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Chaim Noy¹

Abstract

The author offers a reflexive recount of an ethnography conducted at a tourist heritage site. Inspired by critical writings on the aesthetics of (social) scientific practices and texts, the author examines ethnographic practices that take place in the conjoined coercive contexts of tourism and national commemoration. A number of affinities between ethnographic, touristic, and commemoration practices are highlighted, and so are the epistemologies on which they rest and types of knowledge(s) that they help produce. These affinities include the role of authenticity and unmediated encounters, collecting and documenting practices, and lastly practices involved in presentation of artifacts (data vs. souvenirs). The narrative account/recount that the author offers involves visual images, and an examination of the technologies that produce and process them. These present the centrality of visuality in both contexts of tourism (photography, gaze, seeing) and contemporary ethnographic practices and the ways that visual images tell and conceal stories concerning the production of knowledge in social science research.

Keywords

epistemology, reflexivity, critical inquiry, ethnomethodology, visual methods, embodiment

Tracing Encounters

My perspective involves shifting the human and social sciences from scientific paradigms to ethical-aesthetic paradigms. (Guattari, 1995, p.10)

One of the influential theses in tourism studies concerns the pervasive quality of tourism in the everyday lives and experiences of people living in contemporary societies. As John Urry (1995, p. 148) famously asserted, “People are tourists most of the time.” While Urry’s thesis concerns “people” in general, it might well be extended to address particular people in particular circumstances, namely, those who *research* tourists. Inspired by Guattari’s critical proposal in the epigraph, I will attempt to decenter a number of aspects of the “scientific paradigm” (i.e., positivist social science) by addressing situated practices that show how *social science is constructed vis-à-vis tourism*, which is to say how tourism-related aesthetics and epistemologies permeate research that is conducted in tourist sites.

What follows is an ethnomethodologically inspired reflexive account of an ethnographic research I conducted in a tourist heritage site located in Jerusalem, Israel, during the summer of 2006. The research focused on visitors’

inscriptions in a commemorative visitor book located at the site and presented a performative conceptualization of the book and of the inscriptions therein (more on this later). The tale I offer tells—and shows—how the coercive meanings of tourism pervade research, and moreover, how theoretical sensitivities that I used to research tourism sites and discourse, specifically performative approaches, can be re-used and re-applied critically and productively in order to re-search the very research of tourism.

Reflexivity has a prolific history in qualitative research, especially since its emergence into the frontage of social inquiry as part of the “reflexive turn” during the 1970s–1980s. Broadly, reflexivity promotes a view whereby “the scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand or represent” (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 486), and in discussions with positivistic social science it has been associated with the notion of validity, and has been one of the cornerstones of

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qualitative research. Yet validity cannot account in itself for the many critical researches and rich discussions that reflexivity has incited and inspired (Davies, 2008; Mruck, Roth, & Breuer, 2002; Roth, Breuer, & Mruck, 2003; Stronach, Garratt, Pearce, & Piper, 2007). Rather, I find the “reflexive spirit” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 481) so enriching because it “recommends an inquiry into the very possibilities of our unreflective knowledge and practices” (Macbeth, 2001, p. 37) and because insisting on it is trickier than it might initially seem: There are variations and subtleties of reflexivity with no simple checkmark that indicates whether a research is/is not reflexive, various critical approaches inform different reflexivities that are in turn embodied in different types of research practices (see Macbeth’s [2001] interesting distinction between textual and positional reflexivities), and in different fields reflexivity is pursued differently and assumes different meanings—in psychological research reflexive accounts untangle different questions than these accounts do in organizational research or in Critical Tourism Studies (which is the case at hand. See Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007, 2011).

This variation is of course not a problem but a resource, and it is available as such when reflexivity is viewed as a setting-dependent concept. Contrapositionist claims, scientific practices—and foremost among these methodological measures—are not merely “technical procedures” that are indifferent to or independent of the material and ideological environments where they are practiced. Rather, and similar to other institutional practices, scientific practices are situated actions that establish meanings, coherency, identities, and power relationships in given locales. By the notion of a situated action I refer to the fact that these practices transpire in specific, predesignated institutional environments (the lab, the ethnographic field, the laptop, etc.). Addressing the specific settings where these practices occur and the interrelations between them are essential for this reflexive analysis because it reexamines ethnography as it is pursued within the *setting of tourism* and specifically in the environment of a commemorative site. This is to say that the setting in which an ethnographic work takes place is not a passive object or a “container” (Noy, 2007b); it is dynamic and plays ideological roles by offering competing meanings and frames of interpretation for actions that are conducted therein.

In ethnomethodological terms (Garfinkel, 1967), my focus is on “doing being a social scientist” in a tourist site and on the subtle, and oftentimes tacit, practices whereby both social science and social scientists are simultaneously produced, or better: *performed*. These practices are usually “seen but unnoticed” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 41). More important, in order to capture these instances I use the term *reflexivity* in a particular way, which denotes a *sense of repetition* that the word carries. What I repeat, which is to say how I reflect on my research, concerns the very theoretical and

conceptual framework with which I have initially conducted my research at the heritage site. So what I offer here as a “method” for a reflexive account is not external to my research (of tourists’ inscriptions), but rather a reapplication of the conceptual framework that I have used—now unto the research itself (see Pollner, 1991, p. 372).

Reapplying conceptual sensitivities one uses in research unto oneself and unto one’s own research seems to me to be a rather subversive idea (and somewhat “ecological,” in the sense that here occurs a reuse or recycling of theory). In my study of the commemorative visitor book, the theoretical framework that I employed was that of performance studies in tourism. In the context of tourism, and specifically in the context of commemorative sites and museums, a performative re-rendering of fieldwork-related practices, aesthetics, and meanings is almost inevitable. The reason is that the research I conducted took place in an environment, *which is itself a performative setting; it is itself a public stage*.

Indeed, performative aspects in tourism, with its myriad public practices, appearances, technologies, materialities, mobilities, texts, and so on, are one of tourism’s constitutive features. Dean MacCannell (1976) has notably led the way in observing this, when he argued that tourist attractions (from restaurants to national commemoration halls) are constructed performatively as front stages. MacCannell’s observations were followed by inspiring works that conceptualized tourism as a performative context, where the details of various sites and the aesthetics and practices of those visiting them emerge as situated, negotiated performances. My favorites are Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1998) work, which studies the histories of museums, artifacts, and displays—so central to contemporary tourism, and how these are presented and framed so as to construct such notions as culture, heritage, authenticity, and the identities of those who consume these exhibits; Adler’s (1989) work on the styles and aesthetics of travel, where she offers a view of the trip itself as a form of art, and Edensor’s (1998) ethnography at the Taj Mahal, where he documented tourists’ in situ practices, which were the practices that established them as tourists at a symbolic site (see Bruner, 2005; Coleman & Crang, 2002; Desmond, 1999; Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Löfgren, 1999; Neumann, 1999). Phrased in performative terms, what MacCannell said was that tourists do not visit touristic sites and spaces, but rather they become tourists in and through the practices they perform while visiting these places. By addressing my research in a tourist site in line with these performative conceptualizations, I will propose the same: that my ethnographic actions were in effect public performances, which can be viewed in an illuminating way through the conceptual lenses of tourism research and which were aimed at establishing me as a researcher/ethnographer. This reflexive account was born precisely when I realized—only after the research had been completed and academic publications discussing it have appeared—that I too was a tourist of sorts

(observing, observable) and that my activities can and should be understood and addressed via performative lends.

Finally, my interests in the visual dimensions of social research and its representation are evinced, and with them, my interests in technology and artifacts of ethnographic research. Here, again, I intend to reapply theoretical sensitivities that I employed in the research itself: Researching the commemorative visitor book had made me realize how highly visual are the inscriptions therein, and this further suggested a multimodal approach that challenges the common textual approaches to discourse (verbocentric approaches that stress the verbal aspects of discourse; Blommaert, 2004; Kress, 2009; Noy, 2008a). Specifically within tourism studies, the turn to visual dimensions has resonated powerfully and with it the realization that visual sensitivities (for instance, how tourists see and how they are visually represented) are central to both tourism and its investigations (Crang, 1999; Stewart & Floyd, 2004).

The same holds true for technology and material culture in researched environments, and here, again, the performance approach that I used was organically tied to the material environment where the visitor book was located and to the technologies associated with writing in it. When I reexamine my research I do so with awareness to material aspects and to the devices that I used to produce these visual images (mainly to the cameras. See Latour, 2005; Noy, 2009). Hence, the visual images I use (five figures that are interspersed throughout the article) are not supplied only in an illustrative capacity but present also an attempt to re-evolve the visuality of the site/research and to produce a tale that is not limited to words (lightly evoking Ellis & Bochner's [2000] notion of a photographic essay).

From Ethnography of (Inscribed) Performances to Performing Ethnography

Before I address my ethnography reflexively, a number of points should be made with regards to the site I studied and to the focus of my work there. The Ammunition Hill National Memorial Museum (AHNMM) is part of a war commemoration complex located in (East) Jerusalem. Inaugurated in 1975, it is dedicated to the memory of the Israeli soldiers who died in the battle of Ammunition Hill during the Six-Day War in June 1967. The museum celebrates the victory of the Israeli Army over the Jordanian Legion, the "liberation" of East Jerusalem, and the "unification" of the city. It is a half-sunken building that is made to resemble the trenches and bunkers near by. In it, exhibits and information about the battle and about the overall campaign over Jerusalem are presented. Most of the exhibit features are commemorative, such as the Golden Wall of Commemoration on which the names of fallen soldiers are

inscribed, and a short film about the battle, narrated from the perspective of the soldiers who fought in it. Interestingly, many of the exhibits are discursive and have texts as part of the displayed artifacts themselves. These include letters that the soldiers who died sent to their families and loved ones, commemorative installations with the names and signatures of soldiers, generals' war diaries, and so on.

I chose the AHNMM because it seemed as a highly appropriate site to pursue my scholarly interests with performance studies, semiotics, and the study of mobilities and material culture in the context of contemporary tourism. These approaches converged in earlier research I did on backpackers' narrative performances (Noy, 2007a). At the AHNMM I sought to show how in the highly mobile sphere of tourism, texts' meanings emerge in particular material and ideological settings through the dialectics of mobility-immobility. For this reason, my research focused on a specific artifact, which embodied these dialectics and which I found truly mesmerizing, namely, the museum's visitor book.

I now resist the temptation to elaborate in detail on the artifact of the visitor book at the AHNMM, which functions as a commemorative device where acts of national commemoration are performed by visitors through writing. Suffice to say that I found this visitor book interesting because it is materially constructed in unique ways, which frame it as a commemorative stage—a highly public and symbolic media that invites aesthetized performances. These performances have the shape of written inscriptions that position their inscribers' identities in relation to the State of Israel and national military commemoration. In other words, the book is framed in a way that transforms its function from that of a conventional visitor book to that of a ritualistic and ideological commemorative device (Noy, 2008b). Briefly, this transformation is achieved by positioning of the book as the main artifact in the hall where it is placed, and the hall itself is located not near the entrance/exit of the museum (as is typically the case with visitor books) but rather deep inside the museum and near the innermost hall where the Golden Wall of commemoration is presented (Figure 1). The book is placed inside an impressive monument-like construction and has a formidable appearance: It is wide and thick and is made of parchment (and not paper). On each of the book's pages four symbols are printed, including those of the State of Israel, the Israeli Army, the Municipality of Jerusalem, and the logo of the site.

The book's large pages have no marks directing visitors as to how or where to inscribe write (Figure 2, below). This leaves the decisions as to what and how to write in the book in the hands of the visitors (literally), who indeed turn up with highly creative and graphic inscriptions. In analyzing these inscriptions I showed that there exists a vivid combination of verbal and visual signs (multimodality a-la Kress, 2009), and I presented an analysis of the meanings they



Figure 1. Hall and visitor book (left, near bottom)

establish and identities that they aesthetically perform (I referred to the aesthetics of texts, visual signs, and their combination). In addition to examining visitors' inscriptions and viewing them in terms of *traces of fleeting encounters*, I also examined the practices involved in producing (writing) these ideological texts, which were usually a collaborative work in which a number of visitors were involved (such as family and group members). Finally, I conducted short interviews with the visitors upon their leaving the site, where I inquired about their experiences and about writing in the visitor book, and asked for their consent for using the visual data—I did this only at the end of their visit because I was interested in capturing naturally occurring interactions inside institutional spaces.

The point of the above is that in performative settings, employing performative sensibilities by the ethnographer is not and cannot be restricted only to the "objects" of research, that is, tourists' aesthetic inscriptions. As indicated, it was admittedly sometime after I completed the work at the AHNMM that I came to review my research there in terms of performance: I turned my gaze (perhaps the "tourist gaze"? Urry, 1990) away from the museum exhibits and from (other) visitors and begun pondering my own presence and actions there in terms of aesthetic practices and roles that resemble, correspond, and echo those conducted by tourists. I was able to review my activities there performatively because performance does not necessarily assume a *conscious social actor*, that is, a social actor who intently (deliberately) engages in theatrical performance. Instead, modes of performance emerge contextually and are (often inadvertently) consequences of material settings and technologies (Latour, 2005; Noy, 2009).

Redoing Ethnography at a Heritage Site

I will now turn to examine a number of selected research practices, which, when taken from the perspective of scientific discourse establish my work and identity as "scientific." Yet social-institutional roles and the sets of practices that establish—perform—they are never semiotically fixed. I owe the idea to Goffman (1974) that alternative and competing frames are always present and can be observed if explored carefully. This is notable in cases where researchers work in highly ideological and institutional settings. Pursuing this line of inquiry affords gaining insights into the construction of academic knowledge and the practices that are employed at this aim. Three phases or "moments" of research are examined immediately below, which include (1) my actual presence in situ (a prerequisite of ethnographic work and of tourism), (2) practices associated with collecting (data), and (3) issues relating to representation (in the form of academic publication).

In Situ or Being (Looked At) There

Our point of departure is rather banal and concerns the fact that as part of my study at the AHNMM I visited the site often and spent time there. Heidegger's (1962) concept of Dasein comes to my mind as I reflect on this period, suggesting an ontological realization of my "ethnographic presence" in situ. Literally defined as "life" or "being," and commonly taken to mean being-in-the-world or being there, Dasein is helpful in acknowledging the existential aspects of embodying particular spaces and places. The term "being" touches on an existential notion of presence, a Heideggerian being-in-the-world that underlies many theories of performance. This sense of Being is not abstract and has times and spaces as possibilities of materialization and designates particular locals in which "being" transpires. While this is true in general, it is complicated for ethnographic inquiry, which is a particularly situated and embodied endeavor pursued in distinct sites and in line with rather prescribed sets of practices. This type of being-in-the-world (-of-ethnographic-research) concerns the meanings and implications of being in physical and ideological confines of various places. We can say that as a form of research, ethnography concerns *being*—observing, interviewing, writing, recording, participating, interacting, sensing, and so on.—*there*: in situ.

A few examples show the uniqueness of Dasein when viewed within the ideologies and epistemologies characteristic of modern travels' and tourists' encounters. These are illustrations of observable and traceable presence of the ethnographer who is also the tourist-grapher in a symbolic heritage site. First, and on a very basic level, the (noticeable) presence of my research installation, which included a

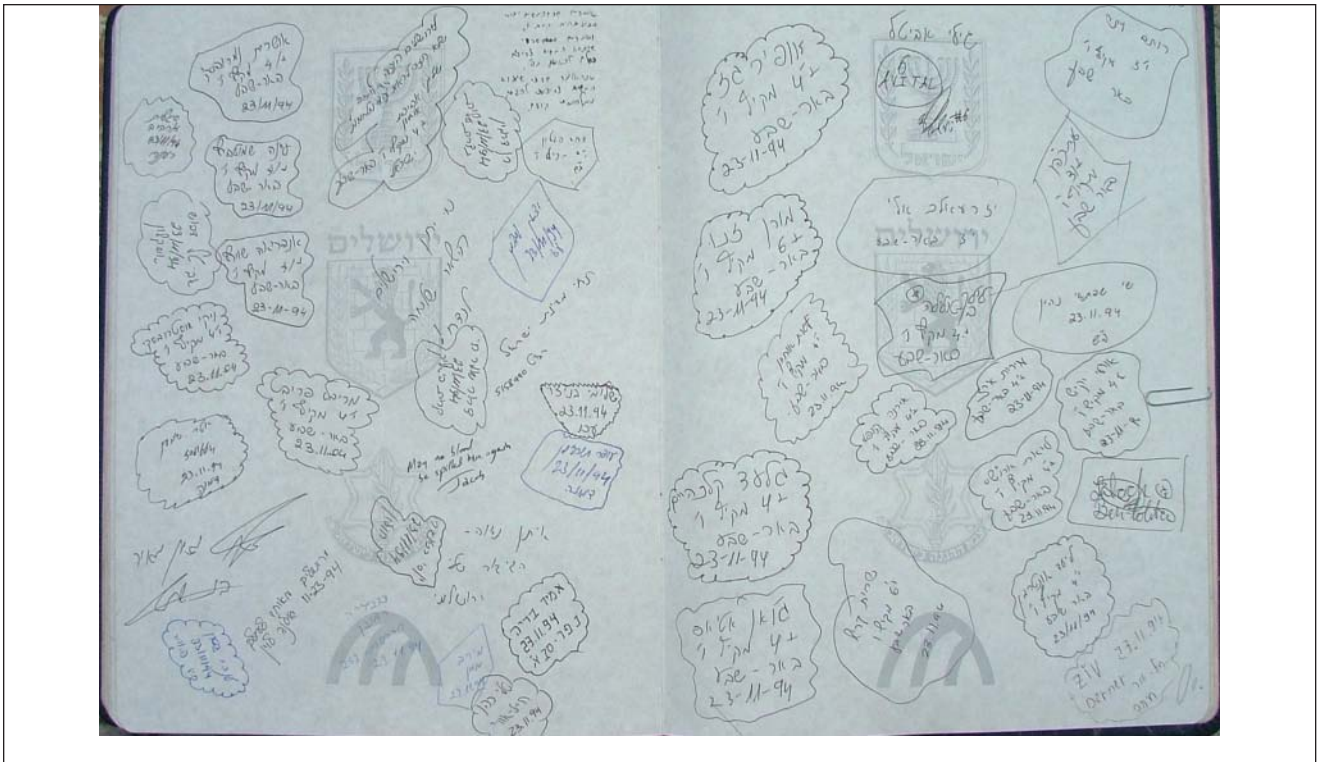


Figure 2. Inscriptions: Traces

notebook, tripod, camera, and video recorder, drew some attention from visitors. This is not very surprising, considering that these devices were located *inside* the museum's exhibition spaces and that museum goers tend to be curious about objects that they think are part of the display. Viewing the video recordings that I took reveals the interest visitors exhibited in this regard. They approached the devices and examined them, sometimes looking directly into the cameras' lenses while discussing their possible meanings with fellow visitors. It seems that this was the visitors' way of indicating that the research apparatus is part of what *they* take to be the *display*. So while in these circumstances I thought that my equipment was meant to *document the exhibits and the visitors*, visitors' reactions and comments indicate that for them the equipment *amounted* to an exhibit. The video recordings captured a number of instances where I had to approach visitors and ask them to avoid manipulating the cameras (I had actually forgotten these uneasy instances). While the motivations behind these interventions of mine are obvious, the point is that in the museum's symbolic space these interactions illustrate an expression of authority on my behalf, marking myself (and the devices that I brought with me) off from common visitors and display, thus situating myself above them in terms of the institutional authority and the respected range of actions that are available to us.

The authority on which I was acting rested on the institutional approval that I had received with regards to conducting research there. The question of accessing the field (receiving approval from gatekeepers, physically approach the site, and so on) is never trivial, mostly so in ethnographic studies. Hence in an early stage of my research I met with Mr. Kahaner, who is the Head of the AHNMM Society of Friends and the institution's central authority figure. Mr. Kahaner was introduced to me as a celebrated veteran paratrooper, who had served in the army many years and had fought in a number of wars. The meeting went ok, but at one point Mr. Kahaner looked boldly into my eyes and stated, "If our soldiers wouldn't have died here, you and your friends up there [he pointed at the direction of Mount Scopus, which is the location of the campus of the Hebrew University] wouldn't have been able to do your academic work and research." The subtext was clear. I would be granted entrance to the site, but I should be indebted twice: personally—to Mr. Kahaner for allowing me to conduct research there, and collectively—to all the soldiers who died there and whose sacrifice allowed academic (intellectual) life. Mr. Kahaner was apparently acting in line with the site's agenda: He was performing commemorative ideology with/on me.¹

Yet a second subtext was also apparent, which concerned gender and specifically masculinity. Confronting me in the

way he did (eyeballing), and opposing (dead) combat soldiers with academics (pursuing ethnography) suggested a symbolic duel between modes of hegemonic masculinity. Since I was never a combat soldier, the gate that the gatekeeper had opened for me was to be ever gendered; it repeatedly presented me with the point that the site is highly masculine and that my masculinity, too, is being prompted throughout my research there.

Returning to my visits in situ, a second case of the observable and traceable presence of the ethnographer concerns the fact that my own embodied presence at the site also drew the visitors' reactions, both directly and indirectly. On a number of occasions I was addressed directly with inquiries regarding the museum's facilities (location of restrooms, etc.). On a couple of occasions Ultra-Orthodox Jewish visitors approached me and announced in a confronting way (though smilingly), that "the Messiah will come!" I was not witty enough so as to ask them why *I* should be the addressee of these assertions, yet the context was clear to me as in the visitor book itself there are confronting and subversive anti-Zionist inscriptions, which challenge the national and military narrative that is told at the site. In still other cases, I was approached with requests to take pictures of visitors near the national flag and the visitor book.

Indirect references to my presence were also made, usually in the shape of whispers, chuckles, and sneak glances, which revealed that my presence was a matter of/for visitors' observation and comments. One memorable instance occurred while I was attending to my video camera and did not notice that a few high school students approached the hall nearby. Since I was absorbed with my apparatus I did not realize that the youths were able to observe me, when I suddenly heard the surprised call from the first of these youths to have noticed me: "Wow! I thought it's a sculpture! Look!" Since the video camera was recording, the tape clearly discerns this cry and the student's hand pointing in my direction. Indeed, why should my figure, bent over the camera and tripod in an empty, darkly lighted museum hall, not be taken to be a statue, which is to say why should the researcher not be taken in the context of a museum to be a display? If in this context I am not viewed as a visitor, what else might I be *doing there*? What else might my actions *there* embody, and in whose (ideological) eyes is my presence acknowledged and evaluated? What are the other interpretative possibilities available for visitors who encounter the ethnographer in situ? In any case, the video camera recorded the momentarily surprise—actually, a horrific moment, where what seemed to the youth walking ahead of his friends to be an inanimate commemorative sculpture suddenly started moving. This moment of animation might have amounted in the eyes of the visitor an act of resurrection (which would have actually concurred with the institutions' commemorative ideology, which seeks to "bring to life" the fallen soldiers).

Lastly, my embodied presence and activities in situ were also captured by the devices that I used in order to document visitors' activities and the inscriptions in the visitor book. Somewhat paradoxically (and reflexively), the ethnographic footage has images of my own body crossing the frame somewhat ghostly (always looking away from the camera). At other times I am recorded talking on my mobile phone or writing notes in my notebook (Figure 3, below). I acknowledge here the role of the recording devices I used. I follow Latour's (2005) line of thought as I realize that in these circumstances the video camera, which was operating continuously, had its own role and performed its own agency: Once operating it did not discern between me and the (other) visitors. From the perspective of the ("dumb") camcorder my figure does not enjoy any particular (esteemed) status, and I am caught in the frame (framed?) just like any other visitor in the museum. Perhaps a bit like a scarecrow that manages to scare not only birds but also the person who set it up, once operating the camera performs work that is social (the framing of what is within its vision) and is unbiased in doing so. The camera's framing, therefore, accomplished something that, for the device of the field note, would be difficult: It (re)positions and (re)presents me inside the museum and it does so on the same grounds as it does to other visitors, as if saying, "You, too, are observed."

The picture in Figure 3 (above, produced from video footage) shows me walking across the hall, while at the background two (other) visitors are writing in the visitor book. I am carrying my bag from the left part of the room (where the camera is located) to the right side, where a half-empty coffee glass can be seen. Observe that in the picture of the hall in Figure 1 (above) my field notebook is visible. It rests on the edge of the short wall on the right side, and there it corresponds with the visitor book as another writing surface where things are documented via handwriting and where performances are established.

Note that the image in the first figure (Figure 1, above) also captures something of my equipment in situ: At the very right my dark bag can be observed and above it the field notebook. Positioned as it is, the notebook corresponds with the inscribing surface to its left, which is of course the visitor book. The point is that both are documenting devices that produce traces: The visitor book helps produce the (public) traces of the visitors' encounters, and the ethnographic notebook produces the traces of those traces, that is, of visitors' interactions with the book.

What these illustrations share is the delineation of the ethnographer's presence in situ. They supply documented instances that make the presence of the ethnographer visible and embodied, and therefore, traceable and accountable. All these interactions not only record my "being there" but also propose social frames and interpretations of understanding the roles I performed in the site's symbolic

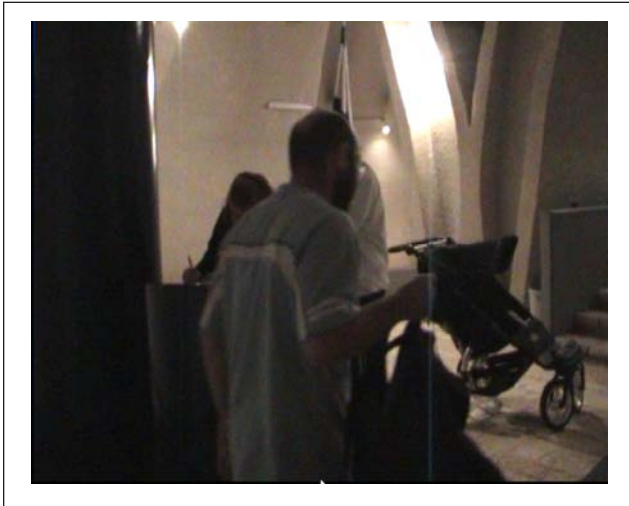


Figure 3. (Un)observed?: Researcher

space. These are situated interpretations that do not necessarily construct me as a “researcher,” which is how I would have had it, but as an involved actor whose social actions and roles are negotiable. It is worth noting that once I had obtained the management’s official approval to conduct research at the AHNMM and had pursued my research there, the research *became* part of the setting, and addressing me with questions regarding the location of the restrooms (before I explicitly indicated that I am a “researcher,” which happened when the visitors left the site) was actually not out of place.

Documenting Encounters

Having (re)positioned myself at the site, my accounts for traveling to the AHNMM play a crucial role in the construction and framing of myself as a social scientist: Unlike tourists and visitors I (tell myself that I) did not travel to the site for pleasure and sightseeing or for paying respect to national commemoration. Instead (so I continue) I went there to research, which is to say to collect data that would be relevant for my study and that is available only there (researchers collect data). Yet in the context of contemporary tourism and museums, practices of collecting and the resultant collections are matters of much ideological concern. With regards to museums, Stewart (1993, p. 161) observed that “[i]t is the museum, not the library, which must serve as the central metaphor of the collection.” It is less important now which of these institutions—museum or academia—is more pervasive, but their comparison (and competition) rests on what they have in common. More recently, Macdonald (2006, pp. 81, 95) noted that, “[t]he idea of the museum has become fundamental to collecting practices *beyond* the museum . . . practices that cannot only

produce knowledge about objects but also configure particular ways of knowing and perceiving.” Collecting practices confirm authenticity with its esteemed cultural capital because by establishing collections institutions perform the power they have in terms of practices of accessing, obtaining, transporting, preserving, and presenting esteemed objects and artifacts.

But tourists, too, are great at collecting, as practices of both collecting and documenting (accessing, obtaining, photographing, transporting, etc.) are constitutive to the role of the tourist. By their definition as such, tourists expect and are expected to encounter exceptional sites and sights and to attempt to “preserve the moment” by employing various technologies of documentation. Being a tourist in this regard concerns being alert to aesthetic and otherwise notable sceneries and attractions, together with the willingness to and possibility of recollecting them at a later point. For tourists, pictures, videos, and souvenirs of sorts provide strong evidence of authenticity and resources for convincing storytelling and reminiscing and are part and parcel of the practices that establish the social role of the tourist and the cultural capital involved (Edensor, 1998; Noy, 2007a).

Finally, much of the aura of authenticity involved in collections is also associated with empirical scientific research (sometimes this is evinced in zones of overlap between these institutions; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Macdonald, 2006). Similar to the ideologies, resources, and authorities that are involved in gathering precious museum collections, researchers too pursue various practices of collecting, which are usually referred to by technical terminology (i.e., “data-collecting methods”). Indeed, many of the scientific practices I engaged in during my stint at the AHNMM, which involved documenting practices and technologies, were surely enough used by the very visitors that I observed and documented.

Typical of empirical research, what I “brought back” from the field can be conceptualized *as souvenirs* that add up to a *collection* (Stewart, 1993). My focus now is not on methods of analysis or interpretation but on acknowledging that series of documents and images are gathered in situ and transposed from the field unto the workplace (the traditional stationary “lab,” which can nowadays be a portable laptop). For this aim I used in my work field notes, audio recordings, digital documentation of various documents, video recordings, and combinations thereof.

Since my research focused on the site’s impressive visitor book, I duly produced digital copies of a number of complete volumes: the one that was presented during the time I was there and a number of additional volumes that I retrieved from site’s archives. Through this documentation process I produced in effect a *comprehensive collection of copies of pages of visitor books* that amounts to a second-order type of documentation of the commemorative site’s corpus of visitor books. Figure 4 (below) shows a small portion of the

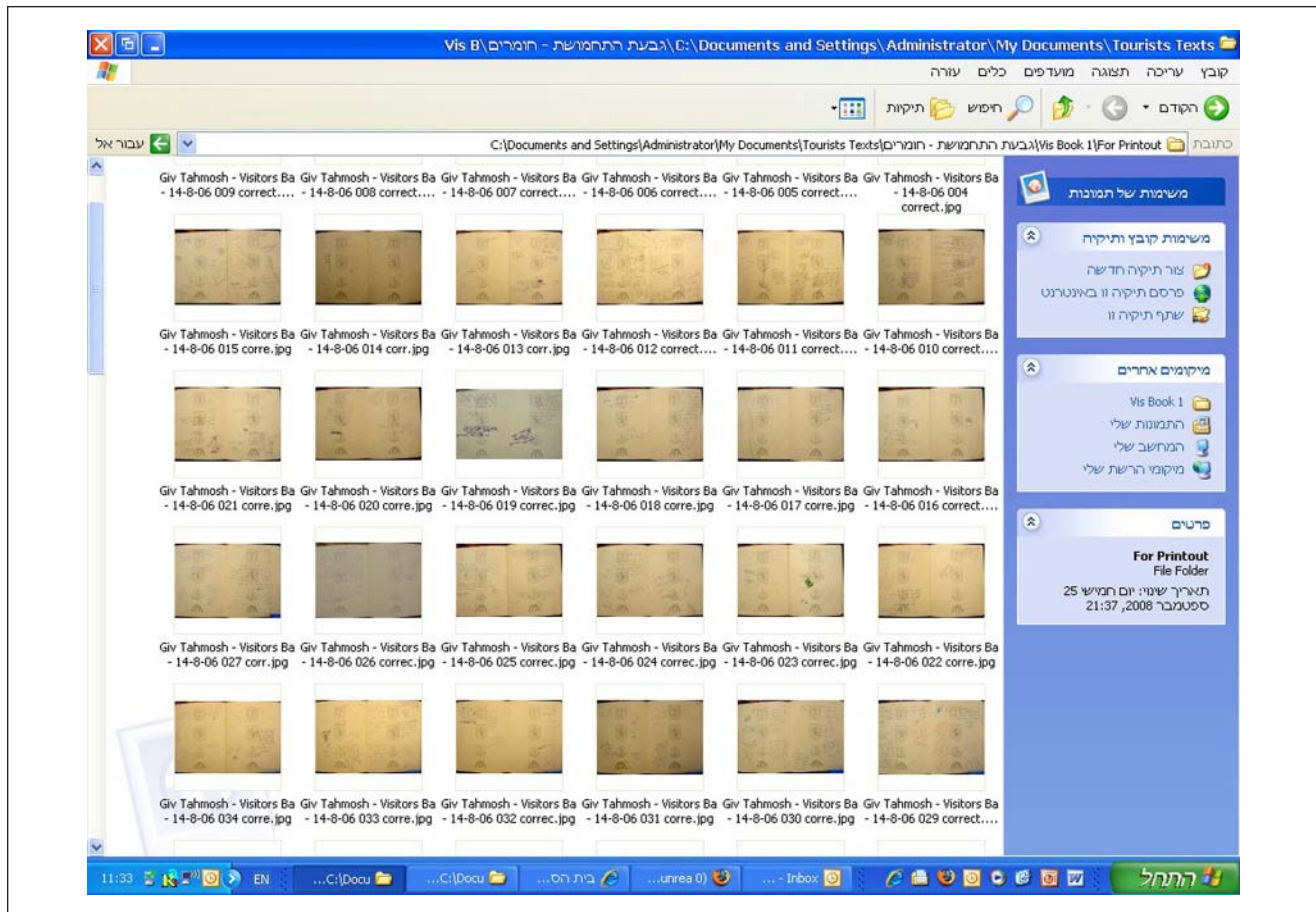


Figure 4. Documenting²

digital collection of pages (24 pages), visible on my personal computer's screen. The digital collection includes high-quality pictures of hundreds of pages, by which the content and appearance of over 10 separate volumes can be reconstructed. Under each image information is supplied (file name, date, etc.), thus (re)framing these images as research data to be analyzed (i.e., scientific discourse, or what Laurier [2003, p. 138] calls a "retrieval dataset"), rather than as authentic commemorative artifacts (which is how they are framed by the museum). Nonetheless, these are authentic reproductions (Young, 1991).

The caption Documenting² evokes the reflexive quality of *documenting documents* (again, reflexivity in the sense of a repeated measure, that of researching research or capturing a device that serves to capture). As I produced and then documented images of pages of the commemorative book, I kept in mind that the book is itself an ideological vehicle of documentation whereby visitors' entries are recorded, documented, and publically presented. These images are thus located within an ecology of commemoration that fuels an ideological manipulation of documents (such as the framing of the visitor book as a emotional and

ideological interface positioned in the heart of the museum). An awareness of the gesture of documenting documents is the same as researching research or ethnographizing ethnography; these are all instances of how the same means that are used *for* scientific inquiry can be critically used *of* the same.

The image in Figure 4 was produced by a screen capturing software—itsself a photographic/documenting device. It shows not only the digital collection I compiled, that is, high-resolution images of visitor book pages, but also the new context unto which they have been transposed. The figure's frame reveals the context where these images are (re)presented. For instance, on the bottom Microsoft Windows Ruler is observed (the Hebrew version), where we learn that other programs are operating. The point is that this is not merely a new context but a highly visual environment with its own rules, aesthetics, preferences, and ideological modes of representation and meanings.

I am presently stressing the similarities between various institutional practices—tourists, museums, and researchers, but crucial differences do exist of course. For instance, in all my visits there never once did I see a tourist *taking pictures*

of the visitor book, which was my favorite attraction! Being the authentic and aesthetic artifact it is, I wonder why would it not be perceived as a worthy tourist attraction to be photographed and cherished? It seems to me that different social actors have different interests and gazes; we do not only look at *different things* but we look at them *differently* (see Goodwin, 1994). These differences are crucial, but as I indicated, I am presently more interested in the similarities and affinities between my work and the practices and modes of constructing identities and knowledge at the AHNMM.

Re/presentation: Dis/emodied

The third and last moment that plays importantly in the situated construction of the research/er and consequently of disciplined scientific knowledge involves representation. While the two moments examined earlier have received relatively little attention in the literature, much has been written about scientific modes of representation in the social sciences (the famous “rhetoric of representation”; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Travel and tourism are of course represented in and through an abundance of writing genres and media, from the (modern) letters and postcards to emails, blogs, and so on, sometime bunched together under the overarching title of “travel writing” (visitor books included). Yet much of the academic literature had a textual focus and did not address other areas such as elaborately embodied practices and issues of visibility and gaze. While both ideologies of commemoration and tourism promote certain types of embodiment in the capacity of arousing patriotic sentiments and emotional and sensuous involvement, scientific representation is marked by a disembodied seeming with the aim of establishing neutrality and objectivity (Young, 1989, 1991). This is in line with Western culture’s view of the body (organs, secretions, etc.), which traditionally occupies lower cultural statuses than the more abstract notions of rationality and intellectualism (Bakhtin, 1968).

In what follows, one last figure is presented. It too is visual rather than textual, though it incorporates inscriptions and in this sense tells of the subsuming of texts within visual artifacts and culture. Before examining the image (Figure 5, below), another look at the image in Figure 2 is needed. The image in Figure 2 shows inscriptions written across a visitor book spread. Since these are the texts that I analyzed, they are viewed suitable for scientific presentation, and expectedly images of this type have appeared in my publications concerning the AHNMM study (for instance, Noy, 2008b, pp. 180, 190). Yet this image is somewhat manipulated. When compared to the image in Figure 5, which originate with the same picture but without my intervention, a few differences are noticeable. These differences reveal story. First, in order to produce an image of satisfactory scientific quality I had to move the visitor books I

photocopied out of the dimly lit archive (where they are stored), and into a convenient outdoor location. The margins of the photo in Figure 5 tell-by-showing the story of the image’s production: One can see the stones that are part of the wall outside the building (typically made of “Jerusalem stone”), where I positioned the book in order to photocopy it conveniently. (Also, one can notice a paperclip, which I attached to right side of the book in order to keep the pages from bending [also noticeable in Figure 2]. These paperclips are not a physical part of the object of the book and served as little prostheses when my hands were busy holding the camera at the right distance.)

The second difference is that my toes are showing—peeking out of my leather sandals (it was summer), at the very bottom of the image. These are the researcher’s footsteps (literally speaking): They are evidences of the *embodied presence of the researcher taking the picture in situ*. In the slightly processed version (Figure 2), the physical context of the image’s (re)production and the embodied presence of the researcher were erased, as they were deemed irrelevant and even distracting in terms of the scientific discursive analysis of texts. The original picture takes the shape of a purified and disembodied “scientific” (re)presentation, which conceals the story of its production. This act of cleansing of my body from the reproduced image presents a(nother) step away from Heidegger’s embodied Dasein (with its traces), toward a decontextualized representation of the type that is (still) all too common in the social sciences (for a discussion of the primarily visual practices of “scientification” in tourism studies see Jafari, 2001).

In the context of modern tourism it represents the production of difference: This is a scientific image and not a tourist souvenir or an emotional commemorative display. If tourists commonly position themselves *inside* the frame, thus authenticating their presence at the site; social scientists usually do the reverse. This is why the image conveys the larger story of bodies and embodied traces at the AHNMM. It conveys the dual embodiments and available traces of the actual presence of both the visitors—who signed in the visitor book, *and* of the researcher—who documented their inscriptions and in order to do so had followed their path and journeyed to the site.

The image’s story carries also gender undertones. Returning to representations and performances of masculinity, the notions of rationality and scholarism have been tightly associated with hegemonic of esteemed modes of masculinity and so has been the figure of the tourist (initially conceived as White, colonial male; Aitchison, 1999). Masculinity has been specifically addressed in relation to heritage sites, which, as does the AHNMM, often band together nationalism, militarism, and masculinity in an unproblematized fashion. Such sites “articulate masculinised notions of place and identity, and male



Figure 5. Twofold embodied: Visitors' and researcher' traces

dominated versions of the past which privilege white, male, heterosexual experience and activity" (Edensor & Kothari, 1994, p. 165). Reintroducing the (researcher's) body into the research and into modes of representation thereof amounts to a move against hegemonic masculinity, both in academic research and in (heritage) tourism. It amounts to a move against the ideal, disembodied, and impeccable forms of representation of dead men/soldiers that govern the AHNMM and other sites of national commemoration.

Further and more critically, I am brought to rethink the meeting with Mr. Kahaner, the site's masculine gatekeeper, not in terms of a dual between one mode of masculinity (academic/intellectual) and another (militaristic/patriotic) but in terms of collaboration of modes of hegemonic masculinity. The fact is that I was approved and granted a free hand with all having to do with the research at the AHNMM, and who can tell whether this would have been the case if I had not been male or an academic (or of a particular ethnic background, for that matter).

In Figure 5 I am both taking the picture and framed within it, as the camera in my hands inadvertently captures my body standing by the visitor book. Unlike visitors who

inscribe in it, I take pictures of the book and I manifest additional rights as I manipulate and move it about (recall that the object of the visitor book is framed as an immovable, monument-like symbolic device).

Return of the Actor: Back From the Field/Trip

[T]races of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel. (Benjamin, 1986, p. 92)

The whole question is to see whether the *event* of the social can be extended all the way to the *event* of the reading through the medium of the text. . . . [A] good account will *perform* the social. (Latour, 2005, pp. 133, 138)

My wish to act reflexively in the shape of a reexamination of ethnographic practices at the AHNMM is part of an interest—a desire—to “return to the scene.” This return performs a Derridian “trace,” suggesting that while an actual

(physical and crude) return is impossible, whether we like it or not we are in fact continuously connected or associated (to use Latourian language) to the scenes we study and in which we physically perform(ed). As in performative auto-ethnographic works, in this reflexive account/recount I returned to the initial scene of my research at the AHNMM, a (re)turn that was made possible by both verbal and visual links and associations. These associations manifest the power of stories. Though in different wording but of similar essence, Walter Benjamin and Bruno Latour (above) argue for the performative power of stories and the traces they embody. For Benjamin (and Derrida after him) these are illusive traces; for Latour, who specifically addresses scientific documents, the text is itself a social agent capable of changing social reality. (It is not surprising that Latour presents theatrical sensitivities—after all, it is no coincidence that Actor-Network Theory uses the term “actor.”) Our texts are powerful performances as they theatrically conjure the realities and the social actors that they describe. So in a sense, this reflexive ethnographic tale is not so much about encounters as it is about the *traces of encounters*—tourists’ and my own. Or, even more accurately, it is about that elusive moment where the binary distinction between the two, that is, between encounters and their traces—dissolves.

I undertook this reflexive gesture because it offered a way to critically redress and unload the meanings of the ethnographic performance at the highly symbolic and ideological site I studied. As I approached the site I conceived of a number of social roles, primarily the tourist and the museum curator/personnel, which were points of reference for my own identity there. Eventually, however, I realized that I performed all the roles possible in the given setting: those of the museum goer and of an affiliate with the commemoration ideology. As I showed, I too visited the site/was a visitor, and took pictures and collected souvenirs and collections (even if “scientific”). At the same time, I was openly accepted by the AHNMM’s management because they now had their own “researcher” and because they realized—perhaps correctly—that the practices of social science *reproduce images* and indeed in this article, as in others, I have reproduced aspects of the site.

So this reflexive story tries to redress what I did in situ. As such, it has some correspondence with tourists’ narratives in the sense that it incorporates visual images, which are essential for its plot’s progress. In this I tried not only to echo the central role that images and visibility play in the cultures of tourism but also to critically incorporate sensitivities from the field of visual studies and their productive impact on the larger social sciences. One more point, the account walks a thin line between critical reexamination and nostalgia (that “felt lack,” which is a “social disease”; Stewart, 1993, p. 23), so central to both the tourism experience and commemoration ideologies. I

tried avoiding nostalgia precisely by redressing positivist scientific practices explicitly and the ideologies that come to work at the site explicitly.

Finally, on an autobiographical note I should mention that up until my work at the AHNMS I have not conducted ethnography in museums. And it was not until I presented earlier versions of this reflexive account that it occurred to me that the notion of a *return to the site* in the context of revisiting museums bears a profound personal meaning: Upon the establishment of the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem in 1965, Mayor Teddy Kollek invited my mother, Dr. Tamar Yizraeli-Noy to curate the museum’s impressive prehistory hall. My mother accepted the invitation and acted as the Israeli museum’s prehistory curator for roughly three decades. You can imagine how many childhood mornings and afternoons I spent roaming through the museum’s halls and exhibitions. More captivating than the public halls were the restricted spaces in the underground levels (the museum’s “backstages”), where the restoration department and the storage halls were located and where (other) visitors could not enter. The implication of *this* realization will supply the material for another (reflexive) story, yet to be told.

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Note

1. Note that the assertion is inaccurate: The Ammunition Hill is located beyond the 1967 borders (i.e., the Green Line), while the Mt. Scopus campus is actually inside these borders.

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Bio

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