precisely this way of looking at social movements, i.e. as indicative of wider social changes. While I do not wish to claim that Travellers are themselves a social movement, as this concept itself belies the complexity of collective action (Melucci, 1989), it seems to me that one of the principal objects of sociological analysis is to connect phenomena, such as Travellers, to broader transformations. Otherwise, the analysis may become solipsistic.

Notwithstanding this, Hetherington (2000: viii–ix) states that he is in the business of sociological analysis, not the journalistic reporting of events. Indeed, he provides an impressive social history of the travelling way of life. Regrettably, however, he uses mainly secondary sources (e.g. Lowe and Shaw, 1993) and rarely offers any of his own data to support his claims. Moreover, while he used the techniques of interviewing and participant observation, his account seems to be limited by originally being a case study (Hetherington, 2000: vii) and he often gives the impression of being disengaged. Another commentator (Dearling, 1999: 4) suggests that this detachment has produced a ‘theoretical and academicised’ account which distorts Travellers’ lifestyle and tells us little about the realities that Travellers face. For me, the account is rather esoteric. It appears reminiscent of Hebdige’s semiotic ‘readings’ of youth styles and one is left wondering at times, as Hebdige (1979: 139) did about his own work, whether Travellers would recognize themselves reflected in the book.

Hetherington’s approach probably results from his wish not to produce an in-depth ethnographic account but from his interest in issues of social geography and the spatial arrangements of Travellers’ lifestyle. As these are relatively abstract ideas, they do not call him to engage in the more nitty-gritty debate about force or constraint. Setting up Travellers as free agents enables Hetherington (2000: 18) to show how, through their use of Stonehenge as a festival site, they challenge the spatial order and have the power to reveal that it is not fixed. However, by embracing the idea of freedom of choice and using it unreflexively (see May, 1999) his work on Travellers is in danger of suffering a similar fate to Giddens’ later works which, it has been argued, have become an apology for the status quo because his celebration of post-traditional individuals ‘echoes dominant free market principles, which privilege choice and consumption, and have been central to the post-Fordist transformation of the West’ (King, 1999: 62).

Lastly, it might be suggested that Hetherington’s approach is part of the trend towards ‘decorative sociology’ (Rojek and Turner, 2000) which is too theoretical, culturalist and depoliticized. In order to overcome this tendency, Rojek and Turner argue that sociologists should adopt an attitude of ‘engaged detachment’, recognizing that:

intellectuals are citizens of societies and therefore have conscious and unconscious attachments to the human formations which they study. In addition, these attachments should be no less the subject of critical, detached scrutiny than the relations and processes that constitute the object of study.

(2000: 644)

Overturning the Rules of Society?

As mentioned previously, Hetherington's principal concern is with social space. For him, social space is not fixed but is made through processes or, as he prefers to put it, it is performed. Hetherington's interest in Travellers and their use of Stonehenge as a festival site derives from this wider concern with social space and its connection to lifestyles and identities. Thus, he regards the identity of Travellers as one that valorizes marginality (Hetherington, 2000: 110) and their use of Stonehenge exemplifies this; although this is also a place of 'social centrality' for them (Hetherington, 1996).

Travellers' lifestyle performance at Stonehenge challenges dominant views of rural England. Hetherington argues that Travellers appear as 'blank figures' in the countryside. They are like Simmel's 'stranger' and are feared as a source of dirt and danger, as Mary Douglas might say. They are the figural embodiment of mystery, ambivalence and uncertainty. Hetherington also invokes the work of Victor Turner to describe Stonehenge as a liminal space where 'the rules of society are overturned, mocked and transgressed, often through festival and carnival forms where the social world is momentarily turned upside-down in some kind of drama ritual of disordering' (Hetherington, 2000: 16).

Travellers therefore pose a symbolic challenge to the rural spatial order, and they do this by placing a marginal space (Stonehenge) at the centre of their identity. They reveal that social space is not stable and this is where their power resides. Even as folk devils, Hetherington (2000: 158) regards Travellers as skilled social agents of creation and change. He argues that folk devils are not simply passive sacrificial victims that have things done to them, but are symbolically very powerful figures. Thus, Travellers challenge hegemonic ways of representing the countryside. However, while this argument may well work at the symbolic level, it is far from clear whether Travellers actually do overturn the rules of society.

Indeed, long ago, Matza and Sykes contested the view that members of delinquent subcultures invert (and thereby challenge) dominant norms, values, attitudes and beliefs as if they are somehow removed from the wider social world. They argued that deviants can never be *thoroughly* socialized into an alternative lifestyle (Matza and Sykes, 1957: 666). Accordingly, they believed there to be no radical disjunction between deviant values and respectable values. Rather, the values that delinquents hold are 'subterranean values' which represent the hidden and less respectable face of the dominant value-system. Therefore, deviance constitutes an unwarranted extension of these values and in so far as they are used inappropriately 'the delinquent suffers from bad timing' (Matza and Sykes, 1961: 716). If we apply this way of thinking about deviance to Travellers, we discover that instead of overturning the rules of the larger society, they tend to reflect and reproduce them, albeit in a variant form.

For example, take the issue of home ownership. Moving onto the road enables Travellers to afford homes of their own in a way that they are unable to in conventional society. While they spurn the idea of living in a house, they do not see anything wrong with owning a home, which is an attitude entirely commensurate with dominant values. Furthermore, many of the younger generation of Travellers believe that they have solved their accommodation problems in a manner that is consistent with prevailing ideas about personal responsibility and enterprise. Thus, they feel that they have risen to their responsibilities and done so in an enterprising fashion by providing their own homes. Elsewhere, I have shown how Travellers are not the only alternative social group in Britain to have practiced 'deviant enterprise'. Squatters, ravers and beggars are examples of others (Martin, 1998: 753).

Another related way in which Travellers' lifestyle mirrors the wider society concerns the ownership of property. In our society, social status is conferred upon those who own large expensive houses. Similarly, Travellers who own double-decker buses have higher status than those living in caravan trailers who, in turn, have greater status than those who live in 'benders' (traditional gypsy tents). One can observe, then, a parallel value-system on the road which is based on property ownership. Hetherington (2000: 81) also recognizes that progressing from one vehicle to another is in many respects no different from the conventional housing chain.

However, this hierarchy is more complex than it first appears. As suggested above, Travellers define themselves in opposition to people who live in houses. This is because they believe that living in the

countryside is more authentic than living in an alienating urban environment. It is also because they regard nomadism as more authentic than sedentary forms of life (McVeigh, 1997). There are, though, degrees of authenticity that exist within the Travellers' scene that are defined according to the extent to which one has moved away from urban-industrial ways of living. In this way, bender-dwellers occupy a position of authenticity by virtue of the extremity of their retreat from the wider culture. They reject most modern technologies and endeavour to live 'close to the Earth'. Travellers who live in buses and trailers are deemed less authentic because they do not reject modern technologies but harness them instead.

I am not claiming that Travellers' lifestyle is a mere microcosm of wider society. Over the years, Travellers have generated a distinctive culture and now there is a generation being born on the road and socialized into this way of life. However, it is important to consider the similarities as well as the differences between Travellers and those who have a conventional lifestyle. While this is at odds with current thinking around identity politics and the recognition of difference (Martin, 2001), it is perhaps one way of bringing about understanding and acceptance rather than the panic and repression that results when Travellers are demonized (Martin, 2000: 5). By treating Travellers as Other, or as blank figures as Hetherington does, one perpetuates their popular image as strangers and all of the negative connotations that go along with this.

Community or Conflict?

Hetherington's portrayal of Travellers as mythical characters who have a radically alternative rural lifestyle is not that dissimilar from some Travellers' own wild imaginings (cf. Higate, 2000). Here the irony is that Hetherington seems to be too close to his subjects, where before he appeared too distant. He seems not to have a healthy scepticism of Travellers' accounts or to examine what have been termed 'subcultural ideologies' (Thornton, 1995: 119). This causes him to paint a rather rosy picture of Travellers' way of life which does not reveal the darker side of site-life. There are many instances of this romanticism in Hetherington's book, but the following extract is fairly typical:

We know that travellers value a strong sense, if not of community, then of communion and fellowship found in such things as festival, convoys and acts of pilgrimage to sites like Stonehenge. This sense of belonging, however, does not in any way undermine the importance of individual liberty, expressed in the form of having space for oneself to be able to live and develop as one chooses. Rather, such a sense of communion provides solidarity and support for individuals to develop as individuals.

(Hetherington, 2000: 125)

If we look at what happens on Travellers' sites we discover a different state of affairs; although I do concur with Hetherington when he says that a sense of 'togetherness' or *communitas* is experienced by Travellers in convoy, as I experienced this during my own fieldwork. While this feeling of communion is generated by flying in the face of adversity and against the authorities, it is by no means a state of normalcy on site. On some sites, Travellers do achieve a sense of community but this is often shortlived and contingent upon a number of factors combining fortuitously.

Essentially, it is preferable to have like-minded neighbours although this is not always possible as access to Travellers' sites is generally a free-for-all. However, social relations between Travellers are also affected by the shape of sites. For example, circular sites and sites having a higgledy-piggledy form are more conducive to fostering a sense of community than are linear sites where vehicles are parked along a green lane or a 'drove' (an ancient cattle track). Whereas the former may have a central/communal focus, such as a fire, the latter are far from ideal especially as they resemble the terraced housing conditions for many cities which Travellers believe accentuate peoples isolation. Population density is

also a factor. It is said that highly populated sites are more likely to heighten pre-existing tensions or create new ones than do sites where there is a low population density.

Contrary to what Hetherington says in the quotation above, I discovered all too often that it is not so much a case of community bolstering individual liberty as individual liberty hindering the development of communal bonds. In my view, Hetherington comes to the conclusions that he does principally because he does not produce an ethnography that examines the daily workings of site-life. Instead, he has focused on highly visible festivals and convoys where the public perception is also frequently one of (comm)unity and organization; whether this be out of a desire to depict Travellers as dangerous because they are so organized or as basically moral/social despite their seemingly chaotic air.

Thus, they are typically regarded as a 'highly organised and mobile community of thousands of young drop-outs who have chosen to live wild in the heart of a rigidly structured society' (Dalrymple, 1992: 1).

If we turn once more to Victor Turner and his three-phase model (social structure, anti-structure, social structure) we find that Hetherington deals principally with the anti-structure (liminality) part of this equation. This not only causes him to exaggerate the significance of Travellers' inversion of dominant codes but also the prominence of communion and feelings of fellowship. Let me support my argument by way of illustration.

One of the principal findings to come out of my research was that a great deal of conflict and tension exists within the Travellers' scene. I may have found this because I was conducting my fieldwork as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill 1993 was being drawn up. This Bill proposed the most comprehensive change in policy towards Travellers since the Caravan Sites Act 1968, along with a toughening up of the Public Order Act 1986. It caused a tremendous amount of anxiety amongst Travellers who faced a very uncertain future. Relations between older and younger Travellers were considerably strained, because the latter were accused by the former of inciting the proposed legislative changes after organizing a free festival-cum-rave at Castlemorton in 1992 that attracted 20,000 people and sparked off a moral panic (Baxter, 1992). Consequently, many older Travellers to whom I spoke had 'closed off' the sites on which they lived. Hetherington does not document this generational conflict and because he focuses on the visible and spectacular aspects of Travellers' lifestyle he also misses some of the subtle, yet important, ways in which conflicts and tensions are played out.

For example, conflict and tension are deeply engrained in the drug culture of Travellers which, although a complicated matter, is worth mentioning briefly because it has implications for social control on sites. The use of drugs amongst Travellers is widespread but there is a huge division between those who use heroin ('smackheads') and those who do not. Travellers claim that when it comes to drug use, as with other things, they are more tolerant than people who live in 'straight' society. However, this tolerance is pushed to its limit apropos of smackheads. This is because they are associated with anti-social behaviour such as theft and violence. They also import a negative vibe onto a site and have little interest in getting along with others and keeping the place tidy. However, as access to sites is free-for-all, Travellers have no real say over who does and does not live with them. Consequently, situations may arise which need resolving, but the police are loath to deal with crime and disorder on Travellers' sites presumably because to do so would be tantamount to an avowal of a lifestyle that is itself effectively criminalized.

Travellers therefore confront a number of dilemmas over the course of their daily lives. Not only might they have to deal with problems that heroin use throws up, but also with more prosaic matters such as generating a sense of collective responsibility for the disposal of refuse. Social organization on Travellers' sites coheres mainly around a number of tacit rules which, paradoxically, Travellers liken to what anyone in 'society' would expect. If these rules are broken the wider 'community' deals with it. More often than not this involves holding a site meeting to arrive at a consensus about what course of action to take. If a guilty verdict is arrived at, the perpetrator(s) are either asked to leave, or the rest

of the site moves off *en masse*. In short, because of their outlaw status Travellers are faced with having to regulate or police sites themselves and operate an informal system of justice accordingly. Moreover, as they are not always able to live with people who are like-minded, it is often not possible for them to form the integrated community to which Hetherington alludes.

Conclusion

My purpose in writing this article has been to offer a view of Travellers *pace* Hetherington. While I do not dispute that some have quite deliberately chosen to move onto the road, a vast proportion of them have, in fact, been forced to do so. These Travellers are akin to Bauman's (1998: 92) vagabonds who 'are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise'. Hetherington's view of Travellers, on the contrary, appears to resemble more the life of the vagabond's *alter ego*, the tourist, whose experience is one of postmodern freedom (Bauman, 1998: 91–2).

Finally, I do not want to deny the communal links that exist among certain Travellers, just as I wish not to downplay their political agency through participation in anti-road protests and ecological campaigns (McKay, 1998). However, we must be careful not to mystify and romanticize Travellers' lifestyle. I suggest that the way to do this is through careful and measured ethnographic analysis.

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Greg Martin is a research fellow in the Department of Sociology & Social Policy at the University of Leeds, where he is part of the ESRC Research Group for the Study of Care, Values and the Future of Welfare (CAVA). Previously, he taught in the Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology at Keele University. He carried out ethnographic fieldwork amongst New Age Travellers for his doctoral thesis and has published work on this and on social movement theory. He is currently researching social welfare movements. Address: Department of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK.

E-mail: g.d.martin@leeds.ac.uk

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