

Welcome to My World: Researching the Role of Personal Narrative and Affective Presence at Graceland

Mariruth Leftwich

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Thesis Abstract

This study explores the visitor experience at one of the world's most famous historic houses, Graceland, Elvis Presley's home. The research methodology prioritises the visitor's voice, examining the impact of the Graceland experience on visitor perception. Particular attention is paid to theories of personal narrative and affective presence as interpretive devices. Personal Meaning Maps from 170 visitors form the core data and provide evidence of the profound conceptual changes that occur in visitors' perceptions of Elvis. Visitors consistently describe Elvis as a 'real' person, with personal characteristics such as humility and generosity proving more memorable than his fame or career.

The Graceland tour is designed for visitors to connect with Elvis in an affective manner, evoking emotions and relying on narratives of family and nostalgic discourses. This succeeds in providing visitors with an experience that challenges and extends their pre-visit views of Elvis as the 'King of Rock and Roll.' The ability to change visitor perception is linked to the quality of the experience, as Adams et al. (2003) suggests, 'the better the experience, the greater the change' (p. 22). The transformations documented at Graceland prompted investigation, searching for indicators of quality interpretation through analysis of the audio tour content and visitor photographs. This examination reveals a set of interpretive practices potentially useful for other historic properties, including the contextualising of space through personal accounts, the introduction of emotive media, and a reliance on a narrative that is personal rather than objective. This set of practices is framed within the context of the 'Experience Economy,' which proves to be a useful tool for examining the successes of the Graceland tour and visitor impact. While historic sites struggle

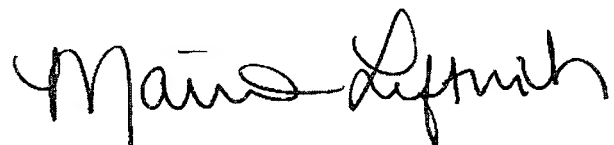
to find new audiences and compel current audiences to return, this experience framework yields new insights into concepts of effective historic house interpretation.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mairi Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'L'.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my supervisors, colleagues, family, and the staff at Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE). I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Pam Meecham, who encouraged me to pursue these findings as a thesis, provided enthusiasm, inspiration, sound advice, and wonderful company over the years. I am also thankful for the support from other faculty, staff, and students at the Institute of Education, especially Dr Stuart Foster, John Reeve, Josephine Borradaile, and Juliette Fritsch.

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Todd Morgan (1962-2008), Director of Special Projects at EPE. He deeply believed in my work and was enthusiastic about the preliminary data findings. I wish he could read the final thesis. To everyone involved in this study from beginning to end, I would be remiss if I did not extend a heart felt 'thank you, thank you very much.'

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A Personal Introduction

It began with a dream and shopping for bed linens. Practically every scholarly author writing about Elvis describes how they came to write about Elvis, as if defending or legitimising their work.¹ Elvis is still embedded in the realm of popular culture, an ‘unwelcome’ and ‘lowbrow’ guest (Bertrand, 2005, p. 8), in the world of intellectual integrity. Doss (1999) describes sitting in a lecture about religious art and how ‘in a flash, a weird sort of epiphanic rush, I thought of Elvis Presley,’ admitting ‘I don’t really know why I flashed on Elvis that academic afternoon’ (p.21). Reece’s (2006) interest in Elvis arose from meeting a devout Elvis fan in the waiting room of a hospital emergency room in Memphis, Elvis’s hometown. Everyone has a story about how and why Elvis came into their lives.

For me, it began with a dream about Elvis and Graceland, the details of which I no longer recall. This seems fitting as house museums have been described as an intersection of history and dream (Risnicoff de Gorgas, 2001), and I have spent many years visiting and working in historic homes. That was the beginning of my search for understanding the Graceland experience. I was born three weeks before Elvis Presley died; I only ever knew his cultural image and music. I had never visited Graceland. So why I had a dream about Elvis and Graceland I will never really know, but I attribute it to the publicity Graceland was receiving at the time. The home had just become a National Historic Landmark and President George W. Bush and the Japanese Prime Minister made a widely publicised visit.

¹ Rodman’s (1996) statement that ‘even critics and scholars who take Elvis seriously . . . are subject to scorn and derision – perhaps even more so than “ordinary” fans, as these critics have supposedly accumulated enough cultural capital “to know better”’ (p.74) rings very true in these accounts.

² My most recent role was overseeing site interpretation for the Hezekiah Alexander Homesite in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA. Constructed in 1774, the

I awoke that morning to find Priscilla Presley, Elvis's former wife, on television announcing she would be launching her new bed linen line at Harrods that afternoon. A quote from Priscilla rings true to me, as she described how the gates at Graceland reminded her and other members of Elvis's family and entourage how 'lucky we were. We were inside. And inside Graceland is where everyone wanted to be' (Ritz, 2006, p. 24). I too wanted to be inside Graceland, so I headed off to Harrods, bought the obligatory sheet set and stood in a queue to meet Priscilla, still uncertain of what I would say to her. I introduced myself as a PhD student interested in Graceland's visitor experience and interpretation, to which she looked both genuinely shocked and intrigued. I enquired if she could tell me whom to contact if I would like to conduct research at Graceland. She quickly gave me the name of the director, encouraging me to ring and tell them I had spoken with her and that she was enthusiastic about the project.

Todd Morgan, Director of Special Projects at Elvis Presley Enterprises, became my primary contact and he shared Priscilla's interest in the potential project. I had to offer many guarantees that I was not planning on selling anything or writing an expose-style book. I assured Todd that my intentions were purely academic, to which he also seemed a bit sceptical. Academics were rarely concerned about the real experience at Graceland I was told, they only wanted to portray Graceland as a 'freak show' that was home to some 'crazy religion,' but 'we're really not,' Todd told me in a tone that was both defiant and beleaguered. I was still not entirely sure what I was hoping to find, but knew I had to visit Graceland to begin this journey in search of a historic house that appears to emotionally move and inspire visitors in a way I hoped could be replicated. I have visited and worked in too many historic homes that fail to connect with people, standing on their historic or architectural laurels alone, somehow

forgetting the people at the heart of the home's story. Graceland and Elvis are synonymous; Graceland can only be the story of people. I wanted to learn what that story was and how it was told to the masses of visitors that enter those legendary gates each day. What follows is a more academic description of how this research developed, but it seems fitting given the personal nature of the accompanying data and narrative that I too offer a personal account.

Three further factors fostered this research, all converging and leading me to Graceland. Firstly, I have spent most of my professional career as a historic house interpreter.² Over the years, I have given my fair share of less than inspiring 'this house was built in 1774' type tours, yet I began searching for more inspired means of interpretation. Attending an interpretive planning colloquium hosted by the American Association of Museums in 2005, I was struck by an interpretive planning model based on the site's *compelling* and *unique* elements. This should mean the end of the classic 'colonial lifestyles' tour. The lifestyles elements that pervade historic house tours, while possibly compelling to a few, are not unique to any site. This colloquium experience instilled in me a desire to find an example of a site that *visitors* widely perceived as unique and compelling.

The second contributing factor was a series of seminars I was taking through the doctoral programme, one in cultural studies and the other in researching the museum. While one course was highlighting non-traditional approaches to understanding museum visitors, the other was positioning popular culture in research terms. To begin thinking about the Graceland experience, since I had never been there myself, I drew on the reviews of others through the

² My most recent role was overseeing site interpretation for the Hezekiah Alexander Homesite in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA. Constructed in 1774, the Alexander Homesite was the oldest standing structure in the county, and home to a prominent Revolutionary War-era leader in the community.

website TripAdvisor.³ Preliminary reviews indicated that while many non-visitors regard Graceland as a somewhat tacky tourist attraction, a much more meaningful experience can be found at Graceland. I was surprised to find comments such as 'visiting Graceland gives you an inside look at Elvis and the many accomplishments of his short life. You will be inspired' (*TripAdvisor Member*, 16 March 2006). Another visitor stated they would definitely recommend the tour to 'Elvis fans and haters alike. I left with more respect for the King – he was quite the philanthropist and family man' (*jetskiwr*, 28 January 2006). I was surprised and intrigued. These comments indicated the tour experience at Graceland challenged visitors' perceptions and encouraged them to relate to Elvis on a more personal level.

The final factor was the designation of Graceland as a National Historic Landmark in the spring of 2006, which received a great deal of press, even in the UK. It occurred to me that having the opportunity to investigate visitors at a site deemed more popular culture than historic house may lead me to the unique and compelling place I had been searching for to inspire my own interpretive planning work. It was with all of these thoughts swelling in my mind that I found myself on a tour bus, driving through the famous music note gates of Graceland, as Elvis himself welcomed me with a rendition of *Welcome to My World*.

Searching for the Personal Elvis

Despite the breadth of media projecting Elvis's image over his lengthy career, there is a surprising dearth of information about the 'real' Elvis Presley. Numerous books, from biographies to 'tell all' books, all aim to reveal a certain

³ TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) allows users to contribute reviews and photos of more than one million destinations, attracting nearly 47 million monthly visitors as of May 2010. Branded the "world's most trusted travel advice," it is based on the written opinions of any user that registers with the site and can be viewed by any visitor to the website.

element of truth about who Elvis was as a person. While his life is documented by a variety of external secondary sources, Elvis himself left behind sparse primary source evidence. As biographer Peter Guralnick notes, Elvis 'never kept a diary, left us with no memoirs, wrote scarcely any letters, and rarely submitted to interviews' (1999a, p. xii). There are only glimpses of the personal side of Elvis's life in the historic record, yet this seems to be the element that fans and visitors clamour for at Graceland.

The residents of every historic home have a personal story, most of which are as equally hard to discern as the private side of Elvis. In my work at the Alexander Homesite I too struggled to discover who the residents were as people, beyond names and dates, hoping to convey something more meaningful than generic lifestyles to visitors. As a historian, I sought primary sources, which were rare in the eighteenth century backcountry of North Carolina. Hezekiah left behind no portrait, no written letters, or journal. People even of the most recent past can remain as illusive as those of the distant past. For Elvis, a man so shrouded in legend, discerning a personal narrative is both demanding and essential, if there is any hope he will be rescued 'from the dreary bondage of myth' and the 'oppressive aftershock of cultural significance' (Guralnick, 1994, p. xiii).

My quest to make Hezekiah more affecting and relatable to visitors became a personal journey, as has my examination of Graceland's depiction of Elvis. Over my years researching and interpreting the lives of Hezekiah and his family I built a sense of intimacy with these people that inhabited the house I walked through daily. I always referred to the family by their first names, hoping to eliminate the distance felt between visitors and the past. The same process has occurred while working with Elvis and Graceland; I feel a familiarity with him,

his home and his story. As such, and perhaps rather unconventionally for an academic piece of writing, Elvis and his family are most often referred to throughout this thesis by their first names, just as they are on the tour at Graceland.

In the course of this research I have tried to uncover the personal side of Elvis, at least as he is presented at Graceland and as visitors might see him. There are undoubtedly many external forces mediating this narrative, making the demarcation line between 'personal' and 'real' all the more relevant. Yet at Graceland the personal side of Elvis seems attainable and tangible, despite any obscured historic realities. That is the power of a historic home, to preserve in some capacity the energy and emotion that was experienced there, a window onto a world that cannot be fully realised in any other way.

Chapter 1 - 'Welcome to My World'

Thesis Overview

This thesis begins with a discussion of the research rationale and focus, followed by an account of Graceland and the visitor experience, contextualising the research. The research design and general methodological considerations lead on to a review of literature, drawing on the fields of heritage tourism and historic house interpretation. The remainder of the thesis is structured around the research process as it developed, beginning with the on-site personal meaning mapping exercises conducted at Graceland, followed by the online visitor photographs, and concluding with an analysis of the tour and its interpretive devices. Sections regarding specific methodologies accompany each of these components. The quotes included in the chapter titles are all lyrics from *Welcome to My World*, providing a thematic link that references the tour's performative quality.

The qualitative and personal nature of much of this research results in a thesis constructed in a reflexive manner, rather than one written with the 'classic detachment of positivism' (Starfield and Ravelli, 2006, p. 222). This approach escapes the metanarrative of scientific objectivity, producing a text that is often self-reflexive and narrative in character, while still adhering to methods of qualitative enquiry. Postmodernism has called into question the validity of authoritative knowledge, allowing writers to assert a situated voice that is no less legitimate than those writing as a 'disembodied omniscient narrator' (Richardson, 2000, p. 928). This thesis embraces a tone reflective of the emotive and narrative rich interpretive style that it espouses, weaving together threads of data to examine the impact of the Graceland visitor experience.

Research Rationale

This research aims to contribute to two still sparse areas of literature: historic house visitor research and the use of online social sites as avenues for understanding visitor experience. Despite the fact historic homes are a prevalent form of museum, there is little concrete research into visitor perceptions and experience (Credle, 2002). Contributors to *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (2002), one of the few books specifically addressing interpretation in this area, refer largely to their own experiences and small scale programme evaluation rather than more comprehensive research. Heritage sites in general continue to lack a 'coherent and overarching strategy' for investigating their sites, with neither a 'recognised method nor a commonly understood set of terms used to characterise these unique spaces' (Garden, 2006, p. 395).

Although the field of visitor studies has developed rapidly over the last 20 years, this research has been conducted primarily in museums, raising the question of its applicability for other informal learning venues, such as historic sites. Authors are beginning to raise this concern (Farmer and Knapp, 2008), positing 'an understanding of learning in informal settings will be of limited scope if the majority of research is conducted only in museums' (Koran, Willems and Camp, 2000). Those seeking to advance the 'science' of interpretation believe the future depends on understanding the processes of interpretation, what works and why (Silverman, 1997). Whilst the field of 'heritage interpretation' is quite broad, including sites from nature parks and battlefields to stately homes and city centres, the settings of historic houses are unique and require their own set of understandings about the visitor experience. This research investigates principals of interpretation for historic homes framed by visitor research within historic houses, rather than museums. The rationale for this research stems from the

belief that by understanding the interpretive experience at one of America's most visited historic homes a set of effective practices can be devised which may hold resonance for other historic house museums.

Graceland is not your average historic house museum, and is not widely viewed by visitors as such. This, perhaps, makes it an even better setting for exploring interpretation, as it is not confined by what a historic house tour *should* be by some formulaic definition. According to Jack Soden, CEO of Elvis Presley Enterprises, they eschewed practically all of the advice given to them by experts in tour management, stating their plans 'would have left Graceland with all the warmth and charm of your average airport' (Hilburn, 1989, n.p.).⁴ This lack of academic and professional background has produced 'a product' that thrives on emotions, performativity, and narrative, charting a new path for heritage interpretation.

This new path, according to some authors (Brochu and Merriman, 2002; Merriman and Brochu, 2004; Smith, 2006; Veverka, 1999), may lie in a better understanding of Pine and Gilmore's Experience Economy (1999). Interpretation is embedded in experience, making a theory devoted to enriching experience particularly relevant. The Experience Economy's core elements can inform a more powerful interpretive strategy. This consists of 1) theming the experience, 2) harmonising impressions with positive cues, 3) eliminating negative cues, and 4) employing all five senses (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Pine and Gilmore argue that people desire experiences, 'memorable events that engage them in an inherently personal way' (2007, p. 1). This framework provides a model outside of traditional interpretation and visitor studies literature that is useful for

⁴ Many of the articles and chapters accessed were online or digital versions with no current pagination, reflected by the 'n.p.' citation.

understanding the Graceland experience.

Research Focus and Questions

This research focuses on historic house interpretation and assessing the visitor experience. The research questions addressed are:

- 1) What are appropriate methodologies for understanding the visitor experience at a heritage tourist site such as Graceland?
- 2) In what ways does the Graceland tour experience change visitor perception of Elvis Presley and what interpretive devices potentially elicit that change?
- 3) What examples of effective interpretive practice can be gleaned from the Graceland experience?

There is a relatively small body of research focused on understanding the experience of heritage tourism through site-based research, with no consensus on appropriate methodologies (Caton and Santos, 2007; Poria, Biran and Reichel, 2009; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). The first task in this study was determining how best to research the Graceland visitor experience phenomenon described in the online reviews.

The second research question arose from the initial review of online visitor comments, which suggested this tour experience was far more than shag carpet and sequined jumpsuits. The ability to shift visitor perception, as first recognised through visitor reviews, is a key sign of experience quality (Adams, Falk and Dierking, 2003). The changes that occur over the course of the Graceland tour are related to the interpretive devices that construct the experience. The main interpretive tool used during the tour is an audio guide, coupled with media staged throughout the tour. An analysis of the audio tour content provides evidence of how Elvis's story is conveyed at Graceland. This audio tour analysis, coupled with the visitor centred research components, illuminates how the interpretive strategies at Graceland affect visitors and their perceptions of Elvis. It is only with

an insight into what occurs during the Graceland tour experience that the final question can be addressed. While the 'Elvis factor' cannot be denied, at its core the Graceland experience is a historic house tour and the changes documented in visitor perception would not occur without interpretive mediation. As historic house museums are challenged to find ways to thrive in the twenty-first century Experience Economy (Merriman and Brochu, 2004), Graceland offers examples of interpretive practice that can be effectively utilised in a broader context.

Research Context: The Graceland Visitor Experience

On 16 August 1977, Elvis Presley died at his home, Graceland, in Memphis, Tennessee. The following day, as thousands of people descended upon Graceland, the gates were opened to the public for the first time. A long line of visitors flowed past an open casket in the foyer allowing people to pay their final respects to the man denoted the 'King of Rock and Roll.' This public opening was intended to be a one-time occurrence, as Graceland had always been Elvis's sanctuary from his insurmountable fame. Within five years of his death, however, the Presley estate was in desperate need of a cash injection, and it was decided that the gates of Graceland would remain open permanently, securing its place as an American cultural icon.

As visitors drive down Elvis Presley Boulevard in search of Graceland they are confronted with two very different components to the Graceland experience. The first part of this experience is Graceland Plaza, which houses the visitor centre, several exhibition spaces, Elvis retail shops, as well as his two airplanes. The Plaza, in a re-claimed strip mall, sits across the street from Graceland mansion and is the departure point for all tours of the home and property. For the purposes of this research, 'Graceland' refers to the house and property that were historically Elvis's home, and not the plaza complex.

The house tour experience starts as visitors wait for a shuttle bus, receive an audio guide with headset, and board a bus that will take them ‘up the hill’ to Graceland’s front door. The audio tour begins with Elvis himself telling visitors that the happiest times he had were with his family at his home.⁵ Lisa Marie Presley, Elvis’s only child, describes the energy and excitement that Graceland always radiated. As the bus drives visitors through the gates and up the long driveway, Elvis sings *Welcome to My World*. This introduction is highly indicative of the audio tour experience, which combines a narrator, archival Elvis interviews, and family oral histories, all punctuated with thematically appropriate background songs. This arrangement has a powerful effect on visitors, as one described, ‘when we entered Graceland on the bus and they played ‘Welcome to My World’ that said it all for me – I was entering HIS world . . . The house felt like it was a home not just a house . . .’ (noggy29, 26 January 2010).

The main floor of the house is almost entirely open to the public, including the living room, dining room, kitchen, a bedroom, and the den popularly called the ‘Jungle Room’ since the house opened for tours. The audio tour dictates the visitor route, and although it provides directions for progressing through the home rather quickly, it also encourages visitors to pause the tour at any point and linger if they wish. The only tour barriers in the home are ropes on stanchions; there are no permanent physical barriers at any point, allowing for the home to be seamlessly transformed back into a liveable space when the family desires. The rooms are fully furnished, down to the last knick-knack on the bookshelf and frying pan in the kitchen, using an extremely extensive and well-documented collection.

⁵ The external company Antennae Audio, a leader in audio tours in the museum and heritage sector, produced the tour. Graceland staff developed the content and Antennae crafted the final tour.

The living room, with views into the music room, is the tour starting point, with the focus on Elvis's musical roots. The second stop is a brief look into the bedroom, which is currently interpreted as Elvis's parents' bedroom. This room is used to illustrate for visitors the bond between Elvis and his parents, both of whom were important figures in his life. The tour continues to the dining room, where visitors are asked to imagine the many evenings of laughter and storytelling that would have taken place over typical Southern cooked meals. This leads to the kitchen, which is emphasised as the centre of the home's activity, with a constant stream of family, staff and visitors in this busy hub fuelled by around the clock cooking. This room, complete with avocado green and harvest gold appliances, often evokes nostalgia, as it is typical of any other suburban American home from the 1970s.

From the normal family kitchen, visitors enter the more surreal world of the basement level, accessed by a stairwell covered in mirrors. The two rooms in the basement, the TV Room and Pool Room, make up the informal entertaining areas of the home, enjoyed by Elvis's ever-present entourage. Both of these spaces are evidence of a striking interior design plan that re-decorated Graceland in 1974. The TV Room is best described as 'an ultra-modern 70s look . . . with walls painted yellow, dark blue and white in a trendy super-graphics paint scheme,' (Morgan, 2003, p. 41) complete with yellow shag carpeting. Visitor reviews often discuss the décor and fascination with the three television sets in this room, a reflection of Elvis's love of media and gadgetry. The Pool Room is dominated by 400 yards of fabric covering the ceiling and walls, but the audio tour draws attention to the tear in the corner of the pool table felt, describing a trick shot gone horribly wrong.

Visitors emerge from the basement into the Jungle Room, 'a normal

looking family room that took a turn for the wild side.’ While the décor of green shag carpeting and Polynesian inspired carved wood furnishing cannot be overlooked, the tour concentrates on the recording sessions that Elvis held in here for his last albums. These sessions, heard on the audio tour, make the shag carpeting on the ceiling seem like an improvement, rather than a design eyesore. The large striped chair in the corner houses a teddy bear, reminding visitors of the frequent naps that Lisa Marie took curled up in the chair.

When this research was conducted, the next part of the tour was an exhibit area that had been converted out of a former garage apartment.⁶ These exhibits included vignettes re-created using furniture and accessories from rooms not on the tour, such as Elvis’s office, dressing room, or Lisa Marie’s nursery. Here visitors had access to some of Elvis’s more personal objects, including the family photos that dominated his desk, his books filled with underlining and handwritten comments, or his favourite sporting equipment. From this space, visitors go outside for a tour of the outbuildings and grounds.

The first outbuilding is the office Vernon used to manage Elvis’s personal affairs and finances. The office was also the setting of an important press conference, held in March 1960 as Elvis returned home from his stint in the Army. The newsreels from this conference reveal the authenticity of the furniture. A television running footage of that conference shows Elvis sitting at the desk still on view. Outside the office building is Lisa Marie’s swing set, a standard fixture in the backyard of many American families at the time. From the office, visitors are invited to view the pasture area that occupies much of the Graceland property. Elvis developed a love of horseback riding in the late 1960s and Graceland soon

⁶ Currently, this area of the tour is now part of the VIP tour package, and is no longer included on the standard tour route.

became a small equestrian centre. The pasture is still roamed by horses and visitors can watch home video footage of Elvis riding through the grounds.

Visitors then enter the Trophy Building, built in the early 1960s as a recreation space that was later transformed into a place to hold Elvis's many awards. The experience departs from the traditional historic house tour, as the Trophy Building houses both the original awards that Elvis stored there and an exhibit area depicting his career from 1954 to 1971. The largest section of the building is dedicated to the Hall of Gold, showcasing the plethora of gold and platinum albums Elvis received, along with his Grammy awards. The exhibit area contains memorabilia from Elvis's army days, his movie career, and the 1968 television show later known as the 'Comeback Special.' Amidst this career related ephemera, two objects stand out, a massive plaque given by the City of Memphis and a series of paid cheques, over \$40,000 worth written for his annual Christmas donations to various charities. These serve as concrete examples of the interpretive theme of generosity developed in this section of the tour.

The final outbuilding, the Racquetball Building, is perhaps the most significant in terms of the visitor experience. This building was constructed in 1975 as a recreation facility, but now houses contemporary awards and showcases Elvis's career from 1972. As visitors enter the two-tiered lounge, the audio tour draws their attention to the piano on the lower level, where Elvis played piano just a few hours before his death, relaxing with friends after a racquetball game. The solemnity of the last place Elvis played music is soon overcome as visitors enter the racquetball court, bursting with costumes, large screen video footage and floor to ceiling awards from 1972 to the present. Video of *The Aloha Special* dominates one corner of the space, in effect resurrecting the Elvis just mourned in the lobby, featuring an emotionally charged

performance that was one of his career highlights. This is the last stop on the tour before the Meditation Garden, where Elvis and other members of his family are buried.

The Meditation Garden was built in 1965, inspired by Elvis's study of religious and spiritual writings. Elvis never intended to be buried here, but his body was re-interred there following security concerns at the cemetery where he was initially laid to rest. His father also re-interred Elvis's mother and had a marker created in remembrance of Elvis's stillborn twin brother. Later, Vernon would also be buried here, as well as Elvis's paternal grandmother, Minnie Mae, who spent the last twenty years of her life at Graceland. Flowers and tributes are placed at Elvis's grave from fans around the world. The tour concludes with Lisa Marie's reflections about her father's enduring spirit and Elvis himself recalling that every dream he ever dreamed has come true a hundred times. Visitors are invited to spend as much time as they would like in the Meditation Garden. The tour concludes with Elvis's *If I Can Dream*, from the *1968 Special*, considered by music historians to be some of the most powerful and emotional music Elvis ever sang (Marcus, 1997), with lyrics declaring that 'as long as a man has the strength to dream, he can redeem his soul and fly.' This acts as a climactic closing to a tour designed to envelop visitors into Elvis's world.

Graceland as a Historic Site

The decision to open Graceland only five years after Elvis's death shocked many, including Priscilla Presley herself who made the final decision to open the home. This conclusion was reached in the wake of Vernon Presley's⁷ death in 1979, when it became clear that without drastic action the dwindling Presley

⁷ Vernon was Elvis's father, who had administered Elvis's estate after his son's death.

estate would not be able to sustain Graceland and it would have to be sold (Hilburn, 1989). While she knew the situation was dire, the former Mrs. Presley still recoiled at the idea of having visitors 'trampling' through the house. Her greatest source of hesitation originated in her history with the house, worried that 'Graceland was the only thing Elvis and I had that wasn't on public view. To open up your home was like being robbed' (ibid, n.p.).

Regardless of Presley's initial reticence, after trying for two years to find other avenues to save Elvis's estate, it was decided that the best way to sustain Graceland was to reinvent it as an income-producing tourist attraction (Carr, 2002). Finding an operator for the new venture proved challenging, with several potential partners quickly rejecting the offer. The City of Memphis declined to take over Graceland citing a feasibility study concluding that 'interest in Elvis would inevitably wane within the next few years' (Carr, 2002, n.p.). With hindsight is it clear that the City of Memphis could not have been more wrong. After failing to find a suitable operator Elvis Presley Enterprises determined they would open the house on their own. With the family acting as sole operators, they were able to portray Graceland and Elvis without having an external entity mediate the story they hoped to tell to visitors.

After years were spent avoiding turning Graceland into a tourist attraction there was a sudden race to open to visitors, an effort led by Jack Soden. Meetings with experts in tour management yielded multi-million dollar proposals that the estate felt would have extruded all of Graceland's intrinsic charm. Advisors also encouraged a year-long audience consultation to determine what the average Elvis fan would hope to see in a tour of Graceland. Soden, however, wanting to take full advantage of the summer tourist season, chose to open the doors as soon as possible with no consultation and a minimal monetary

investment. That initial investment was earned back thirty-eight days after Graceland was opened to the public in July 1982 (Hilburn, 1989).

Although finances were a clear motivator in opening Graceland, EPE had another less tangible goal: the preservation of Elvis's legacy, which they consider a cultural responsibility. They also hoped to preserve Elvis's personality and extend an understanding of his roots (Hilburn, 1989). Jerry Schilling, a close friend of Elvis's and later the Creative Affairs Director at EPE, discussed the estate's desire to instill an image of Elvis they felt most appropriate for his legacy. Schilling commented,

We don't want to try to change history. At the same time, we don't want history to be concentrating on a small portion of his career that may not be as illustrious as the rest . . . We don't want the image of Elvis in future history to be that he was an overweight guy eating a cheeseburger in a white jumpsuit. We want it to be the Elvis as the world knew him for the first twenty years of his career (ibid, n.p.).

Every historic house museum faces the same dilemma of determining the vein of history to present to its visitors. This history should be meaningful, relevant to the home and relate to visitors, but it must also strike a balance with the history of the home's residents. Graceland's opening so soon after Elvis's death makes it easy to understand the concern that visitors would associate Elvis with those last, rather depressing and uninspired, years of his life, rather than the energy and vigour that shaped the early Rock and Roll revolution.

The management team faced another important issue when deciding how to interpret the site: avoiding the caricature that surrounded Elvis. Elvis's iconic status took shape as early as his break through 1956 performances, becoming the first true global superstar. In order for Graceland's success to be sustained the team believed they had to mitigate stereotypical views. Joseph Rascoff, part of the EPE committee opening Graceland to the public, stated 'one of the goals is

to humanize Elvis . . . make sure people remember him as a human being, not as a caricature. That's hard enough to do when you are dealing with a generation that actually saw Elvis, but twenty years from now [1989], it will be even harder . . . that's the greatest challenge' (ibid, n.p.).

Elvis himself was conscious of the dichotomy between who he was a person and his image, stating at a 1972 press conference, '...the image is one thing and the human being is another...it's very hard to live up to an image' (Keogh, 2004, p. 235). Similarly, Elvis's friend and confidant Larry Geller recalls Elvis lamenting, 'the world knows Elvis Presley all right, but they don't know *me*. I want them to know me, the real person' (Geller, 2008, p. 4). It was decided early on in the venture to open Graceland that visitors would see Elvis as a human being, rather than the image thrust on him by celebrity.

Graceland in the Heritage Sector

While Graceland is most often considered a popular tourist attraction, it also maintains a role in the more conventional heritage sector. One of the reasons Graceland may be overlooked as a historic home is its for-profit status, holding no illusions that its fundamental purpose was to make money for the declining Presley estate. While EPE does not release profit figures, it has been estimated that Graceland generates around \$30 million of profits annually (O'Neal, 1996). Timothy and Boyd (2003) have criticised heritage interpretation propelled by economic motives, citing a danger that profit making can alter the legitimacy of the heritage experience. The profit making aspect of Graceland's purpose has certainly shaped the narrative image of Elvis depicted, an issue considered in greater depth in Chapter Six.

Graceland meets every definition of a historic house museum. It is a documentary home, associated with a specific historical event or person,

containing original objects to the site (Butcher-Young, 1993). In 2006, Graceland was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Interior Department because the 'exceptional house has meaning to all Americans' (BBC, 2006). According to Jack Soden, Graceland has meaning well beyond America, stating 'Graceland is so famous it is arguable that on a worldwide basis, it is the second most famous home in America' (ibid, n.p.).⁸ Although rarely perceived as a historic site, Graceland entered a new era with its landmark status.

Graceland may be a unique site, but its visitors are not, as the majority of those who participated in this research visit other historic homes and constitute part of the larger cultural heritage tourism audience. While Graceland's visitorship does include a large fan-based audience, this does not preclude its relevance to wider heritage audiences. Herbert's (2001) research around literary homes concluded that fans of the writers visited a wide range of heritage sites, not limiting themselves to sites of popular culture. In this study, 72 per cent of the participants visit other historic homes, indicating their interest in a wide range of heritage experiences.

An understanding of Graceland's visitor experience can contribute to new models being proposed for historic houses, offering a perspective from one of the most visited and famous homes in the world. Graceland appears to provide a unique encounter, deserving further examination of its success. Simpson (2004) describes the experience as emersion, observing,

At other historic homes, it can be all but impossible to conjure up the spirits of their bygone inhabitants. As soon as your bus takes you through Graceland's legendary musical-note gates, on the other hand, you enter Elvis's

⁸ The presidential home, the White House, is widely regarded as the most famous historic home in America.

world. By the time you emerge from the Meditation Garden, an hour or more later, you will have been completely immersed in Elvisness (p. 407).

Graceland has capitalised on interpretive strategies that bring the person to the forefront of the story, exceeding visitor expectations and succeeding in their quest to humanise one of the twentieth century's most iconic figures.

Elvis's Graceland

Graceland has developed greater cultural significance since Elvis's death than it held during his lifetime. Before considering what Graceland means to visitors and fans it is worth considering what Graceland meant to Elvis during the twenty years he lived there. Biographies often reflect on the significance of Graceland to Elvis and his family, shedding light on what has become an almost mythical bond between the home and its owner (Doll, 2009; Guralnick, 1994; Hopkins, 2007; Simpson, 2004). Central to these accounts is the belief that Elvis's purchase of Graceland in 1957, with profits from his first gold record, fulfilled a promise to provide for his parents. The Depression-era deprivation that Elvis knew growing up in rural Mississippi made him want more for his struggling family and Graceland symbolised their rise from those difficult times. Graceland embodied all that Elvis had hoped to achieve for his family and especially his mother, Gladys. Elvis was devastated when his mother died unexpectedly in 1958, an event only further cementing his commitment to making Graceland his lifelong home. As biographer Peter Guralnick (1999a) notes, 'Graceland was the place he would always maintain as his home because of his memories of her' (p. 222).

Despite Elvis's long absences from Memphis for filming and touring, Graceland was the only place he considered *home*. Elvis once described how

Graceland represented 'the residence of the heart. It is far more than a place of physical needs . . . To me my home is all wound up with all the acts of kindness and gentleness that my mother and my grandmother and my daddy lovingly provided . . . All of this love still remains within its walls. It's an enduring way of life for me' (Guralnick, 1999a, p. 223). Virtually all accounts attest to the role that Graceland played for Elvis as an anchor and family home. His cousin and close friend, Patsy, depicted the relationship between Elvis and Graceland explaining that 'Graceland is Elvis's heart. It's where he was most himself and where he felt most loved' (Ritz, 2006, p. 8).

The idea that Graceland was Elvis's true home resonates through practically every memoir, biography and recollection of Elvis. The earliest version of a guidebook to Graceland, completed shortly after it opened to the public, reflected in the epilogue,

Graceland was many things to Elvis. It was a retreat. It was his playground. It was the incubator for new directions in music. It was the place he could take occasional sabbaticals. It was his Garden of Gethsemane. But more than anything else . . . it was home (Brixey and Dixon, 1983, p. 58).

Graceland was an expression of Elvis's hopes and dreams, commitment to family, and the place he could most be himself. After a visit to Graceland one visitor proclaimed, 'I don't care what anyone says about it being tacky or too 70's looking: this was Elvis' heart and soul. He needed Graceland just to remain human' (*elvisrox*, 17 April 2006). It is the human quotient at Graceland that has become so compelling to visitors, providing another dimension to the iconic entertainment figure.

Graceland as a Place of Pilgrimage

The allure of Elvis's home has attracted many visitors, leading to claims of pilgrimage and a quasi-religious experience at Graceland. Much of the early

literature surrounding the visitor experience at Graceland is tied to themes of pilgrimage. The most influential of these works is Davidson and his colleagues' (1990) visitor research examining pilgrims to Graceland and Harrison's (1992) *Elvis People*, which claims the phenomena surrounding Elvis fans resembles a cult or religion. While Graceland has always been a site for Elvis fans to congregate, it has taken on a new symbolism and mythology since Elvis's death, providing a place for fans and 'devotees' to gather.

The term 'pilgrimage,' while rooted in religious contexts, can reference many types of journeys. Campo (1998) believes that the definition most fitting of pilgrimage in contemporary society is 'a set of ritual actions involving specific human communities, institutions, and organized travel to and from sacred place' (p. 41). Davidson, Hecht and Whitney (1990) argue that pilgrimage is about more than the journey to a significant site, as it also offers opportunities for expressions of faith, prestige and camaraderie. Campo (1998) classifies visits to Graceland as a 'pilgrimage of American cultural religion,' a form of modern pilgrimage that entails 'the commodification of culture and its invasive reproduction through the mass media' (p. 51). Doss (1999) cites Graceland as being no different from other pilgrimage sites 'from Lourdes to the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City' where 'devotional practices, material culture, and commercialism are typically mixed' (p. 93).

In this modern, consumer driven context, Graceland has become the centre of Elvis's mythology and a site visited by vast numbers of pilgrims and tourists alike. Authors debate what delineates the pilgrim from the tourist at Graceland (Davidson, Hecht and Whitney, 1990; Doss, 1999; Rigby, 2001; Rodman, 1996; Vikan, 1994), with the division generally made based on the primary destination for their journey and the importance placed on visiting

Graceland. Tourists are categorised by the way that their itineraries are arranged, intending to visit a variety of sites that are geographically accessible from a given location. A pilgrim, however, is more likely to arrange their travels based on a single 'sacred destination', while also allotting time for visits to 'ancillary holy places' (Vikan, 1994, p. 158). Visitors to Graceland consist of both pilgrims arriving at Graceland trying to 'find solace from the spiritual and emotional turbulence of the everyday world' (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002, p. 204) and casual tourists that are simply on holiday or passing through Memphis for business or pleasure. Doss (1999) notes that regardless of how diverse these visitors might be, 'it is safe to say that most are drawn to Graceland, and drawn together, to try to come to terms with Elvis's abiding popularity. Their presence feeds the phenomenon: even the most ambivalent tourist . . . adds to Elvis's popular culture canonization' (p. 88).

Graceland's shrine-like nature and the notion of pilgrimage spawn from the days after his death, when an estimated 80,000 mourners gathered at Graceland (Brixey and Dixon, 1983). Harrison (1992) draws parallels between the meetings of early Christians and the Elvis fans that gather at Graceland, 'for all the inner conviction in each believer that Christ was alive and with them always, the physical contact would have produced a special excitement. So it is with Elvis's fans and one of the pulls of Graceland is that it provides fans with the tangible evidence of Elvis's life' (p. 162). Fans are also seen to emulate early Christians by leaving behind tokens that symbolise their faith, love, and devotion, a practice adopted by Christian pilgrims as early as the first millennium (Rodman, 1996). Acts such as writing on the stone wall at Graceland, leaving mementos at Elvis's gravesite, and gathering with other Elvis 'faithful' are all seen as ways that fan behaviour constitutes pilgrimage at Graceland.

Much of the pilgrimage literature is derived from the annual 'Elvis Week' or 'Tribute Week' that has developed since Elvis's passing, drawing thousands of people to Graceland each August. On the first anniversary of Elvis's death a fan club spontaneously organized a small candlelight tribute, laying the foundation for Elvis Week's cornerstone event, the candlelight vigil in the Meditation Garden (Brixey and Dixon, 1983). Journalist Ron Rosenbaum (1995) described his experiences at Elvis Week, observing, 'for days, a Canterbury-like fusion of carnival and spiritual impulses has been building toward the convergence on the grave in a climactic ceremony referred to simply as "candlelight." It's the central ritual in Elvis Culture, a phenomenon that has lately transcended the familiar contours of a dead celebrity cult and has begun to assume the dimensions of a redemptive faith' (n.p.). This is the time during the year that fan pilgrimages have become most popular and 'institutionalized' (Doss, 1999, p. 85). Vikan (1994) notes that the visitors during Elvis Week 'disproportionately account for the pilgrimage activity at Graceland' (p. 158).

These pilgrimage themed descriptions of Elvis Week events, however, neglect the much larger traditional tourism audience that Graceland sees year round. The study into Graceland pilgrimage by Davidson (1990), for instance, was conducted during the weeks surrounding the anniversary of Elvis's death. When they began their study in 1984 a sample of 209 randomly selected visitors over five weeks, including Elvis Week, was comprised of both tourists and pilgrims, with by far the largest portion of visitors being tourists. While they acknowledge that 85 per cent of their sample were casual tourists, the authors based the bulk of their writing around the 'smaller but more interesting 31 visitors' who were considered pilgrims (Davidson, Hecht and Whitney, 1990). This appears to be a trend in much of the writing about Graceland, with the literature

focusing on the more 'interesting' pilgrim population rather than the larger general tourist population. Doss (1999) admits that terms such as 'pilgrimage' and 'shrine' are generally 'not part of the average Graceland visitor's vocabulary, and many fans might be offended if they heard these words used in relation to their visits to the site' (p.86). Similarly, Davidson, et al. (1990) recognised that the vast majority of people traveling to Graceland were not devoted pilgrims, but rather curiosity seekers.

Doss (1999) describes the activities that 'pilgrims' engage in during Elvis Week, including touring Graceland, engaging in charity work in Elvis's name, attending benefit concerts, watching Elvis impersonator contests, visiting local attractions connected with Elvis, writing on the wall outside Graceland, buying souvenirs, taking photos at Elvis's gravesite, and creating gifts for his gravesite (pp. 91-95). Reece (2006) is not convinced such a list can be construed as religious ritual, claiming 'if these activities constitute religious rituals, then so do the convention activities of accountants, comic-book collectors, academics, and booksellers . . .by these standards almost all human behaviour is ritualistic behaviour' (pp. 16-17).

While scholars have debated the nature of pilgrimage to Graceland, EPE consistently maintains that the sanctifying of Elvis begins and ends with the fans. The organisation does not see itself as responsible for building a religious or spiritual quality around Elvis, and is 'often forced to take great pains to explain that they're not in the business of making Elvis into a god' (Rodman, 1996, p. 119). In my interviews with EPE staff, they acknowledge Elvis Week is considered a pilgrimage event, but they view those events quite differently from the day to day operations and visitorship at Graceland (Marchese, 6 December 2006). While EPE staff invest a great deal of time and energy in every year's

Elvis Week activities, aiming to provide the 'pilgrims' that do attend with a full slate of Elvis related events, their more central concern is with the approximately 600,000 other visitors that tour Graceland each year.

Debating the spectacle of Elvis Week belies the nature of the average visitor experience at Graceland. It was with this in mind that this research was conducted during the more typical tourist season, rather than at the height of Elvis Week. In the sample of visitors who participated in this study in September, December, and April only 18 per cent were traveling with Graceland as their main destination. Based on the definitions of pilgrimage described previously, the fact that these visitors were traveling solely for the purpose of visiting Graceland would indicate that they are pilgrims rather than tourists. If the definition of 'pilgrim' is so loosely defined, however, visitors surely make 'pilgrimages' to a wide variety of heritage sites, setting out solely to see Mount Vernon or Hampton Court Palace or a battlefield. Even accepting this broad definition, it is clear that the majority of visitors to Graceland are best categorised as tourists.

Another important factor when reflecting on the pilgrimage literature is that much of this research and writing happened closer to Elvis's death and in many ways represents a different generation of visitor to Graceland. Davidson and his colleagues' research, for instance, took place in 1984, only two years after Graceland had opened to the public and seven years after Elvis's death. Today, over 50 per cent of the visitors to Graceland are under the age of 35, meaning that they were born after Elvis's death, never having a personal connection with him through performances or new music releases. Subsequent writings have occurred around significant anniversary years of Elvis's death, where larger numbers attend Elvis Week, with the last major anniversary being in 2007. There has been little published regarding ideas of pilgrimage to Graceland in the last

five years, perhaps signalling a waning of interest in the area or the acknowledgement that this is but one small aspect of the Graceland visitor experience.

Chapter 2 - 'Won't You Come on In:' Research Design and Methodology

Methodology Overview

This study is a bricolage of methodological approaches utilising a qualitative research design, which is well suited for a research focus attempting to 'uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 19). The methodology embraces a grounded theory approach, where the researcher explores an area of interest with no pre-stated problem, but with the 'abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled' (Glaser, 1992, p. 22). This research also draws on concepts of phenomenology as they relate to investigating lived experience, particularly through the visitor created texts that reveal the nature of their tour experience (van Manen, 1990). Following a phenomenological framework, one of the most straightforward ways to obtain insight into lived experience is through writing about experience (Andriotis, 2009; van Manen, 1990). The elements of this research that allow for visitor 'writing' include the online reviews, Personal Meaning Maps created on-site, and visitor photographs that act as multi-modal texts. All of these sources are considered 'self-revealing' research instruments, serving as a 'fountain of lived experiences to which the researcher could find practical insights' (Andriotis, 2009, p. 71).

The design of this study also takes into account narrative theory, as the theme of narrative has manifest itself throughout the research, proving instrumental in understanding the Graceland experience. The idea of 'story' has re-appeared time and time again in this process. It is the visitors' story, Elvis's story, and the story of one of the world's most famous homes. Although understanding the content of the story is necessary, it is its discursive structure of

telling that interests narrative theorists (Chatman, 1980). Graceland's interpretation represents the discursive structure, which is of central importance to this research. The element at the heart of this narrative discourse is the 'narrator-narratee relationship' (Barbatsis, 2005, p. 341), with Graceland's tour experience acting as narrator to the visitors who become narratees.

Structuralists make a theoretical distinction between the story (*historie*) and discourse (*discours*) of a narrative, arguing the narrative discourse constitutes its own structure that is independently meaningful (Chatman, 1980). Chatman believes that a narrative consists of 'the content or chain of events (actions and happenings) plus . . . the existents (characters, items of settings),' while the discourse is its 'expression, the means by the content is communicated' (1980, p. 19). The visitor experience at Graceland, viewed as a narrative encounter, comprises the tour content as well as the discursive interpretive strategy. The visitor experience conceived of in a narrative framework includes the following elements,⁹

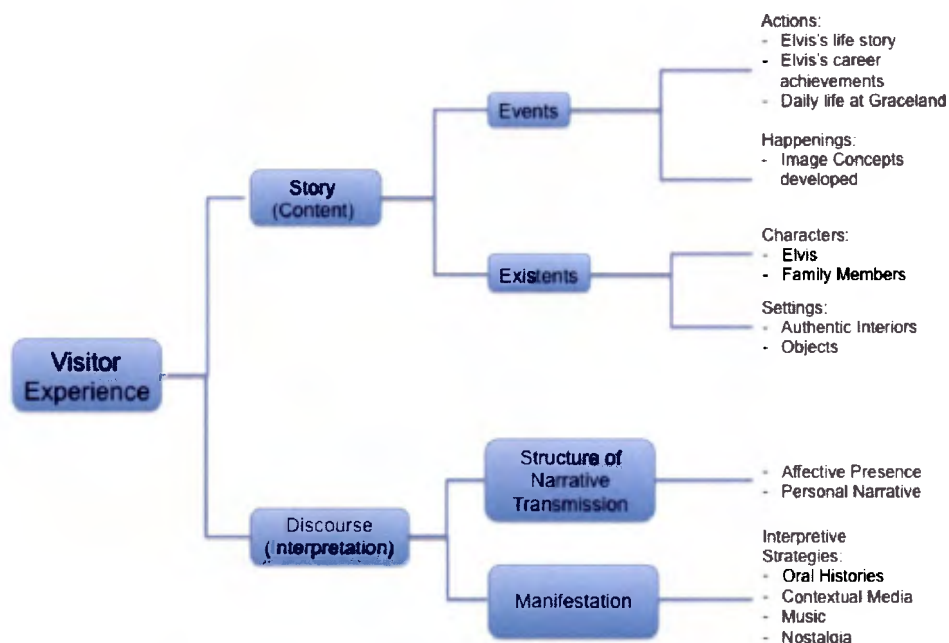


Figure 1. Narrative Structure of Visitor Experience

⁹ This is adapted from the 'Narrative Structure: Elements of Story and Discourse' devised by Barbatsis (2005, p. 336).

To understand the Graceland experience in light of this model requires multiple phases and layers of data collection and analysis, examining both what is produced for visitors to Graceland as well as how this is circulated through interpretive strategies, and ultimately consumed by the visitors. Appropriate methodologies were developed to address each of these elements. To understand the interplay of these components, the 'media studies triangle' approach to deconstructing text (Dick, 1989) has been repurposed as an interpretative triangle. The three distinct but complementary sides include text, production, and audience, allowing for examination of the experience from multiple perspectives. This triangle, displayed below, indicates how the data and methods seek to document the relationship between the tour content, interpretive strategies, and visitor experience.

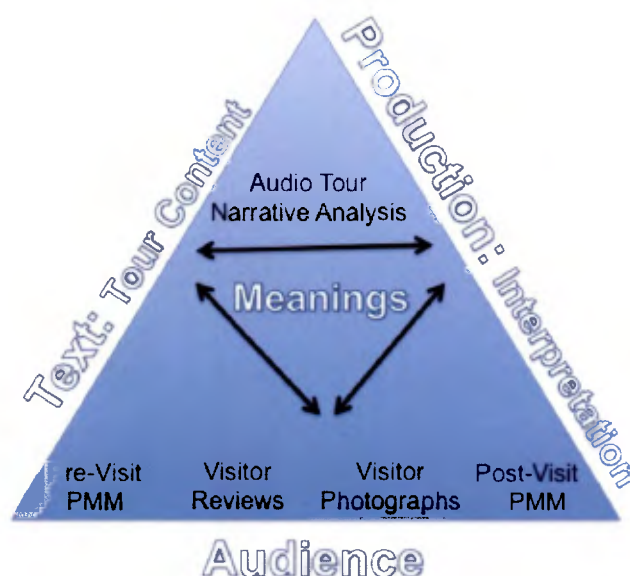


Figure 2. The Interpretive Triangle

It is important to address each side of the triangle to ensure all perspectives are represented. Andersen (2008) believes it is best to continually move around the triangle during analysis, as the 'ideas arising from the discussion of one side will often connect and inflect ideas on other sides' (n.p.). The fluidity in this methodological approach was well suited for this research,

which began with review of online comments, but required further site based research to understand how the interpretive triangle functions as a whole. Shifts in visitor perception documented through the Personal Meaning Mapping exercise at Graceland required further data sources to explain the basis of these changes. As the grounded theory approach also calls for a constant return to data and seeking of data to answer questions that arise (Charmaz, 2006), the next methodological step was gathering additional data to explain these perception shifts. This phase included the visual analysis of visitor photographs on Flickr.com.¹⁰ This data, reflecting the lived experience, was contextualised through analysis of the audio tour's text and production. The dynamic created as each data source informed the others resulted in an approach that was 'powerful and useful' (Andersen, 2008, n.p.) for understanding the Graceland interpretive experience.

One of the contributions of this research is the use of adapted methodologies that are tailored for the tourist setting, maximising the short space of participant time available on-site and use of the online social spaces visited after the tour. Two important phases of this research involved the use of social media, the online reviews and the Flickr photos documenting Graceland's visitor experience. Social media can be defined as Internet-based sites and applications that house consumer-generated content encompassing 'media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers' (Blackshaw, cited in Xiang and Gretzel, 2010, p. 180). Social media has become increasingly intertwined with tourism, leading some to argue that it

¹⁰ Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application. Registered users can upload photos, write captions, and tag the photo contents, making them searchable by other site visitors.

has fundamentally reshaped the way tourists plan for and consume travel (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Despite the importance tourists now place on social media, there are few research methodologies utilising these sites as a source of data to better understand the tourist experience.

Visitor Comment Book Methodology

At the outset, there was no preconceived idea about the impact of the Graceland tour on visitors. Online visitor comments were reviewed to determine if themes or consistent trajectories of experience emerged. Visitor comments were collected from the TripAdvisor website, with 175 reviews for Graceland available for the initial review, which have been added to as the research progressed.¹¹ The use of online visitor reviews as a data source is similar to examining exhibition based visitor books. TripAdvisor, a virtual travel community, is considered to be the most successful social networking/virtual community in tourism, facilitating reviews of destinations and bringing people together through discussion forums. Buhalis and Law (2008) emphasise the ability for virtual travel communities to provide content for analysis to gauge visitor satisfaction and behaviour. Robinson (2001) found that web-based comments on forums are rich sources of unsolicited first-person narratives for use in qualitative research, despite their absence from methodological literature.

Museum visitor books historically consisted of only a visitor's basic personal details and occasional comments, but they have evolved to include

¹¹ One of the greatest challenges of this avenue of research is the never ending stream of data from TripAdvisor. When first examined in 2006 there were 175 reviews, when this research was written for the upgrading panel in 2008 there were 350 reviews, and at the time of this current writing in 2012 there are 935 reviews.

'highly charged emotional and ideological impressions, suggestions, and narratives' (Noy, 2008, p. 176). The valuable potential of visitor books has been acknowledged in several studies (Andriotis, 2009; Macdonald, 2005; Noy, 2008; Stamou and Paraskevopoulos, 2003), yet they are still regarded as a research tool not yet examined systematically or embraced methodologically within visitors studies (Noy, 2011). Macdonald (2005) argues that visitor books 'provide insights and information about audience views, experiences and understandings' (p.119). Unlike most traditional research methods, visitor books are produced independent of a research agenda, becoming documentary sources that may 'elicit unanticipated visitor responses' (Macdonald, 2005, p. 122).

While visitor books have been lauded for their ability to reflect visitor views in a relatively unguarded manner, they are also criticised because entries are typically 'self-selected, appreciative responses' (Katriel, 1997, quoted in Macdonald, 2005), acting as sites of celebration rather than critical reflection. The text producers are also consumers of previous texts in the book, potentially influencing their own contributions (Stamou and Paraskevopoulos, 2003). Comments tend to be very concise, based on vague subjects and express almost exclusively positive attitudes, limiting their usefulness for critical examination in research. Visitors often use these books as a means of signalling their presence at a place, rather than providing constructive comments.

The number and type of visitors who decide to write in comment books limit research data, resulting in a lack of representativeness (Andriotis, 2009), which is perhaps magnified by online reviews. In a traditional site, visitors can more easily access the books and make quick entries. On a site like TripAdvisor, however, visitors have to be motivated enough by the experience to go online, register as a user, and submit their review. Just as a museum might monitor

remarks left in books and eliminate any that are offensive, TripAdvisor reviews are also subject to an editorial process before publishing. This more lengthy procedure lacks the immediacy of site-based visitor book entries and limits the type of visitor that will reflect on their experience in this manner.

While online reviews share many of the same benefits and challenges as traditional visitor books their intended audience is quite different. A review site such as TripAdvisor is designed to offer people a place to share experiences with potential visitors, providing frank portrayals of experience rather than celebrations or addresses to the site manager. Visitors are compelled to share their experiences, both positive and negative, with the wider online community, revealing an account of their experience that serves as rich documentary data. These forums of reflection enable visitors to position themselves, acting as a 'discursive emplacing device' (Noy, 2011, p. 157). The online space frees visitors from the physical and ideological confines of site based visitor books, with the ability to write lengthy entries that have benefited from time to reflect on the experience rather than acting purely as a marker of the visit. The TripAdvisor entries serve a summative purpose, revealing areas of meaningfulness for visitors. Surprisingly, given the potentially large impact for virtual travel communities in tourism and visitor studies, research on the topic is still considered in its infancy stage (Buhalis and Law, 2008).

The visitor reviews on TripAdvisor act as reflexive accounts and provide visitors with the opportunity to 'publicly articulate and express their experiences' (Andriotis, 2009, p. 71). These comments were returned to continually throughout the research process, helping to further ground the themes emerging in the meaning mapping and visual data. The reviews were never comprehensively analysed, in large part because their role became increasingly ancillary and the

number of reviews continued to grow so rapidly. The first reading of the reviews examined the structure of the data and drew out a preliminary list of themes present in the content. Over time, the review content was separated into thematic clusters that recurred as commonalities in visitors' experiences. These clusters were then validated by illustrative quotes, which have subsequently been integrated into the larger text.

The reviews revealed surprising insights into the Graceland experience and included a full spectrum of viewpoints. In the scope of this research, however, they were not a primary focus of analysis and were used in an illustrative manner, with the 'most powerful and eloquent quotes that speak directly to the phenomenon' (Andriotis, 2009, p. 72) being included in the thesis. Since the reviews of Graceland were first analysed in 2006, the popularity of customer review sites such as TripAdvisor has grown exponentially, and with it so have the number of reviews. This provided a challenge in terms of determining a finite sample, as the sample was ever changing, but also interesting to see the same themes continue to appear in the reviews. The theme of a humanised Elvis, for example, is still pervasive in reviews and indicates that the 'snapshot' responses captured in the meaning maps and initial reviews were not isolated. A recent TripAdvisor author reflects, 'I think it made me think of Elvis as a more grounded family man rather than the memory left by his tragic death' (*TrishaBishop*, 4 October 2011), reiterating one of the initial themes I found so intriguing. These reviews offered valuable insight into the visitor experience, acting as an important element in this visitor-centric methodology.

Personal Meaning Mapping Methodology

The themes that arose from the online visitor comments indicated shifts in perception of Elvis, often resulting in the visitor rating the experience very highly.

This audience, however, is self-selecting and may not reflect the average Graceland visitor. In order to determine if these reviews are representative of the larger visitor experience, an onsite study was conducted using brief pre and post-visit questionnaires and a Personal Meaning Map about Elvis. Personal Meaning Mapping (PMM) was introduced to the informal learning field as a research methodology by John Falk and his colleagues (1998), forming the basis of a responsive research methodology designed to 'capture evidence of how the multiple perspectives that visitors bring to and construct in the museum emerge' (Adams, Falk and Dierking, 2003, p. 21). The approach is designed to measure how a specified experience uniquely affects each individual's understanding or meaning making process.

PMM utilises a constructivist approach to learning, recognising that the visitor is an active participant in constructing his or her own understanding. Meaning mapping uses a pre and post-visit method to measure differences in the quantity, breadth, depth, and quality of responses (Falk and Dierking, 2000). The focus of pre and post-visit meaning mapping is to document changes in visitor thoughts and perceptions. Bowker and Jasper (2007) assert that the benefits of this methodology include gaining insights into understanding that cannot be gleaned from more traditional methods, the successful combination of a qualitative and quantitative methodology, the relatively straightforward nature for completion by visitors, and its ability to provide rich data in a relatively short span of time.

The PMM exercise at Graceland was conducted both before and after visits to Graceland mansion, when visitors were asked to write or draw what they thought of when they thought of Elvis. Visitors were given a blank sheet of paper with 'Elvis' as a prompt in the middle and told that they could write or draw

whatever came to their mind. After the tour, visitors were given another blank meaning map and asked to perform the same exercise, collecting their responses to 'Elvis' after the tour. It should be noted that this approach differs from the methodology used by Falk and Dierking and their research associates, as they provide visitors with the pre-visit map at the end of the tour and ask visitors to modify it based on their experience. The Graceland mapping exercise provided visitors with a 'blank slate' at the end of the tour, rather than returning to the initial responses on the pre-visit maps. I felt returning to the pre-visit map was taking visitors back to the ideas they held at the beginning of the tour, rather than accurately recording their immediate post-tour thoughts. This yielded rich data to help document shifts in perception about Elvis as a result of the Graceland tour experience.

Visitor Photography Methodology

While the results of the meaning map exercise document a change in visitor perception, it does not provide evidence for what causes this shift or the elements of the tour that resonate with visitors. In order to examine the tour elements visitors find most compelling a content analysis of visitor photographs was conducted. Photographs were selected as a data source because of their ability to reflect how tourists 'take possession of space' and 'document sequences of consumption' (Sontag, 1977, p. 9). Photographs also serve as mediators between places and the viewer's perspective (Van Gelder and Westgeest, 2011), providing a valuable means of understanding how visitors relate to the site. Flickr was used as a source of non-solicited visitor photographs documenting the Graceland experience, adding an important dimension to understanding the experience through the visitors' eyes.

Photographs are used as evidence and testimony, being 'mobilised as

witness' (Price and Wells, 2004, p. 58) in a range of academic fields. The growth of cultural studies has seen an increased use of visual images, but the vast majority of these studies have focused on commercially produced images, such as advertisements, leading to a 'relative neglect of research on how everyday participants use the visual' (Silverman, 2006, p. 264). There has been even less analysis of travel and holiday photographs, despite the fact that 'most collections of personal pictures are, in fact, dominated by time spent away from home' (Robinson and Picard, 2009, p. 8). Images have the potential to reveal insights that may not be accessible by other means, allowing researchers to glimpse how individuals frame the world around them.

Photographs document what is important to us, where we have been, and what we possess, acting as reminders of the important events, things, and people in our lives and providing rich sociological data (Banks, 2007; Lester, 2003, p. 111; Sontag, 1977). These photographs, particularly in tourist studies, can help 'understand the processes by which people engage with and make sense of the world' (Crang, 1997, p. 370). Watson and Waterton (2010) explore the importance of this visual culture within heritage tourism, noting that the visual is a central component in the engagement between heritage objects and visitors and that 'the processes that constitute meaning, that frame reveal and construct the past that we see around us, are essentially visual' (p.2). Given the role that visuality and photographs play in tourism and heritage, an examination of visitor photographs should reveal key aspects of the visitor experience.

Silverman (2006) suggests that visual research strategies can be distinguished into three different categories: as quasi-experimental data, as a supplement to researcher-provoked data and as naturally occurring material to be analysed in its own right (p. 244). The Flickr photographs constitute naturally

occurring material, created separate from any research agenda and for their sole use as tourist photographs. This study is, however, a departure from the conventional use of photographs as research data, since they are more typically used in photo-elicitation exercises. Photographs of Graceland on Flickr provides a glimpse of the tour experience from the 'visitor's gaze,' without a prescribed research agenda.

Photography plays a central role in the creation of a tourist experience, but it is not a neutral act of recording visual information (Urry, 1990). Schirato and Webb (2004) argue that visitors only photograph what they want to keep as memories, carefully selecting and editing out elements. As visitors take photos they are consciously deciding what they want to communicate about the experience, placing value on certain elements by choosing to preserve them in photographic form.

The heart of tourism lies in a visitor's desire to encounter something inherently different than their everyday life, prompting them to travel elsewhere to engage with a novel setting. Authors have argued that this novelty in turn allows for visitors to see, and photograph, tourist sites in a fundamentally different manner than everyday life. Bourdieu (1990) describes this 'touristic attitude' that allows visitors to escape their 'inattentive familiarity with the everyday world' and adopt a stance of 'armed and directed perception' (p. 35). The tourist gaze becomes directed towards features that are different from those normally encountered, implying 'greater sensitivity to the visual than normally occurs in everyday life' (Longhurst et al., 2008, p. 285). If photographs are regarded as a tool for envisioning the world then it seems appropriate to use them to better understand the visitor experience.

Studies in informal settings have employed Visitor Employed Photography

(VEP) as a primary evaluative tool (Camp, Koran and Koran, 2000) to document visitor interest and preferences. VEP has been used most commonly to understand landscape aesthetics and outdoor recreation experiences, but has also been effectively used to investigate a variety of aspects of tourism (Garrod, 2009; Jacobsen, 2007; MacKay and Couldwell, 2004). VEP utilises photographs taken by tourists themselves, allowing them to adopt an active role in research as generators of images, supporting Urry's notion that tourists are both receivers and modifiers of tourist images (Garrod, 2009). Participant photography has proven particularly revealing in the study of features that attract tourists to certain landscapes (Jacobsen, 2007). A similar approach can be used in exploring the Flickr photographs, examining features of the tour that were found attractive to visitors. The use of social media is not strictly speaking VEP, as the contributors were not participating in a particular study, but the same benefits can be gained. The photographer frequently captions Flickr images, while other visitor comments and discussions about the photographs are also contained within the site. The extensive collection of photographs of Graceland on Flickr, provide documentary evidence, highlighting tour elements that may lead to visitor perception shifts.

Narrative Methodology

In order to fully understand Graceland's impact it is important to examine the tour's narrative structure. Narrative is considered one of the cornerstones of heritage practice, allowing for the reproduction of 'meaning, identity, history and community at individual and collective scales' (Hodge, 2011, p. 117). Importantly, by uncovering the narrative tropes developed at historic homes we can reveal the elements that make these stories compelling to visitors. An understanding of these key narrative elements enables heritage professionals to enrich site interpretation and add new interpretive layers within the established

narratives (Beranek, 2011, p. 113).

The term 'narrative' is used broadly to describe the structuring of events that create a story, used by both individuals and organisations to give meaning to particular events and actions. Bruner (2002) believes that it is a natural 'human capacity to organize and communicate experience in a narrative form' (p. 16) and through narrative 'we construct, reconstruct, in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow' (p. 93). There are disagreements between the components needed to form a narrative, but Prince (2008) asserts a flexible definition defining an object as narrative 'if it is taken to be the logically consistent representation of at least two asynchronous events that do not presuppose or imply each other' (p. 19). The audio tour constitutes the narrative text representing EPE's story of Elvis and Graceland.

We look for meaning and a framework for comprehending actions, both in our own lives and in the lives of others we try to understand, and narrative has proven an effective medium for that task. Schirato and Webb (2004) state 'narrative pervades all of life – there cannot be life without narrative . . . narrative is there not because it is inherent in life, but because it envelops us and structures our practice, or our experience of practice' (p. 96). Perhaps equally important, they believe that narrative is a site of interaction rather than a static object, forcing us to consider the performative nature of narrative.

The term 'narrativity' describes both the components of the narrative and the nature of how that narrative functions. Rudrum (2008) argues that this narrativity is performative in nature and that an understanding of performative language within a narrative aids in thinking about the relationship between what the narrative is and what it does. Performative in this sense suggests we use our narratives to achieve certain goals, asking them to perform a task. Consequently,

this performativity determines how effective narratives are in their position as narratives (Rudrum, 2008). Chase (2005) views narrative as verbal action, performing through explanation, entertainment, defending, confirming or challenging the status quo, all of which 'shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience and reality' (p. 657). The idea that narrative and performativity are linked supports theories of performance and tourism, providing an important avenue for understanding the visitor experience at Graceland as it is conveyed through the audio tour.

Narrative analysis examines the story and analyses how it is put together and how it persuades listeners (Riessman, 1993). Most narrative studies examine personal narratives created by people to structure their own lives, rather than the approach of this study to examine how someone else's life is constructed narratively for public interpretation. The role cultural interpreters play, however, is strikingly similar to the way that self-narratives are constructed. As Riessman (1993) notes, 'human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives' (p.2).

Narrative analysis leans towards reading narrative for simple content, but Riessman (1993) proposes that the structure of the narrative be considered, particularly how it is organised and why the story has been organised in that particular way for the listener. Bruner (2002) considers an understanding of this 'narrative intent' critical to assessing narratives. Beyond the narrative intent, it is important to consider the plot devised to structure the narrative. As Polkinghorne (2005) discusses, plots 'serve to give meaning to particular happening and actions by identifying them as contributors to the outcome of an episode' (p. 6).

While plots may not be linear in structure, the plot acts to build a relationship between the ideas, agents, and events in the narrative (Berger, 1997). This study examines the narrative at Graceland through its components of plot and composition. An understanding of this 'intent' is coupled with the previous data sources to assess how the narrative functions within the visitor experience.

Consideration of Ethical Issues

This study has two groups of participants with separate sets of ethical considerations. The visitors in the meaning mapping exercise were the more traditional group of participants. They all participated under voluntary informed consent and were given the option not to participate in the study during both the pre and post-visit stages of the research. It was made clear that the research was for academic purposes with no connection to EPE, and that all of the visitors would be anonymously identified using numerical tags. Visitors were never asked to identify themselves by name and the only demographic data collected was an age bracket, gender, and their state or country of residence. No contact details were collected from participants.

The TripAdvisor and Flickr research is more problematic, as many debates about issues of privacy and informed consent continue to loom around Internet based research (Buchanan and Ess, 2008). In general, it seems that if people willingly participate in an online venue that they know is in the public domain then there is less obligation to try and protect privacy or the right to informed consent (Ess, 2002; Flick, 2006). Both TripAdvisor and Flickr users must agree to terms and conditions acknowledging the public nature of their contributions as well as the users' right to restrict access to their contributions. Flickr has a number of ways that users can make their photographs public or private, and the users have control over their contributions at all times. On both sites, user names are

created and the decision to include their real name or use a screen name is entirely in the hands of the user.

While the privacy issue seems more straightforward, the issue of informed consent appears less so. It has been acknowledged that the abstract guidelines of informed consent are open to wider degrees of interpretation when dealing with online participants (Kozinets, 2010). It is agreed that users willingly put material online in a public space for public view, but it is not agreed whether or not this gives a tacit consent to use this material for research purposes. Both the visitor comments and photographs are being used for research purposes in the manner in which the writer or photographer originally intended, as a way of sharing their visitor experience. This goes some way to satisfying the idea of consent, as the material is not being misappropriated in any way. A second issue exists, particularly concerning the photographs, around copyright issues. For the sake of this research, photographs are only used with copyright permission.

Methodology Summary

While none of these data sources alone can fully describe or account for the visitor experience at Graceland, the combination of visitor comments, Personal Meaning Maps, tour content, and visitor photographs build a picture that reveals both visitor perceptions and interpretive devices. This analysis reflects on the essential themes that characterise the Graceland experience, investigating it as it has been lived (van Manen, 1990). This use of 'plural approaches' yields a 'fuller and more nuanced access to visitor understandings and experiences' (Macdonald, 2005, p. 120).

Chapter 3 - Review of Relevant Literature

This research brings together several strands of literature, with the most relevant being the fields of heritage tourism, historic site interpretation and the role of popular culture in museums and historic sites. Graceland is frequently referred to as a tourist attraction, making the tourism literature pertinent for understanding visitor motivations and behaviours that have emerged from that field of research. Performance theory also proves relevant to understanding the nature of tourists' embodied experience with heritage spaces. The nature of engagement and experience is also considered through the framework of the Experience Economy, offering a view of successful components outside traditional heritage and tourism fields, usefully conceptualising visitor experiences as a whole.

Heritage Tourism

Graceland functions as a tourism site with ties to a popular culture heritage. The term 'heritage' is often debated and used in both positive and derogatory contexts. One of the best definitions of 'heritage' relating to the informal learning field is offered by Nick Merriman (1989), stating that it consists of 'the physical representations of the past, or conventional activities associated with it . . .' (p. 166). Samuel (1994), describes the term 'heritage' as being nomadic, travelling easily to appropriate a wide range of experiences, setting up residence in 'streets broad and narrow, royal palaces and railway sidings, canalside walks and town hall squares' (p. 205). Heritage tourism is seen as a special form of tourism, considered to be 'a broad field of specialty travel, based on nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes

and forms' (1996) or 'visiting areas which make the visitor think of an earlier time' (Zeppel and Hall, 1992, p. 78). The National Trust for Preservation (USA) defines heritage tourism as 'traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present' (2011). Graceland incorporates many aspects of these definitions, as it is site embedded in nostalgia, for both a person and a historical time period, which also incorporates a unique level of authenticity.

The Role of Tourists as Visitors

Heritage tourism is a burgeoning area of research which was initially construed in simple supply-side terms, but is now regarded as a complex arena emphasising the importance of the visitors as heritage consumers (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). Tourists are variously represented in literature as pilgrims, image seekers, people who uncritically accept their experiences, and as highly astute cultural consumers and producers. The academic study of tourists has historically neglected the experience of the tourists themselves, more often focusing on the production and marketing of tourism (Weaver, 2011). In one of the early landmark works on heritage tourism, Hewison (1987) envisioned the heritage tourist as a passive consumer. His critical concern focused on the sites and institutions that created and mediated heritage experiences, rather than the tourists that visited these sites. Urry (2002) challenged this assumption, stating that this view 'presumes a rather simple model by which certain meanings, such as nostalgia for times past, come to be unambiguously transferred to the visitor by such heritage sites. There is little sense of the complexity by which different visitors can gaze upon the same set of objects and read and perform them in different ways' (p. 101).

Even Urry's initial analysis limits the role of the tourist to someone who

'gazes' upon the site, rather than as active participant in the experience. Crouch (2004b) believes that while the tourist may stand and stare at the interpreted site they are still engaging with the site as 'a complex individual in the round and with an expressive character, extending character of his or her own to the site as well as using it as informing data' (p.90). The view espoused by authors such as Crouch (2004) and Crang (1999) is that the actions of tourists should be interpreted through a field of embodied practise. In most recent literature, tourists are seen as people who should be analysed as an active, shaping force in tourism, bringing their own experiences and interests to the interpretation of heritage (Kurtz, 2010). This study into the Graceland visitor experience prioritises the visitor's view point, while examining the importance of the site constructed narrative, aiming to combine both strands of the heritage visitor literature.

Heritage as Performance

Increasingly the heritage tourism experience is theorised through ideas of performance, performative behaviours and embodied practises (Coleman and Crang, 2004; Crouch, 2004b; West and Bowman, 2010). It is important to remember that our world, and that of the past, consists not merely of physical objects, but 'perhaps more significantly, of the actions, thoughts, and experiences of people' (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 17). Heritage has been described as a set of 'comingling energies,' which should be considered in light of performance and the 'flows of influence inherent in its continual making and emergence' (Crouch, 2001, p. 57).

Performance theory has been applied to the tourist experience in recent literature to broaden an understanding of tourism and heritage beyond the 'gaze' of earlier tourist studies. Ideas of practice and performance allow us to understand visitors through a new dimension, with particular emphasis on the

'ways in which individuals encounter tourism experiences, events, and spaces' (Crouch, 2004b, p. 85). Performance studies investigate the cultural work that performative behaviours undertake and the characteristics they exhibit, as well as the engagements performers and audiences make with each other (West and Bowman, 2010, p. 278). It is this engagement between the performers and audiences, much like the narrator – narratee relationship described earlier that proves particularly compelling for understanding heritage interpretation.

Coleman and Crang (2004) argue tourism destinations should be seen through the 'dynamic flows of tourists, images and cultures . . . as fluid and created through performance' (p. 1). The literature concerning performance theory and tourism is intimately bound with concepts of place. Place is considered both the 'material and metaphorical content the tourist encounters,' while an encounter is summarised as 'a process in which the subject actively plays an imaginative, reflexive role, not detached but semi-attached, socialised, crowded with contexts' (Crouch, Aronsson and Wahlstrom, 2001, p. 253). Encounters with sites of tourism and heritage, as well as their interpretive mediation, culminate in a performance between place and visitor forming the whole of the visitor experience.

Performance can be defined as 'the tourist-in-action rather than the staged events and displays that resemble the tableaux of representations' (Crouch, 2004b, p. 86). This view embraces an embodied idea of the visitor, involving all senses, no longer confining the experience to sight. At Graceland, for instance, the interpretive experience moves beyond simply seeing Elvis's home to creating a strategy that makes visitors feel immersed in his home. Crouch (2004a) presents tourism as 'mediated by our bodies in an animation of space that combines feeling, imagination and sensuous and expressive qualities' (p. 207).

West and Bowman (2010) view performance in the heritage context as the relationship between the visitors' action and the actions performed by the site, embracing all behaviours that are directly communicative. The stance supported by Coleman and Crang (2004) is that researchers should try to uncover a 'sense of performativity of place rather than just performance in place' (p. 10).

Performativity, then, includes both the interpretive elements of the site that perform for the visitor as well as the visitors' reflexive response to this interpreted experience.

Tourism practices from this embodied viewpoint include a wide range of behaviours, such as speech, movement, imagination, social interactions, feeling, touching and 'doing' (Crouch, 2004a). These performative behaviours relate the physicality of the experience with the cognitive and affective spheres of tourist experience. Beyond the performative behaviours displayed by the tourists themselves, the site provides a multi-sensory performance of its own. Visitor interactions within heritage sites include experiences of light, heat, space, texture and sounds, which are often explicitly produced in formal interpretation schemes that control the heritage environment. The official interpretive practices of the site act in performative ways through communication and the way that visitors are positioned as spectators. Ideally, the behaviours exhibited throughout the heritage tour experience place the audience in a reflexive relationship with the site, rather than allowing visitor to feel inert and passive about the experience (West and Bowman, 2010).

Performance theory is an appropriate avenue for examining Graceland as it embraces the ideas of reflexivity and affect, which seem key to understanding the interpretive experience at Graceland. At the most basic level, Elvis still performs at Graceland, both literally and figuratively. The audio tour is the

mediated performance that allows Elvis and his home to engage visitors. As West and Bowman (2010) note, performative behaviours, such as those facilitated through site interpretation, are 'not accidental but intentional, and they have an additional quality of being reflexive' (p. 279). This reflexive quality is seen as an action that 'acts back' on the visitor to effect some change, perhaps in perception, stimulus or the formation of memories. Graceland's tour experience is rich in media, music, and personal accounts, which encourages reflexivity between the place and visitor. This research data indicates that there is a substantial change in visitors' perception of Elvis, likely an indicator of the reflexive nature of the performance visitors experience at Graceland.

The Power of the Historic House

In the realm of heritage, it has been argued that historic house museums have a power greater than any other museum 'to evoke history and put the visitor into direct contact with it' (Pinna, 2001, p. 4), 'capturing the conservational and educational qualities of museums, and also the communicative, cognitive and emotional connotations of the house' (Pavoni, 2001, p. 16). It is perhaps the fact visitors can relate to a notion of 'home' that makes historic houses so compelling and affecting. 'Home' is a place, space, feeling, practice and stage of being; it is a 'physical dwelling and the family, a haven and a journey, intensely personal and irreducibly communal' (Hodge and Beranek, 2011, p. 98; Mallett, 2004). Regardless of who lived within the structure, the time period, or the particulars of furnishings, the space serves the same function as practically any home, acting as a tangible place representing life in a way practically any visitor can understand.

According to Tilden, author of a key heritage interpretation text, one of the basic principles for connecting with visitors is to appeal to their interests in a way

that visitors feel a kinship to the place. He writes, 'these people of other centuries played, loved, quarrelled, worshipped, knew beauty – all of the essentials were about the same' (2007, p. 42). This fact is best conveyed within a home, as regardless of its scale or history, the structure tells the story of how individuals lived. The idea of a residence is commonly understood and is one that visitors can connect with from their everyday experience, which provides one of the greatest advantages of interpreting the past through historic homes (Coleman, 1933; Donnelly, 2002; Pavoni, 2001; Piatt, 2002). This theme of home and commonality of experience is nurtured at Graceland, as a guidebook noted, visiting Graceland is 'not just another famous house or museum tour. Graceland is and will always be Elvis Presley's home, a place full of the same joys, laughter, sorrow and tears experienced in your own home' (Kath and Morgan, 1996, p. 15). This 'king' did not live in a castle, but in a home, with personal stories at the foundation of the interpretative experience and creating resonance with visitors.

A historic home visit can also provide a contextual sensory experience that helps transport people to a different time. The historic house museum provides a space that visitors can walk into, unhindered by museum glass, becoming immersed in the time period through objects that reflect life as it was lived in that particular space. Historic homes are typically fully furnished to enhance the visitor's sense of life in the space, creating a time capsule-like effect that captures visitors' imaginations. These museums are seen as an 'incomparable and unique museum . . . used to conserve, exhibit or reconstruct real atmospheres' (Pinna, 2001). This experience can be the most gripping for visitors, as one author remarked, standing in the Graceland TV room Elvis 'feels so close you wouldn't be totally astonished if he offered you a blast of Gatorade [a sports drink]' (Simpson, 2004, p. 407). Another Graceland visitor summarised her visit, 'there's

something about that place that makes me feel real close to him . . . There were times when I expected to turn around and have Elvis standing there' (Hilburn, 1989, n.p.). Visitors to Graceland consistently acknowledge how seeing Elvis's home and personal belongings help them 'realize that he was a real person with a real life' (Doss, 1999, p. 88), a sentiment echoed in the Personal Meaning Mapping results examined in this thesis. Authors, such as Alison Hems (2006), attribute this feeling to the ability of the building to retain its own power and resonate memory to visitors. Byrk (2002) ascribes this power to the fully immersive atmosphere, which draws visitors into realistic and richly detailed environments.

Heritage Tourism and the Authentic

Like any other heritage site, Graceland's appeal to visitors lies in the authenticity it represents. Authenticity is an important and much debated concept in the field of tourism, used simultaneously as 'measurement, representation, experience and feeling' (Rickly-Boyd, 2011, p. 16). While there is little agreement about the exact nature of authenticity, it has been used to critically frame tourism and heritage (Andriotis, 2011; Hill and Cable, 2006; Jamal and Hill, 2004; Wang, 2000). The search for authenticity has preoccupied much of society throughout the Twentieth and into the Twenty-first centuries, seen as an antidote to the prevalence of the manufactured and artificial modern world (Evans, Mull and Poling, 2002; Gilmore and Pine, 2007; Roberts, 1997). Tourism is often portrayed as a pursuit of the authentic. In MacCannell's seminal work, *The Tourist* (1999), he hypothesises tourism is ultimately focused on a search for the authentic. Similarly, Crang (1999) cites the work of Walter Benjamin and the 'auratic object,' arguing that tourism is bound in a quest for the genuine article, which stand in opposition to replicas and reproductions. It is more often that 'the

appearance or signifiers of authenticity become as important as anything else . . . the critical game of trying to establish 'academic' authenticity is akin to the tourist field rather than its antithesis, being one more attempt to define the auratic object' (Crang, 1999, p. 241).

Other authors, such as Urry (2002) assert that it seems incorrect to suggest that a search for authenticity is the driving force of tourism. Urry believes that tourists are seeking an experience that will differentiate itself from their daily life and routine. While he concedes that tourists may be seeking authentic elements in their travels, this is seen primarily as a contrast to the daily experience rather than an end in itself. Drawing on the work of Feifer, Urry also considers the growing number of postmodern tourists who are fully aware there is no truly authentic tourist experience, but that 'there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played' (2002, p. 12).

Bruner (1994) explored the nature of authenticity at American heritage sites critiquing the postmodern dichotomies of original/copy and authentic/inauthentic. While Eco and Baudrillard contend that Americans dwell on the simulacra, where the reproduction is 'more real' than the original, Bruner asserts that culture's ability to be continually invented and reinvented allows for a transcendence beyond such starkly defined notions of authenticity. He concludes there are multiples meanings of authenticity based on verisimilitude, genuineness, originality, and authority. In the first instance, historic sites are seeking to achieve a 'mimetic credibility' (ibid, p. 399) when creating authentic reproductions, frequently seen in open air and living history museums. Authenticity based on genuineness is derived from being a 'complete and immaculate simulation' (ibid, p. 399), as opposed to an original object. Lastly, authenticity can be bestowed through authority, where sites legitimise authenticity

based on their own power rather than the originality of an object or site. Bruner concludes that while authenticity may act as a motivating force behind a site visit, visitors' experiences go well beyond a search for authenticity. His research indicates that more significant outcomes include learning about personal pasts, playing with time frames, and consuming nostalgia.

Building on their theories of the Experience Economy, authors Pine and Gilmore argue that contemporary consumers, from tourists to casual shoppers, have become preoccupied with a search for authenticity (2007). They believe that as we live in an 'increasingly unreal world,' filled with 'deliberately and sensationally staged experiences' that consumer choice is often dictated by 'how *real* they perceive an offering to be' (Pine and Gilmore, 2007, n.p.). This perspective was confirmed by a survey of over 5,000 history museum visitors who were posed the question, 'what does "authenticity" mean to you?' (Wilkening and Donnis, 2008). After analysing over 3,000 individual definitions, it became clear that 'visitors were seeking an authentic respite from an unreal world' that allows them to feel that they are 'in that period of time and [can] forget the world today' (Wilkening and Donnis, 2008, p. 18). For these visitors, authenticity is both a motivation for visiting heritage sites and a hallmark feature synonymous with history museums and historic sites.

Authenticity in Historic Homes

The authenticity of the historic house experience is its most compelling and unique attribute. Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey (1998) found the search for authenticity drives people to historic sites and museums. Respondents claim they feel extremely connected to the past in these sites because they can 'uncover "real" or "true" history' (p. 32), with 'nothing between them and the reality of the past' (p. 105). The power of a historic home's authentic setting is

exemplified in the following anecdote from my personal experience as a historic house interpreter:

A group of eight-year-old school children sat huddled in the close quarters of a bedroom that had once housed several of the Alexander's ten children. At this point on the tour the children were allowed to play with reproduction period toys and discuss what life might have been like for children of their age in the Alexander House. Everyone played happily, enjoying this foray into an admittedly idealised past, with the exception of one little boy. He sat on the floor running his small hand over the grain in the floorboards. I stooped down beside him, inviting him to join in, and he posed the question, 'these are the *real* floors?' 'Yes,' I responded, 'they are the original floorboards from when the house was built over two hundred years ago.' 'So *real* people walked here? Little boys used to *really* play here on this same floor?' As the toys were returned and the students began to line up to move on to the next part of the tour, the little boy stayed seated, silently stroking the worn floorboards. I had never seen a visitor so entranced and in awe of the reality of the building, the historic fabric of a building that had seen so many lives lived.

This is not a reaction confined to my own experience, as Silverman's (1997) study indicates historic sites visitors appreciate authenticity and realism, expecting to encounter events that they have not experienced personally. One of the earliest leaders of the historic preservation movement, Ann Cunningham, declared it was this authenticity that merited preservation. A critical element of her rationale to save Mount Vernon, was the 'almost mystical experience of a connection with the past developed through the experience of a historic object' (Butler, 2002, p. 23).

While authenticity is a key construct for visitors, in many cases, this authenticity is an illusion. This is most prominently seen in the first large scale American historic sites such as Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village, which were in fact entirely re-creations (Roberts, 1997). When describing the American Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg, Weeks (2003), notes a key feature of 'heritage' over 'history' is the 'substitution of image for reality that turns illusions

into authenticity. The power of images lies in their evocation of feelings regardless of historic facts' (p. 175). Visitors have their own ideas of authenticity, which, while often deeply held and valued, does not necessarily equate to a historical reality.

The problematic nature of authenticity in the heritage sector has been addressed throughout literature on heritage sites (Herbert, 2001; Samuel, 1994; Schouten, 1995a). It has been suggested that an authentic past does not exist and that it is always reconditioned particularly in heritage settings. Samuel (1994) suggests that heritage managers work to re-invent the past, reconciling past and present, memory and myth, written record and spoken word. This may not be of great consequence to many tourists, who may not question what they see. Schouten (1995a) acknowledges that tourists 'may even be only partly interested in the historical reality as such. Visitors to historic sites are looking for an experience, a new reality based on the tangible remains of the past. For them, this is the very essence of the heritage experience' (p. 21).

Herbert's (2001) research into literary house visitors found that while issues of authenticity were important, with visitors often citing significant items that they believed to be authentic, there was rarely an explicit scrutinising of authenticity. In fact, visitors appeared to be more interested in how 'pleasurable' the house visit was rather than what may or may not have been authentic to the home and author. Studies have indicated tourists likely do not see authenticity in the same vein as academics, with most tourists simply wanting 'to take away from a visit good feelings and memories' (Timothy and Boyd, 2003, p. 254).

Authenticity is always in the eye of the beholder. Graceland, for example, has completely authentic interiors with original objects, but the rooms vary in the period that they are decorated from, ranging from the mid-1970s to the early

1960s. Visitor reviews state how they loved seeing Graceland just the way Elvis left it, when in fact much of the ground floor has been re-decorated to an earlier time and is not 'just the way Elvis left it.' When opening Graceland to the public the family felt that the way Elvis left it did not portray the house, or indeed Elvis, in its best light. Out went the red carpet and matching red imitation French classical décor, as the cool whites and blues were reintroduced with furniture from storage. This is an example of authenticity in many layers, which are often not distinguished by visitors in search of the 'real thing.'

Authors Evans, Mull and Poling (2002) explore the issues behind the 'lore of authenticity' in museums, concluding that there are three aspects to authenticity: reality, originality and the 'awe-inspiring nature of objects' (p. 64). Historic homes are a synergy of all three aspects and layers of interpretation can provide an even richer experience. Bain and Ellenbogen (2002) believe that authenticity lies not in the object, but in the context and experience of the object. The implication of such an approach reveals the need for historic house interpretation to capitalise on the objects and setting to bring the sense of authenticity to the foreground.

Popular Culture and Heritage Sites

The concept of heritage in the postmodern world has become more nebulous, with authors noting that heritage is 'essentially whatever the visitor perceives as heritage' (Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Weaver, 2011, p. 250). As the boundaries erode between official and unofficial heritage, as well as the time and contexts of heritage, heritage based on popular contemporary culture and living memory has emerged. Weaver (2011) laments the lack of literature focused specifically on touristic studies of popular culture sites from the mid-twentieth century. What does remain clear is that popular culture celebrities, such as Elvis,

still lie on the boundary of what would typically be considered heritage, but that they are developing to form a new brand of contemporary culture heritage. Similarly, popular culture celebrities of the twentieth century are not typical subjects for historic homes. Elvis' Graceland and the boyhood homes of the Beatles' John Lennon and Paul McCartney, preserved and open for tours through The National Trust, may be the most notable examples.

A text on heritage tourism categorises types of heritage attractions, with the list including museums, war/defence heritage, religious heritage, living culture, festivals and special events, industrial heritage, archaeological sites/ancient ruins, and literary heritage (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). Nowhere in this typology is a specific reference to heritage related to popular culture. Kevin Moore's work (1997) on popular culture and museums noted that 'representation of popular culture in museums are still in their infancy, and there is still a great deal of resistance' (p. 4). He states that concepts of 'high' and popular culture deem the material culture of popular culture inappropriate museum material. In describing the semantics of 'heritage,' Samuel (1994) describe how it has been at times over-inflated, extending to environments and artefacts which in the past would have been regarded as falling beneath the dignity of history, even citing the 'improbable' use of the word to describe the rise of British pop music. A recent article in the Museums Journal (Mulhearn, 2011) still laments the lack of popular culture, particularly music, in British museums, with the editor stating that 'pop culture is too significant for museums to ignore' (p.3).

Avenues to Understanding Pop Culture Heritage

Returning to the typology of heritage attractions, literary heritage is the area of heritage most similar to popular culture sites such as Graceland. The authors acknowledge that the issues and concepts associated with literary

heritage can include the realm of places associated with famous people such as film stars, artists and musicians. Heritage attractions that rely on popular culture figures can 'become a heritage of notoriety, a mixture of fact and fiction,' (Timothy and Boyd, 2003, p. 42). Graceland was even cited by Timothy and Boyd as a prominent example of this form of heritage tourism.

The framework for understanding literary tourism offers useful insight into the role of popular culture heritage. Herbert's research (2001) examines the reasons why people visit literary places, being primarily drawn to places connected to lives of the writer, noting that 'former homes where writers lived and worked have a role to play in creating a sense of nostalgia, and they can inspire awe or reverence' (p. 314). The broader and deeper emotional connection that visitors may feel beyond the specific writer or story is compelling for visitors. An example of this emotional connection is seen in a study at Beatrix Potter's home that revealed many tourists were drawn there because it allowed them to evoke memories and emotions from their childhood, rather than a particular connection with Potter. Graceland exhibits similar features in its appeal to visitors, providing a sense of personal nostalgia that draws on visitor emotions. The experience at Graceland is underpinned by ideas of memory and nostalgia, especially as the context of the home is within living memory of many visitors. With an interior dating from the 1950s to the 1970s, many elements of décor and the household objects resonate strongly with visitors' memories. The personal meaning maps and visitor photographs discussed further in the thesis illustrate how themes of memory and nostalgia are cultivated at Graceland and add to the affective dimension of the visitor experience.

Literary heritage also inspires visitors to share in the life of the person that they admire, seeking for clues to who that person really was. In describing

people's motivations for visiting The Mount, home of author Edith Wharton, Arroyo (2008) writes that 'a writer's true admirers want more than her writing. They want to know what produced it, the person behind it, whatever doses of her real life are included but camouflaged' (p. 49). Much like a visitor's search for authenticity in heritage sites, literary fans often try to ascertain the essence of the author and their inspiration.

Qualities of Popular Culture Tourism – Examining Graceland

Visitors are drawn to sites based on the general and exceptional qualities it possesses. General qualities include the attractive setting, facilities or services and location on tourist itinerary. Exceptional qualities are considered the link with the artist, association with setting for stories and the association with affective values, nostalgia, memory and symbolism (Herbert, 2001, p. 315). These qualities are exemplified in the Graceland experience and the framework can be applied when considering Elvis as the artist that visitors are seeking out. The general qualities of Graceland are met through the ample facilities and services for visitors, with a large visitor plaza providing opportunities for eating, shopping, and exploring thematic Elvis exhibits.

Although Herbert cites an attractive setting as a key general quality that visitors consider, Graceland is situated in an area that defies this notion. When Elvis purchased the property in 1957 Graceland was on the rural outskirts of Memphis with new middle class housing creeping its way south to the city limits. Today, however, this stretch of Elvis Presley Boulevard is a rather impoverished and unattractive area, a fact often mentioned by visitors in their TripAdvisor reviews. While Graceland is not situated in an idyllic location, once visitors enter the gates of Graceland proper the area is quite serene, with rolling hills, pastures, large shady trees and well-manicured lawns.

The location on the tourist itinerary is an important quality for Graceland. There are two general types of visitors at Graceland, those seeking it out as a destination itself and those taking advantage of its location on a larger tourist itinerary. While the literature reviewed earlier points to visitors driven by a pilgrimage to Graceland, the data from this research suggests that visitors are more likely to visit Graceland for other reasons. When asked if Graceland was their main destination, only 18 per cent of the visitors in this study said that they were traveling for the sole purpose of visiting Graceland. Of the 82 per cent who were visiting Graceland as part of a larger travel itinerary, the majority were passing through Memphis on their way to another destination or in the area on a business related trip. As Rodman (1996) notes when describing the tourism patterns at Graceland, the geographic location of Memphis in the mid-South has 'always made Elvis's home accessible to a more diverse range of tourists and fans than would normally be the case for a star's home' (p.106). The location of Memphis, placed within a day's drive of most of the East coast and halfway between the popular destinations of Chicago and New Orleans, make it a convenient site for tourist itineraries. This 'geographical convenience' that Herbert describes appears to be a more important quality in attracting visitors, at least in the sample for this study, than the Graceland pilgrimage literature alludes to.

Graceland's exceptional qualities are more compelling in exploring its role as a pop culture destination. The link with the artist is the greatest draw for visitors to Graceland, as this was Elvis's home for twenty years, from his first year of superstardom to his death. Graceland has been intimately associated with Elvis from the day that he purchased the home. While most people cannot name the houses where their favourite stars live, the link between Graceland and Elvis

is well known. When describing the uniqueness of Elvis's connection with Graceland, Rodman (1996) states that while there are homes, buildings and tourist attractions associated with celebrities, these links are 'typically either circumstantial, based on a momentary historical conjunction between a public figure and a given place, or deliberate commercial efforts. The only real exception is Graceland . . . Elvis was associated with a very specific site on the map in a way that no other star ever was – or has been since . . .' (p. 102).

Other homes now open to the public that housed pop culture icons include those connected with the Beatles' John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The National Trust preserves these homes in Liverpool, but unlike Graceland neither of these homes were linked to Lennon or McCartney during the height of their fame. Mendips, the childhood home John Lennon shared with his Aunt Mimi, saw little of him after the worldwide success of the Beatles and the home was sold when Mimi retired to Dorset in 1965. Mendips was undeniably important to John and the early formation of the Beatles, as Yoko Ono explains in the home's guidebook, 'everything that happened afterwards germinated from John's dreaming in his little bedroom at Mendips, which was a very special place for him' (Garnett, 2003, p. 3), yet few fans or casual visitors to Liverpool would have associated this site with John Lennon prior to its opening by The National Trust. The boyhood home of Paul McCartney, considered by the National Trust to be 'The Birthplace of the Beatles,' is known simply by its address, 20 Forthlin Road. This unassuming brick terrace home may have produced 'a sound that touched the lives of millions' (Garnett, 1998, p. 16), but it is not inextricably linked to McCartney in the way that Graceland is to Elvis. Graceland appears to stand alone in the world of pop culture homes, as a site intimately linked to its owner for the duration of his career in both in life and death.

When Herbert defines the exceptional qualities of a literary heritage site he writes of how closely the site is associated with the setting of the novels produced by the author. Fans enjoy seeing the setting of their favourite novels, producing powerful imagery and giving these sites a special meaning. In the strictest sense this does not apply to Elvis, simply because he never wrote his own music and while he selected songs that were often autobiographical or personally moving to him, they never expressly reflected of his life. Graceland, however, was a prominent image in Elvis's career and the site of several recording sessions. The iconic images of Elvis and Graceland include him posing with the pink Cadillac that he purchased for his mother in the front drive, him being consoled by his father on the front steps of Graceland after his mother's death, his triumphant press conference return from the Army in 1960, and much later the scenes associated with his death and memorial. If the novel is analogous with Elvis's life, Graceland is the most important setting associated with him. His wife Priscilla noted when describing the relationship between Elvis and Graceland, 'to understand Elvis – the real Elvis – is to see him in his truest element. That's Graceland' (Ritz, 2006, p. 8).

The most significant quality in terms of exceptionality is the association that the site has with affective values. Herbert concludes that this provides visitors with their main experience, allowing visitors to be 'transported into the worlds in which the writers had lived and the items on display strengthened that emotive experience' (2001, p. 330). Herbert's research at literary homes found that visitors derived the most meaning from the affective qualities of the places, enjoying the 'atmosphere and spirit of the place' (ibid, 330). Graceland's atmosphere and spirit of place are driven by the audio tour and abundance of authentic objects, crafting an experience that leads many visitors to feel they

could turn at any moment and see Elvis standing there with them.

The Experience Economy

Graceland typifies many heritage tourism modes, from tourist attraction to place of pilgrimage and historic landmark. Sitting outside the typical heritage context, it encourages the use of a non-traditional approach to explore the nature of the visitor experience. As described in the research rationale, 'The Experience Economy' model was originally intended for the business sector and born out of intentions to build consumer audiences. Pine and Gilmore's 1999 work did not escape the notice of the museum field, with Pine even delivering the keynote address at the American Association of Museums conference shortly after it was published. The core thesis of Pine and Gilmore's work is that experiences are economic offerings, which can be categorised similar to commodities, goods and services. In economic terms, when a person buys an experience, 'he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages – as in a theatrical play – to engage him in a personal way' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p. 2). Experiences are seen as economically distinct in that a seller stages them and they are designed to be memorable and personal.

Crucially, Pine and Gilmore's concept of staging experiences lies not in entertainment, but in engagement, proving particularly relevant to heritage sites and museums. They identify 'experience realms' and note that an experience may involve visitors in several of these realms and that a rich and engaging experience will stretch across as many realms as possible. These realms are described as entertainment, educational, aesthetic, and escapist. A range of dimensions defines the realms with the key dimensions corresponding to guest participation and to the environmental relationship that unites the visitor with the event. Guest participation can span from passive to active, with the

environmental relationship ranging from absorption to immersion. Entertainment is passively absorbed through the senses, whereas an educational experience requires active participation. In the immersive dimensions, the aesthetic is defined as an experience where individuals immerse themselves but remain passive instead of an escapist experience where visitors actively participate in an immersive environment.

Pine and Gilmore suggest that it is only when all four realms culminate in one setting that a space and experience becomes distinctive, compelling visitors to spend more time engaging with the offering. They also propose that the 'realness' of any experience is enhanced by 'blurring the boundaries between the realms' (1999, p. 38). These realms relate directly to the engagement level between the experience and the visitor, providing a tacit link between the engagement and value of the experience that lingers in the memory of visitors. Despite the fact the experience itself lacks tangibility, 'people greatly value the offering because its value lies within them, where it remains long afterward' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p. 13). While museums and heritage sites traditionally focus on the educational component of experience, the work of Pine and Gilmore makes clear that a richer and more valuable experience can be created by introducing other elements that appeal to visitors' senses and frames of engagement.

Historic Site Interpretation

There are a multitude of ways to access the past, ranging from documents and photographs to oral histories and the built environment. Historic houses are a popular means for the public to explore the past. A survey of attitudes towards history indicates that Americans put more trust in history museums and historic sites than in any other source (Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998, p. 4). There are

unique attributes that enable historic sites to effectively convey the past, most notably their presumed authenticity and tangibility (Sanchis, 1998). Historic sites serve as important cultural resources, preserving a 'historical context for the tangible remains of the past' (Schell, 1992, p. 27). A historic home is the closest a person can come to stepping back in time, literally walking where others walked in the past. These special attributes are accentuated and extended through interpretive mediation, the key process of communicating with visitors.

Defining Historic House Museums

The term 'historic house museum' is used broadly to describe any home that has been preserved for the public. The general definition for historic house museums centres 'on the maintenance, care, and interpretation of either a single, historic residential structure or a complex of structures associated with and including a single residence that serves as the primary focus' (Butler, 2002, p. 18). A 'historic house museum,' is distinguished from a historic house by the collection contained within the structure, with a historic house museum including furnishings original to the home or time period (Pinna, 2001). House museums can be further divided into two categories based on function. A documentary home is associated with a specific historical event or person, containing original objects to the site and if possible in their original context or layout.

Representative sites are ones that depict a period of history or way of life, reconstructed using objects original to the time period, but not the particular site (Butcher-Youngmans, 1993). There are many homes that combine both documentary and representative elements. These homes were preserved because of their connection with a noted event or resident, with the original contents no longer in tact, leaving the house to be furnished using period objects. In these instances, the structure is documentary and the interiors are

representative. Graceland is a wholly documentary site, adding to its allure and appeal to visitors.

The Purpose of Historic Houses

Historic preservation is often the primary goal for historic homes, with the interpretive stories and collections considered only after architectural preservation. The first formal efforts to preserve historic homes in the United States occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, led most notably by the 1859 acquisition of Mount Vernon, George Washington's home. The first homes preserved in the United States for public interest were connected with the Founding Fathers, and these homes were initially for the 'didactic purposes of inspiring patriotism and inculcating civic virtues' (Schell, 1992, p. 27), rather than for the sake of structural preservation.

The Centennial celebration of 1876 paved the way for many new historic house museums. These early examples demonstrate that preserving physical structures was as important as the preservation of ideals that these structures embodied. The rise of the historic house museum in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America can be largely attributed to a strong revival of colonial styles that grew out of the Centennial (Coleman, 1933). This Colonial Revival movement focused not just on the decorative arts or architecture, but also on the nostalgia of a time that was distinguished by national unity and patriotism. As a text panel at the DeYoung Museum notes, strong proponents of this movement used 'colonial genealogy, historic house museums, and antiques to preserve and promote the values of a disappearing social order.' This was done in large part to encourage an acculturation of values by more recent immigrants, attempting to use historic homes as a way of transmitting the virtues adopted by the nation's Founding Fathers. Coleman (1933) reflected on the nature of this revival and its

impact on future generations of historic house museums, concluding, 'the historic house movement seeks not to *use* but to *know* – to *understand* American houses of the past. This is not a revival but an awakening; its result is education' (p. 20).

Education may have been a result of the historic house museum experience, but it was not the driving force behind the movement. Preservation remained the primary purpose, further strengthened by the 1935 passage of the Historic Sites Act, where the federal government committed itself to historic preservation. During this same era, the private development of Colonial Williamsburg served as an important model and resource for historic house museums (Butler, 2002). The complexity of the research undertaken to re-create the settlement and the relative accuracy of the interiors proved that historic house museums were about more than inculcating virtues, moving closer to Coleman's vision of education.

Education and preservation, while important to those who maintain and interpret sites, may not be of key interest to visitors. Today, the visiting public consider house museums 'primarily as a form of recreation and tourism, with some underlayment, perhaps, of education' (Sanchis, 1998). Similarly, the National Trust in the UK found through market research that only seven per cent of their visitors come wanting to learn something (Taylor, 2006, p. 100). If visitors are not coming to historic homes with learning about the past as their primary purpose, what are they seeking? Contemporary visitors may desire an experience born out of the home's unique qualities, rather than an educational outing. This experience is the result of an interpretive experience, requiring careful consideration and understanding of visitors.

Defining Interpretation

Interpretation in the museum context is both process and product,

describing the process of communicating between the site and the visitor and the tools that are used for this communication. There is no one accepted definition of interpretation, but virtually all definitions focus on bridging information between the object or site and the observer. Interpretation aims to provide new insights and ways of looking at or appreciating a place or object, encompassing both the content and the methods for sharing it. Interpretation is in practice 'how museums educate' (Credle, 2002, p. 269).

The position of interpretation has shifted over the years, as theories of learning and communication now dominate the field, leading to a more audience-focused concept of the interpretive process (Black, 2005; Hooper-Greenhill, 2002; Mason, 2005). The development of interpretation, from nature guiding to the built and cultural environment, has been 'marked by changing aims and interpretive philosophies' (Timothy and Boyd, 2003, p. 197). Initially, interpretation was considered a revelatory art constructed by skilled guides. Contemporary literature, however, focuses on the complexities of semiotic and constructivist theories to describe the interpretive process.

There is a concern that heritage interpretation may over-interpret a site, leading that to a trivialising of events and people, potentially diminishing the visitor experience (Urry, 1990). Timothy and Boyd (2003), however, argue that the belief sites can stand on their own through their intrinsic qualities is flawed. The fear that interpretation will prevent visitors from having a direct experience with the site is based on the assumption that people have sufficient background and understanding to ascertain the significance of the place on their own. While research, such as that conducted by Falk and Dierking (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998; 2000), indicates that visitors come to museums with background knowledge that frames their experiences, Timothy and Boyd (2003) are more

concerned that these backgrounds are not adequate to grapple with the interpretive complexities associated with heritage sites. Similarly, they fear that heritage interpretation is often oversimplified to meet the 'harried needs of visitors' (ibid, p. 196), perhaps contributing to the trivialisation that Urry notes.

Recent advances in interpretive technology may aid heritage interpreters as they share the site's stories and allows visitors to construct their own interpretations. Discussing a new audio-visual programme at the Museum of the Arctic, Kurtz (2010) describes it as 'less a moment of control over interpretation, more a work of seduction: the possibility was always open for its viewers to opt out of its story, yet the programme strove to intensify any existing desire to believe its narrative' (p. 229). This work of seduction draws on multiple historic sources and blends rich media to illustrate the past, forming an interpretive experience that engages visitors rather than didactically shaping their views. Heritage interpretation should ideally strike a balance between drawing on personal experiences that resonates with visitors while honouring the complexities of the past and the unique attributes of sites.

Interpretation as revelation

The historic roots of professional interpretation lie in the American National Parks Service, which employed interpreters from its inception and has continued to build frameworks for interpretation. This early foundation in environmental interpretation emphasised connecting visitors with the setting and revealing the meanings behind the natural and cultural resources, as well as aspects of conservation. Enos Mills, one of the first modern authors to write about the role of an interpreter suggested that the aim of interpretation is to 'illuminate and reveal' (Brochu and Merriman, 2002, p. 13). In 1957, Freeman Tilden published *Interpreting Our Heritage*, considered a definitive text in the field of interpretation.

Tilden was not focused on drafting a concrete definition for interpretation, but rather describing principles for interpretation based on what he had experienced as good practice. He eloquently defined the function of interpretation as ‘an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information’ (Tilden, 2007, p. 33).

The theme of revelation echoes throughout American literature about interpretation. The idea of revelation refers to a stripping away of layers to reveal some element of truth about the site or object. As Tilden went on to explore what interpretation is, he describes it as the ‘revelation of a larger truth that lies behind any statement of fact’ (2007, p. 33). There is an imperative need for interpretation to be more than the simple recitation of fact. These definitions of interpretation historically place the primary responsibility for understanding in the hands of knowledgeable experts, neglecting the role of the visitor. Perhaps most importantly this revelation was a mediated process for visitors, occurring through the aid of a guide, label, or other interpretive device.

Interpretation as meaning making

At its most fundamental level, interpretation has been defined as ‘the process of constructing meaning’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2002, p. 12). Although visitors are capable of constructing meaning on their own, in the museum setting, the term interpretation more frequently refers to the process done by the museum for the visitor. As Hein (1998) notes, once the position that visitors can construct personal knowledge is accepted, it is imperative for interpretation to reflect this stance. Interpretation from this constructivist viewpoint should provide opportunities for the construction and validation of knowledge and conclusions drawn by the visitor. This process is not seen as a one way conduit of

information, but rather a 'dynamic process of communication between the museum and the audience' (EdCom, 2005, p. 11). The UK's National Trust believes that interpretation should strive to 'help people find their own meaning and values and make sense of the world around them' (Taylor, 2006, p. 102). Interpretation, then, should not be a purely didactic endeavour, but one that helps illuminate the site and collections for visitors and enables their own meaning making to take place.

Contemporary museum learning texts view audiences as active participants in the interpretive process, suggesting it is:

an approach to presenting the heritage which seeks to engage and involve the audience with the 'real thing,' to encourage participation and, through that, to assist visitors to develop the skills to explore for themselves and so enhance their own understanding (Black, 2005, p. 185).

Definitions of interpretations that frame the interpretive process as meaning making place the onus of interpretation on the visitor, rather than a well informed guide. The goal is to provide a framework for visitors to construct their own meaning. Russell Dickenson, former director of the U.S. National Park Service, suggests that the function of interpretation should 'implore visitors to better understand themselves and to find personal meaning and inspiration' (Tilden, 2007, p. vii). If the role of interpretation is to enable visitors to construct meanings, rather than assemble a catalogue of facts, then the selection of interpretive tools used by sites becomes paramount in the visitor experience.

Interpreting the Past at Historic Houses

Historic house museums contain a multitude of stories and experiences that need to be communicated to visitors. The American Association of Museums Historic Sites Committee defined interpretation within this context as a 'planned effort to create for the visitor an understanding of the history and significance of

events, people and objects with which the site is associated' (Schell, 1992, p. 30). The value of historic sites' collections is in the historical significance of artefacts in their contextual arrangement and relationship to the building itself. As Schell (1992) notes, this relationship between the site and collections means that interpretation is vital for visitor understanding. Without interpretation, the stories and meanings of the structure, collections and inhabitants remain invisible to visitors. Traditionally, historic house interpretation has emphasised facts about objects or architecture. Although visitors may visit historic house museums solely for the purpose of 'seeing the possession of a revered person, like George Washington or even Elvis,' Donnelly implores that a historic site 'offer a much more complex vision of its past through multi-layered and multisensory experiences that expand interpretive choices and create connections' (2002, p. 2).

Coleman (1933) encourages interpreters to realise that homes have two levels of interest, divided into the foreground and background. The foreground of interpretation should consist of personal 'associations' of the house, acknowledging that this important element may not be represented tangibly. The background is the 'impersonal or general meaning of the house in relation to folkways,' which is 'very visibly expressed by both the house and furnishings' (Coleman, 1933, p. 91). The same challenge remains today, to find effective ways to integrate the personal stories in the foreground with the furnishings and architecture as a backdrop.

The key principles for interpretation outlined by Tilden are as valid today as when originally devised. The first principle, also echoed in contemporary literature about visitor meaning making, states that 'any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the

personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile' (Tilden, 2007, p. 36).

Subsequent principles declare that interpretation is not information, but rather revelation based on information, and that the chief aim of this interpretation is provocation instead of instruction. There is no doubt that heritage interpretation is an art requiring much more than simply recalling important names and dates, and Tilden's writings lay a foundation for considering what interpretive techniques best serve visitors. West and McKellar (2010) reflect that while Tilden's principles were positive suggestions, they also mirror the absences to be found on many sites: an absence of provocation, revelation and interaction with visitors.

When Brochu and Merriman (2002) defined a successful interpretation programme, they distilled a 'recipe' which dictated that interpretation be enjoyable, relevant, organised and thematic. These were similar to characteristics drawn together in *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (2002), which concluded that the components of a successful historic house museum tour are thematic organisation, solid evidence, people stories, historical context, and a carefully planned visitor experience. Schouten (1995b) suggests that interpretation should make heritage visits UNIQUE experiences, with the acronym reflecting elements of engaging interpretation: Uncommon, Novelty, Informative, Quality, Understanding, and Emotions. Additionally, most authors also agree that skilful interpretation requires tours to connect visitors to the day-to-day existence of the past (Donnelly, 2002; Silverman, 1997; Tilden, 2007). All of these characteristics and tools aim to provide visitors with a lens to understand the historic home that they are visiting. It is the mixture of narrative, objects, empathy and enthusiasm that will ultimately make interpretation successful.

Relating Interpretation to the Visitor

It is now widely accepted that museum learning is predicated on the

agendas and meaning making of visitors (Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998), but the recent use of constructivist theories to underpin interpretation is by no means new. In the 1950s, Tilden was already certain that 'the visitor's chief interest is in whatever touches his personality, his experiences, and his ideals' (2007, p. 36) and that ultimately visitors will see things through their own eyes, referring to their knowledge and experience. West and McKellar (2010) state that heritage interpretation should be focused on finding 'a way of engaging the visitor to relate their own experiences to the heritage experience' (p. 167). Interpretive strategies should be crafted with an understanding of how visitors will relate to the information and site.

While personal relevancy has been highly promoted as a tool for successful interpretation, there have been few studies exploring the impact of this approach on visitors. One of the only studies to examine the use of personal relevancy has found a link between personal interpretive connection and long-term retention (Farmer and Knapp, 2008). This suggests that historic sites do have the power to evoke strong images that visitors can intimately relate to. It is this power that should be tapped when designing interpretative approaches.

Successful interpretation is built on an understanding of visitors' contexts and perspectives for heritage site experiences. One of the ways to develop this understanding is to consider how people engage with the past on a daily basis. Silverman (1997) concludes that everyday engagement with the past is characterised by (a) the use of significant others as sources of information about the past, (b) the frequency of the life story as a medium for learning about the past, (c) the importance of objects and artefacts as symbols, and (d) the impact of first-hand experience on one's perception of a past event. This reveals that interpretive tools such as oral histories, first-person interpreters, and tours closely

connecting objects and lived experience should all encourage visitors to better relate to historic sites.

Visitors are easily reached by drawing on daily experiences that are universally understood. Brochu and Merriman (2002) believe that there are universal concepts that are likely to appeal to everyone, including family, work, death, play, and celebration. These are cited as examples of ways to make interpretation more personally relevant. Not every author would agree that universal experiences and concepts exist, as Roland Barthes argued in his critique of the Museum of Modern Art's 1955 photographic exhibition, *The Family of Man*. This exhibition was designed to mirror the 'universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life' (Damrosch, 2000, p. 57), but Barthes (1991) contends that this mythologizes a universally understood human condition. He asserts that while facts of nature, such as a birth, are universal there is nothing more meaningful that can be said about them as they are too historically constructed. Essentialist interpretation that propagates this 'eternal lyricism' of events and discourses ultimately serve to 'suppress the determining weight of History' (Barthes, 1991, p. 101). Damrosch (2000) believes that while Barthes condemned the exhibit's attempt to 'export bourgeois American values under the guise of universalism,' he had no interest in understanding the exhibit's strategy 'towards its primary and original audience' (p. 58). Damrosch concludes, 'Barthes himself universalized the exhibit's nature and meaning as much as the exhibit's own organizers were doing – an ironic result, in view of his ongoing efforts to deconstruct essentialist and universalizing approaches' (2000, p. 60). This debate illuminates the fact that while certain events and institutions, such as birth, family, and death, may exist universally they are always contextually mediated.

Interpreters often seek to portray the 'eternal lyricism' that Barthes cautions against, but they should do so with a clear understanding of their primary audience, acknowledging the situated nature of these 'universal' conditions. To follow the birth example further, in an illustration of what he considers effective interpretation, Tilden recalls the effect of a personal telegram sent at the birth of President Franklin Roosevelt on display at the Roosevelt home. This simple celebration of birth allows visitors to 'instantly feel kinship not merely with the Roosevelts, but with the whole mansion and area' (Tilden, 2007, p. 41). This is a story many visitors can relate to from their own experience, made all the more moving as they conjure images of the future president as a small baby long before reaching his political destiny. Tilden's purpose in citing this example is to inspire an interpretive strategy that focuses on personal connections. While there may be no universal truths, visitors can still empathise and feel 'kinship,' with interpretation relating to the visitor proving powerful (Brochu and Merriman, 2002; Farmer and Knapp, 2008).

Affective Presence and Emotions

Tapping into visitors' emotions and feelings is another powerful interpretive tool for bridging the past and present, and an effective means of relating to the visitor. Bringing affective qualities to the forefront of the experience emphasises the experiential quality of visiting of a museum or historic home (Schouten, 1995b; Welsh, 1997). The goal of interpretation should not lie in descriptions of historic events and people, but should inspire a *feeling* for a moment in history (Craig, 1989). Recent heritage tourism research has revealed visitors' desire to be emotionally connected, stimulating an interest in 'hot interpretation' that is both emotive and cognitive (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 2008; Weaver, 2011). Despite the fact that authors as early as Tilden advocated an affective component to

interpretation, many historic site interpretation schemes still fail to acknowledge that visitors do not experience heritage as a solely cognitive experience.

The term 'hot interpretation' has been introduced to the heritage field in an effort to promote a more affective visitor experience. Hot interpretation can be classified as any interpretation that 'appreciates the need for and injects an affective component into its subject matter, where appropriate' (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 2008, p. 503). The degree to which interpretation 'works on us' and the strength of the affective experience is determined by factors such as time, distance, experiencing places, the degree of abstraction and interpretative management. The research conducted by Uzzell and Ballantyne (2008) at various heritage sites around the globe indicates that interpretation with 'an affective dimension will more adequately convey the meaning and significance of the heritage of the people, places, events and artefacts' (p. 510).

Credle (2002) believes that reaching people through this affective emotional approach is one of the best ways to lead to a successful historic house experience. Triggering memories, creating a sense of personal struggle and achievement, or stirring passions about ideals are all ways to tap into visitors' emotions. Acknowledgement of the affective dimension of learning has emerged partly as new concepts of learning and the role of informal learning environments have evolved (Kryger, 2005). The affective process deals with attitudes, feelings and emotions of learners, connecting with visitors in other ways than strictly cognitive approaches.

Utilising the affective domain has been seen as integral to the interpretive process since the formative days of professional interpretation, with Coleman (1933) introducing interpretation by noting 'words are very properly afterthoughts, since old houses appeal straight to the emotions; but it happens that whenever

the feelings are stirred the mind soon rouses itself and begins asking questions' (p. 87). The National Association for Interpretation frames its definition of interpretation through emotion, stating 'Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meaning in the resource' (Brochu and Merriman, 2002, p. 16). Donnelly (2002) acknowledges that historic house museums can construct experiences, without having to contrive settings, which allow visitors to actively learn through emotions and senses.

It is the intangible nature of emotions that can provide powerful avenues for connecting with visitors. Veverka (1999) advocates the use of this approach throughout his interpretive planning workshops, citing the use of the term 'historic house' as a tangible with far less appeal than the intangible 'historic home,' although it is unlikely that emotional interpretation can be reduced to such simple semantics. This approach to interpretation is in keeping with the knowledge that empathy encourages understanding of the past (Lee, 2005) and can effect the longer-term impact of a historic site visit (Farmer and Knapp, 2008). Visitors often visit heritage sites seeking an emotional experience and consider it a significant interpretive factor. A study examining visitors' preferences for interpretation at heritage sites found visitors are interested in interpretation that generates emotional involvement, rather than just focusing on an educational component (Poria, Biran and Reichel, 2009).

The term that seems most fitting for the role of affect at Graceland is 'affective presence,' indicating that the interpretive experience 'incorporates the ineffable and inescapable qualities of lived experience including emotions, spirituality, social communion, and creative inspiration' (Boehner, Sengers and Gay, 2005, p. 81). The authors of the definition admit that affective presence is

an 'amorphous concept encompassing the rich, subjective experiences that make life authentic and irreproducible to generic abstractions' (ibid, p. 87). Affective presence appears to offer a more immersive affective experience than the ones described earlier, employing emotions to provoke questions and understandings of visitors. This term will be returned to throughout the exploration of the visitor experience at Graceland, as it best describes the emotions that are evoked throughout the interpretive experience.

Narratives in Historic Houses

One of the most successful tools for sharing the compelling commonalities between past and present and revealing the home's inhabitants is through storytelling. The narrative potential of historic homes should be capitalised on to engage visitors. Narrative structuring is a re-current theme in understanding how people learn about the past, with research suggesting that people naturally 'attain the capacity to tell and understand stories and that they engage in structuring their actions and happenings narratively' (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 7). It seems that if people compose their own narratives to access the past that the same process of narrative construction can be a significant interpretive tool for presenting the past.

In a section entitled, *The Story's the Thing*, Tilden observes that 'all the good intentions are unavailing unless the interpreter understands that form is the essence, and that pedagogical miscellany is a bore to the man on holiday' (2007, p. 56). Beyond saving visitors from boredom, Lloyd (2002) claims that developing effective coherent stories is critical for historic houses and something that must be done if they are to have a future. Such narratives are an important means of reaching a public that is acclimatised to the storytelling media of television and movies. The employment of narrative and storytelling makes

'empty-spaces and alien territories' into venues that are 'pleasurable and familiar' (Philips, 1999, p. 91). As early as Coleman's writings in 1933, it was clear that the foreground story about people and events connected with the house should be emphasised over architecture or furnishings.

Visitor research has indicated that certain types of narrative emerge as compelling and interesting to the public in heritage settings (Beranek, 2011; Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998). The narrative should be specific, focusing on named people and events rather than generic and sweeping references to the past and lifestyles. Attempts should be made to make this narrative tangible, attaching it to the fabric of the site in meaningful ways. A recognised 'mode of emplotment' should be utilised, such as tragedy or romance, engaging visitors through a narrative genre they are already familiar with from other settings. Importantly, respondents to these research projects indicate that it is the focus on human experience developed through narrative, instead of events, which is often decisive in the quality of the visitor experience. The emphasis on human experience will allow stories to bring a historic house to life for visitors.

The power of narrative is applicable in any understanding of the past, not solely in a historic site setting. Bage (1999) argues that narrative is one of the most effective tools for engaging people with history, as the structure of stories provides creative insight into the people and events of the past. Studies indicate that people prefer to learn history through individuals rather than the omniscient, unidentified voice most often employed on home tours (Silverman, 1997). Using people to tell the story of the house can take the form of first person interpreters, identified narrators, oral histories, role-played characters, and tours based on journals and accounts. Stories should be told in human terms, encouraging empathy between today's visitors and the inhabitants of the past.

Visitors to historic homes are often searching for encounters that will allow them 'to experience real people, real stories' (Wilkening and Donnis, 2008, p. 19). It is this focus on the lived experience, instead of the history of objects or architecture, which constitutes a personal narrative. The home's story unfolds through the lens of those that lived there, creating an empathetic and personally resonant interpretation for visitors. The use of narrative in interpretation is a 'powerful way to make sense of human temporalities' (Hodge, 2011, p. 129), allowing visitors access to aspects of the house's history in a manner that connects with the visitors, collapsing the time and space between inhabitants of the past and present.

This people-centred approach to narrative in historic homes moves interpretation from the realm of 'high art to human form,' and in the words of eighteenth century commentator Dr Abel Evan, from "house" to "dwelling" (West and McKellar, 2010, p. 197). Interpretation shaped by inhabitants rather than art or architecture is becoming increasingly popular at historic homes, with notable organisations such as Historic Royal Palaces and the National Trust beginning to employ such approaches to re-develop their interpretive strategies. Although this approach is not new, West and McKellar (2010) suggests that its resurgence in interpretation may be driven by contemporary 'celebrity-obsessed and personality-dominated' culture (p. 191).

While the notion of storytelling is appealing, Pavoni cautions it is an approach that 'calls for great methodological rigour' (2001, p. 18). It is too easily assumed that interpreters can find amusing or poignant tales of the people who lived there and produce a storyline. Equally, it might be expected that staging vignettes within rooms or developing a first person character to guide visitors will quickly and instantly make the tour experience more engaging. In fact, all of

these approaches require consideration and can prove to be deceptively hard, with sites struggling to find compelling ways to energise and share their stories. Lloyd (2002) describes the arduous process of creating a new interpretive storyline at Clivenden, revealing that this multi-step process succeeded in meeting the needs of their visitors but required an entire re-development of the house interiors and tour approach. While the narrative approach may be challenging to implement effectively, it is a tool that reinforces what is already understood about how people make sense of the past and connect with history and is central to creating the personally engaging experience sought after by today's visitors.

Chapter 4 - 'Miracles . . . Still happen Now and Then:' Personal Meaning Mapping at Graceland

Personal Meaning Maps form the corpus of the visitor research conducted for this study, with visitors participating in PMM exercises over four days in December 2006 and April 2007. A pre-visit questionnaire recorded basic demographic data, as well as questions positioning visitors as casual tourist or destination specific visitors, and whether or not they consider themselves an Elvis fan. The post-visit questionnaire asked visitors to identify their favourite part of the experience and how their visit matched their expectations. The PMM exercise was conducted both before and after their visits, when visitors were asked to write or draw what they thought of when they thought of Elvis. The pre-visit interviews were conducted while visitors were waiting for the shuttle bus at the Plaza complex. Visitors were randomly selected and asked to wear an identifying badge so they could be located after their tour for the follow-up interview. The post-visit interviews were conducted while visitors waited at the shuttle bus pick-up point at the mansion. After the tour, visitors were given another blank meaning map and asked again what they think of when they think of Elvis.

The responses were analysed using a process set out by Adams, Falk and Dierking (2003, p. 24):

- 1) Review data to identify clusters or patterns in the responses
- 2) Create a set of dimensions or scales based on the needs of the research study
- 3) Devise clear and concise scoring rubrics for each dimension
- 4) Use rubrics to score the pre and post-visit responses, resulting in a series of change scores.

This type of scoring adds a quantitative component to PMM data, as the change scores can be used in both parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses.

The content coding and examination of patterns that emerge in the pre and post-visit maps can also provide rich qualitative data.

In the majority of cases from the Graceland research, the PMM responses were single words or expressions, for example 'music' or 'the King,' allowing for a frequency analysis to be conducted prior to content analysis coding. This frequency analysis served to identify patterns and was compared with the demographic groups represented to determine if there are trends in perception related to the age of the visitor. It also provided a means of beginning to understand the nature of the changes in perception. The first stage of PMM analysis, along with the visitor comments, formed the basis of the dimensions used to determine change scores. The primary dimension scored is the 'universe of concepts' used before and after the visit, which was analysed for the depth of change.

PMM Sampling and Collection

There were 170 visitors who completed both pre and post-visit questionnaires and meaning maps over the course of four weekdays at Graceland. Data was collected in December and April, with overall visitation between 700 and 1500 guests on each day. Notably, this research was not conducted during an events time, such as Elvis Week, in order to obtain a sample of responses representative of the 'typical' Graceland visitor. Of the visitors selected, 75 per cent were from the United States, representing 28 states, and the remaining 25 per cent were international visitors from nine different countries. This breakdown of US and international visitorship is similar to the overall Graceland demographic, which includes 80 per cent American and 20 per cent international visitation (EPE, 2006). The age groups represented are also similar to official Graceland demographics, with 57 per cent of the visitors in this study

under the age of 50. There was no one under the age of twenty in this sample, although this typically would make up approximately ten per cent of the overall visitation. This is likely due to the fact the data was collected on weekdays, minimising the number of families, and school age group visits do not go through the main staging line from which the participants were selected.

During the September 2006 pilot, two factors became clear for successful data collection, 1) visitors needed a way of being identified that was unobtrusive to them, but that the researcher could clearly see after the visit to complete the second half of the exercise and 2) visitors travelling with companions preferred to complete the questionnaire and meaning maps together. Initially, visitors were given small stickers with a number on it and asked to wear it on their outer layer of clothes on the left side. The stickers presented several problems, as they fell off easily or were too easily obscured by other clothing, bags, or straps. This meant that in the pilot, of the 50 people that completed the pre-visit meaning maps, only 37 were identified to complete the post-visit meaning maps. During the main data collection, name badge lanyards were used, which were both larger and hung around the visitor's neck in a clear and recognisable location. With this system of identifying visitors, all of the visitors who participated on the main data collection days were able to complete both sets of meaning maps.

For visitors travelling with a companion, it was often the case that both visitors wanted to participate in the research. This is not altogether unexpected, as learning in museums has been proven to be a fundamentally social experience (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Surprisingly, there is no protocol in published PMM methodologies that account for them being completed in this social setting, as they have always been devised as one person's individual responses. It became apparent early on that visitors were more at ease during

the exercise when their travel partner also participated. In this instance different coloured pens were provided to each person, with their responses recorded on the same meaning map. Typically one visitor would write their response and then hand the clipboard to their travel partner, often requesting it back after they had more time to think or reflected on what their travel partner wrote. Occasionally there was one recorder for a 'brain storming' of ideas, in which case the researcher colour coded the responses after they were finished.

The tour length dictated the number of visitors that participated in the study, as the pre and post-visit exercises were conducted in two different locations. This required the researcher to spend approximately 30 minutes collecting responses before moving to the tour exit to wait for that group of visitors. The quickest time that any visitor went through the tour was 35 minutes and the average length of time was 90 minutes, meaning there could be a considerable period of time waiting for visitors to finish the tour, with some visitors taking over two hours to complete the tour. The pilot study indicated that it was more effective to have the same researcher conducting the pre-visit exercise to wait for visitors at the end, aiding in the identification of visitors and allowing the visitors to recognise whom to speak with at the conclusion of the tour. While this maximised the number of completed meaning maps, it did limit the number of visitors who could participate.

The setting in which the questionnaires and meaning maps were completed was less than ideal. When Falk et al. (1998) conducted the first PMM exercises, visitors who participated were ushered into 'a quiet alcove and were administered a pre-visit PMM . . . [and] encouraged to explain why they wrote what they did and to expand on their thoughts and ideas' (p. 110). There is no quiet alcove at Graceland; instead there is a busy visitor plaza with a series of

queues, the obligatory photo stop in front of fake Graceland gates, and a continual churn of shuttle buses, all with Elvis music playing loudly in the background. While standing in this bustling line, visitors were asked a short series of questions that the researcher recorded the answers to. This sheet was then turned over to reveal the 'Elvis' prompt, which was secured to a clipboard and handed to the visitor to complete. This setting precluded any follow-up interview with visitors about their responses initially (which is suggested in the original PMM scheme), although the setting at the end of the tour did allow for time to discuss visitor responses.

Analysing Personal Meaning Maps

Meaning Maps can be analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, but the majority of published studies are dominated by quantitative analysis (Adelman, Falk and James, 2000; Bowker and Jasper, 2007; Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998). The dimensions typically assessed in PMM analysis are: extent, breadth, depth and mastery (Adams, Falk and Dierking, 2003). Extent examines the quantity of vocabulary used, typically recording one point for each individual vocabulary word recorded. Breadth is the change in the quantity of relevant concepts recorded before and after the experience. Depth is the change in how 'deeply and richly' (Bowker and Jasper, 2007, p. 142) visitors understood the concepts. Mastery is considered the overall change in the quality of understanding and how visitors use this understanding.

One of the key achievements for PMM methodology is the ability to map what is essentially qualitative data in a quantitative manner, providing data that can be subjected to statistical testing rather than solely traditional qualitative analysis. The challenge in viewing these dimensions entirely in quantitative terms, however, is that many of them overlap with qualitative content analysis

methods. In this research, a qualitative content analysis based on frequency of word use has been used to understand the extent of visitor perceptions, rather than incorporating another layer into the quantitative dimensions. The qualitative and quantitative methods serve the same purpose in this respect. When Diamond (1999) distinguished between quantitative and qualitative approaches, she reasoned that quantitative methods attempt to classify diverse opinions into established categories and that these studies are designed to look for numerical patterns. Qualitative methods emphasise depth of understanding and are particularly effective as a way of examining phenomena that cannot be easily summarised into discrete categories. It appears, then, that when analysing the PMM data the creation of discrete categories and the ability to look at them numerically defines the quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis, while possibly employing some of the same coding categories, examines the data in greater depth and utilises individual cases to explore the trends and exceptions present in the data.

Personal Meaning Mapping Quantitative Analysis

Drawing upon the dimensions established by Falk and his colleagues, the breadth and depth of responses were the key components analysed. The use of dimensions such as extent and mastery are more applicable when using PMM to determine what visitors have learned over the course of a visit. The research at Graceland differs from that model, however, as it seeks to uncover perceptions rather than learned facts. The subject matter and purpose of the meaning mapping in this instance did not lend itself to determining mastery.

The number of relevant concepts that visitors express in both pre and post-visit maps defines the breadth of visitor perception. These concept categories emerged from comments expressed by visitors, rather than a pre-

determined set of concepts established by the researcher. Using themes articulated by visitors adopts a visitor centred approach to understanding the experience. Many of these concepts are similar to the multifaceted images of Elvis that Doss (1999) explores in *Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith, and Image*. She argues Elvis's enduring appeal emanates from the multiplicity of images associated with him. The breadth of concepts used in the PMMs is evidence of the lengthy, and often conflicting, typology of perceptions people hold of Elvis. The list of concepts developed for coding the responses is described in Table 1 below¹².

Concept Code	Concept
PD	Physical attribute of Elvis (hair, eyes, sexy, etc.)
TA	Elvis the Teen Angel*
I	Iconic* (the King, Superstar, etc.)
OB	Object or Place associated with Elvis
RR	Rock and Roll Music (specific reference to Rock and Roll)
T	Song or movie title
HR	Historical Reference (50s and 60s, Ed Sullivan, etc.)
PR	Elvis the Performer (music, singing, dancing, jumpsuits, etc.)
GD	Description of Graceland (object on tour, setting, etc.)
DA	Elvis the Drug Addict*
PM	Personal Memory or connection (visitor relating stories from when they met Elvis, knows someone who is an Elvis impersonator, etc.)
IV	Elvis the Innovator (musical innovation, ground breaker, etc.)
CA	Career Achievement
BC	'Blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes'* ¹³
PT	Elvis the Patriot*
PH	Elvis the Philanthropist*
FL	Elvis as fun-loving
FM	Elvis the Family Man*
EP	Elvis in pain* (including sadness of loss of life)
GM	Elvis as a 'Great Man' (uses this specific term)
ER	Emotional response from visitor

Table 1. Concept Codes for PMM Analysis

¹² Concepts with an * represent Elvis image concepts also developed by Doss.

¹³ 'Blue-collar' describes the working class who perform manual labour, originally tied to the colour of denim and chambray work shirts often worn by workers.

Coding each response and the frequency of concepts expressed before and after the visit accounted for the breadth.

These categories also informed the depth analysis, as they were used to devise the five-point scale categorising the depth of change. Depth is measured by assessing the quality of use of each concept, which in this research is the shift in perception about Elvis. A five-point scale was developed to quantify the 'universe of concepts' being used before and after the experience. The concepts were divided into hierarchies, with those relating to the most superficial concepts of Elvis considered as level 1 and the humanised concepts of Elvis ranking as level 4. The shifts between the concept levels formed the depth score. The depth scores provide a picture of overall patterns of perception change.

Score Depth	1 No Change	2 Limited Change	3 Moderate Change	4 Substantial Change	5 Extreme Change
Description	No change between hierarchies or concepts	Change in perception or elaboration of same concept	Change to similar hierarchy concept	Change between two tiers of concepts. At least one pre-visit concept may be represented.	Change from lower level concept to higher-level concept, with no pre-visit concepts repeated.

Table 2. Depth Score Rubric

The coding of responses is subjective and literature suggests that a team of researchers review the data to agree on a depth score in order to increase objectivity. The example provided by Bowker and Jasper (2007) addressed the subjective nature of depth scores by agreeing the score in pairs, which was then checked by another pair. The nature of doctoral work, however, precludes the opportunity to have someone else agree the score. This process illuminates the

subjective and qualitative nature of PMM analysis, and how closely the categories of qualitative and quantitative overlap in the data analysis.

Depth Score Changes

The breadth and depth measurements document the types of concepts visitors associated with Elvis, with the depth assessment proving the most useful. When the concepts were counted for the breadth assessment it became clear that there was no correlation between breadth and depth measurements, as a map with a -3 in breadth, meaning that there were three less concepts represented afterwards, had a 5 depth score. The average breadth of concept change was zero, indicating that most visitors did not show an increase in use of concepts about Elvis, and in fact many expressed fewer concepts at the end of the tour than at the beginning. The lack of breadth change does not appear to impact the depth, as the concepts that were recorded in the post-visit maps were typically in higher concept tiers.

The depth scores depict the level of change between the pre and post-visit meaning maps, with the responses divided into the following categories:

Depth Score	Percentage of Visitor Response
1 – No Change	10%
2 – Limited Change	10%
3 – Moderate Change	21%
4 – Substantial Change	27%
5 – Extreme Change	32%

Table 3. Depth Score Results

The majority of visitors experienced some change in their perception of Elvis, with over half indicating a substantial change. It should be noted that the manner in which the PMMs were used in this study provide a 'snapshot' of visitor perceptions, and post-visit answers may not wholly reflect every concept they associate with Elvis, but is indicative of their immediate response and concepts at the forefront of their thought. Unlike a factual based meaning map exercise,

where visitors re-visit or correct their initial concepts, most of the concepts about Elvis are not subject to radical factual revision. For instance, while visitors may be able to correct their knowledge about gems and minerals (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998) or the rainforest (Bowker and Jasper, 2007), Elvis will still be considered the King of Rock and Roll, his song titles remain the same, and he will still be a music performer. While these results cannot definitively show visitors no longer hold these perceptions at the conclusion of their tour, it does indicate that other concepts of Elvis prevail in their representation of him. The chart below highlights the change in concepts used from pre to post-visit, showing radical conceptual shifts.

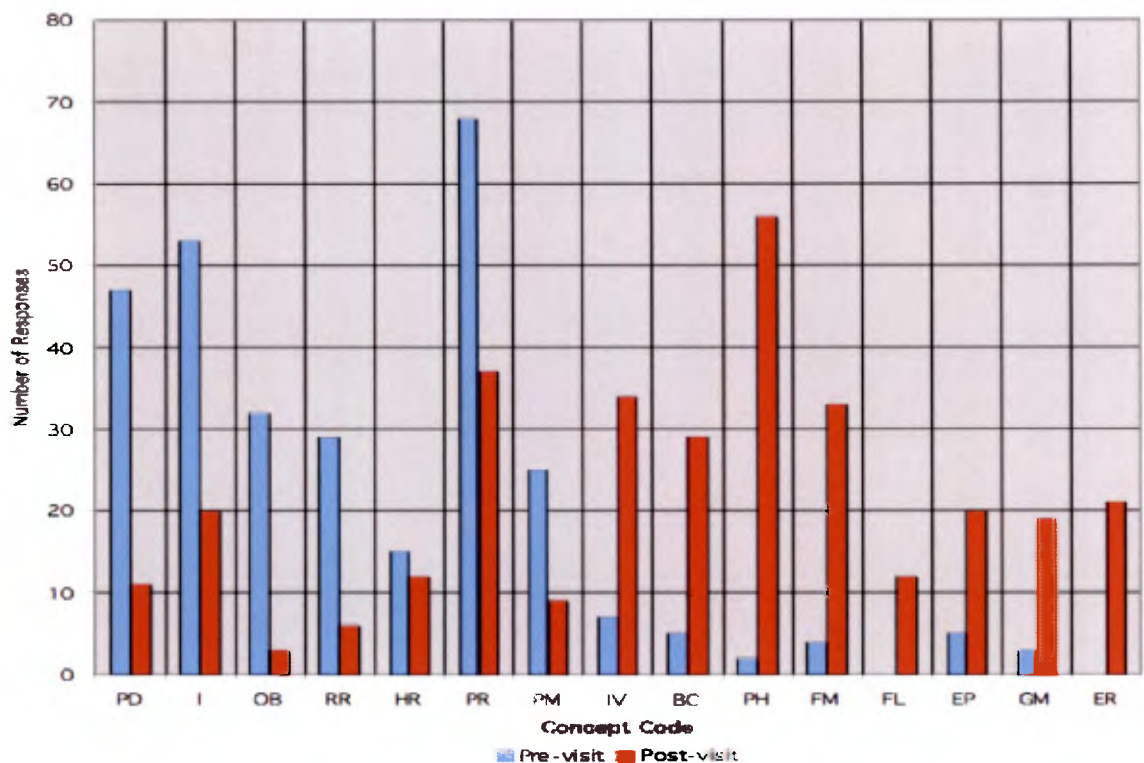


Figure 3. Pre and Post-Visit Concept Shifts

The chart demonstrates the pattern of changes from pre-visit concepts of physical descriptions (PD), iconic Elvis (I), and Elvis the Performer (PR) to post-visit responses dominated by images of Elvis the philanthropist (PH), and family man (FM).

An extreme depth change example can be seen in the maps below, from Visitor 9. These maps illustrate the change from an iconic rock star, considered predominantly lower level concepts of Elvis, to a 'humanised' view of Elvis, which are deemed higher-level concepts in this study.



Figure 4. Visitor 9 Pre-visit Personal Meaning Map



Figure 5. Visitor 9 Post-visit Personal Meaning Map

This type of dramatic shift in concepts of Elvis is seen throughout the sample collected at Graceland, indicating that interpretive elements are driving these concept formations, as they would not be as consistently demonstrated across all groups of visitors without some form of interpretive mediation.

The Impact of Being an Elvis Fan

Graceland is often identified with ideas of pilgrimage, fanatical visitors, and an audience base that is almost exclusively Elvis fans. The visitor profile of this study indicates otherwise, as most of the participants are more accurately described as casual tourists. When asked to describe whether they considered themselves an Elvis fan, 66 per cent said 'yes,' 21 per cent responded 'no,' and 13 per cent fell in between by selecting 'sort of.' When the depth change scores are mapped against the category of Elvis fans it becomes clear that being an Elvis fan does not determine how significantly the tour changes the visitor perception. Both fans and non-fans had 30 per cent of their group scoring a '5' for the depth change, which is consistent with the overall percentages of 'extreme change' reflected in the entire sample. Only the 'sort of' Elvis fans maintained a higher depth change, with 42 per cent of those visitors classified at a level '5' score.

Interestingly, pairs traveling together were often a combination of an Elvis fan and an undecided or non-Elvis fan, with the Elvis fan being the impetus for visiting Graceland. In these instances, the non-Elvis fans always scored a higher depth change than their Elvis fan traveling companions. Visitor 126b is a model example of the tour impact on non-fans traveling to Graceland to accompany someone else, beginning her visit describing Elvis as an 'extravagant' 'drug abuser,' but concluding that Elvis was 'generous' and 'fun loving.' Authors such as Doss (1999) and Rodman (1996) portray the visitor experience at Graceland as one that placates the desires and mythologies of Elvis fans, hoping to reinforce their already idealised vision of Elvis rather than seeking to change or enhance their perceptions. While elements may serve this mollifying function, it appears that a greater impact can be seen on visitors who never considered

themselves Elvis fans, providing them with a radically different view of who Elvis was as a person.

Despite the notion that devoted Elvis fans sustain Graceland's attendance, there is clearly a diverse range of visitors, similar to any heritage site. The depth score changes indicate that historic house tours can have a profound impact on visitors, regardless of whether they come to the site with strong preconceived ideas or attachments to the subject. This is further supported by the high depth score changes that occur in visitors who came to Graceland solely as travel companions. The depth scores are an important component in the meaning mapping analysis, which can be used to further correlate visitor satisfaction and the overall impact of the visitor experience.

Depth Scores and Visitor Satisfaction

Applying the rationale of Adams et al. (2003), stating that a significant change score equates to a quality experience, the change scores from Graceland indicate that the tour is a high quality experience. The depth change scores have been mapped against the post-visit question, 'Did the Graceland tour experience meet, not meet, or exceed your expectations?' All visitors reported that the tour at least met their expectations, and while visitor expectations were exceeded in every category of depth change, it is clear that expectations were exceeded more frequently for visitors with higher change scores. The results of change scores and visitor expectations are shown below.

Depth Score	Percentage of Visitors with Exceeded Expectations
1 – No Change	29%
2 – Limited Change	21%
3 – Moderate Change	38%
4 – Substantial Change	54%
5 – Extreme Change	62%

Table 4. Depth Scores and Visitor Expectations

Substantial or extreme changes in visitor perceptions were frequently

accompanied by exceeded visit expectations. Visitor comments during the post-visit interview often reflected the same sentiment shared by this TripAdvisor reviewer, 'the tour was much more interesting and surprisingly emotional than I had expected. I really came away with a much better – and more favorable – sense of who he was as a person. I'm very glad we took the tour and would recommend it highly' (*MissouriBen*, 16 February 2010).

The quantitative results support online visitor reviews, indicating that the experience at Graceland has the ability to change, and in some cases radically alter, visitor perceptions of Elvis. While the number of concepts expressed by visitors does not appear relevant to the quality of the experience, the change in depth of concepts associated with Elvis seems to be significant. While these numbers are striking, there is richness in the PMM responses that is not captured in numbers alone. As Weber (1990) notes, the best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations. In an effort to more fully reflect the experience documented through the meaning maps a qualitative analysis should support the quantitative data.

Personal Meaning Mapping Qualitative Analysis

The meaning map qualitative analysis involves two components, a content analysis and the results of individual visitors as units of analysis. The content analysis is based on frequency of words or phrases and concepts. The concepts cited in the qualitative analysis are the same as those used in the quantitative portion, offering a glimpse into the compelling nature of visitor responses. These responses are explored in several areas, including pervading pre and post visit concepts, consistencies and discrepancies across visitor age groups, and trajectories of experience shared by visitors.

Pre and Post Visit Concepts of Elvis

A frequency analysis was conducted for all responses, which were then divided by age group. These responses ranged from single words, which were the most common, to sentences reflecting visitor feelings about Elvis. The frequency analysis included the words and grouped phrases, which were entered into Atlas.ti software. This initial step produced clear trends in the pre and post visit responses, with two divergent images of Elvis appearing in the responses. Prior to the tour, visitors described Elvis using words generally descriptive of Elvis's music and appearance, with an iconic image of Elvis dominating the landscape of responses. After the tour, Elvis appeared as a person, recalled through his personality, interests and family rather than his stage presence. Even a cursory examination of the most frequent words/phrases at the beginning and end of the tour illustrates noticeable differences.

Most Frequent Pre-visit Responses	Most Frequent Post-visit Responses
Rock and Roll	Generous
Music	'Family Man' 'Music'
The King	Man (excludes family man, but preceded by another adjective)
Movies	Humble
Sexy	Sadness
Relate a visitor's personal memory	'Life' 'Love'

Table 5. Most Frequent Pre and Post – Visit Responses

The image of Elvis that pervades the post-visit responses is one of a philanthropic family man, contrasting starkly to the hip gyrating King of Rock and Roll from the pre-visit responses. By the end of the tour experience, Elvis is a 'real' (Visitor 39) 'human being' (Visitor 96). The frequency with which these words and concepts appear is not bound by visitor age, as these images are the most common responses across all age categories. Whether you were a teenage girl who huddled next to a radiator listening to Elvis songs in your youth

(pre-visit response, Visitor 112) or a younger person who identifies Elvis solely as Michael Jackson's ex-father-in-law (pre-visit response, Visitor 42), the outcome of the tour experience generally shared across age groups is the same. The tour produces a vision of Elvis full of spirit, who cared about his family and the plight of those less fortunate, never losing sight of his roots and remaining 'a good ole bloke' (Visitor 104).

Visitor Responses by Age Range

The four most common concept images of Elvis recorded by visitors are Elvis the Family Man, the Philanthropist, Elvis in Pain, and the 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes.' While these images appear consistently, the prevalence of the concepts vary by visitor age brackets. Visitors were asked to select their age bracket from the following ranges: 20-30 years old, 30-40 years old, 40-50 years old, 50-60 years old and over 60 years old. These first two age brackets are significant as they constitute a large portion of the general visitorship to Graceland, but they never had a direct connection to Elvis while he was alive. For the 20-40 year olds, Elvis is essentially a historical figure, even though he is from a very recent past. The 40-60+ age brackets represent visitors who view Elvis as a more contemporary figure and likely had some personal reference to Elvis.

The 20-30 year old and 30-40 old age groups had identical concepts emerge with very similar frequencies after the tour. Images of the Family Man, Philanthropist and Elvis in Pain are the three most common concepts documented. The Family Man and philanthropic concepts of Elvis are the most dominant of those expressed by visitors, far exceeding other images. Visitors recalled his 'love of family and friends' and how he was 'very close to his family.' It is no coincidence that these concepts are also at the forefront of Graceland's

interpretive goals. Director of Archives at Graceland, Angie Marchese, explained that the interpretation is designed to 'personalise Elvis' and make visitors realise that 'he had a home and a family' (6 December 2006). The consistency of the family man image throughout the meaning maps, particularly within the 20-40 year old age group, is evidence that they have succeeded in contextualising Elvis and his family at Graceland.

The 20-40 year old age group readily identified the 'Elvis in Pain' image, using words and phrases such as 'sadness,' 'loneliness,' 'melancholy,' and 'life too short' to illustrate Elvis after the tour. This was also the age group with the most frequent references to Elvis's death in pre-visit meaning map responses, citing 'drugs' and 'dying on the toilet' in their depictions of Elvis before the tour. Visitors in the age range that know Elvis only in a culturally mediated historical context, where his image has become intrinsically linked with the deterioration of his health and career culminating in an untimely death, more readily identify Elvis with this final chapter in his life. The meaning maps, however, document a compassionate and empathetic shift between the ideas of a drug riddled superstar dying on his toilet to the portrayal of Elvis as a sad and lonely man who died prematurely.

The only concept that did not cross age boundaries is the 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' representation, featured exclusively in over 40 age groups. Doss (1999) describes how fans often recite Elvis's 'rags-to-riches' life story, with their accounts of his achievement always including the twist on the ultimate American dream that 'Elvis stayed the same "real decent, fine boy" that Ed Sullivan introduced on TV in the 1950s' (p. 13). This 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' image appeared most prominently in the over 40 age groups, constituting the most frequent image for the 50-60 and 60+ age brackets. This

indicates that people closer in age to Elvis were more likely to view him in relationship with his social and cultural roots. During his rise to fame, which these visitors lived through, Elvis was often criticised for his social class, as a 'poor white Southern,' who characterised so many Southern stereotypes. This blue-collar image appears to resonate most closely with visitors who were more familiar with this aspect of Elvis's story.

There is a clear delineation between age groups when describing the historical or contemporary relationship with Elvis. While the younger age groups of 20-30 and 30-40 year olds commonly cited the '1950s' in their pre-visit responses, visitors over 40 years of age were more likely to re-call specifics such as Elvis's famous 'Ed Sullivan' appearance, his 'swivelling hips' that caused so much controversy at the time, and reminisces of '56 magic,' referring to his breakthrough first year as a recording artist. The younger age groups use phrases that are more removed and more aptly refer to Elvis as 'the King' than older groups. Older visitors reflected on 'screaming girls,' 'my youth,' and 'being a teenager.' These personal memories were based on a lived experience and provided these visitors with a very different entrance narrative.

The historical starting point for visitor reference does not, however, appear to significantly impact their final perceptions of Elvis. The 50-60 year old man (Visitor 18) who recalled the '56 magic of Elvis concluded the tour recording only that 'Elvis was a great man.' In a similar example, a 20-30 year old visitor (Visitor 119) who described Elvis as 'Elvis the Pelvis,' 'rock and roll,' and 'The King' before the tour, left the tour observing Elvis was a 'fantastic person,' who was 'charitable, classy, and generous.' The post-visit perceptions are not as easily grouped by age as the pre-visit maps, which showed clear distinctions between age groups based on historical and iconic references and personal memories.

The perceptions of Elvis after the tour are more homogenised, indicating the trajectory of the visitor experience has a similar outcome regardless of visitor age or personal connection to Elvis.

Museum learning research indicates that visitors' personal interests and background experiences can greatly impact visitor experience outcomes (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998; Falk and Dierking, 2000). This would seem to indicate that visitors' personal interactions with Elvis, whether through lived experience or cultural memory would bear some weight on the meaning mapping results. This does not appear to be the case at Graceland, as neither the historical reference point for visitors nor the fact a visitor is an Elvis fan considerably influences visitor perceptions at the conclusion of the tour. This data suggests that the interpretive tools and content emerge as more significant than personal visitor contexts.

Perspectives from International Visitors

Graceland's interpretation, discussed further later in subsequent chapters, appeals to themes that embrace Elvis's supposedly traditional American working class values, focusing on familial devotion and the importance of home. These are the type of discourses often considered universally appealing in heritage interpretation literature, despite Barthes' call to contextualise rather than universalise events and encounters. This PMM sample consisted of 25 per cent of international visitors, travelling from Canada, Australia, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Thailand, Belgium, and the Netherlands. More closely examining their responses allows us to consider if these 'American' themes hold the same appeal and understanding across visitor groups. The depth score changes for international visitors echo the percentages of the overall group, with 59 per cent scoring in the top tiers of change, representing a significant change in perception

of Elvis. Overall, their results were similar to American visitors, and if anything represented some of the starkest examples of change seen in any of the meaning maps. The 'classic' example pre and post example shown earlier, from Visitor 9, was in fact a visitor from England.

The themes of home and family are of particular interest given the supposition that visitors do not value the same qualities or conditions universally. While the international group had the same variety of responses seen in the larger set, the family man ideal and 'home' were the most frequent post-visit international responses. Visitors from England, Ireland, Australia and Thailand all used the word 'home' to describe Elvis after the tour. An English visitor (#54) who began her tour depicting Elvis as having a 'sexy body' and remembering the "68 Special Black Leather," left the tour with her expectations 'completely' exceeded, equating Elvis with 'home,' 'gentle,' and 'peaceful.' An Irish visitor (#122) arrived associating Elvis with 'music,' 'guitar,' and 'dancing,' but provided a much richer depiction at the tour's conclusion, recording 'home,' 'music,' 'giving gift and money to people in need,' 'religious,' and 'love for his wife and child.' Despite the fact that homes are not universally constituted, the idea of it apparently still garners resonance amongst visitors. This is perhaps because regardless of the visitors' origins a home is 'not merely a physical structure or a geographical location but always an emotional space,' residing amongst the most 'emotionally complex and resonant concepts in our psychic vocabularies' (Rubenstein, 2001, p. 1).

The pervasive theme of generosity is also widely accounted for on international visitors' meaning maps. An Australian visitor (#20), for instance, began his tour thinking Elvis was about 'rock and roll,' the '50s,' 'music,' and 'the King,' yet he later considered Elvis to be a 'legend' that was 'great,' 'fun,' and a

'humanitarian.' A Scottish visitor perhaps best summarised the theme of generosity perpetuated at Graceland, deducing Elvis represented 'generosity of spirit, deed and mind,' diverging greatly from his entry account of Elvis as 'entertainer supreme!!' It appears that regardless of where visitors originate, they are willing and able to assimilate the themes portrayed at Graceland into their vision of Elvis, indication that these core ideals of family, home and generosity resound with a wide range of visitors.

Humanising an Icon

At its most basic, the act of humanising is to endow something with human characteristics or attributes. Iconic figures, such as Elvis, often become devoid of human characteristics, becoming mired in myth, image, and cultural memory. The reality of Elvis is long obscured, as Brock (1992) observes 'the reality of Elvis Presley is almost hopelessly confused in rhetoric, rumor, and speculation and seems all but lost in the unreality of his life and world' (p. 129). We recognise Elvis primarily through culturally mediated images, creating a 'level of confusion between reality and Elvis as cultural image/representation. He is known, familiar, and yet unknown, unreal' (Cowan, 2010, p. 224). Graceland aims to make the unreal world of Elvis into a tangible experience, hoping visitors will see a person behind the veneer of iconic image.

When a person is instilled in the public consciousness as an icon they take on a variety of traits that can be commoditised in a wide-ranging manner. Author Wayne Koestenbaum (1996) describes how another American personality, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, achieved her iconic status,

We called Jackie an icon because her image was frequently and influentially reproduced, and because, even when she was alive, she seemed more mythical than real. We called Jackie an icon because her story provided a foundation for our own stories, and because her face, and the sometimes glamorous, sometimes tragic turns her life took, were lodged in our systems of thought and

reference, as if she were a concept, a numeral, a virtue, or a universal tendency, like rainfall or drought (p. 4).

Elvis can easily be compared to Jackie Kennedy in the manner they became entrenched in their roles as a cultural icon, conceptualised through image and narrative. It is too easy to see only that iconic veneer, as music journalist Greil Marcus described when asked to write Elvis's obituary for *Rolling Stone* magazine, reflecting 'I didn't write about "a real person"; I wrote about the persona I heard speaking in Elvis's music . . . I understood Elvis not as a human being, but as a force . . .' (1991, p. 3). Graceland tries to balance this mythical persona by providing a portrait of Elvis in the context of his home and family. Undoubtedly, this humanised Elvis asserts its own mythologies, yet it still renders new dimensions for visitors to conceptualise Elvis beyond his career.

Historic house interpreters often grapple with how to make the home's inhabitants more real, proving particularly demanding when dealing with iconic personalities. The Presley family hopes to reveal the more 'human' side of Elvis at Graceland, exploring the dichotomy between Public Elvis versus Private Elvis. This is a struggle felt at other sites too, including Mount Vernon, where the Director described how little the public truly knows about George Washington, reflecting 'he was a difficult person to know – careful and distant – and the pedestal we've put him on is so high that he's been more like an icon than a living human being. We've been part of that problem – for years we've called [Mount Vernon] a shrine . . . Now we're trying to do everything in our power to make Washington accessible' (Tousignant, 1999). Graceland faces similar issues trying to penetrate the iconic image and provide visitors with a sense of the human side of Elvis.

As early as 1958, two years after his first recording success, an article in *Harper's Magazine* posited 'will Elvis himself be able to salvage a personality

from among the accumulated debris of prolonged public exposure?’ and questioned ‘what’s to become of this young man whose life and legend are by now indistinguishable?’ (Baxter and Baxter, 1992, p. 35). His career spanned another twenty years and his death in 1977 only conflated the challenges of separating the ‘real’ Elvis from the legend that burgeoned from the mid-1950s. The Graceland experience exudes a humanised vision of Elvis, from him personally welcoming you to his home on the audio tour to the exhibition of mundane daily objects, reinforcing the notion that he was just like anyone else. The methods used in the interpretive strategy to humanise Elvis are explored further in the thesis, but the meaning mapping data provides evidence of whether or not Graceland succeeds in presenting a ‘human’ Elvis.

The post-visit meaning map responses acknowledge Elvis as a ‘human being’ that was ‘a regular guy,’ with one visitor even recognising that Elvis was a ‘better man than I thought he was’ (Visitor 156). Visitors recorded twenty-five different words to describe Elvis the person, including ‘giving,’ ‘caring,’ ‘modest,’ ‘sincere,’ and ‘real.’ While this is an idealised version of Elvis and one not wholly human, as it overlooks many of his complex characteristics and flaws, it is clear that visitors are more likely to identify with these personality traits than Elvis’s career or music after the tour. One visitor, who initially saw Elvis only in terms of historic references, concluded that he was a ‘decent human being when he didn’t have to be’ (Visitor 107). This viewpoint assumes that Elvis maintained admirable personality traits despite the opportunities and avenues he had for abandoning his morals in the face of fame.

Many of these humanising responses represent the ‘the blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes,’ allowing Elvis to build an affinity with the public because he can be seen as an everyday person never forsaking his roots, set apart only by

his phenomenal success. This corresponds with Visitor 93's post-visit response, stating Elvis was a 'country boy with fantastic talent who happened to be blessed.' English professor Linda Pratt (1992) compares this mythical quality of Elvis's persona to the nineteenth century American novels by Horatio Alger dramatising the social and economic rise of young men from humble backgrounds. She writes that Elvis is 'the sharecropper's son who made millions, the Horatio Alger story in [Southern] drawl. Almost everyone who knew him assured us that, despite the money and fame, "he never changed" . . . He never got over his mother's death; he was humble and polite; he doted on his little girl; he loved his home town; he never forgot where he came from' (p. 94). These are the same sentiments that appear to shape visitors' perceptions of Elvis after the Graceland tour, with the perceptions of a humble family man dominating the post-visit concept of Elvis in the meaning maps.

An exploratory study conducted at Graceland examining the relationship between Graceland visitors, social identity and celebrity worship found visitors often draw similarities between themselves and Elvis (Sullivan, Venter and Harper, 2007). Visitors were asked to complete a self comparison ranking, comparing themselves with Elvis in the following categories: thought like me, social class similar to me, behaved like me, economic status like me, similar to me, status like mine, like me, background similar to me. The authors were surprised by the number of people who felt they were in fact quite similar to Elvis, with 20 per cent of their visitor sample indicating a high connection to Elvis. They concluded that even denying celebrity-worship reasons individuals see something of Elvis in themselves, but could offer no conclusive explanation as to why or how this happens.

The meaning mapping results perhaps illuminate this phenomenon of

visitors relating to Elvis. The personal characteristics that visitors see in Elvis at the conclusion of the tour are traits that most people would aspire to, being seen as kind, giving, caring, and fun loving. One visitor summarised Elvis as being a 'phenomenal person' (Visitor 30), no longer concerned with his pre-visit concepts of the 'king of Rock and Roll,' 'movie star,' or 'singer.' It is not the celebrity that people identify with at Graceland. They identify with the person portrayed who gave back to the community, was devoted to his mother, played with his daughter, and enjoyed laughs with his friends. In that sense it is no real surprise that visitors see commonalities between themselves and Elvis.

The tour's ability to allow visitors to empathise with Elvis also relates back to visitor satisfaction. Visitors who had the greatest shifts in concepts of Elvis to this more humanised form had their visit expectations exceeded far more regularly. The private side of Elvis revealed at Graceland, while not a holistic examination of all facets of his personality, is compelling to visitors and the most memorable part of the tour experience. This affective element of the experience proves to be more significant to visitors than numerous gold records or sequined stage costumes. This is typified in Visitor 83's meaning map, who systematically drew around the edges of the 'Elvis' prompt in both the pre and post-visit, circling around the prompt as he thought of new words. This can be considered a cycle of meaning making, as he quite consciously created cycles of words, documenting the following transformation:

King → R+R → Blues → Memphis → Generous → Unsettled → Giving → Great Man

This progression is indicative of the visitor shifts in perception from an iconic to humanised Elvis. Graceland staff want visitors to realise that there is 'more to Elvis than jumpsuits,' (Marchese, 6 December 2006) a feat they largely achieve for the visitors in this study.

Experience, Performativity and Emotions

It has been argued that the key to heritage visitor experiences is emotional realism and the ability for a site to produce emotionally authentic responses (Bagnall, 2003). These emotions foster the performative aspect of an experience and add texture to visitors' consumption of the past at heritage sites. Emotions can also lead to a sense of identification with the people connected to the site (Ang, cited in Bagnall, 2003, p. 88), as has been described occurring at Graceland. Perhaps most importantly, emotions can define an experience, 'attaching' visitors to events and objects (Dewey, 2005). American philosopher and educator, John Dewey described what it meant to have '*an* experience,' writing with a conviction that emotions are paramount in experience. He declared, 'in fact emotions are qualities, when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes' (ibid, p. 43). Acknowledging the significance of emotions in the visitor experience, it is important to examine how emotions are manifested in the meaning mapping data.

The emotions engendered by the Graceland tour are evident in the meaning maps, ranging from the sadness and melancholy of Elvis's last years to 'awesome' heights that are 'moving' and 'impactful.' It is difficult to disentangle these emotional responses from the Graceland experience and Elvis himself, as they are words they could often reflect both. A number of visitors used the word 'emotional' in their post-visit meaning maps, ostensibly describing both Graceland and Elvis. This is indicative of the almost 45 per cent of visitors in this study who used an emotional descriptor in their post-visit meaning maps, contrasting with the seven per cent who used an emotional term in their pre-visit maps. There is clearly an emotional tour component that resonates with visitors and becomes a memorable facet in their account of the Graceland experience and Elvis.

Evoking emotions as part of the tour intensifies visitors' embodiment of the experience and the performative nature of heritage sites. Bagnall (2003) asserts that 'it is the reality of the emotions felt by visitors, the emotional realism, that contributes to their ability to "perform" at the sites' (p. 93). The emotional realism at Graceland is seen throughout the meaning map responses, as visitors repeatedly provide evidence of their emotions in relation to Elvis, depicting him through affecting terms. Much of this emotional realism is drawn from what visitors perceive to be an authentic encounter, experiencing Elvis's home intact with his possessions complete with accounts from his family. The studies that Bagnall (2003) conducted indicate that visitors require sites to 'generate emotionally authentic responses,' deepening visitors consumption of the site as they engage with the experience through the affective domain.

The meaning maps offer evidence of the affective and reflexive responses from visitors that constitute a performative relationship between the visitor and site. An example of this process is seen in the response from Visitor 104, a 30-40 year old male traveling with his wife, a dedicated Elvis fan, to Graceland from Wales. His only pre-visit response was 'I put up with it,' referring to his wife's interest in Elvis and her desire to visit Graceland. He had a very different perception at the end of the tour, noting Elvis was 'a good ole bloke,' and that the experience was 'emotional and very moving.' The visit 'far exceeded' his expectations, elaborating he 'didn't think it would effect me,' and that the visit even allowed him to finally connect with his father, a long-time Elvis fan. This visitor felt the full impact of the affective interpretation at Graceland, producing an experience that allowed him to empathise not only with Elvis but also with his own family. This emotional experience provided the relevance and personal meaning that interpreters since Freeman Tilden have deemed a hallmark of

effective heritage interpretation.

Assessing Personal Meaning Mapping

This analysis shows marked changes in the meaning map contents, supporting the results of the quantitative change scores. The data illustrates the ability of Graceland's tour to impact, often in dramatic ways, visitor perceptions and consequently their satisfaction with the experience. Personal meaning mapping is a valuable methodological tool for charting the impact of the visitor experience, providing data far richer than a standard survey. The meaning maps afford visitors an open avenue for communicating their visit 'story,' yielding descriptive qualitative data that privileges the visitor's viewpoint.

There were times when visitors themselves were unaware of how their views changed, saying they did not need to fill out the post-visit map because they thought the same thing as before. After telling them they could write the same thing again and encouraging them to complete the second map, never once did a visitor actually replicate their first map. Superlatives changed, themes changed, ideas were elaborated on and the number of concepts increased, all unbeknownst to the visitors at the time. A visitor who was adamant that his thoughts on Elvis had not changed over the duration of the tour started out believing Elvis was a 'good entertainer, loyal citizen, good singer and all around nice guy' (Visitor 12). He assured me that he just wrote 'the same thing' on the post-visit map, when he actually recorded that Elvis was a 'great entertainer, modest person, good son who honoured his parents, good singer with his own style, religious, gave generously to charities' and that his home is 'very liveable – not pretentious.' Therein lies the value of providing visitors with a second blank slate map at the end of the tour, rather than having them return to their first map. In visitors' minds their ideas of Elvis may not have shifted in any way, but a fresh

start provides evidence of how much their ideas may have permutated.

The meaning maps chart a trajectory of experience, documenting pre-visit views that can be compared and contrasted against post-visit perceptions. This methodology proved to be incredibly useful in illuminating the nature of shifts in visitor concepts of Elvis. While the meaning mapping demonstrates an undeniable and consistent shift in visitor perceptions as a result of the Graceland tour, it does not provide adequate means for understanding why those changes occurred. The remaining data sources, including the visitor photographs and audio tour analysis, further illuminate the nature of the perception changes as a result of the Graceland experience.

Chapter 5 - 'Step Into My Heart:' Visual Research at Graceland

Photographs act as vital reminders of travels, modern souvenirs that are an extension of the 'pressed flower, the preservation of an instant in time through a reduction of physical dimensions' that authenticates the experience of the visitor (Thompson, 2006, p. 27). Barthes (1993) suggests that the evidential power of photography lies in the act one can 'never deny that the thing has been there' (p. 76), attesting that 'what I see has indeed existed' (p. 82). This documentary feature of photography intrinsically links it to tourism, with authors noting 'taking photographs is an emblematic tourist practice . . . it is almost unthinkable to travel for pleasure without bringing the lightweight camera along and returning home without snapshot memories' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003, p. 23). These are not fine art, professional photographs, but ones 'snapped' to serve as documentation once a visitor leaves a place and returns home. They are important indicators of where a visitor places value, what they want to remember, and what they feel is important enough to share with others. Tourist photography transforms an intangible experience into something tangible, enabling 'tourists to take ownership of these experiences and moreover, to direct, structure and measure them' (Lo et al., 2011, p. 726).

The Value of Tourist Snapshots

The vast majority of Graceland photographs on Flickr are 'snapshots,' images taken by amateur photographers as casual photos to document their tour. The fact these are snapshot photos does not diminish their significance as data. Chalfen (1998) notes snapshots are understood as 'a symbolic form embedded in a communication process that necessarily includes making (encoding),

interpreting (decoding), and a multi-faceted use of pictures' (p. 216). He goes on to state that the taking of snapshots is non-random behaviour, and that one of the first ways of understanding these snapshots is by examining the selective qualities of the photograph. Even 'snapshot' photos are usually conscious acts that are deliberate and self-reflective, with photographers paying attention to what is included in the scene they photograph.

The selective nature of the photographs is evident in the images published by Flickr users, who often couple broad snap shots with more closely focused images. It is an appropriate avenue of exploration for this research, which is interested in the objects, settings and juxtapositions that visitors select to document their tour experience. When visitors frame their photographs they are establishing 'a hierarchy with regard to the potentially visible,' making the decision that 'this content within this space at this time was interesting or worthy of attention' (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p. 22). Garrod (2009) acknowledges that visitor photographs are often prompted by an emotional response to the subject, providing useful data when exploring the affective dimension of the tourist experience.

Urry (1990) asserts the role of photography is 'intimately bound up in the tourist gaze' (p. 140), citing central characteristics of its use for tourists. These characteristics include: that photographing is in 'some way to appropriate the object being photographed,' these photographs provide evidence that 'something did indeed happen – that someone really was there.' Far from simply transcribing reality, photographs are the 'outcome of an active signifying practice in which those taking the photo select, structure and shape what is going to be taken' (Urry, 1990, p. 139). Tourist photos on Flickr advance both iconic images of Graceland, like the shag carpeting of the Jungle Room, and unsuspecting

personal details, such as a desktop photo of Elvis holding his young daughter. As Urry suggests, photographing Graceland is part of the act of being a tourist and bound in the need to document the experience and selecting what was meaningful. Holland's (1991) work on family snapshots confirms the importance of photographs and memory, stating 'they are objects which take their place amongst other objects which are part of our personal and collective past, part of the detailed and concrete existence with which we gain some control over our surroundings and negotiate with the particularity of our circumstances' (p. 10). The photographs of Graceland allow visitors to negotiate their tour experience and provide a source of documentary evidence that can be used to explore how visitors perceived the experience.

Photographs as Evidence

Photographs can be interpreted in a number of different ways, which some cultural studies theorists have termed the 'meaning elasticity' of photographs (Harper, 2007, p. 213), leading to debate about what photographs can actually do for researchers. Becker (2007) describes a photography exhibit of a small Californian town slipping into decay, poetically portraying the fate of many small American towns, only to find that the small town is quite vibrant and while the closed down bank does reside on Main Street, so does the newly expanded bank branch a block away. The photographer selected the photographic evidence carefully, constructing a narrative of partial truths. Photographs can easily be used in this manner, yet Becker believes they can still serve as evidence, although not to 'prove' an argument, but 'rather assure us that the entities of the abstract argument, the generalized story, really exist' (2007, p. 386). When photographs are used as evidence in research it is important to ensure enough material is presented, making it 'hard to imagine another reality sits just down the

street contradicting the argument they make' (ibid, p. 386). This becomes an important issue when considering the sample size of the photographs being used for the Flickr analysis, as it is literally impossible to search all 90,000 images¹⁴ of Graceland. Just over 500 images have been systematically selected for analysis, from 87 unique users, which although not exhaustive does provide enough data to indicate that there is not some other radically different version of the Graceland tour depicted through visitor photos on Flickr.

This issue of the 'reality' of photographs persists across the literature (Becker, 2007; Flick, 2009), with Flick noting that there is a 'special problem' with the question of framing and how much the personal choices made by the photographer determines the content of the photo. This raises the questions of 'how far the sample of the reality under study contained in the scope of the photo introduces bias into the presentation of reality, and what part the medium of photography plays in the construction of the reality under study' (Flick, 2009, p. 246). Photographs are constructs reproducing reality through the eyes of the photographer, which in the case of visitor research is a benefit rather than a drawback. Crang (1997) describes the practice of tourist photography in particular as 'a form of symbolic capture,' (p. 365) allowing visitors to project meaning over their visit experience. This research is interested in the ways visitors choose to photographically frame their tour experience and select objects and scenes of focus, capturing their own version of reality at Graceland.

The meaning of photographs is not always isolated within the image itself,

¹⁴ Although Flickr can indicate the number of images that have been tagged with 'Graceland,' it cannot physically show all of them, ostensibly due to server caching issues. There are 24 images shown per page and after 168 pages, roughly 4,000 images shown, the following error is encountered: 'We weren't able to return any more results. You may have reached the limit of how many results we can return. Try changing the sort option or refining your search.'

as the photographs are frequently presented with captions and text which ‘direct the viewer to the meaning of the image’ (Harper, 2007, p. 213). Barthes’ study of image-text relationships indicated three ways in which image and text can relate to one another, including ‘anchorage,’ where the text supports the image, ‘illustration,’ where the image supports the text,’ and the state of ‘relay’ where the two are equal.

Flickr provides users with the opportunity to title and caption their images, as well as for other users to comment on them, sometimes producing a large amount of text around an image. In some instances, these titles and captions reveal a great deal about the intent of the visitor’s photos in describing how they related to the site and tour experience. An example of how the text anchors the image is shown below, with an image of Lisa Marie’s swing set in the back yard of Graceland entitled ‘Gone are the Halcyon Days of Youth’ (*camera1*, 19



Image 1. ‘Gone are the Halcyon Days of Youth’

September 2007¹⁵). The photographer captioned the image saying, ‘One of the most surprising parts of the tour for me was the exact same swing set. Mine, however, was not preserved and enshrined in my parents’ backyard.’

A brief dialogue opened when a viewer commented, ‘Looks a lot like the one I had when I was a kid, too,’ prompting *camera1* to elaborate,

I was really surprised at how normal it is. I would think Lisa Marie

¹⁵ Each user on Flickr creates a unique user name, rarely based on their actual name, used to cite the photographs and comments referenced in this writing. The user name is italicised and accompanied by the date that the photograph was taken in each citation.

would have had an entire carnival at her disposal - her own Tilt-a-Wheel and merry-go-round. My swing set didn't fare as well as Lisa's. After three kids and a lot of wear and tear, toward the end of its life, after harsh Michigan Winters, it started rusting so my dad painted it with Rust-Oleum.

In this instance, the text around the image makes the photograph a much richer source of evidence for understanding how the transition from the iconic to the personal documented in the meaning maps occur.

Online Visitor Photographs: Understanding Flickr

The Internet and digital technologies provide a vast new source of data. Analysis of this style of data, involving images, words, and hyperlinks constitutes a still emerging field of practice (Pink, 2007, p. 191). One of the reasons that Robinson and Picard (2009) cite for the limited attraction of vernacular tourist photographs to the research community is that these photographs remain largely in the 'private rather than public sphere and are consequently removed from scholarly consideration' (p.9). The rise of Web-based social media sites such as Flickr have propelled these once private images into the public domain, providing a platform for the sharing and annotation of photographs. Despite the advent of this widespread platform for sharing images, there is a surprising dearth of research examining the impact of online media and the sharing of travel photographs (Lo et al., 2011). This research aims to determine what visitor photographs uploaded to online communities can reveal about the visitor experience.

Flickr.com is a product of the Web 2.0 environment, hallmarked by the move from consumption to mass participation, allowing users from around the world to add, organise, and share their photos in a dynamic online space. Flickr defines itself as an 'online photo management and sharing application' with two primary goals, to 'help people make their photos available to the people who

matter to them' and to 'enable new ways of organizing photos and videos' (Flickr, 2010). Flickr is a powerful example of online experience sharing, housing over three billion photographs with an average of five thousand pictures uploaded every minute (Richter and Schadler, 2009; Theobald, 2008). The site itself is free to use, requires minimal technical skill and needs little personal information for registration. Flickr users can upload, tag and organise their photos, which can be shared with various permissions, allowing users to communicate with only close friends or anyone on the World Wide Web.

There is great freedom for Flickr users when uploading images, allowing them to add details about the image or simply upload large batches to their photostream¹⁶ without labelling or categorising the image. Beyond individual tags and sets created by the user, images can also be added to 'groups' created by other users. Many photo groups for 'Graceland' and 'Elvis' have been created and users have a wide choice about where on Flickr their photos may be featured. All of these components can be used for understanding the content and context of photographs. As Davies (2007) notes, 'images can be placed in many different configurations within the site, along with all the comments they have accrued, each image can accumulate meaning but which develop semiotically and can be read in many ways' (p. 562).

Flickr users can determine how much or how little they engage with the site. With the ability to comment on photos, add photos to larger groups, tag favourite images seen in other user's collections, and embed images into other social media such as blogs, Flickr provides a range of opportunities for users and multiple contexts for images. The social aspect of this site lies in the ability for

¹⁶ The photostream consists of all images uploaded by the user. Photos can be grouped into albums or left in the collective photostream.

users to tag their images, automatically connecting it to any other image on the site that was given the same tag by another user. Tags are not required for uploading and 'therefore tagging most often occurs when the users want to relate a picture to a bigger pool of pictures with the same topic' (Richter and Schadler, 2009, p. 174), contributing to the social network supported by Flickr. When interviewing Flickr users, Cox, Clough et al. (2008) found that tagging does not typically play a huge role for average users, despite the academic interest in tagging and the folksonomies created by such practices.

A recent survey of tourism and online photography was conducted (Lo et al., 2011) in an effort to begin profiling the users of online travel photo sharing sites such as Flickr. The survey concluded that users of online media sharing photos after travels were most likely to be younger, well educated and more affluent, as well as being more experienced and enthusiastic travellers. Importantly, the sample from that study also appeared more interested in 'engaging with the destination at a deeper level' (ibid, p. 727), supporting the notion that the practice of uploading travel photographs is indicative of engagement with the site visited.

Analysing Photographs

Visual data is frequently treated like any another form of text, with procedures of interpretation for verbal and written data being used to analyse these texts. The evaluative decision made when taking a photograph, whether careful and deliberate or spontaneous, constitutes a visual text that is a product of the acts of selection, omission and framing (Schirato and Webb, 2004). Photos, after all, tell stories and these stories can be broken down using analysis similar to the way more traditional written stories may be coded. As Flick (2009) notes, 'text descriptions, summaries, or transcription often accompany visual data

before carrying out textual interpretation methods on visual materials. Genuine analytical procedures that directly relate to images still remain to be developed' (p. 246).

Just as with all qualitative data, there are several different approaches to analysing photographs, with the most common being content analysis and visual semiotics. Bell (2003) defines content analysis for visual images as 'an empirical (observational) and objective procedure for quantifying recorded "audio-visual" representation using reliable, explicitly defined categories' (p.13), requiring a clear hypothesis and defined concepts to underpin the analysis. The goal of conducting a content analysis is to describe 'salient aspects of how a group of texts represents some kinds of people, processes, events, and/or interrelationships between or amongst these' (ibid, p. 25) and indicates what is given priority or salience and what is not. The framing, scale of shot, angles, and other components of broader analysis are rarely incorporated into visual content analysis.

The quantitative element of visual content analysis reduces the content of photographs into codes to help quantify content. This approach is not concerned with 'reading' or interpreting visual images. This quantitative process can serve as a useful starting point for visual analysis, as it allows for the 'discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection' (Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 89). Lutz and Collins (1993) reflect on content analysis in their own work analysing *National Geographic* magazine, stating it helps protect 'against an unconscious search through the magazine for only those which confirm one's initial sense of the what the photos say or do' (p. 89). In this research, and particularly given the vast number of Flickr images available, the content analysis serves to systematically frame the images and examine patterns that emerge,

rather than searching for images that support or detract from the meaning mapping results.

There are limits to the content analysis of visual images, as Rose (2007) notes, citing that researchers cannot discriminate between occurrences of a code, whether the image exemplifies a code perfectly or is a weak example. Simple frequencies, therefore, may be problematic to interpret. Regardless of how explicit the codes may be, there is an inability of the code to account for the expressive content of an image. While the content analysis works well to define what has been framed in the image, it does not go very far in addressing the interpretation of the image.

Visual semiotics, however, focuses on reading and interpreting images. This viewpoint stresses the way visual elements, such as people, places and things, are combined to form a visual 'statement,' pointing to 'particular interpretations of experience' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 2). Barthes, as discussed by van Leeuwen (2003), proposed an approach to visual semiotics that deals with the individual parts of an image and how these are drawn together to produce a coherent whole. This approach was based on the idea of layered meaning, with the first layer being 'denotation,' of what or who is being depicted, and the second layer being the 'connotation' of the ideas and values expressed through what is represented (ibid, p.94).

The challenge with both of these analytic frameworks in the context of this study is that both were formulated primarily to analyse images constructed for public consumption, rather than the more casual snapshots that document the Graceland experience. As Chalfen (1998) notes, 'we have been drawn to (or seduced by) the study of professionally produced renditions of the world – but, in general, we have ignored the vast "tradition" of personally made images, and we

know very little about relationships of photo-media and private symbolic worlds' (p. 215). Yet, Chalfen proposes snapshots can still be viewed as forms of communication that can be broken down into components for analysis, including the participants, setting, topics, message form and code. This is similar to the 'people, places and things' analysis of visual semiotics. A combination of these approaches has been adopted for analysing the Graceland visitor photographs.

Graceland's Photo Content Analysis Framework

The traditional framework for content analysis is perhaps too restrictive for the type of analysis that needs to be conducted with the Flickr images. While the nature of the analysis is more focused on the content of the images and text, rather than semiotic signs, there are elements of 'reading images' that prove useful as well. The content coding scheme developed encompasses a wide range of variables, beyond the typical frequency analysis of content analysis, to ensure that a full picture of visitors' interaction with the site is developed.

Photographic content is determined by the photographer and 'the photographer's choices will determine content. Content depends on a large number of technical and aesthetic choices made by the photographer, based on his or her intent' (Goldstein, 2007, p. 75). Rose (2007) suggests an extensive list of questions which can be asked of the photograph when examining the content, including,

- What is being shown? What are the components of the image?
- Is it one of a series?
- Where is the viewer's eye drawn to in the image, and why?
- What is the vantage point of the image?
- What relationships are established between the components of the image visually? (p. 258)

While it is clear that there are a myriad of components that can constitute the content of a photograph, it is also important to consider how these components

are manifest within a content analysis framework. Marvasti (2004) suggests that content analysis for visual data include defining the research problems, determining the source of visual material, identifying the categories that will be the focus of research, and measuring the occurrence of the pre-established categories. Similarly, Bell (2003) believes that content analysis of visual images must begin with a precise hypothesis of expectation with well-defined variables, which goes against the notions of grounded theory that this research tries to adhere to.

There was no set hypothesis about the content of Graceland visitor photographs, beyond the possibility they would represent elements of engagement with the site. The nature of those elements or how frequently they might appear was not assumed at the outset. The data from Flickr was collected in a manner that allows for a broad account of visitor encounters to emerge, which was then used to help categorise the images. Both the fields of content analysis and grounded theory establish the need for categories, which in keeping with the grounded approach should 'emerge initially from a close engagement with data' (Dey, 2007, p. 168). The content analysis categories in this research were arrived at through an iterative process and exploration of the data, rather than through a pre-determined set of categories and expectations.

A content analysis study conducted by Sharples et al. (2003) included the development of a coding scheme determined by using a grounded theory approach. The coding scheme was extended and refined by examining the photographs, 'attempting to code their most salient content using the terms of the scheme and, where this was deficient, extending or refining the terms' (p. 309). For the visitor photos in this research, basic codes were developed through examination of the PMM data that serves as an initial framework for

understanding the visual data, reading of literature about images of Elvis, as well as the lengthy process of exploring the visitor photographs on Flickr. Dey (2007) encourages the use of external data and literature in the development of coding categories, as they can provide a useful guide to analysis, 'providing that we keep an open mind about their cogency and relevance to the data' (p. 176).

The sheer volume of visitor photographs of Graceland on Flickr required initial criteria for selecting images for analysis prior to the creation of content codes. A systematic approach was taken, examining every tenth image on Flickr. As the literature supports the importance of selection when analysing visual images, it is fitting for this analysis to focus on visitors who have made a careful selection of photographs to publish on Flickr. While some visitors have uploaded over two hundred images of their visit, indicating they are likely sharing every tour photo, for the purposes of this research photographs were selected if there were ten or fewer photographs published of their visit. Interviews conducted by Cox, Clough et. al (2008) with Flickr users found they typically use the site to share a selection of the best or most appropriate images. This set of approximately 500 images¹⁷ provides a broad landscape of memorable tour experiences and the subsequent analysis provides evidence of tour components that resonate closely with visitors.

Defining Photographic Variables

It appears researchers define the most salient variables for their own research, meaning there is no set list of photographic components that should always be addressed. Chalfen (1998) for instance believes that there are five communication components when analysing snapshots, the participants, setting,

¹⁷ 500 was the limit that could reasonably be accessed due to the search return limitations of Flickr, after examining every tenth image and coding it only if it was part of a set of ten or fewer Graceland photos.

topic, message form and code. All of these components are not relevant to this analysis, but the importance of understanding the setting and topic prove useful for this research, highlighting the image content in terms of subject matter, activities, event, and themes represented in snapshots.

One most interesting variables in the images is the distance placed between the viewer and object. With this portion of the research focusing on what visitors find attractive or compelling, it seems that the closer the object in the image is the more relevant that object becomes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) compare the size of frames of images to the fields of vision and social distance represented by the image. The photographer can choose between a close-up, medium or long shot, which Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid) equate to personal distance, ranging from 'close personal distance,' being the distance at which 'one can hold or grasp the other person,' to 'public distance,' which is the distance between people who are to remain strangers. (p. 124-125). In photography, a shot from close personal distance includes only the head and shoulders, whereas a public distance image would include the torso and several other people. Barthes (1972) came to similar conclusions in his reflections on the photography of political candidates, writing that the 'conventions of photography . . . are themselves replete with signs (p. 92),' based on the framing and turn of figures in the photograph.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest there is a correspondence between the distance of objects and the relationship between that object and the viewer. While they are concerned primarily with commercial images and advertising, the idea that a close distance indicates an engagement with the object is transferable to the framing of visitor photographs. Drawing on the field of contextual media aesthetics, Zettl (1999) suggests an image's narrating presence

is established by reading the spatial and temporal elements. Composition of space inscribes spatial relationships of 'closeness,' placing objects within 'touching distance.' Barbatsis (2005) elaborates that since 'touching distances are experienced perceptually as personal and intimated, the spatial relationships in these images are potentially meant to be "seen" as . . . intimacy' (p. 342). As visitors choose to frame images and zoom in to photograph certain objects they are creating their own relationship with the space and objects being photographed. Throughout the Graceland tour there is almost always a physical barrier preventing visitors from fully entering the space, so by zooming to focus on particular objects in their photos visitors are bringing the objects closer and composing a more intimately framed image.

In an attempt to bridge the content analysis and semiotic divide, an element of examination introduced is the classification of the object(s) photographed. The first step of this analysis is rooted in the content itself, examining what visitors select to photograph, while the second phase investigates the meaning of what is photographed. The material culture of homes has long been an interest in anthropology and ethnographic studies exploring the significance of objects within their context. The objects in our homes 'appears as both our appropriation of the larger world and often as the representation of that world within our private domain' (Miller, 2001, p. 1). When visitors choose to photograph scenes and objects at Graceland they are capturing Elvis's world and in some ways appropriating it for them.

The objects that fill a person's home, from the mundane to the spectacular, all offer insight into the life they live. Objects are 'intimately related to everyday experience' and are indicators of personality and lifestyle, reflecting the wider lives of individuals (Emmison and Smith, 2000, p. 111), all of which

prove compelling to historic house visitors. Kate Marsh (1993) describes how a person's home and belongings represent a greater understanding of that person, 'we extend our knowledge of a person when we look at his homes. We draw conclusions about his taste, aspirations, money and preoccupations. It is one of the ways in which he expresses himself' (p. xiv). The objects at Graceland that visitors choose to photograph are ones ostensibly allowing the visitor to better understand Elvis, illuminating the relationship between the visitor and the significant elements of Elvis's home.

The objects in the home have their own intrinsic meaning and visitors add an additional layer of meaning when they photograph the object. Sociologist Stephen Riggins (1994b) writes that the meaning of objects can only be understood through their relationship with people, as 'objects are a cause, a medium, and a consequence of social relationships. Truly the only context in which artefacts can be observed is in their relation to humans' (p. 1). In historic homes these objects take on the significance of both the relationship between the original home occupants as well as the relationship between contemporary visitors and objects.

In order to assess what the photographed objects means a classification scheme is used to describe the contextual role of the object. As Baudrillard (2005) noted, there are almost as many criteria of classification for objects as there are objects themselves, requiring that the classification criteria address the research context and questions. Riggins (1994b) believes that reading the meaning of artefacts is also rooted in the observers themselves, as varied social positions and experiences 'gives them different kinds of personal experience with objects and with texts about objects' (p. 3). Graceland is filled with everyday objects, alongside the objects of celebrity that celebrated Elvis's career. This

requires a classification based primarily on the meaning of everyday household objects.

The scheme used in this study is based largely on the work of Riggins, who framed a semiotic system of classification for everyday objects while conducting his 'Fieldwork in the Living Room' (1994a). In his exploration of a typical living room Riggins identified a number of conceptual categories for objects found in most homes. Seven of the core concepts developed are applicable to objects found at Graceland, defining objects based on their use and significance. An 'intrinsically active' object is intended to be used, whereas an 'intrinsically passive' object is meant for contemplation or decorative purposes. 'Status objects' are indicators of social status, rather intentionally or unintentionally displayed as such. 'Esteem objects' represent either 'intimate esteem,' reflecting what an individual has achieved in private spheres of life such as parenthood or marriage, or 'public esteem,' which reflects public recognition. 'Collective objects' demonstrate wider social ties, with affiliations to national or religious communities. 'Occupational objects,' reflect the occupation of the inhabitant. The table below provides examples of how these categories can be applied to objects photographed at Graceland.

Object Classification	Graceland Example
Intrinsically Active	Kitchen stove – the kitchen stove at Graceland is still accompanied by pots, a spoon rest and (now fake) vegetables indicating the act of cooking that happened almost around the clock for Elvis and his entourage.
Intrinsically Passive	TV Room Monkey – a white ceramic monkey sits in the middle of the coffee table in the TV room, typical of a 1970s decorative touch.
Status Objects	Triple TV Arrangement – in the TV room there are 3 TVs allowing viewing of multiple television stations simultaneously. This is reflective of his wealth and celebrity status.

Intimate Esteem	Portrait with Lisa Marie – this picture of Elvis with his daughter sits on his desk and is reflective of his relationship with his daughter.
Public Esteem	Gold Records – the Hall of Gold in the Trophy Building contains the gold record awards Elvis earned, signs of his popularity and recognition of his work.
Collective Objects	Army Uniform – when Elvis was drafted into the US Army he served his duty even though he could have used his celebrity to not be deployed. His Army uniform is an example of an object with larger patriotic resonance.
Occupational Objects	Stage costumes – The costumes on display are objects connected with Elvis's stage performances.

Table 6. Visitor Photo Object Classification

It should be noted that an object may fall into more than one category, as, for example, an object may be an intrinsically active object that also signifies intimate esteem. While this scheme addresses the meaning of the objects, it does not necessarily acknowledge visitor meaning making. One of the most photographed objects from the sample set is the group of three televisions in the TV room, functioning as a status object that is also intrinsically active, but more can be learned through the visitor captions and comments. These comments indicate that visitors are intrigued by how 'advanced' the set-up was, how Elvis was inspired by the president and how much Elvis must have enjoyed television, which many people can relate to. Whilst the classification system provides a broad means of examining the semiotic relationship between the objects and visitors, the voice of the visitors must not be forgotten in the analysis.

The Graceland Photo Content Scheme

The coding scheme considers a number of categories, ranging from the basic content categories of setting and subject matter to image/object distance and the relationship to a larger set of images. Visitors are allowed to photograph

freely at Graceland, resulting in a lengthy list of possible photograph contexts.¹⁸

Notes about the photographic frame contents for each image were made, as this is a key component to reading visual images. This selection of details helps to 'constitute and make the visual' as the viewer constructs a frame around the scene (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p. 22).

The settings have been divided into three main areas: domestic interior, exhibition space, and outside space. The domestic interiors include all of the historic interiors that are fully furnished as they were while Elvis was living there using the original furnishings. These differ from the exhibition spaces in the Trophy Building and Racquetball court, which house exhibits and awards. The outside spaces include the pasture and Meditation garden, as well as areas for viewing the front of Graceland.

The length of shot describes the distance between the visitor and the image taken, re-purposing the semiotic social distance framework. Images of an entire room and panoramic in nature are described as having a long/public distance between the visitor and site. Images that zoom to a particular area of a room are reflective of a social/middle distance with the space. Photographs that focus on a specific object are considered to be at an intimate/close distance. An example of this distinction, using the Jungle Room, would have a public distance view include a broad shot of the room taken from the main visitor area, with a social distance photo focusing on the far end of the room with the waterfall, and an intimate image containing only the chair in the corner that was a favourite of Lisa Marie.

The categories for people represented include members of the Presley

¹⁸ The only restrictions for photography at Graceland are that flash and tripods are not permitted. This limits the number of professional style photographs and fosters the 'snap shot' mode of photography at Graceland.

family as well visitors themselves. In many cases visitors take photos of themselves or travelling companions throughout the tour to document their presence. This placing of the visitor in the frame is particularly important when understanding the tourist gaze, as visitors appropriate the space for themselves, providing a lasting record of their visit. Haldrup and Larsen (2003) describe the 'family gaze,' a framing of personal stories and social relationships developed through tourist photography as family members pose with one another during their visit. This form of tourist gaze is bound with the family unit, which is both the subject and object of tourist photographs.

The object classification framework already discussed is used for images focusing an object or particular area of a room. When selecting the classification for an object the inherent use of the object and the visitor comments were both considered. A caption, for example, that highlights how the kitchen stove is intrinsically active expands, 'the kitchen at Graceland with a spoon caddy and an iron skillet for frying chicken' (*that's MR. POPLABS*, October 6 2006). The visitor is envisioning what the Graceland cooks may have been preparing, as there is no specific reference to fried chicken in the audio tour, and endowing this now still space with an activity.

Lastly, details were recorded about the image file, including the name and caption. The positioning in the Flickr set was noted, including whether it is part of a set or if it is in the user's general photostream. This helps situate the image as suggested by Pink (2007) and determine if there is a narrative to images selected for upload by visitors. These details can also help determine how selective the image is, as, for example, some users have file names such as 'Graceland 25', 'Graceland 36', 'Graceland 2,' but have only uploaded eight photos, indicating that they were quite selective when deciding which photos to share.

Table 7. Flickr Image Coding Scheme

Photography Context	Domestic Interior:	Framing Comments:
	Entry Hall	
	Living Room	
	Music Room	
	Parent's Bedroom	
	Dining Room	
	Kitchen	
	Basement Stairwell	
	TV Room	
	Pool Room	
	'Jungle Room'	
	Office building	
	Racquetball lounge	
	Exhibition Space:	
	Trophy Building	
	Racquetball Court	
	Outside Space:	
	Exterior Front of House	
	Exterior Front of House (pick-up side)	
	Exterior Back of House	
	Pasture	
	Meditation Garden	
	Elvis's Grave	
	Pool	
Length of Shot	Intimate/Close Distance (Object)	
	Social/Middle Distance (Room Detail)	
	Long/Public Distance (Panorama)	
People Represented	Elvis	
	Priscilla	
	Lisa Marie	
	Other Presley family member	
	Visitor	
Object Classification	Intrinsically Active	
	Intrinsically Passive	
	Status Object	
	Intimate Esteem	
	Public Esteem	
	Collective Objects	
	Occupational Objects	
File Details	Flickr Set	
	File Name	
	Caption	

Visitor Photo Analysis

Any visual content analysis should begin with a clear understanding of image sampling and consideration of sample representativeness in regards to available data. Rose (2007) stresses that ensuring images are representative does not necessarily entail examining every relevant image, but relying on a sampling procedure. The sample used for this research consists of 514 images contributed to Flickr by 87 visitors to Graceland. The systematic sampling strategy previously discussed allows for a representative sample of visitor photos. The wide range of images provided from this sample also supports its representativeness, as every element of the tour is represented within this sample of visitor photos. This sample includes photos uploaded to Flickr from 2006 to 2010.¹⁹ Sets that included only images of the front of the house or Meditation Garden were excluded, as these areas can be accessed without participating in the tour. This ensured that the photographs in the sample were from visitors who experienced the house tour in full.

Length of Shot

Tourists purposefully frame their photographs; strategically place themselves for a position that will allow them to capture the 'best' view and representation of their visit. They purposefully arrange frames for the images to produce a satisfying effect (Robinson and Picard, 2009; Schirato and Webb, 2004). Significantly, the content analysis draws on that framing through the length

¹⁹ It should be noted that the tour path was substantially changed in 2008, limiting access to parts of the tour that were previously included in the general admission tour ticket. The garage annex area that houses vignettes of other rooms of the house not on display, such as Elvis's office and dressing room, became part of a VIP tour ticket in 2008 and photographs of those areas largely decreased after that point.

of shot, categorising images taken from a long, middle, or close distance.²⁰ The division of images into the length of shot framework is shown in the table below.

Length of Shot	Number of Images	Percentage of Sample
Intimate/Close Distance (Object)	168	33%
Social/Middle Distance (Room Detail)	112	22%
Long/Public Distance (Panorama)	234	45%

Table 8. Visitor Photos Categorised by Length of Shot

Long/Public Distance

The majority of images in this sample are panoramic images, where visitors have ‘snapped’ an overall image of a space from a central viewing point (example below). These images are designed to encompass as much of the



Image 2. Panoramic Living Room view

room or view as possible from where the visitor is standing. The three most frequent panoramic views are of Elvis’s grave, the front of Graceland and the living room, all quite iconic scenes indicating that these photographs act as ‘place images’ for visitors. ‘Place images’

are regarded as images that become ‘viewed as representative of the essential

²⁰ While the majority of the images were easy to sort into these frames of distance, images taken with visitors throughout the property were more difficult to place within this framework. These images are primarily focused on the visitors themselves, with an area of Graceland as a background, creating a social distance with the space. Visitors posed with the exterior of the home are considered to be incorporating themselves into a long distance position. There are several instances where visitors manage to get quite close to objects, such as a family photo hanging on a wall, the entry hall staircase, or a gold record. When visitors position themselves closely to an object these are recorded as intimate or close distance photographs.

character of a place' (Thompson, 2006, p. 5). This photo taking behaviour is also noted by Urry (2002), as visitors reproduce the images that they have seen in publications, television, etc. to shape their travel, feeling that they must not miss seeing particular scenes. It has been argued that tourism is largely bound in a search for these key photographic points.

Urry's work describes the tourist gaze as the product of visitors consuming destination images, taking photos of key site elements, reinforcing the gaze that has been created by the tourism industry and further perpetuating the iconic images of that destination. As one Flickr user noted in her caption of a living room photograph, 'this is one of the first rooms you see upon entering Graceland. I had seen pictures of it in books and on TV prior to our visit: however, seeing it in person was pretty cool' (*dreaminofbeadin*, 12 October 2007). Visitors photograph iconic scenes because they have seen them before and they want to validate their visit by capturing the scenes that have been deemed important by others. These panoramic length shots of Graceland retain a sense of visual distance, acting as concrete proof that visitors have seen one of the most visited homes in the world.

While photographs of the iconic scenes of Graceland appear to support the circle of representation described by Urry, analysis of other popular panoramic shots and numerous social and intimate distance framed images indicate there is more to tourist photography than simply a 'pre-programmed shooting of image driven attractions' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003, p. 24). The next highest-ranking panoramic image after the key iconic images is a scene rarely produced in tourist literature, the back of Graceland. The back view of Graceland is quite different from the front, lacking the grandeur of the stone and columns

that greet visitors.²¹

Photographing this rear view of Graceland offers further proof that visitors have made it inside of Elvis's world and into an area seen by the most intimate friends and family. The guidebook (2003) acknowledges, this now tranquil setting belies the often high-energy nature of the area that included a mirage of pets, golf cart races and firecracker fights, all part of the 'normal' life of Graceland when Elvis was in residence. The back view appears to resonate with visitors who seem to marvel that 'this is Elvis's backyard,' not that different from their own and much more ordinary than the front view. Some visitors assume they are unique in capturing this view of Graceland and even question 'why are there so few pictures of the **back** of Graceland?' (*donnastrickland*, 30 May 2006), as though they are photographing some secret area of Elvis's realm. Donna Strickland, the Flickr user quoted above, is unaware that many visitors photograph this more unusual view of Graceland.

The notion that tourist photography is the reduction of tourist destination images, with sights becoming more important than the site itself, does not appear to be substantiated by the Graceland Flickr data. Crang (1997) is concerned that destination image photography allows for the signifier to 'slip free from the signified and it is the markers that create the experience, rather than any authentic engagement with the landscape' (p. 361). Socially or intimately framed images, making up over half the overall sample, perhaps indicate a more authentic engagement in the mind of the visitor than the panoramic place images, which support the cyclical representation of tourist images.

²¹ The back is not adorned by the stonework seen on the front because the original owners ran out of stone during construction, leaving it remarkably plain (Kath and Morgan, 1996).

Social/Middle Distance

Visitors taking more closely framed photographs focusing on a certain area or room feature make up a quarter of this sample. In selecting what to look at, framing the scene with the camera, and recording them, visitors are expressing an enjoyment and engagement with that specific scene (Schirato and Webb, 2004). Urry (2002) notes a key aspect of the 'tourist gaze' is the selection, structure and shape that visitors impose on the photographs taken. This level of framing requires visitors to select a portion of Elvis's world to capture, with the most common features being views of the music room, the waterfall and seating in the Jungle Room and a corner of the living room incorporating portraits of Elvis and his parents.

The images that focus on the music room, at the far end of the living room, appears to attempt to connect visitors with Elvis as a musician, which is



Image 3. Graceland Music Room

especially easy to imagine as the audio tour plays samples of Elvis and his parents singing along to a piano. This is one of the only places in the house itself that alludes to Elvis in a musical sense, with the piano providing an important reminder

of Elvis's talents, but also affirming those talents as something appreciated and nurtured even on the small scale of his home. The image shown above, from Flickr user *fetchpics*, is evidence of how carefully visitors frame their photographs of the music room. This is not a view that can be quickly and spontaneously snapped, it required the visitor find a very precise location at the far perimeter of

the viewing area and incorporate a clear view of the piano, making it a focal point of the image. If the number of images containing the music room piano in some framed context are combined, they constitute just under half of all social distance images in this set, proving how alluring this setting 'where Elvis his played piano' (*California Will*, 6 April 2008) is for visitors.

Intimate/Close Distance

Beyond social or middle distance frames are the intimate, object-based photographs, constituting the second largest group of images in this sample. While the public and middle distance photographs fell into relatively few categories, as visitors photographed similar features, the variety of objects photographed is quite wide, reflecting the visitor's own motivations and interests. Objects that appealed to multiple visitors included the Racquetball court costumes, the chair in the Jungle Room that Lisa Marie napped in, the bed from Elvis's wardrobe closet, Lisa Marie's swing set, the American Eagle cape from the Aloha special, and even the kitchen stove.

Only twenty photographers out of the sample did not include objects in their visit photos, meaning that just over 75 per cent of this group included an object image when publishing their visit experience. The importance visitors place on viewing objects, rather than just producing iconic snapshots, is evidence of a desire to connect with the people that lived at Graceland on a personal level, examining more closely the objects that Elvis and his family used on a daily basis. As Baudrillard notes when describing the purpose of house interiors, 'the primary function of furniture and objects here is to personify human relationships, to fill the space that they share between them, and to be inhabited by a soul' (2005, p. 14). It is perhaps this soul that visitors are attempting to capture when photographing the chairs that now sit empty, the swing set now still and rusting

after years of use, or the flamboyant costumes that gave Elvis so much life on stage now hanging lifeless in glass cases.

Object Classification

After coding each of the objects photographed using Riggins' classification scheme, the largest proportion of objects photographed had an intrinsically active purpose. Seventy-six images focused on objects originally used in an active, non-decorative way. Visitors have chosen objects that Elvis or his family would have interacted with on a daily basis, many of which are similar to objects that visitors might find in their own home, from cooking utensils to televisions and telephones. Marling (1996) describes the interior of Graceland as being packed 'full of things that we all have or used to have, or used to want, or hate (p.2),' the majority of which are active participants in our daily routines. Visitors are often compelled by the ordinary in a celebrity home. A visitor who photographed the kitchen stove captioned,

The Elvis Presley Graceland home in Memphis, TN [Tennessee] has many wonderful rooms. His two jets are spectacular, even if the color schemes are quite dated. His car collection has amazing vehicles. His kitchen is, well, kinda ordinary. Difficult to believe that this where the deep-fried peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were made (*j.o.h.n walker*, 24 March 2009).

The use of the ordinary and common experience to capture visitors' imaginations can be a particularly effective form of historic house interpretation, allowing visitors to understand the home's residents through objects that mean something to visitors and bear some relation to their own lives (Donnelly, 2002). Active objects appear more likely to build this resonance than those that are intrinsically passive.

Another important element in visitor's photographing active objects is the ability to visualise Elvis actually using the objects, giving him a retrospective physical presence. A visitor who focused on the piano in the music room

captioned, 'this is Graceland. Elvis played this piano' (*kleepet*, 9 May 2006). This is not a prop or reproduction, this is *the* piano that Elvis actually played in his home. Similarly, a photograph of a dining room place setting declares that 'Elvis ate here' (*Cliff Dix Jr.*, 28 May 2006).

Tourism is often associated with the desire to see where past events happened or where the famous lived and died, providing physicality to an abstract history. The focus on active objects photographed at Graceland represents the desire to envision Elvis in this space, whether playing the piano, reading and making notes in books, playing pool or riding horses. For example, two images in the group were photographed low on the edge of the pool table



Image 4. Pool table at playing level

(below), as if they were about to join in a game of pool like one of Elvis's entourage. The Pool Room has been photographed in a number of ways, with many visitors snapping a panoramic shot or perhaps focusing on the ornate fabric hanging on the ceiling and walls. The active photographs,

however, offer another glimpse into how visitors experience Graceland and engage with the collection in a more personal manner.

The second largest collection of objects represents intrinsically passive and decorative objects. These are often objects that inspire nostalgia amongst visitors, including the white monkey figurine in the TV Room and even a door in the Jungle Room, with visitors commenting that their parents had the same décor or it reminds them of an item in their home. These decorative objects also highlight the sometimes eccentric design choices made at Graceland, but as Doll

(2009) reminds us, much of this interior design is no different from that found in the homes of many wealthy Southerners at mid-century. Similar to the place image role panoramic images, many of these object images capture items, such as the shag carpet, that have become iconic signifiers of Graceland.

Another key interior design feature frequently photographed in detail are the many mirrors framing practically every room on the tour, most notably the living room and TV room. Baudrillard, writing in 1968, discusses mirrors as disappearing elements of interior design structure. Mirrors, he explains, are no longer in fashion as they are seen as bourgeois objects that appear decoratively as 'an opulent object which affords the self-indulgent bourgeois individual the opportunity to exercise his privilege – to reproduce his own image and revel in his possessions' (2005, p. 21). At Graceland the number of mirrors is striking, lining walls, ceilings and even stairwells. Elvis, born in the depths of the Great Depression, grew up in a poverty that his biographies argue always haunted him and, while not a member of the traditional bourgeois, sought solace in his new found wealth. Keogh (2004), discussing the initial 1957 interior design, points to these elements as literal reflections of Elvis's desire for his 'home to look new, jazzy, to reflect his status as a young rock-and-roller and now, Hollywood guy . . . He wanted his home to be youthful! Fun! Impressive as hell!' (p. 131). This affect is not lost on modern day visitors, who are clearly drawn to the multitude of decorative mirrors, reflecting Elvis's world and the visitors' own presence in the home.

The Jungle Room dominates the setting choice of visitors photographing decorative objects. It is no surprise that this now infamous room inspires great curiosity from visitors, as its decoration stands apart from everything else in the house. There are a multitude of stories that relate how and why the traditional

family room suddenly morphed into a Polynesian themed oasis, ranging from it being a prank on Elvis's part to him purposefully selecting it all to remind him of Hawaii. While visitors are clearly intrigued by the 'short lived 1970s trend' in decorating, it is important to point out that none of the furnishings were custom made and all of the pieces could be, and were, purchased in furniture showrooms across the country. An article celebrating Graceland's place on the National Register of Historic Places maintains the Jungle Room only looks strange to modern visitors 'because times and tastes changed: in another hundred years, we are told, the Tiki sofas will seem no more or less tasteful than a roomful of Belter Victoriana in the American Wing at the Metropolitan' (Marling, 1996, p. 191). While this seems unlikely, the setting continues to compel visitors, even leaving them speechless, as Flickr user *Get Stitchy with Sarah* noted in her caption of the 'Jungle Room Fur Lamp,' 'there are not words.'

The third largest group of objects, with 29 photographed, represent items reflecting intimate esteem. These objects mark achievements in the personal sphere of a person's life, such as marriage and parenthood. The objects of intimate esteem captured by visitors most often focus on Elvis's role as a father to Lisa Marie. Her toy chest, swing set and photos with her father all appeal to visitors. This is also evidenced in the PMM data, indicating a large number of visitors leave perceiving Elvis as a father rather than a music superstar.

In an article about the last days of Michael Jackson, perhaps the only other entertainer to reach a similar height of stardom as Elvis, a concert producer reflects on hearing one of Michael's children on set call out to their 'Daddy.' The author concludes that hearing Michael Jackson referred to as 'Daddy' is 'startling in its, well, normality. It adds a much-needed and mostly missing third dimension to a man normally viewed, by friends and foe alike, as a 2-D caricature' (McLean,

2009, p. 27). Images of these intimate objects convey a similar revelation, that Elvis was also a beloved father who doted on his little girl.²² Despite the fact that there are no direct interpretive elements associated with the intimate objects photographed, as they are not labelled or referenced in the audio tour, visitors conjure up a familial image of Elvis and his role as a father. Flickr captions proclaim this is 'Elvis' swing set for Lisa Marie' (*that's MR. POPLABS*, 6 October 2006) and that 'this was Lisa Marie's actual toy box and the original toys that Elvis bought her' (*RichM921*, 15 August 2006). There is a familiarity here, in buying a swing set or toys for your child, which captures the imagination of visitors.

The other setting that proves tantalising to visitors is Elvis's desk, brought down from his second floor office and covered with items that were significant to



Image 5. Elvis's Desktop

him, including books and photographs. While it remained on tour, it was a popular source of intimate images. The photo (left), submitted to Flickr by *Carrie Musgrave*, is a very closely framed photograph of Elvis's desktop. The

photographic frame is shared between Elvis's Bible, a picture of him kissing Lisa

²² It is important to remember that personal pictures such as this can be 'deeply unreliable, but it is in this very unreliability that their interest lies' (Holland, 2004, p. 118). Holland (2004) also suggests these images can be the least readable of images, as they depend heavily on knowledge of the subject, on why the photo was taken and on its context. Priscilla reflected on a family portrait session where Lisa Marie cried constantly after leaving her nanny for the session. As Elvis and Priscilla tried to coax a smile from her, Priscilla concluded 'That's when it hit me. My God, she's so attached to the nurse that she doesn't want to leave her. Now I knew I had to find more time to be with her' (Presley, 1985, p. 290). A sentiment such as this lends an entirely different dimension to the image on Elvis's desk.

Marie, and a worn telephone book and telephone. The photograph in particular portrays a vulnerable side to Elvis rarely seen as part of his public persona. As one visitor reflected about seeing this side of Elvis, 'you feel so close to Elvis's story here. He seems so vulnerable and sensitive, I don't think he ever felt truly loved' (Myers, 2010, p. D5). This is possibly the most intimate glimpse a visitor has of Elvis, with these objects that would be mundane if not associated with a celebrity. While visitors form emotive attachments with family images at Graceland, it is important to remember family photographs tend to be constructed with the aid of a 'screen made up of dominant mythologies and preconceptions' (Hirsch, 1997, pp. 7-8). While they certainly produce an emotive response, what visitors perceive as readers of this image may not reveal the truth behind it.

The books photographed on Elvis's desk are curated to reveal more of the man behind the music, with titles on topics including karate, religion and spiritual philosophy. The exhibit contains a book Elvis has highlighted and annotated, providing visitors with the only opportunity on the tour to see an object that Elvis connected with in his private world. The intimate esteem object photos help to clarify the PMM results, providing evidence of where visitors connect with Elvis on a more personal level. Interestingly, these objects often have little directly associated interpretation, but certainly speak to the affective presence of Elvis and its enduring impact on visitors.

Objects representing Elvis's occupation and public esteem constitute roughly one quarter of the sample images. These objects, housed in the exhibit areas rather than the house itself, include gold records, awards and stage costumes. The costumes and awards in the Racquetball court are the most commonly photographed objects in this category, epitomising Elvis's flamboyant 1970s concert era. It is unsurprising that this setting appeals to visitors, as

awards tower from floor to ceiling in this massive double-height room, complete with rhinestone studded costumes and a large video screen production of *The Aloha Special*. It is an immersive encounter that mimics the excitement and enthusiasm of a concert, providing the only opportunity on the tour to experience Elvis the entertainer. The American Eagle Cape is the most photographed object in the Racquetball court. It was worn onstage during the *Aloha Special* and spontaneously thrown into the crowd at the conclusion of the concert. This is one of the most iconic pieces of Elvis's stage costumes and the data indicates its ability to intrigue visitors and embody his performances.

The numerically lowest ranking categories were collective and status objects. The collective object photographed most frequently is Elvis's Army uniform, a symbol of Elvis serving his patriotic duty during the Cold War. Elvis's entrance into the Army in 1958 was a publicised public event, sustained by news footage of his army induction haircut. In the PMM data, visitors used the words 'patriotic' and 'loyal' to describe Elvis, and the display of his Army uniform contributed to that view. A Canadian visitor (#12) ascribed Elvis's role as a 'loyal citizen,' to the fact he 'served in [the] army' and remembered his 'uniform' after the tour, indicating the ability for this object to project ideals even to international visitors.

Despite the fact that Elvis was a wealthy celebrity, few photos indicate social status at Graceland in this Flickr sample. The three televisions that play simultaneously in the TV Room most closely represent social status, with visitors commenting that Elvis was at the cutting edge of technology and must have been wealthy when even one television was often a luxury. Objects of social status are likely excluded from the photographs because there are actually very few objects that reflect a higher social status. If anything, the objects at Graceland are

decidedly middle class and rather commonplace.

Elvis's social status was ambiguous, having grown up in poverty but living the 'American dream' and achieving substantial wealth, contemporaries felt he never fit in the upper echelons of society. Biographers and visitors alike recount how he never forgot the social class that he came from. Some visitors equate Elvis's interior decorating with lower class taste, as Visitor 114 commented on her post-visit meaning map, 'he apparently was a poor boy who unfortunately didn't have the best of taste in decorating.' Richardson (2010) reflects on the American dream and Graceland, saying Elvis 'wanted to take care of his parents; he wanted a job and a nice house. When his career took off, he bought Graceland, and decorated it in the fanciest way he could imagine—not with fine antiques and expensive art, but with a wall of mirrors and a carpeted ceiling.' Despite his economic success, his tastes never became more sophisticated, as Pratt (1992) observed, 'his taste never improved, and he never recanted anything. He was a sharecropper's son in the big house, and it always showed' (p. 97).

This lack of status objects is reminiscent of visitors' disappointment with the size of Graceland, as it appears no larger than many modern suburban homes. Visitors expect something grander from the King of Rock and Roll. A photograph of the exterior of Graceland on Flickr elicited, 'Is this really THE Graceland? I imagined it being a lot bigger and more impressive,' with the photographer replying that 'This is really THE Graceland, haha :) Nope, not too impressive or big . . .' (*DailyDoily*, 28 January 2009). Certainly part of this disillusionment is fuelled by visitors' lack of contextualisation between Graceland and the typical American home in the 1950s.

Elvis's home is not an ostentatious show of wealth and the items most

people associate with his celebrity, such as his extensive car collection and private airplane are across the street at the visitor plaza, far removed from the intimate setting of his home. The data indicates that the number of objects they can relate to from their own family experience often surprises visitors. This is evidenced in the visitor photos, where everyday objects account for 20 per cent of the images. In the visitor reviews, sentiments such as 'what comes across is that it's a cosy family home' (*JustPassingThroughXX*, 4 February 2012) continue to be expressed. There are no priceless antiques or masterpieces of art; Graceland is filled with objects that could be bought at local department stores or seen in the pages of catalogues, objects that do not act as wealthy status symbols as much as they reinforce the idea that Elvis was a commoner who became 'king' but never fully relished in the trappings of his title.

People Represented

It is unsurprising that the main person represented in photos of Graceland is Elvis himself, whether it is a family portrait or his gravesite. Second only to Elvis are the visitors themselves, facing the camera, recording that they did indeed visit Graceland. Holland (2004) contends the 'most frequent and most important image in anyone's snapshot collection is the simple shot of a subject presenting themselves to the camera . . . basically just *being there*' (p. 149). Crang (1997) associates this visitor-centred style of tourist photography with the visitor's desire to authenticate their experience. The visitors in this data posed throughout the property in a variety of locations, with the front of the house proving most popular. This is certainly the most iconic image, lending credence to the notion that visitors are determined to produce an authentic documentary image.

While the front of the house is the most popular place to pose for photos,

visitors also pause to record themselves standing by the back pasture gates, in the dining room, by Elvis's grave, the entry stairwell and even beside the swimming pool. Robinson and Picard (2009) suggest that tourist photos featuring friends and family produce a dialectic between 'the materiality of location and the posing participants,' contributing to the 'formulation of emotional geographies anchored amongst family and friends, so that backdrops become tied to the emotions being explored and "built" through photography' (pp. 16-17). A photographic reality is constructed placing visitors in an almost theatrical setting, commemorating their visit to the site and exploring their own relationship to that place. The images beyond the front façade of the home seem to be examples of occurrences when visitors are more interested in framing stories and emotional connections with the site and Elvis than merely documenting the iconic landscape.

In Bourdieu's (1990) writing on photography he notes the role tourists play when photographing themselves, with the visitor often appearing tiny in the foreground of a shot to allow for the salient hallmarks of a visited sight to be captured in the frame. Holland (2004) asserts that 'a site is not a sight until we've shaped it and made it ours,' which is achieved by placing a familiar face in the scene. At Graceland visitors also commonly play with the effect of the many mirrors in the home, further situating and embedding themselves into the Graceland scene. The most popular place for visitors to photograph themselves is in the Jungle Room, where a mirror is placed on a wall directly opposite from the visitor viewing area. The view visitors capture when photographing themselves in the Jungle Room mirror shows them standing in a sea of green shag carpeting, with tops of carved Polynesian style furniture creeping into the bottom of the frame. These images firmly declare that the visitor has been in *the*

Jungle Room, frequently labelled ‘famous’ and ‘legendary’ amongst Flickr users.

The other person most commonly represented in the images is Lisa Marie. As in many homes, portraits of growing children grace the walls and sit on end tables, a reminder of Lisa’s childhood at Graceland. Even the dresser from her nursery and toy chest are included on the tour, along with her swing set, establishing Elvis’s role as a father. These mementos strike a chord with visitors, who find it hard to believe that Elvis’s daughter had many of the same toys they grew up with, as one visitor in this sample noted, ‘I had this exact swing set in my own backyard. Me and Lisa Marie must have had very similar childhoods’ (*BlueFairlane*, 4 January 2009).

While it seems improbable that anyone can authentically empathise with Lisa Marie’s upbringing, the thought that her home life had the same basic features as anyone else’s appeals to visitors. In the guidebook’s introduction Lisa Marie acknowledges Graceland’s role in culture and history, but emphasises that ‘to me, it was just my home that I lived in with my family and friends and that was a lot of fun to grow up in’ (2003, p. 2). It appears that many visitors find this notion of home and a playful child with her father an easy to accept and memorable aspect to the tour.

Captured Significance

The images shared on Flickr illuminate the range of memorable moments from their tour, providing evidence of how the objects and setting can produce its own affective presence. Sontag (1977) reminds us that ‘photographs really are experience captured . . . To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed’ (pp. 3-4). These images were introduced as a source of data to further illuminate the visitor experience depicted in the personal meaning maps, helping to understand how this shift between the iconic and personal occurs. The

numerous photos that frame objects of intimate esteem at a close distance suggest that visitors are often captivated by the personal world of Elvis.

Visitors are equally concerned with affirming their visit to Graceland, sharing a vast number of documentary images proclaiming 'I was here!' One of



Image 6. Visitor hand touching the wall at Graceland

those images (left) shows a visitor's hand deeply embedded in a wall of shag carpeting in the Jungle Room

(*jerkytourniquet*, 29 February 2008), to which a viewer replied, 'ah, to commune with The King!' This style of images

personifies the value of place and the ability for photographs to capture

meaningful moments visitors want to share with others. The photographs offer a layer of understanding about the experience that could not have been captured with more traditional measures. The self-selected images are indicative of the significant moments of the tour that express interest, resonance, and appropriation of place.

Chapter 6 - 'Built with You in Mind:' Analysing the Interpretive Experience at Graceland

There are a variety of powerful interpretive tools used at Graceland, including oral histories, contextual media, affect and music. These are woven together to build a rich personal narrative about Elvis, crafting a story about who Elvis was at home amongst his family and friends, his values and the man behind the music. With an understanding of the transformation in perception that results from the tour, as well as the markers of interest exhibited by visitors, it is important to analyse the interpretive experience as a whole. This analysis allows us to better understand how these transitions occur and why visitors may be drawn to certain elements of the tour. An examination of the audio tour, viewed as the central narrative text at Graceland, provides insight into the interpretive devices used at Graceland and highlights the relationship between the site-constructed narrative and visitors.

The study of the audio tour is based on a content and narrative analysis incorporating the theoretical concepts of performativity and personal narrative, coupled with the concept codes of Elvis's image used in the PMM exercise. This is a modified form of the grounded theory framework used earlier, as some of the codes were developed in advance rather than emerging purely from the data itself. Content analysis was chosen as the primary method for analysis as it is most appropriate if 'communicative content is of greatest importance' (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 66). Literature and data already examined were developed into category codes to help dissect the tour narrative and accompanying discourses.

Before further discussing the methodology and analysis, it is important to consider the context of the audio tour itself. The tour functions in two ways, as a

singular path through the mansion and then as a series of selections that visitors can make in the Trophy Building exhibits based on the level of content they would like to access. As it is not clear how frequently visitors access the additional information, the basic tour content is only content analysed in this research. The audio tour content is dealt with in two discrete sections, the house and outbuildings still interpreted as their original function are considered separately from the Trophy Building, Racquetball Building and Mediation Garden, which have been re-purposed since Elvis's time at Graceland.

Coding the Audio Tour

Several steps were taken to code the audio tour content, with each step building successively on the prior step. Initially the tour was examined with codes specifically focusing on tour content, including whether it was discussing factual information, an object, or a personal story. Emerging ideas of narrative and performativity required a return to the coding to determine ways to assess four layers of content within the tour transcript:

- 1) Content specific
- 2) Elvis image concept
- 3) Performative/Reflexive Behaviours
- 4) Narrative Structuring

In an effort to visualise how the content overlaps the performative aspects of the tour an axial coding scheme was introduced. Axial coding 'specifies the properties and dimensions of a category' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). This scheme attempts to represent the way in which the content is embedded through performative and communicative behaviours in the audio tour. The image and narrative aspects of the content were considered in another phase of analysis.

The content categories consisted of five main areas: factual information, object/furniture related, family reference, career reference, and personal stories.

Factual information relays the chronology of Graceland and Elvis's life, without interpreting meaning or conveying emotion. Content related to objects and furnishings are the typical fodder of historic house tours and the context in which these sections are delivered at Graceland are of particular importance. The family and career references tie in expressly with the narrative structure, but are easily separated at the content level. The personal stories are differentiated from factual information in that they are primarily concerned with lived experience and what it felt like to live at Graceland, rather than information about objects or room use. These personal stories often take the form of oral histories, but the narration of the tour employs personal stories from Elvis to add additional 'texture' to the tour.

The content categories ranged from the factual to the affective, with affect being defined as the expression of emotional tone. These content categories were assessed against another 'axis' that represents how the content is delivered, ranging from didactic to performative/reflexive. A scale of 1 to 5 was placed on each axis, with 5 denoting content exhibiting that category to the greatest extent. For example, a '5' in the Factual Didactic quadrant would be a statement such as, 'he purchased it [Graceland] in 1957,' which is made during the tour introduction. At the other end of that axis, in the Affective Didactic quadrant, would be statements such as 'around this table Elvis shared many evenings of warmth, laughter and storytelling with family and friends,' describing the dining room at Graceland. Each statement has been allocated a quadrant and number that corresponds to how well it exemplifies that content and property. A diagram showing this relationship is shown below:

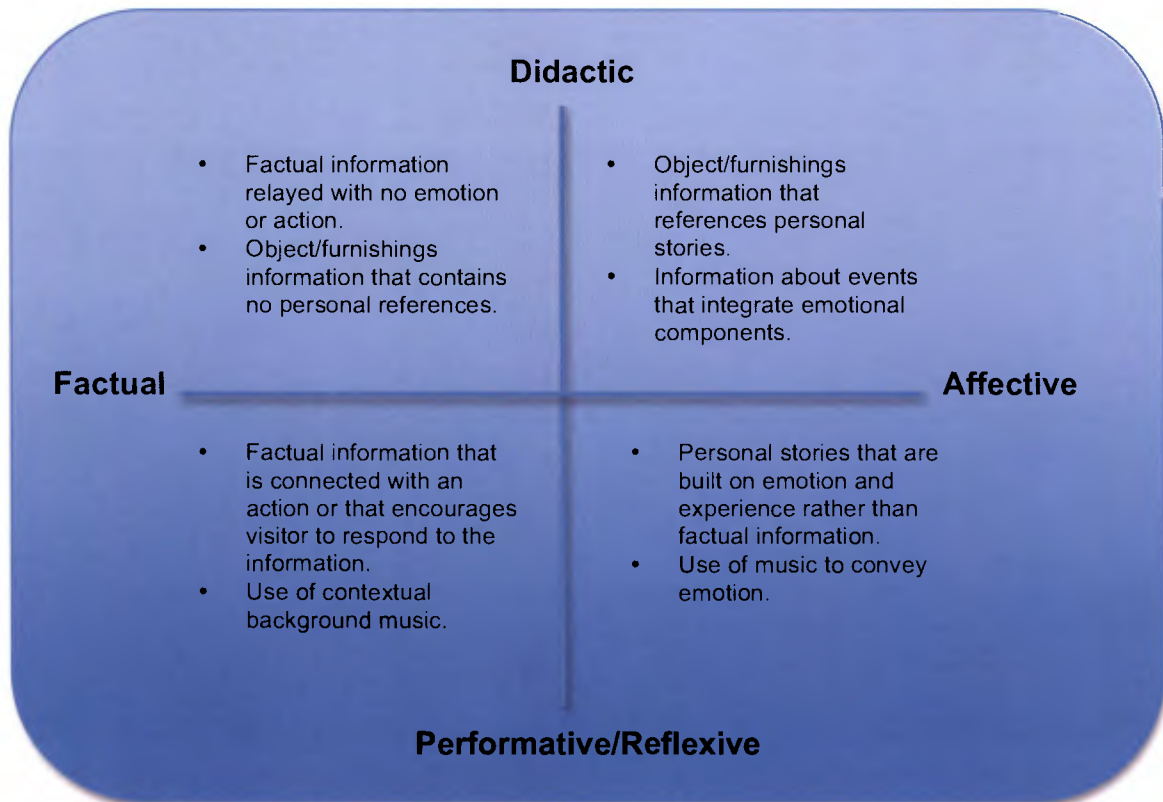


Figure 6: Audio Tour Content Coding Framework Diagram

Tour Content Analysis

The tour content was assessed using the framework above, breaking the tour into discrete elements coded for both their content and properties. A frequency count indicated the distribution of the categories of content and the way it is conveyed. A frequency distribution was created for both the historic and exhibit areas to ascertain which quadrants of content are most often integrated into the tour, thereby depicting the relative role of each of the four dimensions within the tour experience. This reveals that the historic areas of the tour incorporate a more even distribution of approaches, whereas the exhibit areas tend to have a narrower scope of content properties. Patterns of the content are also considered, allowing interpretive trends to emerge when considering the impact of the visitor experience.

Historic House Tour Content Components

The audio tour for the home creates a singular path of content that visitors

follow. The content is composed of narration, audio segments from Elvis and his family that are considered oral histories for this study, music and background sound effects. All of these elements were considered and coded as part of this analysis. A frequency of the content for the historic areas is depicted in the following visual diagram, with the numbers representing the number of times that type of content appeared.

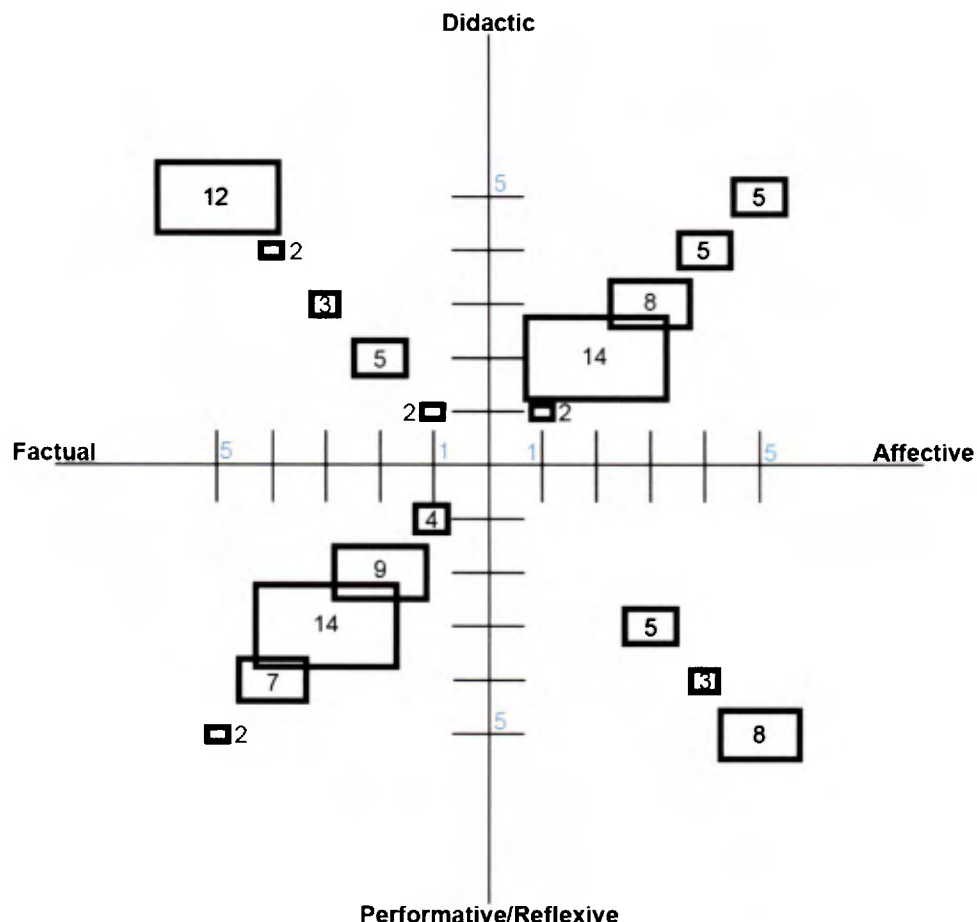


Figure 7. Audio Tour Content Domain Frequencies

The diagram shows clusters of content, with the Affective Didactic and Factual Reflexive quadrants most heavily populated, indicating that the tour draws heavily on affect and information tied to actions and contextualisation. The Factual Didactic segment is also well represented, perhaps not terribly surprising given the nature of historic house tours in general. It is difficult to escape providing basic facts about the history of the house, but these seem well balanced against

the slightly higher represented Affective Didactic style of interpretation.

When the nature of the Factual Didactic content integration was examined, it became clear that with few exceptions an affective or reflexive statement followed each non-emotive factual statement. This is not a house tour packed with statements about chronology, architecture or the provenance of furnishings. In the kitchen, for example, the factual statement 'the kitchen looks just as it did when Elvis last re-decorated it in the mid-1970s,' is supported by the notion that 'this room stayed especially busy serving all the family, friends and staff at Graceland,' a statement which is further supported by a detailed oral history description of the excitement generated in the kitchen practically twenty-four hours a day by Lisa Marie. Virtually every factual statement on the tour is succeeded by comments that help actively people the space and engage the visitor with images of actions and feelings.

Unusually for a historic house, Graceland even contains a room where no factual information is given about the room itself, focusing entirely on the relationship between Elvis and his parents. The second room encountered on the tour is interpreted as Elvis's parents' bedroom.²³ While the guidebook describes the furnishings and the restoration of the suite back to its original décor, down to the fashionable 1950s poodle wallpaper in the adjacent bathroom, none of this information is provided on the audio tour. Instead, visitors are provided information rooted solely in the affective domain, beginning with Elvis singing *Love Me Tender*. The short audio description goes on to depict an emotional image of Elvis and his parents, stating, 'Elvis was very close to both of his parents. The Presleys were poor when he was a child. Elvis promised that

²³ This interpretation does not acknowledge that his parents only used this room for only a short while before his mother's death, and for the bulk of the twenty years Elvis lived at Graceland it was his grandmother's bedroom.

one day he would give them an easy, comfortable life. Bringing them to Graceland was the fulfilment of that childhood promise.’ As visitors turn back towards the front door, Elvis’s *Love Me Tender* continues to echo in the background. His parents’ bedroom is one the best examples of how affect and emotion come to the forefront of the tour, relegating factual information to a supporting role, contrary to traditional historic house interpretation.

The Factual Reflexive elements of the tour provide information connected with an action or sense of peopling the space. This content ranges from Lisa Marie describing how ‘there were people always around – it was all kinds of stuff going on at all hours of the day and night’ to the narrator drawing visitors’ attention to the torn felt in the corner of the pool table in the basement that ‘happened when a friend tried a trick shot that didn’t quite work out,’ which is followed by the sound of cracking pool balls and laughter. The Factual Reflexive ties to the personal narrative constructed on the tour, consistently providing visitors with imagery, sounds and stories that account for the lived experiences in the home.

The Factual Reflexive effect is also achieved through the use of background music and sounds, helping construct a sensory environment much like the sound of the friendly pool game just described. Elvis’s music is used to illustrate a space or idea, with lyrics such as ‘get in that kitchen and make some noise with the pots and pans’ used to punctuate the kitchen audio tour segment and accentuate the atmosphere. Music is considered to be a skilful manipulator (DeNora, 2000; Sloboda and O’Neill, 2003), with the ability to ‘manipulate personal moods, arouse emotions, and create environments that may influence the ways that other people feel and behave’ (Hallam, 2010, p. 791). When Angie Marchese explained how they decided on which background music to use from

Elvis's almost 900 recordings, she stressed they were looking for song lyrics to provide very literal connections between the space and the visitor (6 December 2006). Returning to the pool table incident, for example, the interlacing music supporting that section is appropriately titled *Trouble*.

Research indicates that any experience of music 'depends on the interplay between . . . the music, the person, and the situation' (Gabrielsson, 2010, p. 568), alluding to contextually important role of music in interpretive settings.

Graceland's musical interplay exists between visitors in authentic settings, relevant musical selections, and the portrayal of Elvis, culminating in a performative visitor experience. All of these approaches encourage visitors to actively engage with the material and elicit a response, whether it is laughter, empathy or creating a sense of physicality in a space now void of inhabitants. Graceland does not have costumed or first person interpreters the way older properties often do, it relies on the audio tour to develop the 'sensory spectacle.' Providing visitors with a sensory experience is key for affective interpretation and 'reinforces visitors' perceptions of the visit as an embodied experience whose affect produces more interesting memories than wandering through empty rooms' (West and Bowman, 2010, p. 287).

The Affective Didactic material is approached in a similar manner as the Factual Reflexive, with information about objects and events conveyed through personal anecdotes or stories. These differ in that the Affective Didactic offers personal context, but does not elicit the type of performative response from visitors. The tour more often approaches the didactic information in this way, continuing to support the interpretation of objects through narrative that illuminates personal connections. An example of Affective Didactic interpretation can be seen in the TV Room, where the tour describes Elvis's record collection.

From the outset, the object is personalised, this is 'Elvis's stereo,' not 'the' stereo or 'a' stereo. His stereo is accompanied by 'a small sample of his extensive record collection,' which reflects how 'he liked all kinds of music, including gospel, pop, country, rock and classical.' In reviewing the tour content, a pattern is clear in the way objects are referenced, as they are almost always attached to a person and rarely described simply as 'the' or 'a.' This reinforces the affective dimension for visitors, which can be seen in the visitor photographs, where titles frequently reference objects and rooms in the same manner.

The tour embraces the Affective Didactic by consistently incorporating the personal stories that enliven factual information about the house and objects. This pattern can be traced to the earliest days of Graceland's opening as Priscilla Presley and Jack Soden sought out examples of model house tours. Their time spent at the Biltmore Estate, the Vanderbilt family home in North Carolina, contributed to the idea that 'items of a personal nature should be included in the narration of the tour' as they would 'give visitors a better sense of what it was like when Elvis lived there' (O'Neal, 1996, p. 111). Graceland, however, goes beyond simply providing access to these personal items by layering an element of personal relevance and emotional ties. In the living room, for instance, visitors are introduced to the Presley family through a series of portraits and photographs. The information about the 1957 photograph of Elvis's parents, Vernon and Gladys, describes them as his 'beloved' parents and is followed by the description of the portrait of Vernon, which he gave to Elvis for Christmas in 1976, the last Christmas before Elvis's death. This segues to the narrative for the next room on the tour, his parents bedroom, which as previously described is interpreted entirely in the affective domain.

The Affective Reflexive content is driven largely by oral histories, adding to

Elvis's ability to maintain the 'awesome presence' that Lisa Marie describes in the audio tour. When Lisa Marie recalls in the entry hall how 'even if he was upstairs you could feel him,' she is creating an atmosphere allowing visitors to feel that Elvis is still present, as though he will come 'rattling down the stairs' at any moment. Visitor reviews frequently claim that 'you feel him' (*loveEPGeorgia*, 6 March 2010) and that 'when you walk through the front door you feel Elvis inside the house . . . his presence is here' (*callumSCAR*, 10 February 2010). From the beginning of the tour, when Elvis welcomes visitors to his home and declaring 'the happiest times I've ever had have been with my family, and in fact I can't wait to get home,' visitors are immersed in content that dwells on the affective rather than the cognitive. The oral histories that create this effect allow visitor's to conjure images of what Graceland would have been like when Elvis lived there and sparks empathetic responses. This Affective Reflexive mode draws on the emotions and imagination, which are increasingly regarded as key dimensions of contemporary audience activity (Bagnall, 2003).

Overall, the house tour content is a relatively balanced mix between the four domains, indicating richness in the interpretation that enhances the visitor experience. This successful blending of modes reflects Pine and Gilmore's belief that engaging experiences operate across domains, creating an immersive environment. Within each room at least two content dimensions are used, and they are blended so that the factual is never far from the affective. In the Jungle Room, for instance, the narrative includes a the factual statement that 'Elvis picked out all the wild looking furniture in 1974,' but this is bolstered by the explanation that it reminded Elvis of Hawaii, 'a place he loved.' Additionally, the tour reveals that the round chair in the corner was one of Lisa's favourites. The chair still contains a teddy bear, summoning the image of Lisa cuddled up in the

oversized chair. The tour then describes another classic 1970s touch with the green shag carpeting on the floor and ceiling, which enhanced the acoustics in the room enabling it to be turned into a recording venue. Visitors are allowed into the recording session as they hear Elvis announce to the musicians 'you guys don't desert me on the very first part' followed by the producer stating 'this is 3, we're rolling' and the start of Elvis singing to musical accompaniment. In the space of just under a minute the audio tour has provided visitors with a glimpse into the private world of Elvis and his recordings, mitigating the impact of the obtrusive furniture and décor to focus on the personal narrative that the space encompasses. The tour utilises all four content domains to develop an experience that convinces visitors that indeed 'Elvis certainly lives there' (*aussiegirl1977*, 8 March 2010).

Exhibit Area Content Components

The exhibit areas at Graceland offer a stark contrast to the historic interiors of the house tour. The house tour encourages visitors to conceptualise an atmosphere that feels as though Elvis never left the building, teeming with authenticity and appealing to all of the senses. Once they enter the Trophy Building, however, they are confronted with a typical museum-style exhibition complete with glass cases, exhibit labels and a chronological look at Elvis's career. The content of the audio tour reflects this shift as well, and almost half of the content in this section is Factual Didactic information. While the house tour has a more even distribution of the four content delivery modes, the exhibit areas rely heavily on a direct explanatory mode. This does not, however, mean these areas are devoid of the affective presence that dominated the historic interiors, as almost 30 per cent of the material is drawn from the Affective Reflexive realm.

The exhibit areas are flooded with facts, more typical of museum settings,

providing an account of Elvis's career highlights. The interpretation maintains an affective presence through the use of oral histories, interviews and music. The oral histories and interviews account for the majority of the level 5 Affective Reflexive content, particularly with the integration of comments from Elvis himself. This balance is illustrated as visitors enter the Hall of Gold, where the narrator recounts that 'In 1956, Elvis got five gold records at once for *Don't Be Cruel* and its flipside *Hound Dog*. He also became an instant Hollywood star with the release of his first movie, *Love Me Tender*,' followed by Elvis declaring that 'As long as I live I'll never stop being grateful to the American people for giving me this big break.' Elvis's career success is seemingly eclipsed by this portrayal of humbleness and gratefulness. The regular occurrence of 'humble' in the post-visit meaning maps indicate that this format of factual detail followed by a more affective account has an impact on visitors, with the affective material proving more memorable at the conclusion of the tour.

The Trophy Building exhibits form a pattern of fact and performative emotion. When interpretive planner John Veverka (2009) describes the composition of exhibits he stresses the importance of 'exhibit load,' classifying exhibits based on the activity and passivity of both the visitor and exhibit. Higher 'load' exhibits require visitors to actively engage, with the affective and performative constituting the highest 'load' at Graceland. Veverka suggests exhibit types, ranging from the most active to the most passive, be integrated systematically throughout the exhibit space for the best visitor experience. After reviewing the audio tour content and the content properties, it is clear the Trophy Building does exactly that, consistently alternating between the didactic and emotive.

The first exhibits cover Elvis's early career, followed by the vast display of

gold and platinum records, providing a moment of awe for even the most sceptical visitors. Visitors are then introduced to Private Presley, representing a patriotic American who chose to serve in the Army when he was drafted in March 1958 rather than continue his thriving music career. While his time in the Army could be interpreted in solely didactic terms, the audio tour instead relies on the affective domain recalling that ‘even though his career was at its peak he believed he had a duty to serve.’ This was also the time in his life when he was ‘devastated’ by his mother’s death and soon met his future wife, who recalls on the audio tour that Elvis ‘didn’t have any airs about him whatsoever.’ The post-Army career section highlights the numerous movies he made, which despite being one of Hollywood’s top box office draws, left Elvis feeling empty as he ‘found himself typecast in light romance and musical comedy.’ From the frivolity of Elvis’s movies, visitors literally turn a corner to be flooded by the emotive section on Elvis’s philanthropic work. The careful selection of Elvis’s rendition of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* introduces this section, a noticeable break from the previous displays. Visitors are returned to a career exhibit focusing on his 1968 ‘Comeback’ special, including the display of the famous black leather suit he wore for much of the performance.

The last exhibit returns firmly to the affective domain as ‘one of the proudest moments of his career’ is showcased, when Elvis was named an Outstanding Young Men of the Nation in 1970. Visitors hear Elvis in his acceptance speech and see the trophy he received, with the finish now worn, resulting from being carried even on tour. An early version of the Graceland guidebook describes the significance of the acceptance speech that visitors hear on the audio tour, as ‘the honor visibly moved Elvis and signified acceptance, recognition and respect for his work and for him as a human being – the

attainment of his American dream' (Kath and Morgan, 1996, p. 42). While the Trophy Building is laden with factual information, there is an effort to give Elvis a voice for visitors that simultaneously stresses his humanity and career successes.

The Racquetball Building contains both historic and exhibit elements. The exhibition content relies primarily on the Didactic Affective realm buffered by the use of Affective Reflexive oral histories from his daughter and wife. The environment overshadows much of the audio interpretation in this space and the two are often incongruent, as the tour moves between Elvis's 'peak as a worldwide superstar' to his divorce and death in the space of roughly 90 seconds. As previously described, this two-story space is stacked high with posthumous honours, elaborate stage costumes, and video footage of Elvis performing. While the audio tour incorporates facts such as the number of households that saw Elvis's *Aloha from Hawaii* special (almost one and a half billion), it also provides visitors with emotional accounts from Lisa Marie and Priscilla that stand out against the more didactic tone of the additional tour material. Lisa Marie describes what it was like to see her father performing, despite having just been with him backstage she would 'get crazy' when he appeared on stage, recalling 'I just remember being absolutely awestruck before, during, and after [the performance] – I just couldn't help but stare at him and going "My God".' You can hear a slight tremble in her voice as she expresses her experiences on the audio tour, creating an empathetic bridge between the visitor and Elvis. Visitors have described being 'completely overcome by the power and intensity of this space,' (Drummond, 2011, p. 208). This inescapable mix of emotion, visual imagery, and music that 'bounces off the walls like a hymn in a cathedral' leaves visitors in an overwhelmingly affective space with 'nowhere to run' (ibid, p. 208).

The only attempt on the tour to consider Elvis's long-lived popularity occurs as visitors exit the Racquetball court, a fitting space on the tour as visitors are surrounded by the numerous contemporary honours. The tour explains 'through his timeless body of recording, films, and television specials and through the devotion of his fans, Elvis's popularity remains strong. In life he was the greatest of stars, today that light shines brighter than ever.' Elvis then addresses visitors to say, 'thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.' The affective nature of this content mirrors the experience that visitors will soon encounter in the Meditation Garden. As much as the audio tour draws on emotions, it rarely evaluates Elvis or reflects on his successes beyond the statistics, with the exception of this short statement. The tour content is comfortable dwelling in the extremes of the heart-felt and the didactic, never venturing into an area that requires an appraisal of Elvis or his career, an area explored further in the narrative analysis.

The factual content in the exhibit areas is often enhanced with the use of illustrative music. For instance, the Trophy Building tour begins with the statement 'In 1953, when he was 18, Elvis walked in to the Memphis Recording Service, home of Sun Records, he paid \$4.00 to record this song, called *My Happiness*,' at which point visitors hear part of Elvis's first recording. So while didactic in nature, the approach incorporates another layer enriching the experience. Elvis's music also literally provides him with a voice in the content. In the section at the end of the Racquetball building segment, for instance, Elvis sings *My Way*, with the tour selecting the lyrics 'and I did it my way' to highlight the demeanour of the content about his legacy.

There are points in the exhibits where the music dominates and moves the content into the affective sphere, particularly in the Racquetball Court and

Meditation Garden. As visitors leave the Racquetball Court, for example, they hear Elvis's rendition of a gospel hymn, beseeching 'Lead me oh Lord, won't you lead me, I am tired and I need my strength and power to guide me over my darkest hour.' Having just described the end of Elvis's marriage and his death in an almost detached manner in the Racquetball Court, the tour affords Elvis a haunting and emotional presence through his music as visitors begin their walk to the Meditation Garden.

The Meditation Garden proves a salient point on the tour in terms of content delivery. Visitors are greeted by a very traditional 'house tour' style introduction, as the narrator notes 'Elvis had the Meditation Garden built in 1965 as a place for quiet reflection,' followed by a brief description of the graves and markers. This soon launches into a completely affective experience as Lisa Marie reflects on her father's presence and spirit, stating that,

Whatever he emanated on the stage was what he was when he was off. I think people just felt his presence, it came through in his music, it came through on stage, his being was what was coming through. I just think he touches the spirit . . . My own thing, just from knowing him, is that his [spirit] came through in whatever he did and it would touch other spirits.

While practically hagiographic in nature, this quote also humanises Elvis, with Lisa Marie testifying to Elvis's spirit, reaffirming to fans that whatever they felt of Elvis's presence on stage or in his music was indeed a 'pure' representation of who her father was. Elvis himself provides the tour's final remarks, reflecting that 'When I was a child, ladies and gentlemen, I was a dreamer and every dream I ever dreamed has come true a hundred times.' The tour ends in a space that is curiously both intimate and over-populated, as crowds converge at Elvis's gravesite, saturated with affective presence and designed to engage visitors through emotion and music.

Graceland's Narrative of Elvis

Having determined the interpretive modes employed at Graceland, it is important to ascertain the narrative constructed about Elvis's life and how it helps structure the historic house experience. The numerous Elvis biographies written since his rise to fame in the 1950s portray a range of images and stories about whom Elvis *really* was. The most critically acclaimed, written by Peter Guralnick in two volumes spanning over one thousand pages, begins 'Elvis Presley may well be the most written-about figure of our time. He is also in many ways the most misunderstood, both because of our ever-increasing rush to judgment and, perhaps more to the point, simply because he appears to be so well known' (Guralnick, 1999a, p. xi). Marcus (1991) succinctly reviews the narrative clichés attached to Elvis's life,

Birth in desperate rural poverty, a move to the city, a first record on a local label, unprecedented national and international fame, scandal, adulation; the transformation of a strange and threatening outsider into a respectable citizen who served his country without complaint, years spent dutifully making formulaic movies and unexciting music, marriage, fatherhood, a quiet life behind the wall of his mansion; then a stunning return, loud and vibrant; and then a slow, seemingly irresistible decline: divorce, endless tours as lifeless as his old films, news replaced by rumors of terrible things, and finally early death (viii).

It became important for EPE to distil all of these competing narratives to produce an interpretive tour that served both Graceland's history and the legacy of Elvis they hoped to propagate.

The staff at Graceland had to compose their own narrative of Elvis, his story spanning over time and manifest through his home. The purpose of this narrative, born from early concerns about opening Graceland to the public, was to offer a sense of who Elvis was as a person at home, rather than as an entertainer on a stage. Priscilla believed that 'Graceland was the perfect expression of Elvis's universe because it existed closest to his roots. Graceland

is where he first figured out how to be most comfortable' (Ritz, 2006, p. 23).

EPE's narrative portrays this universe to visitors, providing access to stories and objects that epitomised the 'comfortable' Elvis.

Establishing a storyline that resonates with the unique and compelling history of the historic home is considered paramount to creating a memorable experience. Devising this storyline often proves to be 'deceptively hard,' as interpreters struggle to find an effective way to integrate the important themes of the home in ways that 'energize the stories' that they want to tell (Lloyd, 2002, p. 219). The narrative that is developed must draw on the elements that will appeal to visitors and convey the importance of the site, collection and residents of the home. At Graceland, Elvis's personality and family are at the centre of the narrative, with no real sense of chronology or events shaping the narrative. The story of Elvis subsumes the story of Graceland, allowing the tour to incorporate an affective and personal dimension that drives the storyline throughout the visit.

Every historic house tour is dictated by the confines of time and space and the narratives developed are often bound by these constraints, forcing interpreters to make selections about the elements of the story told to visitors. The narrative of historic homes and their residents are a process of selection and filtering, never providing a comprehensive account. The same is true of Graceland, where a thousand pages of biography could never be summarised in an hour long house tour. The guidebook at Graceland admits that the story of Elvis is 'too immense and multi-faceted to be captured within the limited scope' of the tour (Kath and Morgan, 1996, p. 19). The audio tour is representative of the most important elements of Elvis's narrative as seen by EPE, and the plot developed is key to analysing the tour as a narrative text.

It is also important to recall that while the current Graceland interpretive

are not members of the Presley family, Graceland has always been a family enterprise and they dictated the original narratives at the house. This ties closely to the notion of founding narratives, whereby family members associated with historic homes engage in 'memory work' to tell and re-tell accounts of events at the house, forming the foundations of the home's narrative (Beranek, 2011). This process is also considered an act of 'prospective memory,' as it interprets the past and sets a precedent for how the site and family will be remembered in the future. Through this memory work, families such as the Presleys 'actively shaped and selected aspects of their own memories and family histories to be transmitted' (Beranek, 2011, p. 111) in the larger narrative of the historic home. These narratives based on memory are not about 'retrieving a past truth, it is about reconstructing the past's present, shifting legacies in anticipation of the future' (Hodge, 2011, p. 116). Recalling the original intentions of the Presley family when opening Graceland, casting Elvis's legacy into an image beyond jumpsuits and cheeseburgers, it is clear that a great deal of memory work has taken place and impacted the narrative at Graceland. Hodge (2011) reminds us that it is 'our professional responsibility' to be 'mindful about this work, actively articulating what is being remembered or forgotten, how and why' (p. 116). As the narrative and plot developed at Graceland is examined it is important to remember the source of the narrative and the legacy that is being perpetuated through the site.

Components of Plot

When Pine and Gilmore determined what makes a memorable visit in the context of the Experience Economy, they acknowledged the importance of plot within the visitor experience. They based their theory of plot around Aristotle's understanding of plot as an 'arrangement of the incidents,' which forms that basis

of any staged experience and 'the sequencing of ones required to create a desired impression' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p. 104). The components of plot used by Aristotle reveal much about what makes an experience memorable, most notably the progressive revelation of knowledge, surprising reversals, unity and balance of events, and the emotional effect of tragedy. Pine and Gilmore believe that when an experience, such as a heritage site visit, incorporates these various narrative elements the experience will have a much greater impact on visitors. Many of these components, as discussed through the narrative analysis, appear on the Graceland tour and construct the overall visitor experience.

It is important to note that the narrative directed towards visitors by an institution is not always fully accepted by tourists. Kurtz's study (2010) indicated that tourists accepted official narratives to varying degrees during their visit, with some rejecting the official narrative entirely or rehearsing them with little critical reflection. Importantly, his research also asserts that tourists were frequently 'very selective in their appropriations, letting some of the authorised discourses influence their own interpretation yet rejecting other parts of the official narratives' (p. 218). The official narrative devised by EPE is likely viewed quite distinctly by different visitors and not necessarily accepted by every visitor as a comprehensive account of Elvis.

Elvis's narrative is developed over the entirety of the tour and is consequently dealt with as a whole for analysis, rather than separating the house tour and re-purposed buildings as done previously. Having reviewed the audio tour extensively it was possible to draft the basic plot EPE uses to tell Elvis's story. With these plot markers in place, the audio tour transcript was analysed for elements of the plot to determine which are most commonly represented and the interpretive strategies used to convey the various plot segments. This plot is

closely tied to the concept images of Elvis used previously, so where appropriate the concept image is listed alongside the plot element. The basic structure of the plot at Graceland is as follows:

Plot Element	Image Concept(s)
1) Elvis born to humble beginnings	'Blue-collar Guy in Blue Suede Shoes/' Elvis the American dream
2) Devoted to his parents and promised he would care for them	Elvis the Family Man
3) Made success in the recording industry	Elvis the Innovator
4) Held true to promise to his parents and to his Southern roots	'Blue-collar Guy in Blue Suede Shoes/' Elvis the American dream
5) Married and became a father	Elvis the Family Man
6) Loving family man	Elvis the Family Man
7) Continued career success	Iconic Elvis
8) Philanthropic endeavours	Elvis the Philanthropist
9) Death caused by failing health and long term prescription drug abuse	Elvis in Pain
10) Remembrance and lasting legacy	Iconic Elvis

Table 9. Audio Tour Plot Elements

This official narrative of Elvis is not a comprehensive, or even particularly complex, vision of Elvis. It has been argued that the image of Elvis presented at Graceland is sanitised, as Vikan (1994) describes, 'purged from the singer's factual life history are any references to drug abuse, obesity, or paranoiac violence. The *vitae* . . . speak instead of a dirt-poor southern boy who rose to fame and glory, of the love of a son for his mother, of humility and generosity, and of superhuman achievement in the face of adversity. They emphasize Elvis's profound spiritualism and his painful, premature death' (p. 150). This image is one clearly constructed to accentuate certain elements of Elvis's life, those fitting most closely to the image nurtured as Elvis's legacy by EPE.

Doss (1999) criticises the 'sanitized, drug-free, fat-free, and generally more one-dimensional Elvis' that she sees being promoted through the scripted tours at Graceland. She notes this official narrative of Elvis conspicuously avoids

'attention to Elvis's fandom, his sexuality, his important relationships with black popular culture and his demise' (p. 18). She acknowledges that it is unsurprising that Elvis's estate avoids the negative side of his story, but that visitors would rather learn about these complexities than the 'official' product EPE works so diligently to promote. While some of these issues are now integrated into the audio tour, many of Doss's criticisms remain applicable to the official narrative constructed at Graceland. Before discussing the omissions in the narrative it is important to consider the elements of plot constructed at Graceland and examine how they are revealed over the course of the tour.

Narrative Tour Composition

The ten primary plot elements at Graceland can be divided into two categories, elements promoting an understanding of Elvis's career and those contributing to an affective understanding of his personality. This division is a result of the two main goals at Graceland, to expose visitors to the more human side of Elvis while also promoting his career achievements. When the narrative content is divided into these binary roles it becomes clear the home and historically interpreted outbuildings are the foundation of the personal affective plot elements, while the exhibit areas explore Elvis's career relying more heavily on the factual domain. The narrative consequently becomes physically separated and compartmentalised. Returning to the idea of an 'arrangement of incidents,' it becomes clear that Graceland has arranged the plot elements to foster the dual understanding of Elvis, yet still prioritising the personal over the career.

When the frequencies of plot elements are divided into personality traits and career achievements, personality driven content appears more frequently than career achievements. There is a 60/40 divide between the narrative components, also correlating to the division between the amount of time spent in

the historic areas and the exhibit sections. When visitors responded to the post-visit meaning mapping with such affective and character driven terms they were reacting primarily to the content in the contextual historic setting used to exemplify Elvis's personality. The one exception to this is the generosity attribute, explored in greater depth in a subsequent section, and ascribed to the integration of affecting objects and music in the Trophy Building.

While many historic house tours are arranged to introduce chronological events or tell the story of the site over time, Graceland's reliance on personality driven interpretation means that traditional chronological narrative is abandoned. Although the plot elements described above are in a sequential order, the tour content is not arranged in that manner. The first plot elements draw on the Family Man image, rather than Elvis's beginnings, immersing visitors in personality-laden interpretation from the outset. The traditional 'beginning, middle, end' one associates with narratives appears at Graceland not through chronology, but through encounters with the image concepts developed over the course of the tour. In Aristotle's definition of a well constructed plot he acknowledged it must neither begin nor end haphazardly (Barbatsis, 2005), which is significant because although Graceland's narrative does not have traditional composition it is not arbitrary. It begins with the dominant family man image and concludes with a segment reconciling the iconic and humanised views of Elvis, effectively fulfilling EPE's interpretive goals.

This audio tour departs from more traditional tours in the choice of narrator, who is Lance LeGault, a 'B-movie star and former Elvis stand-in' (Doss, 1999, p. 223). The narrator is never given a voice of authority and he presides over the narrative like a friend peering over your shoulder reminiscing about Elvis. His Southern accent and casual tone add to the 'personal' feeling of the

tour and strengthens the affective elements of the narrative. The combination of this style of narration, interspersed with oral histories from family, encourage visitors to relate to Elvis in a familial manner.

The tour narrative in the Trophy Building, while focusing primarily on career highlights, blends in significant character driven objects and interpretation as well. The exhibits and accompanying audio similarly oscillate between dimensions of factual and personal narrative seen in the house tour. The narrative that began as a foray into his musical accomplishments in an informative tone ends with a self-effacing Elvis reflecting on the nature of his career, once again drawing together the impact of the factual and affective.

An understanding of how the audio tour is composed provides insight into how Graceland has prioritised and developed the elements of plot. There are key themes and images of Elvis established throughout the tour. The impact of particular themes has been illustrated through the Personal Meaning Mapping and visitor photo data already explored in this thesis. The most compelling of these themes are now considered in relation to their narrative role and how Graceland reinforces these images for visitors.

Elvis and the American Dream

One of the most important re-curing themes in Elvis's narrative is his embodiment of the American dream. This is perhaps not surprising, as American historic homes are often built on narratives that are 'an expression of American mythology' (Yentsch, 1993, p. 5). It has been claimed that Elvis 'encompasses everything American from the sublime to the grotesque. He is as much a tribute to the essential optimism of the American dream as he is an indictment of its falseness and its pitfalls' (Quain, 1992, p. xvii). Not only is Elvis conceived of in this archetypal American dream fashion, but Graceland itself also takes on this

moniker. The Graceland guidebook proposes that while for some Graceland is merely a curiosity, 'to many it represents just as it did to Elvis, a part of the American dream' (Morgan, 2003, p. 26).

Rigby (2001) describes this mythology around Elvis, as an exemplification of the American dream, 'he was the poor truck driver who took his mother from a log cabin to a mansion. He is, in death, portrayed as a real folk hero unspoilt by the values of the world' (p. 156). Music historian Greil Marcus believed that 'Elvis's story is so classically American . . . that his press agents never bothered to improve on it. But it is finally elusive too, just like all good stories. It surrounds its subject, without quite revealing it. But it resonates; it evokes like crazy' (1997, p. 128). The American dream rhetoric surrounding Elvis has been embraced at Graceland and echoes throughout the tour, dwelling in ideas of family, promises made good, and Southern cultural roots never abandoned.

A definition of the American dream remains illusive. It can be measured in many ways, ranging from monetary success to freedom of expression. The term 'American dream' was coined by popular historian James Truslow Adams, writing in the 1930s. He described 'that American dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all of our citizens of every rank' (Cullen, 2003, p. 4). This dream can be seen as a 'collective dream of America, rooted in broadly defined notions of community and based on hopes for a better way of life' (Rodman, 1996, p. 83). The very ambiguity of the American dream is the source of its mythic power, as 'the American dream would have no drama or mystique if it were a self-evident falsehood or a scientifically demonstrable principle' (Cullen, 2003, p. 7). Consequently, depicting Elvis as the embodiment of this dream only complicates 'an already tangled web of signification even further' (Rodman, 1996, p. 83).

Tellingly, Guralnick's essay 'Elvis Presley and the American dream'

(1999b) never actually uses the phrase 'American dream' beyond the title, nor does he describe 'the dream' itself. Instead, Guralnick describes the rise of Elvis's career and his music; as if this journey is evidence enough of Elvis's pursuit of the American dream. Elvis's personification of the American dream is multi-faceted, seen in his talent and the economic success of his career, his devotion to home, family and duty to serve in the Armed Forces, as well as his constant search for respectability and legitimacy. Doss (1999) believes that Elvis's 'abiding American presence' is a result of the 'intertwined images of talent, success, familiarity, sincerity, generosity, and suffering' (p. 16), all of which are composite pieces for the narrative of Elvis developed at Graceland.

Writers have envisioned Elvis's representation of the American dream in various forms. An article originally appearing in 1968 declared 'Elvis has fulfilled the American dream: he is young, rich, famous, adored' (Booth, 1992, p. 171), but this appears to be the most superficial vision of the American dream. Marcus's original interpretation of this dream was based on the ability of Elvis's music and story to 'dramatize a sense of what it is to be an American; what it means, what it's worth, and what the stakes of life in America might be' (1997, p. 4). Similarly, Marsh (1982) declared that 'Elvis represents the boundaries of America's capacity for self-invention on the one hand and for the creation of communities on the other' (p. ix). This American dream had nothing to do with a fancy house perched high on a hill or a fleet of Cadillacs and airplanes, this version of the American dream is one born out of talent, hard work and perseverance. Others, including Guralnick, see the American dream manifest through Elvis's story of upward mobility, as 'the classic American success story. Elvis, a desperately lonely, desperately ambitious child of the Depression, rising from that two-room Tupelo shack to a marble-pillared mansion of the hill'

(Guralnick, 1999c, p. 142).

Another facet of the American dream rehearsed at Graceland is Elvis's role in America's post-war 'Victory culture.' According to Marcus, Elvis's early music 'simultaneously captured, reflected, and illuminated what was most valuable about the American culture in which Elvis grew up,' while his rise to fame helped to 'reshape and reinvigorate what it meant to be an American in the first place' (Rodman, 1996, p. 83). EPE acknowledges that Elvis represents something special to many people, 'he represents an era and someone's dreams, a memory of a time in post-war America when maybe life was at its best' (Hilburn, 1989, n.p.). Jack Soden believes that Elvis's legacy is rooted in this interpretation, declaring 'it's an important part of any explanation for the success of Priscilla and company. It is what they exploit and seek to keep alive as a cultural legacy – and for future exploitation' (ibid, 1989). Elvis's embodiment of the American dream provides a narrative of enduring viability that Graceland capitalises on through its interpretive schemes.

The American dream narrative developed at Graceland indexes themes of 'American historical meta narrative,' including ideals of 'entrepreneurial spirit, principled sacrifice, independence, persistence and self-determination' (Hodge, 2011, p. 129). Elvis and Graceland are both idealised as manifestations of larger American ideals, made real in the fabric of the historic home. This ties explicitly into the nostalgic interpretive device employed at Graceland, connecting visitors with an era that has become increasingly romanticised. Drawing on this nostalgic vision of Elvis and embedding it in the concept of the American dream allows EPE to capture the imagination of visitors. While interpretation built on such a foundation may be engaging to visitors on an affective level, Hodge (2011) cautions that an approach built on social values is not 'critical, progressive or

theoretically robust' (p. 130). Graceland's narrative falls prey to the pitfalls that Hodge has described, resting on the ability for Graceland to act as 'a piece of Americana' (O'Neal, 1996, p. 110) that continues to perpetuate an uncritical view of working class American aspirations and values.

This values laden interpretive approach, while lacking criticality, does still entice visitors. As one TripAdvisor commented when encouraging others to visit Graceland, 'it's really the epitome of the American dream to see what he accomplished' (Lyssa4978, 11 January 2011). Other visitors consider Graceland 'a great slice of Americana' and 'an American original' that represent 'everything that is America.' The appeal of the American dream narrative at Graceland is readily found in visitor reviews, serving as both a reason to visit the site and an impactful part of the experience.²⁴

The 'Blue-collared Guy in Blue Suede Shoes'

The American dream narrative is intertwined with the notion that Elvis maintained his status as a typical working-class American, the 'blue-collared guy in blue suede shoes.' This concept permeates every data source in this study, reflected in the meaning map content and the visitor photos. It is represented in the objects that fill Graceland and the narrative depicting Elvis as a typical person un-tarnished by fame. One visitor expresses this viewpoint as 'once inside you know Elvis was a regular but great good guy' (MHFeller, 8 October 2010). Visitor reviews frequently comment on the sense of ordinariness at Graceland, with comments such as 'I didn't expect Graceland to be so "normal"' (Mn_princess73, 8 July 2011) found throughout TripAdvisor.

²⁴ All of the TripAdvisor reviewers that specifically mention the American ethos appear to be American visitors, as they most often refer to 'our' when describing American qualities. Similarly, there is an absence in international visitor meaning map responses that correlate to themes associated with the American dream, such as the 'Blue-collar Guy in Blue Suede Shoes' concept.

The oral history from his wife recounting their first meeting highlights this 'blue-collar guy' narrative: 'he was so nice and just so, gosh, like anyone else.' This image ascribes to Elvis 'the honesty, decency, humility, generosity, respect, politeness, and familial devotion' that are characteristic of an idealised American working class (Doss, 1999, p. 13). This reflects the central tenet of Graceland's interpretive purpose, to showcase the 'real' Elvis while encouraging visitors to establish a familiarity, and resulting compassion, for him.

Both narrative concepts of the American dream and 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' are born from Elvis's 'rags to riches' experience. Rodman (1996) argues that the images of upward mobility and social transcendence at the heart of this myth are 'more relevant to Elvis's status as a symbol of America than they are to questions of class politics' (p.71). He believes American class politics serve the unique function of minimising the visibility of distinctions, quoting economics professor Rebecca Blank's assertion that 'it's sort of the American psyche that wants to consider everyone equal' (1996, p. 195). Therein lies much of Graceland's narrative appeal as Elvis is manufactured as 'equal,' an 'everyman' that visitors can relate to on many different levels.

This blue-collar narrative of Elvis is not new and throughout his career he was rarely seen as a member of the elite, despite his financial standing. Rainwater's (1971) analysis of working class ideals asserts that one of the reasons blue-collar workers never become 'middle class' even as their standard of living increases is that they 'reinterpret the mainstream consumer package in terms of their own goals and values' (p. 207), never able to fully distance themselves from their original mind set. Duffet (2011) argues that Elvis had a 'dogged determination' to maintain a lack of sophistication, distinguishing himself as someone 'who gained the material wealth of a different class, but not its

cultural trappings' (p. 173). This is exemplified on the tour in the dining room, where despite the cut glass chandelier and place settings of monogramed crystal and formal china, visitors are told that 'everyone at Graceland liked the same down home Southern cooking that they all grew up with.' Elvis's taste in food was infamous during his life, identified with images of peanut butter and banana sandwiches and cheeseburgers. Both of these food items were listed in pre-visit meaning maps, indicating how indelible the link between Elvis and 'down home' food has become. This is an example of how his 'dietary *habitus* fixed his class position so that his embodiment reflected a form of culinary and therefore social status' (Duffet, 2011, p. 173).

The Graceland audio tour does not overtly address social class, never reconciling Elvis's social standing after his success. While Elvis's career successes dramatically increased his economic capital, 'his cultural capital never expanded enough for him to transcend the stigma of his background as a truck driver from the rural South' (Rodman, 1996, p. 72). Pratt (1992) surmises that Elvis's inability to escape this lower/working-class image contributed to the fact that 'he remained fundamentally disreputable in the mind of many Americans' (p. 96). Many fans, however, believed it was not an inability to transcend class barriers, but Elvis's purposeful choice not to do so, making him all the more endearing.

Elvis's embodiment of Southern culture is an important component in the blue-collared ideal. When *Harper's Magazine* attempted to assess the phenomenon of Elvis in 1958 they relied heavily on the notion of the 'mysterious South,' and his 'authentic Southernness,' claiming that 'the sum of Presley's qualities matches the national image of the Southland. . . . the self-sufficient, the inaccessible, the fiercely independent soul of the nation' (Baxter and Baxter,

1992, p. 33). Elvis was forever wedded to the South, which carried largely negative connotations outside of the South itself, where Elvis remained heroic in stature. Brock (1992) considers the relationship between Elvis and the South to be one of the great paradoxes of his career as he can be seen as a man 'trying to transcend his roots, while affirming them, to weave together the complex, the conflicting and tortuous strand of identity that are a part of every Southerner – racial, regional, national and human and perhaps of every American' (p. 131).

Graceland stands as an example of a Southern plantation-style mansion inhabited by a man who tried to simultaneously embrace his Southern roots and prove he was worthy of national, indeed global, recognition. While the audio tour only explicitly refers to the South in regards to cooking, it is clear that visitors continue to construct narratives of Elvis as the 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' in relation to his Southern identity. As visitor *Linalassie* reflected on TripAdvisor, 'the house and the grounds are well-kept, something a Southern gentleman would be proud of, especially coming from such humble beginnings as Elvis did - I have been to his original house in Tupelo, Miss. and he came a "long way, baby"' (7 April 2010). For this visitor Graceland becomes the equivalent of the 'blue suede shoes,' which went some way in making Elvis a 'southern gentleman,' evidence he had surpassed his humble beginnings. As a function of plot, Elvis is easily conceived of as a 'blue-collar guy,' whether through his taste in food, the ordinariness of his home, or Southern ideals. This concept also functions to complement the narrative concepts of Elvis as a giving, caring philanthropist and dedicated family man.

Elvis the Philanthropist

The plot element evidenced in greatest frequency through post-visit PMMs is the image of a philanthropic, generous Elvis. This concept also reinforces the

blue-collar ideal, as the working class typically regard their own class as 'generous and kindly compared to the selfishness of those above or below them in status' (Rainwater, 1971, p. 208). 'Generous' was the most frequently used term to describe Elvis after the tour, with six per cent recording that specific word. This raises the question of how significant this narrative element is to the tour and the overall Elvis storyline that has been adopted by Graceland. Elvis's reputation for generosity is well known, most typically manifest in stories about giving away cars and jewellery to family, friends, and even strangers. When Doss (1999) discusses the image of Elvis as a philanthropist she draws on fans' ability to reconcile Elvis's material success with a vision of a 'great humanitarian,' 'a rock-and-roll Rockefeller who gave the gift of music, gave himself to his country, gave away scarves, cars, and expensive jewellery to friends and fans, and gave generously to charity' (p. 15). While Elvis's gestures of public generosity are often remembered, it is the less frequently observed donations he made to local charities and the financial support he gave to individuals that are commemorated at Graceland. At Graceland visitors are introduced to the quiet, private acts of Elvis's philanthropy.

It may seem, based on the fact that 16 per cent of all PMM post-visit responses reflect Elvis's philanthropic image, that this is a narrative theme constantly reinforced and integrated throughout the tour. The narrative analysis, however, provides evidence contradicting this assumption, as Elvis's philanthropic work is only featured twice during the tour. Despite its recurrence in visitor meaning maps it is one of the least developed aspects of the interpretive narrative, falling well below the frequency of other elements represented, such as the American dream or Family Man.

The tour acknowledges the public image of Elvis's generosity, stating that

'he was famous for giving away cars to family, friends, even strangers' in the carport area of the tour where some of the cars are showcased. This particular statement is further supported by the idea that 'he held on to the one that was his mother's favourite,' the legendary pink Cadillac, drawing more attention to the relationship with his mother than with the act of giving. Beyond this singular reference, all other discussion of Elvis's generosity is grouped together in the Trophy Building exhibit. This was, according to Angie Marchese, done quite purposefully so that it could make the greatest impact. She believed that by having the story of his philanthropy work grouped with key objects in the exhibit area, rather than incorporated throughout the tour, it would be more meaningful to visitors (Marchese, 6 December 2006). This meaning map data indicates that this approach functioned as she intended, making a considerable impression on visitors.

Importantly, Philanthropic Elvis is portrayed through use of emotional music and impressive objects. The philanthropy area of the exhibit lies in a curious location, between Elvis's movie career and the *1968 Special*, isolating its appearance in the narrative. Visitors turn the corner to see a six foot tall plaque given to Elvis by the City of Memphis honouring his philanthropic efforts, accompanied by an impassioned Elvis singing *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. The lyrics isolated on the tour are emotive and visually inspired, 'like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down . . . I will lay me down.' Elvis's rendition of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* is followed by a narrated segment that does not reflect the emotional music, nor does it appeal to the affective dimension as seen in other tour sections. The narrator simply states,

This [the 'massive wooden plaque'] was presented to Elvis by the city of Memphis, it recognises his generous annual contributions to more than fifty local charities. Throughout Elvis's life he quietly paid hospital bills, bought homes, supported families and paid off debts

for anyone in need. He also gave several important benefit concerts; a 1961 performance raised over \$65,000 to build the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbour.

Although visitors can opt to listen to an extended narration, this basic narrative does not seem to illuminate Elvis's generosity in a manner that would result in so many visitors identifying Elvis as a generous humanitarian.

The standard audio tour content does not account for the manner in which the theme of generosity pervades post-visit meaning maps. While the narrative analysis has focused on the standard audio tour content, it is worth pausing to consider the oral history Lisa Marie provides in the charity section's supplementary content. She describes her father's desire to give to others, recalling 'I only remember him giving . . . the only thing that kept him sane was his ability to give back . . . I never saw him not doing something for someone.' This account ingrains the charitable side of Elvis's personality; highlighting how profound an aspect of his character this must have been to leave such an indelible impression on his daughter. Narratives such as this can have a similarly enduring impact on visitors as they fulfil performative and affective roles in the 'character' plot development.

The key to this section of the tour lies in objects rather than narration. Two of the largest objects in the exhibit area are directly related to Elvis's philanthropic work. The first is a towering plaque from the City of Memphis, presented to him in the early 1960s (above), bearing the inscription 'In grateful appreciation to Elvis Presley for



Image 7. City of Memphis Charity Recognition Plaque

his untiring interest in the welfare of and financial assistance to the sick and underprivileged people of Memphis, Tennessee. May his future be blessed.’ While the plaque does not mention monetary amounts of donations, it lists fifty local charities Elvis supported. The inscription alone depicts Elvis the Philanthropist for visitors, requiring no further interpretive enhancement to develop the narrative. One visitor concluded the plaque from the City of Memphis was ‘the best thing in there’ (Visitor 76) and consequently used only two words to describe Elvis after the tour: ‘charitable’ and ‘giving.’

The second set of objects, a series of cancelled cheques (below), allows visitors to consider the monetary impact of Elvis’s charitable donations. These



Image 8. Elvis’s Charity Cheques

mounted and framed cheques, each for \$1,000 and written in 1962 to fifty charities and individuals help establish a scale for gauging Elvis’s generosity for visitors. These cheques stand on

their own, supported by a statement

explaining that each Christmas Elvis wrote fifty \$1,000 cheques to various institutions and people. Here, visitors are given the opportunity to see a year’s donation with cheques individually signed by Elvis and all dispersed on one day. As one visitor on Flickr who photographed the cheque set noted, ‘all of these checks were for \$1,000 made out to several different charities. I couldn’t believe how generous he was’ (*nattywhoohoo*, 17 January 09). The phrase ‘cancelled checks,’ accompanied by ‘humanitarian,’ were the only post-tour responses for one visitor (Visitor 102), who actually had no pre-visit response after declared they were not ‘good at this kind of thing,’ referring to the meaning mapping

exercise. Given the opportunity to complete the map post-tour she offered only these two words, signifying the impact that an object such as the cheques can have in shaping the visitor's view.

These are objects that illustrate Elvis's generosity in ways no audio interpretation ever could. The potential impact of the plaque and cheques on visitors is seen in the numerous times they are photographed and included on Flickr in Graceland photo sets. While the plaque is generally photographed in its entirety to show the enormity of the piece, the cheques are most often photographed close-up, signifying the importance of even one donation let alone the fifty represented. A visitor who photographed several of the cheques reflected 'one thing that impressed me at Graceland was learning that Elvis actually donated a tremendous amount of money to charities and individuals' (*redxdress*, 4 July 2008). Visitors seem unaware of Elvis's philanthropic work, an aspect of his life he rarely sought recognition for, and evidence suggests these two objects make deep impressions on visitors.

The ability for objects to shape a personal narrative can be summarised by one Flickr user's caption of the commemorative plaque, which was the only image shared of her experience. She observed,

Sweek [her traveling companion] and I agreed that this was one of the best things in the whole place. It's one thing to look at his stuff, it's another to realize that Elvis was an actual person who believed in charity for others. It could be that it was easy for him – he had the money to spare – but there were a lot of groups listed and checks displayed. Suffice it to say that this made Sweek warmer and fuzzier inside (*Patita Pirata*, 5 August, 2006).

In these objects visitors see an unfamiliar side to Elvis, distancing him from the hip swivelling King of Rock and Roll or other iconic images. Elvis is transformed into 'an actual person,' making the narrative Graceland has developed all the more compelling.

The philanthropic vision of Elvis reinforces the ideals of the American dream and the notion he always remembered his roots. An early Graceland guidebook speculates 'perhaps once his dreams of material wealth had come true it was a special joy to see dreams come true, or hardships disappear, for others. He never forgot what it was like to do without' (Kath and Morgan, 1996, p. 33). A visitor remarked in his post-visit interview that he was glad Graceland brought out the generous contributions that Elvis made, since 'we need to talk about the good in people, not always the bad' (Visitor 86a). While the narrative at Graceland clearly draws on Elvis's generosity to further humanise his life story, the direct interpretation is limited, allowing objects and documented acts of giving to speak for themselves.

Elvis the Family Man

The narrative theme incorporated most frequently on the tour is the Family Man, delivered through plot elements speaking to Elvis's devotion to his parents and the closeness of his family, as well as his role as a father. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Graceland's operations are still very much linked to the Presley family. The theme of family works in concert with the 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' narrative, as 'the deep family orientation of the working class is perhaps its principal characteristic' (Rainwater, 1971, p. 209). This focus also provides an approach that contravenes the iconic image of Elvis and emphasises a narrative embodied at Graceland rather than through his external career. The phrase 'family man' was the second most frequently cited descriptions of Elvis in the post- visit meaning maps collected, resulting from the narrative intertwined throughout the tour experience.

The family man depiction of Elvis is the earliest theme developed in the tour, beginning with the visitor introduction. The connection between Elvis's

family man persona and Graceland represent a natural bond as Yentsch (1993) asserts that homes by their very nature possess connotations of family. She describes how a house acts as a 'transmutation and substitute for human experience; they stand for family members and kinship ties' (p. 7). Historic homes are powerful signifiers of family and Graceland exploits this potential to its fullest.

The images evoked of the family man begin with Elvis's close relationship with his parents, who feature prominently throughout the tour. Elvis is described as being 'very close to both of his parents' as the tour explains the childhood promise he made to provide for his parents. This also further elaborates on the working class theme, as the creation of a comfortable and secure place for family has been considered 'the central life goal of the stable working class' (Rainwater, 1971, p. 206). Elvis's mother and father have been described as members of a 'kind of archetypal Holy family, in which the "child" is of foremost importance' (Brock, 1992, p. 127). Elvis's relationship with his parents, and his mother in particular, is central to his image as a dedicated family man.

The poverty the Presley family endured in the rural South is the foundation of the family man ideal presented at Graceland, as this appears to have strengthened the bond with his parents and ingrained a type of family values that comes from struggling through economic hardship together. The tour describes these difficulties and values, stating 'they continued to struggle through hard times, but Elvis never wanted for love and guidance.' Elvis illustrates these values by elaborating, 'I'm proud of the way that I was brought up to treat people . . . we're always considerate of other people's feelings in general.' The family values that Elvis reflects on during the tour are deeply intertwined with notions of Southernness and the blue-collar ethos.

The other family members featured to complete the image of Elvis the

Family Man are Lisa Marie and Priscilla. The tour itself offers little direct interpretation about these relationships, describing his marriage in factual rather than affective terms, simply remarking that 'In October 1958 he began an 18 month stint in Germany [with the US Army], there Private Presley met an Air Force officer's daughter, Priscilla Beaulieu. They were married over seven years later on May 1, 1967. Lisa Marie was born the following year.' The tour does not delve into the particulars of Elvis and Priscilla's relationship, which some considered quite scandalous given their ten year age gap and the fact that she moved into Graceland when just a teenager still in high school. Their marriage and quick pregnancy were depicted at the time as a major change in Elvis's public image, with manager Colonel Parker eagerly cultivating the new 'family man' narrative. Biographer Jerry Hopkins (2007) describes this new image, 'he was a millionaire possessed of unfailing politeness and an unimpeachable love of God, mother and country, and he had a beautiful, gracious Southern pregnant wife' (p. 205). Graceland draws on this same narrative element, achieving it not with tour narration, but through the arrangement of music, oral histories, objects and video footage.

The presence of Mrs Presley on the audio tour is exemplified in two oral history segments, one where she describes meeting Elvis for the first time and the second where she describes the sense of desolation she felt after his death. Similar to the approach alternating between the personal and the iconic or factual, Priscilla reflects on her feelings after Elvis's death, saying 'I remember looking around and going "how was this world going to survive without Elvis Presley?"' Their divorce is treated in the same sound bite fashion as their marriage, with visitors in the Racquetball court hearing that 'sadly, as his career reached new heights his marriage ended. Elvis and Priscilla divorced in 1973,

but remained good friends.’ The many factors that led to their divorce, after a relatively short marriage, are never breached, leaving the family man image untarnished. A research participant asked me during a post-visit interview, ‘why would she ever divorce him? He seemed like such a good man.’ The visitor was truly bewildered, particularly given the image presented to him on the tour.

At the time this research was conducted the exhibit area in the garage annex housed various objects highlighting the relationship between Elvis and his wife and daughter. These are mementos that every family cherishes, a wedding dress and tuxedo, children’s toys and nursery furnishings. While the tour itself offers little direct insight into these family relationships, visitors clearly adopt the ideal of Elvis as a family man dedicated to his wife and daughter through the affective use of objects and media. The persistence of the ‘family man’ depiction, constituting 15 per cent of all post-visit meaning map responses, points to the affective development of this plot component.

The visitor photos previously discussed are evidence of how objects like Lisa’s toy box or swing set naturally infer to visitors that Elvis was a doting father, despite the fact this is never explicitly expressed on the tour. Visitors all too easily assume that these are objects ‘Elvis bought her’ (*RichM921*, 15 August 2006), further enriching the family man image effortlessly conjured up in the context of his home. Visitor comments on Flickr photos of Lisa’s childhood toys and keepsakes also indicate that people are often drawn to them because they had similar, or in some cases the exact same, toys when they were growing up. These are toys that filled almost any nursery in 1970s America, creating an impression of an ordinary family that is easy for visitors to relate to, further distancing Elvis from his stage and performing persona.

Any historic home invokes ideas and images of family, and Graceland is

no exception. Homes have the ability to make explicit 'relationships between family, society, and history through the medium of a house by associating the behaviour of the person who built it or controlled it with the physical fabric of the house' (Yentsch, 1993, p. 7). While the audio tour does not dwell on the intricacies of Elvis's family life and offers little insight into his marriage or role as a father, a narrative of his family life is woven through the tour in a manner that allows visitors to construct him as a family man. Elvis's affirmation of family in a culture in which the extended family is disappearing is an important element in his appeal (Brock, 1992). Whether through video footage of him racing golf carts across the grounds with Lisa Marie and Priscilla, the photographs of Elvis with his daughter, or even the normal trappings of everyday family life such as toys and family portraits, the data indicates that visitors feel they have been given access to this part of Elvis's world.

This narrative element, while appealing to visitors, continues to present Elvis in a two-dimensional fashion and never confronts the many issues that Elvis and his family faced. Priscilla's autobiography describes the toll of living Elvis's lifestyle even after their daughter was born, 'accustomed to living in dark rooms, hardly seeing the sun, depending on chemical aids for sleep and wakefulness, surrounded by bodyguards who distanced us from reality, I yearned for the more ordinary pleasures' (Presley, 1985, p. 297). She went on to conclude, 'it was difficult for him to come to terms with his role as father and husband' (ibid, p. 298). At Graceland there is no mention of Elvis's many infidelities, his legendary temper, the insomnia that turned the world at Graceland upside down, his erratic mood swings, the fallout of his drug abuse, the strain of his decision to tour continually in the early 1970s, or the impact of his divorce on him and his music. Priscilla remarked, 'there were two universes – the normal universe and the

universe of Elvis' (Ritz, 2006, p. 23). Elvis's universe was not always the appealing idyll that the narrative at Graceland suggests. Visitors find an Elvis at Graceland that is devoted to his parents and young family, transmitted as familiar, relatable and endearing. This narrative is never interrupted by the complexities of actual family life. The data collected in the meaning maps indicates that this homogenised family ideal is a persuasive and compelling aspect of the visitor experience.

Redemption

The character traits instilled through Graceland's narrative act to redeem Elvis and help him shed his iconic veneer. The redemptive trope echoes subtly throughout the tour, culminating in the Meditation Garden at Elvis's gravesite. The themes of home and family values, coupled with nostalgic discourses, all engage the premise of redemption. Rubenstein (2001) believes narratives that thrive on notions of home and/or nostalgia, both key at Graceland, 'confront the past in order to "fix" it . . . to secure it more firmly in the imagination and also to *correct* – as in *revise* or *repair* – it' (p. 6). The image of Elvis at Graceland is one that has been 'repaired,' no longer burdened by his decline, failures, or shortcomings. Critics claim Elvis was 'lonely and unhappy most of his life, he failed to establish genuine longterm reciprocal relationships . . . and he died at the age of 42 from a combination of sustained physical self-neglect and multiple drug abuse' (Heller and Elms, 2004, p. 97). This Elvis is 'fixed' at Graceland through a narrative that celebrates small personal moments, family, generosity, career achievements, and Elvis's inescapable charisma.

The redemptive theme is most overt in the Meditation Garden, as the tour concludes with Elvis's powerful and emotive performance of *If I Can Dream*, considered 'the finest music of his life,' so affective that 'if ever there was music

that bleeds, this was it' (Marcus, 1997, p. 127). This song was also the 1968 *Special* finale, providing visitors familiar with the performance an image of Elvis in his prime, swaying in a white suit on an entirely black stage save for his name illuminated in huge red letters, emotionally singing, ' We're trapped in a world that's troubled with pain, but as long as a man has the strength to dream, he can redeem his soul and fly.' The tour asserts multiple times, through Elvis's own words, that he was a dreamer, and as such was eligible for the redemption that according to biographers he so often sought in his final years. The tour does not allow the melancholy and searching gospel songs, which were often Elvis's solace, to provide the final fixture of the tour. Instead, Elvis stands proud and determined in a performance widely believed to one of his most moving in a pinnacle of affective presence.

Elvis's redemption at Graceland is in keeping with many of the idealised narrative elements. His mediated image benefits from the 'emotional attractions of the American story of fall and redemption' (Porterfield, 2006, p. 128), building on an established American value. Ideas of redemption and regeneration have long been 'ineluctably connected to the moral meaning of America' (Girgus, 2011, p. 338), as Americans 'believe strongly in the value of a chance to start over after misfortune or missteps' (Ledford, 2009, p. 6). Graceland capitalises on the inclination of many to search for and accept a story of redeeming qualities.

For some visitors to Graceland the narrative experience provides Elvis with a way to begin anew. One pair of visitors (Visitors 117 a and b) stood out in their adamant distaste of Elvis. They were there, 'with tongue firmly in cheek,' sure that Graceland 'would be a joke.' The husband acknowledged in his pre-visit meaning map that Elvis 'changed music' and was an 'icon in music,' but his wife was far more disparaging, describing Elvis only as a 'poor excuse for a human

being.’ In further conversation, they explained they had been ardent Elvis fans, only to be incredibly disappointed after seeing his performance in Las Vegas in 1974. They lamented how they lost such great respect for Elvis after seeing him perform in those final years. The Elvis they saw in person paled in comparison to their expectations, so they visited Graceland 33 years later with low expectations and the view that Elvis was irredeemable in their eyes.

At the post-visit interview location I waited in anticipation of what these visitors, the only ‘Elvis haters’ I encountered, would make of their experience. After two hours on the tour they came out of the Meditation Garden in a contemplative mood. Their post-visit responses described Elvis as ‘genuine, sincere, and honest,’ someone who had ‘so much talent’ that was marred by the ‘tragic’ and ‘overwhelmingly sad’ end of his life and career. The tour had ‘far exceeded’ their expectations, reflecting that the Graceland visit had ‘made up for that show in Las Vegas.’ Graceland had redeemed Elvis. Despite their insistence that the tour would be meaningless, the experience altered their perceptions and provided them with an affective encounter that superseded their personal encounter with Elvis.

The narrative’s attempt at redemption does not always succeed, as Drummond (2011) concluded ‘at the end of the tour – Graceland is a haunting, pathetic, and sad place. There is little redemption to be had there, and what redemption there is is fleeting and somber’ (p. 208). At the conclusion of the tour, five per cent of the meaning maps reflected a similar sadness and melancholy, but the overwhelming majority depicted shifts in perception correlating to a redeemed image of Elvis. Visitor 87, for example, began the tour citing Elvis ‘dying on the toilet,’ to later portray Elvis as a ‘humanitarian,’ ‘genius,’ and ‘all around fabulous guy.’ Redemption can be seen as a ‘thrust for narrative

development and the construction of character and personal relationships' (Girgus, 2011, p. 331), which is relevant to Graceland's narrative development. There is redemption to be found at Graceland, established via a narrative designed to 'repair' Elvis through discursive practices that elevate the personal and affective.

'There is no fat Elvis in there!' – Narratives Omitted at Graceland

The redemptive narrative at Graceland is also a narrative of omission. During the PMM research there was only one visitor who commented on the lack of an aspect of Elvis's life missing from the Graceland tour. At the end of the tour the gentleman (Visitor 125b), whose only pre-visit description was 'Fat Elvis,' stated he was shocked that there 'was no fat Elvis in there!' Interestingly, the phrases he used to describe Elvis at the end of the tour were 'looked good' and 'so many awards won.' He went into the tour experience looking for an image and possible understanding of Elvis towards the end of his life, but instead found a handsome award-winning musician. This is by design, as the Presley family has been deliberate in the image portrayed of Elvis, mediating the narrative and omitting facets of his life and career.

When referring to Graceland as a place of pilgrimage, Davidson and Gitlitz (2002) note that the rhetorical mode of the tour is closer to hagiography, the narration of a saint's life, than realistic history. Rodman (1996) also considers the sanitisation of Elvis's life to be an indication of the way that the estate actively 'sanctifies' Elvis, helping to 'mythologize the man as an almost flawless saint figure, rather than a real and imperfect human being' (p. 121). In reality, Elvis was hardly saint-like, as Quain (1992, p. xxii) remarks, 'if only a fraction of the allegations are true, clearly Elvis had some problems. He had a weakness for food and drugs, a violent streak. He was perhaps selfish, self-centred, and self-

destructive. He often betrayed his gift and his audiences with bad performances and bad music.' Historic homes rarely, if ever, offer such an indictment of their residents and personalities are often varnished and polished for the allure of visitors. Elvis's narrative at Graceland has been given a similar treatment, as his multi-faceted character and history are often ignored.

It is as important to consider the narratives absent from Graceland as it is to explore the narrative represented, particularly as several of these neglected elements are considered key by biographers and historians to understanding Elvis. These omissions, ranging from Elvis's early associations with African-American musical influences to his final years when he seemed to have become a parody of himself, have not gone unnoticed by all visitors. A TripAdvisor reviewer even categorised Graceland as 'Dis-Graceland' (*PowderHound*, 15 September 2006). His critique levelled against the experience states that,

Graceland is at its best a time capsule. At its worst, it is a ridiculous vehicle to deliver a desperately manufactured concept of Elvis. Graceland misses a GRAND opportunity to be a great museum by sadly applying a limited two-dimensional look at the man. Instead of insight, Graceland gives rhetoric . . . Graceland solely presents "what" he was, rather than "who" or "why". To limit the look at Elvis to just material goods is yet another selfish capitalization and manipulation of the man.

This visitor went to Graceland looking for meaning, a glimpse of the 'real Elvis' rather than prevailing and manufactured cultural images, and critical examination of his career and character. One Elvis biographer, however, cautions that 'There is no "real" Elvis. That man, whoever he may have been, disappeared long ago into the mists of legend' (Marsh, 1982, p. vii). While it may be all but impossible to discern the reality of Elvis, there are still aspects of Elvis's life and career that could be explored at greater lengths at Graceland to provide visitors a fuller picture of who Elvis was and the forces that shaped him and his music.

'Race, Rock, and Elvis'

Music historians and biographers trace the roots of Elvis's musical sound to African-American music traditions, particularly to the gospel music that inspired Elvis from an early age. Elvis himself described the influence of gospel music on his life, reflecting,

Since I was two years old, all I knew was gospel music, that was music to me. We borrowed the style of our psalm singing from the early Negroes. We used to go to these religious singings all the time. The preachers cut up all over the place, jumping on the piano, moving every which way . . . I guess I learned from them. I loved the music. It became such a part of my life it was as natural as dancing, a way to escape from the problems and my way of release' (Guralnick, 1999b, p. 121).

The music that resulted from these experiences was a revolutionary fusion of white country and western and black rhythm and blues, born out of the experiences of Elvis's early life in the rural South.

One of the more famous quotes associated with Elvis's connection with Black music comes from Sam Phillips, the owner of Sun Records that produced Elvis's first recordings. Phillip's remark that 'if I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars' has been often quoted (Guralnick, 1999b, p. 125) and seems to explain in part Elvis's success and exemplify why he was often vilified during his early career. Elvis had appropriated much from Black music and was inspired by a number of Black musicians. Historian Tom Engelhardt (1995) describes this process as a 'border crossing' between black and white cultures, commenting that at the time there were numerous border crossings taking place in the music world, citing the early Elvis hit "Hound Dog," which had been written by the young Jewish songwriters Lieber and Stoller and originally recorded by black singer Big Mama Thornton. He goes on to consider that 'whether it was because they saw a white youth in blackface or a black youth in whiteface, much of the media grew apoplectic and

many white parents alarmed' (ibid, p. 136). This merging of cultures caused consternation and concern across America, as Black music was integrated into a mainstream setting.

This ground-breaking sound, which Marcus (1997) eagerly points out was not something Elvis copied from anyone, but made up on the spot, made black music acceptable to teenage America. Author Ted Harrison agrees that 'Elvis's greatest contribution to music was one that he himself was probably unaware of . . . that he introduced the riches of black music to a white audience. In the course of just one generation, pop music became not only totally multi-racial, but in many areas the main innovations were inspired by black performers' (1992, p. 18). Marcus (1997) disputes this notion, fearing that 'too much has been made of Elvis as "a white man who sang black music credibly," as a singer who made black music acceptable to whites' (p. 153). To Marcus, Elvis's sound was truly original, 'who was special because in his best music he was so much his *own* man' (ibid, 153).

While many celebrate Elvis's innovative integration of musical styles and his ability to bring often repressed musical forms to a popular audience, this has also inspired heated arguments about the extent to which Elvis profited from black music, capitalising on the oppressed black experience in the American South. Author Michael Bertrand, who dedicated an entire book to the subject of race, rock music and Elvis, believes 'no subject associated with Presley causes greater controversy and conflict than that of race. He was, afterall, a white performer whose financial success rested upon the songs and styles of black artists historically excluded from the popular music market' (2005, p. 26).

It would appear that the 'border crossing' aspect of Elvis's musical and cultural legacy is important enough to warrant consideration at Graceland, but

there is very little addressing this historically important facet of Elvis's narrative. Doss (1999) believes that many contemporary Elvis fans are 'unaware of, or more blatantly ignore Elvis's undeniable appropriation of African-American rhythms and sounds' and 'his personal acknowledgement of lessons learned from black musicians' (p. 168). It would seem that the narrative at Graceland should find ways to acknowledge and incorporate this significant historical perspective to provide visitors with a more well-rounded and complex view of Elvis. This omission leads to a simultaneous disregard for Elvis's rich musical roots as well as the contributions of black artists and culture.

In the Trophy Building the audio tour mentions that the early recordings at Sun Records were 'looking for a new sound, something different' that resulted in a 'sped up version of a rhythm and blues tune "That's All Right,"' which then plays in the foreground, but there is no discussion of how or why Elvis selected rhythm and blues as the base for his first recording success. This new sound could not have been achieved if Elvis had not been so familiar with and inspired by black music. Visitors may recall the several references to Elvis's love of gospel music during the tour and make some connection between that exposure and the new fusion of sounds that marked early rock 'n' roll, but it is in no way an explicit connection.

Elvis's musical background is referenced only at one point in the general tour, on the first tour stop as visitors see the music room at the far end of the living room. Visitors hear a couple singing gospel music with piano accompaniment as they are directed to look at the piano that is the focal point of the music room. The narrator explains 'Elvis loved every kind of music, especially gospel. Those are his parents you hear singing along,' to which Elvis himself adds 'my mother and dad both loved to sing. They'd tell me that when I

was about three or four years old, I'd get away from them in church and walked up in front of the choir and started beating time.' It is clear to visitors that Elvis's musical roots stem from his involvement in church and gospel music, but it less clear this was also essentially the heart of much black music or that this exposure to the black faith-based music served as inspiration for his musical breakthrough in his late teen years.

Elvis's love of diverse musical genres is once again reinforced in the basement TV room, where visitors see a sample of his extensive record collection next to the stereo and televisions. The narration again highlights Elvis's appreciation of gospel music, among others, but that, coupled with the music room narrative, is the extent of the interpretation about Elvis's musical heritage in the home. Returning to the earlier 'Dis-Graceland' comment from the TripAdvisor reviewer, this is likely the type of relevant information that visitors, particularly those with an interest in Elvis's musical legacy might be interested in. The reviewer wrote that reflecting Elvis's life and career simply through 'material goods' was a limiting perspective, but it does not have to be, as museum and heritage interpretation thrives on material culture. The music room piano and record collection are excellent material examples that relate to Elvis's musical background in the context of the house, they are simply not used to effectively explore more than the simple varnish of Elvis's connection with gospel and black music. While the use of Elvis's oral history about being in church with his family when he was young provides a personal context for his early music appreciation, it could be followed with more extensive narration about the connection between gospel and the sound that Elvis would later pioneer or the importance of Elvis's exposure to this musical style.

Graceland likely ignores the influences of Elvis's early musical success, as

this is a complex area where issues of 'race, class, age, region, and commerce intersected' (Bertrand, 2005, p. 27). The audio tour, paying so much attention to Elvis the family man, offers only a superficial insight into his music and never delves into the more controversial aspects of his musical legacy. In some ways, this may be a task too daunting to ask of a historic house tour, particularly one designed to usher as many visitors as possible through a relatively constrained space as quickly as possible. Reflecting on issues of race may also still prove a difficult discussion point for many of Graceland's visitors. Having worked in several historic homes in the South, it is my experience that issues of race remain particularly unsettling for both visitors and interpreters. This does not, of course, excuse the exclusion of the topic, but it may well be an issue that the family deemed outside the scope of the narrative they wanted to portray of Elvis.

Bertrand (2005) likens the reaction against Elvis in terms of race to the one that surrounded Thomas Jefferson, a slaveholder who championed freedom, reflecting that 'like the Sage of Monticello, Elvis has come to represent the dominant culture's oppressive race-and gender-based traditions. Many similarly denounce him as the "quintessential dead white male"' (p. 27). Historic houses are now more than ever trying to break free of the 'dead white male' stereotype, adopting more diverse narratives, and this is certainly an area that should be considered more thoroughly at Graceland.

'He went up against a lot' – Elvis's Controversial Beginnings

Elvis's early success was controversial largely because his sound was so heavily influenced by the black music that had been marginalised and excluded from mainstream culture, but more importantly because he challenged the status quo in ways that were considered subversive and even dangerous by the establishment. Elvis's early career challenged the segregationist views of the

South, raised concerns over sexuality and questioned the validity of Southern culture. Doll (2009) reflects 'the backlash against Elvis revealed a chasm in America between different groups and cultures: young versus old; black versus white; working class versus middle class; and Southern culture versus mainstream culture' (p. 84). This tumultuous time, however, is largely ignored at Graceland, where an apolitical view is favoured over one that embraces understanding the impact of Elvis's music and style in 1950s America.

Graceland never depicts Elvis as the 'legendary symbol of danger and dissonance' (Diggins, 1989, p. 194) that he was publically portrayed as during his rise to fame. The debates about the singer's image in the 1950s turned Elvis into a 'discursive vehicle for youthful sexual defiance' (Duffet, 2011, p. 171). Frank Sinatra declared that Elvis's 'kind of music is deplorable, a rancid smelling aphrodisiac . . . It fosters almost totally negative and destructive reactions in young people' (Baker, 2002, p. 15). Musician Mojo Nixon urges in his preface to an anthology of Elvis texts to never underestimate the effect Elvis had in his first ten years, claiming 'Elvis wiped out four thousand years of Judeo-Christian uptightness about sex in fifteen minutes of TV' (1992, p. xiv). There were two divergent images of Elvis, one as proclaimed by Ed Sullivan during Elvis's third appearance that 'this is a real decent, fine boy' and one of him as a sexually charged rebel. Musician Eddie Condon told *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1956, 'it isn't enough to say that Elvis is kind to his parents, sends money home, and is the same unspoiled kid he was before all the commotion began. That still isn't a free ticket to behave like a sex maniac in public' (Baker, 2002, p. 25). The danger in Elvis was his ability to maintain a multi-faceted image and appeal, the wholesome country boy devoted to his momma, all the while promoting a form of music and performance considered deviant.

The only reference to this turbulent period in Elvis's career comes at the very end of the tour when Lisa Marie describes her father's spirit and character in the Meditation Garden. She declares that 'I think he just touched the spirit – he went up against a lot back then, he overcame it.' The phrase 'he went up against a lot back then' certainly minimises the many controversies that surrounded Elvis's early years, and is evidence of EPE's 'basic historical amnesia about Elvis's transgressive identity . . . and its insistence that there is only one "spin" on Elvis' (Doss, 1999, p. 223). Perhaps more importantly, this approach diminishes the historical significance of Elvis's contributions and forgoes the opportunity to introduce visitors to a richer understanding of the contextual time period and Elvis's role in social history.

The tour in the Trophy Building begins with a chronological display of Elvis's career from 1953, when he paid to record his first song at Sun Records. This is followed by the various television appearances that sparked the nationwide interest in Elvis and a brief commentary about his first gold records in 1956. At that point, the standard audio tour asks visitors to select another audio message if they want to hear more about Elvis's impact on America in the 1950s, or visitors can enter the Hall of Gold. The basic tour makes no effort to provide visitors with an account of the societal storms that Elvis left in his wake. The Graceland guidebook does acknowledge these controversies, observing that 'in conservative 1950s America, Elvis was breaking a lot of the rules, crossing musical, racial and social dividing lines of the time. Not in a calculated way – he was simply being himself. His early career was fraught with controversy almost as much as it was blessed with rapid and outstanding success' (Morgan, 2003, p. 7). They present Elvis with a naiveté, disregarding any possibility that Elvis was consciously in control of his image or actions at the time, never critiquing or

exploring Elvis's impact on larger social issues.

During the pre-visit PMM exercise Elvis was frequently remembered by the phrase "Elvis the Pelvis," a reference to his dance and performing style that highlighted a generational conflict over sexuality. Historian John Patrick Diggins (1989) describes the generation of parents that were 'aghast watching "Elvis the Pelvis" with his tight pants, full, pouting lips, and slick black hair, grip the microphone and buck his hips in gestures so lewd that some TV producers would only film him from the waist up' (p. 195). The still relatively new medium of television that was responsible for Elvis garnering a nationwide following was also the source of much of this consternation over his overtly sexualized performances. The reaction to these appearances culminated in a series of personal attacks and cries of moral outrage against Elvis, with national papers arguing that 'Elvis, who rotates his pelvis, was appalling musically. Also, he gave an exhibition that was suggestive and vulgar, tinged with the kind of animalism that should be confined to dives and bordellos' (Guralnick, 1994, p. 284). This is the Elvis the Pelvis image that appears in the PMMs, from visitors who both were young enough to have lived through the time period and visitors for whom this is a historic image.

Graceland does little to illuminate the sexual taboos that Elvis was supposedly breaking; nor does it give Elvis a voice from this era, despite the fact it contains some of the most revealing quotes from him directly about his music and performance style. This was a time in his career before his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, had so perfectly scripted his every response; Elvis offered heartfelt responses to all of the criticism. To one reporter from the International News Service he retorted, 'I'm not trying to be sexy. It's just my way of expressing how I feel when I move. My movement, ma'am, are all leg

movements. I don't do nothing with my body' (Doll, 2009, p. 98). He specifically broke the Colonel's orders to stay away from the press and sat down with reporters during a June 1956 tour to reflect on the condemnation and talk seriously about what his music meant to him. Elvis offered insight into the type of performance and his inspiration, recalling,

The colored folks been singing it and playing it like I'm doin' now, man, for more years than I know. They played it like that in the shanties and in their juke joints, and nobody paid it no mind 'til I goosed it up. I got it from them. Down in Tupelo, Mississippi, I used to hear old Arthur Crudup bang his box the way I do now, and I said if I ever got to the place where I could feel all old Arthur felt, I'd be a music man like nobody ever saw (Guralnick, 1994, p. 289).

This type of quote stands apart from the more endearing and humble quotes from Elvis that the audio tour uses to build the personal narrative. Quotes of such historically political gravitas are all together ignored at Graceland, which in many ways deprives Elvis of his own voice. This quote in particular also references the controversial issue of race and the racial boundaries that Elvis knowingly traversed, yet another aspect of these early years overlooked at Graceland.

While the influence of black music on Elvis has been previously discussed in regards to the narrative omission at Graceland, the issue brewing in the mid 1950s was less about the music itself and more about the emergence of black culture in mainstream America. The quote from Elvis above supports Doss's (1999) assertion that 'Elvis's identification with black culture was intentional and deep' as he 'participated in the creation of a powerful form of popular culture – rock-and-roll-aimed at crossing and even dissolving a racially divided post-war America' (p. 170). Notably, as Bertrand (2005) emphasises, Elvis was not simply ignoring racial boundaries as the Graceland guidebook suggests, because his 'appeal was too complex for that simple analysis. Yet it is significant that a style that at least questioned racial etiquette did not prohibit popular, artistic, or

financial achievement' (p. 116).

The emergence of rock and roll struck deep at the heart of many racial assumptions and practices long held dear in the South, with some objecting to the new music medium on the basis it fostered social equality and presented blacks as social equals. Perhaps more importantly, the appeal that rock and roll and Elvis had in the young white middle-class audiences of the South appeared to threaten a long-standing social order. One of the segregationist organisations at the time, The White Citizens Council, proclaimed in 1956 'rock and roll is a means of pulling the white man down to the level of the Negro. It is part of a plot to undermine the morals of the youth of our nation' (Marsh and Bernard, 1994, p. 15). It was clear that those steadfastly moored to the past would not be quietly dismissed. All the while the growing rock and roll audiences across the country 'who danced and cavorted to the new rhythms . . . seemed oblivious to the clamor and disruption they were creating' (Bertrand, 2005, p. 244). Elvis was at the epicentre of a significant shift in popular culture, a fact that seems largely and inappropriately dismissed in the standard narrative at Graceland.²⁵

'Careless Love – The Unmaking of Elvis Presley'

The second volume of Guralnick's Elvis biography is appropriately subtitled, 'The Unmaking of Elvis Presley,' referencing the decline of Elvis both personally and professionally. The final years of Elvis's life were marked by various health problems, ballooning weight, and increased dependence on prescription drugs. All the while, his recording career and performances held little enthusiasm for Elvis and were gradually disappointing even the most loyal fans.

²⁵ This statement represents the exhibits at Graceland mansion, but it should be noted that there is currently an exhibit in the visitor plaza titled 'Elvis! His Groundbreaking, Hip-Shaking, Newsmaking Story.' According to EPE, 'this exhibit explores how Elvis' music and physicality pushed the boundaries of free expression at a time when America was experiencing deep generational shifts.'

Quain (1992) commented: 'his greatest sin was mortality; he died young enough for us to remember his youth and old enough for us to witness his pathetic decline' (p. xxii). Indeed, Elvis's deterioration was witnessed publically, from tabloids to 'tell-all' books written by close friends. It is curious, given how visible his later years and death was for the public at the time that it is a part of Elvis's narrative almost entirely excluded from the Graceland tour.

Historic homes largely neglect the final chapters of their occupants' lives, save for the basic facts of dates, inheritance or property transfer that resulted from the death. There are occasional house tours that mark out where these last moments took place. At Mount Vernon, for instance, the tour includes Washington's bedroom, where guides remark that after spending a cold and wet morning out in the fields of his farm at Mount Vernon he contracted a throat inflammation that resulted in him dying in this room two days later – an extraordinary man felled by a common ailment.

The tour at Graceland does not include the second floor where Elvis was found dead in his bathroom, an image that has become so iconic it even appeared on several of the pre-visit PMMs collected. The last morning of Elvis's life is marked in the Racquetball building, where he played a game of racquetball and played the piano singing suitably sad songs, *Unchained Melody* and *Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain*. There is a pervasive affective experience as one considers Elvis sitting down to play the last music of his life at that piano, but there is little indication of the turmoil of his last years.

This is a chapter of Elvis's life many visitors may rather not recall or see explored in any depth at Graceland. When readers reviewed Guralnick's *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley* online they often cited the narrative as being depressing, tragic, 'stunningly sad,' and that it was even

capable of 'totally destroy[ing] her love for Elvis' (Amazon.com, 1999). Guralnick himself declares this second volume a 'tragedy,' acknowledging 'the last few years of his life amounted to little more than a sad diminution,' which produced the 'caricature that we so often see repeated in our pathographic times' (Guralnick, 1999a, p. xiv). Rodman (1996) acknowledges a narrative that incorporated more about the final chapter of Elvis's life could easily upset fans, some of whom may have travelled thousands of miles to see Graceland, but he ultimately attributes their omission as a means of reinforcing the image of Elvis as a martyr.

Although some visitors may prefer for the darker chapters of Elvis's life to remain shrouded, there is a growing tourism movement, categorised as dark or morbid tourism, associated with visitors searching to embrace the 'uncertainty,' 'suspense,' and 'tragedy' of the past (Blom, 2000). Considered to be a form of postmodern tourism, morbid tourism is fuelled by commoditised experiences allowing the public to examine death, disaster, and gaze upon others' misfortunes (Rojek, 1993). While there is an emerging consensus about the importance of this field of tourism, there is still little understanding of visitor motivations (Sharpley and Stone, 2009). Graceland is often used to illustrate this tourism pattern, with Elvis's gravesite the point of interest rather than the house tour. Elvis's life is rarely considered in this literature, so it is unclear how this would manifest in terms of dark tourism. What is certain is that building a narrative around this aspect of Elvis would dramatically alter the current narrative and would require careful consideration.

Authors such as Doss (1999) and Rodman (1996) criticise the Graceland tour for not mentioning Elvis prescription drug abuse and the role it played in his death. Rodman (1996) states 'words that the tourist will *not* hear in connection

with Elvis's death include 'bathroom,' 'drugs,' or 'overdose,' at least not from the mouths of a Graceland employee' (p. 120), but these criticisms do not accurately reflect the current audio tour and publications at Graceland. The audio tour encapsulates Elvis's death by stating 'Elvis continued to tour, but the pressure of his career, chronic health problems, and long term dependence on prescription medication took their toll. On August 16, 1977, Elvis died of heart failure at age 42.' The narrative is specific in the use of the phrase 'prescription medication' rather than 'drugs,' which infers the use of illegal narcotics. Pratt (1992) describes this type of uncritical devotion, observing that 'even his drug-involved death is called a "heart attack," the ten drugs the autopsy found in his body merely the "prescription medicines" of a sick and heartbroken man who kept pushing himself because he did not want to disappoint the fans' (p. 96). While Graceland's interpretation of Elvis's death is certainly not an in-depth examination of his last few years or the causes of his death, the tour does now begin to acknowledge Elvis's prescription drug abuse. This simple recognition is a great stride for a site that initially insisted his death was purely from a cardiac anomaly.

Interestingly, however, while visitors are told about Elvis's decline they are encountering a very different experience in the racquetball court. Awards and rhinestone studded costumes surround them in this huge space, which still seems too small to contain Elvis's accolades, while video projects one of Elvis's most iconic performances. This dichotomy of experience, hearing about the saddest part of Elvis life while watching his exuberant performance onstage, draws visitors' attention in two very different directions. Even while the tour is acknowledging areas of Elvis's life that had not been previously presented to tourists, it masks this with stage performances, awards, and sparkling costumes, in an effort to somehow distract visitors from the inevitable truth of Elvis's last

years.

Excluding details of difficult subjects, deaths, and controversies is not uncommon in historic homes and heritage interpretation. The truth can be uncomfortable and unpalatable to visitors, as well as the 'keepers of the flame' who 'own' the site. In many cases interpreters 'take the line of least resistance and present a sanitised form of truth which will not upset, offend or challenge' (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 2008, p. 509). Ellis (2002) encourages historic house interpreters to embrace the controversial aspects of the site's past, but acknowledges that this is challenging and rarely realised. One historic home that deals with the darker side of the site's history is Kew Palace, a Historic Royal Palace, which was used as a home to keep King George III out of public view while he suffered a debilitating illness and 'madness.' The palace's re-interpretation focuses on a time when it took centre stage in the nation's affairs, during the King's illness (Groom and Prosser, 2006). At Kew Palace they do not shy away from the painful realities of the King's disease, instead displaying one of the King's waistcoats, which is considered an early example of costume adapted for illness. The 'radio play' that visitors listen to as they tour the palace provides a glimpse of both the King's illness and the emotional death of Queen Charlotte, which occurred in the palace. Visitors 'over hear' Queen Charlotte's final words to her son, dramatised next to the actual chair in which she died in there in her palace bedroom. This is an experience infused with emotion that deals directly with some of the most painful episodes in the home's history, a rarity in historic house interpretation.

One of the great differences between the story of King George III and Elvis, however, is that the King suffered from a genetic metabolic disease while Elvis died of a disease largely of his own making. Many Elvis fans 'grasp at any

hint of a medical condition . . . in order to absolve Elvis of responsibility for his fate' (Simpson, 2004, p. 67), yet it is clear from all medical and personal accounts that Elvis's lifestyle the last few years of his life, including overeating, drug abuse, and the stress of constant touring, coupled with legitimate chronic health problems, were accountable for his death. This narrative is incompatible with the personal narrative so tightly woven at Graceland, and it seems unlikely that an organisation from Elvis's own family would provide such a critique of Elvis's failings.

Equally, it is important to consider the visitor perspective and how many of them may actually want to engage in a narrative utilising the 'warts and all' approach to heritage interpretation. A survey conducted with 5,000 history museum visitors appeared to have mixed feelings about sanitised approaches to history, with many wishing to avoid romanticised experiences, but only wanting those 'interpretations to be disquieting to a certain point' (Wilkening and Donnis, 2008, p. 20). Some respondents to the survey indicated they preferred to know that 'a real effort is made to present things as they really were, not present things as people "want" to remember them' (ibid, p. 20). The narrative of Elvis certainly appears to be based on the way that both many fans and his family prefer to remember him, rather than embracing the many complexities of this man who is often characterised in over-simplified terms. Exposing these issues would take careful consideration and contemplation of the extent to which the visitor experience would be affected. A TripAdvisor reviewer reflected 'Graceland is a treasured destination for fans to come home to . . . EPE handles the responsibility with respect and consideration of the enormity of the feelings their customers hold in their hearts for the Elvis home base' (*PilgrimToday*, 19 June 2011). Following this rationale, EPE has recognised their audience and

embraced their aspirations and ideals of Elvis rather than presenting an image that would undermine these concepts. This manipulated image based on narratives of devotion and family ties also challenges sceptical visitors and more often than not wins over even the most cynical visitor.

While there is certainly scope to integrate a more complex and nuanced version of Elvis's personality and life on the tour, it would be important to do so in a measured and purposeful way. Should this 'warts and all' interpretation ever be pursued, Uzzell and Ballantyne (2008) warn that such 'hot interpretation' must be 'undertaken responsibly if it is not to be merely sensational' (p. 512). By choosing an approach that in essence flattens Elvis's character and controversies the interpretation misses opportunities to contextualise Elvis and his accomplishments. Where the interpretation succeeds, however, is at providing visitors a sense that they have been welcomed into Elvis's world, if only briefly, establishing a connection with him through a suitably depicted personal narrative.

Myth, Image and Commercialism

While sensationalism still pervades Elvis's life story Graceland has chosen the path that is both the least sensational and the most affectively compelling. This path, however, often echoes the sentimental myth of Elvis as a poor boy who made good, loved his mother, daughter, country, and Jesus; and gave millions to the unfortunate (Pratt, 1992). This myth, while based on kernels of truth, both reinforces an impression the family wishes to portray and establishes a commercially viable image. In O'Neal's (1996) work on the fall and rise of the Presley empire he concludes 'EPE's primary concern has been, and will continue to be, the making of money; rather than preserving Elvis's memory, it has manipulated and shaped our image of him to the one that was most profitable' (p. 218).

It is no secret that the Presley estate had to capitalize on the only real asset they had, Elvis's image, if Lisa Marie was to have an inheritance and to prevent Graceland from being sold off to the highest bidder. O'Neal (1996) describes Priscilla's 'simple, yet brilliant idea' to transform Elvis into a 'symbol, a character that could be licensed to merchandisers. The estate would turn Elvis Presley into its own version of Mickey Mouse' (p. 89). The challenge would be that Elvis's life, particularly during the later years, was not very 'Disneyesque.' By the time of his death, Elvis had become a 'grotesque caricature of the performer he once was' and 'this Elvis would never do as the symbol of the new empire,' leading Priscilla to conclude they had to act as though the 1977 Elvis never existed (ibid, p. 89). Elvis would be seen only in his prime and his image would be consistent with the best of what Elvis was, conveniently disregarding the elements of Elvis's story that did not sit within their business model. With a both cynical and slightly admiring tone, O'Neal concedes the estate's strategy was enormously successful stating 'Elvis has once again galvanized our imaginations, in no small part because of the remarkable job Priscilla has done erasing the memory of Elvis as he was when he died' (p. 90).

The construct of Elvis produced by EPE aids his role as 'the most recognizable and ubiquitous semiotic marker in American cultural history' (Sewall, 2010, p. 44). This is a process that began long before EPE's formation, as Elvis's image and myth has been well honed since the earliest days of his relationship with manager Tom Parker. Sewall (2010) asserts that Elvis's posthumous career lives on 'in the vast semiotic network that keeps his image alive, if not profitable' (p. 53), continuing to inscribe the 'universal dream for success, at the same time reminding us of the vulnerability of such talent that fails to negotiate the perilous byways of stardom, money and their inevitable

temptations such as sex and drugs' (p.55). Elvis's image exists outside of EPE, although they carefully license and guard his 'official' image, and it has come to represent a seemingly limitless semiotic archive. While the image of Elvis may stand for a wide array of ideas and myths, Graceland is concerned with a polished image that limits Elvis's flaws.

Visitors to Graceland are often repulsed by the commercialisation of Elvis at Graceland. Reviews frequently comment on how 'they have gone way overboard on the commercialization of this attraction' (*Dand978*, 4 July 2010). This commercialisation, however, is seen in the exorbitant cost of admission (with the current cost of basic adult admission being \$31.00), additional fees to park, and the fact every exhibit in the visitor plaza culminates in an Elvis themed gift shop. The attraction is seen as overly commercial, but not necessarily Elvis himself. Some visitors see the poetic in the commercialisation at Graceland as trappings fit for a star Elvis's magnitude. *RoyBoy3* (11 August 2011) proclaims on TripAdvisor, 'Graceland is the ultimately hyped celebrity shrine, as it should be because Elvis was the ultimate celebrity. Everything about it is clichéd, gaudy, over-priced and over glamorized, also as it should be.' Visitors who go to Graceland hoping to make sense of the Elvis myth, however, are frequently disappointed, finding plenty of examples of the mythical and commercial Elvis, but no insight into how and why the image has become so pervasive (*bearonthebounce*, 17 August 2011).

The commercial aspect can be overlooked by some visitors, leading to a 'deep authentic experience of the King despite too much commercialism and distraction' (*PilgrimToday*, 19 June 2011). Most visitors go to Graceland with the expectation of the commercial, and are often surprised with the resulting experience. One visitor reflected 'obviously this a commercialised set up, but we

didn't feel it was too over the top and overdone' (*Welshman 101*, 5 September 2011). Another visitor equated their expectation of the commercial with a poor experience, remarking, 'I went into this expecting commercialization & a sub-par experience, but was pleasantly surprised' (*mccrearyacres*, 12 September 2010). When reviewing TripAdvisor data, 83 per cent of the visitors who reflected on the site's commercialisation still claimed the experience was worthwhile or recommended a visit to other travellers. The commercial and mythologised aspects of the Graceland tour cannot be denied, but they do not appear to significantly or consistently detract from what the majority of visitors perceive to be a quality experience.

The Power and Pitfalls of 'Interproganda'

In many respects, the version of interpretation provided at Graceland falls in the realm of 'interproganda,' characterised by ignoring multiple points of view, skewing facts towards a foregone conclusion, and oversimplifying facts (Brochu and Merriman, 2002). This can be deemed the antithesis of quality interpretation, as the vision of Elvis seems so mediated and honed to 'perform' the goals set out by EPE. Yet this final narrative of Elvis is also the result of a selectively themed and emotive interpretation, which is an attribute of powerful interpretation (Black, 2005). The visitor research undertaken for this thesis indicates that visitors find satisfaction in this affective personal approach, despite its gaping omissions in the narrative of Elvis's life. Visitor reviews often indicate they feel the 'commentary is interesting and provides a real insight into life in his home' (*Welshman101*, 5 September 2011).

In all of the post-visit meaning maps and interviews conducted there was only one instance where a visitor questioned the narrative or image presented at Graceland. The overwhelming majority of visitors felt that the tour was moving

and provided genuine access to Elvis's personal world. Visitors generally interpret the chimera of Elvis that they encounter at Graceland as being authentic. A chimera has been described as a 'lost object we never possessed' (Moran, 2002, p. 161), and indeed the reality of Elvis is something long lost and hindered by myth, perhaps even to those who were closest to him. So while visitors may never be able to 'possess' Elvis in a manner that reflects the complexities of his character, they nonetheless feel they have discovered the personal side of this iconic figure. Having the opportunity to experience his home, career achievements and the solemnity of the Meditation Garden appears to be more significant to visitors than engaging with a more historically complete narrative of Elvis's life and character.

This selective history has been carefully cultivated and effectively transmitted through a wide range of interpretive devices, proving that sustaining myth can still lead to a fulfilling visitor experience. Ironically, however, as Pratt (1992) concludes 'the Elvis of the sentimental myth would never have changed musical or cultural history, but the authentic Elvis who did so was transformed into a legend obscuring what the man, the music, or the image really meant' (p. 95). The 'authentic' Elvis appearing at Graceland is still a largely manufactured and shallow image. The narrative crafted at Graceland can be likened to Priscilla's alleged early attempts to shield Lisa Marie from the disparaging images of her father. O'Neal (1996) asserts that Priscilla wanted Lisa to remember only the positive in Elvis, managing to obscure the details of his death, speculation of his drug addition, and the sordid tales of his womanising. Yet, as she grew older, Lisa found that by 'accepting her father's whole story – the good and the bad' she was freed from the 'need to pretend that Elvis was perfect' (O'Neal, 1996, p. 183). Perhaps visitors would benefit from a similar approach, finding a deeper

appreciation of Elvis in a more holistic narrative rather than one that reinforces a narrow and mythologised view of him.

The narrative content is only the first phase of the analysis, as the narrative analysis methodology suggests the discursive function of the narrative should also be examined. The narrative is manifest by both a structure of transmission and interpretive tools. Having explored the text portion of the interpretive triangle, it is important to consider the production side, as these are indelibly linked for visitors. Recognising how the interpretive strategies are used to deliver the content contextualises the data in this study as well as the overall visitor experience at Graceland.

Chapter 7 - 'The Key to this Heart of Mine:' Graceland's Interpretive Strategies

The tour at Graceland has been shown to change visitor perceptions and exceed expectations, a feat most historic homes hope to achieve. The relevance of this research in a broader context lies in understanding the interpretive devices employed at Graceland, as the approaches can be replicated in ways that the Graceland context cannot. The meaning mapping data, coupled with visitor photographs and audio tour content analysis, indicate trends in the visitor experience and illuminate the memorable tour elements that resonate with visitors. The interpretive approaches that appear to have the greatest impact on these results are the use of a strong personal narrative intertwined with oral histories, the integration of music and contextual media, the effective interpretation of everyday objects, and nostalgic discourses, all of which culminate in an affective presence that permeates the tour.

Contextualising Space

Historic homes are essentially empty spaces. While they may be filled with objects, they are no longer peopled spaces, yet visitors crave an experience that transports them in time and provides the illusion of access to the past. Tilden (2007/) asserts that an objective of historic house interpretation is 'to bring to the eye and understanding of the visitor not just a house . . . but a house of living people' (p. 102). He admits that this desired end is challenging to achieve and in order for these homes to be made to live again, the spaces must be contextualised. West and Bowman (2010) note the significance of this contextualisation in sites employing first person interpreters and providing re-created sensory experiences. Graceland's audio tour provides the much needed

contextualisation of space, creating an environment that visitors consider to be 'alive and intimate' (*PilgrimToday*, 19 June 2011).

The key interpretive tools that consistently support the reflexive and affective dimensions of the tour and provide such contextualisation are oral histories and music. When the oral history and music segments were isolated and plotted on the content and property axes as part of the narrative analysis it became clear that they represent the majority of the content that is both reflexive and affective. Through the use of oral histories and music visitors are provided a more textured experience that dwells on lived experience and an auditory peopling of the space. This combination of music with 'quotes and memories' is often cited in TripAdvisor reviews as an element of a tour that is 'so well done' (*Melmo5*, 4 July 2011). These components appear to constitute a richness that visitors appreciate and that enliven the experience.

Oral Histories

The term 'oral history' describes an interview in which 'the focus is not on historical event themselves, but rather on the meanings that events hold for those who lived through them' (Chase, 2005, p. 652). This definition is useful in the context of this study because it brings to light the main function of oral histories at Graceland, to bring the space alive, creating detailed images of life at Graceland. The oral histories from Elvis, Lisa Marie, and Priscilla are perhaps the best primary sources that could be used to illustrate life at Graceland. Visitors reflect on the presence of Lisa Marie and Priscilla, recognising 'the personal details told by his wife and daughter are emotional and make the audio tour' (*AmericanWife*, 24 August 2011).

The content of their stories falls in all four quadrants on the content and property diagram, but are concentrated in the Factual Reflexive domain,

indicating that they are used to illustrate action, encourage empathy and provide a more embodied experience for visitors. One of the most convincing examples of oral history is incorporated early in the tour in the front entrance hall of the house. While visitors cannot access the second floor of the house, the staircase leading upstairs remains tantalising, with visitors frequently peering up the stairs. It is easy to picture Elvis coming down the steps to greet you, an image richly depicted by Lisa, recalling, 'whenever he would come down the steps you could always tell. He never came down not fully ready to be seen, so he would have on many jewels or something and rattle down the steps.' Observations of visitors on the tour indicated that this story elicited very clear behaviour from visitors, as at the moment they were listening to Lisa's description they frequently turned to peer up the steps as if they too were expecting Elvis to descend from the second floor.

The use of traditional oral histories in historic homes is limited, as they often do not exist for the time period in which the house is interpreted. Graceland is at an advantage because of its more contemporary setting and associated media. Visitors value the oral accounts in their reviews of the tour, with one even stating that 'the best part was hearing Lisa Marie's input' (*jtldb*, 21 November 2010). Others, however, are sceptical of the sources and criticise that 'instead of peer anecdotal support, Graceland opts for a daughter's thin memories (she was eight when he died-how much could she possibly remember from the age of three?)' (*PowderHound*, 15 September 2006). Choosing to use the accounts from his wife and child, however, are in keeping with the family man narrative developed, while further bolstering the sense of authenticity at the site.

There are a host of other voices and accounts that could be powerfully employed as oral histories at Graceland, such as the cooks and maids or Elvis's

friends and extended family. Many of the staff at Graceland were employed long term, even after Elvis's death, and would have great insight into daily life at Graceland. Members of Elvis's entourage, often called The Memphis Mafia, also lived at Graceland and have offered many recorded accounts of life with Elvis that could be incorporated as the 'peer anecdotal' viewpoint. Widening the spectrum of personal recollections would incorporate a more diverse historical perspective, which authors such as Donnelly (2002) believe are critical for the future success of historic homes.

The oral histories currently incorporated on the tour have been carefully selected from over three hours of interviews with Lisa Marie and Priscilla to provide visitors with personal descriptions that also contextualise the tour (Marchese, 6 December 2006). Deliberate choices must be made when choosing appropriate accounts to include in historic site interpretation, but according to O'Neal (1996) this has bordered on a revisionist approach at Graceland. He states that when Graceland first opened there were no references to Priscilla on the tour, as at that time the average Elvis fan still harboured resentment that she divorced Elvis, which was widely believed to be the event that began his downfall. As public sentiment has changed Priscilla is no longer ascribed such a villainous role and is now featured on the tour. Her commentary, along with the media and objects associated with her relationship with Elvis, cement the family narrative, carefully avoiding the many other women that impacted his life and indeed life at Graceland.

Oral histories successfully people the space and provide contextual evidence for the narratives developed on the tour, humanising the home and its narrative. When reflecting on how to make a historic house tour more engaging as part of an American Association for Museums conference session, one

historical society director responded that tours 'need to be "humanized," by which I mean they address relationships between people. They also need to be evocative, by trying to recreate the texture of life in a particular place' (Norris, 2008). According to this definition, the personal accounts included at Graceland function as a humanising agent on the tour, illuminating the relationships between Elvis and his family as well as constructing a connection with the audience. Lisa Marie's recollections in particular provide texture that would be difficult to re-create otherwise, as she describes the liveliness of Graceland, her father's passions, his presence and his humanity.

A powerful voice on the tour belongs to Elvis himself, a feature very few historic houses benefit from. The audio accounts, spliced from various interviews over time, have been cleverly integrated to provide visitors with a sense that Elvis is helping narrate the tour of his home. This greatly contributes to the affective presence felt on the tour and provides a further humanising element. The oral histories are a valuable resource that enables the space to come to life in ways a third-person narration cannot succeed. The melding of these memories with music and sound effects produce a powerful interpretive tool that significantly impacts the visitor experience.

Music

An important component in establishing affective presence during the Graceland tour is the use of music. The music throughout the tour is consistently used in reflexive and affective roles, inspiring action in visitors by engaging their emotions at key points on the tour. Music has been tied to emotion in a range of studies, but the field of research in music and emotion has emerged slowly largely due to the dominance of cognitive aspects of musical behaviour. Juslin and Sloboda (2003) observe that 'even where emotions are valued, they

tend to be those rarefied forms that are related to “higher” abstract and aesthetic properties of works, rather than the everyday or full-blooded emotions’ (p. 5). The emotions that Graceland evokes in visitors are indeed these everyday and full-blooded emotions, from happiness to the tenderness of a parent or a deep sadness.

Research into music and emotions largely support the idea that music can effectively convey affect, with emotions such as happiness, calm, love, sadness, excitement and nostalgia resulting from people listening to particular musical selections (Juslin et al., 2010, p. 609). A range of studies dating back to the 1970s has confirmed that musical performers are able to convey feelings to listeners, suggesting that professional performers can communicate emotions to listeners with an accuracy nearly as high as the facial expression of emotions (Juslin and Timmers, 2010, p. 460). It appears that as a species, humans are predisposed to responding to emotional communication in music and evidence suggests that the impact of music is typically more affective than intellectual (Hallam, 2010). It should be no surprise then that the music of Elvis can be used to effectively express emotions to visitors in his home.

A study conducted by Gabrielsson (2010) aimed to determine the components associated with Strong Experiences with Music (SEM). A descriptive system was developed for the SEM research with categories including 1) general characteristics, 2) physical reactions, 3) perception, 4) cognition, 5) feelings/emotions, 6) existential and transcendental, and 7) personal and social aspects. The feelings/emotions category could include intense/powerful feelings, positive feelings, negative feelings, or different feelings. The 950 respondents most frequently reported feelings and emotions as the primary component in their SEM, although this was commonly interwoven with cognitive or perceptual-

cognitive aspects of the experience. These findings support the experience at Graceland with music, where the music provides a tool to weave together an emotive narrative. The content of the audio tour at Graceland uses music throughout the tour to manipulate the atmosphere, context and emotions of visitors. The impact of the music can be seen in visitor comments, as the audio tour music has been cited as the 'most moving part' of the tour (*lowieEngland*, 29 July 2011). The audio tour takes full advantage of Elvis's music, ensuring that no visitors leave without feeling Graceland was indeed a home possessed by the musical spirit of its owner.

Household Objects

Objects' importance lies in their capacity to invoke memory and sensory engagement, acting as productive forces that trigger memories and carry meaning. Even the most commonplace objects hold a cultural memory that communicates beyond individual memory. These objects become vital for the audience's mnemonic engagement in historic homes (Kwint, 1999). Household objects provide an empathetic bridge between the audience and Elvis. Importantly, visitors feel that 'Elvis comes alive through these material objects' (*PilgrimToday*, 19 June 2011). Visitors can extract elements of Elvis's personality and life at Graceland by experiencing the everyday objects that filled the home.

Graceland is filled with objects from the mundane to the extraordinary, in what is the most intact collection at a historic home I have ever encountered. The Presley family never discarded anything, a trait ingrained through many years of poverty, and EPE manages warehouses full of items that reflect the family's penchant for clinging to material goods. Visitors have remarked at the extensively furnished home and its value, as *AnnieGrant* marvelled on TripAdvisor, 'thank God Elvis and his family were hoarders . . . It was like

stepping back into a time capsule' (10 August 2010). The time capsule effect is noted repeatedly in visitor reviews, adding to Graceland's ability to evoke feelings of nostalgia and produce an immersive experience.

While the audio tour at Graceland provides a narrative crafted from personal memories and stories about how Elvis's personality manifests itself in the design and decorating of the space, there are many objects not included in the audio interpretation that hold deep resonance with visitors. Objects such as family photos on Elvis's desk, open books showing his underlining and notations, and even Lisa Marie's swing set still in the back yard, all help underscore the theme of this tour: Elvis may have been a super star, but at Graceland he was just 'a pretty cool guy that had a family he loved and enjoyed spending time with at home' (Marchese, December 6 2006).

It is the mundane objects, such as the swing set, that hold greatest resonance with visitors. This interest in the everyday is apparent when examining visitor-contributed photos on Flickr. The sample examined in this study included 98 images detailing everyday objects, ranging from photographs of the kitchen counter to toys and books. Moran's work on childhood and nostalgia has shown how easily the 'banal objects of everyday life, which cannot be so easily linked to traditional heritage narratives can be invested with affective meaning' (2002, p. 159). These everyday objects are important elements in the construction of affective presence at Graceland. They speak to nostalgic inclinations, provide an atmosphere rich with detail, and allow visitors to feel they have walked into the past, replete with familiar family objects.

Photos show particular interest in objects that visitors can relate to from their own lives. It seems visitors are fascinated that a celebrity like Elvis had the same type of personal objects that fill visitors' homes, reinforcing ideas of home

and Elvis's personal side. These everyday objects open the door to Elvis's world and foster connections with visitors, as they see a commonality of experience that allows them to identify with Elvis. It is common practice for the public to search for an avenue allowing them to connect with iconic figures through ordinary objects, as Wayne Koestenbaum (1996) observed in his interpretation of Jackie Kennedy's iconic status. Press accounts of Jackie Kennedy often emphasised her association with commonplace actions and objects, 'to strengthen her tenuous connection to "the people"' (p. 90). People are consoled by the fact that celebrities use the same objects we encounter on a daily basis, a fragile connection between 'us' and 'them.' Koestenbaum elaborates,

Everything ordinary that Jackie did, owned, or discovered becomes evidence that (1) Jackie is really just one of us, despite her elite veneer, (2) we, despite our relentlessly ordinary lives, are secretly magnificent, because we share plain objects and practices with Jackie; (3) icon Jackie is an unpretentious object in the American homes, and that's why she is fond of ordinary things – she identifies with them (p. 90).

Elvis maintained a celebrity status rather than Jackie Kennedy's elite social standing, but the concept of identification through objects is equally applicable. Visitors relish in the ordinary at Graceland, as seen in a photograph of the entry hall light fixture on Flickr with the visitor commenting they are 'pretty sure this fixture is from Home Depot [a DIY home store]' (*Brian Fountain*, 8 July 2010). A visitor who uploaded only close/intimate distance photographs of their tour included a decorative object from the TV Room, stating it 'reminded me of the sculpture we have on our living room coffee table . . . We're just like Elvis!' (*kleepet*, 9 May 2006). Graceland is a home filled with commonplace objects, offering further evidence that Elvis was the 'blue-collar guy in blue suede shoes' to whom any visitor can relate.

Elvis by the Presleys, published by the Presley family, showcases many of

the ordinary objects seen at Graceland coupled with personal accounts of life with Elvis. There are detailed photographs of everyday objects in the Presley household, such as a comb, a bottle of aftershave, Lisa Marie's crayons, or a record player. In some ways, these mimic the close/intimate distance photographs taken by visitors, often representing the mundane objects rather than the grandiose. In reviewing *Elvis by the Presleys*, Deusner (2005) asserts that 'these images of banal ephemera simultaneously humanize Elvis and canonize him, treating his possessions as holy objects' (n.p.). In the context of Graceland, however, rather than the stark white glossy pages of a book, these objects contribute to the humanising of Elvis.

Contextual Media

Contextual media helps populate Graceland and further immerse visitors into Elvis's world. Film has proven emotive results, contributing to narrative continuity and inducing mood, while creating and activating memories (Juslin and Sloboda, 2003, p. 263). Graceland does not integrate media through handheld devices, which is becoming increasingly common in museums, but it does showcase home movie footage of Elvis through television screens mounted in certain areas. Film is used to great effect as a result of its contextual location, allowing visitors to associate the films of Elvis and his family within the same space where the footage is viewed. This contextual nature of the footage creates a performative aspect to the media, particularly as it shows the space embodied by Elvis and encourages visitors to respond to the space as inhabited rather than a staged empty space. Visitor *Monomadre* described this effect as the highlight of their tour, observing 'the videos shown throughout the tour made me feel like Elvis had just walked through his home ahead of me' (11 June 2010).

Primary examples of media are the use of video installations in the office

and backyard. The home office used to stage Elvis's press conference when returning from the army in 1960 remains largely as shown in the archival video footage. Video of Elvis at the conference plays next to the desk he sat at addressing the press, playfully answering questions about the girl he met in Germany, Priscilla Beaulieu, and how much he missed Memphis and Graceland. Visitors can see Elvis sitting at the desk that is in front of them, making this one of the most unique spots on the tour. Video screens installed in the carport show home movies of Elvis, Lisa Marie and Priscilla riding on golf carts and horses on the Graceland property. A quick glance to the right reveals the same pasture with horses still grazing and galloping. These media pieces provide opportunities for visitors to envisage Elvis in the space they are currently in and further extend the personal narrative.

The integration of media builds on the process of mediated knowing that has become a part of modern culture, providing visitors with a sense that they know Elvis better through engagement with media featuring him. Lewis (2008) provides an example of how media facilitates mediated knowing with the phenomenon of Princess Diana, which he claims 'illustrates the particular capacity of contemporary culture to construct and radiate meanings, even through the vacuum of personal knowing' (p. 15). In contemporary society we do not need to know someone first hand to have a feeling that we know and can relate to them. As Lewis explains,

Though we know relatively few members of that mass group [modern society] personally, we are nevertheless able to imagine and identify with a culture or community . . . because of the mass media, their images, narratives and information. We didn't know Diana personally, but we developed a personal knowing and an emotional engagement through the operations of the media (2008, p. 15).

Visitors' responses to media at Graceland operate in a similar fashion, providing them with a means for projecting Elvis in the space and offering an

intimate look into his world. Visitors are likely accustomed to the mass media version of Elvis and with the images and narratives associated with that Elvis, which differs in many ways from the Elvis that the interpretive media portrays at Graceland.

While many sites do not have the wealth of media Graceland has access to, particularly for older homes, there are ways to create media to bring the space to life. At Kew Palace, for example, the rooms are re-imagined through an audio drama that visitors overhear as they progress from room to room, giving the rooms personal contexts. Tilden called on historic interpretation to 'animate' spaces, 'to give life, to vivify' (2007, p. 109). Audio tours and associated media, whether on individual devices or played throughout a room, can provide a rich atmospheric experience that animates the home. This layering of interpretive media also helps strengthen the emotional connections that visitors can make, helping to further personalise the experience.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a significant discourse and interpretive device employed at Graceland, building on objects and emotions to 'bind memory, place and experience' (Hodge, 2011, p. 132). The nostalgic experience consists of material, performative and phenomenological qualities, all bound in the processes of heritage and interpretation (Austin, 2007). Nostalgia theory is often invoked to understand tourism at popular culture heritage sites, in both negative and positive constructs, examining how visitors relate to the past by juxtaposing it with the present (Caton and Santos, 2007). For many visitors, Graceland's appeal lies in its nostalgic value, reminding them of a time from their youth or even longing for a culturally remembered past that they never experienced personally. Visitor reviews implore others to visit Graceland 'If you like Elvis,

music or nostalgia; don't miss this' (*Juswannasleep*, 8 August 2010). Pre-visit personal meaning maps often consisted of reminders of visitors' youth and what Elvis has meant to them or family members. Once inside the home, nostalgia brims at Graceland through the homey interior, family reminiscences, objects that many visitors can relate to from personal experience, and through the interpretive tropes depicting family life.

In a nostalgic experience 'affect and meaning are conjoined' (Radstone, 2010, p. 189), creating an emotional engagement as visitors in the present look back to the past. Historic houses possess an intrinsic nostalgic quality, as they are already familiar as a home and a site for stories about family. While nostalgia may be inherent in historic houses, it is also an important interpretive method that can be evoked through media, objects, documents, and the 'atmosphere' of the property. Nostalgia is particularly influential at historic homes, where visitors 'experience a collapse of the present with the past' minimising the 'temporal distance' between the visitor and the past (Gregory and Whitcomb, 2007, p. 265). This distance is, as Gregory and Whitcomb (2007) suggests, however, a romanticised vision of the past. Historic homes allow for the visitor to glimpse aspects of the past yet it is a world that they can never fully enter.

The romanticised aspect of nostalgia makes it suspect in the eyes of most academics and it is typically 'under-regarded, under-theorised or simply dismissed by scholars because of its assumed regressive agenda' (Hodge, 2011, p. 119). Nostalgia is dismissed because it is seen as being a distortion or misrepresentation of the past at its best and a 'regression, delusion and outright amnesia' at its worst (Tannock, 1995, p. 454). Authors such as Hodge (2011) and Gregory & Whitcomb (2007), however, believe that for all of its dangers, nostalgia can play an incredibly useful role in historic house interpretation. Tannock

(1995) suggests that nostalgia is intrinsically linked to a 'search for authentic origins and stable meanings' (p. 453), both of which are components of heritage interpretation. Paradoxically, nostalgia is inherently inauthentic, an experience of the memory of something rather than a genuine experience, and unstable, yet it can offer 'pre-existing common ground among disparate agendas' (Hodge, 2011, p. 131) that foster a richer heritage experience.

Homecoming and Pastoralism

Graceland's interpretation draws on the nostalgic tropes of homecoming and pastoralism that are often associated with historic homes. Nostalgia in contemporary culture is rooted in idealised concepts of home, homecoming and childhood, as well as longing for a stable place of origin (Austin, 2007; Tannock, 1995). The homecoming aspect centres on domesticity and the home as a refuge, while pastoralism reflects the home as a place for a self-made man (Hodge, 2011; Tannock, 1995). The audio tour begins with Elvis's own nostalgic recollections of his family at Graceland, embedding the idea of homecoming from the outset. The value of a homeplace is reaffirmed in the description of Graceland as a literal dream come true for Elvis's once impoverished family. Visitors can join in the experience of homecoming at Graceland, where 'you have the unique opportunity to be "welcomed" into Elvis' home - where he raised a family (of all sorts, related or not) and lived his life . . .' (*Melissaentin*, 8 July 2010).

The notion of homecoming at Graceland also reinforces the idea of the home as sanctuary, a place where Elvis could be himself and attend to his family beyond his fame and career. Having lived at Graceland for over ten years Priscilla claims Graceland is at the heart of understanding Elvis as a person. She believes that,

It was Elvis's refuge from the storms of life. It was where he dreamt of raising a family and finding simple peace. Sometimes he found that peace, sometimes he didn't, but he never stopped trying. Graceland symbolised his hopes for a happy life. That's why he always came home (Ritz, 2006, p. 15).

The nostalgic notions of peace, a happy life and the home as refuge are built into the narrative at Graceland throughout the tour. Just as nostalgia is a longing for the past, the tour attempts to bring Elvis's own longing for home and family to the forefront in the tour. In the video excerpt of his 1960 press conference shown in the office area visitors see Elvis proclaiming how he 'missed everything' about Graceland and Memphis while he was away in the Army, declaring he has 'no plans for leaving Memphis' and that he hopes to 'keep Graceland as long as I can.' The 'rosy' interpretation of history experienced through nostalgia, however, precludes visitors from ever encountering the element of Priscilla's quote about the times Elvis simply could not find the peace he sought even at Graceland. The restless, unsettled and unsatisfied Elvis, particularly of his later years, does not factor into the larger narrative and discourses at Graceland.

The theme of pastoralism extends the ideals of home and family life, an 'endorsement of the modest, determined and entrepreneurial American middle class' (Hodge, 2011, p. 123). The narrative at Graceland engenders a sense of family and the idealised view of Elvis as a devout family man. A visitor comment exemplifies this element of interpretation, 'the house itself had a homey feel and spoke of Elvis' desire to take care of his parents as well as his own family' (*WestNewtonTraveler*, 5 September 2010). The feeling of home and family are intertwined with the larger narratives woven by the interpretation and evoke a sense of nostalgia, juxtaposing the ideals of family values and duty from a bygone era with today's more fragmented and distanced family norms.

Ideas of pastoralism reflecting the family are embodied in the experiential

at Graceland. The physical fabric of the house, from the décor to the sensory experience, stimulates feelings of nostalgia in visitors. One visitor remarked that 'the dining room was understated and just right for them to eat their home-cookin . . . It actually smelled like your Granma's house' (*Travelfam005*, 22 May 2010). This nostalgic experience arises from the ability for visitors to empathise in the historic house setting because they recognise objects and arrangements similar to their own family histories (Gregory and Whitcomb, 2007). Visitors can imagine Elvis and his family dining on a meal of Southern food in the dining room as easily as they can envision family meals in their own homes, recalling even the smells they associate with family occasions.

Childhood

Visitors often engage with the common nostalgic trope of childhood at Graceland. Flickr photographs represent objects visitors remember from their childhood, aiding in the construction of narratives about Lisa Marie and her family, which visitors position against their own childhood memories. Raphael Samuel connects the heritage industry to 'the middle-class cult of childhood, with its celebration of the time-warped and its sentimentalization of the nursery' (1994, p. 93). Indeed, at Graceland visitors find a vignette dedicated to Lisa Marie's nursery, as well as toys subtly placed in rooms and her swing set still in the garden, all reminders of her childhood and the family that inhabited Graceland. Photographs of Lisa Marie's toy box filled with toys and stuffed animals are common in Flickr albums from Graceland. These images are accompanied by comments such as 'I swear I had one of those stuffed Raggedy Ann dolls!' (*LilyTX*, 12 March 2007) or 'Lisa Marie's toy box. I had one just like it!' (*thefiend*, 31 July 2006). Visitors feel connected with the 'middle-class cult of childhood' through material reminders of their own childhood. The objects and displays at

Graceland sentimentalise a childhood that had little in common with any visitor's beyond the fact that they shared the same objects, as Lisa Marie's childhood was far from normal. These objects, however, appear to be at the heart of nostalgic moments.

In Moran's (2002) study of childhood and nostalgia he notes nostalgia for childhood manifests itself both through narrative forms and in 'the more nebulous practices of everyday life,' (p.155) as seen in the context of Graceland's display and integration of childhood belongings. The sense of immersion in the past, complete with everyday objects in a richly depicted setting, prompt this feeling of nostalgia for childhood. As one visitor observed, 'we are not big Elvis fans but really enjoyed the house tour . . . The house is a time capsule from the late 1960's and early 1970's (which brought back lot's of memories from my childhood)' (*Rockyjoe*, 17 August 2011). In this instance the memories of childhood took precedence over the figure of Elvis and proved to be the most engaging element of the tour experience.

The swing set at Graceland is evidence of how visitors navigate the gap between 'representation' and 'reality' to generate nostalgia in the context of the everyday. The swing set remains at Graceland with no interpretation, but it is a primary source of nostalgic engagement seen in visitor photographs. These images represent a yearning for the past and perpetuate the myth of childhood innocence, all the while generating a narrative about the Presley family. There is a longing and emptiness represented in the way the swing set is often photographed, with carefully framed images focusing on the swing set seats. This proves to be a performative act, creating a dissonance between the now empty and still seats and what would have been a lively and playful site of action in the Presley household. These images, such as those seen below (top: *Jim*

Felder, 25 September 2010, bottom: *MisfitHue*, 22 August 2010) portray a



Images 8 and 9: Swing set Details

haunting absence at Graceland.

Stewart (1993) reminds us that 'nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss' (p. 145). Absence is fundamental in the generation of nostalgic moments, as visitors grapple with what is no longer present, yearning for what may have been there in the past. Titles of similar images reflect a yearning for childhood innocence reflected in the swing set, with visitors designating the photographs as symbols of

'simple happiness' (*Jillyboop*, 20 December 2007). They acknowledge that this represents an emotive past, declaring 'gone are the halcyon days of youth' (*camera1*, 19 September 2007).

This nostalgic moment, which may echo authenticity for visitors, as it is a tangible reminder of their own past, is inherently inauthentic. The past seen through a nostalgic lens 'creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience . . . nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face' (Stewart, 1993, p. 23). This act also allows visitors to devise their own narratives about Elvis and his family based only on hollow illusions, creating what can be a powerful interpretation, regardless of the accuracy of the interpretation. The swing set produces images in visitors' minds of this as a site 'where Elvis used to play with Lisa Marie' (*Stevebilliejene*, 23 May 1997) and of

Elvis purchasing the set for Lisa as a gift from her doting father. Another Flickr user provides a contradictory account of the swing set. She describes how 'Mama was at Sears [a department store] way back when, when this was purchased for Lisa Marie. His entourage bought it' (*Leslieslink*, 28 November 2008). If the 'authentic' experience is indeed one of Elvis's employees buying the swing set this would appear to contradict the notions of Elvis as an involved father. Many biographical accounts picture Elvis as a devoted father, but one that doted on his daughter with virtually limitless material goods rather than spending time playing with her on a swing set (O'Neal, 1996). Whatever the truth behind the relationship between Elvis and Lisa Marie may have been, it becomes obscured by nostalgic recollections from visitors' own experiences, an act of transference that has little to do with the reality of life at Graceland.

The nostalgic appeal of childhood is undeniable at Graceland, as it is at many historic sites. Childhood is considered a universal experience, producing sentiments 'that resonates with our own deepest longings for identity, security and belonging' (Moran, 2002, p. 171). Childhood recalled through this mechanism often results from a complex negotiation between larger cultural meanings and half-remembered experience (Steedman, cited in Moran 2002, p. 161). This nostalgia is produced through engagement with the objects, it is a 'childhood voluntarily remembered, a childhood manufactured from its material survivals' (Stewart, 1993, p. 145). The 'material survivals' prove to be an important facet that impacts the interpretive role of nostalgia at Graceland beyond the ideas of childhood.

Material Culture

The material culture of historic homes is a frequent catalyst for moments of nostalgia. Objects can 'speak' to an audience who shared a cultural memory of

those same objects. The visitor photographs shared on Flickr often reflect the nostalgic qualities of Graceland, connecting with the visitor's past through the use of household objects. Even the most mundane object, such as a door, can spark instances of nostalgia. When *sassafrass* visited the Jungle Room the only photograph she took was of an exterior door with three basic windows, remarking that 'my parents had the same door' (11 October 2009). She uploaded only four photographs of her visit to Graceland and one was of a plain door that says little about Elvis, beyond the fact that he had a typical door in his family room. More importantly, this door in Elvis's home linked her present experience at Graceland with the past indexing her own family experience. It is the everyday mundane objects that act as stimuli for nostalgic interludes, as *Travelfam005* noted on TripAdvisor, 'I enjoyed the nostalgic items in the house: the kitchen appliances, the old telephones, the stereo system with LP's and 45's lying around, the furniture, tile, wallpaper' (22 May 2010).

Gregory and Whitcomb (2007) believe that historic homes of today have less relevance with younger audiences because they cannot participate in the shared cultural memory of material objects the way an older visitor such as *Travelfam005* might do. Nostalgia dependent on material culture can result in an overall lack of affect for many audiences, as they are not subject to the same sense of pleasurable memories. This notion is challenged at Graceland because it sits in a time period that is close enough to the lived experience of the majority of visitors. Visitors can also extend nostalgia beyond lived experience, longing for a culturally remembered past that need not have been experienced personally (Caton and Santos, 2007).

Intangible nostalgic ideals such as homecoming and childhood can offer more widely accessible opportunities for visitors to engage with nostalgia,

particularly in homes of earlier time periods. Race, social standing and gender, however, often limit these idealised nostalgic discourses. Hodge (2011) cautions that such approaches to nostalgia may be dangerous, as they 'normalise deeply rooted hierarchal, racialised, gendered and temporalised power structures' (p. 130). Indeed, the nostalgia embedded in the Graceland experience is for a very different time, even though it is not so far chronologically removed. As Chadwick describes, 'industrialization, urbanization, civil rights, the sexual revolution, and the growing multicultural character of American life all contributed to these sweeping social changes that turned Elvis's southern mansion into a lonely outpost on a hill' (Chadwick, 1997, p. xxiv).

The data from this study suggests that visitors are enamoured with both the material objects they can relate to from personal experience and the ideals of home and family. There has been no reflection on the societal issues that, as Chadwick suggests, could arise from a visit to Graceland. The immersive power of nostalgia overtakes any more radicalised or politicised reading of Graceland and the time period it represents. Atia and Davies (2010) admit to the empowering agency of nostalgia in heritage settings, acknowledging that 'an active nostalgia is something more than just a rhetorically powerful propaganda technique' (p. 183). The nostalgia summoned at Graceland is a very real occurrence that significantly impacts the visitor experience. The placement of objects, particularly as they relate to childhood, and the development of narrative around homecoming and pastoralism are important interpretive tools used to help further the affective experience at Graceland.

Authenticity

The topic of authenticity has been previously discussed in the literature review, but deserves to be re-visited in the scope of interpretive devices at

Graceland, as it is key to the visitor experience. The concept of authenticity has been described as 'the single most important influence on social science studies of tourism' (Hill and Cable, 2006, p. 56), and is a primary motivator behind visits to heritage attractions. It is clear from reviews and meaning maps that visitors prize the authentic value of Graceland; the ability to walk through the rooms that Elvis lived in and experience his home in some measure as he experienced it. There is no other place where visitors can be so wholly immersed in Elvis's physical world, indeed visitors often journey to Graceland simply to 'touch where Elvis had touched' (Mabe, 1997, p. 155).

One of the most useful avenues for exploring authenticity at Graceland is through a typology of authenticity related to tourism experiences (Jamal and Hill, 2004), which differentiates between objective, constructed, and personal authenticity. Objective authenticity reflects 'historic time,' requiring an experience to involve genuine objects and other tangible aspects of authenticity, such as historic properties or the sites of well-known events. Constructed authenticity is 'used to inscribe the heritage story in which a heritage plot constructs "heritage time" as the legitimate time frame' by which the heritage site is interpreted (ibid, p. 357). Personal authenticity embraces 'visitor time,' where the visitors engage in narrative and interpretive meaning-making encounters. The experience at Graceland encompasses all three elements, interlacing them to ensure that visitors perceive authenticity in this well managed environment.

Objective Authenticity

The objective authenticity is undeniable at Graceland, a home still filled with original interiors and objects. Visitors relish the opportunity to see 'the real stuff,' because 'pop culture is inundated with images of Elvis but this is the source' (*Pilgrim Today*, 19 June 2011). One visitor expressed the value of this

objective authenticity, stating 'to be able to actually walk and just BE in the rooms where Elvis lived his "normal" daily life is just beyond anything I can think of' (*Coffeedrinker09*, 6 November 2009). Layers of objective authenticity exist at Graceland, as all of the rooms are not decorated from the same period in time. While every object in Graceland is authentic, the rooms do not maintain a coherent historic time, although visitor comments indicate that they are often unaware of this fact.

Historic homes often do not have the original contents of the home and rely on substitute furnishings, compromising authenticity. While Graceland possesses an immense archive of items, they have faced a similar challenge in that they are not always certain about the exact context of all objects. The Director of Archives has estimated there are fewer than 75 historic interior photographs of Graceland, as it was considered invasive for visitors or family members to take photos when spending time with Elvis. This makes the authentic re-creation of interiors difficult even with such an exceptionally intact collection (Marchese, 6 December 2006). The objective authenticity at Graceland plays a large part in the power of the interpretation, as visitors feel they have been given direct access to a genuine encounter with Elvis, which is only heightened by the contextualisation of the audio tour and media.

Constructive Authenticity

The constructive authenticity at Graceland lies in the narrative woven on the tour, an appropriation of the past for the making of present interpretive contexts (Hill and Cable, 2006). Jamal and Hill (2004) describe this construction of authenticity as 'heritage time,' where the site is 'embedded in an intersubjective and discursive matrix' with authenticity emerging from 'substantive staging' (p. 357). There is little doubt that the narrative of Elvis developed at

Graceland has been 'staged' to depict a humanised, if not saintly, portrayal.

There are no lies in this story per se, no events or facts created simply to enrich the story, yet the image is so mediated that it could potentially be seen as riddled with lies by omission.

Visitors go to Graceland seeking the 'genuine' Elvis, and they are provided with an Elvis that is personal and anti-iconic, but not entirely genuine. Elvis's image is highly constructed to minimise the more unappealing or complex facets of his personality and career. This echoes Baudrillard's (1994) concept of simulacra, a copy without an original. The second stage in Baudrillard's image progression to simulacrum is an image that masks a profound reality, which most closely describes the constructed authenticity at Graceland. The narrative of Elvis functions as a copy relying on a mediated image, which is based on an original yet is different from the original. Authors Frazer and Brown explore the making of Elvis's image in contemporary society, remarking that 'there seems to be great flexibility in the way that people fill in the details of "the images without bottoms"' (2002, p. 202). It is this flexibility of details that allows Graceland to develop such a compelling layer of authenticity, born of the very best of Elvis's story.

The constructive authenticity encountered at Graceland serves an interpretive end, providing visitors with the opportunity to feel more closely connected to Elvis, regardless of the omitted details. By failing to acknowledge the flawed facets of Elvis's story and personality the interpretation may, however, be missing further opportunities to strengthen the personal narrative that dominates the tour experience. Elvis's flaws may 'humanize that image and serve to guarantee its authenticity: he struggled, he was real' (Duffet, 2011, p. 178). Visitors are given access to a side of Elvis that confronts the iconic images they hold so dear when they arrive at Graceland. This negotiated authenticity could

provide an even deeper layer of authenticity by more fully acknowledging the human side of Elvis complete with failures, frustrations, and insecurities alongside his charisma and familial devotion.

Personal Authenticity

Personal authenticity exists in 'visitor time,' as visitors engage in narrative and interpretive meaning making through 'encounters with situated space and contextual space' (Jamal and Hill, 2004, p. 358). Visitors construct their own notions of authenticity, with public perceptions and values often conflicting with the views of social scientists as reflected in tourism literature (Hill and Cable, 2006). People are less concerned with the layers of culturally mediated authenticity than scholars are and studies have found visitors are often uncritical consumers of heritage and authenticity (Moscardo and Pearce, 1986; Waitt, 2000). In many ways this seems fitting, as authenticity can be seen not so much as a state of being but as the 'objectification of a process of representation,' referring to a set of qualities that people believe represents an ideal or exemplar (Vannini and Williams, 2009, p. 3). The personal concepts of authenticity visitors generate at Graceland enrich their experience, regardless of how accurately these views reflect the objective authenticity.

One of the most intriguing examples of constructed personal authenticity seen in visitor reviews are descriptions stating the interior remains as it was the day Elvis died. Comments such as 'walking thru, I found it hauntingly sad as it sits as a picture of what his life was on the day he died. The furniture and interior were immaculately preserved' (*Rebecca113*, 16 March 2011) are common occurrences. Visitors frequently believe Graceland's authenticity is rooted in the fact nothing has been changed since Elvis died, adding a definitive level of authenticity to the experience. *TurboTim1967* concluded Graceland is 'preserved

to be as historically close as possible to the day Elvis died in 1977' (31 July 2011), despite the fact that the tour acknowledges rooms are decorated from different eras. Visitors are providing their own reading of the authenticity factor, perhaps because they genuinely want to believe they are encountering Elvis's 'world' untouched. Out of the TripAdvisor reviews examined just under ten per cent of the visitors perpetuated the myth that 'the house remains as it was the day Elvis died' (Lasarre, 3 March 2012). It appears that visitors often simply choose to ignore the more chronological information presented because they want to believe in a greater authenticity than is truly represented.

The constructivist nature of authenticity described by Bruner (1994) and Wang (1999) allows for this adoption of a modified sense of authenticity, as it can be seen as 'a projection of tourists own expectations' (Kelner, 2001, p. 2). Hill and Cable (2006) contend that visitors perceive authenticity regardless of circumstances when an experience is well managed. The immersive experience at Graceland with an objectively authentic collection so wholly intact makes it easy for visitors to assume that the contents of the rooms have not been altered over time. One of the greatest signifiers of authenticity is the depth of experience, and 'deeper, more immersive experiences for visitors immediately convey authenticity, as the deeper one delves the more authentic and real it becomes' (Wilkening and Donnis, 2008, p. 22). In this instance, the embodied experience of the house proves more compelling than the interpretation, allowing visitors to manufacture their own concepts of personal authenticity.

The interactive and performative elements of personal authenticity are regarded as key implications for interpretation, prompting emotional reactions and links to lived experience (Hill and Cable, 2006). Notions of authenticity allow visitors to become connected to the site and interpretive narrative, as visitor

Rosemkhatter (15 August 2010) reflected, 'to think I walked through the same rooms as he did was very humbling. I saw his piano he tinkered on not long before he died, it was awesome.' This connection with authenticity in a historic home setting can be tied to Benjamin's concept of aura as 'an engagement with uniqueness and authenticity,' extending 'beyond the objective to the experiential' (Rickly-Boyd, 2011, p. 3). Rickly-Boyd (2011) argues that the authenticity of the tourist experience results from an engagement with aura, which seems particularly relevant at Graceland.

While Benjamin's theorisations of authenticity and aura are derived from art, they are applicable to the setting of historic homes. Graceland's aura lies largely in the authenticity of the site in 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence' (Benjamin, 1968b, p. 220), all of which is connected with Elvis. Benjamin posits that the authenticity of objects is 'the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced' (ibid, p. 221). Visitors to Graceland encounter a home that provides 'testimony' to the life Elvis lived in private, allowing them to imagine the history each of these objects has experienced. Importantly for Benjamin, aura exists in this relationship between the viewer and the object, as 'experience of the aura rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man' (Benjamin, 1968a, p. 188). This auratic relationship can be seen as the basis of the performative and reflexive nature of personal authenticity at Graceland and other historic sites.

The Graceland experience is multi-faceted and includes all three dimensions of authenticity, generating a powerful interpretive tool. Visitors have cited the importance of feeling they encountered an authentic experience at

Graceland, concluding that 'the Graceland tour is a deep fulfilling authentic experience' (*Pilgrim Today*, 19 June 2011). The recurring use of words such as 'real,' 'genuine,' and 'authentic' across all of the data sources suggests this aspect of the visit is highly valued and prioritised by visitors. Rarely do visitors critically engage with ideas of constructed authenticity, regarding the narrative of Elvis presented as being as authentic as the chairs he sat on and the piano he played. Visitors view Graceland with a primacy born from its objectively authentic connection with Elvis. His home is deemed the place one can come closest to connecting with the person rather than the icon. This is indicative of the importance the public places on historic homes as sites of authenticity, with studies, including this one, repeatedly indicating that authentic experiences motivate people to visit heritage sites and shape their perceptions (Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998; Wilkening and Donnis, 2008).

Affective Presence and Personal Narrative

The results of this research demonstrate that affective presence and personal narrative, forged through the interpretive devices discussed, are intricately linked and key to the Graceland experience. The personal narrative themes are solidified by emotions, allowing for empathetic engagement with Elvis and his family. From the outset of the tour experience visitors are inducted into a narrative that prioritises personal accounts and interactions, rather than an architectural or object-centred approach. The course of the narrative, enhanced by interpretive tools such as music and media, establishes an affective presence that proves virtually inescapable at Graceland. This presence has the ability to alter visitor perceptions and enrich visitor experience.

It has been argued that affective presence constitutes experience and that 'we could not experience anything without being affectively related to it' (Blahnik,

1997, p. 25). The tour at Graceland is deeply rooted in emotion and affect, elements cited as integral to embodied experience at heritage sites (Andriotis, 2011; Bruner, 1994). Authors have long believed that reaching visitors through an affective emotional approach is one of the best ways to establish a successful historic house experience (Gregory and Whitcomb, 2007). This approach has clearly been successful at Graceland, as it has helped changed visitor perceptions about Elvis.

Affect in historic properties can be achieved through a variety of approaches, from sounds and props to costumed interpreters, all aiming to engage the visitors' senses and emotions (Brochu and Merriman, 2002; Coleman, 1933; Credle, 2002). The audio tour strives to create a 'sensory spectacle' by integrating background noises, such as the sound of people laughing or the television on, coupled with Elvis's music that works as an affective soundtrack to the tour experience. You hardly feel as though the rooms of Graceland are empty. This 'fullness' of space developed over the course of the tour, through senses, emotive objects and narratives, and nostalgic discourses establish the affective presence of Elvis and his family. This presence encourages visitors to perceive the 'imprints of past lives' still embedded within the house, resulting in a 'collapse of the present with the past' that allows visitors to enter another world (Gregory and Whitcomb, 2007, n.p.). This other world is Elvis's world, constituted through the economy of experience and affect.

Emotions are employed interpretively in a number of ways at Graceland, whether through the playing of *Love Me Tender* while standing in his parent's bedroom, seeing the piano he played the last morning of his life, or the placement of portraits of Elvis cuddling his daughter on the corner of his desk. In their post-visit meaning maps visitors frequently used emotions to describe Elvis, further

distancing their pre-visit view of him as an iconic superstar. This emotional appeal is significant for both the Graceland experience as well as the continuity of the larger 'Elvis Culture' that Doss (1999) examines. She asserts that Elvis's longevity will be based on the 'emotive, pleasurable, personal, inexplicable, and transcendent meanings that Elvis's multi-faceted image has inspired for the past forty years' (p. 259). The affective presence of Elvis at Graceland is born out of his many identities, from the loving and devoted family man to the jumpsuit clad superstar, all of which are presented to visitors with the same compelling mix of empathy and raw emotion.

Visitors often leave Graceland struggling to explain the emotive impact of their experience. One of the earliest reviews on TripAdvisor focused on this aspect of his visit, stating that he 'went to Graceland on a whim' while in Memphis on business, but after the tour he found himself 'very emotional and not sure why' (*BayAreaTraveler41*, 30 January 2004). He elaborates,

I wasn't even going to go because I find the whole Elvis pilgrimage thing ridiculous.... or so I thought [. . .] I really can't explain it and I'm not sure if this happened to anyone else [. . .] Recommend the tour even if you think it's hokey. That's what I thought until I went and had a weird emotional outpouring I never experienced before.

Even critical academics have been swayed by the impact of this emotive and embodied experience, as Drummond (2011) reflected in his auto-ethnographic account of the tour, 'Graceland had overpowered us; it had pulled the rug out from under our analytical footing' (p. 208). It is the personally affective domain that ultimately transforms the visitor, leaving them 'saturated' (ibid, p. 209) with experience and emotion.

The historical worlds presented in house museums are crafted through narrative coherence, emplotted or constituted as stories. Graceland is a prime example of how this narrative delivers an experience rooted in the personal and

authentic. Handler and Saxton (1988) draw upon Heidegger to argue for the critical role of narrativity and authenticity in heritage settings, reflecting that 'Heideggerian authenticity, writ large, is life as a readable first person narrative, operationally read in the process of its composition . . . integrated through its emplotment, and creative by dint of its invention' (p. 250). Crafting a house tour that draws on this narrative device allows for visitors to experience 'autobiography' rather than 'obituary' (ibid, p. 250). Historic house interpretation can thrive on this 'autobiographical' approach, providing visitors with a story about the home and its residents that appears to be authentically authored by those who lived there. Graceland has become a window into who Elvis was as a person, exemplifying a narrative constructed through affective themes that engages a wide variety of visitors.

This blending of personal narrative and affect also contributes to the performative nature of the house tour. In the Jungle Room, for instance, the tour prioritises stories of personal connections to place and furnishings. Accounts of naps, family time, decorating inspiration and recording sessions dominate a space that could be consumed by a focus on the fixtures. This approach allows for visitors to value the space beyond the oddity of the decorating, as one visitor commented, 'I LOVED the Jungle Room the best. The big round chair in the corner it looked so comfy and cozy. Just the stories and songs. Kinda brought tears to my eyes' (*Millerlitechic79*, 29 August 2009). This visitor describes the impact of an interpretive strategy rooted in a personal narrative and its ability to produce a reflexive affective response.

Historic house interpretation can be likened to 'experience orchestration' (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 66), weaving compelling components of the home's lived history into a narrative that is richly staged through personal accounts and

media accentuating authentic and nostalgic discourses. At the core of a quality experience is a 'script,' that must 'interpret the drama, remaining true to the drama's original meaning, exploiting the expectations of the audience in a surprising way' (ibid, p. 165). A historic home's interpretation should reflect the 'drama' associated with the house in an enlightening and engaging way, as established at Graceland through affective presence and personal narrative.

Chapter 8 - Despite the Elvis Factor: Conclusions and Reflections

The cultural and musical appeal of Elvis draws people to Graceland, a celebrity unavailable to most historic sites, but the interpretive techniques used there have a broader application. This research is evidence that a historic house can be made to 'live again,' as Tilden implored, through the use of strong personal stories, driven by emotions and empathy. Elvis lives at Graceland through a skilful use of personal narrative and interpretive media, challenging the perceptions of even the most sceptical visitors. The tour enters the realm of 'experience,' rather than traditional heritage interpretation, yielding compelling examples of audience engagement.

Assessing the Methodologies

All of the methodologies employed in this research have demonstrated merits and limitations for understanding heritage visitors. The three-fold methodology was an innovative blend of meaning mapping, visitor photograph analysis, and narrative analysis, which yielded rich qualitative data. The use of PMM, analysis of visitor produced photos, and reviews revealed visitor-centred responses to the experience. A more rigid questionnaire style framework never bound these responses. This was a crucial aspect methodologically as it yielded data reactive to the experience rather than a research agenda.

The meaning maps effectively documented change in visitor perceptions, and were an indispensable tool for assessing visit impact. Research aiming to understand the experiential component of heritage tourism would be well served by the use of PMM, as it allows for the performative and reflexive nature of the experience to emerge. The creation of scoring rubrics and content analysis

frameworks can be challenging, but the results reveal a more nuanced response to a heritage site than traditional questionnaires will yield.

Social media was a beneficial complement to the meaning maps, providing access to a vast number of experiences that also prioritised the visitor-centred approach. The reviews and photos provided an insight into what visitors value enough about their experience to share with others. These online postings of comments and images are the 'traces' that visitors leave in today's highly mobile environment, evidence of their time spent at a site (Noy, 2008). The use of visitor books in tourism research has been limited and expanding this methodology to online reviews has rarely been conducted, despite the fact these reviews expose 'tourists' self-interpretive meanings about cultural entertainment' (Mkono, 2011, p. 1). TripAdvisor, or similar review sites, has proven to provide a window into innately occurring behaviours, in a manner that is naturalistic and unobtrusive (Kozinets, 2010). This is an under-examined area of visitor research that deserves greater attention as online tourism communities continue to thrive.

Flickr is not a site intended for visual analysis, but it easily functions as such with its unmediated access to visitor photographs. The only mediation is on the part of the visitor, constituting its value in research terms, as it illuminated how visitors literally framed their time at the site. Focusing on the selective nature of the photographs uploaded made the data manageable and addressed the research questions. When visitors such as *Petra E* (10 October 2007) share only nine images from her entire Graceland experience and six of those are everyday and intimate esteem objects it becomes clear what she valued in her visit. Significantly, she represented Elvis through family items, nostalgic reminders and domestic settings, rather than his iconic career. This provides a lens for understanding the visitor experience, prioritising the 'tourist gaze' as a means for

exploring the impact of the site.

The use of personal meaning maps, visitor reviews and photos all contributed to an understanding of the visitor experience. Each of these tools could be modified to suit the needs of any heritage site, although the scale of visitor contributions may be much smaller than those for Graceland. Graceland has been mythologised over time in a way that makes it difficult to access the core visitor experience without the burdens of its culturally embedded associations. Analysing user contributed content to social media sites and personal meaning mapping allowed for the tour to be examined in a visitor-centric manner, affording unique insights into the visitor experience.

The Power of Experience

When visitors begin their tour they are immersed into Elvis's world in a manner not traditionally seen in historic homes. The house functions as an authentic stage on which a personal narrative is brought to life. Pine and Gilmore's recent *Experience Economy* update stresses 'more experiences should yield transformations' (2011, p. xvi), as those transformations and impressions are the foundation of a quality experience. The tour at Graceland has the power to alter visitors' views and exceed their expectations. This transformative process, from icon to 'real' person, is grounded in an emotive and humanising approach. Significantly, this method shows consistent results, regardless of visitor age or whether they came to the site as an Elvis fan.

Over the last decade, museum learning has shifted towards a constructivist viewpoint (Falk, Dierking and Adams, 2006; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Hein, 2002; Hooper-Greenhill, 2002). Based on an idealist epistemology, constructivism argues that 'both knowledge and the way it is obtained are dependent on the mind of the learner' (Hein, 2002, p. 75). This

theory moves from the idea of a passive audience to a focus on visitor-constructed meanings. The concern has been expressed, however, that there are 'huge problems' in terms of 'what we can expect of our visitors,' leading Black (2005) to conclude that there is little to 'suggest that constructivism on its own is any more an answer to the future development of museum . . . learning than unrestrained didacticism' (p. 141).

Constructivism is closely linked to the importance of visitors' personal learning contexts and entrance narratives. This theoretical stance suggests visitor meaning making is a matter of individual experience, unique to that visitor and their background. The results of this research, however, contradict those suppositions, as the power of the interpretation appears to be more significant than visitors' own constructs. The data indicates that the nature of the visit, visitor age, position as a fan, or country of origin had little impact on the meaning mapping outcomes. In theory, these indicators should have had some demonstrable effect on the visitor narratives, but that did not manifest in this study.

The constructivist perspective of learning suggests informal learning more often results from the meaning visitors chooses to make of the experience, rather than what the museum wishes to communicate (Falk, Dierking and Adams, 2006; Falk and Dierking, 2000). Graceland's narrative and affective impact represented in the meaning making maps form a consensus that suggests the interpretive themes have been rendered with a precision that negates the constructivist viewpoint. This is not to say that visitors are not free to choose their own interpretations of the experience or Elvis, but that the interpretation presented is so provocative visitors rarely choose to deviate from it. Tilden called for interpretation to focus on provocation and Graceland has capitalised on that,

illuminating an image of Elvis that conceptually changes the visitors' viewpoints.

The economy of experience at Graceland emerges as more meaningful than an economy of constructivism. Research from other sites has also indicated a degree of consensus and patterning forms in visitor interpretations, although authors vary in describing why this occurs (Bagnall, 2003; Mason, 2005). At Graceland clear patterns have been documented showing shifts in visitors' conceptualising of Elvis that are not limited to any one group of visitor. Ironically, the constructivist stance that supports PMM methodology has been overshadowed by the results it captured. It appears that the strength of interpretation can mitigate entrance narratives and constructivist ideals.

When presenting a portion of this research at the Danish Museums Conference in 2010, an audience member questioned the 'manipulation' they felt Graceland's interpretation represented. I responded that all interpretation is manipulation, from the objects and narratives selected to the media chosen to deliver the interpretation. Interpretation by its very nature is an act of mediation, just as Chatman (1980) asserts that all narratives are mediated. No interpretation is immune from manipulation. The power of this interpretation, however, seems to have been largely forgotten as the focus has shifted to visitor's meaning making.

Graceland's lack of constructivist underpinnings has, however, in no way hindered the visitor experience. It has produced a hugely transformative experience that proves valuable to visitors. Rather than assuming that the tour has 'brain washed' visitors, another criticism levelled against these findings, it is important to fully consider the discursive interpretive techniques. A significant case in point is the frequent use of the term 'generous' to describe Elvis, which given the large number of visitors leaving Graceland with that view one would assume is featured extensively on the tour. This theme is not overtly emphasised

throughout the tour, but in the one area it is showcased it is done so through a mixture of impactful objects, emotional music, and personal accounts – an example of carefully executed interpretation. The experience derived from this form of interpretation impacts visitor meaning making in a consistent manner, evidence of the compelling nature of this affective narrative.

At Graceland visitors are ‘manipulated’ through emotions and affect, which seemed particularly troubling for the conference audience. This emotional approach seems more appropriate to the field of theatre than museums, where logic and Enlightenment ideologies have prevailed for so long. When Pine and Gilmore (1999) first postulated their theory of the Experience Economy, they likened experience to theatre, with every business being a stage. This approach drew criticism, but they maintain its importance as a model for performance in staging experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). The experience at Graceland can be construed as an act of theatre, where the home becomes a stage for the personal narrative. House museums maintain a theatrical quality, ‘rich with stories of human spirit and activity and the natural forces of life’ (Hughes, 1998, p. 10). These qualities are too often overlooked in interpretation, neglecting the personal and emotional domains seen to be effective through this research.

Graceland's Economy of Experience

At Graceland, visitors encounter an experience beyond a traditional tour. For historic house interpretation to progress, it will be important for this economy of experience to be embraced. When Pine and Gilmore outlined the components of an experience, they provided a framework for understanding how people relate to staged experiences and enhancing their visit. These mechanisms can also be regarded as guidelines to support site interpretation, helping it to become more valued and memorable. Examining how these components are manifested at

Graceland, and evidenced in the data, is an important concluding step for this study.

The key to experience design according to Pine and Gilmore is theming, which must 'drive all the design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unifying storyline that wholly captivates the customer' (2011, p. 78). This resonates with recommendations provided in *Interpreting Historic Homes*, which urged heritage professionals to formulate thematic approaches to interpretation (Levy, 2002; Lloyd, 2002). Themes conveyed through storytelling are 'powerful . . . and have the potential to touch the eye, mind and head of visitors' (White, cited in Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 71). As the narrative analysis has shown, distinct themes emerge from the Graceland experience, most notably those of home and family, which seem particularly fitting given the setting. Visitors appear to embrace these themes and extend them through nostalgic discourses.

Experiences, as defined by Pine and Gilmore, also require that sites harmonise impressions with positive cues. These positive cues 'render the experience with indelible *impressions*,' acting as the 'takeaways' of the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 78). Positive cues should be constructed around what visitors should have at the forefront of their minds when they leave the experience. The post-visit meaning maps at Graceland are evidence of the concepts visitors held top most in their thoughts immediately after the tour, giving some indication of the positive cues developed in the experience. The two most frequent phrases, 'generous,' and 'family man,' closely mimic Graceland's interpretive themes, evidence of the impact of such positive cues. The objects, emotive music, and personal accounts at Graceland function as positive cues to reinforce the core plot components.

Following on from positive cues, the third component of a successful experience is the elimination of negative cues. Pine and Gilmore argue that 'ensuring the integrity of the experience requires more than layering on positive cues. Experience stagers also must eliminate anything that detracts from fulfilling the theme' (2011, p. 82). This element becomes problematic when dealing with a historic site, as integrity is more often linked to a well-balanced factual interpretation than focusing on inculcating a mediated theme. The concern is the extent to which sites contrive their narratives, obscuring or magnifying cues to perpetuate their interpretive themes.

The narrative analysis reveals Graceland has successfully eliminated negative cues, the results of which are documented in the meaning mapping. This image of Elvis succeeds in advancing the interpretive theme and presenting a version of Elvis that appears genuine and personal. In many ways, however, this is simply another veneer designed to minimise negative cues, never revealing the complexities of his life and character. EPE has balanced the cues to produce a successful visitor experience while maintaining Elvis's legacy in the way they see fit; simultaneously visitors empathise with Graceland's 'personal' Elvis and the experience exceeds expectations.

Another important principal is the engagement of all five senses, as the more 'effectively an experience engages the senses, the more memorable it will be' (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 88). Graceland, like any historic home, is full of rooms 'established to produce sound' (Marcus, 1999, p. 70) which have been silenced. These rooms should maintain that sense of 'sound,' an element skilfully executed on the Graceland audio tour. The incorporation of music and media engages the senses, providing the 'right *sensations* as cues that convey the theme' (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 89). The sense of sight should not be

overlooked, as the authentic interiors coupled with the audio tour elements establishes the immersive experience. The blending of all of these principals culminates in a memorable experience that will transform, the hallmark of quality in the Experience Economy.

Implications for Graceland

This research required the support of the staff at EPE, who from the outset was keen to learn about the results. The staff valued research conducted from the viewpoint of museum learning, different from the academics that typically arrive at Graceland interested in the social and cultural phenomenon attributed to the site. Although staff frequently receive informal feedback about the experience from visitors (at one point they were even monitoring and responding to the TripAdvisor reviews), they were looking for an examination of their work from beyond Graceland.

Upon presenting the initial PMM responses even EPE were surprised by the magnitude and consistency of the results, but felt it 'very gratifying that data supports much of what we've thought about the visitor experience through the years' (Morgan, 14 February 2007). Although they clearly set out to portray the personal side of Elvis, they were not expecting the results to resonate so closely with their goals. Through this research staff were also hoping to gain insight into areas for tour improvement. They were particularly interested in the role of the Racquetball building, as there were suggestions to return the entire building back to its historic role, moving all of the awards and costumes to a new visitor centre in the planning stages. The data, however, encouraged them to leave the experience as it is, since it appears key to the affective experience.

The lingering criticisms about the narratives omitted in the house tour have been responded to in the form of exhibits in the Plaza, where EPE feels more

comfortable being historically objective. The house will remain an area devoted to cultivating the Family Man image and personal narrative. Within that scope, however, there is still room to add layers of complexity without danger of damaging Elvis's image. There are facets of his personality and story that would enrich the tour without leading down the path to sensationalism. As biographer Pamela Keogh (2004) observes, 'Elvis may have presented himself to the world as a simple man. But he had a complex personality, and a complex life' (p. 145), and more of that deserves to be shared at Graceland.

Broader Implications

Historic homes are an under-researched area requiring new visions of connecting with the public to ensure their longevity. The experience at Graceland cannot be duplicated, but it offers insights into an interpretive scheme that successfully dwells on realms often neglected from traditional historic house interpretation. This research contributes to the larger field of heritage interpretation by providing evidence of the impact personal narrative and affective presence have on visitor experience. This affective narrative approach also appears closely tied to increased visitor satisfaction.

The Experience Economy framework offers unique insights, which have proven relevant to understanding the Graceland experience and historic site interpretation. Introducing thematic experiences lies at the heart of this contemporary economy. Any historic home can develop strong interpretive themes focusing on how the space was used by the family and the role it played in family life. It is important to differentiate this approach from a 'lifestyles' tour, which employs the disembodied third person from a vague past. House tours should instead rely on the stories that rise from actual residents and deploy them in ways that meaningfully contextualise the space. Every historic home should

welcome you to the world of its former inhabitants, engaging audiences with personally relevant emotions and narratives that humanise rather than distance those people. Interpretive plans should hone cues that accentuate their themes, using appropriate discursive strategies to engage visitors. Themes and cues are successfully melded through multi-sensory approaches, yielding an affective experience. All historic homes have opportunities for embracing the tenets of the Experience Economy that appear to have so greatly impacted the Graceland experience, but it will require shedding many of the preconceived ideas about traditional heritage interpretation.

Visitors rarely go to Graceland expecting a tour of its calibre or the emotional impact that it will have. They leave surprised by their own reactions. Graceland's ability to transform and engage visitors is not uniquely bound with Elvis, but with its interpretive strategy. Experience, in its commoditised form, is at the core of successful interpretation. The affective and performative nature of this experience can be replicated if house interpretation draws on tools that contextualise space through rich media and personal accounts, relying on a narrative that is personal rather than objective.

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