Litera: Dil, Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi
Litera: Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies

İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

Litera 2023; 33(1): 187-203
DOI: 10.26650/LITERA2022-1205428

Research Article

Collecting and Destroying Postcards: Discursive Travel in Lynne Tillman's *Motion Sickness*

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Submitted: 15.11.2022
Revision Requested: 06.01.2023
Last Revision Received: 15.01.2023
Accepted: 25.04.2023

Citation: Hein, A. (2023). Collecting and destroying postcards: Discursive travel in Lynne Tillman's *Motion Sickness*. *Litera, 33*(1), 187-203.
https://doi.org/10.26650/LITERA2022-1205428

ABSTRACT

Lynne Tillman's novel *Motion Sickness* (1991) features an unnamed American female narrator's journeys through Europe and provides an example of textually mediated travel and relationships. Moving from city to city, the narrator collects and writes postcards as inscriptions that reveal how travel is shaped by writing and memory is inherently incomplete. In Tillman's text, postcards function as a snapshot memory of a place by which the traveler marks her presence, but these fragments indicate that a physical or mental picture of a place is always limited by form, perspective, and time. This awareness that memory is fractional corresponds to a relational ambivalence since the narrator fluctuates between connecting and disconnecting with people by writing and destroying postcards. While these mailable traces of her journeys establish a point of contact with friends and family and the past, the traveler frequently tears up the messages she writes because they cannot adequately convey her experiences or maintain interpersonal connections. Approaching travel as a physical movement shaped by discursive practices, this article explores how the fragmentation and flux embodied by postcards in *Motion Sickness* emphasize that the product of the tourist gaze is textually constructed, limited, and unstable, and therefore an unreliable way to connect with people or interact with the past.

Keywords: Discursivity, Fragmentation, Memory, Postcards, Travel

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Introduction

Postcards collected from various landmarks and tourist attractions figure prominently in Lynne Tillman's novel *Motion Sickness* (1991), and thereby provide an opportunity to consider the nature of travel, memory, and relationships. A travelogue of sorts, *Motion Sickness* is narrated in the first-person by a young American woman who purchases and writes countless postcards from the many places she visits throughout Europe. From her hotel in Crete, the narrator declares, "I'm writing postcards to friends, having purchased all the best ones from the cigarette vendor downstairs," but then she problematizes these images and words by wondering if it is really possible to see what has been represented (Tillman, p. 12). Throughout the novel, she continues to select these mini mementos and pen messages to friends and acquaintances across the world, but she just as frequently destroys them or refrains from sending them to their intended readers. From purchasing, writing, and sending to reviewing and tearing up, *Motion Sickness* depicts postcards as an integral part of travel and an oscillation between creating and destroying that reverberates into the narrator's relationships with friends, family, and lovers. Due to their fragmented aesthetic and limited ability to convey memories or connect with intended recipients, the abundant postcards in the novel provide a striking example of travel writing that challenges the touristic pursuit of new and captivating experiences. More significantly, however, these products of tourism reveal how the narrator's desire for connection with the past and with friends and family is continually deferred due to discursive limitations and the inadequacy of memory. Treating the novel's references to postcards as discursive travel inscriptions, this article argues that the postcards in *Motion Sickness* expose the inherent instability and constructed nature of tourism, and thereby embody the fragmentation experienced by the narrator-traveler, who fluctuates between connecting and disconnecting with people and memories.

Discursive Constructions of Touristic Experience and Memory

Underlying the fragmented memories and relationships portrayed in *Motion Sickness* is a suspicion towards claims of singular truths and best methods. Rather than relying on authoritative texts like travel books that prescribe "best" ways to sightsee, Tillman's novel portrays how travel is constructed by multiple texts, and recorded memories can be endlessly reinterpreted despite their limited scope. This problematizes not only how a place is experienced and remembered but also how one communicates in discursive relationships, such as with family and friends in distant places. Touristic texts[1] function not only as guides and memory makers but also as communication devices, and thus the motif of postcards in *Motion Sickness* is highly relevant to the relationships portrayed in the novel.

In *Motion Sickness*, references to multiple texts reveal how the tourist gaze is discursively mediated. Throughout the book, references to various novels and films create a dense background of linguistic and filmic texts that shape the narrator's perceptions and experiences in each destination. The traveling narrator spends much of her time reading in her hotel room or writing brief postcards, rather than following recommendations that promise fantastic experiences or trekking to the top sights immediately upon arrival in a new city. In contrast, the English brothers Paul and Alfred follow a systematic plan to see all of Italy, informed by their guidebook and map. With their belief that "there is *a* way to see Italy," the brothers are disconcerted by the narrator's "lack of a system" (Tillman, 1991, p. 46, emphasis mine). The English brothers' organized itinerary stands out against the narrator's spontaneous plans, and this also highlights their reliance on touristic texts. From guidebooks and maps to novels and films, each traveler is influenced by texts that shape their experiences.

This emphasis on textual influences undermines the supposed novelty of tourism. In *The Tourist Gaze,* John Urry (2002) asserts that one of the purposes of modern travel is the search for an authentic experience and a break from the routines of ordinary life. For example, a certain landscape might attract one's attention because it is considered out of the ordinary, and it is in this departure from daily routines that the tourist searches for authenticity or newness (Urry, 2002). However, Tillman's novel inhibits novelty by repeatedly gesturing towards the forces that determine what and how travelers see. While Paul and Alfred stand before 14th-century paintings, they read aloud from books that inform them about the artwork, so it is evident that their artistic consumption is directly shaped by writing. Their fascination with Italian art and architecture subtly evokes the tradition of the Grand Tour undertaken primarily by wealthy young men around the eighteenth century, which positioned Italy as the center of Roman antiquity.[2]

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[1] I use the phrase "touristic texts" here to refer to narratives created by tourists as well as informative texts produced to assist or influence tourists, such as guidebooks and postcards. This overlaps with some travel writing, which is typically based on an author's journey (see T. Youngs, 2013), but it excludes non-tourist trips, such as business or migratory travel.

[2] As James Buzard (2002) notes in "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)", Italy was a primary destination of the Grand Tour because it was viewed as the Roman center of antiquity.

Just as former tourists immersed themselves in art and architecture while relying on teachers and guidebooks to develop their understanding of the past (Black, 2003), Paul and Alfred move through history accompanied by a written commentary. Through these characters who repeat other viewers' observations of a sight rather than developing their own interpretations, Tillman links travel to already-viewed artwork and pre-existing interpretations that have been curated for tourists.

As *Motion Sickness* integrates various texts into each traveler's experience, it touches on issues of how touristic knowledge and narratives are formed. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, François Lyotard differentiates between "modern science" that "legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse," and "postmodern" knowledge that exposes and questions underlying metanarratives (1984, pp. xxiii-xxiv). Although clear-cut distinctions between the modern and the postmodern have been debated and challenged, Lyotard's work draws attention to different ways of producing and legitimating knowledge. Similarly, *Motion Sickness* presents multiple ways that tourists plan their travels and consolidate knowledge about the places visited. For example, the English brothers in Tillman's novel search for a unique experience by relying on metanarratives like guidebooks and maps. They legitimate their "master plan to see all of Tuscany" (Tillman, 1991, p. 46) by turning to texts that promise rational progress toward the goal of an absolute experience. On the other hand, the narrator views guidebooks as cookbooks that "inflame the senses" like pornography or science fiction (Tillman, 1991, p. 59). Such books fantasize, inflate experiences, and promise more than they can ever deliver. Unsettling the notion of a master plan or seeing all of Italy as prescribed by a text, Tillman's narrator demonstrates suspicion of metanarratives by turning away from traditional guidebooks and rejecting the search for an absolute truth or unique experience. Instead of relying on a single authoritative guide, she uses multiple sources such as novels, films, and postcards to shape her travels.

The narrator's casual replacement of maps and guidebooks with novels and films reveals a self-conscious submission to tourism's discursive nature. The abundance of texts mentioned by Tillman's narrator, along with signal phrases like "I'm reading" (1991, p. 8), draws a direct connection between the traveler's impressions of places and the books she reads. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon analyzes art and theory that point out their own paradoxes and inability to escape from the metanarratives they challenge.[3] The self-consciousness with which Tillman's narrator exposes her discursive habits shows that she is aware of how multiple texts influence her experiences. Because she draws attention to this relationship rather than resisting or ignoring it, she can be considered a "post-tourist," a term coined by Maxine Feifer (1985) to describe someone who recognizes and enjoys that tourism is a constructed game and not an authentic experience.[4] Elaborating on Feifer's concept, John Urry (2002) defines a post-tourist as someone who "knows that he or she is a tourist and that tourism is a series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experience" (p. 91). Urry conceptualizes travel as comprising many games and rulebooks and he emphasizes its multiplicity, which not only inhibits the traveler from achieving a unique experience but also reveals how any itinerary is only one game among other options, which are also textually constructed.[5] As *Motion Sickness* refers to multiple texts, the novel reflects the narrator's awareness that travel is textually constructed and therefore not original or inherently unique.

Along with her discursive self-awareness, the narrator's use of postcards—from purchasing and writing to ripping up and sending—exposes one of the controlling texts that shape what she sees and remembers. Urry (2002) declares, "People have to learn how, when, and where to 'gaze'" (p. 10). Dependent on external sources to prescribe what should be seen and in what manner it is to be seen, the tourist is not considered capable of self-direction; rather, what they view and encounter on a trip must be informed by markers such as guidebooks, postcards, plaques, and brochures. This idea that the traveler's experience is mediated by various texts can be seen as a "circle of representation," a concept that Olivia Jenkins (2003) adapts from Stuart Hall's work on images and language as part of representational systems. Jenkins explains how the "circle of representation" describes tourist behavior, in which mass media projects images of certain destinations, the traveler visits these places and creates their own records, and then friends and family view these mementos, which extends the influence of the initial image and completes the circle of representation. As objects in the circle of representation, postcards display certain destinations to the traveler, carry records of the visitor's experiences, and convey these memories to their readers.

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[3] To gain a sense of how self-consciousness is central to Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernism, one can simply look at the number of index entries for "(self-)reflexivity/self-consciousness" in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. These terms appear over 50 times in Hutcheon's book.

[4] Bulamur (2011) also identifies Tillman's narrator as a post-tourist due to her self-consciousness about her identity and her exposure of the tourism industry.

[5] Urry's work in *The Tourist Gaze* (2002) can be seen as an outgrowth of deconstructionist and postmodernist theories such as Barthes's (1968, 1971) writing on plurality and the endless deferral of meaning, Derrida's (1967) criticism of the search for a fixed archive, Derrida's (1967) embrace of play and multiplicity, and Lyotard's (1979) discussion of how knowledge is legitimated by narrative.

In *Motion Sickness*, the narrator relies on postcards to direct what she views, and she reveals this dependence to the reader by stating, "From the postcards I buy, I know what churches and galleries I ought to visit. I choose these postcards carefully, with an eye to sending each to someone specific" (Tillman, 1991, p. 41). Perusing a postcard stand becomes, in effect, comparable to reading a guidebook, which points the traveler toward certain churches and galleries. In this case, however, the traditional guidebook is replaced by multiple texts that shape without carrying the weight of authority and without forming a metanarrative. Focusing on the role of images in tourism, Winiwarter (2008) states, "Postcards are a visual instruction manual for the consumption of sights" (p. 195). As mini travel manuals, postcards direct the tourist's gaze. These objects of tourism contain images of the most iconic places that the traveler must see, and thus control the tourist's gaze, while as souvenirs and communication devices they also directly influence what is recorded and remembered. By constantly referring to postcards, Tillman's novel reveals how postcards are one of the texts that shape how travel is experienced and recorded.

While functioning as input and output of the traveler's experience, postcards also mediate the traveler's memory. Early in the book, Tillman's narrator writes, "My stack of postcards grows, progeny of these travels" (1991, p. 55). The use of the word "progeny" suggests that these postcards will continue to live beyond the moment and that they may grow and even change as they perpetuate the traveler's memories. In "Travel as Performed Art," Judith Adler (1989) identifies inscriptions as the tourist's mechanism for remembering what has been seen and experienced. Adler points out that travelers tend to create markers of their journeys, such as letters, postcards, and photographs, which show that travel is also textually mediated through its output. Accordingly, the texts produced by Tillman's traveler-narrator bear a direct relation to memory and reveal her assumptions about one's ability or inability to adequately represent an experience from the past.

By recording her travels on postcards, which are limited in size, Tillman's narrator-traveler produces a disparate record much smaller in scope than her experiences. Her early comments on memory compare a recent conversation to an unfinished jigsaw puzzle (pp. 17-18), which emphasizes her limited sense of recall and her impression that memory is shifting and unreliable. If *Motion Sickness* is read as a retrospective of the narrator's travels written after she has returned home, it is a collection of mismatched pieces that resist forming a complete puzzle or an orderly narrative. Contributing to this fragmented and shifting aesthetic, *Motion Sickness* is formally built around associations as if moving through the narrator's impressions and memories of the past. In an interview with Lynne Tillman, Patrick McGrath observes, "The narrative in Motion Sickness is carried forward by theme, by a movement of ideas, rather than by plot" (1991, p. 16). As a result of this thematic structure, the novel moves between past and present, and it jumps from one location to another according to the narrator's conscious thought processes. Of course, the novel as a whole can be seen as an extended memory of her travels, but the disjointed nature of *Motion Sickness* reinforces the novel's sense that memories exceed their written records.

Moreover, the novel and its postcards are incomplete because they tend to portray only one side of a relationship. Unlike a letter, which takes advantage of space to address its recipient more personally, postcard writing is literally and figuratively one-sided. On the back side of a photo, the writer pens a few lines to dispatch before moving on to the next city, rarely if ever receiving a reply. The implication of this observation is that Tillman's narrator's reliance on postcards significantly shapes her relationships, fostering short monologues rather than extended dialogues. Like her communication style, her relationships seem to be short-lived and fragmented. In *Motion Sickness*, then, the limitations of discursivity correlate to both memory and personal interactions, portraying an ever-shifting trio of recollections, words, and relationships that come and go.

Flattened, Fragmented, and Proliferating Images

As *Motion Sickness* reveals how touristic texts and images mediate experience, it problematizes this dynamic by showing how visual records flatten reality, fragment what is whole, and generate multiple interpretations. Tillman's narrator levels distinctions between the exciting and the mundane by equating sex to familiar landscapes and monuments, simultaneously invoking and criticizing touristic searches for unique experiences. Her reflections on the superficial, instantaneous nature of photography show how images that purport to capture memories of travel are incomplete and neglect what is below the surface. As Roland Barthes (1993) asserts in *Camera Lucida*, a photograph is flat and offers no interpretation beyond the fact that the event photographed happened. Despite this impenetrability put forth by Barthes, Francois Brunet notes in *Photography and Literature* (2009) that art, including photography, is now dominated by assumptions of its subjective origins, rather than a single underlying reality that leads to a stable interpretation. Likewise, Tillman's narrator finds that even though a photograph is only a small image of a person or place, its interpretations can multiply endlessly. Thus, the photograph yields to both fragmentation and multiplication, and it privileges surface over depth.

If the conventional tourist relies on constructed discourses to shape their experiences and direct their gaze toward the new and exciting, Tillman problematizes this search for novelty by comparing it to pornography. From her hotel in Crete, the narrator recalls a movie scene where "the dinner guests look at tourist postcards as if they're pornography" (1991, p. 12). Unlike dinner guests in the film *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* who gain an almost-sexual pleasure from postcards, she normalizes touristic sights by reducing sex imagery to something familiar and mundane. She says, "I feel very much the same way talking about sex as I do landscapes and monuments, events and sights that we all do and know, that are always there and never new" (p. 12). In her view, the dinner guests in the film gain pleasure from touristic emblems like postcards or previously unseen landscapes because they are new; but for her sex, landscapes, and monuments are common and unchanging, not unusual or exciting. This emphasis on mediocrity and banality resonates with Susan Sontag's claim in *On Photography* (2005) that "Taking photographs has set up a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world which levels the meaning of all events" (p. 7). If the act of photography flattens distinctions by reducing events to one-dimensional printed surfaces, Tillman's comparison of postcards to pornography reveals how tourism evokes fascination and capitalizes on the traveler's desire to see what the visual sources have promised. By demystifying touristic images that stimulate anticipation, Tillman's narrator criticizes texts that promise extraordinary pleasure from average sights and exposes how the appearance of an exotic locale is textually constructed. Moreover, by comparing postcards to pornography, she suggests that tourist texts inject the ordinary with an erotic element to mask the artificiality of the search for authenticity. Rather than naively consuming places according to directions that imbue landscapes and monuments with novelty, she disrupts the search for newness with a pronounced awareness of tourism's discursive construction.

The narrator further problematizes images such as those featured on postcards because they are superficial fragments that invite false impressions of depth and wholeness. While waiting for a train in London, she poses for and takes several self-portraits in a photo booth. As Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry (2004) remark in *Performing Tourist Places*, photographs are part of a narrative process whereby the tourist makes sense of their memory, identity, and social relations. But even if this observation touches on a truth about tourist approaches to photography, Tillman's text emphasizes how these narrative processes are superficial and incomplete. The narrator-traveler considers the images from the photobooth to be surface markers because "the camera cannot discern this inner life of mine. This secret life" (Tillman, 1991, p. 35). Similarly, Roland Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida* that he "cannot penetrate, cannot reach into the Photograph" (1993, p. 106). Since the camera's knowledge is limited, it can only portray the external appearance of an instant, not the secrets and thoughts inside a person. In contradistinction, one might argue that photographs reveal emotions, expressions, and gestures indicative of a person's character and inner self. But even if a photograph manages to express a deeper dimension of its subject, this is still only one perspective, not a comprehensive understanding. As Tillman's narrator reflects on her photo booth portraits, she finds a gap between her appearance captured by the machine and her inner life which is concealed from the camera.

Moreover, just as the camera captures only a single perspective, the traveler grasps only a fragment of a place, and the memory of that fragment is even more limited than the initial experience. Contrary to its initial impression of being an objective record, the essence of the photograph belies its flat surface. In the photo booth, Tillman's traveler captures a small impression of her appearance, but the fixed nature of the print contradicts the depth of her inner self and the abundance of interpretations that may arise from a single photo. Indeed, the work of the camera is itself a process of division and multiplication. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag (2005) writes,

> Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles; and history, past and present, a set of anecdotes and *faits divers*. The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. Any photograph has multiple meanings; indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. (p. 17)

By splicing the world into a series of images that can be endlessly rearranged, redivided, and recaptured to provide another perspective, photography rejects unity and wholeness. It subdivides overarching narratives of past and present into separate moments, and results in ever-increasing interpretation by spurring speculation. Similarly, the postcards scattered throughout *Motion Sickness* stand as textual images of the world that have been captured, spliced, and separated from their contexts, and then brought together in ways that trigger unceasing interpretations.

Tillman's narrator is aware of this gap between the image on a postcard and the many meanings it might carry. While sitting in her friend Arlette's kitchen she notices a Velázquez postcard that she had sent to Arlette, along with a few other postcards. The narrator writes, "The Velázquez has also absorbed other meanings, and suddenly wears meaning like Joseph wore a coat of many colors," but she quickly acknowledges, "I see only a few of the colors and some of the stitches" (Tillman, 1991, pp. 155-156). These observations reveal how the narrator moves from a single image to disparate memories, back to the image now imbued with multiple meanings, and then to her own limitations. She imagines the postcard as a multicolored coat, yet she can only see some of these colors, along with the stitches that hold it together. Moreover, she realizes that her memories of Barcelona connected to this postcard are based on her experiences there; they do not encompass the entirety of the city, just as her view of a coat doesn not capture all of its components. As interpretations proliferate from pieces of reality, notions of a fixed past or unchanging memory are rapidly destabilized. Like the photograph, visual mementos depict only in part and can be continually reinterpreted, which renders the memory unstable.

Limitations of Postcards for Memory and Communication

While the image flattens and severs itself from the object of representation, memory inversely propagates and expands from the image. The postcards in *Motion Sickness* highlight how tourist memories are shaped by texts and images with a tendency towards fragmentation. This is because the nature of the postcard is limited, detached, and brief. Like the picture on the front, the writing accommodated on the back of a postcard is short and incomplete. Thus, the fragmentary aesthetic of the postcard correlates to the elusiveness of memory and relationships portrayed in the novel.

Like the photo booth images, postcards purchased and written by Tillman's narrator reveal how her travels and memories are textually mediated and therefore fragmented and unstable. Written from many different cities and encompassing various moods and memories, the postcards in *Motion Sickness* serve as a non-unified record of the traveler's journey. Each postcard references a distinct location or attraction, such as Aswan, Egypt; the Louvre metro stop; the Duomo in Milan; Amsterdam's red-light district; a Goya painting; San Marco Cathedral in Venice; an Edward Hopper painting, and so on (Tillman, 1991, pp. 201-202). Since they are each contained on separate cards, this formal division between places develops into a scattered travel narrative, rather than one that integrates individual memories into a cohesive whole. Studying the role of images in touristic memory-making, Bærenholdt et al. (2004) argue in *Performing Tourist Places* that tourists spend time posing for and taking pictures because this enables them to embed a momentary experience into their larger life story. In other words, by collecting travel photos, "people strive to make fleeting experiences a lasting part of their life-narrative" (Bærenholdt et al., 2004, p. 105). By writing postcards, Tillman's narrator embeds memories of her journey, but these inscriptions are significantly limited, and they are dispersed rather than gathered into a single location or incorporated into a metanarrative. Unlike a diary or travelogue which is typically contained in a single book, *Motion Sickness's* postcards are addressed to distant readers, so they are highly unlikely to coalesce into a unitary record of a journey. The disparate nature of these inscriptions, collected from and sent to many places, reflect the narrator's conviction that memory and its mechanisms are always fragmented, just as her travels are erratic.

Due to its limited size and form, the narrator's chosen medium to mark her travels signals a rejection of tourist narratives that claim a whole perspective or assume that memory is complete. If travel always contains a way of marking one's journey and solidifying a temporary experience, as Adler (1989) asserts, this is a function fulfilled by postcards in *Motion Sickness*. Adler writes, "Although the art of travel centers on the imaginative construction of encounters and passages, it has always included means by which fleeting experiences could be permanently marked or inscribed" (p. 1370). For Tillman's narrator, however, postcards inscribe a temporary experience in a form that is itself transitory and mobile. With their compact size, postcards declare their incompleteness; they signal to the viewer that they are only small snapshots of larger places. Tillman's narrator refers to postcards with images of a bridge in Venice, a sea, a painting by Vermeer, a church in Italy, and a detail from a fresco, among many others (1991, p. 71). Each of these captions gestures toward a larger scene or location, but they are necessarily confined to the physical medium, which reduces a three-dimensional location to an image on a piece of paper. Because the pictures themselves are not included in the novel, the constraints of the text are further revealed as the writer includes captions but not images. Moreover, the caption, which tells the reader what they are seeing, is hardly ever written in a complete sentence. For example, one postcard contains "a view of the duca d'Urbino's palace" (Tillman, 1991, p. 71). Even if the reader knows where this palace is and what it looks like, the specific view is undetermined. The inclusion of "a view" indicates that other viewpoints are possible, but the photograph can only capture a single frame. The seeming specificity of "the duca d'Urbino's palace" gives way to an overwhelming lack of clarity, for the reader cannot look at the entire palace or discover what perspective is represented. In this way, the limitations of the postcard also point to the incompleteness of remembrance, since a memory can never grasp the fullness of an actual experience.

The postcard also invites fragmentary expression because the writer tends to use incomplete sentences which give only brief snapshots of what the traveler has seen or done. For example, when Tillman's narrator writes to her friend Jessica, the first line is a short phrase, "On my way to Venice" (1991, p. 36). The rest of the postcard reads, "I'll write you from there. Did you know or guess I wasn't going to Amsterdam? I will eventually. Love." (p. 36). Totaling a mere 24 words, this syntax suggests a limitation, as if the writer has no time or space to extend her comments beyond the most basic information. While other postcards in the novel divulge deeper and more personal feelings, their brevity nonetheless accentuates that they are only fragments of the writer's thoughts. Commenting on the relationship between part and whole in travel inscriptions, Adler (1989) writes, "All significations created and played on in travel performances draw sustenance from the whole lives of their producers and interpreters" (p. 1370). This statement points out that inscriptions of travel draw on the larger scenes of both the traveler's life and the interpreter's life, but it is impossible to reproduce the whole life of the writer or reader in a single inscription. In *Motion Sickness*, each postcard is influenced by the narrator's immediate circumstances and her personal history as well as her relationship with the addressee. Likewise, the reader's interpretation of a postcard draws on his or her situation and life story in addition to the relational dynamic with the sender of the postcard. This gap between the representation and the object of representation further underscores the limited nature of discursivity for both communication and memory-making.

Relational Awareness and Fluctuation in Postcard Writing

While the act of writing postcards emphasizes limitation, focusing on their recipients highlights instability and multiplicity. Tillman's narrator exhibits self-consciousness in her discursive habits because she expects that her postcards will be read and interpreted, and she knows that there is a risk of misunderstanding. This possibility of misinterpretation sometimes pushes her to destroy her writing, opting for no communication rather than conveying unwanted meanings. As she pens and rips up postcards, the implications of her writing habits become clearer: the fragmented nature of these postcards appears in her relationships as a tendency towards disconnection, which she experiences as motion sickness.

Throughout the novel, the traveler adjusts her postcard purchases to her intended readers. Just after commenting on how postcards show her which places she should make sure to visit, she says, "I choose these postcards carefully, with an eye to sending each to someone specific" (Tillman, 1991, p. 41). Even when choosing which postcards to buy, she exhibits awareness of her reader. Adler (1989) points out that, like any art, travel is performed for an audience, and thus the traveler adjusts the performance based on how they think the audience will respond (p. 1378). In these terms, the relationship between the narrator and her readers in *Motion Sickness* exemplifies how her travel performance is shaped by discursive expectations of a writer-reader relationship. In Assisi, for example, she expresses curiosity about seduction, and then says, "Now that I've written this on a postcard I have no perfect person to send it to, no ideal reader" (Tillman, 1991, p. 70). Her desire for an ideal reader indicates that even when her writing is uninhibited by an imagined audience, her publication of such desires depends on the existence of a reader. She can write without a reader, but she cannot send a postcard to a non-reader. Further, her choice of postcard is influenced by what she thinks her friends are like. For example, she hesitates to send Sylvie a postcard showing a mobile home because she doesn't think Sylvie, a Parisian French woman, will be familiar with images of mobile homes (Tillman, 1991, p. 202). In this discursive travel process, even the images chosen to bear a message reflect the traveler's perception of who her audience is.

In addition to the visual element, the traveler-narrator adjusts her writing according to her audience and strives to be understood because she knows that the proliferation of fragments and meanings complicates communication. In one scene she writes to her friend Ann, "I think a lot about death so visiting churches is OK" (Tillman, 1991, p. 71), but upon further reflection, she realizes that it would have been better to write, "I'm thinking about death and the English brothers I'm traveling with" (p. 72). Her revision indicates a desire for accuracy and suggests that she is concerned about misinterpretation. Similarly, she tears up a postcard to Zoran because she thinks he won't understand her usage of the phrase "keep the faith" (p. 72). Though not expecting to achieve complete authenticity or reveal her inner self through a postcard, she nevertheless wants to minimize miscommunication with her readers.

Despite the care that the traveling narrator puts into choosing postcards and tailoring her words according to her audience, her discursive habits consistently prioritize fragmentary travel over a personal connection. Throughout her travels, she writes postcards to friends and family across the world, but she often destroys these postcards. For example, at the end of Chapter 6, after writing at least seven postcards, she tears up two of them. She rips up a postcard to Zoran because she thinks he won't understand a phrase she used, and she destroys one written to Ann because it doesn't express exactly what she wanted to say. Perhaps her self-consciousness is part of the reason why she frequently obliterates what she has written. One of the earliest such occurrences is described after writing a postcard to Jessica. She copies the message and follows it up with an evaluation: "But then I tear up the postcard. It was a nice one too, in black and white, taken from the top of the Eiffel Tower. I tear up as many as I send. Tear up more, actually" (Tillman, 1991, p. 36). Regardless of having chosen a "nice" picture of the Eiffel Tower to bear her message, she destroys it as soon as she has written it. Moreover, she rips up approximately one postcard for every one that she sends. This tendency to ruin the postcards so carefully chosen and inscribed reiterates her posture toward disconnection: although the postcard intends to communicate something about a place, or about her experience, it only conveys a limited perspective. By extension, it is appropriate that the partial representation of a fractured memory ends up in pieces. Due to this fragmentation, the narrator fluctuates between connecting and disconnecting with people, and her habit of writing postcards that she never sends prioritizes constant motion over memory or relationship even though this contributes to her metaphorical motion sickness.

"Postscript," the last chapter of *Motion Sickness*, features an amalgamation of postcards that each portray a different place and are addressed to a different person: a Vietnam postcard intended for Clara, an empty highway for Sylvie, Egypt for Tina and Graham, the Louvre metro stop for John, the Milan Duomo for her mother, the red-light district of Amsterdam for Cengiz, a Goya painting for Gregor, a Marilyn Monroe reflection for Pete, San Marco's Cathedral for Jessica, an Edward Hopper painting for Alfred, and an Orson Welles photo for Paul. This juxtaposition of people and places creates a whirlwind effect that blurs places and disorients the reader. In this postcard palimpsest, specific places lose their perceived distinctiveness that would ordinarily suggest a unique or authentic locale. The image is fixed on the postcard, but the juxtaposition of disjointed places shatters this stability and replaces it with constant motion. Previously, postcards were also overtly linked with motion sickness, as the narrator considered her erratic travels and the fact that ferries make her seasick, saying, "Motion sickness. Motion pictures. Picture postcards" (Tillman, 1991, p. 131). This string of associations draws a link between the sickness caused by constant motion and the supposed stability of postcard images. It creates a sense of motion between fixed images, which breaks down the impression of stability, and emphasizes the narrator's turbulent travels. Similarly, the compilation of postcards in the "Postscript" undermines the stability of the place portrayed on each card and leaves the reader with a sense of disconnection and brokenness rather than a connection between places and people.

In the novel's final paragraph, an increased rate of fragmentation further reinforces the sense of instability and motion sickness as the narrator surveys postcards that are spread all over her bed. In a flickering review, she mentions an item from each postcard such as "A portrait of Colette. A detail from Michelangelo's *David*. A Parisian street scene, the Rue Mouffetard with red balloons and people everywhere. Zippy the Pinhead in German. Chinese acrobats. Young Moroccan girls" and so on (Tillman, 1991, p. 203). For each of these images, the reader could ask multiple questions to gain a better understanding of the scene represented, but the resultant mental picture would still be only a fragment of the whole. This amalgamation of over 25 postcards, each described in a separate sentence, reinforces the piecemeal nature of her travel memories. Once again, the narrator's relational ambivalence rises to the surface, as the postcard retrospective prompts her to reconsider her choice for Alfred: "I tear up the Edward Hopper *Girl with a Sewing Machine* that was meant for him. I may mail the others. I'm not sure," she concludes (Tillman, 1991, p. 204). This reprise of the writing and tearing motif concludes the book and emphasizes the narrator's oscillation and ambivalence. Surrounded by scattered images and sentences from across Europe, she abruptly moves toward people and memories by recalling them, and she just as suddenly disconnects by shifting to another scene and another person from her memory. This fragmented aesthetic is significant because it hinders the narrator's ability to connect deeply with people in her life. Her sense that postcards are surface images and incomplete memories stunts her communication with the addressee of each postcard, and her cognizance of these limitations further impedes her interpersonal connection as she edits and trashes her own writing.

Conclusion

Throughout *Motion Sickness*, the narrator's writing and ripping of postcards mirrors her wavering attitude toward relational connection and the past. If penning a postcard to a friend signals a desire for communication, tearing up the postcard rather than sending it moves her back toward disconnection. Similarly, she fluctuates between holding onto and letting go of the past which is inscribed in her touristic discourse but only partially, since the whole can never be captured. In *Motion Sickness*, the narrator's pictorial record of her travel privileges fragmentation over unity and reflects her awareness that memory and its tools are always incomplete. By collecting and writing postcards, she creates visible traces of her journey, so the inscription can serve as a point of contact with the past and with people who are part of her memories. However, in obliterating many of these postcards, she maintains a state of flux between the past and the present. This constant motion reiterates her sense that memory is inherently incomplete; just as the postcard reveals only a snapshot of a place, memory contains only a brief instant of a moment in time. As the subject of this constant and erratic travel, the narrator's tourist gaze destabilizes fixed images by flickering between the past and the present and rapidly shifting from one place and person to another. This discursive motion disrupts the illusion of a touristic quest for authentic novelty and reveals how travel and its record are mediated by texts, which are always incomplete and arbitrarily constructed. As a meditation on travel, relationship, and memory, *Motion Sickness* exposes the discursive nature of tourism and shows how tourist inscriptions like postcards are unreliable ways to maintain memories or interpersonal connections.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.
Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

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