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Book review

Thank You for Dying for Our Country, C. Noy. Oxford University Press, Oxford (2015). 274 pp., (Pbk.), \$39.95, ISBN 978-0-19-939898-0

As the study of Tourism continues to grow in academic circles, management, and practice, the urgency of modernizing the methodologies utilized in discovery of tourism phenomena are of paramount importance. While much of the study of tourism has been firmly planted in the positivist paradigm, it has become apparent that the field must embrace newer modes of inquiry that can yield insight and interpretation that ordinarily is not found in the positivist realm (see Podoshen, Andrzejewski, Venkatesh, & Wallin, 2015). Chaim Noy, in his latest text, *Thank You for Dying for Our Country*, fervently and unabashedly embraces a deep ethnographic approach centered on analysis of communication in commemorative visitor books. Noy calls the entextualized discourse “tourists’ traces” and demonstrates, over the course of a number of highly detailed and introspective chapters, the value of analyzing the communications left behind in artifacts of tourism performance.

Noy’s specific focus on The Ammunition Hill Museum gives readers insight into the battle and campaign for Jerusalem. The book certainly does give immense detail about the museum, the campaign, and the underlying politics about both. Readers will be well-versed in the history of the site during the 1967 war and will empathize, through an array of vivid description, with the families of those soldiers who lost their lives in battle. The inclusion of photography in the text gives the description deeper meaning and assists in understanding context for those who live continents away. Those looking for information and details about collective identity performances and nuances of Zionist remembrance will not be disappointed. In fact, the section on “hyper-Zionist” ethnonational challenges is particularly fascinating to read. Similarly, those looking for takeaways related to gender performance and representations in tourist logbooks will also find what they are looking for here. Overall, the richness of Noy’s analysis and his fearlessness in interpretation leave the reader engaged in a wealth of depth and introspection from chapter to chapter.

Chapter Five, entitled, *Articulating Commemoration*, is a chapter of particular interest. Here the author really goes into the semiotics and depth of the visitor books with reckless abandon. With particular emphasis on symbols in context, as well as written communication structure, we can see the nuances of tourist performance become ever more elucidated. The chapter itself also contains a significant amount of excerpts from the visitor books that clearly demonstrate the magnitude of meaning for the tourists as well as the nation of Israel. Readers feel the depth of affect among the visitors in this chapter and will take away not only a key analytical frame but an emotional one as well.

While the historical aspects of Noy’s book are quite compelling, the real value for those in the realm of Tourism studies is the analysis. Noy, as he mentions, is specifically examining the performance

of tourism. In fact, he is studying the performance with a focus on language and inscription – even going as far as examining drawings and symbols found adjacent to text left behind in visitor books. Further, as the author points out, the tourist is relying thoughts, feelings and affect right at or immediately after experiencing the tour. This gives an intensely rich set of data that suffers from minimal decay.

As a qualitative researcher who delves deep into ethnography I can say that there is great value in Noy’s work. First, the use of the visitor book as a rich set of data is virtually unheard of in Tourism academia. Noy proves that embarking on the type of discourse analysis he dove into is very much warranted. Second, the author raises the perceived value and perception of visitor books, log books, etc. These books, he demonstrates, are compendiums of tourist voices, not mere graffiti. Most importantly, however, is the vast amount of evidence that Noy provides for the value of the interpretative school in the realm of Tourism Studies. Ethnography still, sadly, plays a second class in many Tourism journals, and for no real reason other than the fact that a vast majority of Tourism scholars are trained in the dominant positivist paradigm. Noy’s work shows us so many aspects of the tourist experience that likely never would have been analyzed or discovered through the use of the narrow positivist lens. Of course, positivism plays an important role in discovery, however, it is not the only the way to examine tourism phenomena. Even the most ardent critics of ethnography might be swayed by close examination of Noy’s text.

Presentation and production values are quite good and the book, though chock full of analysis and data, is rather easy to read. Even the novice tourism scholar can likely learn a great deal about methodology from Noy’s study. Organization is spot on and each chapter provides a brief section about what the reader is to expect in the respective chapter. This will allow the book to become somewhat of a desk reference for those looking to employ Noy’s techniques.

Overall, *Thank You for Dying for Our Country* is a valuable, insightful text that not only directly and concisely addresses a gap in the Tourism literature, but also demonstrates how Tourism inquiry can stem from ethnographic, visual and even linguistic inquiry. Students and faculty in the liberal arts environment will find the book particularly useful as example of how interdisciplinary inquiry can play a prominent role in deep discovery.

Reference

Podoshen, J. S., Andrzejewski, S., Venkatesh, V., & Wallin, J. (2015). New approaches to dark tourism inquiry: a response to Isaac. *Tourism Management*, 51, 331–334.

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