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A Tourist Performance: Redefining the Tourist Attraction

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the intersection of tourism and memoirs in the United States specifically how specific travel memoirs function as tourist attractions. This investigation employs performer-centered analysis as a method of inquiry in order to gain insight on tourist experience as well as concepts of travel, imagination and embodiment. The paper also employs MacCannell's Semiotics of Attraction as a framework to illustrate the presence of the following categories: tourist, sight, and marker. The presence and the relationships established between these categories establish *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere: Twenty-eight Days on the John Muir Trail* can both be defined and function as tourist attractions.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Field Notes: June 10, 2015

I crawl out of my tent into a sea of frozen white and shudder from the immense cold. The glacier I slept on the previous night is blanketed with over a foot of fresh snow. Throughout the night I could hear the cracks and creaks of the glacial ice, an unsettling sound coming from avalanches on the steep walls above my tent. Luckily, I am camped just beyond their reach. Today I embark on my journey to Camp Two to further the acclimatization process. It is brutally cold this morning as I set out from Camp One, and my claws are stiff and achy. The cold, however, immediately subsides, and I am struck with immense heat. As soon as the sun's rays strike the glacier, I feel as though I am immediately immersed in an oven. The heat's intensity reminds me of the dreadful migraine that plagued me at Base Camp. In an attempt to thwart the inevitable, I rush to dismantle my down suit and shed layer after layer of clothing until I am left in my long underwear. I reach into the snow mounds, grab a handful of snow and place it under my hat to cool down. The heat is crippling, but I steadily continue to climb, step by step up the glacier for the next three hours, only stopping for brief moments to quench my thirst and replace the melting snow upon my head. My face is dripping; I am dizzy and impaired from the heat and altitude. At 200 feet below Camp Two, I stand at 21,000 feet. Just off the trail I see a large object, a blue plastic sheet. In my altered state it takes me a moment to comprehend what I am seeing. I just stare, shocked. It is a human body.

“Bzzzz, bzzz!”

The doorbell rings. Jolted from contemplating the human body, ripped from the mountain, I find myself once again snuggled under a blanket on my couch, book in hand, reading *Into Thin Air*, Jon Krakauer’s personal account of the Mt. Everest disaster.

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I encountered *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere: Twenty-Eight Days on the John Muir Trail*, before I started this research. I was struck by how when I read these travel memoirs my experiences were different than when I read other kinds of memoirs, fiction, and nonfiction works. I wanted to understand my experiences, so I chose to pursue an analysis of these texts for this thesis. After extensive research into travel memoirs, I realized Dean MacCannell’s semiotics of attraction would help me better understand the structure and function of these texts. In this thesis, I argue travel memoirs function as tourist sites. I believe this analysis offers contributions to tourism studies, in general, and studies of virtual tourism, in particular.

Travel memoirs have been overlooked. Historically scholarship regarding travel memoirs has been limited. Scholars in the fields of anthropology, literary studies, history, and tourism studies have studied travel writing in its literary form, offering both criticism and history. Scholars of travel writing tend to investigate themes such as colonialism, exploration, politics, gender and language. More specifically, travel writing scholars focus on the individuals who have written travel literature. For instance, in *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt employs an interdisciplinary approach to focus on the “conventions of representation that constitute European travel writing” (Pratt, 2008: 11). Pratt

examines the ways cultures both communicate and negotiate through the history of imperialism (Pratt, 2008). Her work focuses on how people describe themselves through writing, examining “texts in which people write to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (Pratt, 1991: 35). This research, however, doesn’t address how the travel memoir can be looked at differently-as a form of tourism. As there are many forms of tourism available for the tourist, which is evident in recent virtual tourism scholarship. The studies prevailing in virtual tourism are primarily concerned with technology. Virtual tourism scholars are investigating forms of travel that take place in a virtual space that rely on a visual component. Virtual tourism is providing individuals with a new way of seeing. For example, with a click of the mouse, the virtual tourist can view images on social media or Google Earth and/or watch films to experience destinations. In virtual tourism scholarship the image functions as a tourist site, however, and as a result the travel memoir has been left out of the scholarly conversation. This intersection of historical travel writing and virtual tourism creates a fissure that allows for my investigation of travel memoirs as tourist sites. I don’t know whether or not the majority of travel memoirs will function this way, but the travel memoirs I selected do because I experienced them these ways. What I am suggesting-analyzing how selected travel memoirs are constituted as tourist sites-is one way of approaching travel memoirs among many others. This approach is important because it demonstrates tourist sites are constituted through imaginative processes, practices, and performances. My work is different because it relies on my own bodily experiences with these two travel memoirs and offers insights into tourist phenomena such as imagination, embodiment, and travel.

Literature Review

The travel experience has been altered by the democratization of travel. The internet and smartphones have provided us with a new way to access tourist sites. These virtual spaces create a platform where tourists can experience a destination. There are a variety of options available for these virtual tourists, such as immersive websites and social media. Images, films, videos and narratives offer individuals opportunities to “tour” from the comfort of their homes or from anywhere they find convenient. The virtual tourist can view photographs, brochures, travel guides and maps and experience a multitude of adventures on the web via a click of the mouse. Imagination plays a crucial role in virtual tourism.

Tourism has long been understood as an embodied experience where imagination and physical travel intersect. Within the tourist’s imagination manifests the knowing, experiencing and feeling that is often associated with tourism studies. As a result of media and technological innovations, the virtual tourist has the ability to engage different modes of travel whether corporeal, imaginative, or virtual (Urry, 2002: 256). According to John Urry, “people are tourists most of the time, whether they are literally mobile or only experience simulated mobility through the incredible fluidity of multiple signs and electronic images” (Urry, 1995: 148). The virtual space becomes a place with endless possibilities. Today’s tourist can access almost any destination across the globe without fearing the associated costs and risks of physically traveling to such places.

As a result of scholarly conversations regarding virtual tourism, places are no longer constituted geographically. While recent scholarship in the field of tourism studies asserts

images, films, videos, and/or blogs are forms of virtual tourism, I would also like to add travel memoirs to this conversation.

This rupture in understandings of place generated by tourism scholars creates a gap that allows for my investigation of travel memoirs as tourist sites. Recent scholarship demonstrates how tourist sites are constituted through imaginative processes, practices, and performances. This work opens the possibility to talk about how conventional technologies also constitute sites and places.

Travelers have a long history of documenting their travel experiences. From the Vikings mapping the night sky to the New World explorers recording the flora and fauna of a new land, humans have recorded their journeys. Travel writing is an established tradition that was built on the literature of discovery and exploration. The travel writings that emerged out of the Western world during the 19th century reveal “consciously constructed, visual, verbal, and physical narratives of the actual and imaginative journey,” practices that are still prevalent today in contemporary tourism in the United States (Shaffer, 265). According to Marguerite Shaffer, “diaries, albums, and scrapbooks suggest tourists made their journeys into stories, highlighting the sites and events that were most ‘memorable’ and locating themselves within the tourist landscape” (Shaffer, 265).

Modern tourist practices mirror those of -nineteenth-century tourists in that individuals continue to document their actual experiences. While today’s tourist locates themselves within the images they view on the internet, the virtual tourists of the past viewed panoramas and dioramas, which were marketed by the tourism industry to position the tourist as consumer. They were created to aid in attracting tourists to particular destinations and presented as commodities

to be consumed. Both traditional and digital modes of engagement provide the tourist with an illusion of travel where the physical mobility of the body is not necessary; rather, panoramas, dioramas, and the internet provide a “virtual spatial and temporal mobility” (Friedburg, 22). This practice suggests a fascination with the “illusion of travel” (Sears, 51). These devices were and are designed to attract tourists to buy sensations, increase visitation, and exemplify the commodified experience of tourism. The practice of recording the touristic experience for representation is evident in the travel memoirs I have chosen to examine for this project.

While tourism studies scholars have attempted to more narrowly define tourism, there are still many different meanings and uses, both scholarly and colloquial, of the word. Tourism can be viewed as a fluid concept the definition of which is located in specific contexts and manifest through complex sets of practices and social discourses. I have chosen to situate my research on travel memoirs within a definition of tourism advanced by Erve Chambers. Chambers states tourism is a “self-conscious experience of another place” (Chambers, x-xi). By using this definition, travel memoirs can be included in the tourism conversation. This definition of tourism is significant to my research because it expands the boundaries of what constitutes tourism. Previous assumptions regarding travel focused on the physical movement of people. Chambers definition suggests physical mobility is not a requirement of travel. When the concept of travel is examined without its link to physical mobility, new ways to experience place and alternative forms of movement are revealed. This impacts our understandings of the constitution of place itself and, thus, the constitution of tourist sites. It is possible for a tourist to experience a tourist attraction by engaging a travel memoir.

Tourism studies is a contested landscape where terms such as travel, imaginative and virtual have been newly theorized. Current scholarship within tourism studies suggests distinctions are made based on where and how one travels (See Lean 2014, Urry 2007, Scarles and Lester 2014), whereas previous work relied on socio-cultural distinctions such as travel versus tourism and work versus leisure (Boorstin 1992, Aron 1999, Brown 1995). Categorizing and creating typologies has, in some sense, expanded our understandings of tourism. More importantly however, it has made visible certain kinds of tourism practices and sites that cannot be readily classified. The term travel signifies particular kinds of movements, historically indicating bodies moving through time and space. More recently, tourism scholarship has included the term “mobility” as a way to address the problems the word “travel” presents (Urry 2002, Lean 2014). Previous discourse has pitted “travel” versus “tourism,” however this bifurcation is a matter of categorization and socio-cultural distinctions. Travel has many guises and scholars focus on the many kinds of travel such as “emotional journeys, travels in the mind, and somatic experiences along the way,” as well as virtual and imaginative travel (Lean, 14). Whereas “mobility” is central to travel, according to Urry, it offers an explanation of different forms of travel (Urry, 2002: 256). Urry presents five different kinds of travel or “mobilities”: 1) the physical movement of *objects*; 2) *imaginative* travel, “to be transported elsewhere through images of places and peoples encountered on radio and especially the ubiquitous TV;” 3) *virtual* travel, is to “travel” through the internet; 4) *communicative* travel, travel through person-to-person messages i.e texts, letters, fax and 5) *corporeal* travel, the physical travel of people (Urry, 2002: 256; 2007: 47). While this project is informed by Urry’s work and will also focus on travel and embodiment, I will not focus on the interdependence between these “mobilities” or physical movement. Rather my interest is in embodiment and the embodied experience of a form of

Urry's imaginative travel. In his more recent work, Urry states, "there have been many other forms of imaginative travel, as people 'travel' elsewhere through memories, texts, guidebooks and brochures, travel writing, photos, postcards, radio and film" (Urry: 2007: 169). His analysis, however, focuses on the interconnections of imaginative travel with physical travel.

Much of the scholarship regarding virtual tourism focuses on the mediated tourist experience, specifically online images, films, video games and immersive websites (Facebook, YouTube, 2nd Life, Google Earth). This scholarship has tended to look at the types of mediation with which tourists engage, and focuses on how the tourism industry can incorporate new technology to provide tourists with a new way of "seeing." More recently though, studies have begun to focus on mental travel, suggesting the significance of imagination to the virtual travel experience. The mediated tourist experience via virtual tourism enables people to travel mentally and emotionally without moving in physical geography, positioning the reader or spectator as an armchair tourist (Strain, 177). When applying this concept of mental travel to reader engagement with memoirs, the memoirs can be understood as sites of the touristic experience; the reader "travels mentally and emotionally" performing as a tourist. The "tourist imagination" is the primary mechanism of engagement.

Embodiment and imagination are both crucial to the touristic experience and necessary to understand how travel memoirs function as tourist sites. It is through embodiment and imagination that the tourist negotiates space and meaning and makes sense of what they're doing. The body itself is a place; it has agency and is the locus of travel and imagination (Lean, 17). Bodies are performative and play a role in space/place and knowledge practices. The body houses a number of elements such as memories, emotions, identity, the senses and imagination

among others. These elements reveal the entwined nature of travel and imagination (Lean, 17). Garth Lean expresses the significance of imagination to the tourist, stating it is crucial to tourist identity, “to the experience of travel and to the way tourists conceptualize their experiences for themselves and others” (Lean, 15). Imagination makes travel possible anywhere. The travel memoirs I have chosen illustrate the ways imaginative travel is bodily made manifest, for instance I was mentally transported to these destinations. As a tourist engaging these sites my imagination was activated, and as I read through the chapters I became entangled in the authors’ accounts. It was my own imaginative journey that allowed me to construct and experience the travel memoirs as tourist attractions.

In this essay I will argue that travel memoirs function as tourist sites. Their structure transforms and transports the reader to a distant place where they are immersed in touristic experience. Specifically, this research focuses on the intersection of tourism and memoirs in the United States. By relying on my own experiences as a tourist and using performer-centered analysis as my method of inquiry, I will analyze conventionally published travel memoirs to answer the following questions: Do travel memoirs function as tourist sites? If so, how do they accomplish this? What are the processes and structures that enable such types of engagement? What are the similarities and differences between travel memoirs and physical sites? Do contemporary processes of performance practices of tourism significantly affect the meaning of the experience for tourists?

Methodology

Literary scholars have long debated how readers engage texts. In response, a school of literary theory emerged known as reader response criticism. This school, led by theorists such as

Hans-Robert Jauss, Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser and David Bleich, argues literature should be viewed as a performing art, where the individual reader creates their own text-related performance. According to Iser, “the literature generates effects of meaning for the reader in a *virtual space* created between reader and text” (Iser, 63; emphasis mine). By engaging a travel memoir, the reader creates her own performance as a tourist in a virtual tourist site.

Drawing on performance theory and my own fieldwork, this project demonstrates the generative potential of performance studies and tourism studies in studying the intersection of tourism and travel memoirs, including addressing imaginative travel, embodiment and issues of authenticity.

Performance studies offers critical strategies for many disciplines such as communication, contemporary critical theory, tourism studies and cultural studies. According to performance theorists, “all language is a way of doing” (Madison, xvi). If this assertion is correct, then when a reader engages with a travel memoir they are performing as a tourist. If language performs a reality, then the written accounts in travel memoirs perform tourist sites. Performance theory is a tool “for engaging and describing the embodied processes that produce and consume culture” (Hamera, 5). Performance emphasizes the “doing,” “it makes things and does things” and describes how they are made or done (Hamera, 6). Performance scholar Dwight Conquergood’s influence has been profound. He asserts performance-based approaches “help scholars imagine new critical possibilities that can revitalize the connections between artistic accomplishment, analysis, and, articulations with communities; between practical knowledge, propositional knowledge, and political savvy” (Conquergood, 153). Tourism is a complex form of communication and performance where scholars including Edward Bruner and Barbara

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett utilize a performance theory approach to explain the tourist experience. Performance is integral to tourist research as “travel has been recognized as a performed art for centuries, and contemporary touring may be recognized as a manifestation of this art” (Adler, 1371). Both Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett embrace theories of performance to explain what tourists do. For example, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett uses a performance-centered approach to examine theatrical displays that constitute tourist destinations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 64). Bruner’s research addresses tourists and the people being toured as performers. While some scholars focus on others’ bodies in space by employing performance-centered inquiry, Tracy Stephenson-Shaffer uses performer-centered analysis as a method that centers on the researcher’s own bodily experience (Stephenson-Shaffer, 141). In “Performing Backpacking,” Stephenson-Shaffer recounts her performance as a backpacker in Europe, paying close attention to the ways she constructs her performance before, during and after her excursion. She uses performance, “the actual doing in a particular time and space, and in a particular body,” as a method to understand a subculture of tourism (Stephenson-Shaffer, 143). Both methods of inquiry offer insights into tourist phenomena such as ritual, play, identity, everyday life and embodiment (Bowman, 199).

The tourist as performer is a highly interesting topic of study. This research focuses on my experience as a tourist, specifically my embodied experience of tourist sites. By using performer-centered analysis, as modeled by Tracy Stephenson-Shaffer, as my method of inquiry, I will analyze traditional travel memoirs as tourist sites. The traditional memoirs I will be using are *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer and *Almost Somewhere: Twenty-eight Days on the John Muir Trail*, by Suzanne Roberts. Both of these memoirs are contemporary travel memoirs documenting the experiences of the authors at a specific place and time. Krakauer’s book is his

personal account of the Mt. Everest disaster during the 1996 climbing season. He describes his climb along with others' attempts to summit. Roberts' book is an account of her experience hiking the John Muir Trail the summer of 1993, a twenty-eight-day journey and consists of three genres. The first is memoir, which is a written account of a particular experience or event- a story from a life (Casteneda, 2015). Next, nature writing is a style of writing about the natural environment. Examples include the writings of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir (Walsh, 2015). Lastly, it is a travelogue, a written account of someone's experience traveling (Roberts, Back Cover). Krakauer's and Roberts' written accounts are a mixture of their experiences and reflections that reveal how a journey has transformed them. I have selected these two sites because they are structured similar to physical sites. It is their structure that allows me to engage these memoirs as tourist attractions and imaginatively construct and experience Mt. Everest and the John Muir trail.

Both of these memoirs offer immersive travel experiences where the reader engages as a tourist. The books, as tourist sites, navigate readers through the stories similar to the ways physical tourist sites are constructed to move people through a physical place. For example, Krakauer begins by introducing the reader to the logistical issues when trying to get to Mt. Everest and discusses the multiple modes of transportation--planes, helicopters, and by foot--which are necessary to reach Everest Base Camp. He emphasizes the arduous journey one must endure just to reach this mountain they want to climb. During the "journey" to the destination he stops at key sites such as Katmandu, Buddhist Temples and Namche Bazaar. These sites are points of interest within the Everest attraction landscape. In similar fashion, Roberts' twenty-eight-day hike reads like a trail guide. There are "stops" to take in the beautiful scenery and the nightly task of choosing a campsite. Roberts' makes multiple stops along the trail to resupply,

enjoy mouthwatering meals and have conversations with other hikers. These traditional travel memoirs are structurally similar to non-traditional memoirs, although they differ in their mode of presentation. In other words, these books, *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* provide a platform where I (the tourist) experience a destination.

I will use performer-centered analysis to document my own experiences performing as a tourist engaging travel memoirs. Performer-centered inquiry focuses on my own bodily experiences, which will provide further insights into the field of tourism. My own embodied experiences as a tourist will elucidate the complex ways in which memoirs function as tourist sites and how tourists understand, imagine and engage tourist destinations. I will extend the work of previous tourism scholarship that focuses on imagination by expanding the definition of what constitutes tourism, specifically by introducing travel memoirs into the conversation. In chapter two, I will examine how the travel memoir is structured and functions as a tourist attraction by employing MacCannell's semiotics of attraction. His categories of marker, sight, and tourist function to further divide this chapter into three sections. These categories also provide the framework necessary to showcase the similarities between traditional tourist attractions and travel memoirs, particularly the methods of navigation and the ways information is conveyed. In the first section titled, *Markers*, I will demonstrate how the chapters convey information regarding the site to the tourist. I will be employing key museum theorists such as Valerie Casey, Bella Dicks and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asserts the museum experience becomes a model for experiencing life outside where the tourist encounters both the exotic and familiar (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 51). I will demonstrate how the travel memoir functions similarly to the museum as surrogates for travel and offer the tourist conceptual pathways in a virtual space. In addition, the category of marker will demonstrate how the

memoirs I have selected express museum-like qualities. In particular I will discuss a museum approach known as in-context display. This approach is discussed in *Destination Culture* by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. This museum approach to display highlights how the chapters as markers establish a frame of reference and convey information to the tourist. It is through the arrangement of these chapters and the techniques of explanation that allow for them to be discussed in relation to museum studies. These chapters function as objects on display where their “labels” (headings) name the site and the content in the chapter deliver commentary. The second section, *Sights*, establishes how the chapter headings identify the key points of interest at each tourist attraction. In addition, I will discuss how tourist movement is directed and simulated through the segmentation of the chapters. The final section, *Tourists*, will address the tourist, specifically, as the experiencing subject and commercial activity of tourism. I will demonstrate how the tourist is positioned as a consumer. I will discuss the critical role of imagination in the travel experience and the embodied nature of travel. I will conclude this chapter by discussing a concept that is key to tourism studies; escapism. Nelson Graburn’s research on the anthropology of tourism asserts tourism is a form of escapism. Graburn describes the tourist experience as a journey from “home” to “away” and then a return to “home” (Graburn, 1977). This notion is key to how a tourist engages and experiences a travel memoir. Finally, I will conclude this thesis by addressing the significance of what I find and the potential for future development of projects. I will also discuss the further implications for tourism studies and the study of tourist practices as a result of my research.

Throughout the body of this thesis I will use a writing format put forth by Carol Rambo Ronai known as the “layered account.” The “layered account” will convey my experiences as a tourist. Ronai asserts the layered account “offers an impressionistic sketch, handing readers

layers of experience so they may fill in the spaces and construct an interpretation of the writer's narrative" (Ronai, 396). The layered account presents the reader with representations of the lived experience while providing many "ways of knowing" (Ronai, 397). In addition, Ronai states the layered account is "designed to loosely represent to, as well as produce for, the reader, a continuous dialectic of experience, emerging from the multitude of reflexive voices that simultaneously produce and interpret a text" (Ronai, 396). The layered account appears at the beginning of each section. It provides insight into the touristic experience, specifically my personal experience engaging with these travel memoirs. The layered account demarcates the field component from my analysis of these experiences. When reading this thesis, the reader is presented with the actual experiences of a tourist who is engaging with a non-traditional form of tourism. The layered accounts provide insight into these tourist phenomena. It offers the reader an opportunity to not only interpret my own experiences but the ability to travel mentally with me, as a tourist to construct and experience these travel memoirs as tourist attractions.

CHAPTER TWO:

SEMIOTICS OF ATTRACTION

Field Notes: June 11, 2015

Our travel experiences are often influenced by what we know about a place, whether by a previous visit or our exposure to films, books, websites or images. When we travel we often spend time planning and preparing. My travel experience began the same way. I began preparing long before I traveled *Into Thin Air*. I cannot pinpoint exactly when it began, but for as long as I can remember I've had an ongoing obsession with outdoor adventure. Throughout the years I have been fortunate to experience nature at its finest hiking in our National Parks.

Unfortunately, myself as well as many others, experience limited mobility due to the associated costs and time that are required to travel. If money and time weren't an issue, however, I would spend endless days immersed in diverse forests, admiring expansive mountain views. As this is not the case, I have come to rely on alternative ways to travel and experience adventure. In my ongoing attempts to expand my experiences, I have viewed numerous films, a mixture of documentaries and non-fiction, and read a variety of travel memoirs. A few years ago, while watching television, I stumbled across *Storm Over Everest*, a Frontline special on PBS that documented the tragedy that struck Everest in 1996. As a result, I immediately became obsessed with all things Everest. I watched films, spent hours online, even began planning a trip so that one day I, too, could trek to base camp. Naturally, the next step was to purchase *Into Thin Air*

and set off on a journey to Everest accompanied by Jon Krakauer. I was thrilled to step into his private sphere and to penetrate interior recesses. He provided me with a way to see without being seen that allowed me to encounter both the exotic and the familiar. His memoir is the result of his actual experiences and, for someone like me who is unable to afford the costs and is not equipped to tackle such a feat, his memoir functioned as a surrogate creating a virtual space for me to travel. It engaged my senses, emotions and imagination. I was instantly transported to the frozen landscape of Everest and immersed in a world other than my own.

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What is a tourist attraction? What is a tourist site? What makes *Into Thin Air* and *Twenty-Eights Days on the John Muir Trail* tourist attractions? In its widest context an attraction can include historic sites, amusement parks, and scenery. A site such as the Grand Canyon can also be an attraction. Sites are specific places or destinations that are considered significant. In other words, the terms “attraction’ and “site’ can be used interchangeably both constitute a place that attracts tourist visitation. In his research regarding tourist attractions, Alan Lew states, “tourist attractions consist of all those elements of a ‘non-home’ place that draw discretionary travelers away from their homes” (Lew, 554). Tourist attractions usually offer activities and opportunities for participation, landscapes to observe, and experiences to remember (Lew, 554). Without tourist attractions there would be no tourism and vice versa.

A tourist attraction can be analyzed as a system containing interconnected elements. Dean MacCannell’s semiotics of attractions offers a suitable framework to examine how travel memoirs function as tourist attractions. The framework establishes the parameters that define what constitutes a tourist attraction. According to MacCannell, a tourist attraction is defined by

its “relationship between a *tourist*, a *sight* and a *marker*” (MacCannell, 41). A *sight* is a site that can be visited and attracts tourists such as a “mountain range or moon rocks.” A *marker* provides information, name and/or image of a specific site, such as a “travelogue or guidebook.” (MacCannell, 41). A *tourist* is the individual engaging/experiencing the sights and markers. According to Alan Lew, these criteria allow for “virtually anything to become a tourist attraction” (Lew, 554). Following Lew, travel memoirs can be included as tourist attractions. Travel memoirs exhibit characteristics of a non-home place and function as an inclusive environment drawing tourists to a specific destination. When a tourist engages *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere*, she is mentally drawn away from home and immersed in an environment where she can experience Mt. Everest and the John Muir Trail as tourist attractions. Lew’s work expands the boundaries of what can be conceived of as a tourist attraction and create a foundation for positioning, travel memoirs as sites of tourism.

There are many similarities between travel memoirs and traditional tourist attractions with regards to their structure and function. It is with this in mind that I have chosen to employ MacCannell’s semiotics of attraction as a mechanism to frame this chapter. MacCannell defines a tourist attraction as a system consisting of tourists, sights, and markers. It is through the relationship between these categories that a tourist attraction is constituted. Each of these categories is clearly present in the selected travel memoirs. For example, when an individual engages *Into Thin Air* or *Almost Somewhere*, she is performing and participating as a *tourist*. The tourist is navigating and experiencing a destination. The *sights*, or points of interest, are identified by the chapter headings and the segmentation of the chapters. On the first page of each chapter a *sight* is identified by name. The headings function like a map, guiding the tourist through the space. Movement is achieved as the reader advances from chapter to chapter, sight to

sight. I have discussed how I will employ MacCannell's semiotics of attraction to travel memoirs, in the next section I will offer a more thorough explanation of semiotics.

Semiotics is the science of signs; it provides the theory to locate the sign. Theoretically, semiotics is the negation of the division of subject from object. It treats the sign as an "original unification of subject and object" (MacCannell, 109). MacCannell's work is informed by Charles Peirce's original formulation, "a sign represents something to someone" (MacCannell, 109). MacCannell applies this theory to tourism, suggesting tourist attractions are signs. He formulates the attraction as a relationship between a marker, sight and tourist (MacCannell, 110). Attractions are signs meaning they are manifestations of the relationships between information and associations, a thing-in-itself and a tourist. The semiotics of attraction examines the structure of the touristic consciousness, how the tourist encounters, interprets, and makes meaning through tourist practices.

Markers

Field Notes: June 12, 2015

I plopped down on the couch to read *Into Thin Air*. As I opened the book I found Krakauer's memoir began like many books: words of praise and quotes from newspapers and magazines, a title page, copyright and publishing information and brief introduction. The pages that follow house a list of 161 names. The title reads, "Dramatis Personae," it identifies most of the individuals present on Mt. Everest in the spring of 1996. The list spans almost four pages front and back. It is organized by expedition, and each name is accompanied by the individual's country of origin and role on the mountain; for example, client, Sherpa, trekker, journalist, camp

doctor or guide (Krakhauer, xx). This expansive list suggests the inherent danger when too many climbers are on the mountain. I turn the page and see a map stretched across both pages, labeled “Mount Everest: The Southeast Ridge Route.” In black ink, the trail to the summit of Everest boldly stands out against the grey and white shaded areas of China and Nepal. The map identifies key points of interest along the trail and within the region; for example, the Khumbu Glacier, North Face, Western CWM, Lhotse Face, as well as each individual camp, which is noted by a symbol of a triangle.

Chapter One begins with Jon Krakauer on top of the world. He has just summited Everest. After being awake for the last fifty-seven hours, having only eaten Ramen noodles and a handful of M&Ms in the last three days, suffering with two separated ribs, struggling to breathe from the lack of oxygen, all the while being exposed to freezing conditions, he can’t even muster up the strength to care or celebrate. What would it be like to be standing on an icy ledge with one foot in Nepal, the other in China while gazing down at Tibet? After revealing the tragedy that would plague the mountain that day, he retraces his journey to summit the tallest mountain in the world. “Dehra Dun, India 1852 2,234 FEET” Chapter Two provides historical background and geographical information about Mt. Everest, starting with the initial survey of the mountain in 1852, when Everest became known as the “highest mountain in the world.” Previously referred to as “Peak XV,” the mountain would later be named Mount Everest in honor of Sir George Everest. It was only a matter of time before people decided Everest needed to be climbed. Many were lost attempting the summit. After the passage of 101 years, however, the summit of Mt. Everest would finally be conquered (Krakhauer, 16-17). The turn of a page provides new information about Everest, including chronicling the climbs of infamous mountaineers such as

George Lee Mallory and Andrew Irvine in 1924, and Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953.

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The chapters of these travel memoirs function two ways. In this section, I will address how they function as *markers*. The chapters as *markers* provide pieces of information about a *sight*. They convey information regarding the place itself-- flora -and fauna, history, and/or culture. According to MacCannell, “the information given by the sight marker often amounts to no more than the name of the sight, or its picture, or a plan or map of it” (MacCannell, 110). The maps preceding the start of chapter one in both *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* are sight markers as defined by MacCannell, as are the sketches at the beginning of each of Krakauer’s chapters.

MacCannell explains his use of the term “sight marker” further by expanding its definition to include “any information about a sight, including that found in travel books, museum guides, stories told by persons who have visited it, art history texts and lectures, ‘dissertations’ and so forth” (MacCannell, 110). MacCannell uses the terms “on-sight” and “off-sight” markers to distinguish the ways information is provided. For example, an on-sight marker, such a plaque reading “George Washington Slept Here,” provides information at the sight whereas the off-sight marker provides information that is separate from the sight (MacCannell, 110). I have talked about how MacCannell describes a marker and the ways information is provided to the tourist. Next, I will discuss how my experience of markers in these travel memoirs also bears a striking resemblance to the ways one would experience a museum display specifically through imaginative processes.

Into Thin Air and *Almost Somewhere* are hosts welcoming the tourist into a private sphere where they are immersed in a world other than their own through a form of transport—imagination as transportation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 132). The museum experience created by the travel memoir becomes a model for experiencing life outside where the tourist encounters both the exotic and the familiar (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 51). The travel memoirs immerse the tourist within a tourist attraction and offer the tourist “the chance to see without being seen, to penetrate interior recesses,” and “to violate intimacy” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 54). For instance, when I read *Into Thin Air*, no one can see me, the other tourists have no idea that I am peering inside. I am able to act as a voyeur, looking in on others’ lives. Travel memoirs function like museums in that they are both surrogates for travel; they provide conceptual pathways in a virtual space (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 132). *Into Thin Air and Almost Somewhere* convey “the results of authors’ actual experiences, to” tourists such as myself, “who are unable to obtain such experiences” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 135). The tourism industry focuses on creating an experience based on doing rather than seeing. Because the travel memoirs are performances of places, and readers who engage these memoirs are themselves performing tourist, travel memoirs fit neatly within these parameters. The tourist is an active participant; in reading a travel memoir they experience a destination. As a result, it creates a meaningful experience for the tourist at a tourist attraction. The travel memoir offers a multisensory experience by engaging the senses, emotions and imagination.

According to MacCannell, “museums can set the totality of the modern world in motion in the tourist’s imagination” (MacCannell, 78). Museums function to determine both what is shown and how objects are shown, specifically by their types of displays. The manner in which the chapters deliver information to the tourist, is similar to the methods of another prominent

institution of the 19th century and today, the museum (Sears, 27). The combination of the chapters and their headings serve an additional purpose, functioning as *markers*. As *markers* they are tasked with providing information pertinent to the *sight*. They also bear a striking resemblance to museum displays. The memoirs function as “re-presentations, offering an arrangement of objects in a reconstruction of a total situation” (MacCannell, 78). Re-presentations require identification; in the travel memoirs, the chapters identify the objects. The individual chapters are positioned as objects on display, where the chapter headings become the “object” and the chapter itself becomes the label. The content within the chapter delivers information regarding the sight/ POIs to the tourist. The significance of the object or site is reified in this process. The *markers* both mediate and contextualize the experience for the tourist directing their movement through the display and organization of objects. Sears states “the museum offers diverse attractions under the umbrella of a unifying spectacle, functioned as instruments of the mass consumption of culture and provide a democratic stage” (Sears, 28). The travel memoir much like the museum, through their use of markers, offers the reader-tourist diverse attractions. Next, I will discuss in further detail how the markers function as objects on display, specifically as in-context displays to convey information through their specific arrangements.

I have previously established the chapters in these memoirs function as objects on display both mediating and contextualizing the experience for the tourist. To further this conversation, I have chosen to include a discussion of a specific approach of display employed by museums. When applying the concept of in-context displays to the chapters, it furthers our understanding of the ways markers convey information to the tourist. The similarities between MacCannell’s use of the term marker and this approach to museum displays demonstrates how the chapters

establish a frame of reference for the tourist. In-context displays convey ideas through specific techniques of arrangement and explanation. The chapters function to do the same, for example the chapters, as objects on display, are set in-context by means of labels, diagrams, and/or commentary. The *labels* are the chapter headings listing the sight, the *diagrams* are the maps and the *commentary*, located within the chapters, provides the information about the sights. Each individual chapter is an object on display and is set in context to other objects based on their relationship to one another. For example, “Chapter Eight Camp One,” “Chapter Nine Camp Two,” and “Chapter Ten Lhotse Face” (Krakhauer, 1997). The title of each chapter in *Into Thin Air* function as individual elements as separate objects on display, however their relationship exists because they share the same unifying principle, as they make-up the Mt. Everest tourist attraction. The same is true for *Almost Somewhere*, each chapter is an object on display, set in context within the memoir whereby their relationship to one another forms the John Muir Trail tourist attraction. For example, “Day 1: Whitney Portal to Outpost Camp,” “Day 2: Outpost Camp to Trail Camp” and “Day 3: Trail Camp, Mt. Whitney, and Crabtree Meadows” (Roberts, 2012). The chapters in the form of in context displays, establish a frame of reference by offering explanations, historical background, comparisons and questions to the tourists engaging these memoirs (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 21-23). *Into Thin Air* and *Twenty-Eights Days on the John Muir Trail* reflect the museum in that, Mt. Everest and the John Muir Trail are unifying spectacles that offer a variety of attractions in a concentrated space moving the tourist from one to the next. In the next section I will discuss how the tourist is directed through a site.

Visitors to a museum follow a physical and conceptual route through a predetermined narrative. The tourist’s experience engaging a travel memoir is similar. The tourist experiences the displays presented via the structure of the chapters, which creates a route for them to follow

through this tourist attraction. For instance, the first display I encounter in *Into Thin Air*, is a map of the Everest region as I continue on my journey, each new chapter (object) provides me with information about Everest's history and landscape.

The *markers*, the information offered through chapter headings and content in these memoirs, function as museum displays and exhibits. The chapters as objects on display both refer to the name of the sight and are the vehicles conveying the information (MacCannell, 111). These displays and exhibits provide information that is pertinent to the John Muir Trail and Mt. Everest while emphasizing their significance as tourist attractions. Travel memoirs offer the tourist an alternative way of bringing 'there' here, they are a mechanism providing the tourist with the means to directly experience the reality of another time or place (Dicks, 2). When you read a travel memoir you experience "presence at a distance" through what appears to be "instant travel" (Dicks, 176). Travel memoirs offer journeys of discovery in the form of arm-chair travel. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states, "we travel to actual destinations to experience virtual spaces" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 171). If this is true, then we can also travel to virtual destinations to experience actual places? *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* enable the tourist to encounter and experience the John Muir Trail and Mt. Everest. The *markers* functioning as objects on display reconstruct a place (JMT and Everest) bringing a site otherwise removed in space or time to the tourist, creating a virtual space of travel, a key characteristic of museum exhibition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 132). Travel memoirs become a valid alternative to physical travel because the reader-tourist openly imagines the site into being. The travel memoir's "mode of conveyance" is similar to earlier forms of virtual spaces of travel such as panoramas and dioramas, which according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "were celebrated in their own day as substitutes for travel that might be even better than actually going to the place depicted."

(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 133). This coincides with MacCannell's concept of marker involvement where he states, "there is no practical limit on how far a marker can go in covering over an absence of sights" (MacCannell, 115). A tourist may get more from the marker instead of the sight, even when there is something to see. The information, or marker, is as important or more important than the thing-in-itself.

Sights

Field Notes: June 15, 2015

It is day 15 on the John Muir Trail, and I'm feeling great. Today, I will hike from Bear Creek, elevation 9,040 feet, to Vermillion Valley Resort, 7,750 feet, a total of 11 miles. I begin my day descending seventy or so switchbacks, which guide me down through a diverse forest. I am immersed by mountain hemlock, silver pine, red fir, Jeffrey pine, aspen, white fir, and cottonwood; they remind me of a mystical Sherwood Forest. The morning light is filtering in through the canopy illuminating the canvas of purple lupine and red Indian paintbrush carpeting the walls. I continue sauntering along the trail anxious to arrive at the resort. Today is the day I will be picking up the supply package I sent to myself.

I can finally see it! A big white sign and in black letters the word FERRY. I am almost there. I find myself at the edge of a forested shoreline where I wait anxiously with other hikers for the ferry to arrive. At four o'clock, the *Edison Queen* arrives to transport us across the lake to the resort. Upon my arrival on the other side, I quickly disembark the ferry and dash off to the store to see if my package has arrived. It made it! I rip open the box and dump the contents out. I

am thankful to see those lemon drops and M&M's I stashed and can't wait to eat them. Fresh clothes, bandages, a glorious bottle of Advil mixed among a variety of food that should last me the remainder of my hike. Out of the corner of my eye I spot a restroom. I scamper across the store looking forward to running water and a mirror. I begin to wash my arms and hands. Despite my daily ritual of washing in creeks and streams, I am filthy. The sink is black, and I finally feel clean.

I can't wait to eat at the restaurant. I welcome the much needed escape from dehydrated meals. I gorge myself, gobbling up salad, a tuna fish sandwich, French fries and top it all off with warm apple cobbler and toffee crunch ice cream. Ugh! Immediately I am overwhelmed with a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach; I may have overdone it. All I want to do is relax, so I walk over to inquire about the hiker's tent cabin only to find out it is full. I am informed that the backpacker's camp is available, but will need to catch a ride in the back of a pick-up truck in order to reach it. When the truck stops I am disappointed, it's just a flat area. There is no bathroom or anything for that matter. I set up my tent and settle in for the night, wishing I was staying at the resort, but then I am reminded of John Muir "rejoicing in the abundance of pure wilderness, so close to me" and I drift off to sleep.

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What is a *sight*? According to MacCannell, no naturalistic definition of a *sight* is possible because without a marker it lacks significance, instead he relies on the term "well-marked" sight to convey how attractions attract tourists. Examples of "well-marked" sights include mountain ranges, Grant's tomb, Bear Creek, Vermillion Valley Resort and Dehra Dun, India. These "well-marked" sights are collected by entire societies. The relationship between the markers and sights can be explained by MacCannell's discussion of the interchangeability of the

signifier (marker) and signified (sight/tourist). MacCannell states the markers and sights are differentiated only by social systems through the transformation of ideas into things and things into ideas (MacCannell, 119). The elevation of an object (memoir) to “sight status is the work of society” (MacCannell, 119). Within *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere*, the *sights* are identified by the chapter headings. These *sights* are elements in a set known as either the “John Muir Trail” or “Mt. Everest.” Each of the chapters in *Into Thin Air* function as a symbolic marker in a set that is called “Everest,” but “individually, each item is a sight requiring a marker of its own” (MacCannell, 112). Each of these *sights* is a symbolic marker requiring a marker of its own which is included inside the chapter. The marker functions as a concept or mental image, while the sight functions as an observation and is “understood as an objective fact” (MacCannell, 118). According to MacCannell’s principle of interchangeability, when a marker turns into a sight and vice versa, that the aesthetics of production can be transformed into the aesthetics of consumption and attraction” (MacCannell, 120). The chapters within *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere*, as a result of the principle of interchangeability, illustrate how sights and markers are both related and function together.

Each chapter begins the same way throughout both travel memoirs, the headings are organized chronologically guiding the tourist movement and function like a trail or road directing them through the attraction. The role of the chapter headings is to identify specific sights and their locations similar to the symbols on a map or brochure at a traditional tourist attraction.

The markers give meaning to *sights* and allow for them to be “meaningfully experienced” (MacCannell, 112). Each memoirs’ layout mirrors the structure of a traditional tourist attraction through the segmentation of the chapters. The headings identify the points of interest within the

landscape; passing through the headings into the content simulates movement, navigating the tourist (myself) from sight to sight. When the tourist arrives at a new chapter, they are greeted by a *marker*, which provides new information regarding the sight, the lived experience, introductions to other tourists as well as the history and scenery of a specific place. The tourist is propelled through the space as a result of the layout of the chapters. This layout simulates movement and functions similar to the way the map on a brochure or a walkway at Disneyland funnels tourists through the landscape. The arrival at a new sight is signaled by the start of a new chapter, which identifies a place by name. Chapter Ten from *Into Thin Air* illustrates this point, “LHOTSE FACE April 29, 1996 23,400 FEET.” Not only does it name the sight, but it signals the shift to a new location. It also simulates movement and the progression of time because it features the date, a chronological format of this travel memoir. At the new sight, I experience the thrill of a thousand feet climb up a steep, slick ice face (Krakauer 137). The reader performing as a tourist is navigating conceptual pathways that are provided by the travel memoir. Not only are they moving through the book, but they are also traveling through a virtual space.

In both *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* the segmentation of the chapters and the headings function as sign posts to guide and manage the tourist at the attraction. In *Into Thin Air* each chapter heading identifies a specific place, elevation, date and sketch. For example, “Chapter Four: PHAKDING MARCH 31, 1996 9,186 FEET” (Krakauer, 41).

Almost Somewhere navigates the tourist similarly although the chapter headings identify two sights, a starting point and ending point of the hiking segment, which mimics movement through the space. In *Almost Somewhere* Roberts also begins each chapter by naming a specific place, the elevation, and a date but she also adds the mileage for each hiking segment and a quote by John Muir. For example, the top left corner contains a quote “I only went out for a walk and

finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found was really going in. / John Muir” it then reads “Day 1; Summer’s 3 Percent; Whitney Portal (8,360) to Outpost Camp (10,080) 3.8 miles” (Roberts, 1). The structural components of *Almost Somewhere* divide the landscape by sights. It does so in the chapter headings, but also within the chapters; the tourist encounters sights such as Half Dome, Mather Pass, Mt. Whitney, along with various meadows and lakes. These points of interest mark and make up the John Muir Trail landscape and are sights to be consumed. For example, the above narrative documents my experience navigating the John Muir Trail. More specifically, what one would encounter hiking from Bear Creek to Vermillion Valley Resort. The *Edison Queen* ferry and Vermillion Valley Resort signal the final point of interest within this sight (chapter) as well as direct the movement of the tourist to the next sight.

The chapters divide the tourist attraction into multiple sights and become significant points of interest within the landscape. By naming and marking them off, the sights become objects in themselves, and commodities to be consumed. Throughout history the tourist attraction has maintained this feature, for example, John Sears describes the divided landscape of Niagara Falls where “all of the sites were set apart, by a fence, gate, ticket booth-combined to make ‘doing the falls’ a matter of covering all of the bases” (Sears, 22). Travel memoirs mirror Sears’ description. The tourist engaging in a travel memoir must complete all of the chapters, experience all of the *sights* in order to successfully “do the John Muir Trail” or “do Mt. Everest.” The *sights* are consumed by the tourist bit-by-bit until they are “done” with the attraction. For example, in *Into Thin Air*, the addition of elevation on the chapter headings signals the ascent up the mountain. This transport up the mountain is also strengthened by the names of certain chapters which feature numerical language in the titles, for example “Camp One,” “Camp Two,”

“Camp Three,” and “Camp Four.” The simulated movement produced by the division of chapters signals to the tourist they are “covering all of the bases.” Each chapter heading as a *sight* functions to bring the tourist one step closer to the summit of Everest through consumption practices. In the next chapter I will further the discussion of consumptive practices by discussing how tourism is organized as a commercial activity, more specifically, how the tourist is positioned as a consumer- of products and experiences.

Tourists

Field Notes: June 18, 2015

The line is shorter today than it has been, perhaps I left the house too early. Actually that is exactly what has happened, it is only two o'clock. Only one hour and ten minutes left until the school day is over and I can get Madelynn and go back home. If only it was summer vacation, then I could escape this dreaded pick up line. At any rate, I came prepared with a new book. I settle in and sink down into the seat, unbuckle my seatbelt and turn off the radio. I read the title, *Almost Somewhere Twenty-Eight Days on the John Muir Trail*, written by Suzanne Roberts. The memoir documents Suzanne's experience hiking the JMT the summer after she graduates from college. When I first meet Suzanne, she tells me she considers herself an experienced hiker. She continues by introducing me to the other women who will be joining us on this journey. Erika is extremely athletic, an outdoor enthusiast if you will, according to Suzanne we probably won't be trying to keep up with her. Finally, I meet Dionne, who is very slim and lean woman whom I later learn has an eating disorder, she came on this hike because her boyfriend thought it could

help her combat her illness. Like Suzanne, I would also describe myself as the “outdoorsy type.” It’s exciting starting a hike, especially one you have planned and prepared for. One thing you have no control over is the weather. The rain is really coming down, the drops feel like needles stinging my face. Two miles down only 209 miles left to go. You know there comes a time and point on the trail when the reality of what you’re doing starts to sink in. Plagued by bad weather, stuck in wet clothes, it is commonplace to feel discouraged. A garbage bag? Who wears a garbage bag and poncho hiking? I am surprised by Suzanne’s actions, I thought she said she was prepared. I on the other hand recently purchased new raingear for a trip I took last fall to the Smoky Mountains; I imagine that I am much more prepared. As I continue hiking with the girls, I am reminded of a day-hike I took a few years ago in the Smoky Mountains. I was completely soaked and cold, but not because of rain. It had snowed the night before. By midday, the warmth of the sun was melting the ice and snow from the forest canopy above causing it to drip profusely on to me for four long miles. Back on the trail, Erika shouts, “Look! There it is.” I visualize “the smoky granite towers, like carved totems, ancient faces with white beards looking down on us” Mt. Whitney rising up over Pinnacle Ridge (Roberts, 18).

Honk! Honk! Startled, I find myself back in the car line where I am apparently holding up the line. The grandeur of Mt. Whitney is lost.

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According to MacCannell, a tourist is the experiencing subject. The tourist is positioned as a consumer- of products and experiences. One of the advantages of choosing a non-traditional tourist attraction such as a travel memoir is the *sights* are already marked and separated waiting for the tourist to arrive and while this is also true of traditional sites, the travel memoir can be an alternative that offers tourists both the escape they are seeking and a satisfying experience

conveniently in their hand. These tourist attractions are organized and marketed to transform the tourist experience while simultaneously positioning the tourist as a consumer. Through a segmented structure, the memoir is transformed into a commodity to be consumed. Tourism is a highly mediated activity where the tourist is directed through a space that is segmented. Travel memoirs function the same way. Modern tourism is an activity that is mediated by actors and institutions. For example, mediators of commercial entities include the transportation industry, travel agencies and hotels. Tourism is deliberately organized both in the ways it is structured and managed (Chambers, 14-15). It is a commercial activity that provides entertainment, which is manipulated and packaged to be easily consumed (McKercher, du Cros, 28). Tourism offers a commodified experience that often requires acts of purchasing; for example, a ticket to gain admittance. Ultimately, tourists are “buying sensations” (Sears, 19). This is also the case with travel memoirs. In order to participate, you must first purchase a “ticket”-the book- to experience this type of tourist attraction. The travel memoirs are neatly packaged, providing entertainment which can be easily consumed. For instance, the covers of *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* feature colorful illustrations of the destinations themselves. For example, the image of the peak of Everest is encased by white fluffy clouds. *Almost Somewhere's* cover provides a photographic image. In the foreground there are three young women sitting with their backs to the reader, they are gazing at the scenery. They are sitting on a rocky ground overlooking a forest where in the distance a mountain peak is the focal point. Additionally, the bright blue sky morphs into a topographic map of the John Muir Trail. The titles are bold, the letters are capitalized and imposed over the visual images of the destinations. *Almost Somewhere's* cover is picturesque, portraying beautiful scenery that draws the tourist within. *Into Thin Air*, however, features black and white coloring, suggesting danger and impending doom. Both of these travel

memoirs command the attention of the tourist through visually by the imagery and language on the covers. Both *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* market a neatly packaged “tour,” attracting the tourist to the destinations. The marketing approach highlights the commercialization and consumptive practices of the tourism industry. I have established the ways these specific travel memoirs are packaged to provide entertainment, next I will discuss the role of imagination and how it affects my experience at these sites.

When I read travel memoirs, my imagination transports me to distant places, on a journey to the wilderness of the John Muir Trail and to Mt. Everest. I am in the safe representational space of these tourist attractions and the text provides an immersive total environment. The safe representational space provided by these travel memoirs, offers me a place to experience Mt. Everest and the John Muir Trail freely without the fear and danger associated with physically visiting the sites. I navigate, moving through the sites in order to experience them. As a tourist I actively engage with the John Muir Trail and Mt. Everest as tourist attractions and also engage with other tourists as I am introduced to them. I perceive my experiences of these travel memoirs to be similar to physical tourism. It is through the performative practice of tourism, that I, as a tourist engage with these sites, specifically, through the process of imagination.

The imagination is crucial to the travel experience because it is where a variety of things take place, such as day dreaming, fantasy, memory, conjuring of the absent, aesthetic mental images/feelings and transcends clock-time (Lean, 14). Scholarship focusing on the interconnections between travel and the imagination emphasize mental visualization as pivotal to tourist practices. It influences how we think, experience and write about travel (Lean, 15). Tourist identity, the experience of travel and the way tourists conceptualize their experiences for themselves and others is shaped by imagination (Lean, 15). Imagination takes place in the body;

it is always embodied. The body is the locus for travel whether corporeal, imaginative or virtual. By concentrating on the body and the embodied practice of tourism, the tourist engaging a travel memoir participates through imaginative interaction to experience imagined landscapes, places and objects within these tourist attractions. The individual has the potential to develop their own significance and understandings of places, events, and things. Through the embodied practice of tourism, tourists can make sense of what they do. I have discussed the ways a tourist can engage these travel memoirs as tourist sites, next, I will address tourist motivation for travel and what constitutes a tourist.

What or who is a tourist? All tourists seek some kind of an experience of another place, whether they are motivated because of adventure, leisure, education or scenic appreciation. There are a variety of reasons tourists tour. Experience, however, is fundamental. Nelson Graburn, in his early works on the anthropology of tourism sees tourism as a form of escapism. He has described the tourist experience as a journey from “home” to “away” and then a return “home” (Graburn, 1977). Similarly, Erve Chamber’s includes the tourism industry’s definition of a tourist in his book *Native Tours*, stating “a tourist is anyone who spends a certain amount of time or travels a specified distance away from home” (Chambers, 21). The elements of home and away are central to tourist activity. This is a common scheme that appears frequently in tourism literature and although some scholars have problematized the concepts of home and away, I believe this model to be a useful tool to examine how a tourist can engage and experience travel memoirs as tourist attractions. Many scholars agree (Graburn 1977, Chambers, 2010, Urry, 2007) tourists are often motivated to travel because they want an escape from the everyday. This need to escape from our everyday lives’ can be fulfilled by engaging these travel memoirs.

The narrative account at the beginning of this section echoes the concepts of home and away and the notion of escape. My tourist experience began at “home” in an “ordinary,” familiar everyday world. I was going about my daily routine when I decided to escape the monotony of the car pick up line. As I began to read *Almost Somewhere* I found myself traveling mentally, away to another location. While reading this travel memoir, I was transported to a space where I was able to experience the John Muir Trail as a tourist attraction. It is precisely this instance that reflects what Graburn refers to as a “heightened” moment. I had openly imagined the site into being only to be interrupted by a honking horn and immediately return “home” to a familiar and “ordinary” world (Graburn 21-36: 1989). As an armchair- or perhaps autochair- tourist, my experience models Graburn’s description of the tourist experience. Through the process of reading and the immersive qualities of the text, I became an active participant performing as a tourist. As a result, I experienced a “heightened” moment when I was mentally transported to the John Muir Trail. Specific travel memoirs can be convenient options that offers tourists both the escape they are seeking and a satisfying experience. After all, a “tourist is anyone who spends a certain amount of time...away from home” (Chambers, 21).

CHAPTER THREE:

CONCLUSION

Drawing on performance theory and my own fieldwork, I have demonstrated the ways performance studies and tourism studies can be a productive approach to studying the intersection of tourism and travel memoirs. Performer-centered inquiry is a valuable method that can be used to understand this subculture of tourism for in “the actual doing in a particular space and time, and in a particular body” we gain a better understanding of imaginative travel and the embodied experience of tourist sites.

A tourist attraction is constituted through imaginative processes, practices, and performances and, as such, opens the possibility to talk about how conventional technologies also constitute sites and places. The democratization of travel has altered the travel experience thereby expanding our field of study. This research focuses on the tourist as performer and their engagement with unconventional tourist attractions. Specific travel memoirs are a means of transporting and transforming the reader to a distant place where they are immersed in touristic experience. These travel memoirs provide the tourist with the “illusion of travel,” specifically by resembling the structure and function of traditional tourist attractions. The travel memoir provides us with a new way to access tourist sites in the form of virtual spaces. These findings confirm places are no longer constituted geographically and physical travel is no longer a requirement of the tourist experience. This thesis recounts my embodied performance as a

tourist experiencing specific travel memoirs and some of the insights I discovered along the way. *Into Thin Air* and *Almost Somewhere* are structured, can be experienced and function as tourist attractions. By employing MacCannell's Semiotics of Attraction as a mechanism it became clear that these specific travel memoirs were structured, functioned and could be experienced as tourist attractions. The categories of tourist, sight, and marker provided a framework that allowed me to gain a better understanding of my experiences and the criteria to establish travel memoirs can function as tourist attractions. I demonstrated through my performance as a *tourist* that the tourist experience is a journey from "home" to "away" and then a return to "home" through my engagement with the texts. In addition, the consumptive practices of tourists were also reinforced first, by purchasing a "ticket"-the book, and then through the structures which simulated movement and navigated me through the attractions. Tourism provides entertainment that has been neatly packaged and these travel memoirs mirror this notion by reinforcing tourism is a commercial activity. When I engaged these travel memoirs, I participated in a highly mediated activity, the travel memoirs offered me a commodified experience in which I consumed all of the *sights* bit-by-bit until I had "done" the John Muir Trail and Everest attractions. The term *sight* refers to an attraction that attracts tourists, it is signaled by the chapter headings. The *sights* are identified in the chapter headings and name key places within the landscape. The segmentation of the chapters manages and directs the tourist while simulating movement through an attraction. The tourist is navigating conceptual pathways where they travel through a virtual space. The term *marker* refers to any information provided about a *sight*. The chapters within these memoirs function as *markers*, they deliver information to the tourist in ways similar to approaches used by museum in the form of museum displays. The chapters not only function as objects on display, but also the objects are set in-context by means of labels, diagrams, and

commentary thus establishing a frame of reference for the tourist. The relationships established by MacCannell's semiotics of attraction provides evidence that travel memoirs can be defined as tourist attractions. Furthermore, this research demonstrates the constitution of tourist sites is an imaginative process whereby a tourist can mentally travel to experience a destination. These findings suggest travel memoirs are a valid topic of study and anchors them in the field of tourism studies.

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