

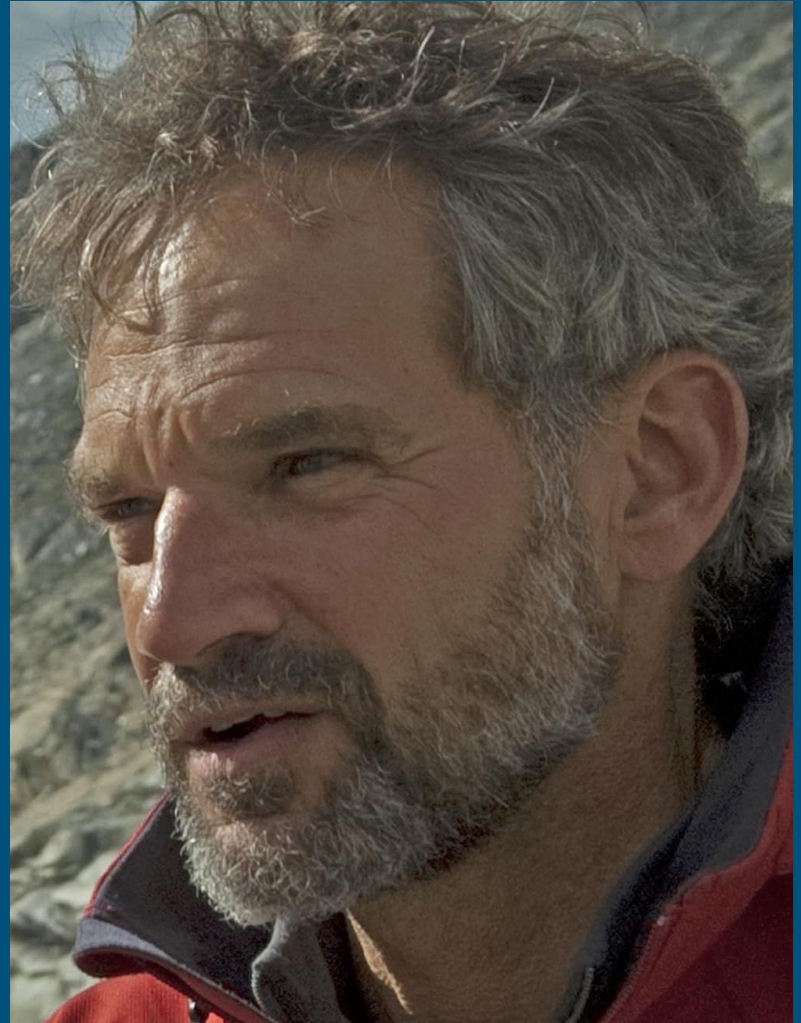


Into Thin Air: How to “Sell” Everest

Presented by Áine Fox-Lynch and Juri
Rose

Jon Krakauer

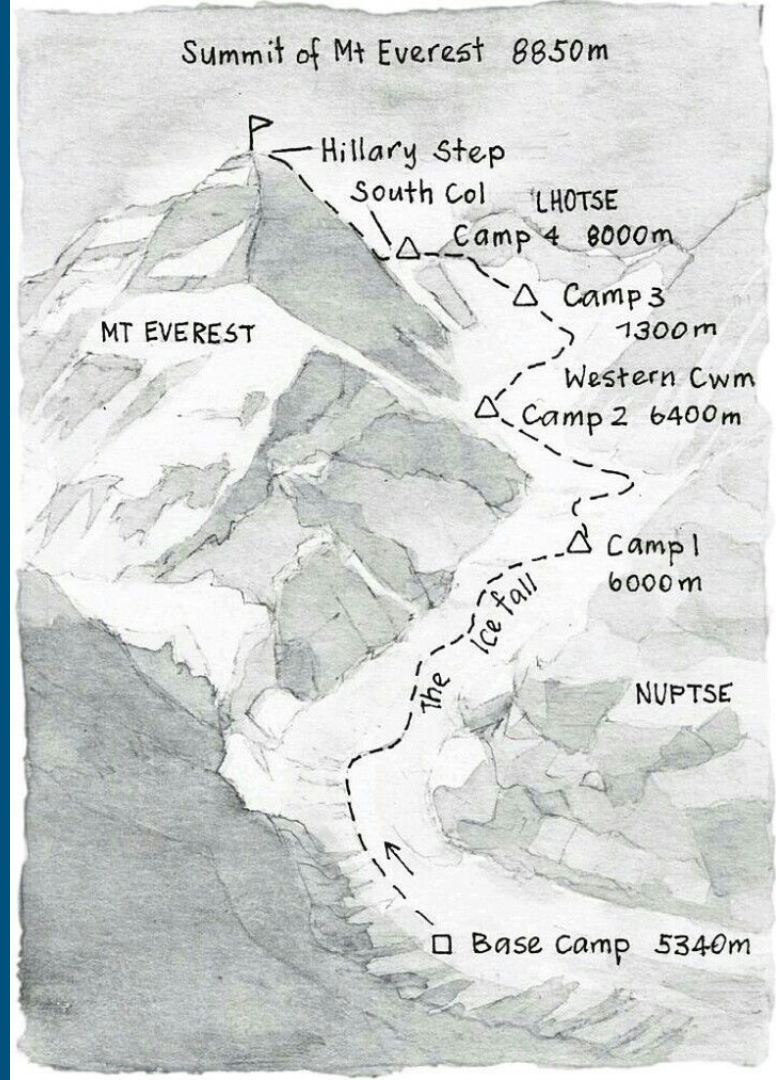
- Introduced to climbing by his father
- 1976 after finishing his degree in Environmentalism, he went on become an experienced climber
- Had written more than 60 pieces for *Outside* magazine in the past 15 years before 1996
- Written other books such as *Into the Wild*



Plot summary

Part 1: to the summit

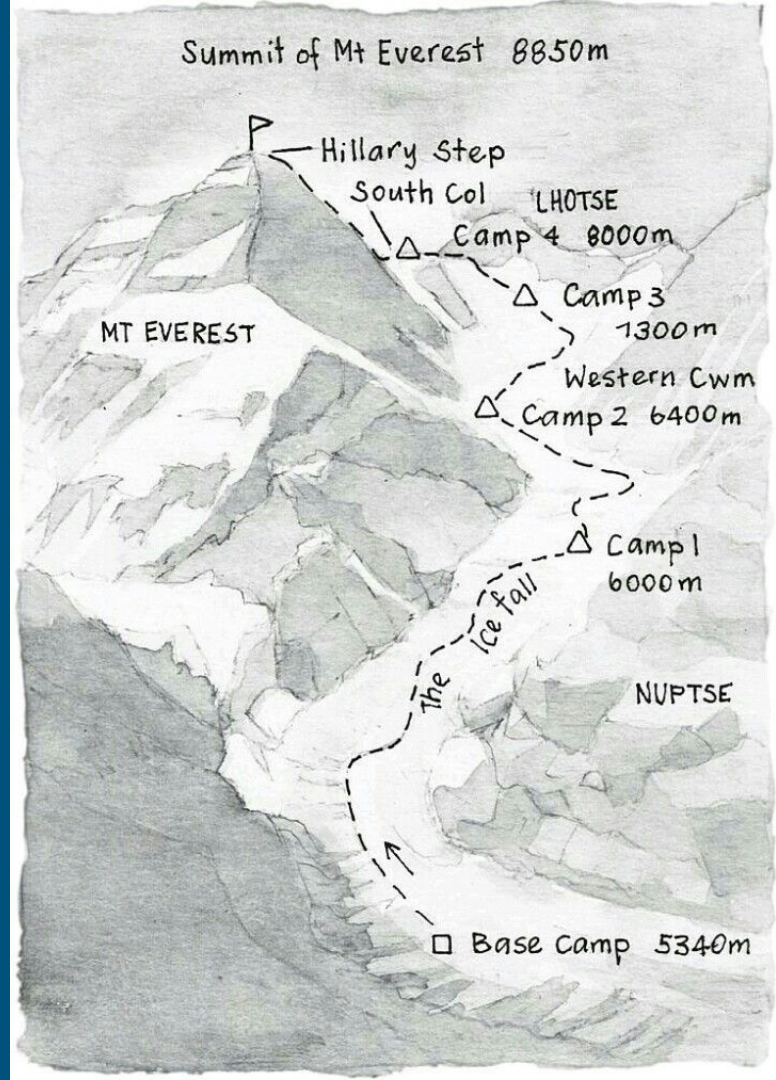
- Krakauer goes to Nepal
- meets Robert Hall
- introduces the other climbers
- climb up to base camp (acclimate)
- repeat process until camp 3
- push to camp 4, final ascent



Plot Summary

Part 2: descent and death

- descent and blizzard
- Krakauer makes it to camp
- Boukreev starts rescue attempts
- clients die
- Hall and Fisher die
- return with dangerous descent



The Dangers of Everest

The Climb

- not the most technical
- not to be underestimated
- steep falls
- becoming stuck after fall
- virtually no rescue



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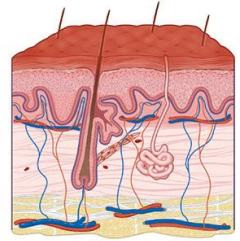
The cold

- temperatures on everest never pass 0°C
- median temp is at -19°C
- slows processes and brain
- no long breaks or body heat will stop
- frostbite forms, complete cell death

Frostbite

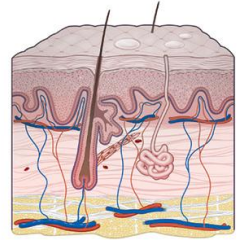
Stage 1: Frostnip

- Cold, sore and painful.
- Skin red and purple.



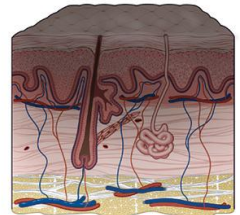
Stage 2: Superficial frostbite

- Pins and needles.
- Patches of peeling skin.



Stage 3: Deep frostbite

- Numbness.
- Hard, black skin forms.



The height

- timer as soon as camp three
- brain cells die every minute without oxygen
- harder to perform tasks
- HAPE as deadliest condition



Scenes - A Close Reading Of Death

- A critical narrative approach
- Treating the scenes as a close reading
- Book feels fiction, how is it read when approached as such

Jon's return to Camp Four and mistaken Identity - p93

Once I was off my feet, inertia took hold. It was so much easier to remain at rest than to summon the initiative to tackle the dangerous ice slope, so I just sat there as the storm roared around me, letting my mind drift, doing nothing for perhaps forty-five minutes.

I'd tightened the drawstrings on my hood until only a tiny opening remained around my eyes, and I was removing the useless, frozen oxygen mask from beneath my chin when Andy Harris suddenly appeared out of the gloom beside me. Shining my headlamp in his direction, I reflexively recoiled when I saw the appalling condition of his face. His cheeks were coated with an armor of frost, one eye was frozen shut, and he was slurring his words badly. He looked in serious trouble. "Which way to the tents?" Andy blurted, frantic to reach shelter.

I pointed in the direction of Camp Four, then warned him about the ice just below us. "It's steeper than it looks!" I yelled, straining to make myself heard over the tempest. "Maybe I should go down first and get a rope from camp—" As I was in midsentence, Andy abruptly turned away and moved over the lip of the ice slope, leaving me sitting there dumbfounded.

Scooting on his butt, he started down the steepest part of the incline. "Andy," I shouted after him, "it's crazy to try it like that! You're going to blow it for sure!" He yelled something back, but his words were carried off by the screaming wind. A second later he lost his purchase, flipped ass over teakettle, and was suddenly rocketing headfirst down the ice.

Two hundred feet below, I could just make out Andy's motionless form slumped at the foot of the incline. I was sure he'd broken at least a leg, maybe his neck. But then, incredibly, he stood up, waved that he was O.K., and started lurching toward Camp Four, which, at the moment was in plain sight, 500 feet beyond.

I could see the shadowy forms of three or four people standing outside the tents; their headlamps flickered through curtains of

Jon's return to Camp Four and mistaken Identity - p93

blowing snow. I watched Harris walk toward them across the flats, a distance he covered in less than ten minutes. When the clouds closed in a moment later, cutting off my view, he was within sixty feet of the tents, maybe closer. I didn't see him again after that, but I was certain that he'd reached the security of camp, where Chuldum and Arita would doubtless be waiting with hot tea. Sitting out in the storm, with the ice bulge still standing between me and the tents, I felt a pang of envy. I was angry that my guide hadn't waited for me.

My backpack held little more than three empty oxygen canisters and a pint of frozen lemonade; it probably weighed no more than sixteen or eighteen pounds. But I was tired, and worried about getting down the incline without breaking a leg, so I tossed the pack over the edge and hoped it would come to rest where I could retrieve it. Then I stood up and started down the ice, which was as smooth and hard as the surface of a bowling ball.

Fifteen minutes of dicey, fatiguing crampon work brought me safely to the bottom of the incline, where I easily located my pack, and another ten minutes after that I was in camp myself. I lunged into my tent with my crampons still on, zipped the door tight, and sprawled across the frost-covered floor too tired to even sit upright. For the first time I had a sense of how wasted I really was: I was more exhausted than I'd ever been in my life. But I was safe. Andy was safe. The others would be coming into camp soon. We'd fucking done it. We'd climbed Everest. It had been a little sketchy there for a while, but in the end everything had turned out great.

It would be many hours before I learned that everything had not in fact turned out great—that nineteen men and women were stranded up on the mountain by the storm, caught in a desperate struggle for their lives.

What narrative techniques
can you identify?

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Jon's return to Camp Four and mistaken Identity - p93

- First person point of view
- Homodiegetic
- Vivid description
- Emotional
- “ We'd fucking done it. We'd climbed Everest.”
- Line break for Tone change
- Positioning of this section

Chapter Sixteen: Realisation

As Adams described his encounter with the anonymous climber, and then sliding down the ice, my mouth went dry and the hairs on the back of my neck suddenly bristled. "Martin," I asked when he'd finished talking, "do you think that could have been me you ran into out there?"

"Fuck, no!" he laughed. "I don't know who it was, but it definitely wasn't you." But then I told him about my encounter with Andy Harris and the chilling series of coincidences: I had bumped into Harris about the same time Adams had encountered the cipher, and in about the same place. Much of the dialogue that transpired between Harris and me was eerily similar to the dialogue between Adams and the cipher. And then Adams had slid headfirst down the ice in much the same manner I remembered seeing Harris slide.

After talking for a few minutes more, Adams was convinced: "So that was you I talked to out there on the ice," he stated, astounded, acknowledging that he must have been mistaken when he saw me crossing the flats of the South Col just before dark. "And that was me you talked to. Which means it wasn't Andy Harris at all. Wow. Dude, I'd say you've got some explaining to do."

I was stunned. For two months I'd been telling people that Harris had walked off the edge of the South Col to his death, when he hadn't done that at all. My error had greatly and unnecessarily compounded the pain of Fiona McPherson; Andy's parents, Ron and Mary Harris; his brother, David Harris; and his many friends.

Andy was a large man, over six feet tall and 200 pounds, who spoke with a sharp Kiwi lilt; Martin was at least six inches shorter, weighed maybe 130 pounds, and spoke in a thick Texas drawl. How had I made such an egregious mistake? Was I really so debilitated that I had stared into the face of a near stranger and mistaken him for a friend with whom I'd spent the previous six weeks? And if Andy had never arrived at Camp Four after reaching the summit, what in the name of God had happened to him?

Multi-layered Text

SIXTEEN

SOUTH COL

6:00 A.M., MAY 11, 1996 • 26,000 FEET

I distrust summaries, any kind of gliding through time, any too great a claim that one is in control of what one recounts; I think someone who claims to understand but is obviously calm, someone who claims to write with emotion recollected in tranquillity, is a fool and a liar. To understand is to tremble. To recollect is to reenter and be riven.... I admire the authority of being on one's knees in front of the event.

Harold Brodkey
"Manipulations"

Yasuko's death p288

- Yasuko Namba
- Oldest woman to have submitted Mt Everest at the time
- Extremely experience climber
- Heterodiegetic
- Journalist style

I chatted with Beidleman after we'd both re-acclimated to our home turf, and he recalled what it felt like to be out on the South Col, huddling with his group in the awful wind, trying desperately to keep everyone alive. "As soon as the sky cleared enough to give us an idea where camp was," he recounted, "it was like, 'Hey, this break in the storm may not last long, so let's GO!' I was screaming at everyone to get moving, but it became clear that some people didn't have enough strength to walk, or even stand.

"People were crying. I heard someone yell, 'Don't let me die here!' It was obvious that it was now or never. I tried to get Yasuko on her feet. She grabbed my arm, but she was too weak to get up past her knees. I started walking, and dragged her for a step or two, then her grip loosened and she fell away. I had to keep going. Somebody had to make it to the tents and get help or everybody was going to die."

Beidleman paused. "But I can't help thinking about Yasuko," he said when he resumed, his voice hushed. "She was so little. I can still feel her fingers sliding across my biceps, and then letting go. I never even turned to look back."

Rob's Phone call - "On screen death" p235

- Narrator is not directly involved in this event
- Conveys the disorientation that comes with lack of oxygen well
- Contrast of talking to his wife against the image of his corpse on the mountain
- Personal and emotive conversation conveys a better sense of the disaster to readers.
- Moral challenges

At 6:20 P.M., Cotter contacted Hall to tell him that Jan Arnold was on the satellite phone from Christchurch and was waiting to be patched through. "Give me a minute," Rob said. "Me mouth's dry. I want to eat a bit of snow before I talk to her." A little later he came back on and rasped in a slow, horribly distorted voice, "Hi, my

sweetheart. I hope you're tucked up in a nice warm bed. How are you doing?"

"I can't tell you how much I'm thinking about you!" Arnold replied. "You sound so much better than I expected.... Are you warm, my darling?"

"In the context of the altitude, the setting, I'm reasonably comfortable," Hall answered, doing his best not to alarm her.

"How are your feet?"

"I haven't taken me boots off to check, but I think I may have a bit of frostbite...."

"I'm looking forward to making you completely better when you come home," said Arnold. "I just know you're going to be rescued. Don't feel that you're alone. I'm sending all my positive energy your way!"

Before signing off, Hall told his wife, "I love you. Sleep well, my sweetheart. Please don't worry too much."

These would be the last words anyone would hear him speak. Attempts to make radio contact with Hall later that night and the next day went unanswered. Twelve days later, when Breashears and Viesturs climbed over the South Summit on their way to the top, they found Hall lying on his right side in a shallow ice hollow, his upper body buried beneath a drift of snow.

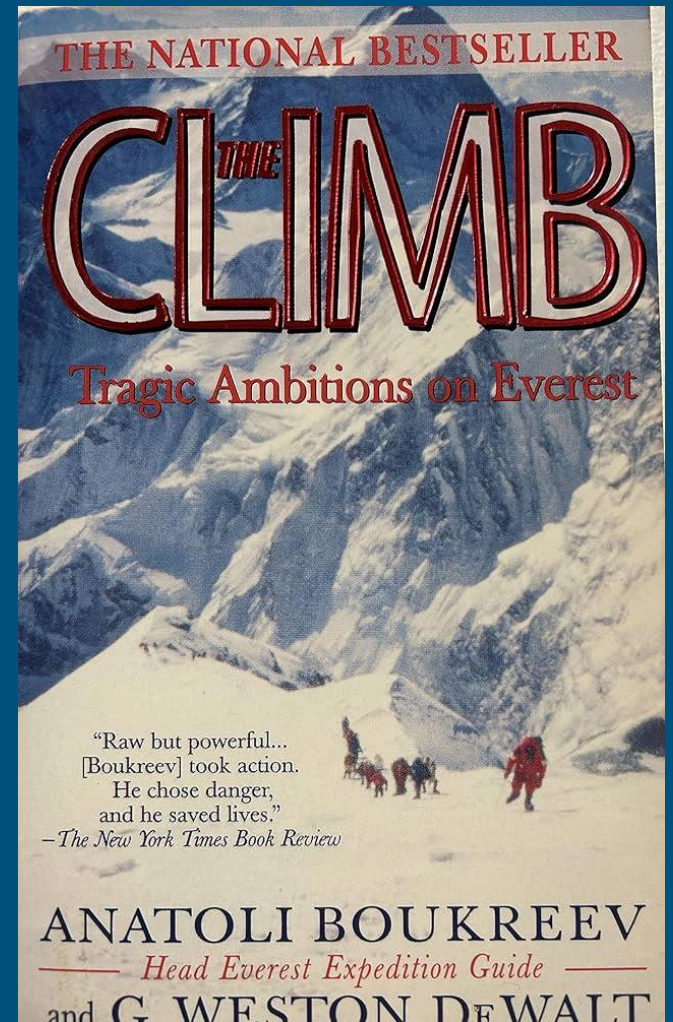
Disaster + controversy

- Krakauer critical of a lot of aspects including Boukreev and himself
- he misidentified Andy Harris, directly leading to his death
- Rob Stayed too long on the peak
- Boukreev went without Oxygen and had to go down first
- describes Boukreev's heroic rescue missions



Controversy

- Boukreev felt attacked by Krakauers statements
- The Climb as answer
- long serious beef between them
- Boukreev died before they could reconcile
- more clout for the books than without



Ongoing Controversy - Nearly 3 decades later

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Jon Krakauer

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A refutation of Michael Tracy's obsessive campaign to impugn the veracity of "Into Thin Air"



Feb 6 1.3K 50



The YouTuber on a Mission to Trash My



Jon Krakauer

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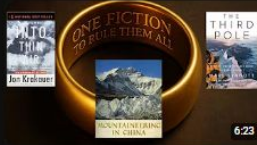
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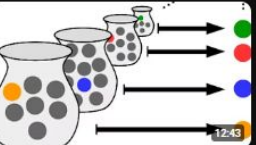
 **1996 1997 2008**
35:11

Because he was there: The false authority of Thin Air.
14K views · 2 months ago

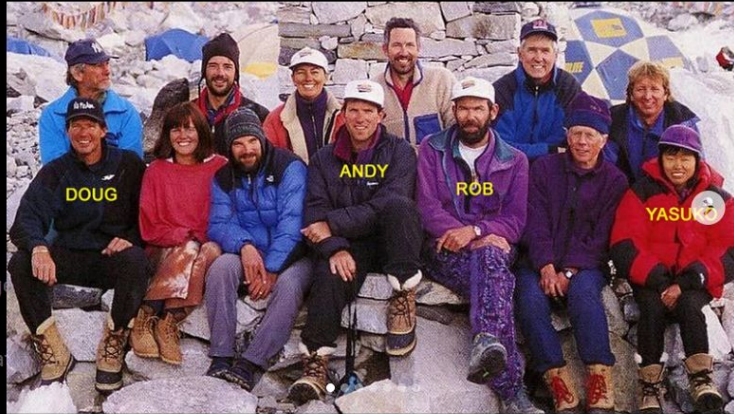
 **28,000ft Actual 21,860ft Virtual**
21:35



 **SANDY IRVINE WAS LOST ON EVEREST HIS NAME LILIAN WHO LET THE HALL LIGHT ON EVERY NIGHT**
0:49

 **Empty bucket**
2:44


 **12:43**

Ongoing Controversy - Nearly 3 decades later



krakauemotwriting  • Follow 



krakauemotwriting  It's the 10th of May again. 29 years ago on this date a violent storm engulfed the upper reaches of Mt. Everest. By the time it dissipated, eight climbers had perished, four of whom were my teammates: Andy Harris, Doug Hansen, Yasuko Namba, and Rob Hall. Every year when May 10 comes around I grieve deeply for each of them, and get a knot in my stomach as hundreds of climbers on guided expeditions attempt to ascend the mountain.

1st photo by Caroline Mackenzie. 2nd photo by William Thompson. Hit link in my profile to read various pieces I've written about the 1996 Everest disaster, including excerpts adapted from my book Into Thin Air.

Edited · 8w



Liked by [ruben_widmer](#) and others

May 10



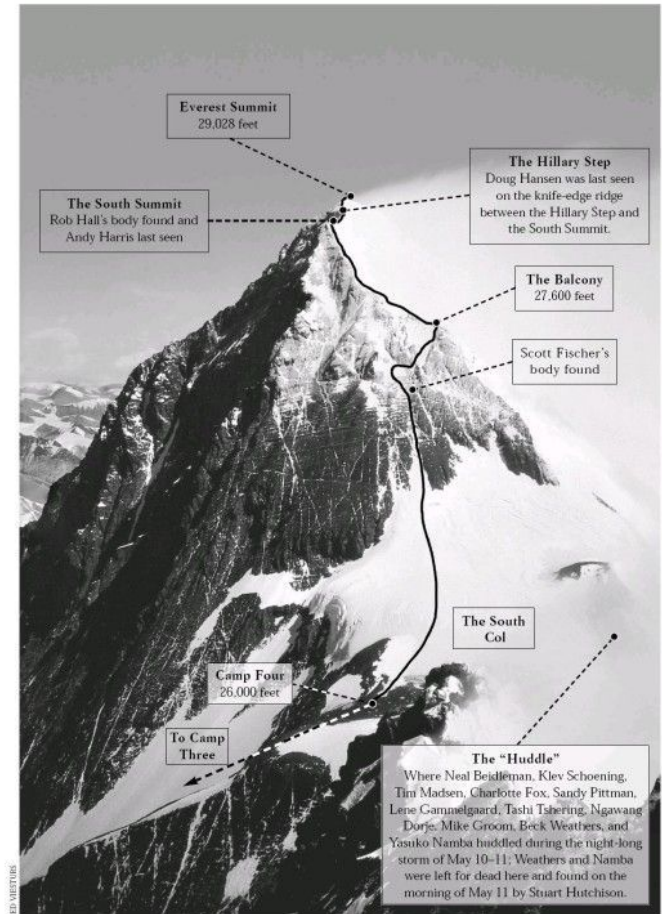
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Post

Post Colonial Reading; Critical Analysis/ Framing

Edmund Burke, in his Enquiry of 1757, identifies the “passion” caused by the sublime as “astonishment [...] that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror” (57). This passion is aroused by the contemplation of something of overwhelming greatness, something beyond human control or comprehension. This greatness consists in such things as obscurity, vastness and power, and gives rise to terror, “the ruling principle of the sublime” (58).

- Philip Dickinson, Postcolonial romanticisms 2007

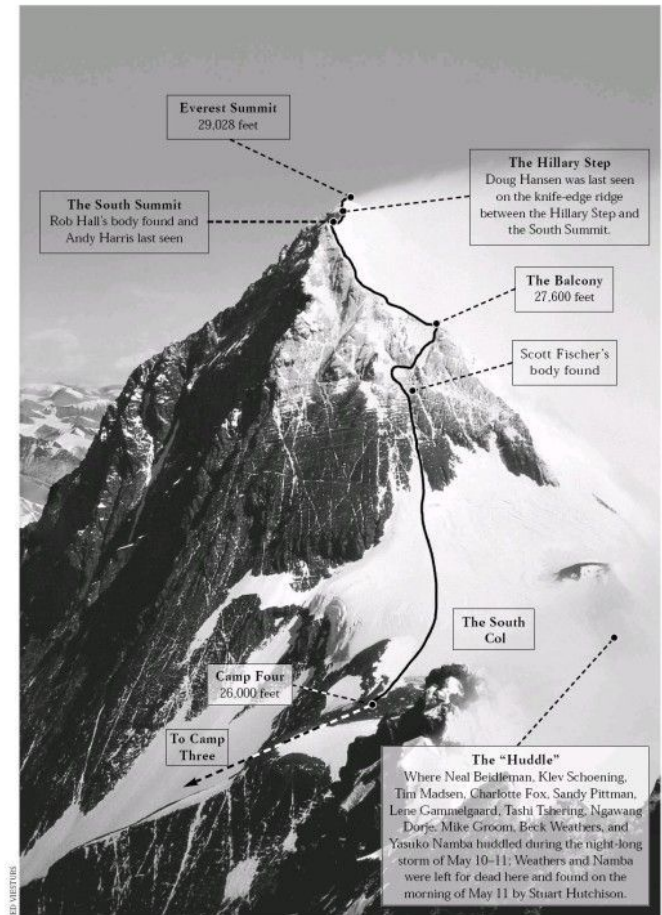


The upper slopes of Mt. Everest from the summit of Lhotse Everest's trademark plume of cloud can be seen blowing from the crest of the Southeast Ridge, the standard route up the peak.

Post Colonial Reading; Critical Analysis/ Framing

Straddling the top of the world, one foot in China and the other in Nepal, I cleared the ice from my oxygen mask, hunched a shoulder against the wind, and stared absently down at the vastness of Tibet. I understood on some dim, detached level that the sweep of earth beneath my feet was a spectacular sight. I'd been fantasizing about this moment, and the release of emotion that would accompany it, for many months. But now that I was finally here, actually standing on the summit of Mount Everest, I just couldn't summon the energy to care.

- Subverts the Sublime ?
- Or redirects it ?



The upper slopes of Mt. Everest from the summit of Lhotse Everest's trademark plume of cloud can be seen blowing from the crest of the Southeast Ridge, the standard route up the peak.

Questions

- Is it ethical to write a personal account of the disaster? And at that, is it ethical to profit off of it ?
- Did you feel that feeling of sublime while reading?
- What do you think of the continuing controversy? Is it productive ?

Images and sources

Background of the first slide - [A Postscript to “Into Thin Air”. Written as an afterword to the 1999... | by Jon Krakauer | Galleys | Medium](#)

1 <https://de.pinterest.com/pin/42080577764701811/>

2 https://abenteuer-berg.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Khumbu_Eisbruch_Txikon-1.jpg

3 <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/-/scassets/images/org/health/articles/15439-frostbite>

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