
4 Travelling for Masculinity: The Construction of Bodies/Spaces in Israeli Backpackers' Narratives

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By means of this familiarity with the divine act of creation, the Western traveler became himself creative and divine, or at least legendary and heroic.

(Green, 1993, p. 52)

Introduction

Gendered bodies and narratives play various roles and assume various meanings within the myriad cultures of modern tourism. The symbolic richness of contemporary tourist cultures, as well as the spaces, practices and experiences that they embody, suggest that in the broadest sense of the term, tourism amounts to a heightened arena of consumption and production (performance) of gendered identities. In this chapter I explore narratives of hegemonic masculinity, as these are represented in, and socially constructed through, travel narratives Israeli backpackers tell. This chapter is also inspired by phenomenological sensitivities and seeks to reveal the personal experiences of men and to elaborate upon the telling and sharing of these experiences. In this context, narratives of personal experience supply both a representation and an evocation of different types of masculine identifications. They illustrate various tactics of resistance, improvisation and subversion that are employed with regard to normative discourses.

Addressing Israeli youth backpackers in particular affords an examination of the conflation of local and global cultural gender themes. Images of masculinity that are common in the backpackers' home society and culture ('local') are fused during the trip with representations of hegemonic masculinity in international tourism ('global'). In the narratives of the backpackers who were interviewed for this study, these images mostly reside in one sociocultural site or space: the backpacker's body. This body is at the centre of the chapter.

Locally, it is important to note that among secular Jewish Israeli middle-class youths, embarking on an extended backpacking trip soon after their discharge from

obligatory military service is a time-honoured, widespread social custom. On an individual level, the backpacking trip, which is inspired by romantic images and narratives, amounts to a formative, highly meaningful period. On a societal-cultural level, the backpacking trip has come to assume a form of a collective and normative rite of passage (Noy and Cohen, 2005b). The duration of the lengthy travel amounts to an experientially heightened time, wherein backpacker ideology and symbolic system have a major and enduring impact on the youths who engage in backpacking (Sorensen, 2003; Welk, 2004). The many and intense interactions and relationships, typical of backpackers, and the symbolic order of the trip, amount to the heightened sociocultural backdrop against which the drama of the youths' gender identity is fervently negotiated and consolidated (Noy, 2004b). Globally, 'backpacker ideology' is heavily implicated by images and discourses of gender, which in turn it perpetuates. To begin with, by merely undertaking tourism the youths partake in a notoriously conservative ideology-ridden endeavour, described by Aitchison (2001, p. 133) as the 'world's most sex-role stereotyped industry'. Moreover, backpackers are distinctly romanticist tourists (Urry, 1990, pp. 45–47). By the very definition of the type of trip they choose to undertake, in which they adventurously explore and seek 'exotic' and 'authentic' experiences and destinations (that are located in the 'Third World' or in the 'periphery belt'), the backpackers assume a symbolic image. At the very core of the community's ideal an image of a traveller – a valorized male hero – is to be found. A hero who is the male protagonist of what is arguably the West's most powerful and influential genre – the patriarchal travel narrative.

The narratives backpackers relay indicate how a neocolonialist and quasi-militaristic practice emerges, wherein strenuous and risky activities play an important role. These activities amount to a 'must' on the backpacker checklist, without which the cultural capital endowed in the lengthy and arduous trip cannot be consumed. These activities are perceived by the backpackers as a meaningful physical challenge – a challenge which, if overcome successfully, endows manly identity. Furthermore, these activities are performed and mediated by the backpackers' bodies, travelling in and across natural outdoor ('virgin', 'untouched') spaces. In and through recounting their experiences a meaningful relationship is woven between embodied practices and spaces. While the participation in adventurous and risky activities carries manly hues in general (regardless of the backpackers' cultural background: see Elsrud, 2001), in this chapter I wish to focus on masculine-endowing experiences in light of an Israeli travel culture, illustrating how contemporary backpacking amounts in fact to an additional chapter in the national occupation with/of bodies and spaces.

The chapter commences with a theoretical review of three bodies of literature, in an attempt to contextualize the backpackers' travel narratives and the gender experiences of which they tell. The first considers the body as a metonymic site wherein patriarchal cultural norms are being implicated and inscribed in individual bodies. This section builds on celebrated works of feminists and sociologists who reintroduced the corporeal human body into mainstream thought in the social science. From being censored in the past the body is presently perceived as a metonymic sociocultural site. Oftentimes it is through the body, and through its movements, sensations and representations, that we can learn most clearly about the sociocultural matrixes of power and meaning that surround the person.

The second field concerns the interrelations between engendered bodies and engendered spaces. This section illustrates the socially constructed qualities that bodies and spaces share ('bodies as spaces/spaces as bodies'), as well as the spaces wherein hegemonic masculine discourses are worked on and in men's bodies. Inspired by romantic-idealistic ideologies, spaces are conceptualized by tourists as feminine destinations. Both geographically and symbolically spaces are places to be dominated by and absorbed in. Excerpts from backpackers' narratives evince how the romanticist male hero encounters nature, and perhaps more importantly how he returns from this encounter transformed.

The third body of literature addresses the consequences of the unique sociocultural role backpacking assumes in Israeli youth culture. This 'local' aspect suggests a surprising socio-historical context against which contemporary backpacking, and the depths of the cultural experiences it endows, can be comprehended. Following the theoretical introduction, excerpts from male backpackers' travel narratives are interpreted. The backpackers' words and experiences allow a 'near-experience' study of men's lived experience, as these emerge in a masculine-institutional setting (i.e. tourism). The narratives also show how the narrators wholeheartedly embody and perpetuate pressing hegemonic images or, alternatively, how they subvert and resist them. They illustrate the masculine norm by which the young men have to conform, and how symbolic and narrative resources are employed in order to achieve a sought-after social status in the backpacker community.

Masculine Bodies/Masculine Spaces

Good travel (heroic, educational, scientific, adventurous, ennobling) is something men (should) do.

(Clifford, 1992, p. 105)

The body as a metonymic site of social and cultural norms

During the last two decades the body was the subject of a vast corpus of literature in both social sciences and humanities, occupying the forefront of a paradigmatic shift. Inspired by the works of Douglas (1966) and Foucault and Gordon (1980), feminist thought illustrated the myriad ways by which women's bodies have been suppressed and policed by institutional chauvinist ideologies and discourses. Butler (1993), Grosz (1994), Martin (2001) and many others supplied a detailed account of the ways by which patriarchal discourses – the medical, the militaristic, the religious and the national, to mention but a few – monopolized and manipulated women's bodies, controlling and suppressing it. Moreover, they showed how women's bodies, as well as the bodies of other suppressed groups, were actively absented from emancipating discourse.

Concurrently, sociological thought too yielded vast innovative literature, deconstructing and reconstructing the body as a crucial social site. Bourdieu (1977), and later Csordas (1990) and Featherstone *et al.* (1991), to mention but a few, have plucked the human body out of its previous (ideologically) naturalized state, suggesting

that in modern and late-modern (consumer) societies, the body is the embodiment of dynamic social processes; of ceaseless sociocultural pressures and manipulations. In both its biological corporeality and social existence, the body is neither 'complete' nor 'whole' anymore; rather, it is 'unfinished', 'uncompleted' (Bourdieu, 1977; Csordas, 1990; Turner, 1996). This state of the body accounts for the reason it is continuously susceptible to social, institutional and ideological influences. As Frank (1991) observes, social institutions – from national movements and social classes to hospitals and backpacking trips – offer the body goals and aims that tie it to social and institutional discourses which grant it identity and sociocultural capital. By means of the body, and of the goals and tasks it is required to accomplish, the social system defines the ideal body, and with it the preferred bodywork or the bodily 'recipe'.

[AU1] Similar to more traditional disciplines in the social sciences, the subject in and of tourism research traditionally lacked a body. This absence deprived the tourist of agency (MacCannell, 2001), referring to her or him as the *object*, rather than the *subject*, of tourism research. This absence marked 'a conceptual blind spot' (Grosz, 1994, p. 3) and obscured the mechanisms and the discourses through which tourists are institutionally disciplined. As Veijola and Jokinen (1994) observed: '[T]he tourist has lacked a body because the analyses have tended to concentrate on the gaze and/or structures and dynamics of waged labor societies' (p. 149).

Alongside additional theoretical schools, feminist and feminist-inspired thought initiated a radical change in the direction of repairing this enduring schism. 'Instead of seeing the body as distinct from the mind', and thus 'tied to a fixed essence or reduced to naturalistic explanations', Johnson (1989, cited in Johnston, 2001, p. 183) promotes that the body 'can be viewed as the primary object of social production and inscription'. While emancipatory notions of this type are also applicable to the study of men – indeed, my view is that men's studies are pro/post feminist ('a significant outgrowth of feminist studies and an ally': Kimmel, 2002, p. ix) – it is interesting to note that poignant feminist insights and observations are commonly reserved to the research of women and their bodies.

Empirical explorations of contemporaneous male bodies (particularly heterosexual males) by and large occupy two sociocultural sites in which, and in relations to which, hegemonic images of masculinity are intensively and influentially shaped: war (institutionalized by the military) and the emblematic ethos of the warrior, on the one hand (Connell, 1995; Mosse, 1996, pp. 107–132), and competitive (capitalist) sports and the manly ethos of the sport superstar, on the other (Messner, 1995; Kimmel, 1996, pp. 117–155; Kimmel and Messner, 2004). While elaboration on these institutions and on the heroic images they promote in the West since antiquity lies beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worthwhile noting the unique interrelations between bodies and particular spaces where hegemonic male bodies and identities are constructed ('forged'). These spaces are physical and at the same time function also as sociocultural arenas, wherein the male body ritualistically assumes valorized symbolic capital. The bodies of the warrior and of the sportstar are *constructed and shaped in particular spaces*, to which they are *intimately interrelated*: the warrior acquires his military skills through training in military zones and later embodies the heroic image in *battlefields*. The body of the sportsman wins its prestigious status in well-demarcated spaces too, such as soccer and football stadiums or basketball arenas, wherein the body's performances are publicly observed and evaluated. [AU2]

Engendering spaces: the place of/the work on the manly body

A third archetypal image of hegemonic masculinity, which will be at the centre of our discussion, is embodied in the ideal of the traveller or adventurer. The traveller's body is an ideal masculine body, one that is founded on powerful romanticist and colonialist discourses of movement, expansion and exploration. At the core of these discourses we find a manly hero who operates in an eventful scene, which is abundant with risks and dangers (Green, 1993; Campbell, 2004; Rank, 2004). Travel is an ideal context within which eventfulness can be encountered, and where spaces that are constructed and perceived as 'authentic' and 'exotic' can endow the male body with esteemed qualities. By their definition, these spaces lie beyond the known and the familiar, beyond the urban and the everyday (*terra incognita*). They are the destinations whereto the explorer travels in order to face the Other – in the form of nature or peoples – to conquer and dominate it.

Critical conceptualizations of engendered spaces were largely promoted by geographical and cartographical feminists. In these disciplines feminist works strived to expose and undo the masculine monopoly of certain spaces and certain types of knowledge that pertain to them (Ardener, 1981; Diprose and Ferrell, 1991; Katz and Monk, 1993; Blunt and Rose, 1994). Through a refreshing critical (re)examination of spatial hypotheses, these works have denaturalized and de-essentialized commonplace perceptions concerning the (lack of) relation between spaces and genders (preconceptions that are not too different than those referring to the body). A related body of research is specifically concerned with the relations between types of masculine identities and types of spaces, which are urban/sub-urban or rural and natural. The latter are of specific relevance to us, because many activities and diversions backpackers undertake occur in, and in relation to, rural spaces and natural landscapes. These are constructed as locations that exist at a critical distance from industrialized metropolitan centres. Longhurst's (2000; also Morin *et al.*, 2001) works on masculine touristic spaces, and Woodward's (1998, 2000) works on militaristic masculine spaces, indicate that spaces are sites of engendering activities. More radically, they argue that interrelated interconstructions occur in these spaces, whereby spaces and bodies are *mutually engendered*. The romantic construction of 'Nature' as feminized allows contrastingly for the enactment and validation of masculinity in tourism. As historian White notes in a discussion of frontierism in western USA, 'men to match mountains – that is, men able to overcome and dominate a feminine nature' (White, cited in Quam-Wickham, 1999, p. 135).

It is worthwhile noting how various masculine images, which originally stemmed from different semiotic spheres of patriarchy relating to war, competitive sports and travel, are exchangeable in discourse. Such is evinced by the Israeli backpacker cliché 'we conquered Thailand', or with the designation of the backpackers as 'settlers' (*mitnahalim*) or 'conquerors' (*kovshim*), which is common among backpackers (Noy and Cohen, 2005a). The use of these and other tokens indicates that under the heavy influence of romanticist-colonial discourse, a diffusion of metaphors occurs – all of which relate to the masculine body and its movement in, and occupation of, designated spaces. Within the ludic context of tourism (Cohen, 1985), the fluidity of manly metaphors is heightened. Backpackers who describe how they

‘traveled from one town to another, from one target to another’ (using distinctly militaristic jargon), juxtapose different (neo)colonial registers. Enmeshing militaristic and touristic registers they create a ‘militouristic’ mode of travel. The militouristic fusion is possible because different spaces and discourses share the function of masculinizing men, evincing the abilities and skills of able and privileged male bodies to act competently: to cover distances and to overcome obstacles.

Trans/formed bodies: national ideologies and backpacking

Pursuing strenuous hiking activities builds on, and is a contemporaneous cultural successor to, an embodied and enspaced tradition of trips and hikes conducted in Israel. As early as the second decade of the 20th century, groups of ‘wanderers’ had undertaken extensive hiking tours and field trips across the Land of Israel for a ritual through which people experientially got to ‘know’ the Land. As Katriel (1995, pp. 6–7) observes, travelling at length by foot was an ‘important element in the complex of ritualized cultural practices which have been appropriated and cultivated during the Israeli pre-state . . . [it carries] a special aura in Israel public culture . . . as a native-Israeli form of secular pilgrimage’.

Indeed, a significant aspect of the emerging Sabra (native-Israeli) tradition was the performance of adventurous, sometimes highly risky, trips throughout the country. This quality further intensified with the shift from the ethos of the ‘farmer’ to the ethos of the ‘warrior’ (Shapira, 1999), whereby hiking and travelling absorbed the meaning of a quasi-military reconnaissance activity (Ben-Ari and Levi-Schreiber, 2000). These manly adventures, which in extreme cases included transgressing the borders of neighbouring (hostile) countries at considerable risk, were pursued vehemently by various youth institutions, including youth movements of German and English origins.

The dominant masculine quality of these embodied and enspaced manly rites touches on three additional issues. First, these travels bring to mind an observation made by Mosse (1996), who argued that in public social spaces the male body is continually pursuing tasks in the name of hegemonic ideologies, and particularly national ideologies. In hiking trips in Israel the male body functions semiotically as grounding, or as an intermediate: the body is the means through which the relation between the people and the land is forged. This relationship is bi-directional: the land assumes a (new) identity through the people who inhabit it, and the (Jewish) people assume a localized ‘national body’.

Second, the type of hegemonic body that is arrived through the exhausting, and yet invigorating, activities of hiking constructs and legitimizes a particular type of masculinity (from a variety of possible alternatives: see Connell, 1995). Gender-informed commentators of that period observe that immigrants from Muslim countries (‘Oriental Jews’, also colloquially called ‘*mizrahi* Jews’), did not share the European romanticist-colonial heritage. They did not hold with the view that patriotism is ideally pursued and performed through participation in strenuous travelling activities (Katriel, 1995). Hence, a hierarchy was established within various masculinities, one which is effective nowadays. According to this cultural hierarchy, Jews of European descent (*Ashkenazi* Jews) assume the top hegemonic ranks.

Finally, the demanding and masculinizing activities were part of a national project of transforming the diasporic Jewish body. The bodywork that was performed in and through adventurous travel was to achieve a transformative aim: transfiguring the feminine and weak image of the diasporic Jew into a well-built, competent, heterosexual Israeli body (Mosse, 1996, pp. 151–154; Boyarin and Boyarin, 1997; Boyarin *et al.*, 2003). This was in line with a few early Zionist ideologists who thought that the invention of a stronger, healthier heterosexual ‘Muscle Jewry’ would overcome the stereotype of the Jewish male as effeminate. Around the turn of the 19th century, Nordau famously called to establish the ‘New Jew’, who will be a ‘strong-chested, tautly jointed, boldly gazing me’ man (Nordau, 1900, cited in Presner, 2003, p. 283). Along this vision, we can conceptualize the spaces of the Land of Israel as an ideological (national) *gymnastic hall*, wherein the ‘New Jew’ will practice and train through exhausting outdoor activities.

Yet, while the field trips of the Israelis are conducted mostly *within* the confines of the homeland, the backpackers undertake adventures *outside* the spaces of Israel. This geographical transposition is meaningful because the Jewish male body thus far acquired its (national-ideological) meaning through hiking within national spaces and through the interrelation between national spaces and national bodies. Yet, the backpacking trip takes place in extranational touristic spaces. These are located at a great distance from the initial spaces in, and with regard to, which the new Israeli identity was formed. From a postcolonial perspective, Massad (2000) critically indicates that the exilic Jewish body could have earned its manhood only within the confines of the Land of Israel:

The corporeal self perception of the Israeli Sabra is always already delimited within this space-time compression outside of which ‘he’ cannot exist. Israel as a colonial/postcolonial space-time, however, allows the existence of new postdiasporic Jewish bodies only as holograms. . . . If they exit (in the Zionist lexicon ‘descent from’) the Israeli space-time continuum, these bodies lose their new corporeality, and revert back to their pre-Israel diasporic condition . . . to being the ‘feminine schleimel’ that he [the Israeli Sabra] was before.

(Massad, 2000, pp. 339–340)

An interesting question thus arises concerning the construction of hegemonic masculinity among Israeli youths who are travelling *outside* Israel. If the male body outside the borders of the homeland is as ‘hologramic’ as Massad (2000) suggests it is, and if, outside the national landscapes, it regresses to its exilic ‘feminine schleimel’, the stories of adventures in, and conquests of, the Third World will be ridden with this anxiety.

Backpackers’ Narratives

This research is based on 41 interview conversations (Kvale, 1996) I held with Israeli backpackers who had recently (within 5 months) returned from ‘the great journey’. The interviews took place in Israel, usually at the backpackers’ homes (or, to be accurate, at their parents’ homes), which were commonly located in large cities. The interview conversations were in-depth and open-ended, and typically lasted between 1 and 3 hours (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The backpackers with whom I met were middle-class, secular Jewish Israelis, aged 22–25, half of whom

were women (21) and half men (20). All but two had been born in Israel. They all travelled for at least 3 months in the countries typically frequented by Israelis in Asia (mostly India, Nepal and Thailand) and in South America (mostly the Andeans, Argentina, Chile and Brazil), in a trip that took place shortly after completion of their obligatory and lengthy military service in Israel (3 years for men and approximately 2 for women).

I reached these veteran backpackers through employing a sampling method that is known as 'snowball' sampling, by which interviewees referred me to friends and acquaintances of theirs, and those friends and acquaintances gave me further names, and so on (Heckathorn, 1997; Noy, 2007). The first few backpackers I met through joint acquaintances and through several visits I made to a photography store located in the centre of Jerusalem which backpackers frequented in order to develop the many reels of film they had taken during the trip. The main advantage of the snowball sampling procedure is that the researcher is led along active social chains of friends, acquaintances and even siblings, who, in this case, regularly exchange backpacking travel information and experiences.

The interview conversations were semi-structured, giving priority to spontaneous expression and narratives of experience. This method is most appropriate to the aims of the research, namely to learn about backpackers' travel experiences and perceptions, and to explore the ways they narratively shape and communicate their experiences. In line with works on tourists' performances, I presently conceptualize the act of narration of one's travel experiences as a 'tourist performance' in and of itself (even if off-site performances: see Edensor, 2000; Noy, 2004a; Bruner, 2005). Indeed, as a backpacker exclaimed in the beginning of one of the very first interviews, 'whoever comes [to my] house, I immediately prepare him a cup of coffee and sit him down to hear my trekking and traveling stories!' By so indicating, the backpacker constructs the event of the interview as a routinized (and ritualized) opportunity to present himself or herself publicly, and to embody the cultural capital he or she has gained whilst backpacking.

Indeed, sharing stories of adventure and risk frequently is something that the backpackers enjoyed doing, a fact which was obvious from the pattern of participation in the interviews (they wilfully and with no exception consented to partake in the interview), as well as from the nature of the interview interaction itself (they enthusiastically shared detailed travel stories, apparently celebrating the opportunity that fell in their hands to tell their eventful recollections to an eager audience).¹

Travelling and trekking: the male body mediating transformation

To receive a [masculine] initiation truly means to expand sideways into the glory of oaks, mountains, glaciers. . . . We need wilderness and extravagance.

(Bly, 1990)

Masculinity required proof and proof required serious effort.

(Kimmel, 1996)

In the backpackers' narratives hiking is commonly viewed as the emblem of outdoor activities, which are themselves the emblem of the entire backpacking trip (Noy, 2005). These outdoor activities embody a linear and progressive ascension,

which aims at reaching a peak that is simultaneously topographical and experiential. They assume their emblematic (metonymized) status by showing the exchange between the physical and symbolic realms in (backpacking) tourism (Harrison, 2002; Bruner, 2005). Along the hiking trail the body continuously moves ('travels') forward and onward, engaging in strenuous, demanding and challenging activities, seamlessly collecting experiences and photographs. The physical difficulties backpackers confront and surmount are one part of the story. The other part consists of feelings of highest reward and satisfaction, which are endowed upon the successful completion of the tourist 'task'.

The following extract from Uri's story shows how meaningful indeed is the experience of hiking competently. The narrative concerns reaching and crossing a high-altitude mountain pass, in the region of the Everest Base Camp Reserve, in Nepal.

URI: We decided that we're climbing that mountain. I mean the one that's harder to climb. And this is already truly a serious operation. We had to take with us – to plan everything. It's five thousand and eight hundred meters high. It's something that most [backpackers] don't climb. We left early in the morning. . . . And we said we'll make it to the mountain, then we'll stop for a rest and have breakfast. And this is what we really did. We had breakfast and we really left very very early because there's a weather problem there. Everyday, sorta in the middle of the day, clouds appear. [They] simply ascend up the wadi and block the entire vision. So it's also very dangerous, because in fact if you're stuck somewhere that steep and suddenly clouds appear, you can't see anything. And so you miss on the entire scenery. So this is why we had to leave very very early. At the break of the day. . . . [The mountain] had a very steep part which was made of huge rocks. So we reached the – We climbed up until that rocky part. There we decided that we're taking our backpacks off, and the rest of the heavy gear, and we're starting to climb without gear. 'Cause actually we had to get to the top, and to return, [and] we didn't want to take heavy things with us. On us. So we begun climbing and we were literally climbing with our hands and legs. . . . [Reached the Pass] was fascinating, simply fascinating. It's a point where you see and Everest and all these huge mountains, and the sun is setting behind you, and then everything simply gets covered with a kinda red line. It's a really fascinating thing in its appearance. Really pretty. . . . The view was impressive and I said [to myself]: 'this is like a once-in-a-lifetime experience'. . . . I descended to the town of Namche, where I was already looked at as one of *the* veterans. There were already stories being told there about me, and there I told everyone about my adventures. And so I was – I was kinda of an attraction. It was nice – [they] sought my advice and asked me [questions], and [called me] like – (in English) 'the crazy Israeli'.

This extended extract, wherein Uri describes parts of a trek he hiked alone for over 6 weeks, illustrates the physical difficulties backpackers endure during the lengthy hike, the drama embodied in ascending high-altitude mountain passes and the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that a successful backpacker performance endows. We also learn about the narrative stylization of adventure stories, wherein suspense, drama and surprise work together in creating worthy and tellable stories, which transpire against the appealing background of soaring snowy peaks.

Stories of this type typically describe a lengthy and strenuous ascent, at the end of which a particularly spectacular view is visible or 'gaze-able'. The ascent is described as physically challenging, mentally demanding and, in so far as it requires meticulous

preparations, it also demands the careful attention of the intellect. Together, these features endow the climb with a unique status, which Uri describes in the militarized term 'operation'.

The peak experience which is narrated concerns reaching a high-altitude pass. It typically lies at the heart of romanticist stories of adventure. The narrators describe how they successfully and resourcefully overcame immense predicaments and obstacles (Elsrud, 2001). From Uri's narrative we can see that these stories are clearly dramatic, and their heroes – the narrators themselves who are acting as characters within the heightened realm of adventure – are shaped according to heroic patterns of manly stories of travel, adventure and valour (Green, 1993; Campbell, 2004; Rank, 2004).

According to these masculine meta-narratives, the hero's movement across physical space has a social direction: from the familiar to the foreign, from the everyday to the sublime, exotic and authentic. After successfully grappling with, and overcoming, many obstacles, a deeply meaningful and (trans)formative experience awaits the male hero. It is a transcendent, 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience (as Uri puts it), which is intimately related to the natural and sublime spaces wherein it is consumed. In the backpackers stories Nature is the emblematic embodiment of the 'Other'. Nature supplies both the scenery and the setting in and against which – quite literally – the hero is constituted.

In Uri's narrative, representations of Nature recur: the huge boulders that are nearly insurmountable and the ominous clouds that threaten to rob the ascender of the prize of ascension (the spectacular views). These are concrete manifestation of Nature, which amount to tests and trials that the able male body is required to surmount. Indeed, there is a need for a variety of qualities to be possessed and actions to be taken on behalf of the hero in order to pursue the aim in a successful manner, including stamina, resourcefulness and self-discipline.

The topographic peak conflates with the phenomenological peak, and immediately after consuming these twofold peaks the narrative turns to describe the descent from the mountain. This is the return travel, whose direction is from the realm of the transcendent to the realms of the familiar and the social. In these stories the peak experience is located in, and defined by, a liminal moment, which lies between the movement away and the movement back, between ascending and descending, and between the experience and its recollection and recounting.

Moreover, Uri's extract clearly illustrates the prestige that is gained by the protagonist who returns from foreign and risky spaces. It has been noted repeatedly that a tight hierarchical social structure exists among backpackers (Riley, 1988; Elsrud, 2001; Sorensen, 2003). This hierarchy is based on the overall length of the trip and the many adventurous experiences backpackers undergo whilst travelling. Uri proudly indicates that his mesmerizing adventures had an instantaneous effect: he immediately acquired an outstanding status within the backpacker community. This status is stressed by Uri and is described in two different ways. The first is the phrase 'one of the veterans'.² The expression indicates that prestige is correlated with a state of being accomplished in the particular practice of backpacking. The point is that according to processes of 'hierarchization' (Sorensen, 2003), adventure-undertaking transforms into experience, and experience transforms into esteemed cultural capital.

The second expression that stresses Uri's accomplishments and their socio-cultural value or capital is 'crazy Israeli'. This expression is uniquely uttered in English, which amounts to a linguistic 'code switching' (Hymes, 1975, pp. 66–67). It performatively indicates that voices of others entered the narration in the capacity of validating the argument made by the narrator. In this case, Uri illustrates that his reputation exceeded the limited social circle of Israelis, and was admitted (even) by English-speaking backpackers (specifically by backpackers from New Zealand: see Morin *et al.*, 2001).

Upon returning from excursions to guest houses the backpackers have a ready audience to share with, and to recount to, their adventurous experiences. The deep and rewarding gratification they speak of stems from the successful performance of adventurous excursions, the narratives which they freely share and compare with fellow travellers. Satisfaction emerges from transgressing outstanding physical difficulties. This is apparent in the following two excerpts. The first of which is drawn from an interview with David, who backpacked for 7 months in South America. In the following excerpt he tells of the famous Machu-Picchu trail in Peru. The second excerpt is from an interview with Guy, who backpacked in Asia for 5½ months. Guy contrasts two different modes of backpacking: one, of which he is disapproving, is more leisurely, and the other, which he praises, is more adventurous.

DAVID: You can hire local porters there. That is, you pay them about a buck a day, and they'll carry all your equipment on their back. So you can like walk freely . . . and hike the hills there quite leisurely. We decided not [to hire porters]. That is, we came in order to have an experience. So everyone took his own backpack on his back, and this added to the overall experience. That is, you know, after it's done, *all the pride* of returning like that to town, saying 'we did the four-day trek with the backpacks on our backs, an' all.' So it was – it was a wonderful trek.

GUY: We saw that once you complete the trip – all that pride [that you feel] that you're not just lying about, but that you came here, you've traveled all that distance just to sit in some restaurant and tell your friends how much pot you smoked. I think that this was our greatest pride: that we pursued the trip *the way it should be done*. Not just wasting time moving from one site to another not doing anything in between, but really making the most of this period.

David commences by making a point about how backpackers can make travel life easier for themselves. He indicates that during the trek he and his companions *could* have made use of commonplace tourist services (porters, in this case). David explicitly notes that the price of these services, at least in monetary terms, was negligible, and by no means was the reason the group did not hire local porters. Rather, the masculinizing experience, which David seeks to establish, concerns precisely the right to *refuse* any such assistance. This refusal is particularly meaningful in the backpacking context. In the eyes of backpackers, services of this type are associated with bourgeois tourists, who are not manly enough to carry their valises by themselves (they are 'spoiled' as other backpackers indicate).³ Hence, receiving help could have potentially robbed the experience of its manly qualities. The weight of the pride, which is experienced upon the completion of the task of hiking and travelling, is correlated with the weight of the heavy backpacks that the backpackers are carrying on their backs and with the amount of physical effort they exert.

Moreover, David has proved worthy of a deeply meaningful masculine experience also because he and his companions hiked the path quickly, covering the distance in only 4 days (less than the average time). Later in the interview, when he talks about his military service, David mentions that during the trip he faced an alternative that was not viable during the obligatory service: to relax and let go of the body discipline and have someone else carry his personal gear. It is against this background that the decision to *refuse* the porters' services, and to *voluntarily* carry the group's entire gear throughout the mountainous trail, achieves its highly gratifying and masculinizing effect. As another backpacker puts it: '[T]he habits we have are from the army, [but in the trip] you're doing it the way you like.' Male backpackers' bodies are inscribed with machismo patterns of movement and conduct, which the backpackers easily carry (over) to civic contexts, i.e. (backpacking) tourism. In other words, the 'way you like' (the civic and voluntary mode) and the militaristic (obligatory) mode are in effect identical.

From Guy's assertion a dichotomous distinction arises between the travellers, on the one hand, and those who 'smoke pot', on the other hand. Underlying this distinction are two resources – *body* and *time* – and the patterns of using them efficiently. The manly claim that is expressed in Guy's extract is also established by the fact that he is referring to a doctrine or to a hegemonic norm: there is a *correct or right* way of doing things, an accepted code by which those who wish to attain the symbolic capital engendered in backpacking need to abide. The expression 'the way it should be done' echoes an accepted masculine norm (which is not cited directly: see Noy, 2007). The reverse form, i.e. the manner which is *not accepted*, is presented in negative light, and includes the verbs 'to sit', 'to smoke pot', 'to tell about it', 'to waste time and not to do anything'. These descriptions clearly answer to the category of *passivity*, which is constructed as having cultural association with femininity and weakness. Passivity does not supply for proof of masculinity (Kimmel, 1996).

Guy contrasts these passive verbs with active and assertive verbs such as 'making the most' of the time. The duration of the trip is presented as a period in which one should by no means rest or relax, but to the contrary. There is a pressing need to actively 'do' or 'perform' or accomplish backpacking, to *seize* the backpacking tenure. And the more this is pursued along the narrative of the ideal backpacker, the better. Production and gratification are inter-correlated in the manly stories, indicating that there are preferred ways of acquiring status and manhood. In these tight and hierarchical circumstances 'lying about' and 'wasting time' is a near sin.

In this way too, backpackers of the type of David and Guy differentiate themselves from the 'mass tourist'. They imply that some of the backpackers have 'gone bourgeois' and are acting like conventional tourists (Noy, 2005). Furthermore, since tourism is about the collecting of experiences (Bruner, 2005), and since backpacking is commonly viewed as a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience, the youths' attempts to condense the trip and pack it with events are only sensible.

When Alon, who also praises the merits of hiking strenuously, describes the famous Machu-Picchu trail in Peru (as did David), and mentions that there are two ways to get to the Hidden Inka city: by foot and by train. His description indicates that worthy and rewarding experiences are only to be encountered when travellers 'truly exert efforts and do not take some *tour* (uttered in English), that transports

them in the train'. Akin to David and Guy, Alon too contrasts the different gender/masculine alternatives tourists face when pursuing backpacking. Uttering the word 'tour' in English and not in Hebrew, helps to sharpen the contrasts between tourists' commercialized patterns of travel and transportation (and their discursive correlates), and those of the backpackers, which are supposedly more 'authentic'. The latter create experiences that are more 'truly' masculine, because they are registered in the backpackers' bodies by way of notable physical effort. Because hegemonic masculinity requires proof, and proof requires considerable effort, in the backpackers' stories 'tourists' amount to a feminine ('softish' and passive) category of travellers, against which backpackers can appreciate and validate physical effort and the fruits it carries in terms of masculine identities.

Note that the words referring to 'taking it easy' (in Guy's extract) and to 'taking a tour' (in Alon's extract) are not uttered by the backpackers in English coincidentally. In the capacity in which they are performative 'code switchers', they indicate that the narrators are making use of the lingua franca of modern tourism (i.e. international English). In the context of tourists' language, international touristic English is a resource that tourists can productively draw upon. In the present case, David and Guy (and to some degree Uri too) are employing *vocabularies of leisure* which are incongruent with the backpackers' codes and ethos of manly endeavours and adventures.

In line with Richards and Wilson (2004) and Welk (2004), the excerpts above lend support to the observation that backpackers construct their identity in contrast to *other backpackers* as much as they do so vis-à-vis 'tourists' in general. These findings illustrate recent developments in backpacking tourism, concerning the proliferation of this form of tourism and its impressive raising heterogeneity. The contemporary social scene of backpacking necessitates that the youths distinguish themselves not only from 'tourists' (which was traditionally the case: see Riley, 1988) but primarily from other types and groups of backpackers. The latter, I mentioned earlier, have 'turned bourgeois'.

From these and other narratives a normative male image emerges which encompasses the successful, sometime virtuous, performance of romanticist-adventurous masculinity. This type of male body is characterized by self-restraint, self-discipline, outstanding physical abilities and cohesive social relationships (Klein, 1999; Ben-Ari, 2001). These qualities assist the backpacker hero in the task of competently overcoming the challenges and impediments that await him. The return from the nearly supernatural heights at which most of the backpackers hike are described in nearly mythic terms, which construct these sites and spaces as literally extraordinary.

Shortly after Uri's account, he indicates that when he returned from the trek, 'people looked at me there . . . they thought I returned from Mars'. Thus, the hero in the men's tall tales is constructed as if returning from a space or state of utter alterity. As Elsrud (2001) observes of male backpackers, 'through establishing a (mythologized) image of Otherness, a story about self-identity can be told' (p. 606). While the context of every day remains unchanged, the hero undergoes profound, transformative experiences (Bruner, 1991). As yet another backpacker indicates when he recalls descending from the Annapurna Circuit Trail in Nepal: '[Y]ou return to civilization, you return to yourself.' The first half of this parallel structure evokes the binary tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary, or between the familiar and the exotic. Interestingly, it does so by contrasting the *social realm*

(inhabited by people) with an alterity that is constructed as non-human ('Mars' and 'the crazy Israeli', the latter metaphor evoking Otherness via an 'unnatural' or 'deviant' psychic state). The second half of the utterance, the expression 'you return to yourself', is commonly evoked in the narratives I researched in the form of bodily transformations, whereby the body of the traveller 'departs from itself' only to 'return to itself' transformed. As a whole, this expression tells the story of rites of masculinity in a nutshell, and implies why (backpacking) tourism should be its vehicle.

Hegemony and resistance: additional male voices

The voices of the backpackers we heard thus far unanimously express congruence with the normative and hegemonic masculine model. Yet, in most of the interviews I conducted, various degrees of oppositions to, and rejections of, the ideal male image were apparent. In fact, in only one-third of the interviews backpackers did not express resentments, oppositions and complaints with regard to the male ideal and to the strenuous efforts that they had to exert in order to stand up to it. In two-thirds of the interviews (and in all of the interviews with female backpackers) the narrators expressed overt or covert objections with regard to the normative challenges they had to face and stand up to.

In regard to the 'hegemonic group', i.e. backpackers' whose narrative and images were in complete agreement with the ideal ethos, it is interesting to note that during their obligatory service in the army they all have served in elite fighting squads. All of these backpackers indicated that certain skills, which came handy to them during the lengthy trip, were initially learned in military training (such as climbing). Ethnically, this group is expectedly composed of *Ashkenazi* (European) youths exclusively, a fact which brings to mind the hegemonic status of Ashkenazi Jews in Israeli society, past and present (Kimmerling, 2001).

In contrast to the stories narrated by the 'hegemonic group', the stories of most of the male (and female) backpackers I interviewed can be characterized by the ambivalent position they express. In most cases the male body does not stand up to the normative masculine expectations, which is one of the reasons a few of the backpackers reject the hegemonic ideal altogether. In such cases, where there is a considerable difference between the ideal image of the adventurous traveller and the actual performance of the male (and female) body, the narrators tell about minor bodily incidents which did not permit their bodies to pursue the backpacker goal to its idealic and hegemonic end (Noy, 2003, forthcoming). Their bodies, then, do not represent or embody the ideal backpacker. These backpackers mention that they suffered needlessly during the trip and particularly so during outdoor excursions, that they did not feel well (they were nauseous and/or vomited), that they slipped and tripped while hiking, that they lost their way and a whole variety of additional somatic symptoms suggesting incongruence with the competent image of the reconnoitring lone traveller.

This is the case with Tal, who tells an amusing incident which occurred to a friend and travel companion of his while they neared the peak of a trail in the Salar Salt Desert in Argentina:

TAL: Near the end there's a rock there that's about a meter and a half, which you simply need to grab with your hands and climb. You climb a sorta mountain step, which is about fifteen meters [high]. And this guy, Dan like reached the last rock, sorta puts his hands on top (laughs) and he simply freezes. [He] starts shouting: 'I have a paralysis, I can't climb, I have a paralysis!' (laughs) And I remind him of this anecdote every time I see him. Every time! 'I have a paralysis.' That was really hilarious.

The humour that is expressed in this strip is related to Dan's (Tal's friend) bodily malfunction, due to which Dan was not able to conclude the climb and reach the sought-after peak. Tal is in fact describing a momentary paralysis of a hysteric type, which made his friend's hands immobile and ineffective. The laughter stems from an anxiety that the unexpected paralysis aroused. Discussing humour in tourist contexts, Dann (1996) notes that 'while humor can sometimes relieve anxiety, it does not exist without it' (p. 107). The surfacing of the paralysis in and of Dan's body prevents him (and the rest of the group) from progressing along the expected route in the normative direction of the summit. It calls to mind the fact that the trail is actually unidirectional: the travellers are expected to proceed onward and upwards. Turning backwards and returning in this one-way course are socially sanctioned movements. A female backpacker expressed this point poignantly when she narrated of her physical difficulties and said she wanted to quit the trek: 'I wanted to return but they (her friends) didn't let me.' The betrayal of Dan's body and his bodily refusal to withstand the many manly challenges backpacking embodies, suggests an incongruence between his *individual body* and the *normative ideal*. This incongruence is what sparks the lively laughter (which is embodied as well), which illustrates the expression of feelings and emotions rather than their denial.

The 'really hilarious' anecdote Tal narrates, which takes place shortly before the group is supposed to reach the climax of the trail, is not recounted as a peak experience in the normative sense, and it is not the climax of a romanticist travel narrative (Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004b). Later, it is told as an implied *counter-peak experience*. According to the norm, the body is the source of extreme pleasure, which stems from the competent performance of the body's organs. The body should not be the source of anxieties and of moments of embarrassment and amusing bodily dysfunctions (some of which are not amusing at all, as we shall shortly see). Neither paralysis nor laughter is among the bodily experiences that are typical of hegemonic masculine narratives. Instead, romanticist sublime experiences are expected to be recounted, which include elation, satisfaction, fulfilment and deep pride (as Uri, David and Guy demonstrated). Incidentally, the fact that the anecdote is told repeatedly in post-trip contexts suggests that the group's shared recollections of the trip (and to some degree the group's identity) is constructed by way of implicit resistance to the romanticist ideal engendered in the backpacker norm.

This type of anxiety reaffirms the gender construction of the activity of hiking and of the spaces within which it is pursued. The trail is often referred to by the term *tsir* (literally meaning 'track' or 'way' yet connoting militaristic register), which is located in a space that is called 'the field' (*hashetah*, again, clearly connoting militaristic register). These words stress the quality of the spaces and routes that facilitate a particular type of engendered activity; they stress the predominantly active dimension of the endeavour of 'doing trekking'. This type of 'militouristic' discourse suggests that hiking is not about pleasure as much as it is about a

particular type of ‘bodywork’, one which transpires in the ‘field’ and carries with it unique experiential value and cultural capital.

Later in Tal’s story, he relates to female backpackers and expresses a typical negative evaluation: ‘[M]ost of the women – like just the mere thought of sleeping in a sleeping bag makes them feel uneasy.’ Still further in the story Tal surely enough notes that he himself ‘does not like sleeping in sleeping bags’. A picture thus emerges wherein behaviours that do not accord with the masculine norm are rendered as having stereotypically feminine attributes.

We can see that between stories conveying impressive masculine performances, on the one hand, and bodily incidents and minor accidents, on the other hand, a hierarchic continuum of masculinity is constructed. In a few cases, confronting the masculine norm is done explicitly and frontally, and indicates a basic rejection of the gender hierarchy. In the following excerpt, Ron locates himself socially vis-à-vis the backpackers’ community. He states his beliefs about the trip apropos discussing the effect the service in the Israeli army had had on his trip.

RON: People who I really didn’t like are those who talked about trekking: ‘we hiked thirty kilometers per day. We carried thirty kilos on our backs. aam We climbed this [mountain] in two hours. We climbed this [mountain] in three hours. Like, the most important point for them is how fast they hiked and how much they carried and how long they hiked. Like, it’s the kind of long walks [that are] walked simply in order to [be] completed. And I think that if you feel that you’re walking [only] in order to complete the path then you’re missing out. Whoever walks in order to complete the trek and doesn’t enjoy it – it’s a shame. You can simply do it by bus. Save the effort. It’s not that we didn’t enjoy the effort. There were moments when we did. We felt really good each time we arrived at the summit of the Pass. Believe me – you feel [like] the king of the world. Like I’ve accomplished something awesomely great. [AU3]

In order to substantiate the claim Ron is making, he is citing the collective backpacker norm. The normative voice illustrates a distinctly masculinist-militaristic mode of participation and conduct. According to the norm, hiking trails engenders a challenge that needs to be confronted and overcome in a manly manner. Inspired by the modern scientific ethos of quantification, the backpackers’ performances too are quantified (‘thirty kilometers . . . thirty kilograms . . . two hours’). The backpackers’ performance equations, consisting of the variables duration, weight and length, affirm the accomplishment of the ‘mission’, and indicate how much effort and sweat were invested. Since the performances are quantified, they supply firm validation to their narrators’ tales of masculine adventure and conquest (after all, it is hard to argue with numbers). All this effort results (at the end of the excerpt) in a unique and elevated sense of gratification, evoked in the expression ‘king of the world’.

Ron commences the assertion by positioning his backpacker identity contrastingly in relation to the collective norm. As mentioned earlier, with the proliferation of backpacker populations in the last decade of the previous century, on the one hand, and the heterogenization of the range of experiential possibilities and travel preferences, on the other hand, more and more backpackers assert their identity vis-à-vis other types and groups of backpackers (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Cohen, 2004; Richards and Wilson, 2004). This change is true to both global backpacker contexts and to local (Israeli) backpacker populations (Noy and Cohen, 2005a; Noy, 2006). Yet, interestingly enough, following the harsh critique Ron

makes with regard to the instrumental mode of travel, he indicates that he and his companions were also seeking peak experiences. Hence, the differences that arise between the norm Ron evokes and criticizes and Ron's own perspective refer to the *way* in which peak experiences are to be obtained.

In this light we understand Ron's emphatic description of the truly uplifting experience he had upon reaching the summit. The last two sentences ('you feel [like] the king of the world. Like I've accomplished something great') are important because they show that giving up on the masculinist mode of travel does not necessarily entail giving up on the rewarding experience. Ron asserts that to the contrary, an immense sense of gratification and personal empowerment can be experienced without the exertion of strenuous physical effort. He, and backpackers like him, can also be (manly) 'kings of the world', and should not give up on the backpacker cultural capital because they did not adhere to the mode of 'traveling by foot'.

The injured hegemonic body or 'the body slowly, slowly shuts down': insights from Brian's story

I wish to use the remaining space of this chapter to explore in some length one narrative recounted by Brian about adventurous hiking in Bolivia. The narrative sheds further light on the backpacker masculine norm, from a particular perspective of a person – a body – which had *inadvertently* deviated from the norm. It is interesting to note that the insight or morale which Brian expresses could not have been attainable if some unexpected harmful event had not occurred. In other words, if the regular course of action had taken place, Brian's body and Brian's story would have both supplied an embodiment of the hegemonic masculine norm. Indeed, Brian notes that he served in the Israeli army in an elite infantry unit, and throughout his tale he repeatedly mentions intense training in long-distance navigating, survival and reconnoitring training, mountain climbing and many additional exceptionally difficult challenges he had to overcome during the military service.

Yet, the story he tells is illuminating precisely because a dramatic and negative turn occurs, in the shape of an inexplicable life-threatening pathology. Due to this accident the entire trip was abruptly stopped. While backpackers' stories regularly include episodes of risk, these eventually appear as surmountable challenges which test and validate the hero's abilities. Yet the plot line in Brian's story depicts a traumatic experience, which hues the narrative in post-traumatic shades. While hiking, Brian experienced a sudden and severe deterioration in his health, and the state of his body exceeded the common descriptions of painstaking physical challenges. It included, over and above headaches, dizziness and nausea, acute symptoms of numbness of hands and legs, breathing difficulty, loss of vision and even temporary loss of consciousness. The trek and the trip were abruptly terminated and Brian was evacuated to the USA and later to Israel. Because the medical examinations did not yield a clear diagnostic picture that could account for his malady, Brian was quite insecure and somewhat anxious about his health when we met and conversed, 5 months after he returned (was sent back) from the trip.

Brian describes himself before the trip and notes:

[AU3]

BRIAN: I really liked traveling. I traveled a lot here (in Israel). I always enjoyed a sense of utter personal security while wandering around everywhere. . . . I served in the army and I did very dangerous things, aa traveled around a lot. I worked my body a lot. . . . I was in infantry and more than once I had experienced a real life threat there. And I also saw people getting killed right near me, but I was – somehow I had the knowledge that I myself am truly fine and healthy deep inside, and that my body can perform anything I ask of it – [this was] a very powerful knowing. I think that it made me deeply arrogant. Looking at things like, I mean – I can conquer the world.

Brian's tale begins with his passion for, and skills of, travelling and hiking in Israel, an activity which reached its climax during his active service in the army. Brian's body performs hegemonically as it encounters and surmounts life-threatening situations time and again in the service of the nation. Definitely the 'chosen body' (Weiss, 2002), Brian's body is the emblem of Jewish Israeli masculinity. His body repeatedly proved itself and its outstanding abilities, and thus generated a unique sensation of self-assuredness, captured in the expression 'a sense of utter personal security'. The many near-death moments he experienced did not weaken his body (or soul), but to the contrary proved how durable the body is 'deep inside'. In the introduction to his story, Brian suggests that the adventurous trip initially amounted to yet another challenge, which, in light of the above, by no means seems difficult or unattainable.

It is worth noting that Brian's words have a touch of hindsight to them. They suggest that the narrator and the protagonist are not in fact the same person. The retrospective recapitulation communicates a message, which says that the traumatic experience endured during the trip outdid earlier experiences, and overshadowed Brian's 'hegemonic-military body'. At this early point we already learn that the experience truly humbled Brian and taught him a lesson in the shape of overcoming his 'deeply arrogant' self-esteem.

The body that emerges from the extract is a 'buddy' or an 'ally', which is utterly reliable and obedient. The body-buddy delivers whatever is demanded of it, and can perform 'anything I ask of it'.⁴ Brian's body-buddy endures ultra-masculine trials and rites demanding exceptional stamina with a particularly rewarding outcome. It supplies Brian with a deep and rare sense of complete personal safety and security. More than that, the body's abilities in fact endow a sense of invincibility. This powerful 'knowing', as Brian puts it, emerges not only because the body is extremely physically able, but also because of the type of *relationship that emerges between the body and the self*.

Internalizing and embodying hegemonic masculine discourse brings about a split between two entities: the body and the hero.⁵ This is evinced quite plainly in the words 'anything I ask of it': the subjectivized 'I' (self) is distinct from the objectified 'it' (body). The second is expected to conform to nearly superhuman (superman) tasks, a conformity or obedience that brings about a sense of gratification in the first. Hence, we witness a *replication of macropower relationships*, which are perpetuated by the national-militaristic discourse of hierarchic obedience and submission. Here the body is instrumentalized in the same way that the person or soldier is instrumentalized and mobilized in national-militaristic contexts. As Longhurst (1995) points out with regard to both tourists and their researchers, hegemonic masculinity is characterized by 'the dominant/subordinate structure of the relation between the mind and body' (p. 97); the body 'it' is the servant of the self 'I'.

Yet, this schism between Brian and his body changes during the story. While the physical injuries and painful psychological experiences he endured in combat have only strengthened his sense of personal security, the mysterious life-threatening trauma his body endured during the trip had a transformative effect. The male ‘buddy-body’ ceased obeying its master and a breach in the contract of subordination and obedience appeared. The body was hurt from within, from its interior (its ‘deep inside’),⁶ and has failed Brian for the first time.

Brian continues with the beginning of the actual narrative:

BRIAN: We were in a pretty spot there. I remember dogs and cats and ducks all playing together. A really beautiful trek. And slowly, slowly I began feeling a serious shortage of breath. Even now I shudder when I think about it because every time the experience – it’s like I can’t take another breath. Just like that. And the hands gradually grow numb, and I felt it happening to me the way they described it would in the army. I remember that a man who loses – a man who’s gonna die, slowly, slowly his body’s peripheries grow numb. That’s how it is in case of dehydration and loss of blood. The body slowly, slowly shuts down its systems, one by one. I felt it reaching [my] breathing, I couldn’t see well, my handles were numb. . . . I could see death approaching. . . . It’s something that I guess I’ll carry with me for the rest of my life. . . . I simply lay there on the ground. I couldn’t walk.

The description of the escalation of Brian’s health begins in a pastoral and harmonious natural setting, which suggests a stark contrast to what follows: the collapse of a mechanic system. Indeed, Brian narrates the story of his body’s shutdown in accordance with utterly disembodied militaristic discourse: the body is a machine, and its death is a technical process through which mechanic and electric units cease to function (cf. Martin’s (2001) work on the female body as a reproductive machine). The process is spatial and its direction is from the ‘peripheries’ to the centre, or from the limbs (outside) to the lungs and heart (inside). We learn how badly the body is hurt when Brian ends the description with an observation: he could not walk. In the context of the masculine tradition of national travelling and hiking (see above), this handicap means more than a limited disability; in the capacity in which it indicates the lack of agentive movement, it amounts to a symbolic death.

In addition, between the lines we hear the possibility that a disease was lurking within Brian’s body, i.e. inside the ‘chosen body’, a disease of which outbreak sheds retrospective light on the body’s biography. Or is it the extranational space in which Brian and his companions travelled which rendered the body vulnerable and ‘hologramic’ ‘from the inside’, as Massad (2000) suggested?

In any case, an unexpected bodily transformation occurs. While other male and occasionally female backpackers indicate that their bodies ‘adjusted’ and ‘acclimatized’ to high-altitude destinations, thus indicating that an inner bodily change occurred, Brian’s body failed to adapt to the new environment. His body refused to undergo inner transformation, a refusal which granted Brian a refreshing perspective. This perspective deviates from the normative and linear or progressive hegemonic track of Israeli youth, which Brian now views as ‘deeply arrogant’.

Towards the end of the story, after he was evacuated to a nearby town (and then sent back to Israel), Brian reveals in a touching way the emotions that overwhelmed his body:

BRIAN: In the end I called home. I was obviously very emotional. And up until then, *never in my life did I* – some friends of mine in school died. One in a terrorist attack, two had cancer. All the kids in my class could cry but I could never cry. Also in the army I faced death and I never cried. . . . And then, when I called home and talked to my mother I burst into tears and I could hardly control myself. Somehow it opened something. Since then crying comes much more easily to me. It's something that – something that opened there.

Immediately after his successful evacuation, Brian establishes a reassuring connection with home (mother/homeland), whereby a burst of uncontrolled emotions is described as erupting from *within the body*. Although Brian's until-then hegemonic body did not undergo the sought-after transformation, his story, like other backpackers' stories, includes an impressive personal change and growth (Noy, 2004b). He gave up on check-marking yet another site of masculinity, but he gained a refreshing perspective and a new spectrum of bodily behaviours (such as crying). Brian is not 'deeply arrogant' anymore, and while he gave up on the sense of being the invincible 'king of the world', he can now express more emotions. Although the experience which he narrates is surely not typical, similar to many backpackers and tourists, Brian too 'accepts the invitation to become a better person' in and through tourism (Rojek and Urry, 1997, p. 4).

The two extreme states that Brian describes, that of being near death during the trek and that of bursting into tears while talking with his mother, share two important features: they are both *embodied states of loss of control*. During the trek Brian mentions that he lost his bodily mobility and spatial orientation, and during the conversation with his mother, too, he says that he could 'hardly control' himself (i.e. his body). Both states are bodily and hence essentially inexplicable. Indeed, Brian indicates that '[s]omehow it opened something'. In both cases the site of the transformation is interior, located amorphously deep within the male body ('something that opened there'). In both of these inter-correlated instances, the hegemonic masculine discourse, according to which the body is always under complete control, is rejected. This temporal lapse brings about a permanent bodily transformation. When Brian recounts his backpacking adventures and says 'I'll carry with me for the rest of my life', he indicates how the unusual backpacking experience he had undergone was absorbed both in his body and in his biography.

Conclusion

Backpackers' narratives of travel and adventure are embodied texts that shed light on the ways hegemonic masculinity is constructed and pursued in this tourist (sub)culture. Listening to their narratives illustrates the particular relations between bodies (tourist bodies) and spaces (touristic spaces). In this regard, this chapter deals with the semiotics of the interrelations of gender and embodiment in global backpacking tourism, and offers a contribution to the 'empirical possibilities of an embodied account of tourism' (Johnston, 2001, p. 181).

To begin with, the travel narratives powerfully illustrate the crucial role reserved for the body in the consumption and construction of gender identities in tourism in general and hegemonic masculinity in particular. The backpackers'

post-trip narratives are embodied through and through. They supply a lively experience of how ventures and adventures are pursued in a manly rite of passage. The masculine body that progresses from one backpacker destination to another, check-marking on the way entire continents and subcontinents, is engaged in a 'mission', whereby it accomplishes a demanding physical challenge. The experiential reward of the intense 'bodywork' is twofold: experientially, backpackers indicate a deep sense of gratification and fulfilment upon completion of the lengthy trip. This experience is the accumulated result of various demanding activities that are pursued during the lengthy trip. The sense of gratification and self-fulfilment is oftentimes expressed in terms of a true personal transformation (Noy, 2004b).

Socially, the narratives backpackers recount endow the youths with *symbolic and gender capital of hegemonic masculinity*. The travellers are transformed from youths to (young) adults, and upon returning to the homeland they join a new collective of veteran backpackers. Hence, socially, their inner sense of fulfilment and transformation is expressed in terms of social systems and collective identities. This new affiliation is crucial within the heated politics of identity in present-day Israeli society. We should keep in mind that the backpacking trip, which is undertaken shortly after a duration of obligatory service in the army, is the first civic endeavour backpackers undertake as adults. Hence, the sites they visit and the trails they walk symbolically amount to the first footsteps they make in the world of 'grown-ups' and in its institutions.

As far as images of hegemonic masculinity are concerned, the masculine backpacker body heroically confronts and surmounts primordial 'authentic' wilderness (Nature), which is constructed as a 'militouristic' (romanticist and semi-militaristic) challenge. While overcoming Nature, the trip constructs and shapes the body, and its sense, abilities and limits. This act of overcoming nature is symbolic and has at least two additional aspects: first, the romantic hero receives or absorbs something of the profundity and exoticism of Nature (or Native) that it transgresses and overcomes. As Green (1993) notes in the epigraph of this chapter: 'the Western traveler became himself creative and divine' (p. 52). All of this occurs in tourist contexts where familiarity and alterity are institutionally juxtaposed. It is through this contrastive juxtaposition that one assumes a sought-after identity. '[B]odies involved in the tourism process do undergo change', and they do so 'through the reflexive play of the Other, as a category and as Body' (Veijola and Jokinen, 1994, cited in Johnston, 2001, p. 189).

The second symbolic aspect that is related to overcoming Nature (Other) concerns gender. The romantic construction of touristic destinations and spaces is feminized, and as such it endows the traveller with a sense of competent masculinity. In fact, the very act of travelling, i.e. of materializing one's mobility rights in public spaces, is itself a demonstration of cultural dominance and sovereignty (Pratt, 1992; Minh-Ha, 1994; Mazali, 2001). This is particularly so with backpackers who are emphatically romanticist tourists (at least the backpackers of the type interviewed for this study).

Yet, not all the narratives male backpackers recount describe spatial manly accomplishments. In fact, two-thirds of the male backpackers (and all of the female backpackers) evinced different degrees of discord in relation to the hegemonic norm by which they were required to adhere. In these instances too subversion was

manifest in and through the site of the body. These backpackers did not celebrate the strenuous work they had to perform in the name of normativity; nor were they enthusiastic about the patriarchic discourse that splits the tourist into a conforming (instrumental) body and a disembodied traveller. From the richness of practices entailed in modern backpacking tourism, and from the varied gender characteristics they embody, these disillusioned backpackers tailor their own leisurely set of engendering practices and experiences (Uriely *et al.*, 2002; Cohen, 2004).

The singular complexity which characterizes the backpackers whose words were presented above stems from the transposition of embodied colonial practices from national territories (the territories of the youths' homeland wherein these practices were initially pursued) to extranational touristic spaces. While a few accounts support Massad's (2000) hypothesis concerning the 'hologramic' state of a body that exists in its constituting national spaces, other accounts indicate that a physical departure does not necessarily entail a symbolic departure. In other words, the 'hologramic' anxiety of the backpackers' bodies is reduced or eliminated as a result of the construction of tourist enclaves and spaces which resemble those of the homeland or motherland. Additionally, through these long-haul trips, which are pursued collectively, a 'new Israeli' arguably emerges (Haviv, 2005) who is not the Sabra Massad (2000) discusses.

Regarding the travellers' home society we can learn that it did not undergo changes that are typical of post-Second World War societies, whereby embodied endeavours of the national-colonial sphere gave way to the spheres of competitive sports. The transformation Kimmel (1996) notes, observing that 'the geographic frontier was replaced by the outfield fence' in the USA (p. 141), does not accurately describe the large-scale ideologies and institutions that are influential in Israel. Rather, as geopolitical frontiers in and around Israel have not been 'replaced' and clearly demarcated, hegemonic masculinity is (still) pursued through neocolonial-militaristic practices. Backpacking is thus viewed as a 'national sport', wherein exotic and faraway spaces are its arena. The travellers' bodies, and the body of the nation state, are both correlatively incomplete and unfinalized; they are both still being negotiated on macrospheres and microspheres.

Acknowledgement

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Endnotes

- ¹ See Elsrud (2001) and Sorensen (2003) concerning similar observations about backpackers. In relation to interviewing men, see Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001), and Arendell (1997), which I teach in masculinity classes and which the students find very helpful.
- ² The Hebrew phrase Uri uses is *mivatikey ha-dor* (lit. the elders of the generation), which is somewhat archaic and of high register. The phrase connotes precisely the tradition mentioned earlier, that of Sabra ritualistic hiking.

³ An additional reason for which David stresses that money was not an issue when refusing porters' services concerns the fact that bargaining and getting the 'best deal' are also activities that backpackers regularly boast about. By indicating that it was 'about a buck a day', David establishes the fact that his companions were good bargainers, and that money was really not the issue.

⁴ For similar references to the male body, i.e. as a reliable and faithful companion, see Hammond and Jablow (1987) and Sherrod (1987).

[AU4] ⁵ Feminist theoreticians of tourism and travel have noticed the price women pay for materializing their rite to travel. A split within the traveller occurs, as is the case with Brian. Blake (1990) notes that 'split between traveler and lady . . . pervades women's travel narratives' (p. 354).

⁶ With respect to interior (unobserved) bodily changes, which are socially constructed as transformative, see Weiss (1997).

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Author Queries:

- [AU1] "Veijola and Jokinen, 1994" is not cited in the reference list. Please check.
- [AU2] Please check whether "battle" in "battlefields" should be made italics.
- [AU3] Please check the words "aam" and "aa", respectively.
- [AU4] Please check whether: "rite to travel" should be changed to "right to travel".
- [AU5] Please update Noy (forthcoming) and also update text citation.