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# TOUR GUIDES AS CULTURAL MEDIATORS

## Performance and Positioning

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### **Introduction: Hosts, Guests and Mediators**

This special issue devotes comparative and ethnographic attention to the topic of the tour guide as cultural mediator.<sup>1</sup> Based on studies in a panoply of countries (UK, Israel, Peru, Cuba, Réunion, Germany) and sites (museums, pilgrimages, casual street-guiding, mountain treks, folkloric displays), we demonstrate how various settings, power relations, and tourist gazes enable or constrain intercultural guiding performances. Tour guides embody a wide range of roles, cultures and positions on the tourism stage. Their presentation of “their” culture to others carries a certain authority and implicates them in positions towards aspects of their own culture and those of the tourists that they may come to acknowledge, appreciate or resist over time. Thus, approaching tour guides as cultural mediators offers new insights into the anthropology of tourism and cultural contact as a whole.

The anthropology of tourism was first conceptualized under the rubric of host-guest relations (Smith 1977). In their retrospective survey, Candea and da Col (2012) asserted that “hospitality” could be a term no less productive to think with than “the gift”, which has generated a multitude of reflections and research since Marcel Mauss’ initial work produced nearly a century ago. The past three decades have witnessed a shift from the conceptualization of tourism as an interaction of “hosts and guests” (Smith 1977), to the processes of institutionalization and commodification that underlie the “hospitality

industry” (Greenwood 1989; Cohen 1988; Watson & Kopachevsky 1994). While the “gift of hospitality” is often promoted by tour operators and vacation destinations, this classification mystifies and obscures the economic relations between visitors and service providers in the tourism industry (Candea & da Col 2012).

As empirical research at tourist venues increased, and postcolonial movements removed the veil of innocence from many taken-for-granted practices of power (such as exoticization), anthropological and sociological studies of tourism often turned their attention to the power differentials of the tourism encounter and the practices that propagate it. Foucault’s medical gaze was adapted by John Urry (Urry & Larsen 2011) to describe the power of the tourist gaze: how it is propagated through media images, itineraries, and discourses; how it changes as a result of socio-historical processes in the touring society, and how it affects the toured culture. These gazes often extend and mask the oppressive relations of financial and social inequality (Crick 1989). They were also reproduced by management-oriented tourism research and the neo-liberal values of performativity, consumerism and profitability that have dominated those research interests (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan 2010: 887)

Under the influence of the critical turn in anthropology and sociology, the notion of “culture” was called into question in tourist studies (Ateljevic et al. 2005), as the integrated (and isolated) whole

societies, often promoted by tourist industry literature (“romantic Paris”, “exotic Thailand”) were examined in detail. This led to the application of new analytic categories of class, race, ethnicity, gender, etc. Thus, empirical research began to ask “which natives?”, “what kind of tours?”, “what kind of tourists?”

Most “natives” do not engage with tourists. Rather, the encounter – especially in the framework of the guided tour – is specific to certain members of the “host” culture and certain members of the “guest” group. It usually takes place in contact zones or what Ed Bruner called “touristic border zones”: “distinct meeting places between the tourists who come forth from their hotels and the local performers, the ‘natives’, who leave their homes to engage the tourists in structured ways in predetermined localities for defined periods of time” (Bruner 2004: 17; cf. Edensor 2001: 63–64). In such spaces, the tourists and locals can be considered to be actors improvising their interactions (Bruner 2004: 19). Among the most prominent persons inhabiting such zones, and often demarcating them, are tour guides. A nuanced look at the performances and perceptions of guides in a variety of situations can thus teach us a great deal about the cultures and their boundaries as reflected and shaped through the tourist encounter.

J. Christopher Holloway (1981: 385–386) was the first to place mediation at the centre of tour guide analysis, citing the multiplicity of roles played by tour guides acting variously as directors, choreographers, stage hands and virtuoso performers. (Note the theatrical metaphor and suggestion of performance that we return to in this special issue). Among the roles he lists are: information-giver and fountain of knowledge, teacher or instructor, motivator and initiator into the rites of tourist experiences, missionary or ambassador for their country, entertainer or catalyst for the group, confidant, shepherd and ministering angel, group leader and disciplinarian. We find a similar approach to the guide taken in Erik Cohen’s path-breaking article (1985) where he provided a classification of tour guide roles into pathfinder, animator, mediator and communicator. In the guide’s communicative role,

processes of selection, provision of information, interpretation and fabrication make sites and societies accessible and interesting for visitors. The communicative role, in which interpretation is the essential component, Cohen adds, becomes most prominent as the tourism infrastructure and institutionalization expand, while new roads, signage, communication and infrastructure may make the pathfinder’s role superfluous.

Heidi Dahles writes that:

Guides [...] sell images, knowledge, contacts, souvenirs, access, authenticity, ideology and sometimes even themselves; their knowledge of the local culture is not limited to facts, figures and other *couleur locale*, it includes the art of building a network, of monopolizing contacts, a familiarity with the operations of the tipping and commissions system [...] Successful guides know how to turn their social relations and narratives into a profitable enterprise. (Dahles 2002: 784)

Insofar as they master this role, they may be classified as culture brokers (Salazar 2014). The guide integrates the tourists they guide into the visited setting as well as insulates them from that setting. They do this by interposing themselves between the party and the environment, thus making it non-threatening to the tourist. They thereby come to represent the party to the setting, as well as the setting to the party (Cohen 1985: 13). Thus, the guide may bridge conflicted relations and build understanding across communities, as in Sarajevo (Causevic & Lynch 2011) or up the Falls Road, Belfast (Skinner 2016). Alternatively, guiding may perpetuate power relations inherent in colonialism and Orientalist understandings of “natives” (Bruner 2004: 33–70; Bunten 2008, 2015; Crick 1989).

More recently, Weiler and Black (2014: 32–43) developed and modified Cohen’s typology, employing an expansive use of the term “mediation” in tour guiding to include provision of access, encounters, understanding and empathy. This includes mediation between visitors and destinations, within tour groups (this subsumes Cohen’s “animator” category

ry) and within individuals as guides to inner journeys (Weiler & Black 2015: 266). They claim that with the shift to an experience economy, the communicative role has been to some extent pre-empted by media (including social media), so that dramaturgical and interactive skills have become more important in tailoring tours to the individualized demands of the public. Insofar as what tourists are seeking is to broaden their *experience* (rather than obtain information or access to places) and become “co-producers” of tours, the broker of experience and the “mediator” are synonymous (Weiler & Black 2015: 365–366; Salazar, this issue).

We have chosen to frame the various guide roles and tasks discussed in the articles in this issue as “cultural mediators”, rather than “brokers” (Salazar, this issue), in order to highlight the multiplex, performative, interactive dimensions of guiding as well as the fluidity of the “cultures” they seek to negotiate. Brokers negotiate between distinct entities and demonstrate their mastery of manoeuvring and translation – the stock market crashes, the brokers move on to the next cushy job. Guides are often heavily invested in their work, and their performance is often inseparable from their persona. The “cultures” they negotiate are often those they feel they belong to, and their representation to others may demand intense emotional labour. “Mediation”, for us, conveys the tentativeness, the liminality and the vulnerability of being in the middle.

The articles in this issue place much emphasis on the guide’s performative role but, rather than positing a progressive change in forms – say from information to experience (Weiler & Black 2015) – they demonstrate the need for grounding the multiplicity of guide-tourist interactions in specific local histories, power situations and institutional frames. Cohen (1985) points to this multiplicity by outlining some of the constraints of the guiding frame (cf. Bras & Dahles 1999). The structure of the tour and its marketing may facilitate certain roles for guides, while marginalizing others. To give an example, Heidi Dahles (2002) uses her example of the state control of guiding in Indonesia to demonstrate the constraints that the political context may

impose on guides’ behaviour. Some countries, sites and institutions exert a great deal of control over guide narratives, either through intensive training courses which limit guides’ explanations to tightly-controlled scripts, or through licensing regulations or surveillance (Dahles 2002; Simoni, this issue). In many cases, however, guides have great agency in developing their own narratives and tours, loosely directed by shared points or values (Wynn 2011). The step-on guide who boards the tour bus for an hour’s city tour may be evaluated by different criteria than the trek pathfinder or the museum docent (Dekel, Skinner, this issue). Guides hustling for business on street corners or near tourist attractions may perform differently than “official” guides licensed by governmental bodies (Simoni, this issue). The guide hired for two hours by a shop-owner to present Bethlehem and get the tourists into the souvenir shop has less agency than one who accompanies a group for ten days on a coach tour across Poland or Ireland (Feldman 2016: 85–87; Costa 2009).

As Cohen’s typology was applied to a wide variety of situations on the ground, scholars attempted to expand the classification of mediation to situations in which the borders of “cultures” have become more fluid, and in which other categories are more salient. In her study of tour guides at the former Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg, Sharon Macdonald (2006) makes the point that cultures are no longer seen to be discrete, and so cultural mediation is not necessary solely between one culture and another. Macdonald (2006: 123) suggests that the tour guides she observed encoded preferred site readings as part of a wider process of mediation and that they took care to *position themselves* vis-à-vis their tour site. This is exemplified by tour guides in Nuremberg who established dominant narratives of the place and its difficult Nazi heritage while dis-establishing or closing off readings of the place that they consider inappropriate such as a celebration of Nazi grandeur. Macdonald’s example, in which guides elicit tourist interpretations of images which they then undercut, serves as a counterpoint to the atrocities of the subject matter being revisited. It demonstrates the complexity of seeing and mis-seeing, and the careful and

strategic negotiation and positioning of the guide with their audience, one that shifts, aligns, opposes, agrees, deceives, interprets and misinterprets, and re-aligns. These strategic negotiations are a central theme informing many of the articles in this issue.

### **Performing under the Commodified Tourist Gaze**

The processes of commodification in the tourism industry affect services as well as goods (Watson & Kopachevsky 1994). Commodification replicates gazes that are shaped by tour agents' itineraries, pre-trip briefings (Kaell 2014), glossy publications, post-cards and brochures, and in the case of pilgrimage – religious discourses. As part of the tourist product, guiding is open to the larger debates over commodification and authenticity<sup>2</sup> (MacCannell 1976; Greenwood 1989; Cohen 1988; Crick 1989; Edensor 2001). It continues to be seen as more “real” than the second order and sometimes second-hand guidebook – described as “a mediator of understanding” by Peel and Sørensen (2017: 50); this may account for the stigma associated with the book mediating the gaze as opposed to the enhanced gaze of the human guide. Where the guidebook acts as technology in the hybrid performance of sightseeing, the guide is the cosmopolitan technician.

Edward Bruner (2004: 238) maintains that most tourists “accept no moral or political responsibility for the people they visit”. Instead, they exhibit what Rosaldo calls an “innocent yearning” that serves “to conceal its complicity with [the] often brutal domination” of the communities that they visit<sup>3</sup> (Rosaldo 1993: 69–70). In the research of many scholars, tourist gazes (Urry & Larsen 2011) cause toured cultures to produce flattened-out, essentialized and sometimes degrading versions of themselves in order to correspond with foreign tourists' preconceptions and prejudices (Crick 1989; Bruner 1994). Thus, Anabel Black (2000: 112) wrote:

I was struck by the number of ways in which one becomes involved in colluding with a remarkably strict set of expectations and ideas about one's own culture. These may bear little resemblance to

the parameters which structure one's own world outside the context of acting as a host, and yet they somehow make sense, or at least contain an internal logic, irremovable from the spaces marked out and sometimes constructed through tourism. (cf. Greenwood 1989; Edensor 2000; Salazar 2010)

This negative view of tourism as a means of domination and debasement of local culture is countered by other studies that illustrate how tourism may become not only a means of livelihood but a resource for the shaping of identity (Boissevain 1996; Comaroff & Comaroff 2009). Crang finds that tourism workers not only produce a product, but produce themselves as part of their jobs: “identity politics are at the heart of tourism labour processes [...] Identities are not just brought to work by employees; they are forged through it” (Crang 1997: 152; see also Bunten 2008). The discussion has also been enriched through the application of new conceptualizations of culture and identity which see them as fluid projects that can be shaped through performance and interaction (Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008) rather than the fixed essences that much of the tourist industry promotes. The questions that remain are: To what extent do tourist motivations and expectations determine the guide's performance? Can this interactive performance be a positive resource in fostering one's sense of self? How much control do guides have as wilful and skilful mediators, especially as they find themselves caught in the middle of conflicting cultural forces and caught up in the dynamics of their own performances (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan 2010; Megeed 2017)? Alexis Bunten's recent auto-ethnography, *So, How Long Have You Been Native? Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide* is an excellent reflection on this issue (see also Feldman, this issue).

Recent research has provided a more diverse picture of tourist imaginaries and how these impact on the guiding role:

Tour guide interpretations largely feed off wider imaginaries, culturally shared and socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used

as meaning-making devices, mediating how people act, cognise and value the world, and helping them to form identifications of Self and Other. (Salazar 2014: 212; cf. Salazar & Graburn 2014)

As tourist imaginaries and tourist gazes vary (Urry & Larsen 2011: 15–40), so too does the content of guiding and its effects on the persona of the guide. To properly comprehend the effects of power differentials in tourism, however, we need to enlarge our scope beyond the space-time of the interactive performance to engage questions of identity and resistance to the tourist gaze as the guides understand them (Dahles 2002; Salazar 2013; Feldman 2016).

### **Multiplex Mediation: Guides on the Move**

As cosmopolitans (Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008), leaders, gigolos (Bras & Dahles 1999), father figures, pathfinders (Cohen 1985) and anthropologists (Bruner 2004), the tour guide negotiates a complex terrain of physical mobility and virtual and existential imagination. They interpellate sites and reanimate streets (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; see Skinner this issue). While they often take pride in their skills as entrepreneurs, adept in code-shifting, translating, presenting and dissimulating, the long list of guide roles certainly generates contradictions and role strains. If “no one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24), guides must do so or be prepared to pay for the consequences.

These contradictions and tensions have been well illustrated through reflective articles written by scholars who worked as guides themselves: Ed Bruner (2004: 6–7; see also Bunten 2008, 2015; Feldman 2016) highlights the discordances between the tour bus and the academy, between expert guide and anthropologist. He found that “his” tourists had neither the patience nor the desire to invest in getting behind the scenes (backstage) of an Indonesian festival, and that his academic commitment to revealing the behind-the-scenes power relations and peeling the façade of Balinese heritage displays ultimately resulted in his dismissal from tour guiding. Moreover, Noel Salazar, building also on his experience as tour guide in Tanzania and Indonesia writes of the

cosmopolitan guide straddling both host and guest fantasies and imaginaries (Salazar 2010; cf. Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008; Meged 2017). This bicultural nature is akin to the cosmopolitan nature of the anthropologist, “betwixt and between”, to invoke Victor Turner. While some studies celebrate the cosmopolitan competence of guides (Nonnenmann & Scherle 2008; Meged 2017), it may also be dangerous or suspect in its “neitherness” – neither entirely one or the other, multiplex and nuanced rather than straight-forward – as Hannerz (1996: 110) warns.

The danger, then, is that mediation becomes an over-simplification for a complexity of push–pull factors, strategic behaviour and political constraint, fabrication, dissimulation and staged commodification (cf. Bunten 2008; Feldman, this issue). The concepts of cultural mediation can be complicated by documenting both the institutional and social constraints under which guides labour, as well as by following the guide as they move on and off the tourist stage, indeed even as they try to define the tourist stage in certain ways. The constraints may include national, company or site administration surveillance and training (Bras & Dahles 1999; Dahles 2002), or normative societal models of ideal guides and guiding tropes (Wynn 2011; Cohen, Ifergan & Cohen 2002; Katz 1985). In addition, tourists’ perception of the generational, ethnic, religious, racial or national identity of the guide may determine the “storytelling rights” (Katriel 1997: 75–88) they grant them. Thus, whereas anyone of the (Jewish-Israeli) ethnonational group of the pioneers’ generation may recount a story of a particular kibbutznik in the first person (Katriel, *ibid.*), only native Alaskans (even if not of the same tribe) may speak for Sitka natives on Pacific Coast Inner Channel cruise tours (Bunten 2008). Guides who are veterans of the battle of Pearl Harbor (White 2004) present first-person narratives which others may not; likewise for Holocaust survivors on Israeli youth trips to Auschwitz (Feldman 2010) or Republicans along Belfast’s Falls Road (Skinner 2016) – a politicized tour guiding that differs notably from the political neutrality of Blue Badge guides carefully guiding through the Maze/Long Kesh prison outside of Belfast (Skinner 2014).

Local and foreign guides use different strategies of mediation and are granted different speaking rights by various groups (Salazar 2010). Thus, the guide's body, accent, gender and appearance may become semiotic objects of the tourist gaze and limit or enhance their possibilities as cultural mediators.

Furthermore, the increased use of the internet by visitors using smartphones may further devalue the role of guides as didactic information-givers while further increasing the practice of storytelling (Urry & Larsen 2011: 203). On-site technologies, staged attractions and interactive media may render guides' roles as information-givers less important (Weiler & Black 2015: 369–371; Skinner, this issue) or provide tourists with a set of pre-images (Edensor 2001: 68–69) to which guides' performances may be expected to conform. Yet, as the articles in this issue bear out, smartphones and social media often play little role in the performance of tour guiding; the full-bodied performance of the guides *in situ* provides tourists with a sense of “being there” that they cannot get from the screen. They are more a record than co-agent. We accept that this is different from the smartphone and self-guided tour where the medium also informs the tourist experience, such as the use of QR codes in each room in the Memorial Museum (ESMA) in Buenos Aires.

### The Articles in this Special Issue

The major contribution of this special issue is in making tour guides the subject of comparative ethnographic inquiry, and thus problematizing tour guiding as practice. As cultural mediators, tour guides do not merely interpret one culture in terms comprehensible to another; nor do they just facilitate access to sites and provide information and local colour. Tour guiding is a bodily practice that implicates guides in its performance. Guides must constantly negotiate changing perceptions of self and other, guiding work and daily life, intimacy and economic exchange, past and present. Unquestionably, the personal experience of most of its authors as tour guides themselves (Dekel, Feldman, Picard, Ron, Salazar, Skinner) contributed to the richness of the descriptions.

Several articles document how guides move in and out of tour stages to their private lives. Sometimes guides deliberately blur the distinctions between guiding and daily life to advance their interests, whereas in other cases the tour frame “leaks” into offstage life. Thus, Valerio Simoni's study point to informal touristic encounters of foreigners and locals in Cuba that are both an opportunity for Cubans to earn scarce foreign currency, but also a way of establishing longer term relations that escape the worker–customer binary. The article draws attention to shifting boundaries between “work” and “leisure”, and documents the subtle strategies and tactics that guides develop in mediating the attraction and suspicion of tourists in intercultural encounters.

David Picard's article describes performances of heritage, sociability, knowledge of nature, and “being Creole” for tourists on the island of La Réunion. For the tour guide, the publicly performed act of guiding tourists and “giving a good image” of La Réunion and local creole traditions legitimated his participation in the social life of the village. The same performances that mark “tradition” for tourists become the means of affirming participation in an emerging local modernity in the village. Thus, the performances on and off the tourist stage emplace the guide as a mediator belonging to both the world of modernity and that of the traditional past.

Jackie Feldman analyses the performances of the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims by Jewish-Israeli immigrant guides. Ritualized acts of hospitality – greetings and offerings of food and drink accompanied by scriptural references and readings – are claims to Jewish nativity expressed in terms recognizable by Christians. The article compares the “commodified persona” these guides develop to protect their integrity with those of Alaskan guides expected to perform the exotic or primitive native. It shows how guide performances are assertions of identity and belonging developed under particular tourist gazes and power inequalities.

Amos Ron and Yotam Lurie explore a similar field – the contact zone between Holy Land Christian pilgrims and their Jewish-Israeli tour guides – as an

area of intercultural intimacy. Employing Wittgenstein's concept of "seeing as", Ron and Lurie show how guides can understand the joy and meaning that the pilgrims experience, bypassing grand theological disagreements to find a shared sense of fellowship and spirituality. They identify three narrative strategies of guides – imitation, distinction and fabrication – through which intimate mediation is achieved and probe their ethical implications. They demonstrate what kinds of intimacy and trust may be achieved in spite of religious differences.

Another ethically and politically charged issue involving tour guide mediation relates to tips and commissions. Annelou Ypeij, Eva Krah and Floor van der Hout examine the ethnic and gender hierarchies between Spanish-speaking male guides and Quechua-speaking female weavers selling to tourists along the Inca Trail in Peru. Rural Quechua women weavers are dependent on the urban Spanish-speaking male guides for their livelihood. Guides may take a paternalistic or even disdainful attitude towards the women, manipulating them into paying high commissions. In response to this, the women develop tactics that attempt to achieve greater trust and reciprocity.

Several of the articles explore the ways guides manipulate tropes of pastness and presentness to create proximity or distance towards the sites they mediate. This is made explicit in Irit Dekel's research on home museums of diplomats, artists and political leaders in Germany. Here, she documents guides' selections of objects and stories, and correlates them with the degree of reconstruction and type of display in each of the home-museums. She classifies guide narratives along two major axes: those of hierarchical distance and temporal displacement. By "playing" with various tropes of distancing and proximity, guides and tourists negotiate the meaning of politics and history through the perspective of home life.

Finally, Jonathan Skinner shows how an ostensibly empty heritage house on the outskirts of London is re-animated by the tour guides and room stewards for the different visitors through dramatic imagination and guidebook props. Though the house was already conceived by Horace Walpole in the eight-

eenth century as a tourist attraction, present-day reactions to the house and the house's creator differ considerably from then. The playful narration lives on in guides' living embodiment of a past that bleeds out into the everyday life of the host and the sold imagination of the host. Together, both jostle for a similar position – to inhabit the heritage of their minds.

Taken all together, the papers mark an anthropological shift in conceptualizing the tourist encounter from one of hosts and guests to a focus on the mediators of tourism and their practices. In the meeting grounds of the tourism frontier area, the cultural differences and misconceptions call forth for a creative framing of the tour, dramatization, and dissimulation; these may result not only in satisfied customers but in the establishment of deep intimacy (Ron & Lurie, this issue). Furthermore, as we have shown, the forces under which the guide performs, and the sweep of the performances themselves, overflow the tour frame and impact upon the daily lives of guides. Though always positioned, guides are not a fixed bridge between two distinct cultures. Their shifting positioning raises questions about the relation of guests and hosts in tourism while reminding us of the dynamic and emergent nature of seemingly rigid cultural boundaries.

## Notes

- 1 We are grateful for the comments from anonymous peer reviewers and the editors of *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology*, as well as to Noel Salazar and Erik Cohen, who have contributed discussions to this issue. Its genesis as a volume originates from extended conversations started at an EASA panel in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2014 on tour guides as cultural mediators. Since then it has morphed from an interest in technologies used in tour guiding – technologies being used expansively to include digital practices, the tricks and rhetoric of guiding, and harnessing technologies of the imagination in the performance of the guide – into an exploration of cultural mediation in the practice of the tour guide. (add from below if possible)
- 2 For a still relevant survey of tendencies in this literature, see Harrison (2002: 13–24).
- 3 Preceding the cultural turn, several niche markets such as ecological and "alternative" political tours may have provided an exception to the rule that tourism narratives and gazes refashion politically and financially

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weaker areas in the image of the more powerful touring culture (Crick 1989; Stronza 2001).

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# INFORMAL GUIDING

## Enacting Immediacy, Informality and Authenticity in Cuba

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To better conceptualize the tourism encounter, scholars have highlighted the importance of mediators, notably tourist guides, in framing visitors' experiences of a destination, encouraging to move beyond "hosts and guests", "tourists and locals" binaries. The study of informal touristic encounters in Cuba helps problematize the identification of the tourist guide, highlighting the stakes of such categorization in a context of tightly regulated, state-led tourism development. Favouring a framing of tourist-Cuban interactions as genuine expressions of intimacy that escape the worker-customer binary, these encounters enact valued forms of informality, immediacy and authenticity. Their promise is to provide a "unique" glimpse into the "real" Cuba and the lives of "ordinary" Cubans, and to generate alternative possibilities for knowing and relating with the destination and its people.

*Keywords:* tourist guide, informality, authenticity, intimacy, Cuba

### **Introduction: From Guide to Guiding**

In *Being a Tourist*, anthropologist Julia Harrison (2003) foregrounds the notion of "touristic intimacy" to highlight the importance of the value of intimacy as a driver of people's travel. While much of her focus is on the connections tourists make with other fellow travellers, Harrison also reflects on tourists' expectations of "meeting the local people" (2003: 61–66), their desire to engage, however briefly and incidentally, with residents of the visited destination. The desire "to connect with others" (Harrison 2003: 47), cherished by Harrison's research participants, was very present among the foreign tourists with whom I worked in Cuba. But who were those "others" that the tourists encountered, and

what were these connections about? This article focuses on the dilemmas and implications that these questions can raise for the protagonists of touristic encounters.<sup>1</sup> It follows their tentative answers, showing that much is at stake in defining and categorizing who these "others" are and what connections are about, while also demonstrating the close links between these two questions. As it will appear, much can be lost in scholars' efforts to classify and give closure to roles and identities, especially when remaining open, ambiguous, and changeable seems to be one of their defining features. Anthropological work on tourism has highlighted the need for theoretical frameworks that allow "for uncertainty and ambiguity as defining factors in relationships" (Fo-

sado 2005: 75) and, I would add, in relational processes of identification (Simoni 2016a). Drawing on my work on informal touristic encounters in Cuba, this article wishes to mark a step in this direction, and act as a counterpoint to the widespread drive to categorize and typify the encounters, identities, and occupations that tourism brings into play. This seems all the more important when studying contexts in which such encounters, identities, and occupations remain contentious, and where the act of fixing them is fraught with ethical, political, and epistemological implications.

Since the foundational publication of the edited book *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Smith 1978a), the notions of “host” and “guest” – evoking the process of receiving and entertaining outsiders (Smith 1992: 187) – have raised much debate in tourism social science. In their recent review of anthropological interventions in tourism studies, Leite and Graburn (2009) point to the key problem in the use of these notions, which is that “as a social field comprised of manifold interactions, ‘tourism’ includes far more than the basic binary of ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’” (2009: 47). Writing on the issues, Chambers highlights the increasingly “mediated” character of tourism, whereby this activity is now “dependent on the intervention of others who serve as neither hosts nor guests in any conventional manner” (1997: 6). Under these circumstances, “[t]hinking of tourism as being predominantly a relationship between ‘real’ (i.e., residential) hosts and their guests has become problematic in several respects” (1997: 6). In line with these insights, the figure of the “mediator” has received increased attention in the last decades (see in particular Chambers 1997; Cheong & Miller 2000; Werner 2003; Zorn & Farthing 2007), and anthropologists have made new headways in the study of guides and guiding activities (Bras & Dahles 1999; Bunten 2008; Crick 1992; Dahles 1998, 2002; Feldman 2007; Picard 2011; Salazar 2010). Earlier studies of tourism paid attention to the roles of “middleman” (van den Berghe 1980), “cultural broker” (McKean 1976; Smith 1978b; Nuñez 1978), and “guide” (Cohen 1982, 1985), which may be seen as the quintessential tourism mediators, actors devel-

oping skills and engaging in entrepreneurial activities specifically tailored to tourists. Resonating with the Cuban material on which I draw in this article is the work of authors who have focused on informal guiding activities, featuring guides who operate without official licence at the margins of the formal tourism sector, and who do a lot more (or less) than what is commonly understood as guiding (Crick 1992; Bras & Dahles 1999). These are situations in which the boundaries of guiding become blurred, and where the identification of the guide can itself be problematic.

When set against the backdrop of the rich literature on tourism encounters, mediation, and guiding briefly addressed above, the Cuban cases explored in this article present striking features that enable us to advance reflections on how both scholars and their research participants approach tourism relations and identifications. More precisely, the study of informal touristic encounters in Cuba, understood here as encounters between foreign tourists and members of the Cuban population who are not officially employed in the tourism sector, helps problematize the identification of who counts as tourist guide and mediator, highlighting the stakes of such categorization in a context of tightly regulated, state-led tourism development. My attention will mainly be on the techniques and narratives of Cubans – predominantly young men in their twenties and thirties coming from marginalized sectors of the population – who strived to establish connections with foreign tourists and bring about a sense of immediacy and authenticity in such an encounter, in contrast to the more staged, scripted, and mediated nature of official guiding tours led by state-employed guides (Látková et al. 2018).

The material on which I draw comes from sixteen months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out intermittently in Cuba between 2005 and 2016, mostly in Havana but also in the beach resort of Playas del Este (a half-hour drive east of the capital) and the rural town of Viñales (about 200 km west of Havana). During fieldwork I relied mainly on participant observation to generate data on encounters in the realm of tourism. This led me to observe and engage

in conversations, of varied duration and scope, with hundreds of foreign tourists and members of the Cuban population, including informal guiding-related situations in which they engaged with each other. The reflections presented here are informed not only by my engagements in a broad range of informal instances of guiding, but also by several experiences with official guiding tours, which enabled me to appreciate contrasts between the two, and to better grasp some of the key features of the former, notably in relation to valued enactments of informality, immediacy, and authenticity. As it will appear, in the informal encounters I consider, resistance to assuming the formal role of guide could become important not only to generate the feelings of serendipity and authenticity that gave value to these interactions, enabling in some cases the establishment of longer-term relationships, but also to counteract their identification as illegal economic practices and punishable forms of harassment. While providing broader insights on the stakes, risks and limits of analytical categorization and closure when addressing the ambiguous relations and identifications that can emerge in tourism, the empirical material discussed here contributes more specifically to the reflection on the notion of tourist guide, problematizing its conceptual value in contexts where its use is fraught with serious implications and can have a profound impact on the lives and experiences of the protagonists involved.

My approach is inspired by recent scholarship on the relational (Abram & Waldren 1997), purposeful (McCabe 2005) and locally situated (Frohlick & Harrison 2008) nature of tourism-related identifications. Accordingly, it backs away from holistic views of “the tourist” and “the local” to focus instead on situated identifications and modes of engagement. The goal is to shift the focus of analysis from “tourists”, “locals”, and “guides” in this case, to the practices and discourses circulating in and characterizing the moment of encounter, and to illustrate the insights that can be gained by reorienting research from a prevailing focus on (id-)entities towards a study of the relational processes from which (id-)identifications emerge. As a last caveat, it should be clear

that the examples presented in this article do not aim to be representative of the range of relationships and identifications that took shape in the realm of tourism in Cuba. Instead, they have been selected to advance analytical reflections on the notions of guiding and tourist guide, to explore their boundaries and test some of their limitations.

### **Informality**

Towards the end of the 1980s, after about three decades of relative stagnation in terms of international tourist arrivals, a rapidly worsening economic crisis prompted the Cuban authorities to renew their efforts to develop tourism, which received further impetus with the beginning of the Special Period in Time of Peace (*Período especial en tiempo de paz*) in 1990 – the time of austerity and economic hardship that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Cuban people struggled to get by and ameliorate their economic conditions, the Special Period saw the explosion of an ample range of informal economic activities on the island, among which tourism-related ones played an increasingly salient role. This realm of activity has come to be known as *jineterismo*, from the Spanish for “rider” (*jinete*). With the metaphor of “tourist riding”, *jineterismo* tended to evoke notions of tourism hustling and prostitution, sexual conquest and instrumentalization, and was employed more broadly to designate various informal engagements in tourism, including guiding activities.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, while my research participants could easily refer to their actions using the verb *jinetear* (e.g. *estaba jineteando*, I was engaging in *jineterismo*), thus denoting a situated activity and temporary engagement, they were less keen on assuming an overarching identification as *jinetero/a*, a point that underscores the relational nature of such identifications and supports the broader analytical approach advocated above. Notions of *jineterismo* were grounded in the reification of an us–them divide that objectified tourists as sources of hard currency and promoted the image of the cunning Cuban deceiving foreigners via duplicity and dissimulation of economic interest.

By the time I undertook my fieldwork, after over

a decade of impressive growth in international tourists' arrivals, narratives of encounters between visitors and Cubans had gone beyond the images of welcoming hospitality, generous and disinterested friendships, and easy and spontaneous sexual affairs that may have prevailed in the early 1990s. An additional scenario, tainted by notions of prostitution, tourism hustling and *jineterismo*, had emerged and gained visibility on the tourism scene. In this sense, *jineterismo* had become an integral part of what Cuba was about and what tourists had to expect, and avoiding cheating and deception tended to be among the visitors' major concerns. Cubans dealing with tourists were generally also aware of such fears and scepticism, and many tourists knew that Cubans "knew they knew", so a hall of mirrors of reflexive self-presentations and reciprocal expectations could inform relationships between them. Rodrigo<sup>3</sup>, a Cuban man I visited regularly throughout my fieldwork and an occasional street guide in Havana, told me that tourists were getting more and more untrustworthy (*desconfiados*) by the day. They were harder to get in touch with, and excessively worried that one would cheat them. To have any chance of developing a relationship, Rodrigo argued, one had better know how to address, soften (*ablandar*) and charm them.

Rodrigo was very fond of making typologies of tourists, notably based on their nationality, and also liked to rank the visitors' level of trust in Cubans like him in relation to their countries of origin, with North Americans generally coming on top and Spanish and Italians being the more mistrustful (the countries and their position on the list could quickly change depending on his latest experiences). But beyond the specific reference to national differences, which could no doubt matter, there seemed to be widespread recognition by Rodrigo and other Cubans engaging in similar informal activities that foreign tourists, in general, had become increasingly reluctant and sceptical of engaging with them. Such growing scepticism constituted a major obstacle to meeting and relating with visitors. The main challenge was how to move beyond the instrumental horizons of *jineterismo* and the overdetermined identifications of (deceitful) tourist hustlers and

(gullible) tourists that it implied. Rodrigo's informal economic activity, offering tourists to be their guide while having no official license for doing so could quickly lead him to be cast as a *jinetero*, making him look like the typical "tourist hustler" in the eyes of sceptical tourists. This was an identification that would deter tourists from engaging with him, and which could also carry legal sanctions – and Rodrigo did indeed spend several months in police custody during the years we were in touch. It is important to mention here that at the time of writing this article, no legal provisions exist in Cuba that would authorize Cubans to act as private guides for tourists (Látková et al. 2018). All official guides were employed by the state, and as Rodrigo and others offering similar services made clear to me, it could be extremely hard to get into those jobs (see Dahles 2002 for an Indonesian parallel).

On the other hand, many tourists I met stated their willingness to meet and engage with "ordinary" Cuban people, and sought contact with them to learn about everyday life in the country. This was what people like Rodrigo could bank on, emphasizing their insider-ness, their being a "lay" Cuban as opposed to an officially appointed guide. Several narratives circulated among visitors regarding the Cuban government's efforts to channel and control tourism on the island, and to obstruct "ordinary Cubans'" possibilities of interacting with foreigners. Such interpretations converged with those of people like Rodrigo, and could thus work to establish a certain complicity, prompting alliances between tourists and Cubans to evade the authorities' control. Dahles (2002) has shown how in Indonesia official guided tours can act as "highly effective instruments of controlling the tourists and their contacts with the host society as well as the images and narratives by means of which the host society presents itself" (2002: 787). The peculiar political context of Cuba, with the same regime in power for over fifty years, made it easy for tourists to cultivate similar views on official guiding practices, a view that Cubans interacting informally with visitors could quickly capitalize on, urging them not to get caught in the usual "tourist bubble" and government mediated

propaganda, and to venture instead in the “real”, “unfiltered” and “unmediated” Cuba.<sup>4</sup> As I consider in the next section, such a “direct” experience of the island could be portrayed as intimately connected to and dependent on the establishment of equally “direct” and “immediate” relations with its “lay” inhabitants, cast as the legitimate spokespersons to shed light on Cuba’s everyday life and reality.

### Immediacy

As self-professed “*ex-jinetero*” Fernando, one of my key “mentors” on the world of *jineterismo*, once put it to me, *entradas* (openings) were the most difficult part of establishing a relationship with a tourist. Once you had managed to get the tourist’s attention and started an interaction on a positive note, interesting and profitable possibilities were likely to open up. As I soon realized during fieldwork, tourists also tended to place great emphasis on these first moments of encounter, which enabled an initial assessment of the intentions of the Cuban person at stake. “It all depends on whether you initiated the contact or they came towards you,” several visitors told me. If the latter was the case, the rationale was that you could be sure the Cuban in question was a hustler and wanted to get something from you, which was not a good start. At issue were the directionality of the encounter and its premeditated nature, elements that could indicate people’s intentions and agendas. Were tourists dealing with a well-planned approach from a “professional hustler”, a *jinetero/a* with a clear agenda in mind who wanted to profit from them? Or were they facing an “ordinary Cuban” who did not specialize in the tourism trade and had no intention of cheating? Resisting the analyst’s drive to differentiate and typify those who counted as “informal guides” – and therefore also as potential *jineteros* – or as “ordinary Cubans”, it seems more relevant and insightful (and less condescending) to follow empirically how similar characterizations were played out by the protagonists involved, and to show how this matter could become a rather contentious one to settle once and for all.

To counter the impression of a well-rehearsed *jinetero*-style approach, my Cuban interlocutors

experimented with conversational openings that could give encounters a fortuitous result. Striking parallels appear with Dahles’ (1998) notes on the techniques used by street guides in Yogyakarta (Indonesia), suggesting that in different parts of the world, similar solutions are devised to engage informally with tourists. Dahles (1998: 35) observes that “from the tourist’s perspective, they [street guides] seem to bump into a visitor purely by coincidence, actually being on their way to some important appointment”. According to her, “this impression is carefully staged” (*ibid.*). The same could be said of many “fortuitous” encounters in Cuba. Jorge, a Cuban man in his forties with whom I spent several hours talking about tourism and tourists, and whose “street turf” was in Old Havana, explained his technique for producing the effect of a “chance meeting”: he would start walking in the same direction a targeted tourist (or group of tourists) was going, as if on his way somewhere. When passing his target, he would find a pretext to say a few words and strike up a conversation. With similar opening techniques becoming increasingly common and widespread, the impression of serendipity was always at risk of fading away, together with the promise of a “genuine encounter” with “ordinary Cubans” as opposed to the more predictable exchange with a *jinetero*. To keep this promise alive, people had to devise creative approaches that preserved a sense of something special, of an encounter like no other. Their ability to decode tourists’ behaviour, to detect their potential interests and focus, could help tailor and personalize approaches, as Fernando explained upon delighting me with an instructive tour of Havana enlivened by concrete examples of his tactics.

Fernando’s *entradas* were designed *not* to give the impression of the well-scripted, predictable *jinetero*-type approach, a fact that exemplified *jineterismo*’s intrinsic drive to innovate and surpass itself. In his view, openings were to be seen as genuine expressions of interest, whereby tourists could feel they were recognized as “real persons” (Harrison 2003: 63), less as “mere tourists” (Sant Cassia 1999: 253) and more as individuals, with their specific personalities, interests and agendas. We can join here the remarks of

Tucker (2003, 2009a), going in the same direction, on “the importance of serendipitous events to ‘traveller’ tourists”, for whom “such chance encounters serve to individualize their experience and identity” (2009a: 31) – something that Fernando seemed well aware of. Besides his ability to creatively grab tourists’ attention, Fernando was very skilled at nourishing their interests and thus giving continuity to the encounter. “Those [*jineteros*] who don’t know” (*los que no saben*, i.e., who don’t how to “open” properly), he told me, would, having caught the tourists’ attention, let them slip away, unable to give new impetus to the encounter. The ability to sense the tourists’ degree of openness, their interests and inclinations was fundamental, as was the capacity to cater to their potential desires and eventually awaken new ones. This corresponds to Crick’s considerations on Sri Lankan street guides’ “insightful, if essentially pragmatic, understanding of human nature, their ability to read a social situation, and their skills in turning it to their advantage” (1992: 138). Similar to what Dahles (1998: 35) has shown for street guides in Yogyakarta, in the first moments of an informal encounter with tourists, Cuban men and women tried to gather relevant information that could help them orient the ensuing steps in the interaction. How this was done reflected further differences in skills and expertise, given that too many too straightforward questions could make visitors suspicious. Indeed, as repeated observations and conversations with tourists in Cuba showed me (Simoni 2016a), one should recall that they also valued these initial moments of interaction in making up their minds and typifying their Cuban interlocutor. Was she or he a hustler? What was his or her agenda? Clearly, tourists were not passive targets of Cubans’ questionings but also tried hard to grasp the latter’s intentions.

The wider the range of assets and competences Cubans could mobilize in dealing with tourists, the better chances they had of establishing and lending continuity to relationships with them, which was what many were hoping for. Several of my research participants highlighted the importance of knowing how to cater to the widest possible spectrum of tourists’ interests and desires. Hence their interest in cul-

tivating a broad range of skills and abilities, similar to the “multi-functional guides” described by Dahles and Bras (1999: 287) in Indonesia, among which the establishment of intimate relationships and romance with tourists was, like in the Cuban case examined here, also a priority (see Frohlick 2007; Herold, Garcia & DeMoya 2001; Mullings 1999; Pruitt & Lafont 1995 for further parallels). In this multitasking scenario, adaptability became a considerable asset, and it was precisely the importance of such “chameleon-like qualities” (Bowman 1996: 90), “the ability to tailor situational identities” (Bunten 2008: 388), that Jorge made clear to me in the course of a long conversation we had one afternoon in Old Havana. Describing his informal tourism-related activities, which included guiding tourists around, Jorge told me that he could quickly assess what kind of person he was dealing with, and that this informed the way he would present himself: “If he [the tourist] is cultured, I [Jorge] am cultured. If he is delinquent, I am delinquent.” As Jorge suggested, the same person could thus become a “university student” for certain tourists (or in his case, given his age, a “university professor”), a “salsa teacher” for others, and a “cigar manufacturer” for others still.

Scholars have shown the potential of touristic encounters to act as a space for cultural invention and self-creation (Bruner 2005; Causey 2003; Cone 1995; Graburn 1983; Picard 2011; Tucker 2009b), with Feldman highlighting more specifically the transformative potential of guiding and suggesting that via their practice, guides also “engage in remaking themselves” (2007: 367). This resonates strongly with my ethnographic material, all the more so once we consider that many among my Cuban interlocutors spent their days trying to interact with tourists, confronting and measuring themselves in relation to foreigners, and seeing themselves in the foreigners’ light. Feldman (2007) recalls Lanfant’s (1995) comment that “[t]he evaluation of the affirmation of (one’s) own identity can only be accomplished by reference to the Other” (1995: 36, in Feldman 2007: 367), and it was this relational constitution of self that was very much at play in the touristic encounters I researched in Cuba. The persona that Cubans

enacted in their interactions with tourists, however, cannot be reduced to being a “superficial” self-construction or a “frontstage” presentation – as a simple reading of Goffman (1959) and MacCannell (1976) may suggest – neither can it be fully encapsulated in Bunten’s notion of a “commodified persona tailored to and compartmentalized within a tourism context” (Bunten 2008: 389). As I show elsewhere (Simoni 2015, 2018), the constructions of the “self” that emerged in informal touristic encounters in Cuba might be better apprehended as exemplifying one mode of being within the repertoire that constituted my interlocutors’ heterogeneous lives, a “self” whose commodified character remained contentious and was frequently contested, rising in tourism (see Causevic & Lynch 2011) but overflowing its confines, and easily escaping any compartmentalization within that realm.

Even in analyses of informal guiding, we see a tendency to focus predominantly on the entrepreneurial qualities and economic motives of the informal guides, a view that leads for instance to portray their claims of “love” for their tourist partners as eminently strategic and part of an economic rationality (see for instance Bras & Dahles 1999). Such approaches and an overemphasis on economic strategy and commodification, however, can overlook how roles and relationships developed in informal touristic encounters can become more than, and depart from a simple earning strategy and economic calculus, becoming in some cases a primary source of self-assertion and identification (Simoni 2015, 2016b, 2018). What seemed important to my Cuban interlocutors was to maintain open the possibility of switching from one form of identification to another – from guide and service provider, to friend and lover, for example – making such ambivalence in positionality and self-identification a constitutive and foundational aspect of their informal engagements with tourists, one that cannot be adequately captured in definitive either/or categorizations.

Cubans’ determination to deeply connect with tourists also found expression in the communicative abilities that were valued and cultivated among my research participants. Beyond the knowledge of

foreign languages, we should consider aspects of interpersonal communication that enabled to capture the tourists’ attention and maintain the flow and intensity of engagements. What mattered here was one’s skill in bringing up possible topics of interest, finding ways of communicating that could please and charm – the kind of dramaturgical qualities already evoked by McKean (1976: 10–11) and Cohen (1985: 16) for “culture brokers” and “guides” in tourism<sup>5</sup> – listening empathetically and showing understanding, remaining sensitive to the tourists’ specific needs and desires, and offering solutions and alluring prospects for the way ahead. This is how I interpreted the expression *saber hablar*, “knowing how to talk”, to which Juan, another Cuban interlocutor, drew my attention in one of the many conversations we had on touristic encounters. What this young Cuban man was referring to was not just how to speak languages or the quality of the information provided, but more about the “how” of communicating. It is useful to recall here Tucker’s insights on the importance of recognizing not just the cognitive but also the more emotional and embodied dimensions of tourism encounters, and how significant differences in both locals’ and tourists’ abilities “to read the element of emotional moral discharge from their own and each others’ bodies” (2009b: 459) can inform the relative success of such interactions. As Juan put it, *saber hablar* also had to do with the ability to “vibrate” (*vibrar*), to have the “good vibration” that would lead tourists to enjoy his company and follow him. For my friend Ernesto, a Cuban man in his mid-twenties with whom I spent many days and nights hanging around in tourism spots in Havana, and who was also fond of the “vibration” metaphor, what mattered most for success in dealing with tourists was “to be a mind” (*ser una mente*): to be smart and perceptive, to know about people, relationships, sentiments – “working the truth” (*trabajar la verdad*) of these things.

Grasping multiple points of view, understanding different approaches to tourism and tourists, attending to subtle emotional variations and moral sensitivities when relating to people who differed in terms of their origins, age, gender, socio-economic status,

interests and more – such endeavours, as some of my interlocutors put it, could be seen as *un arte*: an art of communicating and dealing with people, of sparking interest and developing relationships. Theirs was arguably a portrait of *jineterismo* in its most anthropological and cosmopolitan mode: a positive body of knowledge about humans and human relationships. We rejoin in this sense the considerations of Forshee (1999), Frohlick (2007), Salazar (2010) and Tucker (2009b) who, in different touristic contexts – studying pedicab drivers in Yogyakarta (Indonesia, Forshee), sexual and intimate relationships between female tourists and local men in Caribbean Costa Rica (Frohlick), tourist guides in Yogyakarta and Arusha (Tanzania, Salazar) and informal tourism encounters between tourists and local “hosts” in central Turkey (Tucker) – have likewise highlighted the “cumulative knowledge” (Frohlick 2007: 149) and know-how of tourists’ preferences, imaginaries and desires, and the peculiar cosmopolitanisms that members of a visited population can develop through their engagements in the tourism realm.

The problem, according to Ernesto, and the source of many of his colleagues’ mistakes in dealing with tourists, was that they considered themselves superior, that they were vain (*vanos*) and looked down on tourists as if they were *bobos* (stupid, naïve). This major error in judgement, he maintained, went on to colour Cubans’ ways of relating with visitors, grounding them in typifications and objectifications that the latter were bound to sense and resent. Instead, Ernesto advocated remaining open and respecting the individuality of every tourist. This was also a call for tourists to reciprocate by doing the same, as opposed to confining him to the realm of *jineterismo* and the *jinetero* identification. The moral demand at stake was to respect the integrity of the “other” and avoid reducing him or her to a type, a “summative account” and illustration of a more general pattern (Throop 2014: 72, 75). Seen in this light, Ernesto’s approach can be seen as a call for openness, for charting new paths and partaking in a world as yet unwritten and unscripted but full of generative potential for ways of being and doing things together. While effectively guiding tourists around,

Ernesto would refuse reducing his role to that of a “guide”, “cultural broker”, or “mediator”, identifications that evoked a degree of formalism, standardization, and instituted a certain distance between “self” and “other”. The notions of broker and mediator evoke the bridging of two different entities, but also the possibility of leaving those two entities intact, separate, different, while what was at stake for Ernesto was a transformative experience that would engulf him and his foreign partners in equal measure, clearing new territories for both. Rather than reproducing a well-known pattern and script, what he was looking for, in his relations with tourists-as-persons (Simoni 2014a), was to develop something unique, personal, and intimate: a relationship that was irreducible to any other, that escaped any attempt of typification, and that could open the way to explore what was true and authentic in life, including life in Cuba.

### Authenticity

In spite of widespread scepticism towards potential hustlers and *jineteros/as*, most tourists I encountered cherished the idea of “meeting the locals” and getting to know “ordinary people” with whom they could talk, for instance, about the realities of everyday life in Cuba, and develop relations that could help them move “backstage”, beyond the tautological connotations of the “tourist bubble”. Cubans could capitalize on these expectations by reminding tourists that they had come to Cuba to discover their country and its people, and therefore *had to* meet and make friends with locals who could tell them about the country’s reality and guide them around. The right attitude prescribed here was to *abrirse* (open up), *confiar* (trust), if one wished to gain access to the *Cuba de verdad* (the real Cuba), moving beyond the glossy images of tourism brochures. By bringing visitors’ attention to the limitations of the typical tourist role and its normative dimensions – for instance, in terms of being channelled into the routes and circuits prescribed by the industry – these narratives tended to strike the right note, triggering sympathetic and consensual reactions. Suggestions that opened up new fields of possibility were a com-

mon follow-up, alluding for instance to unforgettable and unique experiences “off the beaten track”, and evoking with complicity a sense of defiance of the monopolistic machinations of the state and the tourism industry. This was also when Cubans could try to take the lead in their relationship with visitors. Enacting the quintessential local and displaying their insider knowledge, they encouraged tourists to follow them as friends, listen to their stories about everyday Cuba and explore places that other tourists would never see. The power dimension of guiding comes clearly into relief here, with the guide capitalizing on his or her unique access to information and knowledge of the place and its asymmetry with the tourists’ ignorance of it (see McKean 1976; van den Berghe 1980). To signal this leading role, Cubans guiding tourists around could also emphasize the danger, for tourists, of exploring the “real” Cuba on their own, arguing that foreigners would not know where to go, that they could get lost and fall victim to ill-intentioned Cubans.

Once Cubans’ succeeded, be it only momentarily, to eschew the identification of the *jinetero/a* whose primary motive was to get hold of the foreigners’ money, their narratives on Cuba and on what it meant to live on the island would gain in credibility. The assessment of the relationship and of the person tourists were dealing with informed in this sense the value and validity of such person’s stories. Once they were recognized as legitimate speakers for the “real” Cuba, once their stories were seen as “genuinely” expressing “the voice” of “ordinary” Cubans – as opposed to the “ideologically tainted” narratives of state representatives or the “economically motivated” manipulations of tourist hustlers – then they were likely to gain much credit. At stake here is the issue of authenticity, in different but related dimensions; authenticity of the person that visitors were dealing with, of the relationship at stake, and of the stories that were told. Here is also where, drawing on Bruner (2005: 150), “the issue of authenticity merges into the notion of authority”, the “fundamental question” being “who has the authority to authenticate”, “who has the right to tell the story of the site”. Focusing on who has the power to authen-

ticate helps us foreground the conflicting nature of authenticity, and the “multiple competing voices” that may be making claims on what is authentic and how to access it.

In contrast to the case examined by Bruner (the historic site of Lincoln’s New Salem in central Illinois), the authority to authenticate, in this case, did not come from people’s official and professional status, but rather from being seen as a “lay”, “ordinary” Cuban. Once seen this way, Cubans found it easier to instruct tourists on what was more or less authentic, what was truly Cuban and what not. As I have shown elsewhere (Simoni 2008b), discourses on what was Cuban, in which way, and on how best to experience it, while also building on and reproducing long-standing stereotypes, could show great plasticity to suit the purpose at hand. Unlike official tourist guides (see Dahles 2002; Bunten 2008), Cubans interacting informally with tourists were not talking or acting on behalf of any institution, and this could grant them greater “creative licence”. Their relative independence could make them more ready to adapt both to tourists’ agendas and their own, and if this implied more possibilities for lying and manipulating, it could also translate into increasing scope for honest and sincere criticisms.

Drawing on the Indonesian case she studied, Forshée argues that “those least ‘absorbed’ in their own societies are perhaps the most able (or at least the most motivated) to slip between the margins with other people, entering a new region in which they might function as critical agents” (1999: 302). According to several of my Cuban interlocutors, it was precisely their honesty in criticizing the Cuban government that made their narratives more authentic than those of a formal guide, and which also explained the authorities’ repressive stance on their informal interactions with tourists: “they [the authorities] don’t want us to speak with you and tell you the truth [about life and the situation here in Cuba]”. In contrast to official guides who may worry and compartmentalize “what is and is not appropriate to share on tour” (Bunten 2008: 389), the informal interactions I observed in Cuba and the stories that emerged from them could easily be couched in a

valued register of revelation. Revealing the “secrets” of the “real” Cuba, leading tourists to the “genuine” sites of Cuban life – as opposed to “touristy” locations – confiding stories “no other tourist” would hear. These narrative plots helped cast the tourist-Cuban relationship as special, unique, and based on unmatched levels of openness and disclosure, as reflecting, for instance, a genuine friendship that had a bright future ahead. As I have shown elsewhere (Simoni 2014b, 2016a), such conjuring of a unique relationship, be it a special friendship or an intense romance, also worked to entangle tourists in the moral imperatives that came with these relational idioms of intimacy. Themselves “ethical demands” (Zigon 2009, 2013), friendship and love called for commitment and continuity in relationships, evoking a range of responsibilities, and inviting connections that had emerged in what could be seen as the rather playful, superficial, and transient tourism context, to be carried on and strengthened beyond the time of the holiday, so as to become more serious, profound, and durable social ties. What should also be recalled here, is that any responsibility tourists felt towards their Cuban friends and partners, could ultimately help the latter to realize other socio-economic aspirations as well, diminishing for instance their anxiety towards a possible lack of support when having to face hardship in the future, or perhaps even being able to travel abroad thanks to a foreign connection.

### Conclusion

Social science research on guiding advances our understanding of tourism, its cross-cultural dimensions, and the way tourism shapes the imagination of those it brings into contact. Paying attention to tourist guides helps highlight the mediated nature of tourism, and shows the limits of conceptualizations that foreground encounters between “hosts” and “guest”, between “tourists” and “locals” as an essentially dyadic affair. Tourism is not only a mediated activity, but such mediation is said to be on the rise (Chambers 1997), making it all the more important to understand the different vehicles and expressions that mediation takes. This article wished to draw attention to the strong connotations that “mediation”,

and the role of the “tourist guide”, can acquire in certain tourism contexts. The context at stake was one of tightly regulated tourism development, where boundaries between formal and informal encounters exist, and where (im)mediacy and (in)formality acquire a value of their own, affecting, among other things, the way authenticity and relationships are constructed and experienced. In the realm of informal touristic encounters in Cuba, defining what counts as “mediation” and who counts as a “guide” ceases to be a matter of analytical acuity or theoretical dispute alone, and becomes an ethical, political, and epistemologically fraught act when it confronts the resistance of research subjects that wish to avoid univocal identifications as “guides” and “mediators”. Allusions to “work”, to “commodification”, to “filtering” and “domesticating” the reality that tourists experience are contested and problematized, notably as they threaten to limit the scope of relationships that foreign visitors and members of the Cuban population may achieve. In this context, and in other similar ones (Adams 1992; Tucker 2003), to be recognized as a “local” or a “host” as opposed to a professional service provider is charged with implications, and can open up unforeseen paths and experiences with “guests”, which stand in opposition to the provision of a commoditized service.

Highlighting the ambivalence and contentious character of what counts as commerce and as guiding service in certain tourism contexts, the notion of the informal encounter (Simoni 2016a) can help us draw attention to shifting boundaries between “work” and “leisure”, sharpening our analytical grasp of situations that confound clear cut notions of commodification and the worker–costumer binary. This approach ensures that people’s own understandings and definitions of encounters and relationships, and of their roles and identifications, take precedence over the researcher’s assumptions, and helps re-discuss recent literature emphasizing the role of “mediators” in tourism (Chambers 1997; Cheong & Miller 2000; Werner 2003; Zorn & Farthing 2007). My research in Cuba shows that the question of determining whether tourists are dealing with tourism “brokers”, “entrepreneurs”

and “mediators”, with “hustlers” and “prostitutes”, with “ordinary Cubans”, “friends” and “partners”, or with “tourist guides” is one that occupies and informs much of their engagement with Cuban people. In this context, rather than reflecting a superseded lack or void of something (i.e. mediators) that does not stand the test of contemporary tourism complexity and mediations, “immediacy” appears as a situated achievement, as a construct that may require a range of efforts, skills and competences to come about and be upheld. In the light of recent developments of tourism in Cuba, which foreground the risk of being deceived either by official propaganda or by experienced hustlers, the “authenticity” of encounters with Cubans has become an important matter of concern, one that absorbed tourists’ talk and deliberation on the country and its people, and in which the perceived (un)mediated character of experiences and relationships played a key discriminating role. The notion of mediation and what it signified – notably in terms of “filtering”, “distancing”, “domesticating” and “distorting” reality – had in this sense “gone native”, and a lot of effort could be invested in trying to reach beyond it and achieve a sense of immediacy and related authenticity.

Once the mediated character of tourism is ascertained, and mediation becomes part of our analytical “infra-language” (Latour 2005: 49), we must still be ready to recognize when, how, and with which consequences “mediation” takes on a life of its own for the people we work with, becoming part of their “meta-language” (ibid.), and the centre of controversies that inform the very nature of what they experience.<sup>6</sup> To neglect this is to indulge in a deconstructive endeavour that imposes its language and categories and is unable to acknowledge that the reality it seeks to uncover talks back in analogous terms, questioning and problematizing these same processes of categorizations. In touristic Cuba, the possibility of moving between different forms of relationality and identification explains the vitality, unpredictability, and also the fragility of informal encounters (Simoni 2016a). If, as analysts accounting for these phenomena, we take it as our task to define and determine, once and for all, which relation

is at stake and which identification corresponds to whom, we only risk losing all the interplay, relational negotiations, and interpretative struggles that give these situations their meaning and liveliness, as well as their imaginative and transformative potential.

## Notes

- 1 This article draws and expands on sections of the book *Tourism and Informal Encounters in Cuba* (Simoni 2016a). I would like to thank the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Post-Doctoral Grant SFRH/BPD/66483/2009) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (*Ambizione* Fellowship, PZ00P1\_147946) for supporting my research and writing. I am indebted to the guest editors of this special issue, Jackie Feldman and Jonathan Skinner, and to the article’s anonymous reviewers, for their useful suggestions and critiques on earlier versions of the text. This article would not have been possible without the collaboration of the many tourists and Cuban men and women I worked with in Cuba, and my deepest gratitude goes to them.
- 2 Several authors discussing *jineterismo* in Cuba have emphasized how this ambiguous phenomenon, whose identification brings issues of morality, nation, race, class and gender into play (Berg 2004; Cabezas 2004; Fernandez 1999; Kummels 2005; Palmié 2004; Simoni 2008a), can be hard to pin down, define, and circumscribe.
- 3 All the personal names appearing in this article are fictional.
- 4 Considering the purposefulness of this kind of narratives and the way in which discrediting the work of official guides also served to differentiate and accrue the value of the informal interactions at hand, we should be weary of analytically reifying the opposition between formal and informal guiding and their respective qualities and biases. In an interesting account of a formal guided tour she took in Havana, Babb (2011: 34) highlights for instance the official guide’s facility in “conveying a sense that we were getting an inside story”. What matters here is the value-generating potential of this distinction between formal and informal, upsetting established hierarchies between “professional” and “amateur”, and the greater scope for creativity it could grant in defining what was “real” and “authentic” and what was not (see section 4).
- 5 As argued also by Feldman when discussing the growing importance of the “communicative guiding role”, “[i]ncreasingly, the successful tour guide is one who masters the art of storytelling” (2007: 357).
- 6 According to Latour, “[w]e have to resist pretending that actors have only a language while the analyst pos-

esses the *meta*-language in which the first is ‘embedded’” (2005: 49). For him, “analysts are allowed to possess only some *infra*-language whose role is simply to help them become attentive to the actors’ own fully developed meta-language, a reflexive account of what they are saying” (ibid.).

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# KITCHEN BANALITIES INTO TOURIST MAGIC

## Tourism Cosmology and Tour Guide Mediation in La Réunion

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Drawing on ethnographic research in the Indian Ocean island of La Réunion, the article explores how tour guides transform the banalities of local everyday life into deeply moving tourist stories, and by that means position themselves as social characters within a wider tourism cosmology. At times they become actual extensions of the projected magical qualities of the destinations, at times enlightened mediators of a post-traditional condition in which a common global humanity melts into a perpetual movement of creolisation.

*Keywords:* tour guide, mediation, magic, La Réunion

### Introduction

Drawing on detailed ethnographic descriptions of tour guiding contexts and practices in a village of the island of La Réunion in the Western Indian Ocean, this article aims to explore the role of intercultural mediation between hosts and guests as a means to playfully engage, locate, attribute, subvert, transform, reproduce, or deceive conceptions and ideas that both tourists and locals hold of themselves and various types of others. The analytical frame builds on Mary-Louise Pratt's (1991) revived concept of contact zone, especially her emphasis on the analysis of transculturation processes by means of which a presumably politically dominated subject appropriates and self-consciously transforms images of Self projected by a dominant Other. The work explores the role of tour guides as mediators between the different often-discrete imaginary and social spaces that separate and connect tourists and destinations.

In line with the overall aim of this special issue, the work is to push the study beyond a structural

representational analysis of host-guest relations that has been a common approach in tourism studies for the past forty years. MacCannell's (1976) semiotic study of touristic sign worlds, Graburn's (1983) theory of tourism as a ceremonial anti-structure to quotidian life, Bruner's (2005) study of touristic meta-narratives as a kind of wider frame guiding and motivating travel experiences and Urry's (1992) study of collectively formed and performed tourist gazes all seem to establish tourism as a social fact defined by abstract collective worlds of images, narratives and gazes that impose themselves upon individual travellers.

At the same time, a growing number of works focusing on the multifaceted spaces of mediation between tourist populations and various intertwined local and translocal actors argue for a more dynamic (and politically informed) approach to tourism which takes into account the complex dynamics at play in the tourism contact zone. Great examples are the works on postcolonial nation-making in Indo-

nesia by Adams (2006), Bruner's (2005) work on the politics of the subtle adaptations of cultural performances produced in the tourism realm, or del Marmol's (2014) fine ethnographic study on the political grounding of seemingly banal aesthetic choices underpinning current landscape and urban architecture projects in Cataluña, Spain. This relatively new body of ethnographic research shows that what was precisely termed as "host-guest" relationships cannot merely be captured as an expression of bipartisan relationships between discrete populations and their respective projections of images of Self and Other, without an understanding of the wider political contexts in which such populations act. Various ethnographic studies centred on the role of the tour guide have proven particularly effective in investigating these complex dynamic relations observed on the ground (Cohen 1985; Graburn 2002; Bunten 2008; Salazar, 2010; Weiler & Black 2015), progressively dissolving the epistemic boundaries between different categories of actors and considering them as temporarily bound co-creators of experience.

In this study on tour guides in La Réunion, I wish to deepen this latter aspect by approaching the guide as a social-theatrical character whose relationships to, and interactions with, different local and tourism actors evolve within a form of societal play. I conceive the guide as a specific temporarily-adopted role whose performance is framed by the choreographic frame of the "tourist plot" (Picard, Pocock & Trigger 2014; Picard & Zuev 2014; Picard 2016) that orchestrates the tourism realm and leads tourists through their journey. The guide's specific character role within this play, not unlike that of half-divine Dionysian messenger gods in Greek and Roman mythology, is to mediate between the discrete social worlds of humans and divinities, gods and ghosts, social, gender and age classes, tourists and locals, etc. In doing so, it challenges tourists to renegotiate the meanings and boundaries of such worlds and eventually reposition themselves within a wider cosmologic narrative.

A second aspect of this work explores the aesthetic and political contours of these theatrically drawn social worlds and their ability to act as socially meaningful metaphors for the symbolic and geopo-

litical situation of La Réunion as a particular place within a wider world order. Pratt's (1991) conceptual approach to the contact zone comes in handy here as an analytical category to study the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 1991: 34). The focus on tour guides as social and political actors of the contact zone can usefully build here on previous works by anthropologists like Smith (1989) who investigated the role of marginal people like foreigners or children of foreigners, often at the boundaries of local social life, as driving forces for innovation and change. The focus on the actors of the contact zone would then allow us to articulate the study of narrative frames, gazes and representations performed for tourists with the geopolitical and social dynamics observed in a given local social context.

The main ethnographic informants – and lead characters that guide the reader through this article – are Orom and Laslo (both pseudonyms), who developed a flourishing tour guiding activity at the end of the 1990s and whom I followed over a period of several months in 1999 and 2000. During that time, I stayed in the mountain village of Hell-Bourg, in the eastern valley of Salazie. Through systematic participant observation of the daily lives of these and other tour guides living and working in the same village, I progressively gained more access to the inner organisation of local tour guiding culture and the local social lives of the guides. I participated in approximately twenty half-day tours guided by Orom, took notes, observed and at a later stage recorded once with a small tourist-style video camera. I started these observations before the actual interactions with tourists and continued afterwards, often doing other things with the main informants. As this was part of a larger study on tourism and social transformations in the island, I also investigated the historical contexts of the demographic, geographic and geopolitical situation of La Réunion, and later combined these different types of data into a common analysis.

## Orom

A typical tour would start in the morning at the square in the centre of the village. Orom would wear his tour-guide uniform – a straw hat, khaki shorts, a white T-shirt, heavy hiking boots and a black mountaineering backpack. He would welcome the group and invite them to walk along the main road leaving the village towards the coast. The rhythm, itinerary and performances of the tour would then follow a largely invariable script, as typified by the description of one tour that took place in autumn 1999.

On that day, Orom made the group halt in front of a camellia tree. The group formed a half circle around him, waiting to see what would happen. He started telling a story about a woman who disliked the odour of flowers. She would not use perfume and the only flowers cultivated in her garden were camellias. Why only camellias? He asked the people surrounding him. There was a moment of silence. The tourists guessed at different reasons. They were all wrong. Because camellias are odourless, he said and smiled. And they are also beautiful. This is why the lady was called *La Dame aux Camellias*. He picked a couple of flowers and passed them around. The people raised the flowers to their noses trying to grasp the absence of a scent. They looked at each other, smiling and affirming that the flowers effectively had no, or only a very fine, odour. Orom announced he would tell them about “proper” Creole ways of using camellias. During processions, he explained, people would throw the flower’s petals onto the path before people passed. However, he added, possibly the most interesting use of the flowers, especially of the white ones, was simply as soap. The tourists looked doubtful, facing him with a questioning gaze. He picked a large white camellia flower and started rubbing it between his hands. On continuing to do so, after a certain period of time, a white soapy mousse appeared between his fingers. Ah! The tourists seemed astonished. He smiled, happy about the effect of his demonstration. Two of the tourists themselves started to repeat the experiment and, just like Orom, generated soapy foam. Before, Orom explained, everything was used. Today we constantly bypass flowers and plants that previously had multi-

ple uses. Some people still know about these flowers and plants, but they are no longer in use. However, he added, to make the children – his children – use them – no, that’s not what he wanted to do. Yet, he concluded, he believes that it is important for the children to know about these flowers and plants and how these were used in the past. So, the white camellias were used for washing cloth. Efficient! He had finished his explanation and the tour was ready to continue.

I first met Orom during the late 1990s. He was then around forty. He had grown up in Hell-Bourg, a village deep inside the valley of Salazie – the village we had just left as part of his guided tour. His parents did not own land and so had worked for local farmers. These had mainly small farms, with narrow patches of land and small herds of cattle. The surplus of the local produce was usually sold to the markets and the large domains outside the valley. During the 1960s, the period that followed La Réunion’s transformation into a *département d’outre-mer* (DOM) (in 1946), most of these small-scale family-run agricultural enterprises faced increasingly fierce competition from imported goods. In 1963, Michel Debré, French Prime Minister under President de Gaulle and fervent defender of France’s overseas colonial interests, was elected a member of the French parliament, representing the first circumscription of La Réunion. During his mandate, he engaged in an eager struggle against the communist party of La Réunion, a movement led by Paul Vergès striving for autonomy for the island (Gauvin 1996). To counter the political influence of the local communist party, Michel Debré often violently instrumentalised the colonial rhetoric of France as a motherly *Mère-Patrie*. He distributed free milk to the newly created school canteens and initiated a wide-ranging economic and social development programme for the island (Vergès 1999). The French welfare state was introduced, giving the population previously unknown access to consumables, especially the women who received family allocations for their children. It often left the men in a socially and symbolically ambivalent role, as disempowered heads of families, incapable of providing the main income.

At the same time, in a drive to make the agricultural sector more productive, many rural hamlets were regrouped into villages, new routes to better access the mountainous inside of the island were built and a land reform was initiated to increase the size of agricultural exploitations. A majority of the rural population, including Orom's parents did not own any land. Many of them remained with little to do and left for the urban centres at the island's coast or the French mainland in far-away Europe. It was in this context of rural decline that Orom – among thousands of other rural Reunionese – moved to Saint-Denis, the largest town on the island's coast. In the years that followed, he worked as a musician for private parties and as a waiter in local restaurants. It was here that he discovered and cultivated his skills for entertainment.

In 1996, Orom was approached by local development agents who were about to initiate a training programme for local tourist guides. The training was accompanied by a study bursary. Orom was offered a place and accepted. From 1996, he spent a year undertaking classroom teaching and learning, with modules in enterprise management, heritage communication and project development. As part of this training, he did a professional internship with a mountain hiking company then new to Salazie. He also collaborated with the eco-museum of Salazie, a new museum initiated by local development agents and university researchers that was then preparing its very first exhibition. Tutored by the director of this new museum, a French anthropologist, Orom had then developed the ethno-botanical guided tour that had taken us, that day, to the camellia tree.

### Laslo

Having left this tree behind, Orom led the group into a forest. Following a rather well-established script of explanations and performances (to which I will return below), he introduced different plants and the ways these had been used "before". The group then left the forest and followed a road for a couple of hundred metres. It eventually arrived at Laslo's garden plot.

Laslo was Orom's maternal uncle. Around 65 years

old at the end of the 1990s, he was a former forest labourer and dockworker in the harbour of La Réunion. Since his retirement, he spent most of his days in his garden plot, maintaining the courtyard, the kitchen and a small wooden house, looking after the fruit trees and vegetables, and receiving friends for a talk and a coffee. He had also started selling fruits and vegetables that he put on a table by the road. The garden plot had previously belonged to his parents and he was brought up there. Some members of his immediate family still lived in small houses next to it. Laslo had then recently moved to a purpose-built house in a nearby village called Mare-à-Poule-d'Eau and only came back to his garden during the day. I first met Laslo through his sister in whose house I was renting a room. Both treated me like a member of their extended family. Laslo, when I met him, kissed me on the cheeks, a sign of social intimacy as opposed to the more common handshake.

Following his training, Orom, Laslo's nephew, was temporarily employed by the eco-museum of Salazie to help with a new exhibition on the theme of "The nature of know-how" (*La nature des savoir-faire*) inaugurated in 1998. Along with ethnographers from the University of La Réunion, he participated in the collection of objects and in the erecting of exhibition displays. Laslo, who by then had just moved out of his old house, wanted to demolish the old wooden buildings in order to expand the garden. Orom convinced him to keep these and to transform the plot into a "heritage site". To make the garden more accessible, Orom and Laslo built a ramp between the road and the pathway leading to the old wooden house. With the financial and technical help of the eco-museum of Salazie and the ethnologists of the University of La Réunion, Orom and Laslo added a straw hut to the existing structures, using traditional building materials and techniques. The building of this straw hut was visually documented by a team of university ethnologists (Pandolfi & Quezin 1998). From 1997, Laslo became a privileged informant for the ethnologists working for the Salazie eco-museum. Repeatedly interviewed, observed, photographed and filmed, he progressively transformed into a public figure representing and embodying the

presumed essence of an immediate past, of a popular culture that had just been “lost”. Various fragments of his life, especially those related to “traditional life”, were visually widely present at the 1998 eco-museum exhibition. He also appeared in academic articles published in the journal of the National Museum for Popular Arts and Traditions (MNATP 1999) and in numerous journalistic photo-reportages in international and local media. Since 1998, local tour operators programmed visits of Laslo’s garden as a tourist site. International travel journalists invited by La Réunion’s tourist board were taken to Salazie to visit – and write about – his garden.

While Laslo was transformed into a kind of popular heritage star at the local level, he seemed little concerned about this new public persona. In private, in the presence of his friends and family, he usually avoided talking about it. Only once did he show me a collection of French and US-American travel magazines in which he appeared. These he had put out of sight in a toolbox in his kitchen. Otherwise, he seemed to have continued life as before. In the morning, he usually started his day by sweeping the courtyard of his garden plot and the floor of the wooden house. As with most people in La Réunion, he wanted his courtyard and house clean, free of dust. He then built a fire in the kitchen to boil water and make coffee. The doors of the kitchen were usually wide open and a radio was turned on. He fed his cats and then spent the rest of the morning looking after his plants. At lunchtime, he usually ate a meal that he had brought with him to the garden and then slept for a while in the kitchen and, later, in the newly built straw hut.

This daily routine was slightly altered when tourist groups were expected for a visit. In most cases it was Orom who would bring these groups to the garden, but sometimes other guides working for coast-based tour operators would come. The relationship with these guides was always personal; Laslo knew them individually and the guides knew they had to call him before paying a visit. As a sort of entrance fee (Laslo would not call it this), Laslo received the equivalent of one euro per visitor. Sometimes tourists also left tips. Tourist groups usually arrived be-

tween 10 and 11 a.m. and the site visit took about one hour. When such groups were expected, Laslo, after sweeping and cleaning the courtyard and the house, and after lighting the fire and making coffee, usually went into his garden to pick a selection of fruits and vegetables – bananas, passion fruit, tree tomatoes, lychees, mangoes, pineapple, etc., depending on the season. These he placed on a table in the wooden house. He also placed a chayote fruit (*chouchou* in Creole) on a rock in the courtyard between the house and the kitchen. He rearranged the fire so it would not smoke too much. Orom had told him to do so, Laslo once explained me. And he turned off the radio and hid it under a pillow.

When the time of the visit approached, he usually got nervous – like an actor before going on stage. He repeatedly went back and forth between the kitchen and the house for a last check, picking up leaves fallen in the courtyard, stroking the cat. During this time, he would hide behind bushes and trees, not to be seen, watching for signs that would announce the arrival of the tourist group. Once he spotted the tourists through the woods, he would jump into his kitchen and hide behind the half-closed kitchen door. Sometimes I hid with him and, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork, he explained to me what would happen next. The tourist guide, usually Orom, or one of the tourists would ask, in a loud voice, if someone is home (*Il y a quelqu’un?*). Once this sentence had been uttered, he would open the kitchen door, slowly step down into the courtyard and walk down the path towards the street, to welcome the visitors.

### **Orom and Laslo at Play**

Orom had gathered the tourist group at the entrance to Laslo’s garden plot. In the Creole garden, he explained, there is no entry gate. However, there is an invisible boundary that visitors should not trespass without being invited by the owner of the plot. A specific type of plant marks this boundary. The group halted and Orom explained that there were three questions one can ask in order to be granted licence to enter a house. The group chose among these options and, all shouting together, loudly enquired if

“someone is home” (*Il y a quelqu’un?*). After a short while, an elderly man appeared on the path under the trees, smiling and inviting them to come in. Orom presented the man as Laslo, his uncle. Laslo and the tourists shook hands and then entered the garden plot. Orom took the group to the courtyard between the kitchen and the wooden house. What followed was a relatively sophisticated performance acted out in an interplay between Orom, Laslo and the tourists. Orom usually started by announcing that he (Orom) had “his own way of seeing things”, but that he also respected the way his parents understood and still understand the world. He picked up different plants in the garden and explained the way they had been used by his parents. Laslo intervened at specific moments, when Orom – seemingly spontaneously – asked him to develop or confirm one of his stories or explanations. Orom spoke in French, with a slight Creole accent, and Laslo in Creole. When Orom addressed Laslo, he talked to him in Creole and then explained to the tourists, in French, what he had asked him or what Laslo had answered. In most cases, this “translation” was not strictly necessary as Laslo’s Creole was pretty much understandable for French language speakers. Orom and Laslo largely followed a kind of unwritten script, which seemed to have emerged from the frequent repetition of the visit. They played different roles: Orom the mediator between “tradition and modernity” and Laslo the living representative of a lost past. Orom talked about contemporary issues, about scientific proofs for the naturalist knowledge of his parents, about economic, social and environmental problems. Laslo talked about his parents, about how life was before, about how to use certain objects, about the medical use of plants. Laslo confirmed Orom’s explanations by adding stories of his childhood, his own past. The same set of stories was told, again and again, during this standard itinerary. They were often based on objects, plants, fruits or buildings “found”, as if by coincidence, along this itinerary. Many of these were props that had been purposefully placed in specific locations.

After his introduction in the front yard, Orom asked the group to enter the wooden house. Laslo

no longer lives here, he explained. He lives in the village down the road. However, he explained, his uncle would come to this garden every day and he – Orom – found it fantastic that he has kept this kind of traditional life while everything around him has changed. This is why, Orom said, two years ago he had the idea of showing this place to visitors so that its memory would not be lost. He explained various aspects of the architecture of the house and Laslo pointed out where exactly he, his brothers and sisters and his parents had slept before. Orom explained the building technique of the house, the wood used, the beliefs related to the position of the door and the windows. Laslo added short anecdotes. The visit to the house concluded with an invitation to the tourists to try some of the fruits placed on the table. The group then left the house and entered the kitchen, a wooden construction around an open fireplace, covered by a straw roof. The kitchen used to be the place for people to meet, Orom explained. It was here that people received visitors, where the family came together to eat, where important decisions were made. The house, by contrast, was only used for sleeping. It was always kept clean and nicely decorated, so people who passed by could look inside. His parents rarely received visitors in the house; it was far more convivial to receive people in the kitchen. This, he concluded, is proper Creole hospitality.

The tourists sat down on wooden benches around the fire. Orom talked about different objects in the kitchen, how these were used in former times. Laslo talked about how the family came together here, how they were not allowed to talk while taking their meals, how his father used to punish him and his brothers, how his mother was compassionate with them when they were punished. Orom’s stories about “how the world has changed so quickly in recent years”, often triggered more generic conversations, typically<sup>1</sup> about “how globalisation has left the world empty of values”, “how young people cannot connect to the world and have become violent”, “how hard it is for people to find jobs”, “how the Americans have imposed their values on the world”. Orom usually took a specific position within these conversations. He explained that his motivation for

guiding tourists was to bring people from different locations together; so that he could bring to life a commonly lived Creole moment. He often explained that his past, the traditions he grew up with, were disappearing as well. After these “kitchen conversations”, he usually got out his guitar and suggested singing a song, normally *Mon Ile*, a popular song about La Réunion. Although this suggestion appeared spontaneous, it was part of the standard visit programme. The song’s lyrics were about the singular beauty of the island, a declaration of love by the singer for the place in which he grew up. Through the emotion in Orom’s voice, the ambience of the fireplace in the dark and smoky kitchen and the mood created by the conversations, this song generally generated an emotionally very moving moment. It was not unusual for some of the tourists to start crying, hiding their faces with their hands. Even I, who had many times participated in this highly choreographed moment, had the shivers.

It seemed to me that Orom’s performance was dependent on his living in two worlds, which allowed him to evoke the nostalgia for a world he belonged to but that was no longer lived. The success of his guide’s performance as mediator depended on his situating himself as both a member of the visitors’ world he could connect to through shared references to science and technology, and living (if tenuous) ties to a warmer, more familial, and intimate disappearing traditional world.

When the song was over, Orom stood up and invited the tourists to go back into the garden. He led them to the old-style straw hut that he and Laslo had built close to the kitchen. The tourists entered, and it was Laslo’s turn to explain that people “really lived in this kind of house before”. Orom usually watched through the window and commented that the bed doesn’t “run”, smiling. It was fixed to the wall so it can’t “run”. Before, as it was often raining and people like Laslo’s parents had no TV, it was important that the bed didn’t “run”. He smiled again. It explains, he said, the large number of children in the Creole families. The tourists smiled as well. They understood Orom’s underlying suggestion that a bed that “didn’t run” – a bed solidly fixed to the wall – al-

lowed for making love very frequently. Laslo usually added, seriously, that even during a cyclone, the bed didn’t “run”. Orom, again smiling with a wry face, repeated “even during a cyclone” (implying the double sense “even during making love like a cyclone”). The juxtaposition of Laslo’s seriousness and Orom’s double-meaning of “during a cyclone” amplified the comic nature of this double act. So, the bed doesn’t run, hmm, Orom concluded, again with a smile. For the rest of the day, sentences about things that “don’t run” became running jokes among the tourists. The joke almost always worked.

Once again, by employing a comic and distanced mode, Orom marked himself as an inhabitant of the tourists’ world as well. The sexual innuendo is thus communicated by Orom, the younger mediator-guide, whereas the older native presents himself as unaware of the humour in his own explanation. He doesn’t share the joke and remains excluded from the micro-sociability formed around the humorous moment. He is the “straight man” in the humorous interaction. The task of self-consciously joking devolves to the mediator between the two worlds, not the inhabitant of the traditional world. In this way, the mediation is also a scripting of particular ways of looking at generations, of different modes of communication assigned to the guide-mediator, who belongs to both worlds, and the somehow “untouched” native. Otherwise said, there is a generational style of guiding that overlaps with cultural distance from “once upon a time”.

### **Allegorical Flowers**

Anthropologists have shown that the ability and efficiency of interacting with tourists derives from a learning process which more often relates to the experiences of repeated interactions with tourists than to classroom learning (Cohen 1985; Bunten 2008; Salazar 2014). In a similar fashion, Orom had learnt to interact with tourists. He had observed their reactions, understood how to anticipate expectations, how to throw rhetorical hooks, build tension and then nullify it through forms of comedy or tragedy. Orom constantly flirted with social, gender, phenotype, time, space and moral boundaries. He pro-

jected tourists into a kaleidoscope of possible roles and existences, of selves in which tourists could recognise their own histories and desires of being and belonging. Through the quick juxtaposition of such possible roles and existences – images of poverty against images of progress, cruelty against happiness, order against chaos – he frequently took them on an emotional rollercoaster ride. At one moment, they could identify with Orom’s implicit critique of modernity, his pessimism towards a disarticulated social life, the loss of beauty and social solidarity of an idealised past, all of which constitutes, as a critique of modernity, a central rhetoric pillar of modern cosmology (Picard 2010, 2011). To evoke this anti-modernity narrative, Orom repeatedly talked about the rich naturalist knowledge of the generation of his parents – a knowledge that, he explained, was now being forgotten. People do not know how to use plants anymore, he repeatedly explained. In the next moment, he challenged this nostalgic narrative through an optimistic one of social progress. He talked about his children who now could go to school for free, who had access to modern medicine, to mass media, to travel. He talked about himself, of black phenotype, born into a family that owned no land, who was now able to look after his children, who had become part of modernity at a time when the striking poverty of the past, the cruel times of slavery and social injustice, of severe punishment, were over. In the next moment, he often once again juxtaposed this optimistic narrative of social progress to a narrative of social complexity, of social fragmentation – where people belong to a variety of different, usually non-articulated contexts, where they are lost, where they search for roots.

A core set of rhetoric-based and non-verbal performances appeared in all his guided tours. They formed a kind of core register of narrative possibilities, of scripts that were acted out through his guide’s performance. These were usually based on the opposition between an immediate here-and-now, and different types of alien worlds: the past, Western modernity, female gender, wilderness, etc. The tourists were habitually made to identify with roles and characters related to these alien worlds. In many

ways, they were identified with representatives of a global modernity and the former coloniser: France. Within the same type of narrative structure, Orom projected himself into the role of the noble castaway, the underdog rising up against the presumed non-liberty defining the modern condition, the powerful metaphorical figure of the runaway slave who escaped the cruelty of a society dominated by the French. He thus created a situation unusually uncomfortable for the mainly French tourists who, at least implicitly, were identified with the role of the villain. In some cases, by addressing the tourists through terms like “your ancestors did that...”, Orom made this attribution quite explicit. Yet he also had a particular talent for dissolving these uncomfortable situations through forms of comedy or tragedy. He joked, for instance, about the difficulty slaves had when they tried to run away with thorns in their feet. Part of the violent story of slavery and hardship was told in a comedic mode that Orom and the tourists laughed about. The tourists could allow themselves to laugh about the past because Orom (who identified his ancestors as slaves) laughed about it. The rhetorically-built ontological difference between the self-victim and the other-colonial exploiter (implicitly projected onto the local-tourist relationship) was nullified. In the end, everyone was on the same level – a member of a common contemporary humanity. At other moments, Orom concluded his stories about social progress through a form of tragedy. He talked about a commonly experienced loss of authenticity and disenchantment brought about by the modernisation of the world. Here again, he merged the initially ontologically separate entities of tourists and La Réunion into a collective condition. Everyone was caught up in the same types of contradictions marked by the desire for social progress leading to better chances and equality on the one hand, and, the fear of dissolving forms of order and traditional forms of solidarity on the other.

Through his experience as a tourist guide, Orom could anticipate how tourists would react to these stories and their endings; how they projected their own contradictions of life into the narratives he used to structure his stories. He could anticipate fairly well

that tourists perceived the tragedy of his life to be an allegory for their own lives. Orom was a brilliant performer, able to spontaneously re-arrange scripts and interpret them in ways that would surprise. His performance was marked by changing rhythms and the staccato of dramaturgic turning points, by a juxtaposition of moments that created deep aesthetic emotions, feelings of heart-breaking sadness, thrills of erotic temptation, joyful happiness and profound sensations of existential human connectivity. Particular situational contexts generated further possibilities for refining the role-play. Sometimes, it suddenly started raining and Orom spontaneously improvised his rhetoric in this specific context. He would use the rain to talk about modernity and the progress brought about by “good roofs” – to evoke nostalgic images of the past, of being a child walking through the warm summer rain. Or, if he spotted particularly pretty girls among the tourists, he would develop a juicy, sexualised metaphor about the effect of rain on flowers, or the effect of La Réunion on organic matter imported onto the island. The tourists often threw images back to him and the dialogue that developed from there sometimes reached hilarious climaxes. Orom invariably mobilised explanations, grimaces or jokes out of a pre-existing personal register, which he adapted to the situational context. Sometimes, new jokes or stories emerged through contact with tourists. Sometimes, tourists made spirited or funny jokes or connections that Orom would later re-adapt and, if these proved successful, integrate into his repertoire. Orom’s performance worked because he shared a common register with most of the tourists, which allowed them to effectively communicate. This would probably work less well if Laslo were to do it. Attributed the role of older native, Laslo instead served as a foil or a contrast in verifying the persona of Orom as guide. For Orom’s performance to work, the collaboration, or actual lack of social distance between Orom and Laslo needed to be partly obscured. The difference between generations must be essentialised in order to make the power of Orom’s performance as mediator effective.

### **Fashioning Creole as an Existential Condition**

Through his guide performances, Orom persistently related his personal existence to a form of belonging to La Réunion – excluding the tourists as members of a world outside, usually the European French mainland. The separation between these worlds was discursively marked by the ascription of respective attributes and qualities. La Réunion was depicted as a plentiful place of juices, colours and flavours, luscious odours, monstrously magnified vegetables and plants, flowers that look like sexual organs. It appeared imbued with magical qualities capable of transforming imported things, of awakening the vitality of ordinary European garden flowers, of sexualising people, plants and objects, of making things bigger, tastier, juicier. Orom constructed the island as a magical garden able to liquefy categorical boundaries between people and things, to dissolve ontological difference, to reinstate the reign of an idealised essential nature of all things.

To define the product of this specific quality of the island, Orom constantly returned to the term “Creole”. In his narrative, this term was made to signify a form of solidarity between flowers in Laslo’s garden, populations in La Réunion, humans and nature, male and female gender, La Réunion and the world outside. “Creole” became a way of being in the world, a romanticised ethno-method to living contradictory relationships. It became a way to package the accidents and complexity of social history in models and stories, a kind of remedy to make sense of oppositions and boundaries other than through racial or class categories. It was a narrative that suggested an alternative cosmos based on forms of solidarity and fluidity, an idealised world of harmony, a utopia come-real within a here-and-now. Tourists could make sense of this narrative; they could identify with this Creole world, with La Réunion as an island that enabled peace and intercultural understanding.

By emphasising his belonging to the island, his being Creole, Orom constituted himself as one of the island’s products, a Creole ontologically linked to and imbued with its “magical” qualities. Through his tourism performance, he constituted himself as part of the island’s nature; as a man with an in-

timate connection to this nature; a man talented with the spiritual and sexual power of this nature. At the same time, through other references (e.g. his narratives about social progress and nostalgia), he portrayed himself as a self-conscious and cultivated person, as a man who speaks the language of humanistic culture, who defends humanistic values.

### **Tourism as Local Stage**

Orom knew that “Orom-the-Creole-hero” was a successful figure navigating the tourism plot. Performing this role was his job and it was this job that legitimated his participation in the social life of the village. It was the performance of “being Creole” for tourists that constituted him as a social persona within the context of his immediate social environment. When the tourists had left that day, he asked me if I wanted to join him for a drink at his house. We walked up the street from the central square of the village and talked about one of the girls in the tourist group. Talking about girls was one of the themes of interest we shared. It was an easy start for a conversation. Then we talked about things that had happened in the village, the preparations for the village festivities that would take place two months later. When we arrived at his house and met his wife and kids, the emotional theatre of the morning, the songs, the stories and the tears, seemed to have vanished. They seemed only significant in terms of a job Orom had done, as his profession. It was not spoken of any further, which in a way increased the performative aspect of guiding, insofar as this Creole hero persona was not worn offstage at home. The transition from guide to father and husband was usually accompanied by micro-rituals such as the sitting down and “letting go” in his house’s backyard, the consumption of drinks and the change in mode of social interaction, less centred around heritage or the past than in the concrete daily preoccupations related to the household and children’s education.

That day, Orom’s son brought each of us a bottle of beer and we drank together. A complicity and friendship had developed between us over the many months in the same village, the many hours on guided tours. I had met his family, been invited

to some of his Sunday family picnics. We had some private parties in my house and often went to Lasso’s garden plot to fix things or just for a coffee. One day, a couple of weeks earlier, after finishing a guided tour, Orom had started a conversation about his job. He had asked me not to think badly of him, but explained that he would “normally not work every day”. I had not understood what he wanted to tell me. He explained that other people in the village guided tourists every day, even on Sundays. That they often even took several groups a day. In these cases, the contact with tourists becomes very industrial, he said. It is like slavery, he added. You do the same thing over and over, and you lose its humanistic essence. He clearly seemed to imply an existential dimension to his role as guide and mediator, connecting worlds otherwise apart.

When I had met him on one of the early days in the village, he told me about how important it was to him to “preserve” and “value” (*valoriser*) Creole traditions, a discourse not much different from the one he usually performed for tourists, local development agents or the ethnologists of the Salazie eco-museum. It was he who had invited me to accompany him during his tours. It was only later that he realised that I would eventually stay in the village for quite a few months. He told me that his wife had asked him to go work while I was around, to “give a good image” both of his family and the village.

During my fieldwork in other contexts in La Réunion, I had repeatedly come across the term “giving a good image”. It seemed to indicate a communicative dimension to individual acts where the finality of doing things seemed to lie less in the immediate transformation of a reality or the re-establishment of a kind of order, than in the public display of the very act of doing things. In this sense, acts like gardening or going shopping frequently seemed to be associated with social significations that went far beyond their presumable immediate utility. They were social performances of “giving a good image” that allowed a social actor to project a certain image of the self into a given social arena.

Within the village context, the publicly performed act of guiding tourists seemed to legitimate

a social role for Orom. This role was almost ritually reaffirmed during village festivals and public ceremonies. During these events, Orom would dress up in his usual tourist guide uniform and perform “Creole traditions”. Wearing khaki shorts, a white T-shirt with “Tour Guide” for a logo, hiking boots, and a straw hat on his head he would sing Creole songs before a local audience. In the eyes of this local audience, he looked precisely like a tourist guide. People did not dress like this in La Réunion. His dress code belonged strictly to the realm of tourism. Straw hats were for elderly men living in rural areas. “Modern men” in La Réunion did not wear hiking boots or hats. The songs Orom performed during these local events were pretty much the same ones he performed for tourists. Through this performance, Orom dramatised himself as a professional performer for tourists, as a tourist guide. Just as local farmers would use these festive events to perform their attachment to the earth and the fruits they gain from it, Orom performed his attachment to “Creole traditions” as core values of his tourism activity. At least, this was how many people in the village initially saw and accepted it.

Symptomatically, the straw hat on his head became a public symbol, not of local traditions, but of the performance of such traditions to tourists. This process is intrinsically connected to the emergence of what Bruner (2005) calls a local tourism realm and the recognition of Orom as one of its key players. Local spectators from the village who knew Orom as a lay person would situate him accordingly, as a socially somewhat marginal member of a certain generation, place of birth, and status who engaged in tourism activities as a form of livelihood. In the early stages of his guide career in the mid-1990s, concepts like “heritage” (*patrimoine*) or a revalorised interpretation of Creoleness first emerged in local development politics, and remained deeply alien to local self-definitions in the village. By employing these concepts (learnt during his state-sponsored training as a guide) before tourists and locals, Orom affirmed a social role of both successful professional in the tourist industry and ambassador for local traditions. The perfor-

mance of traditions for tourists became the particular means to affirm participation in an emerging local modernity in the village. While initially looked down at compared with the village’s traditional sectors, especially agriculture as “real” work, in the early 2000s, tourism progressively became recognised by the locals and his family as providing real, prestigious work. During this period, with the help of public subsidies, the active involvement of neo-rural villagers and the technical advice of public sector experts, houses were repainted (Nioulet 1999), wooden façades repaired, a central square built, and heritage highlights were made visible through signposts. La Réunion’s Regional Development Plan (SAR) recognised the village as an “authentic Creole village” (Région Réunion 1995).

The economy of the valley and that of the entire island underwent a profound transformation from an initially agricultural to a more horticultural logic of gardening. The political economy of the colonial society, based on the production and export of sugar and the exploitation of cheap labour initially introduced as slaves and contract workers, progressively dissolved. The origin of wealth was no longer associated with the fertility and work of the soil, but with the economic value of a specific (touristic) aesthetics of natural and urban landscapes supported by French and European Union subsidies, public sector jobs and infrastructure investments. Through the floral allegories of his guide discourse, Orom talked about this historical rupture that had dissolved the moral order of colonial social life and projected him into the uncertainties of a new era. The longer I observed him, the more I gained the impression that the sense of tragedy he developed through his guiding translated his ambiguous feelings about his newly found social freedom and the simultaneous loss of a life he had grown up with. At the same time, he turned the colonial periphery rhetoric of La Réunion on its head. No longer the unworthy child of a colonial mother, being Creole metamorphosed into a global ideal, a wider model to think a global world in continuous contact, exchange and transformation.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the role of tour guides as mediators between the social spaces that both separate and connect tourists and destinations. The first aspect is the multifaceted role of guides mobilising, performing and transforming, but also subverting and deceiving representational expectations that tourists and locals hold of themselves and of others. Through the focus on the performances and actual social lives of two local guides, I show how the repetition of tour guide performances for tourists creates a tourism realm whose underlying metaphors and cosmology work as a common register enabling tourists and mediators to communicate. It is precisely the ambiguity of the contact zone that here allows several actors to differently recognise themselves in a same image or narrative, using it as a common frame to negotiate very personal meanings.

Orom the guide takes on the scripted role of the messenger between two worlds: a lost and somewhat magical world of the past, looked at with a mixture of nostalgia and relief, and a contemporary world of global modernity, equally looked at through mixed feelings of both disenchantment and liberation from a past condition of poverty and injustice. Both forms of ambivalence work in tandem to sketch an overarching cosmology that defines a common frame for the multiple interactions between guides, tourists and various types of locals. The pertinence and success of Orom's guide performance lies in his ability to dissolve the inherent contradictions of this cosmology through optimistic images of a world in creolisation. Through his discourse, the island, its people, natural substrates and selected everyday banalities become means and metaphors for a magical quality that allows precisely such processes of creolisation to take place. The cosmology allows him to formulate a new geopolitics of the world in which the island shifts from its historical role as unworthy child of a symbolically elevated French motherland to a contemporary role as medium and model for transforming the disenchantments of modernity into new forms of solidarity and meaningfulness.

The second aspect explored in this work concerned

the social and economic consequences of the emergence of a local tourism industry built upon heritage and the past as its principal economic resource base. I have shown how Orom, through performances for tourists and local audiences constitutes for himself a role as mediator belonging to both worlds – those of modernity and the traditional past. One becomes the means for the other. Laslo, belonging to an older generation, is instead attributed a role of immutable native, presumed witness-character of a social world of the past who through his performances, words and silences reinforces the power and veracity of this world that seems to just have slipped away.

Yet, Laslo and Orom have close family ties and live in the same world, respectively defined by marked struggles to gain minimum incomes, help one's children succeed in school and gain social recognition as a worthy member of society among villagers and their own families. Paradoxically, these latter aspects are partly and perhaps necessarily obfuscated from the theatrical space created through the tour guiding and interactions with tourists. Here, Orom temporarily becomes the self-confident mediator between worlds of here and there that he enjoys playing, and which also provides social recognition at the family and village levels. For both Laslo and Orom, guiding tourists eventually fulfils the function of attaining social recognition, especially when public policy narratives about the worthiness and importance of preserving heritage become more notable during the early 2000s. Being a mediator becomes a wider social role: not only immediately connecting tourists and destinations, but connecting the social worlds of local life with the realities of global society.

The co-creative role of guides as mediators (Weiler & Black 2015) hence takes place at once in various concurrent yet interwoven contact zones, whereby the narratives and scripts of the tourist plot flow into the social local worlds and transform their meanings. Through a miraculous moral and aesthetic transfiguration, the Réunion Creole, previously at the very margin of the French national society and world transforms into an idealised aspirational character, a metaphor through which to think about a global world in creolisation. The tourism contact

zone hence operates as a device both for tourists and locals to emancipate new metaphors through which to locate oneself in the world.

## Note

- 1 The vast majority of the tourists Orom interacted with can be categorised as French urban middle class. The quasi-systematic repetition of conversational themes in a given moment of the guided tour hence could be related to a more generic French middle-class culture of communication emerging within a specific frame of the French nation state and its strongly centralised social institutions (e.g. education, media, army, public service, governance corps).

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# MEDIATION AS A PRACTICE OF IDENTITY

## Jewish-Israeli Immigrant Guides in the Christian Holy Land

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The performances of the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims by Jewish-Israeli immigrant guides are an expression of belonging to place and history. Through auto-ethnography of my guiding performance and career path interviews with other immigrant guides, I illustrate how scriptural knowledge, mastery of Hebrew, and the invention of “biblical” rites of hospitality mediate between Christian pilgrims and the land, as well as between Christians and Jews. These performances not only make pilgrims co-producers of the tour; they also assert guides’ claims to nativity. I then compare the performances of such guides with Alaskan cruise guides. I show how the submission or resistance to the commodifying tourist gaze varies under different gazes, different power conditions, and given other “native” practices of asserting identity and belonging.

*Keywords:* tour guide, identity, performance, Holy Land, Judaism

### Introduction: Tour Guides as Mediators of Experience

The introduction to this special issue outlines several of the mediatory functions of tour guides. Earlier tourism research stated that “the principle expectation of mass tourists from Professional Guides is that they provide information and interpretation” (Cohen 1985: 20). Weiler and Black (2015: 364) suggest, however, that in the twenty-first century, “to satisfy tourists in search of personalized experiences, guides... need to actively engage tourists in the co-creation of their own guided tour experiences”. For them, the contemporary tourist is increasingly in search of multi-sensory participation, and emotional access to and empathy with the past or present host communities (ibid.: 366). In their view, guides are not so much mediators of *knowledge* as media-

tors of *experience*. In the case of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, the transmission of empathy and understanding through the selection of and emotive reading of appropriate biblical passages (often in concert with members of the group), the use of appropriate feeling tones and the performance of mini-rituals and gestures of respect have always been more valued than encyclopaedic information. The knowledge pilgrims request most is knowledge that augments their faith experience (Guter & Feldman 2006: 88–90). In Evangelical language, the “head” of the guide is a tool for reaching the “heart”.

Insofar as the guide is expected to be a mediator of empathy and experience (rather than just information), the role strains of guiding and of shifting from on-stage to off-stage life intensify. Guides may have to perform emotional work (Hochschild 1983) in or-

der to maintain both their competent guide persona and their private integrity. The challenges of such emotional work are compounded when the guide is expected to represent the toured nation or culture. Thus, the guide's body, accent and cultural competence in routine interactions may be examined by the group, and their accordance with visitors' preimage of the country or people may be a condition for granting him "storytelling rights" (Katriel 1997: 73–102).

There has been some study of the ways that guides and other tourist workers work under a variety of commodifying or essentializing tourist gazes (Crang 1997; introduction and Picard, this issue). There has also been sufficient documentation of successful, unsuccessful and desirable guiding performances (especially in "best practice" recommendations of manuals for tour guides [Pond 2003; cf. Wynn 2011]). Far less has been written on the ways guides shift between their on-stage and off-stage lives (Bunten 2008, 2015; Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008; Feldman 2016: 1–16, 143–154; Widfeldt Meged 2017).

In her study of native guides at Sitka who work with passengers of Alaskan cruise ships, Alexis Bunten (2008, 2015) demonstrated how guides negotiate the tourist gaze to their advantage though the development of a commodified persona: "a set of beliefs and practices in which an individual chooses to construct a marketable identity product while striving to avoid alienating him- or herself" (Bunten 2008: 380). In most of the literature to date, "local tour guides are key actors in the process of localizing – folklorising, ethnicising, and exoticising – a destination" (Salazar 2005: 629). Such guides reproduce the exoticising gaze: "images and discourses [which] often propagate historically inherited stereotypes that are based on myths and fantasies related to nature, the noble savage, art, individual freedom and self-realisation, equality and paradise" (Salazar & Graburn 2014: 212). In the case of Jewish-Israeli guides of Christian pilgrims, however, the primary means of earning confidence and achieving rapport is through the use of a text shared by pilgrims and guides – the Bible. Moreover, in the case of immi-

grant guides the performance of biblical Jewishness under the Christian pilgrim gaze may affirm his or her Israeli belonging and nativity as depicted in the Zionist understanding.

As I understand it, identity is not an essence, but a project of self-formation developed through contact with the other (Ren 2010). By documenting several performative practices of Jewish-Israeli pilgrim guides, and by comparing them with Bunten's case, I will show how different guiding performances develop in response to significantly different tourist gazes, power structures, and appropriating practices; these performances are not only a way to please the client, but a means of developing guides' own sense of identity. Thus, not only do guides mediate tourists' relation to the land and its people, but tourists may mediate guides' relationships to the land and its people.<sup>1</sup>

This article provides a brief auto-ethnographic sketch of my entry into guiding<sup>2</sup> and then focuses on several *shtick* – formalized, often comic routines employed by guides, often to introduce tourists to a new site or programme – which become part of guides' fixed repertoire. Two of the three examples of shtick discussed in this article were developed for groups that I guided over the course of a 30-year career. I have guided several hundred tours over three decades, taking notes on many of them. Although I stopped guiding intensively in 2000, when I entered academia, I continue to guide several groups a year and maintain contact with other tour guides, including new guides I meet as I participate and sometimes teach in refresher courses. Other shtick mentioned here (like those performed by "Roberto") were obtained from open-ended interviews with 30 guides, which research assistants and I interviewed and recorded at several intervals in 2002–2004, 2010 and 2015. The materials served as part of a larger project, which I recently published as a book (Feldman 2016). Although tourism has increased several-fold over the past two decades, the requests, itineraries and expectations of most pilgrim groups have changed little. Although there are important differences between Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant pilgrim groups, as well as between parties of differ-

ent nationalities, the sample brought here includes American, British, German and Italian groups, both Protestant and Catholic.

### **The Holy Land Tour and the Guide's Role in it**

Most pilgrims of Holy Land tour groups come on 8–12-day tours focused on biblical sites, along with their pastor or priest; they usually belong to a single town, parish or church. The groups' itineraries focus on sites of significance to Christian faith and history, and are frequently advertised as "walking in the footsteps of Jesus". Groups regularly conduct Christian worship, read Bible passages, and sing hymns in the course of their visit. Local travel agents assign a single tour guide to accompany the pilgrims throughout the course of their trip. The guide may be Israeli, Palestinian or a foreign Catholic religious; Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Except for the religious, who are licensed by church authorities, all other guides must follow a two-year Israeli government sponsored training course,<sup>3</sup> and pass a series of exams. Although both men and women attend the course, men tend to continue to guide for longer periods of time, probably as a result of the difficulties of combining guiding and child-raising. The guide is often the only local person pilgrims converse with in the course of their visit. In this article, I restrict my analysis to the Jewish-Israeli case, and as the examples I bring are from my own experience and that of "Roberto", I refer to guides using the masculine pronoun.

As opposed to the group's spiritual leader (priest or pastor) who accompanies them from the home country, the guide is marked as "local", and is often introduced as such by the leader to the group. Not only does the guide reside in the toured destination country, but he is "entrusted with the public relations mission to encapsulate the essence of place... and to be a window onto a site, region, or even country" (Salazar 2005: 629). Pilgrims often depend upon their guides' historical and geographical knowledge to provide material and "scientific" proofs for their Christian faith, whose roots and traces pilgrims seek in the land.

The guide spends 8–10 hours a day performing

in places he does not usually inhabit, often speaking another language. Mostly independent freelance workers, tour guides tend to see themselves as competent cosmopolitans (Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008), skillful self-actualizers in a competitive market (Widtfeldt Meged 2017). Guides avoid commitments to the rhythms and obligations of daily life (parent-teacher meetings, holidays, birthdays, scheduled classes, etc.). They lose track of the day of the week, the month and season of the year, as they wake in yet another anonymous hotel. Often, their work takes them away, physically and mentally, from their families for days or even weeks at a time. Most guides acknowledge the blurring of work and leisure (Widtfeldt Meged 2017) and the difficulty in readjustment from work to home life, which creates considerable strains in many guides' families.<sup>4</sup> Some become "serial" guides, taking one consecutive group after another, in part, so as not to face the gap between their "star" status on the road – as expert, ambassador and exemplary Jew and Israeli – and their "normal" status in the family.

### **Zionism, Israeli Nativity and the Pilgrim Guide**

Zionism as an ideological assertion and Zionism as a tried sense of belonging to place and community are two very different things. (Katriel 1997: 9)

The Christian pilgrim gaze and the authenticating practices of Jewish-Israeli guides are both tied to the Bible and to Zionism. The Christian pilgrim gaze on Israel is one that seeks a sacred Centre rather than an exotic Other (Cohen 1979). Holy Land pilgrimage seeks to bring biblical events to life by providing geographical and multi-sensory anchors for biblical events. Already in the sixth century (Limor 1996), Jews had become seen as witnesses and authenticators of Christian sites and truths, in spite of their refusal to recognize Jesus as Messiah. Jews were seen as people of the Book, as bearers of the longest memory and as older natives of the land, who possess geographical and scriptural knowledge.<sup>5</sup> The Christian pilgrim gaze may seek to appropriate the guide as "one of us" – either through fostering of a rhetoric

of “Judeo-Christian tradition”, or by seeing the Israeli Jew as Biblical Hebrew or as promising but “incomplete” Christian to be missionized. The latter is particularly true in the case of Evangelicals, as I have described elsewhere (Feldman 2016: 6).

From the guide’s perspective, especially in the case of Jewish guides who are immigrants from elsewhere, the text often mediates connection to the land. The Zionist reading of the Bible – as a national history book, source of heritage and justification of the claim to the land – is promoted by political discourse, Israeli formal education, hiking practices (Selwyn 1995; Almog 2000: 160–184) and the training course for tour guides. These discourses and practices depict Israeli nativity as an act of *recovery* of biblical roots detached at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and the beginning of exile (Zerubavel 1995). This rhetoric is particularly attractive to Jewish guides who immigrated to Israel from the West, many of whom came to the country for Zionist reasons. Thus, there is a common ground between the pilgrims’ quest to make the Bible real, confirm their faith, walk in the footsteps of Jesus, the prophets and ancestors, and the immigrant guide’s quest to become an Israeli native. Viewing, walking and reading is an attempt to infuse the “little place” of everyday life with passion of the “big place” of Jewish and cosmic history (Gurevitch 1997), an effort which may have served, consciously or unconsciously, to motivate the immigrants to seek work as guides for foreign pilgrims or tourists.

A large portion, perhaps half, of active licensed Israeli tour guides are immigrants from other countries. Undoubtedly, their command of the tourists’ language is one reason for this predominance. I suggest, however, that there are psycho-social reasons as well. The immigrant sees much of Israeli culture and everyday life as not taken-for-granted, and this offers the guide a bifurcated perspective on Israeli culture and society, which facilitates translation of culture into terms familiar to the tourists. By presenting the land, Judaism, sacred texts, and themselves to foreign Christian pilgrims, Jewish-Israeli tour guides both affirm and interrogate their relations to Israeli belonging in new ways. For guides

who are not native-born, their Jewish and Zionist commitments and imaginings are a major part of what brought them to Israel and how they explain their belonging to the place, the land and the state. Their profession as guide is not just an expression of that status, but an aid in the process of becoming native, as I will now describe.

### **Migrant on the Margins: Becoming a Native through Guiding**

At age 22, I emigrated from Manhattan to Jerusalem. When, before I left New York, I told my friends I had decided to come on *aliya* to Israel, I spoke of leaving the moribund swamp of America to live where the Jewish future would be made. The Orthodox Judaism I grew up with was the Judaism of interiors. Jews were inside – in the homes, schools, synagogues; *goyim* – Gentiles – were on the streets, in the street. My grandmother would remind me, “Don’t park your car on the wrong side of Broadway . . . Always carry a quarter for the muggers . . . Come home right after school and study for your exams . . . if not, you’ll grow up to be a *sheigitz*<sup>6</sup> [non-Jewish man]!”

While I was certainly influenced by the safety and freedom of movement I experienced on my summer visits to Israel, I had also been impressed by the writings of Zionist thinker Ahad Ha’am. According to Ahad Ha’am, only Israel could become a centre for spiritual renewal for the Jewish world, because Judaism could only thrive as a viable modern culture under physical and political conditions that granted it a measure of autonomy. In exile, he wrote, the practice of Judaism could not be sheltered from the power of the omnipresent othering Gentile gaze. Hence, Judaism in exile would either fashion itself as a walled enclave or accommodate itself to the Gentile gaze and assimilate (Zipperstein 1992). In the State of Israel, Judaism could have the space of a majority culture and renew itself without regard for the disciplining gentile gaze.

The Land of Israel that attracted me was a land of open spaces without danger, a land of being in the majority. As a new immigrant from a religious background, I imagined the land itself as overlaid with biblical significance, material evidence of Jewish

history, yet not constrained by Orthodox Jewish law. It was a place where one didn't need to be religious to be Jewish. The Jewish year-cycle was manifest in everyday movement in the public square and the marketplace. The street was Jewish in name and in population and – at least in Tel Aviv – it had sand that got into your sandals, and it ended at the beach. And it was far away from my Orthodox home.

The Israel I found when I moved there was not the Israel of my dreams. I spent hours waiting in the wrong lines in banks, post offices, government ministries; I lacked *protekzia*, the connections that might ease my way through bureaucracies. Though I spoke Hebrew well, for years merchants and people on the street would address me in English. The wide-open Jewish country fragmented into territories of Arabs and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis, Orthodox and secular, Mizrachim and Ashkenazim. If in New York I was a Jew, in Israel I became an American, or most bizarrely, an “Anglo-Saxon”.

The tour guide course I entered a year after my arrival was, for me, an initiation into Israeliness. Besides academic study, the course involved over 75 full-day hikes through the country. Hiking was an integral part of Israeli *sabra* (i.e., native) culture (Almog 2000: 160–184), and *yediat ha'aretz*, knowledge of the land practices, widely diffused through Israeli culture, are at the core of tour guide training. Zionism promoted a “direct and working partnership both with the land and with the landscape as a whole, in order to express a human nature that had become cramped and partial in the ghetto. Secondly, there was the comparable notion of cognitively associating land, landscape and the ‘nature’ therein with the resurgent nation” (Selwyn 1995: 117). The links made between the land and the biblical text resounded with my New York yeshiva day school education. Hiking uniquely tied the desire for physicality and open space with a familiar Jewish grounding. It linked the small place of mountains and valleys with the “big place” of historical Israel (Gurevitch 1997). It took Judaism out of the classroom and into the valleys and fields in ways that made sense to me.

By being the guide to the Land of Israel I could overcome the cognitive dissonances of my own *aliya*

to Israel by missionizing, bringing the outside world into accord with one's own beliefs. In this case, it was the belief and practice of preaching Israel as the “big place” of Jewish/biblical history and destiny, rather than the “little place” of local daily life. By “making souls” for the land, showing how a geographic understanding of the land and a knowledge of Jewish history could enrich pilgrims' own faith and their link to Israel, I could acquire a role as an exemplary Israeli that was denied me as a new immigrant in Israeli society. At the same time, my work for Palestinian tour agencies and with Palestinian drivers enlarged my understanding of the political contexts I was working and living in, and made me aware of alternative narratives, other claims to the land.

The “big place” of the Land of Israel attracted me, while the small place of everyday life was often alienating. So, my turn to tour guiding was a way of being in Israel without being with Israelis, being home while spending my time away from home, walking and explaining the mythical landscapes while avoiding some of the frictions of daily life. The enthusiasm displayed by pilgrims in many of the sites and vistas of the land (and my assigned task of arousing it) also recharged the emotional connection to the land that had originally brought me to Jerusalem, but that weakened with time and routine. And, of course, it provided me with a livelihood that enabled me to build a home and a family in Israel. What's more, it endowed me with an honorary status – as Israeli, knowledgeable Jew, and for some Evangelicals agent of the divine plan. As several pilgrims asked me in the later days of their voyage, “Don't you feel privileged to come back home?” In part thanks to the pilgrims, I did.

### **Who Belongs to the Land? Co-producing Empathy and Authority through Welcoming Rites**

One of the ways guides establish authority as natives in guided tours is through giving and teaching greetings in the local language.<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew language and selective Bible readings perform similarly in the case of Holy Land pilgrimages. The following is a *shtick* – a ritualized greeting ceremony that became

a standard part of my guiding repertoire, at least for Evangelicals:<sup>8</sup>

A group from California arrives at Ben Gurion Airport after nearly 24 hours in transit. After the driver has loaded the luggage onto the tour bus, and I have counted passengers, the pastor requests the microphone for a word of prayer: “We *just* want to thank you, Lord, for safely bringing us to this special place. Bless our guide and driver as they take us through Your home. Continue to protect us and guide us, in the wonderful name of Jesus, *Amen*.” The pastor hands me the microphone, as the bus pulls out of the parking lot.

I turn to face the group and begin:

Shalom, everyone and welcome to Israel. My name is Jackie, and I’ll be your guide to Israel for the next ten days. Our driver’s name is Muhammad, and he’ll be driving us through the Land of the Bible.

Now your pastor, Reverend Jones [nodding and winking at him], tells me that you know your Bible. How many of you brought your Bibles with you?

[Most of the hands go up. Some: “I left it in my luggage.”]

Good! Now I’m going to start off with a little quiz. Just to make sure you really know your Bible – okay? [waving my Bible at them] Now, I’m gonna mention some names, and if any of you recognize any of them, just raise your hand, okay?

[I open the Bible and read from the text of the Book of Numbers, Chapter 13]:

*Shammua ben Zaccur*. [no hands]

*Igal ben Yosef*. Anyone here know Yigal? [no hands]

*Ge’uel ben Maki*. [no hands]

*Nah’-bi ben Voph-si*. [no hands]

I read through ten names, emphasizing the Hebrew pronunciation of each.

*Calev ben Yefuneh*. [a few hands go up]

*Joshua, the son of Nun* [Anglicized pronunciation – all the hands go up]

Whew, I was getting worried! Well, the first ten names I read were those of the bad spies. Those are the ones that came back and said, “Israel! Dangerous place! You don’t wanna go there!” [pause, some laughter] Bet some of your friends told you that before you left, right? [murmur of assent] Well, forget about them – just like the ten spies – we forgot about them. But the other two, Caleb and Joshua – they said, “Don’t worry, just put your faith in the Lord and He’ll see us through.” *They’re* the ones we remember.

We’re here in God’s hands, and we’re here in the hands of our excellent driver Muhammad, and I’m looking forward to a wonderful and uplifting experience over the next ten days with you. Welcome to Israel [pause].

We’re now travelling through *Emek Hasharon* – the Sharon Plain, and in 45 minutes we’ll be at our hotel in Netanya. I’ll have maps for all of you tomorrow.

Taking a cue from the tropes of the pastor’s opening prayer, the guide enlists the group’s participation in a dialogue whose form, he assumes, will be familiar to them.<sup>9</sup> He builds on assumed visitors’ preconceptions of the land (dangerous and Oriental), Protestant practices and implicit theological understandings (Bible reading, the Jew as native and authoritative Old Testament witness), Protestant tropes of faith (“just put your faith in the Lord”), popular U.S. culture (quiz programmes), the use of enthusiastic feeling-tones (“Whew! I was getting worried!” [Fine & Speer 1985]), as well as strategic shifts in pronouns (from *you* to *we* – Katriel 1997: 73–102).<sup>10</sup> By introducing himself, the tour, and the

land through this dialogue, the guide seeks to position his performing voice as the voice of the land. The act of reading the Bible while pronouncing the Hebrew names is self-referential and self-authorizing (Crapanzano 2017), as the biblical passages, their reading out loud and the call-and-response mode of interaction are already familiar sources of authority for the pilgrims. The guide claims a preacher-like authority by demonstrating a familiarity with the biblical details that the Christian lay believers do not possess – a familiarity that derives from the guide’s position as native and as Hebrew speaker. The guide’s mention of the group’s preacher and his nod and wink to him is a subtle way of acknowledging that it is the preacher who is responsible for the group’s relation to the Bible, and that the guide will not impinge on his territory. By affirming the authority of the Bible, the guide attempts to win over the group’s confidence in him, while revealing the true Land as the one inhabited by biblical and mod-

ern Israel. The fragility of the affirmation – this is certainly not the only legitimate interpretation of the Bible – is deflected by the pilgrims’ investment in making their trip rewarding; this investment calls for a suspension of scepticism and distance (Crapanzano 2017).

The dialogue uses the biblical story to cosmicize Ben Gurion Airport (a modern Israeli site) as the gateway to the Biblical Promised Land. It is as Israeli local expert that he asserts his position as witness to biblical truth. Assuming this position, the guide welcomes and praises the participants’ decision to tour Israel not as a vacation option but as an expression of religious faith. By singling out the participants who brought their Bibles on board, and by calling the travellers “the good spies”, he lauds their decision to overcome security concerns and fly to Israel as an act of trust in God. In choosing the obscure names of the Bible, and pronouncing them in ways that increase their foreignness, the guide makes the



Ill. 1: By strategically using large maps as well as the Bible, the guide demonstrates his familiarity with the biblical and current landscape of the Holy Land and acquires authority. (Photo: Jackie Feldman)

pilgrims aware of their relative ignorance of the Hebrew Bible. In mentioning Caleb (but pronounced as “Kalev”) next-to-last, the guide assumes that some will recognize the name through the “veil” of the Hebrew pronunciation. The final name, with Anglicized pronunciation – Joshua, the son of Nun – is recognized by all, as the guide assumes it will be. The guide has positioned himself as teacher, by gradually lifting the veil of ignorance, bringing the group to greater biblical knowledge. By raising their hands to “volunteer” to identify (and identify with) Caleb and Joshua, and laughing in appreciation of the point afterwards, the pilgrims provide bodily assent to this role and assume a part in the co-production of the tour (Weiler & Black 2015). At the same time, the joking tone and the reference to the tour bus and

its Muslim driver as divine instruments – but not grounded in scriptural reference – mark a hierarchy between the Jewish-Israeli guide and the Palestinian Arab driver.

Yet the performance also involves a measure of self-essentialization: the names of the spies or the biblical passage are not familiar or important to most Israelis. The guide essentializes himself by assenting to assume the position of “true Biblical Hebrew”, as the sign of his nativity and belonging – as an Old Testament Israelite as depicted in the Protestant imagination. This performance traces a pattern that the guide will then be expected to repeat throughout the course of the tour. In my own guiding, it made me play down my distance from the Orthodox understandings of Scriptural authority that I grew up with, and delay voicing my objection to the interpretation of current political events as manifestations of biblical (often apocalyptic) prophecy (common among Evangelicals) until a later point in the tour, when I felt I had acquired enough trust to voice unpopular views.<sup>11</sup>

### Feeding the Multitudes – Scripturalized Hospitality in the Homeland of Jesus and Abraham

Besides greetings and teaching words in the native language, guides may display their hospitality by offering food. Candea and da Col (2012: S9) note that “food itself [is]... a prime manipulating substance designed to lure and establish a pivotal asymmetry between hosts and guests”. By distributing food to pilgrims in ritualized or scripturalized contexts, guides assert themselves as hosts – not only personally, but as members of the hosting country and nation – Israel. The following two examples will illustrate this:<sup>12</sup>

Roberto, a licensed tour guide and Italian Jewish immigrant to Israel interviewed in 2010, recounts his motivations and his guiding practices for Italian Catholics:

From the outset, I felt that my home was more in Jerusalem than in Italy...My father was a Christian and my mother was Jewish, so I lived in the



Ill. 2: Evangelical pilgrims follow the guides’ citation of scripture in their Bibles. The guides’ ability to quote the Bible and link it to the scenery grants him authority as biblical native. (Photo: Jackie Feldman)

Christian world my entire life... Whoever grew up as I did, in an Italian village with few Jews, and went to mass to pray... Whoever grew up that way has a special understanding of things. He knows what the Christian has in his head...

Until thirty years ago, the Vatican prohibited the study of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. The Italian Christians date back 2000 years and don't know who Jesus was. What a Jew is. The common people don't link up to the intellectual theories. So, when they arrive here (in Israel), we construct their knowledge in their language and in their mentality, and that's a great accomplishment [...]

Some of them can't stop bragging about how proud they are of their country, of Italian food; the group is really a branch of Italy. So, I prepare them a picnic on the Mount of Beatitudes where you see the entire lake. People get high from that. I prepare them sandwiches and fruit... After I've led them to understand the story from the territory, then, when I read to them from the Hebrew Bible, they react with "wow!"...

I chose Judaism and it's the best thing I've done in my life and I have no regrets and not a shadow of a doubt. I chose and I'm at peace so I can live with others and have no reason to fear. Many Italian guides don't go into churches, and in their position they transmit that they don't want "to get dirty". I go inside, and provide the complimentary Jewish part to the priest's words – all if the priest agrees, of course... Every Christian is also a Jew; he just doesn't know it. But when he gets here, he discovers that...

On the one hand, this reflects the Zionist thinking of Ahad Ha'am (see [above](#)): <sup>p. 44</sup> אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל, in the landscape of Israel, Roberto is empowered to instruct Italian Catholics in ways he could not in his Italian hometown. As he remarks elsewhere: "no Jewish community in Europe can be an educational force towards the Gentiles... They don't want to disturb their lives, they just want to be obedient to the authorities;

they're still searching for themselves..." As Israeli, he can enter a local church in Israel, not as the child of an insignificant minority, but as "elder brother" to instruct Italian Christians about the Jewish Jesus and the Hebrew Bible: "every Christian is also a Jew, but he doesn't know that".

In response to the pilgrims' Italian patriotism, Roberto shows them that as Christians, their deeper roots are in Israel, where Jesus lived as a Jew. He offers the group bread and fruit at the Mount of Beatitudes, overlooking the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes. By offering them hospitality there, he positions himself as host and native, as proprietor of the symbolic landscape of the Sea of Galilee. As a member of the family of Jesus the Jew, he invites the Gentile Christians into his home. As Herzfeld (1987: 76) writes, hospitality creates an "essential homology between several levels of collective identity – village, ethnic group, district, nation. What goes for the family home also goes... for the national territory." As a Jew, Israel is Roberto's home and they are his guests.

Roberto adds:

the success of tourism is, on a certain level, the success of the State... It is our future. It will determine if we will have a state or not. Since 1948, we are constantly on display, and the number of tourists is half the number of citizens. The tourists' impression is part of our struggle to be a cultured, righteous and accepted country.

In the guiding encounter, Christians serve as representatives of a global gaze, possessors of a shared corpus of Scripture, and as a community that historically claimed the heritage of the Bible, while humiliating "Israel according to the flesh". By reading to and feeding his Italian Christian guests, Roberto can re-enact his life-choices through guiding, reassure himself of the correctness of his choice to be Jewish and make Israel his home, and even serve as an ambassador for his chosen homeland.

A second example of marking belonging and ownership through food rituals is the welcoming ceremony to Jerusalem held at the Mount Scopus out-

look. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the tour guide often introduces the city by performing a ritualized welcome including bread, salt and wine. While this is a recently invented ceremony, apparently popularized by Jewish tour groups some time after the Six Day War in 1967,<sup>13</sup> its similarity to both the Christian communion and Jewish Sabbath blessings give it a veneer of antiquity. The rite varies from one guide to another, and the following is a description of a typical performance, as I might do as guide for my pilgrim groups.

Upon the group's arrival in Jerusalem, usually just before sunset, I would drive up to the panoramic platform on Mount Scopus. I then set up two small loaves of bread covered with a napkin, a packet of salt and a cup of wine or grape juice atop the low retaining wall of the panorama platform. Placing a yarmulke on my head, I would read the passage from Genesis, concluding with Melchizedek's reception of Abraham, following Abraham's victory over the Kings of the North:

When he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King. And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand." And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything. (Genesis 14: 17–Jewish Bible and 20, JPS translation)

should read 'Genesis 14:17–20, JPS translation'

Following the reading of the Genesis passage, I would read one of the pilgrim psalms (Songs of Ascent), most frequently Psalm 122(121): "*Samah'ti be'omrim li beit Adonai nelekh*. I was glad when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord. My feet were standing within your gates, Jerusalem..." I would then prompt visitors to sing or hum the final verses of the psalm, using a Hassidic melody I had taught them: "because of my brothers and friends, I will say, I will say, peace be with you. For the sake of the house of the Lord, I will seek your good" (Psalm

122(121): 8–9). I would sing the last refrain in the Hebrew original and then recite the Hebrew blessings over the bread and wine and the *Shehecheyanu* blessing in Hebrew and English: "blessed art thou, God, our Lord, king of the universe, who has kept us alive, and sustained us and brought us to this day". Sometimes, the blessings were followed with a passage read by the pastor, describing Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Subsequently, I would break the bread, dip the pieces in salt and distribute them among the members of the group. I would pour the wine/grape juice into small individual cups for the pilgrims to drink and conclude: "welcome to the Holy City of Jerusalem".

This ceremony, as a perceived re-enactment of the original welcome in Genesis 14, positions the guide as native host and ritual expert (like Melchizedek, the priest of God and King of [Jeru-]Salem) and the pilgrims as honoured guests to the city (like Abraham). The recital of the biblical passage, and the Hebrew pronunciation of the difficult names of the kings in Genesis 14: 8–9 acknowledges the guide's familiarity with the Bible. The sharing of bread, wine and word/quotes from the Bible signals a shared spiritual descent from Abraham (and perhaps Melchizedek, linked with Jesus in the New Testament – Hebrews 6–7) and a shared sacred book. The prominence of the Hebrew language and Jewish customs (covering one's head before the prayer, covering the bread, blessing the wine first and bread second, using two loaves as in the Sabbath ceremony) marks it as authentically Jewish. The breaking of bread and pouring out of wine by the Jewish guide is part of the guide's claim to belonging and possession. The Jewish-Israeli guide enacts the King of Salem, and the Christians are honoured guests in his home. The perceived Jewish authenticity of the ceremony and its resemblance to Christian practices has made the ritual popular as a rite of passage of entering Jerusalem. It is often requested by returning Christian groups and is sometimes explicitly mentioned in printed tour itineraries.

The ritual seduces the pilgrims with its inclusiveness and familiarity (it's like Communion), but it is not quite Christian. It reaffirms Judaism (including

latter-day Jewish customs) as the basis of Christianity and as the native religion of the city, ostensibly dating back to Abraham.<sup>14</sup> As the guide Roberto said, “every Christian is also a Jew, he just doesn’t know it. But when he gets here, he discovers that.” If the ceremony is immediately followed by the identification of the major sites of the city, its function as rite of passage, and the status of the guide as autochthonous native and ritual mediator are reaffirmed.

### **Between Sitka and Zion: Hospitality, the Commodified Persona and Becoming Native**

What can the Israeli case teach us about tour guides’ mediatory role and its influence on their identities and senses of belonging? In her article (Bunten 2008) and subsequent book *So, how long have you been native?* (Bunten 2015), Alexis Bunten studies how native guides in Sitka, Alaska, working under the gaze of white American cruise tourists construct a “commodified persona”: “a set of beliefs and practices in which an individual chooses to construct a marketable identity product while striving to avoid alienating him- or herself” (Bunten 2008: 381). She describes the guides as sophisticated culture brokers who create a “commodified persona” for guiding work which they can put to rest when they leave the work frame. The native tour guides, she argues, develop this commodified persona in order “to gain control over the product of his labour, namely, himself” (ibid.: 385). In their one- to two-hour long presentations, guides are expected to “present a simplified version of the self that conforms to (popular) Western concepts of the Other” (ibid.: 386). These include identifying themselves by Tlingit names and clan affiliations, and teaching groups several Tlingit greetings and words and identifying flora and fauna by their Tlingit names and stories. Native culture is sanitized, eliminating much of modern reality as well as mention of many of the effects of colonization. Guides are expected to portray themselves as close to nature, and not mention their higher education degrees, if they possess them. They should personalise their stories for a variety of publics, even if the autobiographical mode preferred by many American tourists runs contrary to Tlingit norms.

While those too attached to those norms may find themselves unable to function in the tour context, most come up with creative responses to the tourist gaze, including covert forms of resistance, especially through humour. If they succeed, she claims, their performances can generate heightened awareness of authenticity and tradition.

I find the “commodified persona” to be a useful concept in understanding how tourism can *both* create pressures on tourism workers to conform to visitors’ expectations and gazes, *and* become a resource in strengthening ethnic or national identity. If successfully maintained, the marketing of national identity may lead not necessarily to self-parody but (as in the case of commercialized performances of ethnicity) to “(re)fashion identity, to (re)animate cultural subjectivity, to (re)charge collective self-awareness, to forge new patterns of sociality, all within the marketplace” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 26). It may even temporarily reverse the historical power relations between the West and the toured country (as in Greece – Herzfeld 1987: 86).

Why, then, does the Alaskan cruise guide seem to be able to compartmentalize his “commodified persona” and restrict it to the tour frame more easily than the Israeli pilgrim guide? I offer three reasons for this difference: (1) the duration of the tour, (2) the nature of the visitor gaze on the culture represented by the guide, and (3) the ways the host culture defines “being native”.

1. The Alaskan cruise tourists hop off the cruise ship for a one-day tour of the island. The actual tour may last no longer than an hour or two. There is little time for developing an intensive relationship, and the guide has less responsibility in caring for his tourists. Another day, another tour group. The Israeli guide usually accompanies his pilgrims for over a week, caters to their material needs, illnesses and preferences, and attempts to cultivate the affection of the group in order to receive future requests for work from pastors and priests who may return year after year.

2. In Alaskan tours, as in much cultural tourism, otherness or making-other plays a constitutive role in the performative making of the nation (Mitchell

2001: 215) – and the tour group. However, as Noel Salazar (2017: 704) writes, “(tourism) imaginaries often shrewdly exaggerate the power of difference while neglecting and obfuscating the power of commonality”. In the guiding of Holy Land pilgrimage, the fostering of common ground is the basis for creating difference that will be valued. The duration and (often) intensiveness of the encounter,<sup>15</sup> and the search of pilgrims for commonality with the Jewish-Israeli guide (rather than distancing exoticism), increase pressures on guides to conform to Christian pilgrim imaginaries of Judaism, imaginaries which are partially shared. This makes the compartmentalization of the commodified persona in the workplace more difficult to maintain. Even the most adroit performers experience “leakage” between the public persona of the guide in the tour frame and the stories they tell themselves in private life, as in Roberto’s biographical story of Jewish-Christian relations.

3. Zali Gurevich suggests that the Zionist relation to the land is based on biblical paradigms: “The book that tells the place’s story... also resists the place as a totality that harmonizes the relation between humans and their immediate earthly abode. In Judaic thought, the place is human but its meaning is taken from the voice that is out of place and defies place-ness” (Gurevich 1997: 213). This textual mediation of belonging is evoked every time the guide reads from “his” Bible at a tour site. It makes the Israeli guide’s approach familiar to foreign Christians. This is particularly true for immigrant guides, whose motivation to come to the land is often founded in a Zionist vision of becoming native, of returning from diaspora/exile to a place anchored in the Jewish – and Christian – Bible. The Bible becomes part of the historical claim to belonging to the nation and the land. The dominance of recovered roots in Zionist national identity, and the sharing with pilgrims of an attachment to a common Scripture (even if in different ways and with different degrees of commitment<sup>16</sup>), make the performance for visitors “stickier” than it is for Alaskan native guides of cruise ships. Their sense of everyday belonging has very little to do with hunting seals or collecting shellfish.

Given the nature of the pilgrim gaze and the construction of Zionist belonging, the pilgrim guide who acts more pious, more honest, or more respectful of his pilgrims’ beliefs than he feels in private, offstage life is not necessarily “selling out”. As Schieffelin noted, “performances, whether ritual or dramatic, create and make present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse or terrify. And through these presences, they alter moods, social relations, bodily dispositions and states of mind” (Schieffelin 2003: 195). The religious language itself and its aural resonance (Stromberg 2009) may have transformative potentials. To encourage faith among the pilgrims the guide need not playact. Rather, he allows himself to be caught up in the performance, and his scepticism is suspended. In that sense, the ritualized performance not only reflects faith but also generates it.

### **Conclusion – Tourists as Mediators of Guide Experience?**

In many contexts, we are witnessing a shift in the role of the tour guide from that of communicator of information to that of mediator or broker of experience (Weiler & Black 2005). As brokers of experience, guides are expected to create meaningful, interactive, affective experience for tourists (ibid.). This will demand more emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) of tour guides and increase the role strains on them. If tourists are content with the depiction of an exoticized, essentialized past (cf. Bunten 2015) and the frame of the tour is sufficiently restricted in its duration and in its depiction of the exotic, guides may succeed in developing a commodified on-stage persona that supplies tourist demand without “selling out”. However, as the example of the Israeli immigrant pilgrim guide illustrates, if the story expected by the tourists and the guide’s own story overlap, the frames may blur.

Insofar as we are performative beings (and tour guides certainly are!), what happens inside the tourist/pilgrim frame may affect the guide’s larger life. Like Arlie Hochschild demonstrated,

the reactions of others to our gestures may help define what we really come to feel. . . . We, in turn,

may internalise their imputation and thus define our inchoate feeling. The social interaction of gestures may thus not only express our feelings but define them as well (Hochschild 1983: 213).

Thus, the native guide may not only serve as a mediator between the tourist and the land or local culture; in some cases, the tourist may be a mediator between the guide and the land. The public performance of the land and culture for others positions the guide as a true native. And if we understand identity not as an essence but as a project, it may actually help make him one.

## Notes

- 1 Research for this article was made possible by a grant from the Israel Science Foundation (13/07), and from support during spring 2017 as an Israel Institute fellow at Universiteit van Antwerpen.
- 2 For an insightful discussion on the anthropologist as tour guide, see Bruner (2004: 1–10).
- 3 The Palestinian Authority also conducts guide courses and licensing exams in the Palestinian Territories, but very few Palestinian guides have permission to guide in Israel or in East Jerusalem, where the majority of pilgrim sites are located.
- 4 For similar observations on air hostesses, see Hochschild (1983). For a perspective application to tour guides, see Widtfeldt Megeed (2017).
- 5 They may also be seen as Christ-killers, money changers in the Temple, treacherous Judases, and conspirators to dominate the world. Such views rarely come to the fore, but if they do, they demand other strategies on the part of guides.
- 6 The Yiddish words *sheigitz/shiksa* referring to non-Jewish men/women, from the Hebrew root *sheketz*, an object of disgust. Both have connotations of animality and sexuality.
- 7 This is common in many guided tours. Alexis Bunten (2008: 387) mentions how the Native American guides she studied greeted visitors in the local language and mentioned their Tlingit names at the opening of the tour – even if the guides actually belonged to another tribe!
- 8 The story appears in a slightly different version in Feldman (2007: 357–359). As oral performances, the details change from one retelling to another, while maintaining the same basic structure.
- 9 In a lunchtime conversation with another guide who studied in the guide course with me, he mentioned his use of the story of the spies as a welcoming dialogue at the airport. I then adopted it, adding my own intona-

tions, verses and skills.

- 10 “The use of the first person plural often signals their self-inclusion in a wider, more encompassing group of like-minded people” (Katriel 1997: 78).
- 11 For another case of the conflict of guides’ performance of belonging and its conflict with one’s own off-stage practice, this time through Jewish ritual at the Western Wall, see Feldman (2016: 6–7).
- 12 Roberto’s account is based on the transcript of an interview conducted by my research assistant Smadar Farkash, whereas the description of the Mount Scopus ceremony is based on my own past and (occasionally) present practice with pilgrim groups.
- 13 I have so far been unable to trace its origins, though it has been suggested that it is a post-Six Day War inversion of a traditional mourning ceremony (Elchanan Reiner, oral communication). The ceremony has become a standard part of Jewish tour groups’ itineraries, especially Reform and Conservative ones.
- 14 I surmise that the rite has increased in popularity as many Christian groups have adopted Jewish rituals as a marker of their authenticity (Dulin 2015).
- 15 “The deeper the experience sought by the tourist, the more strongly will he tend to embrace this ‘Other’ and turn it into his ‘elective Center’” (Cohen 1988: 376).
- 16 Thus, Melchizedek is part of the Jewish Bible, but that text is read and valued differently by Christians who read the Old Testament through the New.

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# THE INTIMACY OF MEDIATION

## Jewish Guides in the Contact Zone of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage

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The contact zone between groups of Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land and the Jewish-Israeli tour guides leading these groups can become an area of intercultural intimacy, respect and mutuality, based on a form of shared understanding, despite the cultural differences. Thus, after making sense of the piecemeal and practical notion of “shared understanding” that develops in the day-to-day interaction between the guide and the pilgrims, three practical mediation techniques that are commonly used by guides, are identified through observations and interviews with guides regarding their practical handling of cross-cultural and ethical difficulties. These techniques, channeled into guiding practices, enable guides to engage other religions while fostering relations of intimacy.

*Keywords:* Christianity, pilgrimage, Holy Land, tour guide, intimacy

### Introduction: The Story of Ronen

Ronen is a Jewish-Israeli tour guide who has been guiding groups of pilgrims through the Holy Land for many years. One day, while heading to the airport with a group of tourists after a successful ten-day tour, the tour leader took the microphone and bore his testimony in Christ. He then asked a few tourists to do likewise. Members of this denomination normally end their testimony by saying “and I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ – Amen”. Then, the tour leader turned to Ronen and asked, over the microphone, that is, in public, that he also bear his testimony in Christ. Ronen’s first thought was that since the tour leader knew very well that Ronen was Jewish (they had been working together for more

than twenty years), he had put him on the spot. After ten days together, interacting with local service suppliers and visiting tourist attractions, Ronen could not come to see the request that he testify as a simple act of courtesy. He knew that something deeper was happening here. However, if this was not just an act of courtesy, then it is not altogether clear whether the tour leader called upon Ronen *despite* knowing that he was Jewish, or perhaps he called upon him *because* Ronen was Jewish – thus, carrying out his missionary role. As a tour guide in the Holy Land, although he does not share the pilgrims’ faith, Ronen is de facto taking part in their spiritual journey, informally almost serving as a “witness” as he tells the group of the events which, according to

tradition, took place at the various sites, conveying to them their Christian meaning and significance. After traveling the country/the Holy Land together, a sense of intimacy and shared understanding is created. Ronen describes his deep sense of personal uneasiness:

I felt trapped, and did not like the corner that I was led into. My reply was: "I am honored and proud to guide Christians through this land. As a Jew I will not bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, but I do bear testimony that this tour is spiritually significant to me." I have known this tour leader for more than twenty years, and I knew right away that it was a challenge to our relationship. (Ronen, interview, September 22, 2014)

Ronen thought that his response was appropriate and that he was successfully treading the middle ground, both distinguishing himself from their faith, yet encouraging their spiritual journey by mimicking their tropes. When Ronen says: "I bear testimony that this tour is spiritually significant to me," he affirms a shared sense of intimacy between the Jewish tour guide and the Christian pilgrims.

Following a short overview of the literature on Jewish-Israeli tour guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, this paper has a twofold goal. First, in a more theoretical section, we examine the shared understanding and intimate mediation between the guide and the pilgrims. Second, using interviews and observations, we answer the practical question of how this is done, thus identifying three practical mediation techniques that are commonly used by guides.

### **Literature on Tour Guiding in the Holy Land: Issues of Faith and Religious Identity**

Many of the original sites commemorating and celebrating the life and death of Jesus in the Holy Land were destroyed after Jesus' death and subsequently destroyed and rebuilt several times; nevertheless, the shrines and churches built at these sites are tangible places through which the Christian pilgrims come to enact Jesus' life and journey. At the same time,

Jewish-Israeli tour guides, who guide the pilgrims at these sites, do not share this Christian narrative and are, one way or another, entrenched in the narrative of Israeli collective nationhood with its Jewish links to the sites and the land. Thus, the interaction between Jewish-Israeli guides and groups of Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land, is a rich domain for the study of cross-cultural understanding.

When a Jewish-Israeli guide takes a group of Christian pilgrims to historical-religious sites in the Holy Land, he or she is not a detached professional. As expressed by Feldman (2015: 78), guides to the Holy Land play the additional spiritual role of "forming the diverse sites of the tour into a spiritual path". Hence, within the broad field of research on tour guides in general (Weiler & Black 2015; Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming), Jewish guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land are a particularly interesting case. Specifically, at least two related research agendas are commonly pursued in this context: On the one hand, the interaction and shared understanding between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims, overcoming their cultural differences, provides for a more cross-cultural context of research. On the other hand, the personal gap between the guides' identity as members of the Jewish-Israeli community and their professional role in leading the pilgrims along their spiritual journey, provides a context for a study of their professional ethics. Within the context of these two research agendas, this research presents a pragmatic and tactful understanding of the interaction between guides and pilgrims, in which the cultural differences are bypassed and the professional ethics is not principle-based.<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written on the topic of Jewish-Israeli guides leading Christian pilgrims through the Holy Land (see detailed list of references in Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming). The most relevant sources for this research are Guter (2004), Feldman (2016, and in this special issue), Harani (2015) and Kaell (2010, 2014). Except for Hillary Kaell, all share the double title of academics and guides. Guter's work and Harani's work are a useful database of guides' thick descriptions of their professional niche as Jewish-Israeli guides who interact with Christians and

Christianities on a regular basis. Feldman's anthropological background and the time factor of decades of a double professional identity ("Dr. Jackie and Mr. Guide", in Feldman 2016: 144) contributed several insights regarding guides' identity and performative role; Kaell's work is different because her fieldwork as a participant observer looked at both guides and pilgrims, and observed the interactions between these two groups.

Yisca Harani, who is in charge of the guides' continuing education in Christianity at the Israel Ministry of Tourism, describes the personal difficulty tour guides face when questioned about their faith and religious identity:

Nine out of ten tour guides have been asked by tourists whether or not they are Christians and/or believers in Jesus Christ... After the sites are presented as the authentic places in which the miracles and events took place, and excerpts of the New Testament are read aloud, the listeners wonder whether they are faced with a Jew or a "believer". Tour guides faced with this question for the first time may be amazed or embarrassed, and sometimes feel distress about letting down the asker by admitting that for themselves Jesus is not their messiah or savior. (Harani 2015: 10)

On the other hand, from a cross-cultural perspective, after a Jewish tour guide is revealed as a "non-believer" in Christ, the question that arises is: "How can you read the Scriptures and *not* accept the Messiah?" This can lead to feelings of frustration among the pilgrims, who may attempt to convert the guide to Christianity, but also to feelings of frustration among guides, as their religious identity is constantly challenged (as observed earlier in the case of Ronen).

### **Intimacy of Mediation and Cross-cultural Understanding**

The Contact Zone. The interaction between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land is an interaction between people from different cultures, who journey together to specific

physical places, where each sees the same physical sites as something exhibiting quite a different meaning and experiences the sites in a different manner. The epistemological nature of this interaction and the cross-cultural understanding it enables are the focus of this paper. More specifically, this paper articulates the epistemological nature of the cross-cultural understanding between the guides as cultural mediators, and the tourists, people from different religions and cultures. Coming from different cultures and despite their different personal religious beliefs, guides and tourists are able to share intimacy, respect and mutuality.

The term "contact zone" was coined by Mary Louise Pratt in her keynote address to the Modern Language Association. According to her, this term refers "to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 1991: 34). She goes on to explain that the idea of the contact zone "is intended in part to contrast with ideas of [a single monolithic] community that underline much of the thinking about language, communication and culture" (ibid.: 37). Although the term was developed in other contexts of power relations, tourism scholarship then borrowed it to describe the friction area and gap between hosts and guests (Bianchi 2000; Bruner 2005: 18–19, 232; Cejas 2006; Toyota 2006, Feldman & Skinner, Introduction in this issue). However, while the contact between foreign tourists and local hosts might be limited to what Bruner called "touristic border zones", the contact between the local tour guide and the tourists is rich, multifaceted and may last for long days over the course of a week or longer. This is the relevant usage of the concept "contact zone" for the present research.

More specifically, the contact zone is the space of interaction, both professional and personal, between the Jewish tour guides and the Christian pilgrims. On a professional level, the explicit task of the Jewish tour guide is to provide the pilgrims with a particular Christian narrative regarding the holy sites,

including some which, according to his or her best professional judgement, could be historically inaccurate and are not altogether supported by acceptable historical and archaeological evidence. Leading the tour group on their spiritual journey requires that the guide bypass “heretical” critical perspectives, no matter how historically accurate and true he or she believes these perspectives might be, so as not to harm their holistic and total experience. On a personal level, despite being Jewish, the tour guide is expected not only to enable, but also to more or less passively participate in, the different ceremonies and rituals, to trail along and partake in various expressive forms of behavior, that he or she not only does not share, but that might also be offensive to his or her own cultural integrity. The idea being that when partaking in certain shared actions, especially ceremonies such as prayer and singing national anthems, it does not make sense to be a passive participant.

Despite the putative cultural gap between Jewish

tour guides and Christian pilgrims, the process of cultural mediation requires a kind of intimacy between the guide and the tourists. Notwithstanding the cultural differences between the guide and the pilgrims, the outcome of this interaction, when successful, is a sense of shared intimacy between guides and Christian pilgrims. That is to suggest that alongside the explicit goals of the tour (such as “seeing Jesus” or “strengthening our faith”), guiding a tour in this situation involves a form of cultural mediation between the Christian pilgrims and the Jewish tour guide, between the Christian narrative and modern-day Israel.

An intimate relationship is a close affective interpersonal relationship between people. Intimacy certainly need not be limited to sexual intimacy alone – one can speak of different types of intimacy, such as emotional intimacy, intellectual intimacy or experiential intimacy. A sense of intimacy can occur in many life situations, such as at a dinner party or dur-



Ill. 1: Tour guide with a pilgrim group during bible class, led by Dr. Wayne E. Brickey, at the Mount of the Beatitudes located by the Sea of Galilee in Israel. (Photo: Amos S. Ron, 2009)

ing an exchange of ideas. It is formed through mutual understanding and shared experience. Thus, a sense of emotional or affectionate intimacy between guides and pilgrims can develop as a result of mutual understanding, while sharing a meaningful experience. Commonly, when two or more people share an intimate moment they must be aware that the experience is significantly meaningful to the other. It is often the case with guides and pilgrims that the former serves as a mediator and appreciates that this is a significant experience for the other. In such cases, there is a shared sense of intimacy, although the experience is meaningful to one side alone. As articulated by Garlikov (1995), "intimacy is sharing in what is good and personally important to another person and having it be important to you while you are together, intimacy can be facilitated or established by caring about another person and helping bring about what is important to them". Moreover, a shared sense of intimacy between two people can develop even when they come from very different cultural settings, that is, intercultural intimacy.

Consequently, intimacy between the tour guide and the pilgrims is especially prevalent between the guide and the tour leader who, in most cases, is also a spiritual leader (pastor, priest, etc.). Some tour leaders return periodically, sometimes twice a year or more, for twenty or thirty years, and often want to use the services of the same guide, year after year. This creates a sense of intimacy, which is quite uncommon in professional circles. For example, Amos Ron (one of the authors) guided groups led by Dr. Wayne E. Brickey, an American Christian spiritual leader (see ill. 1), between the years 1990 and 2012. During that period, Amos visited him and his family in the American West a number of times, also with members of Amos' family, and likewise, Brickey came to Amos' house several times, and also met Amos' parents on a number of occasions. A few months ago, one of Brickey's sons called Amos and said: "You know that dad is very sick [with cancer], and he asked me to call you and ask that you come over here to say goodbye." Amos' reply was that he would be able to come in the summer, when there is a school break, but his son's assertive reply was that

he would not live that long. A few weeks later, Amos made the 24-hour journey, at his own expense, and spent a few days with Brickey and his family. Brickey passed away eight hours after Amos' departure. After he passed away, one of his daughters suggested that since dad is gone, and dad saw Amos as a "brother in spirit", we can then call Amos "uncle Amos". Her initiative was circulated via Facebook, and minutes later, after accepting the offer, Amos became "uncle Amos", and a member of their family.

**Shared Understanding.** The religious differences between tour guides and pilgrims which might perhaps exist at the level of grand theory or basic religious theology are bypassed in a piecemeal manner: unsystematically, through partial measures via shared practices, over time. Like a mosaic, these shared practices are not subservient to the grand theory, nor do they form a global coherent worldview. They are intimate points of contact where concrete shared practices allow for respect and mutuality. This notion of shared understanding, which is exhibited in Ronen's story, stands in need of further theoretical grounding.

Returning to Ronen's example and pushing the example a bit further, it is worth looking at Ronen's intentions in saying that he was "honored and proud to guide Christians through this land" and how the pilgrims understood this claim. We assume that the pilgrims probably understood him to mean that he was honored to be part of their spiritual journey, bringing the written words of the Bible to life and walking together with them in the footsteps of Jesus. In contrast, Ronen said this as a professional tour guide who was proud of his expertise and honored that the group had chosen him as their guide. It was essential for him not to surrender his Jewish identity and the sense in which he differs from the group. But within this context this is not a fundamental hindrance. Ronen was aware that his words may be understood differently by pilgrims, but he deliberately utilized a strategy of creative ambiguity maintaining intimacy with the pilgrims (and the tour leader) by reaffirming the common spiritual goal of the group, while maintaining his personal integrity in his commitment to a Jewish identity. By traveling

through the Holy Land together, a sense of intimacy and shared understanding is created. As discussed, this shared understanding results in a shared group dimension. Ronen was interviewed once more (over the telephone, August 1, 2018) and sounded more relaxed about the whole issue:

when this incident took place, I was both angry and sad. Angry because he put me on the spot, and sad because I feared it was the end of our relationship. I now realize that what he had done is exactly in line with the missionary nature of this denomination, and with his sparkling personality. I understand and respect him and we have been in touch since, and I definitely did not lose him.

As Ronen's example demonstrates, managing the interaction within the contact zone between guides and pilgrims is subtle and complex. It is intricate and a gradual piece by piece process, including subtle references and gestures, making use of the rich and expressive language: the Christian pilgrims could mean one thing by "bearing testimony" and the local host could use this phrase quite differently; the pilgrims and the guide can visit a local site together, such as the Garden Tomb, have a shared understanding that it is a significant historical site, and yet experience its Christian meaning differently; thus, they express their shared sense of fellowship and spirituality.

This conception of shared understanding can be clarified in contrast with the Gadamerian notion of "fusion of horizons", which is a paradigm for shared understanding. According to Gadamer (2004), every encounter between different traditions involves a tension, similar to the tension between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims over the meaning of the sites and the forging of an experience. According to Gadamer,

The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why part of the hermeneutic approach (is) to project a historical horizon that is different from the

horizon of the present... In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs. (2004: 306–307)

In other words, according to Gadamer, real understanding of one tradition by the other (and vice versa) only takes place when each tradition overcomes its own biases (prejudices as prejudgments) in favor of a more comprehensive and coherent fusion of horizons. As Gadamer fleshes this out, "the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the parts and back to the whole (ibid.: 291)" – that is, the hermeneutic circle. However, within the context of the tourists' experience this is neither possible nor desirable. The guide and the tourist do not engage in a Gadamerian dialog toward mutual understanding, because neither side is really willing to challenge their own prejudices or try to reach a shared agreement in judgement. Tourists who are visitors to the local culture are not cultural immigrants and the differences between the two religions' historical narratives is not challenged. Moreover, while each tradition might provide rich and meaningful experiences for its participants and a narrative within which to understand the various physical sites, fusing them together is artificial and alien to both.

In the same vein, Bateson's ([1972]2000) notion of an overriding meta-narrative also fails to do justice to the complex notion of the shared understanding Ronen exhibits. In a case study that examines the contention points between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims, Bajc (2006, 2007) focuses on how Christian pilgrims and Jewish guides interact, and on the framing of each cultural group's unique experience through its meta-narrative. Applying Bateson's ([1972]2000) notion of meta-narrative, she argues that while the meta-narrative of each of the two groups, the pilgrims' and the guide's, remains unchallenged, they are able to have a dialog and "negotiate specific places and narratives" during the tour (Bajc 2006: 110). Applying Bateson's concept of an unchallenged meta-narrative with sub-narratives that are open to dialog is, however, a conceptual simplification which erects a false dualism within language and culture between the authority of the

meta-narrative and the sub-narratives that are subservient to it.

As an alternative, thinkers as different and diverse as Lyotard (1984), in his criticism of modernity, or Wittgenstein (1953) proposing his notion of “language games”, profess a concept that gives preference to a plurality of small narratives over a hierarchy of narratives. Moreover, as emphasized by Wittgenstein, within this plurality of language games, meaning has to do with how the words are used (within practices and in interactions). Meaning is not permanently ascribed to words; the same word can mean different things, within different languages, and when used differently. Specifically, this is manifest by the fact that as a guide one can bypass significant theological disagreements and still grasp and relate to the joy and meaning that the pilgrims experience. In Wittgenstein’s language, these are different language games. The guide does not simply understand *the fact that* they are joyful and spiritually moved, but rather understands their emotions and what they feel. In other words, the guide does not simply understand *that so and so is the case*, in the sense of detached and abstract propositional beliefs. Rather, he or she understands their experience of meaning.<sup>2</sup> This has to do with the fact that one can react and respond to their expression of emotions in the most immediate and inter-human sense. This is a very powerful sense of shared understanding. By way of analogy, it is a very basic human trait to smile when seeing someone happy or, when seeing someone suffering, to identify by shedding a tear. In simple and concrete terms, the guide reacts to their joy and elation, and can even share their emotions without personally feeling spiritually moved, that is, without turning this understanding into propositional knowledge. Through his own experiences, the guide can share the same type of emotion, and thus makes it possible for a sense of intimacy to emerge, although he or she does not personally experience the same feelings in relation to the sites. In this immediate sense, sharing similar emotions provides a first step toward intimacy. Sharing similar emotions in this sense is one aspect of how groups and collectives are formed (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 12).

Moreover, although under normal circumstances the Jewish tour guide and the group of pilgrims do not experience the meaning of the sites in quite the same way, this does not rule out the possibility that, depending on the broader social and ritualistic context of the visit to the various tourist sites, one can experience the same site once as sacred and once as profane. This is linked to the broader phenomenon of “seeing as” that is extensively discussed by Wittgenstein. As articulated by Wittgenstein, someone can now experience the sites (or figures) this way, and later, that way (Wittgenstein 1980: 25, 31, 66, 156). Recognizing the pilgrims’ experience of joy and elation, the guide can see in what way the sites have a special meaning to them.

The guide is a mediator between the foreign tourist and the local culture.<sup>3</sup> As a mediator he or she has a practical – practice-based – role in making the local culture accessible enough to the tourist, so that the latter can experience it not only as a foreign and exotic form of life, but rather come to grasp what it means and how it is significant to those who partake in it. On the other hand, the tour guide has to lead the group in such a way that friction and conflict with local practices are mitigated and reduced. Groups of tourists who visit strange and exotic countries are staged in organized groups moving from site to site, and it is the local tour guides’ job to mediate and introduce the foreign tourists to the local cultural practices and symbols (Cohen 1985). This is neither theoretical nor abstract. The constant predicament of the tour guide is to straddle between the two cultures: between the guide’s own host culture and the tourists’ foreign cultural understanding. The guide must be fluent in the language of the group and present the local culture in their language; the guide must also be able to connect and relate to the groups’ specific interests and concerns. Using the terminology of Salazar based on case studies of Indonesia and Tanzania, the guide has to maneuver between his local identity, which is a form of social capital within the frame of the guided tour, and the cosmopolitan capital that he develops professionally (Salazar 2010: 78–110, 2012: 874–875). The group commonly travels (as they are staged in an environmental bubble)

along a preset itinerary, usually designed around predefined tourist attractions. They have minimal unmediated face-to-face contact with the local people. The key to this mediation has to do with forging shared practices, that is, intercultural interactions, while sharing the same goal. The tourists visit local sites and attractions, purchase various services and goods from local suppliers while staying in local hotels. Intercultural interactions begin with the most mundane matters of dress code at dinner and at holy sites, tipping service providers, and what it means to show up on time and travel as a group. These intercultural interactions continue and become thicker according to the itinerary and specific tourist attractions chosen for the group, and reach their pinnacle when the local tour guide takes his or her position and stands in the midst (or in front) of the group and begins framing the stories and narratives of the various physical sites and attractions the group is visiting, to create a meaningful experience. This pinnacle experience is created through the guide's charging the sites with meanings that conform to the tourists' personal faith.

### **Practical Techniques for Promoting Intimacy**

Following this more abstract discussion of the notion of "shared understanding" upon which intimate mediation between the guide and the pilgrims comes to exist, we now turn to some empirical data, based on interviews and observations, which is used to identify and flesh out some of the practical guiding techniques that promote intimate mediation.

#### *Research methodology*

*Methods:* The research methods applied here are qualitative, and include collecting and using primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include: (a) reflexive observations (Davies 2008: 83) based on Amos Ron's, the first author's, 37-year guiding experience<sup>4</sup> of Christian pilgrims from several denominations and destinations, which led him to be deeply immersed in the socio-cultural context of both the tour guide and the pilgrim; (b) in-depth interviews with Jewish-Israeli tour guides specializing in guiding Christian pilgrims.

The secondary sources include the written works of Jewish-Israeli academic tour guides (Feldman 2016; Guter 2004; Harani 2015; Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming), and participant observations done by Hillary Kaell (2010). The categorization of primary and secondary sources was blurred at times, because as a tour guide himself, Amos Ron was interviewed a number of times by Guter, while he also assisted occasionally in choosing the interviewees, due to personal and professional ties with Guter.

*Collecting the data:* The primary data set consists of 15 informal and semi-structured interviews with licensed Jewish-Israeli tour guides who specialize in this market. The personal interviews took place over a period of 17 years, and selecting the guides was based on personal acquaintance, place of residence and random factors. Both formal and informal interviews took place at hotels (usually in the Galilee, when away from home), restaurants, and at sacred sites while the group attends mass, or was engaged in some other spiritual activity, during which the guide had time off. Formal interviews were recorded, and usually lasted longer. Informal interviews were shorter, and at times it was in a setting where other guides could overhear the conversation.

Interviewing the guides was rather easy; we found that in many cases tour guides were eager to talk about their guiding experiences, not only because they are talkers by professional definition and habit, but also because they need to share their ongoing experiences and observations with someone else.

#### *Imitation, Distinction and Fabrication*

Based on qualitative data derived from interviews and reflective observation and participant observation, it is possible to identify three strategies – imitation, distinction and fabrication – through which intimate mediation is achieved and a shared understanding is forged.

Imitation in tourism settings is often referred to as the *demonstration effect* (Burns 1999; Fisher 2004; Monterrubio & Mendoza-Ontiveros 2014), which is broadly defined as a situation in which the local imitates the tourist in order to gain some advantage – usually monetary.

The concept of the demonstration effect in relation to tourism was probably borrowed from economics. According to Duesenberry (1949), consumption habits are often socially generated by one person seeing another person consuming the same thing, that is, by emulation, and are not linked to personal likes or dislikes. As such, when people feel pressured to alter and increase consumption habits, the demonstration effect within the context of consumption often leads to a sense of dissatisfaction with current levels and habits of consumption.

The demonstration effect is manifest in the relationship between guides and pilgrims in many subtle ways. The guide might imitate the pilgrim, to a certain degree, while at the same time strive to maintain a distinction between himself and the pilgrims, seeking to set clear boundaries for the sake of protecting his distinct identity. Jewish guides find themselves treading a thin line – on the one hand, showing respect for the pilgrims' faith and imitating their practices, lingo and expressive gestures, while on the other hand, maintaining a distinction to protect their own identity. According to Jewish tradition (Avodah Zarah 17a), for example, it is forbidden for Jews to enter churches. This is a daily problem for religiously observant tour guides, although even for secular guides, distinctions are necessary. Alon, for example, tries to hold both ends by making a rigid spatial distinction. In his words:

I simply stay outside the church building, but they don't miss much because I explain outside the church. Often they ask why I don't go in, and I explain the theology behind the prohibition. Usually they find it fascinating, so I don't feel that I compromise on the quality of my guiding. (Alon, interview, March 10, 2016)

Other guides do enter the churches, but the spatial distinction is milder and takes place inside the building. According to Feldman (2016: 132–133), the Jewish guides Gloria and Bernice take care never to speak from the ambo, the place of preaching of priests, even in inactive churches that have long become archaeological ruins. Language can also assist

in creating distinctions. Language goes both ways. If the guide imitates the pilgrims' lingo then language is a bridge between cultures, but language can create a separation if noticed. For example, Guter recounts the story of Helen, who avoids reading in public from Christian sacred scriptures:

I never read from the New Testament. I always find a volunteer to read. Nobody notices this, because I do this with other readings, as well. They don't feel that I don't read from the New Testament *as a matter of principle*. (Guter 2004: 250)

Ronen does read from the New Testament, but he is very precise with his wording:

I call him Jesus, and never Christ or Jesus Christ, because Christ means Messiah, and for us he is not the Messiah. (Interview, March 6, 2016)

So does Gloria:

I will never call him by his Hebrew name, Yeshua. Because he doesn't belong to me. Only "Jesus," never another name. (in Feldman 2016: 131–132)

Thus, these brief examples demonstrate how the techniques of imitation and distinction are applied with various degrees of prominence in tour guide practices in a manner that mediates the religious and cultural differences, enabling intimacy while nonetheless maintaining a subtle distinction: referring to him by the first name "Jesus", yet maintaining a distinction and not according him the title of "Christ"; or going with the familiar "Jesus" but maintaining the distinction that he is not "Yeshua", which in Hebrew means "the Savior". The distinction helps the guide maintain her identity, while going with the group. From the group's perspective this might vary: in some cases it might go unnoticed by them, while in other cases it takes a while until the group is aware of the guide's standing.

Another technique is fabrication, which is a well-known aspect of guiding. Erik Cohen mentions fabrication as part of the mediatory sphere, and as

a form of communication that takes place while guiding. Although in a general context fabrication is a form of lie, Cohen realized that the cause of fabrication could also be seen in the context of trying to provide a good service:

He [the guide] thus frequently finds himself treading the narrow path between refined interpretative keying and outright fabrication. (Cohen 1985: 21)

In the context of guiding Christian pilgrims, one of the most problematic situations is when a guide declares that “according to the tradition, this event happened here”. By adding these four words, the guide displaces her commitment to authenticate the site or event to “tradition”. She can create the impression that either she thinks that the event never happened at all, or that it may have happened, but perhaps not here. Some guides often use this delicate terminology, but others feel that they should not. For example,

one guide told me that with Catholic groups, he never says “according to the tradition”. Everything has to be true; all the places they visit must be authentic beyond any doubt. Otherwise, it will ruin the entire tour, and the relationship with the group and with the tour leader. (Guter 2004: 136)

Another example is provided by Hillary Kaell, who quotes a conversation between Dorothy, an American evangelical pilgrim, and Gilead, a Jewish-Israeli guide, on a tour she observed for her research:

The next morning, she [Dorothy] broached the issue ... asking Gilead, “Do Jews believe in Jesus?” His answer was abstruse: “It’s like a palm tree. The roots keep it strong – they are the same and then there are the branches – one goes one way and one goes the other way but it’s the same really.” Dorothy pressed the issue, asking him if he personally believes in Jesus. He responded: “You can’t be a guide without developing a relationship with Jesus.” Dorothy was overjoyed ... that Gilead did

indeed believe Jesus was the Messiah. Later, when I asked him about the exchange he replied..., “I’ve developed a relationship with Jesus like I’ve developed a relationship with [Roman-era historian] Flavius Josephus or any other historical character. So it’s not a lie, how she takes it is how she takes it.” (Kaell 2010: 232–233)

In this sense, he diverted the question from his personal religious convictions to his daily guiding practices and interactions as a guide leading pilgrims. For Dorothy this was sufficient in order to feel a connection with Gilead, while it enabled Gilead to maintain his personal integrity.

The guides’ flexibility in finding the most suitable narrative is not limited to the Jewish-Christian context. Other researchers point to the same phenomenon in other contexts.

This raises two separate issues that deserve further discussion: The first issue, epistemological, relates to the cross-cultural understanding between guides and pilgrims. The second issue, normative, concerns the ethical question lurking in the background, whether these techniques (specifically fabrication and imitation) are not forms of deception. That is, to ask whether these practices are morally acceptable.

Returning to Wittgenstein, these examples illustrate the sense in which cross-cultural understanding, or language in Wittgenstein’s terminology, is not just a matter of words, sentences, and syntactical structures. Rather, cross-cultural understanding of subtle meanings has to do with interactive language-games and the way language is used in social interactions. Thus, for example, reading a text inside a sacred place as opposed to reading it outside; using the limiting clause “according to tradition” in an explanation; or the complex interaction between Dorothy and Gilead – all are different language games and different ways of creating cultural understanding. The meaning of words is interwoven with actions; meaning has to do with use. Thus, the process of cross-cultural understanding is a piecemeal process of using language in practical situations, through which understanding and trust are built. What these

examples demonstrate is that intimate cross-cultural understanding is possible without agreement in either meta-narratives or a hermeneutic dialog “from the whole to the parts and back to the whole”. The guides and the pilgrims interact with one another, use language in practical situations and relate to one another in the context of the historical-religious sites.

Regarding the normative question, essentially, like a good service professional, Gilead played his part, his role, in this particular social interaction. The norms that govern one’s private life are not identical to the norms of professional life, and what being honest and truthful means in private life is not the same as in professional life. Service professionals are professionals and as such there are special responsibilities and conflicting duties they must balance. Clearly, honesty as a professional tour guide does not require that Gilead reveal to Dorothy his deepest religious feelings, as he probably should to his family. Nevertheless, assessing Gilead’s fabrication from a normative moral perspective is not a black-and-white issue and is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Such a discussion requires much more contextual information about the relationship between guides and tourists, in general, and in this situation, in particular.

### Conclusions

To conclude, what has been argued can be summarized in two main points: The first issue concerns the intimate understanding between the guide and the tour group; the second has to do with understanding a foreign culture.<sup>5</sup>

Although tour guides are, in a sense, professionals, this paper has argued that even between professional Jewish-Israeli guides and Christian pilgrims touring through the Holy Land, there is a sense of intimacy that emerges through cultural mediation. Traveling the country together for several days, carefully communicating with one another about both the mundane and the sacred, while (at least for the pilgrims) going through powerful spiritual-religious experiences, make this human connection possible. As with other professional occupations, there is an

inherent knowledge-gap and dependence between the professional providing the service and the client, that is, between the tour guide and the group. *Prima facie*, there is potential for dispute and conflict due to the gap between Jewish guides and Christian tourists. However, despite the cultural differences between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims, intimacy is forged through imitation, distinction and fabrication.

The contact zone between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land is a place where people from two different cultures meet and interact; although they do not share the same religious beliefs and, in ordinary circumstances, might have a conflicting understanding of the historical and religious meaning of the sites they have visited, an intimate sense of shared understanding is created. Like a mosaic, shared practices, expressive gestures and language enable intimate points of contact where concrete shared practices allow for respect and mutuality. On a psychological level, tour guides are expected to recognize the spirituality, joy and elation experienced by the pilgrims, through imitation, distinction and fabrication. They should relate to this meaningful experience with respect.

In addition to the two significant points made above, this paper’s contribution to our understanding and knowledge of the tour guides should be qualified, and it is not legitimate to haphazardly expand the arguments made here to other contexts. First of all, there is a difference between a Holy Land Christian pilgrimage with a Jewish-Israeli guide and other encounters between local guides and foreign pilgrims in other geographical contexts. Our data suggests that this case is unique, partly because of the historical debate between Jews and Christians that contains a dialectic of intimacy and distinction (cf. Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming). In certain Christian circles, Jews are expected to accept Jesus as the one and only Messiah, and any deviation from this path can result in mutual frustration; yet it is often precisely the guide’s Judaism and relation to the Bible and the Land that heighten the guide’s authority and the group’s expectation of him. Hence, the

guide finds himself or herself dealing with tension management issues while guiding which are unique (Cohen 1985).

Related to this, the three techniques used by guides (imitation, distinction and fabrication) are permissible, and even desirable in the unique context presented. However, from an ethical perspective, carrying these techniques over to other contexts is questionable. Our data suggests that imitation is the most permissible, possibly because of the humorous context; distinction is acceptable, although not always appreciated; and fabrication is the least tolerated, always hidden from the tourist, because it is perhaps somewhat dishonest. Finally, questions might be raised about the tension between truthfulness and intimacy. Conflicts between truth and intimacy exist in other contexts as well, such as families and other close relations. This tension is part of the fabric of human relations and the proper path to balance this tension is intuitive, dynamic, and most likely reciprocal. Both the guide and the tourist cherish this intimacy, do not want to harm it, and hence try to find the proper path of compromise.

## Notes

- 1 The notion of “principle-based approach” is common both in ethical theory in reference to familiar theories such as those by Kant and Mill, and in contrast with virtue ethics, particularism or casuistry. The notion of principle-based approach is also used in regulation, such as for example principle-based approach to environmental policy using a single-instrument for policy as opposed to consideration of particularities and circumstance.
- 2 As expressed by Wittgenstein, “there are cases in which we may call a particular experience ‘noticing, seeing, conceiving that so and so is the case’, before expressing it by word or gestures, and that there are other cases in which if we talk of an experience of conceiving at all, we have to apply this word to the experience of using certain words, gestures, etc.” (Wittgenstein 1958: 137). In other words, there is a kind of “mental undertone” or “depth” in philosophical investigation.
- 3 In this context, see Feldman & Skinner in this special issue.
- 4 It is estimated that in the course of the given period Amos Ron guided approximately 7,000 pilgrims.
- 5 In most cases the Jewish-Israeli guides and the Christian pilgrims come from different cultural backgrounds. In this context it is important to introduce the term “intercultural communication”, which has been researched in the context of tour guide performance by Scherle & Nonnenmann (2008); Trauer & Ryan (2005); Weiler & Black (2015: 64–68); Widtfeldt Megeed (2010).

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# WOMEN WEAVERS AND MALE TOUR GUIDES

## Gender, Ethnicity and Power Inequalities in the Selling of Handicrafts in the Sacred Valley of Peru

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In Peru, in the tourist village of Chinchero located in the Machu Picchu region, tourism is often organized through guided excursions. This article deals with the contacts that urban male guides maintain with the local, often Quechua-speaking, women of Chinchero. These women have opened workshops where they offer tourists demonstrations of their weaving art as well as weavings to purchase in an atmosphere created to simulate the Andean home. To a large extent, the women depend on male guides to bring tourists to their workshops, and pay them commissions. Based on frequent field visits, informal conversations, interviews, participation and a survey, the study demonstrates how gender and ethnic inequalities are replicated through interactions between weavers and guides.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:* tour guides, ethnicity, gender, Peru, commissions

### Introduction

The Urubamba Valley, better known as the Sacred Valley of the Incas, is one of Peru's main tourist regions. Located in the southeast of the country, between the city of Cusco and Peru's tourist flagship of Machu Picchu, it offers a wide variety of attractions to entertain tourists: beautiful nature and ecosystems, Inca ruins, colonial architecture, museums, the so-called living cultures of indigenous people,<sup>2</sup> and outdoor activities such as hiking, hang gliding and canoeing. It is not without reason that an increasing number of national and international

tourists visit the region. During the last decade, the annual number of international visitors arriving in Peru grew from almost 1.5 million in 2004 to 3.5 million in 2015. The number of tourists visiting Machu Picchu increased from 453,000 to 971,000 in the same period.<sup>3</sup> An important tourist service in this area is the guided tour. Excursions of one or multiple days are offered all along the tourist route between the city of Cusco and the ruins of Machu Picchu. For tourists, these tours are an efficient and safe way of sightseeing. On the famous Inca Trail, the state obliges visitors to go on guided tours. One of

the tourist villages in the Sacred Valley that is heavily dependent on guided tours is Chinchero. Here, Quechua-speaking women have opened workshops where they offer tourists demonstrations of their weaving art. This article problematizes the relationships between the women weavers and the (generally) male tour guides.

There is a body of literature on guides analyzing the different roles that guides perform (Weiler & Black 2015). Early studies focused on guides as intermediaries between the tourists and the local population. They are perceived as middlemen (van den Berghe 1994), culture brokers (McKean 1976) or mediators (de Kadt [1979]1984; Pearce 1984: 73). Inspired by these studies, Cohen presents a typology of the roles of modern tourist guides that have their antecedents in the *pathfinder* who leads the way and the *mentor* who directs a person's behavior (Cohen 1985). He identifies two archetypes: the *leader*, who is responsible for the group dynamic (inner-directed) and the organization of the tour (outer-directed), and the *mediator*, who explains points of interests to tourists (inner-directed) and mediates between the tourists and the local population (outer-directed). The mediator role is becoming more important in contemporary guiding, as intercultural communication becomes more central in the increasingly professionalized tourist industry (Cohen 1985; Weiler & Black 2015: 45–70). Other studies refine the mediator role of guides focusing on their role as interpreters who help tourists to experience the *couleur locale* with all the senses (Dahles 2002: 786), or creative storytellers using global discourses (Salazar 2006). As performers, they add meaning to a tourist attraction and may even turn it into a “sacred” site (Fine & Speer 1985; see also Cohen 1985: 26). They are acknowledged as contributing significantly to the way tourists experience the tour and local culture. Hence, the quality of guiding has become a key component in the tourist experience (Cohen, Ifergan & Cohen 2002: 920; Geva & Goldman 1991).

However important and inspiring these studies are, they do not offer a reflection on the power relations the guides are involved in. Their role as cultural mediators and go-betweens is often more prob-

lematic than is suggested in most of the discussed literature. Dahles states about the guides' work that “it is doubtful whether [it] ... can be interpreted purely according to a harmony model of ‘mediation’, of keeping all parties involved satisfied” (Dahles 2002: 784). Mediation is not always a conflict-free, neutral and innocent practice, and the positioning of guides is important (MacDonald 2006: 123, see also Feldman & Skinner, this issue). In highly stratified Peru, guides' positioning in the social hierarchy of gender and ethnicity is, as we will argue, crucial in understanding their mediating role. In Peru, social discrimination based on class, ethnicity and gender is pervasive (de la Cadena 2000). It varies from daily practices among individuals to institutional discrimination and state policies that violate human rights (Boesten 2012, 2014; Weismantel 2001). Tourism reflects and is integrated within existing social hierarchies and in the Cusco-Machu Picchu region, ethnic and gender inequalities are notable (cf. van den Berghe 1980: 387). One manifestation of this is that local tourist workers occupy different socio-economic positions based on their gender and ethnic affiliation (Ypeij 2012). Moreover, the way guides perform their jobs reconfirms and recreates ethnic and gender inequalities.

We illustrate the social hierarchies within tourism through a focus on the financial side of guiding and related power inequalities. Guides earn their income through three sources: the salary paid by the travel agency or tour operator, the tips from satisfied tourists and the commissions that are paid by local businesses (Holloway 1981; Feldman 2014). The latter will be at the center of our scrutiny. As Feldman argues, these different parts of the guide's income are associated with different sets of moral values and degrees of transparency. In his study on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, commissions are of concealed nature and have negative connotations attached to them (Feldman 2014: 147). In this study, we investigate the commissions collected by male guides from female tourism workers in the city of Cusco and in the small village of Chinchero located in the Sacred Valley, and show how they contribute to ethnic and gender inequalities.

The article is organized as follows. The first section describes the structure of tourism in the Sacred Valley. We then provide a sketch of the guides who work in the Valley, and subsequently we present the women weavers of Chinchero. We then turn to the relationships between the women and the guides and especially to the commissions that the women are obliged to pay them. The last section focuses on how the guides use and abuse these commissions to confirm their superiority over the women. The article is based on frequent field visits to the village of Chinchero. Annelou Ypeij studies tourism in the Sacred Valley since 2003. Her yearly field visits last two to three weeks. Chinchero is one of her case studies. Eva Krahl and Floor van der Hout did research on tourist guides in Chinchero as junior scholars and under supervision of Ypeij. Krahl stayed in Chinchero for two weeks in December 2013/January 2014 and van der Hout for three months in 2015. Research methods include observations in the workshops, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with women weavers, focus groups and a small survey with guides. The 30 guides were selected by the snowball method. The lists of structured questions took 30 minutes. Often the conversation continued after the questionnaire.

### **Guiding in the Sacred Valley**

In the Cusco-Machu Picchu region, the tourist infrastructure is reasonably well-developed with transportation possibilities, hotel accommodation and restaurants to suit every person. Despite the region's intensive engagement with tourism, there are inherent challenges for the travelers. Its altitudes vary from 2,400 meters above sea level at Machu Picchu to 3,800 meters at Chinchero where we conducted our study. The rainy season has particularly heavy showers. During the year, temperatures can vary from tropical at lower altitudes to below zero with hail at the higher altitudes. Tourists run the risk of altitude sickness, headaches, stomach trouble, fatigue, chilly shivers and sunburn. Many international tourists travel with tight schedules and wish to see everything in a few days, often before their bodies can adjust to the altitude, food and climate.

Besides, distances can be difficult to cover, especially to Machu Picchu.

Both the ruins and the Inca Trail are located in a park known as the Historical Sanctuary of Machu Picchu that is protected and acknowledged as a Unesco World Heritage. Governmental agencies strictly control the flow of tourists with several checkpoints in the park. Tourists are not allowed to enter the park without an accompanying guide with a special license (Maxwell & Ypeij 2009). Hence, guided tours form an important aspect of the way tourism is organized in the Sacred Valley. Throughout the Valley one can find local travel agencies that organize these tours and especially in the city of Cusco, where larger and smaller travel agencies are located around the Plaza de Armas. A popular excursion is the one-day Valley tour that passes the highlight of the Valley and ends in Chinchero.

The guides who accompany the tourists on these excursions form a heterogeneous group, often specializing in specific tours or trails. Most guides who work on one-day tours do not do multi-day hikes. Also, there are "spiritual tours", which demand specific expertise. Tour guiding is a protected profession in Peru, demanding a university degree or higher vocational training in tourism. Moreover, guides who wish to work on the Inca trail must be registered by a union in order to receive their licence and must follow refresher courses on a regular basis (Bosman 2006: 203).<sup>4</sup> But not all guides are formally educated or keep their licence up-to-date. It depends whether they work independently, for a small travel agency or for a larger tour operator. All guides work on a temporary basis (Bosman 2006) and they may switch agencies regularly or alternate work for agencies with independent work. In a survey of 60 guides held in 2004, almost 90 percent mentioned their heavy responsibilities and their low wages as the most negative aspect of their work (Bosman 2005: 65; Ypeij 2012: 25). All in all, tour guiding is a demanding job and Salazar's (2010 and this issue) characterization of tour guides as "mechanics", that is, "highly skilled technicians who work to keep tourism operating properly", certainly fits the situation in the Sacred Valley.

Based on official lists of guides who were registered in Cusco in 2013 and 2014, we conclude that 80 percent of them are male.<sup>5</sup> Both women and men work as guides on one-day trips in the city of Cusco and in the Sacred Valley. Few women guide multi-day hikes such as the Inca trail (Bosman 2005), and even on day tours female guides are greatly outnumbered by males. Guiding is perceived as men's work. Ypeij argues that because a guide's work, especially the work on the trails, demands an able and strong body, leadership, and a strong sense of responsibility, it is associated with masculine values, such as authority and superiority (Ypeij 2012: 26).

In 2015, we conducted the survey of male guides, and found that more than half had a rural, agricultural background and spoke the indigenous language of Quechua as their mother tongue. Ethnicity in Peru, often associated with the divide between the urban and the rural, is related to styles of living, clothing, language and education. As de la Cadena argues, urban represents modernity and progress and those who consider themselves as modern, such as city-dwellers, look down upon the rural population, whom they associate with backwardness, lack of morality and Indian-ness (de la Cadena 2000). In Peru, according to de la Cadena, the most important characteristic of ethnic difference is not phenotype but one's intelligence and morality as expressed through one's exposure to education (2000: 9).<sup>6</sup> Schooling at different levels and proficiency in Spanish enable people to climb the social ladder and distance themselves from Indian-ness. Van den Berghe's (1980: 385) study of ethnic relations in the tourism industry of Cusco found that the middlemen positions in tourism, including the tourist guides, were all occupied by Spanish-speaking men who lived in cities. Furthermore, in the research Bosman conducted in 2004, the mother tongue of most (male) guides she encountered was Spanish. They were born and/or raised in the city of Cusco and had an urban lifestyle. Our findings, that several guides speak Quechua as their mother tongue and originated in rural areas, may indicate that social relations within the tourism industry are slowly changing. Increasingly, rural Quechua families are

benefitting from tourism work that they conduct in combination with their agricultural activities. The additional income they generate is often used for the education of their children. As working in tourism has a high status, the preferred career choice is studying tourism at one of the universities or at the cheaper institutes for higher vocational education in Cusco. However, ethnic inequalities remain. Quechua guides generally work without a license for smaller travel agencies under less secure circumstances. Also, while more Spanish-speaking urban guides work on the day tours in the city, the Valley or to Machu Picchu and on the multi-day Inca trail, the Quechua guides are more involved in multi-day trails such as to Salkantay, Choquequirao, Lares and the jungle. To use the classification of Erik Cohen, the Spanish-speaking urban guides work in the "central regions of the tourist system", whereas the Quechua guides work in its periphery (Cohen 1985: 25). They are not only "pathfinders" but also "path-breakers", leading tourists to less known areas, off the beaten trails (Cohen 1985). The guides receive a lower salary for these more physically demanding tours that also have added responsibilities for the well-being of the tourists. It is not without reason that many used the term exploitation when referring to their working conditions. One Quechua guide indicated that he would prefer to work for larger travel agencies because they pay better. But, as he stated:

At the larger agencies, they discriminate against guides from the countryside. They immediately see that you are a peasant because of the way you dress and the way you talk. (Interview, June 2015)

In other words, his education notwithstanding, this guide's social distance from Indian-ness was not sufficient to obtain a better paid job. Chinchero, the village of our case study, is part of the central region of tourism and it is largely Spanish-speaking male guides who take the tourists there.

### **The Women Weavers of Chinchero**

Chinchero is a small village in the Sacred Valley of Cusco located on a road that connects Cusco and

Machu Picchu. It is located at 3,800 meters above sea level. Lonely Planet describes Chichero as a “typical Andean” village with “a colorful Sunday market” and “traditionally dressed locals” (Lonely Planet 2010: 263). The Sunday market is a regional market where local peasants trade their agricultural products. Under the influence of tourism, the market has changed in character and is expanding in size. Handicrafts and other tourist items are increasingly being sold. A daily tourist market is held in front of the colonial church which dates from 1605. The “traditionally dressed locals” mentioned in the Lonely Planet are women who wear the typical Andean woolen layered skirts, hand woven shawls, their hair in artistic braids with a characteristic round hat in red and black on top. This clothing is their most beautiful and valuable, originally worn only on special occasions. Since the rise of tourism and an agreement made between the members of the market associations, they wear them for tourists on a daily basis. However, when traveling to Cusco or working the fields, they change into more comfort-

able, less expensive clothing. They live in the village itself or in the surrounding communities and speak Quechua as their mother tongue. Their language skills vary between fully monolingual to proficiency in both Quechua and Spanish. They are members of peasant farming families who grow broad beans, barley, potatoes, etc. on their plots of land (Garcia 2015: 17). The growing number of tourists who visit Chinchero offer them the possibility to generate an additional income with the sale of their weaving and other handicrafts. They work as street vendors on the tourist and Sunday markets, and increasingly, in the many weaving workshops that are located in Chinchero’s small tourist center over the last ten years (Garcia 2015). These workshops can be considered as a tourist border zone (Feldman & Skinner, this issue; Bruner 2005: 17, 191–210).

The women have established them as an intercultural meeting place where they offer tourists demonstrations of their weaving art. They invite tourists to sit on low benches covered with sheep hides and have a cup of coca tea. They show and explain the



Ill. 1: Overview of a weaving workshop in Chinchero. (Photo: Yolanda van Dongen)

processes of spinning the sheep's wool into yarn and coloring them with a natural dye made of a variety of herbs, which they boil in clay pots on an *adobe* stove like the ones they use in their own kitchens. They warp the yarn and weave the textiles sitting on the ground with the typical backstrap loom attached to their bodies. In the workshop, guinea pigs, the local food specialty, are kept in cages, small children walk around or play with kittens and even some llamas may be present. Weavings of all sizes decorate the adobe walls and counters. The women take time to engage with the tourists and pose patiently for their cameras. In this tourist border zone, the women create an intimate atmosphere and give a romanticized manifestation of the "ideal Andean home" with the ultimate goal of selling their weavings. The border zone of the home is a designated space for women to perform the commodified persona of the native Andean. There, they become exoticized under a tourist gaze (Bunten 2008; Feldman, this issue).

These women weavers follow the example of Nilda Callañaupa, the first woman of Chinchero to go to

university. She studied tourism and anthropology, graduating from the Universidad de San Antonio Abad del Cusco in 1986. During her studies, a grant enabled her to travel to Berkeley, California, to study the history of textiles and experiment with different types of looms (Callañaupa Alvarez 2007, see also 2012). She came in contact with American anthropologists interested in Andean antique and contemporary artefacts and noted that collectors valued the traditional weavings highly. As the transmission of the art of weaving was declining in Chinchero (Callañaupa Alvarez 2007: 16), she began to organize women into weaving workshops and established the Centre for Traditional Textiles of Cusco (CTTC). Callañaupa's organization, the CTTC, represents more than 650 women from all over the Sacred Valley. Besides, there are an additional 8 to 10 organizations that unite another estimated 300 women. The aim of her work is to revive the art of weaving while offering poor rural women income-generating opportunities. The president of one of the workshops told us:



Ill. 2: Woman weaving in a workshop in Chinchero. (Photo: Yolanda van Dongen)

As the president of the organization, I try to continue preserving everything that is from our ancestors, our culture, and further to promote it and to spread it. Our ancestors are the Incas. The textiles come from pre-Colombian times. Thus, we will not lose our culture and can pass it on from generation to generation. (Interview, October 12, 2010)

The experience the women offer to the tourists is presented as part of a culture with historical roots that dates back to pre-conquest times. As Ypeij argued elsewhere, the women appreciate their work in the weaving workshops, not only for the earnings but also for the contact they have with tourists and the pride they feel through their work (2012: 31).

By presenting themselves in their most beautiful clothing, in the intimate home-like atmosphere of the workshops and by demonstrating their weaving art, the women stress traditional ethnic and gender identities.

At the same time, however, gender relations, especially those at the household level, are being transformed by tourism (Ypeij 2012). Tourism enables women to generate an income, which changes the sexual division of labor that ascribed income-earning to men. Women spend increasingly more time on their weaving art and, when they get a turn to participate in the workshop, they may be away from home for up to a week. Their position within the household changes and men may become more involved in childcare. However important these changes in their marital relations may be for the women, we will argue that the relations the women maintain with the guides introduce new gender inequalities in their lives.

The weavings on display in the market and in the workshops are in part woven by the women themselves, while they also sell machine-made items, other weavers' items and even weavings made by prison inmates in Cusco (Steel 2008; Garcia 2018). The practice of prison inmates weaving and earning



Ill. 3: Women from Chinchero (left) and Santa Thomas (right), both working in a weaving workshop. (Photo: Yolanda van Dongen)

money with it, originates already from the 1930s. Nowadays, the women of Chinchero subcontract their weavings to the inmates because they do not have time to do it all themselves and the inmates provide cheap labor (Garcia 2018: 15–18).

The tourists can easily pick out the handwoven items, because of their quality and design. About the other items some confusion may exist and the women may invent stories to add to their authenticity (stating that they handknitted the items themselves, while in fact, they are machine-made). Needless to say, they never mention the word “inmate” during their sales-pitch. These women often combine the sales in the workshops with street vending in Chinchero or elsewhere in the Sacred Valley.

### **Guiding as a Job**

Most tourists visit Chinchero as part of a one-day excursion through the Sacred Valley. The excursion starts early in the morning in Cusco at the tourists’ hotel. It takes them to Písaq and Ollantaytambo and, on the return to Cusco, the tour pays a call to Chinchero, arriving in the late afternoon, when dusk is starting to fall and temperatures drop. Only a few backpackers and tourists with private guides visit Chinchero during the day. From 16.00 on, bus after bus appears at the parking lot in the center of the village. The tourists have 45 minutes to an hour to visit the tourist market, the church and the museum, to walk around the Inca ruins and to go to one of the weavers’ workshops. Sometimes, accompanying guides ferry “their” tourists to one of the workshops. Other tourists may have some free time to spend in the village and enter the workshops by themselves, in response to the invitation of the women in the street. The tourists appreciate what they consider to be the authenticity of the workshops. They value the opportunity to meet and talk to Quechua women and to experience local culture with its “age-old traditions”. Given the importance of staying on schedule and the short time-span allotted the visit, and the position of guides as time-managers, information providers and cultural mediators (cf. Cohen 1985), guides exercise a great measure of control over the tourist-weaver encounter. In particular, the

guide’s contacts and the authority accumulated in the course of the day’s tour (or longer) are crucial in shaping tourist experience (cf. Bosman 2005).

As mentioned in the introduction, guides’ income consists of salaries, tips and commissions (Holloway 1981; Feldman 2014). The latter two sources of income can be quite significant. As Bosman shows for the guides who work the Inca Trail, the tips paid by satisfied tourists can amount to up to 40 percent of their income (Bosman 2006: 210–211). Unfortunately, we have no data on the percentage of the guide’s income that derives from commissions. But we do know that the payment of commissions in Chinchero, as in the entire Sacred Valley, is considered a normal and unavoidable practice.<sup>7</sup>

The women weavers who participated in our research all confirmed that they are expected to pay commissions on sales to tourists who are accompanied by a guide: 10 to 20 percent is the norm, according to our inquiries, but they can go as high as 25 percent. Many of the women weavers did not want to speak about this openly or told us not to tell the president of the workshop that they had given us this information. Many efforts are made to keep the payments out of sight of tourists (and anthropologists for that matter). As Feldman has argued, the knowledge that the guide benefits from the deal may compromise his professional authority in the eyes of the tourists (2014: 148). Guides come back the next day to claim their commissions. Also, we noticed a batch of envelopes with money and names written on them that were hidden under the merchandise, waiting for the guides to collect their share. We also observed how a guide asked for some grass to feed the guinea pigs. Later one of the weavers explained that this was a “coded” message to the weaver to hide the commission under it. While the sale of the weaving to tourists is an open agreement in the course of which both parties negotiate with each other and exchange money publicly, the payment of commissions is a shadowy game.

The size of the workshop and its position in the tourism industry determine the extent to which the workshop, or its leader, can negotiate the size of the commissions. Nilda Callañaupa’s CTTC, an inter-

nationally known organization with a newsletter, a website, and two shops-cum-museums has a much stronger negotiation position than the many small informal workshops. CTTC maintains working relations with several larger travel agencies. As they pay lower commissions, they are frequented mainly by guides who work for those agencies and are obliged by the agents to do so. Smaller, more informal workshops have much less control over the visits of the tourists and the level of the commissions, and are more at the mercy of the guides.

In addition, income within the workshops are often distributed unequally (Ypeij 2015; Garcia 2018). Some workshops function as commercial companies with a president who acts as the owner of the workshop. In others, the president charges a commission, whether the guides demand one or not. In one such case, the president argues that the animals that adorn the workshop need food. Moreover, she charges the women for the meals of the guides (see below). We also know of cases in which women pay a percentage of their sales to the workshop owner in lieu of stall rentals.

### **Between Collaboration and Exploitation**

As we mentioned, most tourists come to Chinchero on guided tours. This means that the workshops are very dependent on the guides. When arriving with tourists in the village, the guides advise them what to see and whether to go to a workshop or not. Women may stand outside gesturing to tourists or weave outside the workshop to attract tourists, but it is difficult for them to get tourists inside if their guide has other plans.

The women compete with each other for the attention of guides by paying the guides commissions. However, aside from large workshops such as CTTC, opportunities for most women weavers to negotiate the commissions is quite limited. Therefore, to establish long-lasting relations with guides, the women offer the guides meals and sodas in addition to their commissions. Around Christmas time, *panetones* (a Christmas bread with raisins) are presented as gifts. The meaning that the women attach to the commissions and the additional gifts vary – from

acts of reciprocity to blunt corruption. Reciprocity in the Andean context has a special meaning. In the rural communities reciprocity and communal work are an essential part of the political-economic structure (Golte [1980]1987; Mayer 2002). Reciprocal obligations and maintenance of mutual exchange relationships are characteristic of Andean culture and governance. The exchange of work for work, or work for money, can be supplemented with an ancillary meal (Mayer 2002: 109–112). These practices are attested to by the stories of the women weavers. The meals and *panetón* complement the commissions and change their meaning from an exclusively economic exchange relation – in which the women pay for the services of the guides – into a reciprocal relationship with additional meanings of friendship. Or at least they give the relationship an aura of friendship. Friendship – whether genuine or not – facilitates the negotiations about commissions and offers a certain guarantee that the guide will continue bringing tourists to their workshop. Also, guides are perceived as knowledgeable about what tourists want. Befriended guides may give advice about how to make the workshop more attractive to tourists. For example, a guide advised a workshop president and her husband to relocate the workshop to a courtyard at street level to make it more accessible to less able walkers. In addition, the guide proposed higher counters for display of the handicrafts and the construction of more accessible lavatories. The workshop president and her husband followed this advice in the hope of pleasing the guide so that he would continue to bring “his” tourists. These forms of collaboration might indicate a certain level of interdependency. Nevertheless, most women are critical about the relations with the guides and stress the unbalanced reciprocity and inequality.

We both need each other, but they have more power. That is how it is. When we give them their food, their commission, they are loyal to us and always come back. If we wouldn't do that they will go to another place where they treat them better. We give presents to them. Not they to us. (Interview, December 30, 2014)

When we told guide “Carlos” that the women think guides have a lot of power, he reacted as follows:

In the end that is how it is. I have the power. I am with the passengers. I can go wherever I like to go. What I say is ... the law. But we also want to take the tourists to a place that is serious, responsible, authentic. (Interview, December 30, 2014)

As Salazar (2005: 642) indicates, “guides actively help to (re)construct, folklorize, ethnicize, and exoticize the local, ‘authentic’ distinctiveness and uniqueness...”. In Chinchero, guides choose those workshops that, in their opinion, give the best and “most authentic” experience to the tourists. They also advise tourists where to buy the “real” handicrafts. We observed a guide leading his tourists away from the street vendors who displayed locally woven items saying: “This stuff is fake. It comes from China.” Another: “Don’t buy this. It is sheep’s wool, not alpaca.” The saleswomen explained that this happened regularly (cf. Garcia 2015: 183).<sup>8</sup> Garcia’s study mentions that guides would get angry with the women when they were not “dressed up” in traditional clothing with their hair braided to look more “Indian” and “would threaten them with taking their tours to other centres” (Garcia 2015: 191).

This display of power should be understood in light of the social hierarchies marking the relations between weavers and guides. The work of the guides stresses their masculinity, their leadership roles, authority and machismo, their urban identity, their knowledgeability, education and language skills (cf. Ypeij 2012). Their contacts with international tourists further increases their social status. The work of the women weavers and their traditional dress recreate a romanticized ideal of the Andean home and culture, reaffirming the women’s femininity and Indianness (de la Cadena 1995). The male guides look down upon the people from Chinchero, considering themselves as superior on the social ladder. Asked about discrimination among his colleagues, Carlos answered:

Yes, that happens everywhere. Everywhere in Peru. The people from Lima feel themselves to

be better than the people from Cusco. And those from Cusco, because it is a bigger city, feel themselves as better than those from Urubamba, Chincheros and other villages. (Interview, December 30, 2014)

The guides’ feelings of superiority manifest in disdainful behavior toward the women weavers. We observed one guide who entered a workshop, looked briefly around, refused the tea the women offered him by shaking his head, and left without saying a word. He seemed to be checking out the place – why we wondered? And why so arrogantly and disrespectfully? We also witnessed how a guide produced an uproar, walking agitatedly up and down the workshop, arguing loudly with the women and even shouting at them. The women responded nervously, “No, no, no.” Finally, the guide left the workshop, still as angry as when he came in, leaving the women (and us) behind in amazement. Later, the women explained that the guide accused them of not having paid a commission. He thought that two of “his” tourists had bought something in the workshop, but they had only taken some photos. “The tourist bought at another workshop, not with us,” the women assured us, still confused (cf. Ypeij 2015: 198).

Here, when the guide doesn’t receive what he thinks he is entitled to, he tries to get his way by intimidating the women through aggressive behavior. In retrospect, we consider these occurrences examples of what de la Torre has called everyday forms of racism (de la Torre 1999; cf. Essed 1991). Studying ethnic relations in neighboring country Ecuador, he defines racial discrimination as “the overt and subtle actions and words utilized by white-mestizos ... to exclude, restrict, or harm Indians”. (cf. Feagin & Sikes 1994: 18–26). Verbal attacks, as in the example we described, are one of a range of discriminatory actions.

Because of these disdainful practices in combination with the sometimes excessive commissions demanded by the guides, some women referred to “corruption” when talking about the guides’ behavior. References to “corruption” express feelings of in-

justice and indicate the other pole of the continuum between collaboration and exploitation. Nevertheless, references to reciprocity, albeit unbalanced, are never completely absent in the discourse about commissions. As one woman reflects:

Yes, it is a type of corruption. In Peru, everything and everybody is corrupt. We see it as follows: if they do something for us (bringing tourists), then we do something for them. Just that. (Interview, December 27, 2014).

Disdainfulness may turn into sexual intimidation when the guides' feelings of ethnic superiority intersect with their masculinity. We have witnessed flirtatious behavior, indecent jokes and physical contact that obviously embarrass the women. A recent example from our fieldwork diary:

We entered a workshop in the center of Chinchero. It was a large workshop where the light was dimmed and the wooden benches for the tourists were set up in three semi-circles. Within fifteen minutes three different groups of tourists with their guides entered. It became very crowded as there were at least 50 people there. At a certain moment, three demonstrations were given simultaneously. A guide stepped in front of the tourists and intervened in a demonstration. He grasped the weaver, a young girl, by her shoulders and turned her around. As she stood with her back to the audience he took her hair between his fingers, lifting it high and asked: "Why is she wearing her hair loose? Why doesn't she have braids?" Nobody answered. "That is because she is single. All single girls have their hair loose," he continued, smiling significantly. The audience laughed. Then he let her continue with the demonstration.

We didn't have to wait long to witness a second incident with another guide. While his tourists were buying and negotiating with the women, he put his arm around the shoulder of a woman standing next to him, talking excitedly to her, tried to convince her of something. We noticed how she blushed as she tried to distance herself

from him. A third incident occurred in the tumult of many tourists buying at the same time: a guide grasped the braids of a woman, played with it between his fingers and then stroked her cheek with his hand. It all happened in less than half an hour. The guides were clearly older while the women they touched were all young. (Excerpt from fieldwork notes, June 21, 2017).

This shameless display of masculinity and ethnicity before a group of foreigners confirms the social inequality and the intersection of gender and ethnicity as a social fact. Guides have a much broader power basis from which they operate and women's opportunities for negotiation are highly constrained. Inequalities in access to tourists are not stand-alone manifestations but are firmly rooted in existing social hierarchies of ethnicity and gender.

## Conclusions

Tourism in the CuscoMachu Picchu region is built upon and integrated into already existing social hierarchies of the highly stratified society of Peru. In spite of the recent entry of Quechua speaking guides into the profession, the hierarchies of ethnicity, class and gender are maintained and often reinforced in the tourist industry and in the tourist border zones of the workshops that the women of Chinchero have created. Male, Spanish-speaking urban guides occupy superior positions in the hierarchy of guide work, and reflect and manifest their privilege and power in verifying authenticity, exoticizing the Quechua-speaking women weavers and in the ways in which they negotiate commissions with them.

The guiding roles of leader and mediator are certainly important in the Sacred Valley (Cohen 1985). The guides do not only establish the contact between the weaving women and the tourists, but they are also active in giving advice for improving the workshops. They play their role as cultural brokers with a great deal of verve and define for tourists what is authentic and what is not. The general goal of the women with the workshops is twofold: to earn a living within tourism and to revive ancestral weaving techniques. The demonstrations of their weaving

art, their typical clothing with the handwoven shawl and layered skirts, and the setting of the workshop as a reminiscence of the Andean rural home reconfirm their ethnic and gender identities. The women are proud at their work and the interest of tourists adds to their feeling of self-worth (Ypeij 2012). The revival of their ancestral traditions and arts are very meaningful for them. It leads to a reshuffling of gender and ethnic relations at home, where the changes in the sexual division of labor and increased women's status and earning power are notable. Yet the performance of traditional work under the conditions of mass tourism, with its increased contact with Spanish-speaking guides and foreign tourists, may introduce new gender and ethnic inequalities into the lives of the women.

In the women's daily touristic interactions, guides have a broader power basis to determine the conditions of their interaction than the women. Because the number of tourists that travel independently to Chinchero is very small, the women depend heavily on guides to bring tourists to their workshops, that is, to turn their workshops into real border zones. Their room to maneuver is subsequently limited, except for the large and well-known workshop of CTTC, which can negotiate agreements with tour operators and travel agencies. The other, smaller workshops depend on maintaining friendly relationships with the guides and complying with their demands. In order to compete with other workshops, they have to accept the commission demanded by the guides, who "skim off" 20 percent or more of their sale price. While some weavers stress the reciprocal character of their relationships with the guides, others see this as "corruption".

The negative moral value assigned to these exchanges by the women is reflected and reinforced by the concealment of the ways in which money changes hands. For the women, keeping this practice in the dark may have to do with the competition they face from other workshops. For the guides, it protects their professional authority toward the tourists and increases their ability to manipulate the women.

More importantly, commissions play a pivotal role in the power play between the male, Spanish-speak-

ing guides and the Quechua-speaking, rural women. Based on their positioning in the gender and ethnic hierarchy, they feel superior to the women and play out status differentials with rude, disrespectful and intimidating behavior. The determination of percentages of commissions, the authority in determining authenticity, the right of guides to demand ancillary meals, and the sexual license displayed by the guides are all expressions of discriminatory social hierarchies.

The case studied here can contribute to our knowledge of guides' roles. As Dahles has stated, guiding is not necessarily a harmonious mediation "keeping all parties satisfied" (Dahles 2002: 784). Our research shows that the different positions the women weaver and the guides have in the border zone of the weaving workshops reflect the social hierarchies of gender and ethnicity of the overall society. Both male guides and women weavers show resemblance to the commodified persona who commodify and exoticize themselves to accommodate tourists' conceptions (Bunten 2008); in the case of guides, however, the acting out power differentials prevalent in the broader society may not only be part of their performance for tourists, but a means of intimidating the Indian women in order to secure financial gain.

We realize that our study is limited because it only focuses on commissions and the related power differentials between guides and local tourist workers. A broader study might also examine the relationships between the guides and the travel agencies who pay their salary, or between the guides and the tourists who pay them tips. By taking the entire spectrum of the guides' income, including the visibility or invisibility of acts of exchange, as a starting point to study inequalities in tourism, we may shed further light on the role of guides. This may result in greater focus on the performative bases of their authority, and further problematize their mediating role.

## Notes

- 1 The authors wish to express their gratitude to the reviewers and editors, particularly Jackie Feldman, for their many fruitful comments on earlier versions of this article.
- 2 The term living cultures of Peru is used by Promperu,

- the Commission on the Promotion of Peru for Tourism of the Peruvian government. See their website <http://www.peru.travel/en-us/what-to-do/peru-of-living-cultures.aspx>, consulted July 24, 2017.
- 3 Sources website of INEI (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Información) “Entrada de extranjeras, por años”, <https://www.inei.gob.pe/estadisticas/indice-tematico/tourism1/>, visited November 30, 2016.
  - 4 Karin Bosman did this research as a master’s student under supervision of Annelou Ypeij in 2004.
  - 5 In Cusco, guides are registered with three unions: Agotur, Colitur and Progtur (Bosman 2006: 203). Of the 691 registered guides on the list published by Agotur, in 34 cases their surnames did not reveal their gender. Of the remaining 657, 522 (79.5 %) were males and 135 (20.5 %) were females (<http://www.agoturcuso.com>, visited July 27, 2014). The Ministry of Environment list for the Inca Trail to Macchu Picchu lists 1,361 licensed guides. Of the 1,320 whose gender could be identified by surname, 79.3 percent (1,048) were males and 20.6 percent (272) females.
  - 6 See the documentary Choleando: Racism in Peru, by Roberto de la Puente with the collaboration of Taller de Antropología Visual, Relapso Films, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wrixBocUg0>, consulted March 7, 2017.
  - 7 We have focused on commissions paid by the women to the guides. We have no information on whether the women or the workshops pay the travel agencies for which the guides work.
  - 8 Ypeij and Zorn (2007) have noticed comparable practices at the island of Taquile.
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# QUOTING AND TELLING

## *Mediating Techniques of Tour Guides in German Home Museums*

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Tour guides in home museums perform a special mediating role: they connect past and present through stories that mark both proximity and distance from them. This paper is based on ethnographic research in four home museums in Germany, those of Konrad Adenauer, Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel, Albert Einstein, and Kaethe Kollwitz. I analyze the performance of guides quoting the words, either written or allegedly spoken, of home museums' protagonists. I claim that the quotes work along two axes coordinated according to the relative differentiation of hierarchical distance and temporal displacement. The guides navigate the space created by these axes and negotiate the meaning of histories through the perspective of home life. The axes help us understand both guides' and visitors' work and interpretation.

*Keywords:* hierarchy in tourism, tour guides, museum temporality, collective memory museums

### **Guides and Visitors: Encounters in Home Museums**

Tour guides in home museums use different resources and techniques to draw their audience into a story at a certain site. They point to different sources they use, such as objects, diaries, art works and media, and they quote sources. Those can be understood, following Handler (2016), as multidimensional resources for the historical imagination of visitors, and guides draw from them to tell personal stories linked to events of local as well as national magnitude. In home museums, they often quote the protagonist who used to live there or a text they wrote. This is a technique that the anthropological literature on tour guides discusses as central to site sacralization (Fine & Speer 1985) and a "trick of the trade" that involves bridging historical knowledge for contemporary visitors (Wynn 2005). Guides co-produce a scene

together with visitors (Feldman 2007) and with it a claim to belonging. Such claims of belonging to a scene at home enable visitors to relate to a shared social past enacted by museum guides who, in their rhetoric, encode museum's narratives (Katriel 1997a). Guides present those narratives with varying degrees of pedagogical and seductive construction of the imagination of the tourist site (Salazar 2012). This article wishes to discuss how quoted texts from poems, fiction, drawing, and diaries are used as indexical tools (Rojek 1997) in representing a home. Vinitzky-Seroussi and I (Dekel & Vinitzky-Seroussi 2017) define a home museum as a heritage site in which a famous person has lived and which is open to the public as a partial or full reconstruction of a home. I adopt Brin and Noy's (2010: 27) definition of the guide's performance as a situated event during which both guide and tourist assume the presence

of a site as a stage and partake in reconstructing it. This perspective highlights the hermeneutical negotiation of difference, as Steinberg (2002) does while discussing the creation of a “contact zone” or a site of encounter between tour guides and visitors during a boat tour from Europe toward Israel, in which Zionist ideologies are presented in the guides’ articulation of Jewish belonging.

Casting home museums as such sites of encounter, I show how, by *condensing* or *expanding* the distance from the home’s dwellers and their time, guides make the home into a space of temporal encounter. This encounter also positions the visitors and the protagonist in a hierarchical relation, with visitors present in a place that is at once mundane (being “merely” domestic) and enshrined (being the former home of an important historical personage).

The guides thus create a space of relation to other publics and other times in which the protagonist lived, or in which their home became a museum. With visitors’ own sense of belonging to a certain home, be it a national, group, or family home, museum guides present (and often debunk) competing narratives about the person and their time. This encounter is constructed through (1) the guide’s utterance, (2) the visitors’ position and reactions and the (3) home-museum’s curated space, ranging from a preservation of the time in which it was occupied, to the preservation of different stages of its renovations as a home and later on as a museum.

Class, ethnicity and level of education mark those who fit and do not fit into museums (Fyfe & Ross 1996; Bourdieu 1984; Gable & Handler 2006; Gable 2011). The intimate relation between home museums and national projects (Young 2015) is pronounced in our cases, as the homes studied are those of national heroes. Visitors are encouraged to feel proximity to the protagonist in home museums. As a consequence, visitors and guides switch roles in maintaining distance or creating proximity to the protagonists’ times and the various tourist-imaginaries available in telling them. In other words, they alternate following the guides in “returning” to the time of the protagonist, leaving the guide there, or vice versa. Salazar and Graburn (2014: 1) define

tourism imaginaries to be socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people’s personal imagining and are used as meaning-making devices. These imaginaries are intangible and implicit schemes of interpretation.

Studying home museums provides a lens on the co-construction and negotiation of such imaginaries in museums. Guides often collapse this distance between the protagonist and the visitors, presenting the protagonist as being “like us” (or natural, authentic and simple).

Unlike in other tourist sites, in home museums this negotiation is carried out in a place that is the most ordinary site of all – a former home. Rojek (1997: 60) maintains that “the indexing and dragging processes” through which the visitor understands a site “have independent, self-generative cultural meanings” such that the meaning the visitor comes to assign actually starts at home, away from the visited sites, and often independent of the visit. Such practices of sense-making rest on other resources, such as a book the visitors have read or a film they have seen, which then produce memories and sentiments of events and sites that potential tourists would like to visit and of which they are reminded when they do visit the home museums. The guides in home museums respond to and mediate an encounter where complex hierarchical relations obtain between parties that would not otherwise meet: the visitors at the house of the great figure and the great figure, now absent, within the home as the stage for telling public-national and private stories as mutually related and at times mutually constitutive.

Mallet (2004) defines “home” as a multidimensional concept involving dwelling and its space with practices and relations of the household. Woodward (2001: 120) claims: “Domestic spaces are not exclusively public or private. As such, meanings shift according to the social and familial location of visitors to the spatial organization of the home.” According to Douglas (1991), home is constituted by patterns of doing, and thus also provides orientation to an embryonic community living therein, by which she means that the space of the home is defined by the set of practices of living together which can also get

carried to other communities. This understanding of homes affects the representations of family, space and habits in home museums. Beranek (2011) claims that founding narratives concerning the national context in which the heritage site is ensconced are integral to the preservation of home museums. This affects the position of both guides and visitors within the domestic politics of the home museums, within a larger national context of the museum. Handler (2016: 70) claims that a time-space matrix undergirds the “domain of history” which, “as understood in modern ideology, has both spatial expanse and temporal depth; translating this into nationalist terms, the national territory has attached to it a particular history”. This particular history is inseparable from the space of encounter guides create for and with visitors to home museums. Those historical events can be seen as part of a multi-vocal story and approaching them in this way, Johnson (1999: 199) suggests, underlines the significance of the local space without using the house “as an exemplar of general historical processes made local”.

It is in this respect, Vinitzky-Seroussi and I suggest elsewhere (2017) that visitors in the home museums are *doubly* situated: in relation to the exhibited home and in relation to their own home. We argue at length (2017) that the crucial point is that while “home” is complex and constructed, people typically come to a home museum believing that they know what “home” is from their own, personally and politically defined, experience. The guides, therefore, represent home as an identifiable cognitive construction for different individuals and collectives. Guides and visitors, as well as the curated space, partake in the construction and maintenance of atmosphere. Vinitzky-Seroussi and I define atmosphere in home museums to be “created, maintained and transferred through the condensation of time in specific areas in the home museum” (2017: 337). Atmosphere is created in the interplay between (1) stories of home, (2) objects at home, and (3) the situation of visitors in it. The condensation of time is enabled by the existence of what Vinitzky-Seroussi and I (2017: 337–338) define as “a temporal multitude”, as we can see in the analysis of the practice in

which guides frequently engage, namely, quoting the protagonists of “their” home museums.

Here, I demonstrate that such a temporal multitude indexes not only the coexistence of temporalities, in which past, present and future show themselves to overlap and intersect, contrary to our usual sense of them as discrete magnitudes with definite boundaries. While such a coexistence of temporalities is also a feature of a memory atmosphere, the phenomenon of temporal multitude can be further conceptualized as the way in which the “present” of a visit to the home museum, mediated by the gesture of the guide, is over-saturated with temporality as such. As Vinitzky-Seroussi and I (2017: 252–254) demonstrate with respect to the experience of the “uncanny” (the *unheimlich*, or “condition of being not-at-home”), the temporal multitude does not describe the overlap of the temporalities of past, present and future, but rather indexes the degree of time-determination during the home museum visit. More prosaically, this means that the museum visit itself, at certain crucial moments like those felt to be “uncanny”, is experienced not as a moment in time, but as the experience of temporality itself. This understanding has far-reaching implications both for the study of home and historical museums as well as the work of guides in them.

Quotes are situated by guides within a specific home area, often anchored to an object around which the story evolves or can be abstracted from. The objects, we will shortly see, are taken out of their context, perhaps their original location, and get re-located in a de-contextualized manner which makes it possible for visitors to consciously experience the lapse of time since the person who lived in the house departed. This can create a very familiar and inviting atmosphere but also an uncanny feeling, a limit case of the time-space condensation (Dekel & Vinitzky-Seroussi 2017), as we will encounter shortly. In showing, telling and asking about the home, both the guide and the visitors partake in creating a stage on which the moving body “is intertwined with discursive techniques in the purposeful construction of a tourist place” (Chronis 2015: 125).

### **The Museums: Artefacts, Tours and Understanding them “at Home”**

This study is based on research which was carried out in home museums in Israel and Germany between 2014 and 2016.<sup>1</sup> I here discuss the homes of Kollwitz, Einstein and Brecht and Weigel – all in the former GDR, and of Adenauer, which is located in what used to be West Germany. The homes of Einstein and Kollwitz are virtually empty of furniture. In both cases it was deliberately decided to keep them empty of original furniture, or similar to them, in order not to fabricate a façade of a home that was never so, in the case of Kollwitz, or was brutally violated in the case of Einstein.<sup>2</sup> These decisions are often shared with the visitors. The study also included Goethe’s house in Weimar, and a set of other museums in Germany which the research team visited for comparison. In this article, the choice of these four museums is based on the fact that only in them guided tours took place. The four museums are:

- Konrad Adenauer’s house in Rhöndorf near Bonn: Adenauer (1876–1967) was the Mayor of Cologne between 1917 and 1933 and the first Chancellor of West Germany between 1949 and 1963. In 2016, the museum hosted 24,377 visitors.
- Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel House in Berlin: Brecht (1898–1956) was a poet and playwright, the founder of the theatre Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin (1949). His wife Weigel (1900–1971) was an acclaimed actress and the director of the Berliner Ensemble. In 2016, the museum hosted 4,936 visitors.
- Albert (1879–1955) and Elsa (1876–1936) Einstein’s summer house in Caputh near Potsdam: Albert Einstein was a theoretical physicist, and Nobel Prize laureate. In 2016, 7,221 visitors visited the house.
- Kaethe Kollwitz House in Moritzburg, near Dresden: Kollwitz (1867–1945) was an acclaimed woman artist and hero of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The home hosts about 11,000 visitors annually, including special events in town at which times its grounds are opened to the public.

The ethnography included observation of 10–20 guided tours in each museum, thematic workshops and special events in all four museums. Specifically, I or a research assistant observed the tours, which lasted between 45 minutes and two hours; we recorded and transcribed them, used discourse analytical tools to analyze them, collected educational materials and publications shared in them. We additionally conducted semi-structured interviews with guides and visitors, sampled the visitors’ book and mapped the home museum as a curated space.

The studied home museums are small institutions with freelance tour guides (except for one case, in which the director serves as a guide). The directors, all women, are often the only full-time paid persons in their institutions (with the exception of Adenauer House that is directed by a state-supported foundation that finances the home museums of former Chancellors). In the Brecht-Weigel House, at the time of the study, the guides were also actresses, historians, and German literature students. In Adenauer’s house they were historians and educators, some retired; in Einstein’s house – historians, graduates of religious studies programs, and teachers; and in the Kollwitz House, the director and a part-time employee guided the groups – and they had a background in art education. However, most visitors walk through Kollwitz’ home without the guided tour offered to booked groups.

In each of the museums, guides followed a route that changed only for special events or for special groups. The tours included entering the home (often from what used to be its front door) and walking through, or viewing through glass doors, the main home areas such as living room, kitchen office/library and bedrooms. The guides were eager to talk about the details of the house acquisition or building, renovation and preservation work, attending to the dichotomy between the domain of tourism and the domain of the everyday (Skinner & Theodosopoulos 2011; Urry 1990) and often blurring it.

The tours were conducted in a relaxed mode, with the exception of Kollwitz House where the topics of death, war, violence, poverty and suffering are central and affected the mood of the tour. Home mu-

seums tour guides joke about silly Einstein, messy Brecht, and ironic Adenauer, enacting what Schorsch (2013) terms a shifting self by which guides perform closeness to the protagonist, yet also criticism both of their acts and of the ways these have been interpreted. Guides offer enchanting stories and create a source of pleasure and trust between themselves and visitors. Pabel and Pierce (2016) demonstrate how guides' use of humor enhances the feeling of comfort and satisfaction among the visitors. The authenticity of the place, corroborated by the visitors' decision to be in this place, is effected by the guides, sometimes relying on objects in the home or else relying on stories and quotations, when objects are not at hand. By using quotations, I suggest that guides mediate hierarchy and temporality in helping visitors to experience the site *in situ*, in what Macdonald (2009: 155) terms a "here-site" within a home that nevertheless directs attention to events which mostly took place outside its confines. Following this technique, we will be able to better understand how guides manage hierarchy, temporal proximity and grand narratives. More specifically, this analysis elucidates how they are able to extract indexed meaning from the quote and its performance *in situ*, and drag it (Rojek 1997) into other realms of historical understanding, affording or denying belonging to various groups through them.

Guides and visitors often share what Feldman (2010: 5) terms a "common cosmology" or an understanding of how the world around them is ordered. The use of citations is effective in substantiating this common ground of shared views on a home and home rules. The citations work in two directions: sometimes making the home and protagonist "more real" and events he or she were part of very close, and the visitors' experience therefore "closer to the original". Other times staging the historical personage and creating a more "artificial" experience in visiting the home museum, and so, distance from the protagonist. Indeed, sometimes both proximity and distance operate at the same time in the encounter between visitors, the protagonist and the tour guide who mediates between them.

Tours took place in German and English. I in-

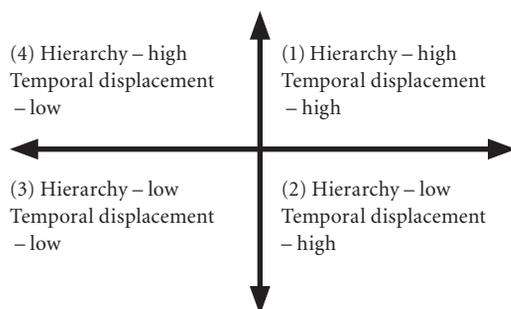
terviewed visitors in the language they were most comfortable with. Guides in the German home museums disclosed that, with the passage of time, visitors know less about who the protagonists were, and need a longer introduction. Visitors, however, do not say after the visit: "now I know what it was like to be Adenauer/Einstein/Kollwitz/Brecht/Weigel". Rather, they identify with the time and the place presented to them as parallel to a past they intimately recall: "this is how my grandmother's/aunt's kitchen looked like". Interestingly, this frequent reaction does not solicit an identification with any position – neither that of a responsible witness (such as in Holocaust remembrance tours and historical or memorial museum tours, see Feldman 2010), nor full identification with the protagonist.

Visitors did, nevertheless, claim after the visit (in interviews we conducted as well as in visitors' book entries), that they came closer to understanding the protagonists and intimate aspects of their lives. They often claimed that they were grateful for this intimate perspective as pilgrims who perform an introspective search for the right setting and mood with which to access history in this intimate space. This can also be understood as what Basu (2007) calls "roots tourism". That is, they return to a place of origin of the admired author, in which their identity is also rooted – as individuals who grew up when Germany was divided, or in the GDR. As Macdonald demonstrated in the case of the Nuremberg Nazi Rally Grounds, the tourist gaze can be directed by guides to the site being toured as well as elsewhere, inviting the visitors to perform acts of double and triple vision (2009: 155).

To better understand how such double or triple vision is performed across places and times, I introduce two thematic axes in home museums: hierarchical differentiation and temporal displacement. I then provide examples for each type and analyze what kind of messages they perform and convey. I focus on the texts the guides quote in guided tours in order to discuss how guides and visitors negotiate the meaning of historical events plotted onto domestic life from the point of view of the protagonists, as told in or about their homes. The guides'

utterances around the axes can shift within and between visits.

### Thematic Axes of Guides' Performance



#### *Type 1: High hierarchical differentiation and high temporal displacement*

In this type the guides position the protagonist as a greater-than-life figure, elevated, whose time of action is far and remote from our time. Guides present national narratives about great men and their achievements and examine them, such as in the following iconic story that guides tell visitors as they stand outside the pavilion where Konrad Adenauer wrote his memoirs late in life.

The story goes as follows: In 1955, the first of the approximately 10,000 soldiers and 20,000 civilians arrived at the Friedland border transit camp. The release of the Germans, who had been held in Soviet camps for ten years after the Second World War, was one of the greatest achievements of the first chancellor and was the result of intensive discussions in Moscow in September 1955. During these negotiations Adenauer received a gift from Soviet Ambassador Smirnow: this attractive walking cane. But he did not use it. Of this choice he used to say: “I would not rely on (or be supported by) the Soviet Union” (guide, May 29, 2015).

The guide takes the position of Adenauer in quoting him and this is always followed by a laugh from the visitors. After a tour with high-school students in which this story was shared, I asked them to reflect on what they generally took from the visit and a few answered: “I learned that Adenauer was a down-to-earth man” (*bodenstaendig*). This German ex-



Ill. 1: Konrad Adenauer Pavilion 2015. (Photo: Irit Dekel)

pression, like all idiomatic expressions, is properly untranslatable: the sense that Adenauer was “down to earth” as in the English idiom is there of course, but so too is the sense that he was one who “stands his ground” as another idiom has it – this point is picked up by both guides and visitors, as in the example: “I learned that Konrad Adenauer was a strong man, he stood on his principles” (June 9, 16). There were other stories from which visitors could infer this quality of Adenauer as a politician, such as how, as the city mayor of Cologne, he refused to hang Nazi flags on an official visit of Hitler there, and consequently, had to leave office – this story is presented through documents in an information center that visitors tour prior to the visit of the home.

In quoting the ironic statement about the cane while looking at it and using Adenauer’s voice in reference to his own aging body, the guide tells about West Germany’s relations with the Soviet Union in the years after the Second World War. Most interestingly, the guide retains the hierarchical distance

from the leader together with the temporal displacement from his time and the time of that statement by uttering “he used to say”, and then quotes Adenauer in a first person voice. By quoting the term “support” (“I will not be supported by the Soviet Union”), symbolized by the cane that is in front of the visitors, a time-space matrix is at work (Handler 2016): The utterance is thought of as timeless, as other persons could use it in other places and times. Likewise, the distance in time between “then” and now is condensed. The visitors can imagine today’s Russo-German relations and remember what they knew of “other” times which were related to “other” cultures and people (Fabian 2006) that this quote encapsulates. The visitors come to share a past as told (in its integrity as a present), by its author’s voice through the symbol of support of a frail body. They thus have a rare opportunity to feel the immediacy and intimacy with its hero’s voice.

As seen in the later interview, the visitors, playing their part in reflecting on the visit, chose an expression that conveys resilience and strength in describing Adenauer. This avoided the issue of age that comes up frequently in guided tours through references to Adenauer’s walking canes (four more are hanging in his bedroom). The tour guide’s cane story is a “perfect tour guide moment” that Wynn (2005) defines, one in which a guide tells a story that illustrates particularly well a historical sequence and helps visitors imagine a larger context for this historical moment, a moment in which Adenauer needed to negotiate with the Soviet Union in order to release the captive soldiers, but as a strong and sovereign head of state. A second “trick” this point uses is what Wynn (2005: 412) calls “the bridge”: when one part of a story is used to illustrate, metonymically, a larger historical process or context, as we will see in the following example.

The example is an iconic quote from Brecht. Many visitors to the Brecht-Weigel House inquire about the presence of the Bible in Brecht’s library, or find curious two Christian icons of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary hanging on the wall in his large office. The guides typically respond with a fact followed by a quote: “He has several Bibles in his library

and used to say: ‘I am an epic writer, of course I love the Bible.’” Guides, here, cater to German citizens with knowledge of the GDR or to its former citizens who expect narrative consistency with what they know of the skeptical attitude toward religion in the GDR. They also expect consistency with what they know of Brecht, a celebrated playwright in that culture and time, who declared unapologetically that he “loves the Bible” – not on grounds of faith but rather as an epic author, for the Bible is an epic text.

The hierarchical distance from the author, Brecht, both in the way the guide positions him within the narrative (albeit embodying his ironic tone) and in the way visitors imagine him is high. The temporal displacement from the time of the quote and of Brecht’s life is noticeable, since such statements would not be required in today’s Germany by authors who have Christian icons in their office or use the Bible in their writing. Last but not least, this quote has little to do with the actual figurines that prompt its performance. Standing by them and the knowledge visitors have that these are Christian figures triggers the talk about religion and scriptures for Brecht and in the GDR, and for visitors thinking about the GDR in Brecht’s house.

*Type 2: Little hierarchical differentiation coupled with a high stress on temporal displacement*

Here the visitors are invited to feel close in status to the protagonist, who is not presented as hierarchically elevated, while they are nevertheless made to feel at a temporal remove from her or him. This type is not common. We can, however, see it exemplified in the case of a workshop, entitled “Unfortunately I was a girl,” held in the Kollwitz House. The quote is drawn from her writing relating to how her father supported her art studies despite her gender. This quote has often been used and reproduced – such as in a book title (Trüper 2001) – and was shared with the visitors in all the tours I participated in. For instance, in the following tour:

She came from a very open-minded parents’ home, and wrote in her diary, that although she was a girl her father recognized her artistic talent

at an early age and supported it. And he indeed granted her private instructors but there was no possibility at that time for girls to attend a university for the arts [...] that is why she went to Munich and Berlin; where there were art schools for women. (November 3, 2014)

Here we encounter the pronounced distance from the time in which Kollwitz lived together with an insistence on the *lack* of hierarchical differentiation between the home's former resident and its current visitors. In this case, Kollwitz is not elevated or positioned over the visitors in social status or achievement, but instead is quoted recognizing her misfortune in having been born a girl. Insofar as the guide adopts Kollwitz's voice from the past (Kollwitz wrote in her diary "Unfortunately, I was a girl"), the visitors are encouraged to compare it with the present.

In a later off-scene conversation with the museum director, who was also the guide on this tour, I asked her about the workshop "Unfortunately I was a girl" which she designed. She replied:

Many are not aware of how hard it was for Kollwitz to take this particular path, always being the only girl or woman in a circle of men. Today it is a relevant question for women [...] Women who are artists in Germany are actually the most drastic about it and claim: "today it is just as bad as it used to be at her time".

The director criticized the fact that Kollwitz then and today is presented as a subordinate "other", a woman, and that her success is measured primarily against this fact, rather than based on her art itself. However, by choosing a quote which illustrates this criticism, the director, in her capacity as a guide who reports on visitors' reactions, demonstrates that this very position which Kollwitz found herself in still exists for female artists today. In this type of low hierarchical distance from the protagonist combined with pronounced distance from her time, the guide solicits identification and solidarity from the visitors.

According to Katriel (1997b), the ways that wom-

en are presented in museums reflect both present social constructions and former ideologies. This is true in the case of GDR memories of Kollwitz as well, which, I suggest, are the main frame for understanding "her" home museum. Katriel reveals that women in the Israeli pioneer museum discourse are presented as necessary yet problematic elements in the enactment of pioneering ideals of labor and equality (1997b: 676). Women are portrayed as service workers rather than essential figures embodying the ethos of productivity and equality the museums are meant to project. Kollwitz is no service worker and her art stands at the center of her "own" home museum; it is framed in terms of work and creativity, not least when guides state that Kollwitz actually did not "work" in this home, since she was sick and fleeing war and destruction.

The director's critical presentation of the condition of women as unequal in the workforce in Germany today joins the mode of reflecting on ideologies and social conditions of visitors in museums today. The manner of portraying even powerful women as subordinate figures explains the guides' use of the voice of women in those homes, as hierarchically close to the visitors today and at the same time as belonging to time past. In this example, of type 2, visitors share less of the chronology of the protagonist, a woman, and although she is presented as closer to them in hierarchy, she is nevertheless also an "other", or embedded in a temporality distant from the present, as Fabian's analysis (2006) made clear. This type is also used in the case of criticizing ideological positions the protagonist was disillusioned about, a sentiment often shared by visitors, as in an oft-quoted text in guided tours in Brecht's part of the house, as well as in the museum brochure. The quote is taken from a letter Brecht wrote in March 1954 to his publisher Suhrkamp: "It is really advisable to live in houses and with furniture that are at least 120 years old and were in earlier capitalist settings until you have them later in a socialistic one."<sup>3</sup>

Here the reference is to two past times that the author criticizes from "the present" (i.e., the early days of the GDR). This example can be used to show that guides may use one or more types in a guided tour

and that type 2 often conveys criticism that the protagonist had toward present and past conventions they were affected by.

*Type 3: Low hierarchical differentiation and low temporal displacement*

In this type, the hierarchy between the “larger-than-life” persona and the tourist is flattened by making them more human, a process that takes place also in type (1). Here, we encounter alleged quoted utterances about routines, preferences and habits in which the great person becomes intelligible and at times ironically flawed, and in which the guides repeat earlier presentations and representations of myths about the protagonist, often debunking them. Here, the body of the protagonist and his habits are paramount – Einstein is presented as though he did not have predictable work habits and used to roam around (largely) naked. An iconic story the guides tell almost every tour is as follows:

On a hot summer day, Einstein was walking around the summer house without a shirt and barefoot. As the couple was waiting for guests, his wife, Elsa Einstein, suggested that he put on a shirt and his reply is then quoted by the guide: “if they want to see me, I am here. If they want to see my clothes, take them to my wardrobe.” The crowd then laughs in appreciation of Einstein’s wit, which is often presented in contrast to his annoying wife who, according to the guides, interfered with his work. Of course, she had enough wit to supposedly report on this interaction, but this is not part of the fable. It is, however, important to add that the museum describes the summer house in its publications and tours as a paradise for the short while Einstein spent time there between 1929 and 1931, for he subsequently decided not to return to Germany after the Nazi’s rise to power. The iconic story of him roaming naked is repeated in all of the tours. It supports this narrative and helps tourists to imagine him in his home, a home figured as a leisurely paradise, a refuge lost when the Nazis forced him and many others (who could still leave) out. This “works” for the

visitors because the protagonist is Einstein. The unpredictable, earthy genius character would not be as amusing for visitors if the story was about an undistinguished man, or on the other hand, about another great man, like Adenauer, whose orderliness is central in narratives about him.<sup>4</sup>

Another example of this most common type is a story about Helene Weigel. She is described in three home areas: upon entering the apartment in Brecht’s section – regarding the couple’s loud breakup before Brecht’s renting the apartment and her return thereafter – and at length in her bedroom and in the kitchen in the lower section of the house which were “hers”. All tours describe her love for cooking and gardening, that she directed the Berliner Ensemble from bed (since she had “smokers’ legs”) and that, in search for roots after her long exile, she collected porcelain dishes. A few tours also mention her Jewish roots and her family’s fate, while none remark on her library which contains, among many other topics, books on the history of Jews in Germany and Austria.

An anecdote that often uses her voice in first person and is told in the kitchen is that she would often hang a note in the theatre inviting colleagues to come for dinner, stating “At my place there is goulash today.” Here, the motherly qualities and the quote of her voice in the present tense exemplify the lack of hierarchy she allegedly established with co-workers, now extended to the visitors in the present tense. Weigel’s legendary Viennese cooking is central to the restaurant under the house that in the present day serves “her dishes”. It is a memory that students take with them and resonates after their visit, such as in a website of a Berlin gymnasium which summarizes a visit to the house: “In her bedroom stood a large bed. In it, as we were told, she liked to work. Across the hall was a small kitchen in which she enjoyed cooking marmalade and goulash. Her recipes are highly respected today.”<sup>5</sup> The students take Weigel’s legacy to be that of cooking, a legacy perfectly adapted to the museum’s narrative. This “bundle package” enables an extension of the intimate atmosphere allegedly shared at the museum, to resemble or mimic the

intimacy and trust which the visitors are told took place upstairs, between Brecht, Weigel and their colleagues, and among artists in the early days of the GDR, an intimacy visitors can enjoy today in reunited Germany.

The reason why, in studying guided tours, one finds types 1 (high hierarchical distance with high temporal displacement) and 3 (low hierarchical distance and low temporal displacement) more often than their chiasmic counterparts is that in a home museum, the condensation of time (low temporal displacement) around specific home areas correlates with the oft-heard expectation from guides and directors of home museums that visitors will leave thinking: “they [the great men/women whose homes we visit] are like us”. The mix of voices creates a more complicated terrain for the mapping of conventional narratives, as we saw in type 2 and we will encounter in discussing type 4 just below. The complication derives chiefly from the perhaps obvious fact that it is hard to preserve displacement along one axis while eliminating such displacement along the crossing axis. In analyzing type 2, we saw the complexity of the guide’s (more or less planned) choice to maintain temporal displacement from the protagonist’s time while minimizing the hierarchical distance from the protagonist. In type 4 below, we will see the challenges guides face in trying to maintain hierarchical distance between the visitors and the protagonist while minimizing the temporal displacement.

#### *Type 4: High hierarchical distance and low temporal displacement*

One strategy that guides employ in order to meet the challenge of maintaining hierarchical distance while minimizing temporal displacement is intertextuality, which can be deployed by the technique of quoting the protagonist when she or he is quoting another work. We can see this, for instance, in a quote from Brecht that was presented by a guide during a tour of the Brecht-Weigel House on March 18, 2015: “This is Brecht’s small office, [...] On the wall hang three Japanese masks,” to which the guide points, quoting the poem [The Masks of Evil] from memory:

On my wall hangs a Japanese carving,  
The mask of an evil demon, decorated with gold  
lacquer.  
Sympathetically I observe  
The swollen veins of the forehead, indicating  
What a strain it is to be evil.

The guide embodies the position facing the masks which Brecht looked at when inspired to write the poem in his small office where the visitors now stand. Usually, after the last line of the poems, visitors and guide reflect on how Brecht observed historical complexity and how inspired he was by Asian art in his work.

In Kollwitz House we encounter another example of a guide quoting the protagonist, who is herself quoting someone else. Here we find Kollwitz quoting a text by Goethe, which the guide cites while standing by a lithograph (drawn by Kollwitz in 1941) of a mother protecting children, entitled “Seed-bearing fruit should not be crushed”.<sup>6</sup> The guide tells that Kollwitz reflected on and worked with this theme ever since she lost her son Peter in the First World War. The students are asked to describe the lithograph. They typically say that it is a mother protecting her children from getting hurt. The guide then directs their attention to the quote which is the title of the art work, positioning the students together with Kollwitz in citing Goethe.

As in type 1, the hierarchical distance is high both from Goethe and from Kollwitz, who is presented as knowing Goethe’s work intimately. Unlike this “master type”, however, here in type 4 the temporal displacement is low, as the quote is also an imperative that can be read literally in the present. In this part of the guided tour, the guide often quotes Kollwitz in a letter to her remaining son Hans (from February 15, 1915) in which she wrote that she reflects on the death, a few months earlier, of her son Peter: “I am not a seed. I had only the task to grow the seed that was placed in me until it was developed” (Schulte 1998: 126). The work of intertextuality, in the guide’s quotation of Kollwitz’s authorial voice, which itself is a quotation of the voice of the “national poet” Goethe, positions the protagonist in



Ill. 2: "Seed-bearing fruit should not be crushed". Kollwitz lithography in Kollwitz House. (Photo: Irit Dekel, May 2015)

a higher hierarchical position, but close to the visitors in the present time – Kollwitz, together with the guide, is with us in “looking back” to Goethe.

### **Experiencing and Understanding the Space of Encounter**

The guides in home museums build their narratives around the mundane and choose ordinary elements of home life from a large number of objects and an infinite number of possible biographical and historical stories in order to tell tales about the protagonist's life and times. They condense time in specific areas in the home in order to create and maintain a

certain atmosphere, but do not pretend to portray this time as taking place “here and now” (Dekel & Vinitzky-Seroussi 2017). The sensory experience of walking in a museum that was once a home and is now empty both of inhabitants and of most basic elements of home life, affects the visitors' decoding of the message communicated by the guides.

The construction and maintenance of a certain domestic atmosphere is a crucial mechanism by which the appropriate degree of temporal displacement is created. When it is useful for the purposes of the museum that the protagonist be perceived as distant in time, the ties that bind that historical

figure to the past are made explicit. When, however, a sense of temporal intimacy and immediacy is desired, guides pronounce and indulge in the uncanny character of certain objects or places/positions in the home museum in order to create the sense that somehow the past is present, and the linear sequence of events within a continuum of temporal displacement is disrupted.

The positions taken by the guides change between groups, and they are certainly different in the four home museums discussed here. Guides in the Einstein home report that he became a model for their everyday life. The three male guides at the time of the study often found themselves imitating him by showing off their comprehension of theoretical physics from which most visitors glean that they themselves are geniuses and can explain and understand Einstein's theories (the two female guides at the time of the study did not make visitors feel unable to comprehend theory). In personal interviews, the director of Kollwitz House conveyed that she has been inspired by Kollwitz's respect for her sons and learned from her independence as a female artist.

Importantly, as cultural mediators (Salazar 2012), the tour guides in the studied home museums are also all quite local: they capitalize on visitors' love of the landscape and often declare that they are very close to the protagonist. This adds to the homeliness of the visit and the guides' credibility as mimetically authentic. Noy (2009) describes tourism authenticity as a semiotic resource that gives sites, people and objects a sense of worthiness.

Visitors, however open they are to seeing the home as authentic, are not naive about the narratives told and the home scenery. They are open to the work of curation of the home museum and accept that there are secrets behind what appears to be authentic in the sense of unchanged original. They ask, for instance, what will happen if they make a call from the red phone in Adenauer's house – whether the current Chancellor will be on the other side. In this (apparently very popular) question, they respond to the condensed time between Adenauer's death and their own visit that could grant them access to authority as well as to the rhetoric of authenticity, since it is clear

that the phone is not used now to communicate with the Chancellor and thus the performance of acting like Adenauer in his home is bound to fail. On the other hand, there are no narrative failures during the tours in which a visitor questions either the story's accuracy or the genuine character of the protagonist and his or her moral position. They come to like the protagonists, as well as the stories about them and their homes (Forchtner & Kølvrå 2015).

### **Concluding Remarks: Guiding through Time**

I intend to have an effect on these times, in which human beings are so at a loss and so helpless. (Käthe Kollwitz' diary entry December 4, 1922, in Bohnke Kollwitz & Kollwitz 2012: 14)

This quote is central to all tours in the Kollwitz House and frames the ways visitors talk about her displayed works that are thereby presented as an assessment of her life. The quote also makes the visitor wonder what this means today in thinking about arts, politics and helplessness. The guide, on her part, offers a reading of this quote beyond the GDR cult of genius that elevated Kollwitz's standing as a socialist artist. By using this quote, the guide directs attention to all three historical periods within a home museum: the time the Kollwitz lived in, the time the museum opened and that of the visit.

As Handler claims, there are endless possibilities in mining the time-space matrix of national history, "[b]ut at any given present moment, not every person or institution can muster an equal claim to a particular event in the past" (2016: 72). The story of Kollwitz, in the contact zone that the home museum offers, is full of such impasses. Guides select certain stories about her everyday life and elide others, because that past was encoded in ways that cannot be shared today: the way the house was used in the GDR, the director's resisting her veneration in the GDR, and the story of her fleeing Berlin after her house was burned, her death alone in this house – all would view her life through the lens of German suffering in war; these were deemed an inappropriate platform for the museum. These factors materialize in the guide's technique of stretching and condensing time in stories about Kollwitz, and elevate her or

make her “down to earth”. The Kollwitz House thus constructs “alternative traditionalities” (Macdonald 2013: 56), narratives which elide the ways memory work was performed in the GDR, and the story of her life.

Our exploration of the interplay of temporal and hierarchical displacement with the peculiar “domestic politics” involved in turning a private home into a public museum has shown that, with varying degrees of consciousness, tour guides and directors engage visitors in performing historical awareness together with other people in non-tourist settings. Visitors and guides share social worlds that interact explicitly or implicitly, with social regulations and power relations (Edensor 2000: 323). This becomes particularly visible in the intimate encounter with a historic public person in the space usually most marked as private: the home.

As we saw, sometimes guides yoke visitors closer to historical personages by minimizing either temporal and/or hierarchical displacement; sometimes they emphasize either or both forms. The closer we are to the focus of the displacement in either time or hierarchical social status the more we approach an uncanny realm, and the more we are unsure of our position vis-à-vis the protagonist and her or his ghosts, as well as about possible position to their story (Arnold de-Simine 2018). For those ghosts are indeed very present at the moment of encounter between the space, objects, story, guides and visitors.

The model described here has explanatory power beyond these four home museums. It can be applied in historical and memorial museums as well as in heritage sites. It helps understand the phenomenology of distance from times past as an assemblage of different junctions in space and time, together with the positions taken by guides and visitors, marked by present memories and expectations enunciated within the intimate encounter at the museum. The model also helps see the dramaturgical potential of citation, where guides employ quotations from texts that visitors can recognize, and their relation to heritage tourism as pilgrimage, where visitors venerate the protagonist(s) in home, and other heritage, museums.

So too, with this model, the analysis of distance and proximity to stories and the ways they are shared calls for further research on how visitors acquire a perspective on the past, taking into account their ideological and partisan political positions within the contact zone they partake in constructing, where multiple pasts and presents can be explored. The study of the over-saturation of temporalities can be a tool for understanding the impact museum objects have when visitors and guides discuss them in certain museum settings. Finally, this article developed the understanding of how the performance of double and triple vision (Macdonald 2009) about the past is performed and what visitors experience in the encounter with guides quoting a protagonist. This understanding can be extended to the study of the experience of anchor objects in historical museums and how they are used to contextualize discussions of politics and history today.

## Notes

- 1 The research was carried out in cooperation with Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and financed by the German Israeli Foundation for Research and Development. I am grateful to Ms. Lotte Thaa who assisted in conducting the research in the home museums located in Germany.
- 2 Einstein’s house in Caputh was abused by the Hitler youth upon his departure; in Kollwitz’s case, she briefly lived in two of the rooms. After her death in 1945 and until 1995 the house was populated by families.
- 3 “Es ist wirklich ratsam, in Häusern und mit Möbeln zu wohnen, die zumindest 120 Jahre alt sind, also in früherer kapitalistischer Umgebung, bis man eine späterer sozialistische haben wird.”
- 4 I thank Jackie Feldman for pointing this out.
- 5 <http://www.goethe-gymnasium-berlin.cidsnet.de/musik-lehrer/83-deutsch/deutsch-exkursionen/383-brecht-weigel>, accessed May 29, 2017.
- 6 “Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden.”

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# TECHNIQUES OF THE IMAGINATION IN THE TRIBUNE

## Stewarding and the Guidebook at Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham

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This article examines heritage-making first-hand through the techniques of the imagination visiting Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham – the summer house and Gothic castle of Horace Walpole. Walpole developed Strawberry Hill as an architectural experiment in visitor emotions. In a now seemingly empty historic house, Walpole's sleights of hand are being carefully and authentically conserved to fulfil the imaginations and expectations of the tourist as though a tour guide from beyond the grave. A detailed exploration of this staged encounter in the Tribune Room during a temporary exhibition highlights the workings of the tourist imaginary and the techniques and technologies of the visit – in particular the use of a 1774 guidebook as a resource for self-guided tourists – in conservation work, and the virtual development of the house as an award-winning heritage destination.

*Keywords:* tour guide, guidebook, tourism, Strawberry Hill House, architecture

The old lady walks into the room I am observing and looks around. “This is not art!” she shouts at me and anyone else in the room. She walks around the exhibit, and looks up to the ceiling. “This is art!” As she leaves the room she jumps up and down on part of the new exhibit in the room, shocking other visitors and leaving me stunned at the animosity being expressed. She is gone before I can challenge her.

I have been left for several years with this lady's physical reaction to what she was seeing and how she was feeling. She was on a self-guided tour of an historical heritage institution with contemporary sculpture installation carefully placed through the rooms. Her reaction was extreme and embodied

if not violent, passing on with a performance her feelings. Such animation contrasted with the calm steady flow of visitors to the room. Some agreed with her but didn't dare to express themselves in such a fashion. Others recoiled in shock at her destructive jumps when I recounted the event. It certainly interrupted one afternoon in the Tribune Room at Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham (see ill. 1).

### **Docent Fieldwork**

This article is about the first-hand reactions to a heritage site.<sup>1</sup> It focuses upon influences, reactions and mis-directions at play in and around the temporary Laura Ford exhibition at Strawberry Hill, June–No-



Ill. 1: Summer fête at Strawberry Hill with Days of Judgement (Cats) by Laura Ford. (Photo: J. Skinner, August 2015)

vember 2015, as a “study of tourism from the inside” as Bruner (2005: 1) deems it. Since 2014, I have volunteered as a room steward at the house, favouring – or specializing in – the Tribune Room built by Georgian era novelist and Cervantes-styled “Prince of Wits” Horace Walpole. This is docent fieldwork where I sit once a month in a largely empty room and observe visitor reactions. These afternoons contrast with my more regular body-involved fieldwork on the dance floor (Skinner 2010). Here, my research method is more static, relying upon the eyes and ears reading the visitors just as they read their guides and react to the texts as well as the walls of the house. I note down visitor sketches. What do they make of the room? How do they react? Does it live up to their expectations or not? Often we break the ice and a conversation strikes up about the room, the former owner and his taste, and I launch into my repertoire of knowledge about it; the tourists have guide books containing similar information but it is easier and friendlier to have it delivered to them by another person. Some, however, bypass the room entirely.

The docent is typically a learned person who greets the visitor. Whilst there are a number of very

vivid studies of the tour guide as native (Bunten 2015), cosmopolitan (Salazar 2010), urban re-animator (“the ground troops of the travel industry” [Wynn 2011: 6]), as witness (Feldman 2008: 67) and as general entertainer/trouble-shooter (Costa 2009), the docent in the gallery or museum or heritage destination has been studied less. As docents, we have not been trained as the traditional “pathfinders” examined originally by Erik Cohen (1985). Nor are we the “cultural mediators” that Sharon Macdonald (2006) walked and worked with at Nuremburg as they decoded the Nazi architecture for the awkward visitors, “façade peeling” (2006: 130) as she refers to it. We are trained in identifying the types and needs of the visitors to the house (the middle-class older couple, the reader, the specialist, the friends, the solo visitor, the family) and we have rehearsed ways of interaction or non-interaction should the visitor need or look like they want assistance (the mini-lecture [large-group engagement], the teaser [unsolicited information to pique interest and conversation], the smile [non-verbal acknowledgement of the visitor]) (SHH 2015a). Our mission statement is to “tell the stories of Horace Walpole and Frances Waldegrave

while preserving and sustaining their residence, the elegant and eccentric gothic castle Strawberry Hill” (SHH 2015b). The room stewards at Strawberry Hill House “bring the history and stories of Strawberry Hill to life” (SHH 2015c). They are passive communicators, both “interpreters” of their room and “custodians” for it. Their voluntary work has to be carried out in a “customer friendly way” so that visitors have “an enjoyable and safe visit” (SHH 2015c).

We engage our visitors with stories, re-animating the rooms for the season (10,040 visitors in 2017). When Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995: 369) writes, “[a] key to heritage is its virtuality, whether in the presence or the absence of actualities”, her words connect closely with the heritage of Strawberry Hill House, an empty house enlivened by stewards and their scripts. The stewards assist with the visitors’ interpretation of what she refers to as “a hyperreal past”, one that relies upon the imagination to produce a heritage in the present. These heritage relationships are a “collaborative hallucination” decried by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995: 375), virtual in their “hereness”: phantoms animated by plaques, memorials, and other instruments to commandeer the imagination and suggest an Otherness – Lowenthal’s (1985) “past as a foreign country”, one recognizably similar but also markedly different. A room steward at Strawberry Hill, then, is a static facilitator of interpretations of a hyperreal past; Strawberry Hill House is a physical phantasm inhabited by phantom figures consumed by the public as they see fit (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995: 387). We allow them to linger in an ethereal heritage firmament, Strawberry Hill, as backdrop for our imaginations.

### **Strawberry Hill and Guiding Techniques and Technologies**

Heritage houses are lodestones to an imagined past. At Strawberry Hill House, the imagination can and has run riot. Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham, was the summer house and Gothic Castle of Horace Walpole (1717–1797). Walpole developed Strawberry Hill as an architectural experiment in visitor emotions, playing with them to instil a state of “gloomth” – a term that he coined to express an af-

fective reaction of “gloom” and “warmth”. Living off sinecures set up by his father, Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister of Great Britain, his son Horace spent a lifetime re-modelling his summer house into a Gothic-styled castle. In his own words, Walpole (1753: 372) gained deep satisfaction “imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one’s house”. He spent much of his lifetime revamping the place, turning a relatively simple cottage – known locally as “Chopped-Straw Hall” – that he had purchased in 1747, into a Gothic revival castle that by the time of his death in 1797 was decorated with pinnacles, battlements, vaults, turrets and medieval-styled ancestral ceiling paintings. In a letter to Harry Conway, Walpole described it: “It is a plaything-house, that I have got out of Mrs. Chevenix’s shop, and it is the prettiest bauble you ever saw” (Walpole 1747: 269); Walpole bought the remainder of the lease on the property from Mrs Chevenix who ran an exclusive and well-known toy shop in London. His critics might have had little compassion for his “self-indulgent bauble” (Sabor 1995: iii) that went against the trend in Palladian and classical architecture.

Visitors come to Strawberry Hill House to see the castle that Walpole built. They also come to develop their understanding and imagination of the man, a prolific satiric letter writer and chronicler of eighteenth-century Georgian life, grand tourist and travel collector, Gothic revivalist and novelist, libertine and “outsider” (Mowl 2010). Walpole was a man of letters, many many letters, with over 6,000 known correspondences carefully published in 1937 in 48 volumes by the American collector/scholar W.S. Lewis and now held online at Yale University’s The Lewis Walpole Library (Lewis 1937–1983). The letters “flesh out” the house for volunteers, visitors, guides and stewards. They detail its development as either the eccentric mixed-up abode of a contriving dilettante, or the visionary preserve of the man who ushered in the Gothic revival, with “Gothick” architecture and inventive writings that went on to influence Mary Shelley and Victorian Gothick literature. They attract the visitor and play an active part in the appreciation of the house and the man.

In a now seemingly empty historic house, Wal-

pole's sleights of hand are carefully and authentically conserved, restored and further mediated to fulfil the imaginations and expectations of the tourist under the guidance of The Strawberry Hill Trust and their staff, and the watchful eyes of the Friends of Strawberry Hill volunteers. In cultural terms, or "the politics of connoisseurship" (Bruner 2005: 163), the Trust "authenticates" the work on the house and the Friends regulate it. Both enact a deep and sensitive understanding of taste à la Walpole. This creates a doubly staged encounter zone. In the eighteenth century, Walpole developed Strawberry Hill as an architectural experiment in visitor emotions with medieval-inspired exteriors, trompe d'oeil decorations to give the impression of medieval Gothic permanence, and faux papier-mâché interiors to connote splendour, all complemented with a staged assemblage of over 4,000 curiosities ranging from Cardinal Wolsey's hat to a bust of Medusa, an exotic armory and intricate collection of Holbein miniatures. These *objets d'art* turned the house into a tourist attraction. Walpole (1784) himself encouraged paying visitors to his house and in 1784 published a detailed guidebook with sketches that is now used as a pamphlet for self-guided tourists and in conservation and the virtual development of the house as an award-winning heritage destination. This guidebook is particularly important following the sale in 1842 of the contents of the house. It is a prop for tourists to rely upon in front of them rather than face the "empty" rooms with an unmediated gaze, and for guides to use in picking up and describing the now empty rooms to the critical tourists' gaze and to cultivate the tourists' imagination and fulfil their period expectations.

The house and the man divided opinion then and continue to do so today. Gayford (2010) describes Walpole as an Oscar Wilde or Kenneth Williams of the eighteenth century. He sees the place as an eccentric English reaction to baroque public and religious trends on the continent: "rococo paganism in the boudoir" (Fallowell 2010) for a man with "skittish" and "lyrical" but "lonely" tendencies. It is an "architectural collage" (Gayford 2010) that directly challenged the ordered Palladian style of the

day with, for example, a staircase based upon one in Rouen Cathedral; fireplaces based on medieval tombs; ceiling designs developed from a rose window seen in St Paul's Cathedral; a reception room derived from the funeral chapel of Henry VII. It is a house that continues to stay ahead of its time and is now back in fashion with its postmodern pastiche and parody. It is a theatrical stage with texture and all manner of sets: the dark entrance hall is decorated with wall designs from Prince Arthur's tomb at Worcester Cathedral, a wallpaper that looks like stone carving; the library has a recreated medieval painting of jousting knights; the gallery glitters with gold leaf overlaying papier mâché. The result is "a spectacular conjuring trick" (Kennedy 2015), a "fantasy castle" of architectural tricks that attract and impel the viewer to visit and try to fathom the man. It is as though Walpole were writing and designing for posterity – a guide absent, now relying upon us stewards. His tourists were charged entry to the house and shown around by his housekeeper whilst he retired to a more private cottage nearby. He did, however, sell them a guidebook to the house, an invaluable aid for present-day conversation and restoration and a technique for introducing the house to the modern-day visitor.

The original guidebook was published on his own printing press, carefully illustrated and introduced the visitor to Walpole's house, deliberately positioning his text in the third person before listing – *vade mecum* (cf. Seaton 2002) style – the contents of each room. Its title was *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex. With an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.* (Walpole 1784). Its preface begins as follows:

It will look, I fear, a little like arrogance in a private Man to give a printed Description of his Villa and Collection, in which almost every thing is diminutive. It is not, however, intended for public sale, and originally was meant only to assist those who should visit the place. A farther view succeeded; that of exhibiting specimens of Gothic

architecture, as collected from standards in cathedrals and chapel-tombs, and showing how they may be applied to chimney-pieces, cielings [sic.], windows, ballustrades, loggias, &c. The general disuse of Gothic architecture, and the decay and alterations so frequently made in churches, give prints a chance of being the sole preservatives of that style. (Walpole 1784: i)

The modern guidebook is notebook size, using the front plate from the original as its cover and extracts from the preface and each room description to briefly orientate the reader in the house. But there are additional explanations of the work the Strawberry Hill Trust has done in the restoration of each room. At the start there is also the declared intention to bring back as many objects from the rooms to the house once their provenance has been tracked down. There are floor maps for readers to orientate themselves. Moreover, as a guidebook, there are indications as to where to walk next:

We have added a modern commentary to Walpole's guide, which explains recent developments, including the restoration and objects which have returned. A visit to Strawberry Hill was always intended to be a theatrical experience and by following the directions in this booklet you will discover the castle as its creator intended. (SHH 2016)

It is thus intertextual, both informing the readers and directing them through the space of Strawberry Hill House. The start of the description of the villa begins the same way:

It will look, I fear, a little like arrogance in a private Man to give a printed Description of his Villa and Collection, in which almost every thing is diminutive. It is not, however, intended for public sale, and originally was meant only to assist those who should visit the place.

The following paragraph, however, cuts to the end of the preface, omitting Walpole's rationale for sustaining an interest in the Gothic through his house. He

characterizes the house "capricious" and ancient by design but modern by decoration:

In truth, I did not mean to make my house so gothic as to exclude convenience, and modern refinements in luxury. The designs of the inside and outside are strictly ancient, but the decorations are modern, would our ancestors, before the reformation of architecture, not have deposited in their gloomy castles, antique statues and fine pictures, beautiful vases and ornamental china, if they had possessed them? ---- But I do not mean to defend by argument a small capricious house. It was built to please my own taste, and in some degree to realise my own vision. (Walpole/SHH [1784]2016: 9)

Neither guidebook text is to be trusted despite its claim to authenticity. The latter one gives an impression of the original in its design but adds instructions and follow-on boxes with additional information for the reader, and larger font instruction at the bottom of the page that develop the tourist gaze (cf. Urry 1988) for the modern – twenty-first century modern – tourist:

Your ticket will allow you entry at a specific time. Please feel free to look around the main garden, this courtyard and the small Prior's Garden while you wait. After a short introduction to the house, enter through the front door. (Walpole/SHH [1784]2016: 11)

This is, however, in keeping with Walpole's trickster style of narration. His writings as much as his building contain subterfuge and deliberately mislead the reader. Many of the letters that he did not want recorded for posterity were destroyed. Moreover, he is also known for the Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* that he published in 1764. Rather than claim authorship for it, though, Walpole presented the novel as a translation by pseudonymous character William Marshal who had been working from a fictional sixteenth century Italian manuscript written by Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St Nicholas

at Otranto. These layers of design “spoof” the reader into thinking the account true, at least, in part; and could serve as inspiration not just for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic novelists. These are techniques designed to intentionally lead the reader/viewer of letters, books, and tourist sites in particular (mis)directions. Writing about Walpole in a guide to the sale of the contents of the house in 1842, we read how he was viewed as a paradox:

Horace Walpole was one of the most remarkable personages of the last century, but his character was made up of paradoxes. He was a worshipper of fashion, and a sneerer at it, – a courtier, while he affected to be a republican, – a grave historian, and a gossip, – a good natured man, and a satirist, – and, though loving his ease, possessed of a more restless spirit of curiosity than ever stimulated even old Pepys himself. (Strong 1843: ix)

It is controversial that the reference to “gay” is omitted from the new tourist guide’s preface. Though the sense of the word has changed since its original use, it is problematic in that Walpole was an effeminate gentleman who never married and surrounded himself with a close group of male contemporaries. Many visitors to the house visit because he is perceived as a gay icon, expressing himself through his building when homosexuality was illegal. For them, the Gothic Castle is a camp structure, sometimes brought to life by theatrical tour guides (“look around you: the queer man gets hold of you!”), but sometimes denied by conservative room stewards (“the jury is out: there is no written evidence”). This occasionally creates awkwardness in the tours. As such Strawberry Hill is, quite literally, one of Dean MacCannell’s (1992) “empty meeting grounds”: it is a tourist construction where diverse feelings and reactions to the building are elicited, as well as multiple subject formations projected upon its creator.

### **Tribune Swag**

“Hi! Welcome to the Tribune room. This is where Walpole kept his more precious objects.” This is the room that I spend my hours in, sitting in an alcove,

discrete unless disturbed by a question or a soliciting gaze or tentative inquiry. I have been schooled and trained to respond about the Tribune room or any other room that I am scheduled to steward in. This is my favourite room and I feel confident and comfortable in it. I have sat in it for several years now. Other rooms would necessitate recapping on their significance, reading and memorizing key details. The Tribune room lends itself easily to description due to its purpose and structure. It is entered from the long Gallery full of light and gold leaf. It is a dark room, a square with four circular alcoves breaking the sides of the square and entrance. It is nineteen feet from entrance alcove to window alcove and each alcove is five feet in length. The Tribune is entered by passing through a wooden swing door with lattice bars, like a prison door. Walpole kept it shut for the usual ticketed visitors, but let in his special guests. It can be used for dramatic effect, with tour guides closing it behind them ahead of their spiel (see ill. 2). The room is empty but has a vaulted ceiling curving in towards a modern-like glass roof. There are two stained-glass windows in the alcoves opposite the entrance. On the right, as the visitor enters, the alcove has been raised. On the left, the window shutters are closed and chairs are set for the room steward. The floor is bare wood.

In the first year of room stewarding, there were two “props” for the room. On the left was – and is to this day – a tall wooden podium with a tray and two wings containing interesting information about the current room that the visitors are in. This is window dressing of the room for the tourist. On old thick paper are photocopies of a letter from Walpole describing his Tribune room. There is a reproduction of Caligula’s head, a bust found in Herculaneum, one of Walpole’s most prized possessions, and there are some postcard-sized copies of art work that show the room when it was full of possessions and a detail of the cabinet that sat in a raised semi-circular recess above a black and gold altar. One looks to be a painting c.1789 by architect John Carter of the Cabinet, as the room was sometimes colloquially called; the view is from the room steward’s perspective front on to the altar whereas the Edward Edwards water-

colour drawing of 1781 is from the entrance to the room. On the right of the entrance way there is a small digital screen cycling through images of the Tribune Room. Today, the room is dominated by a two-metre-high female kangaroo, steel sculpted with jesmonite and covered in sacking cloth. Her pouch is full and she has a startled expression facing the visitor coming into the room. Perhaps she has been caught looting from Walpole's Tribune collection?

The room is featured on pages 32 and 33 of the new guidebook (see ill. 3). On the left side there is an introduction to the room followed by a boxed-off commentary upon the room and a final instruction in a larger modern font: "Now leave this room, turn left and continue until you reach the Great North Bedchamber" (SHH 2016: 32). On the right-hand page is a reproduction of a watercolour drawing (1781) by Edward Edwards held by the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University. It shows an angled view of the room to include stools, the alter and cabinet, pictures filling the room and the recess between the windows filled with a bronzed plaster cast of Lady Catharine Walpole, Horace Walpole's mother, modelled from her statue in Westminster Abbey. Walpole's "Cabinet" is to the right of the centre of the picture as the main feature.

The first part of the text is taken direct from Walpole's guide to the villa:

It is square with a semicircular recess in the middle of each side, painted stone colour with gilt ornaments, and with windows and niches, the latter taken from those on the sides of the north door of the great church at St Alban's; the roof, which is taken from the chapter-house at York, is terminated by star of yellow glass that throws a golden gloom all over the room, and with the painted windows gives the solemn air of a rich chapel... The grated door was designed by Sir Thomas Pitt. (SHH 2016: 32)

The last sentence is edited from the end of the following paragraph. Whereas the original text in between mentions the key objects in the room, the edit



Ill. 2: Walpole's Tribune Room with Kangaroo by Laura Ford. (Photo: J. Skinner, October 2015)

draws attention to a current feature of the room, its dramatic entrance that gives it the impression on a bank vault for valuables. The remainder of the page, and majority of text, consists of four bullet points with each bullet a quatrefoil design that resembles the architectural tracery found in the house and on the wallpaper.

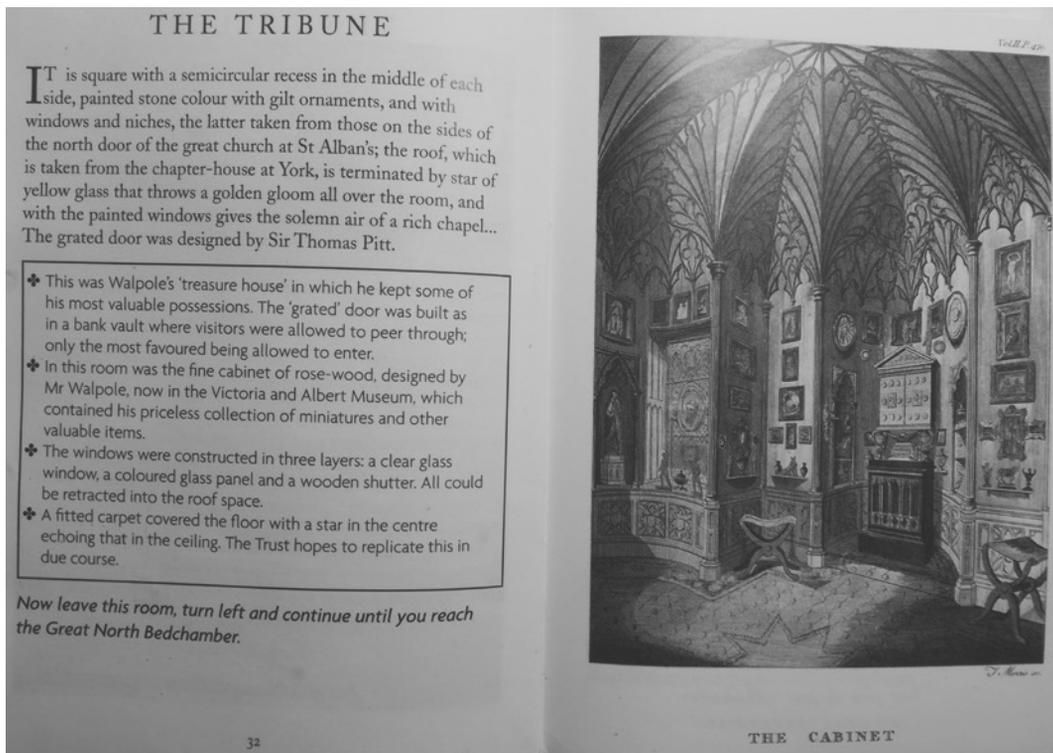
- ❖ This was Walpole's 'treasure house' in which he kept some of his most valuable possessions. The 'grated' door was built as in a bank vault where visitors were allowed to peer through; only the most favoured being allowed to enter.
- ❖ In this room was the fine cabinet of rose-wood,

designed by Mr Walpole, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which contained his priceless collection of miniatures and other valuable items.

- ❖ The windows were constructed in three layers: a clear glass window, a coloured glass panel and a wooden shutter. All could be retracted into the roof space.
- ❖ A fitted carpet covered the floor with a star in the centre echoing that in the ceiling. The Trust hopes to replicate this in due course. (SHH 2016: 32)

These bullet points are written by the Strawberry Hill Trust for the self-guiding visitor. They introduce the room from the door and the windows to the absent cabinet and carpet. They succinctly set the scene for the readers/viewers as they enter the room and recreate it from the guide, the painting and digital display, the podium and their imagination. The

intention is for the self-guided tourist to turn into the dark, enclosed Tribune after visiting the long Gallery (56ft long) sparkling with gilded ceiling and expansive with windows to the gardens and mirrors to reflect the light. The contrast is deliberate. It takes a few seconds for the eyes to adjust to the low level luminosity – Walpole’s gloomth and now Ford’s animal. The viewer is typically drawn, then, to the two stained-glass windows visible, and to the warm orange glow from the glass in the roof. Gone are the several hundred objects listed in the guidebook from pages 76 to 102. I might point some of them out to the interested visitor: Henry VIII’s dagger, Holbein miniatures, Lady Walpole’s statue, a wooden cravat tie, Caligula with the lively silver eyes, and the cabinet and the door featured in the guidebook. And yet, for all this, the visitors and room steward are entering an empty room.



Ill. 3: The Tribune pages from the modern guidebook. Edwards painting image courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. (Photo: J. Skinner, September 2017)

## Guides, Students and Visitor Reactions

The reactions to Strawberry Hill House and the Tribune Room, in particular, come from three cohorts of students working with tour guides giving tours, debriefing the tours and analysing them for their assignments. Moreover, for three seasons, I regularly sat in the Tribune Room looking at visitor reactions to the room, talking to and stewarding visitors in the room should they want contact. I also followed over half a dozen public tours, volunteer re-training walk-throughs and new tour route illustrations through the house, and interviewed six tour guides at length. This does not, however, seek to be a comprehensive analysis of the tour, but rather reactions to the Tribune Room, and the importance of the prop in the enhancement of the tourist experience and tourist's imagination.

### Guides

The guides did not make use of the Trust's props in the rooms. They relied upon their narrative and, in some cases, their own theatrical presence, to illustrate the tour for the visitor. Several guides dressed up in rich personal costume, developing an association between themselves and the Walpole character and house that they were (re-)presenting. They typically spent about four and a half minutes in each room, and the tour built up a picture of not just the house but also of the man that built the house. Context was thus all important in their demonstration of historical knowledge about the man, the house, the construction and fashioning of each room, and its use and filling. One of the themes was change, with the building illustrating key eras of use from a cottage to a castle to a residence for Vincentian Fathers teaching at the adjacent Catholic Teacher Training College (now St Mary's University). One guide set the scenes with a parallel association: "Think Disneyland castle – amusing, theatrical, inconsistent." The location is certainly treated as a stage set: "A home built for ancestors, a stage set"; "a house of illusion"; "a very theatrical house with the illusion of the ecclesiastical" where things are not as they seem and as they are seen. The story is all important – "It's all about the story" – and the priority is to estab-

lish "Gothic gloomth". In short, the guides facilitate Walpole's original "mood journey: dark, light, contrasting atmospheres to affect visitors". The grandiose nature of the man and his constructions is one of the attractions for the guide as well as the one-off visitor. These reactions also carried home with the guides and influenced their room decorations, their visits to other historical houses, gardening and curiosity as to how Walpole would have seen and reacted to their own tourings.

The guide's commentary follows the layout of the house from its entrance to its exit, with detailed points about each room and how it would have looked in the 1750s under the gaze and direction of its owner Horace Walpole. It is as though they inhabit his or his house keeper's mantle and we, the visitors, are those ticketed tourists that visited from Georgian London. On both host and guest sides, we imagine ourselves into roles. This is the inescapable nature of visiting Strawberry Hill House. As two guides pointed out in their spiel:

What we are doing here is just replicate what he had done for tourists.

A stoic of Antiquity with a plaything house – his lil' gothic castle that tells us a bit about him: a mad chap – scandalous to build this here. It has a posterity theme. Haunting themes. We are his posterity viewing it now. Do we understand him better for it?

Walpole was building his future in the house, establishing his Gothic revival style of architecture, and writing his account of the age for future readers. His role has been author and editor of the past. But this was not necessarily new according to architectural editor of *Country Life* John Goodall who suggested in a talk at Strawberry Hill (June 9, 2016) that the idea of building fictional pasts is a common palimpsest of England. Here the Gothic articulates an ancestry that Walpole sought, a practice found later in the exotic Hearst Castle in California built by U.S. news magnate William Randolph Hearst or, more recently, Wisconsin's architecturally diverse House

of the Rock that, like Strawberry Hill, toys with the visitor, especially their senses and sense of authenticity.

Walpole's Tribune Room is modelled after the Uffizi in Florence, a room crowded in art, keepsake and memorabilia. Some of the guides stand by the grilled door and close it for dramatic effect, explaining and paraphrasing Walpole: the uninvited guests, "[t]hey look with their hands", and so were not allowed beyond the grill. There is thus a sense of specialness about being on the inside of the room, in the vault, so to speak. Here, the illumination is subdued, the light changing during the day to give it an ecclesiastical feel; ironically, the Vincentians consecrated the room. There are numbers on the walls where the pictures would have hung. But now, instead of the objects taking the focus of the room, the papier-mâché tracery and the stained-glass windows are the object of the tourist's gaze. There is no outside view and so the association with York Cathedral comes out of the background. Even the tour of the house foregrounds Walpole the man. As one guide remarked, "the house is a theatrical backdrop to his life". It is his story that is told through the house, "his own fiction in bricks and mortar, as you were". This man with "the soul of an interior decorator", "a Gore Vidal rather than an Elton John of his time", found an imaginative freedom in his Gothic turn. And in the Tribune Room, the gloomth is "a golden gloomth". For some guides it is their favourite room and it has a sobriety about it. For others, "a bizarreness about it, a showy feel". It seems to have an appeal, then, for different guides in different ways just as some of the guides and room stewards liked the inclusion of the kangaroo, but others felt it distracted from the windows and architecture of the room.

### *Students*

The cohorts of students visiting Strawberry Hill reacted very differently from each other. For many, it was their first time in a heritage location, and it did not live up to their expectations of an old home, in particular because of its emptiness. The students noted the time of each room narrative and, whilst they too did not engage with the room props, they

made use of their mobile phones to take notes, post Instagram images and look up online the objects that the guide was talking about. There was a digital engagement with Strawberry Hill House. It was a near instantaneous engagement with the room and its former objects, a level of connectivity and information that is new to the tourist attraction and had not been anticipated by the guides. This meant that there was reduced eye-contact between the guide and the visitors and the guides commented afterwards with the students that they had found it difficult "to read" their audience and so pitch their narrative accordingly.

The students typically found the house to be an extension of the Walpole character. Several thought that he was "odd", "macabre", "a bit of a character". They were impressed by his vision, "the dream at the centre of this house". It was certainly larger than life and "a projection of his identity". There was, however, a disjunct between the guides and their narrative and the expectations and desires for an entertaining and informative experience that the students wanted. They felt that the place had become "too sanitized" in that the rooms were clean, uninvited in but also sterile in their emptiness. There were no sounds or smells that could accompany the tourist experience. This forces the visitor to use their imagination. And yet, if the visitor does not have a knowledge of the Georgian era, then there are few mental constructions of the house's context for the visitor to tap into. In other words, some of the students struggled to engage imaginatively with the house, to populate it with objects and characters. A number thus welcomed the Laura Ford sculptures for helping them to visit the rooms, but they were not lost to the Georgian era – the temporality of the place remained in the present, sometimes jarringly so; "the sculptures were the air to let me breathe. But there were IKEA lamps in each room!" They suggested a lifesize cutout character of Walpole or a painting at the start of the tour for the visitor to latch onto, some smell sticks and some Georgian music playing in some of the rooms or recorded conversations to listen to. This would provide focus for the narrative they were hearing from the guides, one

which featured Walpole but also the different ages of the house. These multiple accounts of the place and restoration points – that were largely eighteenth century but also included the designs and schemes of other subsequent owners, and what it looked like before it was “returned to Walpole” – confused the students as to the main purpose of the tour. They felt excluded or patronized, even, when the guides assumed fore-knowledge of the Georgian era. When a guide used the expression “of course” in the Tribune Room or anywhere else, the students heard not a rhetoric of inclusion but a discourse alienating them and making them feel ignorant or lacking background knowledge. This “script” was read as talking down to them, belittling.

### *Visitor Reactions*

For many general visitors to Strawberry Hill House, the Tribune Room is the favourite room in the house (“I love this room. Come see my treasures! Come into my treasure chamber – its fab!”; “Coolest room to hang out!”). There is an appeal for the vaulted and vault-like empty room with its lists of former items. The altered light is apparent through the ceiling and the stained-glass windows. All of the room is photographed respectfully by visitors, even the empty parts (see ill. 4), with one visitor once lying on the floor to capture the best possible image of the ceiling. Like with the guides and the students, visitors expressed a mixture of opinions with respect to the exhibition in the Tribune Room. Mixing eras, the medieval Gothic with a more romantic prehistorical time of myth and legend, one visitor updated her impressions of the house: “Gothic – dragons and now a kangaroo!” This was more apt than the gentleman who confused the Gothic period for Visigoth tribes of Germanic barbarians. Positive reactions to the room are as follows:

The kangaroo enhances the house with its contemporary texture.

Its just mindboggling. Its amazing that she’s matched up her weirdness.

The kangaroo adds to the room. You’ve got someone to talk to!

Some of the visitors came specifically for the Laura Ford exhibition. Others visited Strawberry Hill House at the time of the exhibition and resented the objects intruding in on their experience of the place. They wanted to get lost in Walpole’s creation and were jarred out of it by each of the installations:

I want to see the house, not this!

The kangaroo distracts from the house. What a monstrosity. Lose it!

This is the Skippy room! This is the only room that has creeped me out. Nice gilding.

I like this empty to view the architecture properly.

The last comment is particularly telling of the way in which the installation intruded and obscured the direct view of the house and its development.

The diversity of reactions to the room is worth noting. They were all impressions; all responses to the entry into the room. None came from an engagement with the digital displays and the materials on the podium. All of the visitors had copies of the tour guidebook and were making extensive reference to it, either reading or paraphrasing the entry to others in their party, or reading it to themselves and then looking to the places in the room or vice versa (father telling son: “this is magnificent in itself. Each room is just splendid. He did the Gothic revival. What was he like? Such detail. That art is from York Minister. He copied bits from everywhere!”). This was often the place or moment in the tour that the tourists felt it getting dark, not just in terms of luminosity but in terms of the nature of the content linking the place to death – to deceased people who have passed away and to objects of violence or reminders of their passing (daggers, locks of hair, miniature portraits, busts). It is a memorial room, “crypto-religious”. As one visitor remarked, “sombre and gawdy. This is dark isn’t it!” Another reacted to the room with the comment, “deep, dark and scary”. The juxtapositions in Walpole’s collection make for an ambivalent response from the visitors: “Fantastic and nightmarish!”; “It’s fun gloomy!” These place the site on the lighter side of any potential dark tourism spectrum with other visitors assessing the room in particular

as strange or playful but with an attractive quality, for all its over-the-top entertaining fashion:

Very strange thank you.

Very playful. In some ways it's sad that it's stripped but in other ways it is rather suffocating.

Definitely a shell but beautiful.

A curiosity room.

So outrageously OTT. Splendid but they must have said, "Come on, Walpole, what are you doing?" An enormously entertaining building.

The room befits Walpole the character in the guide book and the historical imagination. It is "brave" and bold in its design, "blooming amazing!" even. Walpole was read into the empty place. One German visitor in a party enjoyed the similarities between Walpole and Ford, between two types of artistic self-exhibition: "I like heritage houses and heard about the exhibition. This I like as a tourist attraction and it is so much about showmanship and stage trickery!" Another associated the whims of Walpole the dilettante and wealthy aristocrat with the present-day financial excesses of the wealthy with his reaction and cynical comment, "Very funny! Nothing changes really."

### Performing Tourism and the Guidebook

There is an irony about tourism to Strawberry Hill House. It is based upon Walpole's guide book and constructions, the latter of which is a pastiche of styles and designs from other locations. It copies, mocks and has an intertextuality about it in that designs and objects refer to Walpole's travels. They are synecdoche stories for his private and public tours. In this way, to take but one room as an example, Walpole's Tribune – with the wooden door that looks like the door to a vault, and the recontextualized altar underneath a cabinet of curiosities – is a precursor to the postmodern. It is a humorous, remixing, hyper-real representation of the past (cf. Walsh 1992: 56) that attracts and intrigues many visitors. The exactitude of the conservation and restoration work with its attention to detail for the 1780s attempts to historicize this heritage room, with the Strawberry Hill

House Trustees deliberately deciding to take it back to this point in time, using the original guidebook as a guideline to the past, the pictures as a sight line to how it really was. The room remains "as it was", frozen and empty barring the desire to repopulate it with the original objects for an anniversary exhibition of items for the 300th anniversary of Walpole's birth in 1717 (delayed to 2018). It is the guidebook that is the technology of the tour, framing and determining the visit experience for the visitor and it was seen in everyone's hands as they entered the room. It is far more than an artefact from the eighteenth century. It caters for the credibility of the house and the Ancien tour. It is the device used as architect for a contemporary experience of the house and its history, and the man and his heritage.<sup>2</sup>

Walpole's guidebook is not an introduction to a foreign land. It is a guidebook to his house, where he lives. As such, with its inventory style, it is closer to the museum catalogue than a Baedeker or Fodor country guidebook. This museum-like quality is hardly surprising given that Walpole was a trustee of society physician Sir Hans Sloane's collection bequested to the nation in 1753 that became the foundation of the British Museum. As a literary style, it is more object-based than memoir or how-to; it is as Seaton (2002: 148) defines this writing, more a *vade mecum* text than *belles lettres*. The eye is drawn to a particular place filler with a description and provenance than to an emotional engagement with a scene or experience. The modern interpretation of the original guidebook "performs" more of the function of the guidebook as a text that mediates the visitors' understanding of the place and influences their behaviour – what to look for, what to miss and how to progress through the rooms and from room to room. It is commercial in that it sells the site to the consumer and assumes a particular readership; typically these guidebook users are middle-class according to Peel and Sørensen (2016: 42). Walpole was establishing his aristocratic credentials in the original guidebook that was used to attract wealthy social elite visitors from the centre of London. The Strawberry Hill House Trust are appealing to a far broader constituency of foreign

and local visitors, English National Trust members and the general public, as well as those interested in contemporary art for the Laura Ford exhibition. The text written in bullet points is a retrospective explanation to draw the tourists' gaze to particular features and to present an overview and introduction to the room as a self-guide for the visitor who in the past would have accompanied Walpole or his housekeeper. The image in the latter guidebook reinforces the emptiness of the room. Walpole is living author in the original text. In the latter, he is part alive and part deceased; the objects of the room are part present and part absent. The tenses shift between present-day description and past-tense explanation of what was. This retrospective is enlivened by the room steward and the tour guide, as well as the kangaroo.

It is possible to take a performance perspective to the guidebook and visit to the Tribune. So too, the visitor's dramatic response to the installation in the room. Jack and Phipps (2003: 283) suggest that a guidebook has interactive qualities to it. It instructs the reader and so is *apodemic* and performative. This, they qualify as follows: "Apodemic literature is a didactic, instructional literature which exerts a significant performative role upon the reader." The term derives from 16–18th century instructional tour manuals, the precursor to the modern guidebook. It is more subjective and interpretative than the "non-personal media" suggested by Timothy and Boyd (2003: 220). Such a performance approach to tourism is reflexive and a modern-day paradox for Minca and Oakes (2006: 13) in that we seek difference to reconfirm a sense of order and place. Potentially, in these subject–object binaries of tourists visiting Strawberry Hill, as well as in volunteering and working back stage, there is an ontological certainty reified in the place: the eighteenth-century leisured class reinforced their position and status in society by visiting Walpole's retreat, and the modern-day visitor – largely retired – has their nostalgia for a more certain and stable past assuaged and their cultural capital maintained. To corrupt Lowenthal, it is the modern-day visitors' present that has become a foreign country.

Strawberry Hill House, like other stately homes (cf. Johnson 1999), has been "framed" in a specific past. Once this framing came through the objects viewed for their spatial quality, for where they came from. Now, in the absence of the objects, the temporal dimension is sold to the visitor through the tour. Each room allows one to travel in social history to the everyday life of the ruling class in the house in Georgian times. The interplay of object, guidebook narrative and audience is minimized in Strawberry Hill by the dearth of objects in favour of an interplay between text and the imagination – between the written and physical text and the reader and viewer's mind. The guidebook is very much the dynamic text mediating the place and the people from the past to the present. It is a performance still, nevertheless. Marion Harney, in *Place-Making for the Imagination*, her detailed study of Walpole and his Strawberry Hill House, suggests that the house has an "architecture of death" (Harney 2013: 163) about it in its associations with monastic and religious buildings that Walpole had visited. His Gothic pilgrimages were brought back home in the styles and objects that were integrated together in the structure of the house. The end result was "the first purpose-built antiquarian 'museum' interior, a sequence of theatrical spaces" (Harney 2013: 4). The sum of all these parts is an evocative, sensational structure that elicits an emotional reaction and associates where possible a medieval dynastic "origins". Asymmetry and irregularity are *de rigueur* as befits the man and his dwelling. Within the Tribune, Harney notes a mood-altering changeable light that plays with the visitor. This is "masquerade in stone" and glass to add to Emma McEvoy's (2016) examination of the house as an example of contemporary Gothic tourism. It is "an immersive art environment" (McEvoy 2016: 31) even without the Laura Ford exhibition. Each room is a walk-in painting, a scene or representation from other images for her or a site-specific performance space with each ticketholder an audience member to Walpole's dramas. This is "elaborate human theatre" (McEvoy 2016: 37) with élan.

## Conclusion

Walpole coined the term that describes the effect of a visit to his asymmetrical fantasy: “serendipity,” the glory of a chance meeting. Ford’s meetings have the quality that Freud called *unheimlich*, unfamiliar and indeterminately nightmarish. (Green 2015)

Visiting Strawberry Hill House has been shown to be an experience that provokes a reaction from the visitor from dramatic foot stomp to exclamation of desire to live in a house such as this. The range is extensive, from “serendipity” to “*unheimlich*” (Green 2015) with Ford’s exhibition. Laura Ford saw a marriage between her figurative work and the house exposing it. She creates larger-than-life figures and places them to get an emotional response from the viewer. This is not dissimilar from Walpole’s designs for the rooms in his house and the placing of his objects throughout. There was a fit in terms of the humour of the place and her sculptures. For the curator of the exhibition, Stephen Feeke, there was a “duality of elegance and the gothic” (Feeke 2015) in the location that gave it a site-specific edge. As he continues, “Strawberry Hill House is a wonderful empty shell with atmosphere to repopulate with Laura’s work. The challenge for people is to find those links” (Feeke 2015). The kangaroo sculpture had an apposite place in the Tribune Room. The room is empty but her pouch looks like she has stolen objects from the room. There is also a startled guilty look on her face, one that probably matches some of the looks on the visitors’ faces as they react to Walpole’s guilty pleasures.

Despite being relatively empty, the Tribune Room and others do provide enough texture, context and surround for the visitor to realize their imagination from the guidebook – what Peel and Sørensen (2016: 209) describe as a dynamic “condenser of information”. This is enhanced further with another level of interactivity by the room steward, or the tour guide, though neither were included in the digital images taken by the visitors as memories of the place and experience, collectables in their own rights. This article, though, shows first-hand how the guidebook

acts *in loco parentis* for the guide and as a prompt for the steward – in this case for myself and a man who was born nearly three hundred years before me. We both gaze and are gazed upon in this cycle of heritage manufacture. There might be no living characters embodying Walpole or re-enacting Georgian scenarios or episodes from Walpole’s life – and his letters do incentivize this approach – but instead, there is a dramatic backdrop for the imagination to fill in, a guided (almost) blank canvas for the visitor.

## Notes

- 1 The author is grateful for the support of staff, tour guides and students in writing this article, and for advice and corrections.
- 2 Addendum: since reviewing this article, to save money, Strawberry Hill House stopped including the guidebook in the tour at the start of the 2017 season. It is now for sale for £2 in the shop and a map of the tour is given to the tourists instead.

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# THE MECHANICS AND MECHANISMS OF TOURISM BROKERING

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Although most forms of tourism are, and have always been, highly mediated activities, surprisingly little scholarly attention has been given to the crucial role of human brokers in tourism (Salazar 2014). This neglect is partially the consequence of the dominant models that academics and tourism practitioners alike have relied upon to comprehend tourism. Anthropologists studying tourism have traditionally conceptualized their research as being about the encounter between “hosts” and “guests”. Although Valene Smith worked as a tour guide herself, only the third *Hosts and Guests* (the “revisited” version), published a quarter of a century after the original version (Smith 1977b), includes a chapter that deals explicitly with culture brokers. She defines them as “the mediator[s] between hosts and guests”, situated between “the demand and the supply sides of tourism” (Smith 2001: 276–277).

In the first version of *Hosts and Guests*, Smith had identified brokers such as “governments, carriers, and tour operators” (1977b: 13), but their pivotal role in tourism was only mentioned in passing. She drew on the anthropological concept of “marginal men” to refer to local guides who presented Eskimo culture to tourists (Smith 1977a) and noticed how “the culture brokers have converted the anthropologist’s ‘hidden corner’ of the world into a focal point for ethnic tourism” (Smith 1977b: 49). In that first volume, Dennison Nash (1977) wrote in very general terms about “cultural brokers” or “mediators” who tend to emerge to manage the relations between hosts and guests. The underlying idea here is one of

two discrete, bounded cultures, the group members of which often misunderstand each other during the tourism encounter.

Despite the early call by Philip McKean (1976), repeated a decade later by Malcolm Crick (1989), to pay detailed ethnographic attention to brokerage mechanisms in tourism, relatively few scholars focused on these aspects (exceptions include Adams 1984; Cohen 1982, 1985; Evans 1981). Erik Cohen (1985) developed an influential typology in which he traces the origins of tour guiding back to the two types the ancient Greeks distinguished: the pathfinder (“leading around”) and the mentor (“explaining”). The first “provides privileged access to an otherwise non-public territory”, while the second is concerned with “edifying his party as in social mediation and culture brokerage” (1985: 10). This second role is very evident in museum contexts, as we see in the articles by Irit Dekel and Jonathan Skinner. Social mediation involves “representation”, linking tourists to peoples and places, and making the host environment non-threatening for the tourist and vice versa. Cultural brokerage, on the other hand, involves “interpretation”: provoking thought and helping tourists connect with the peoples and places they are visiting. It is worth noting here that most of the more recent scholarship on guiding, including in this special issue, has abandoned this semantic distinction and uses the concepts of mediation and brokerage interchangeably (cf. Weiler & Black 2015).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides us with

various general descriptions of a “broker” (<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23644>, accessed April 1, 2018). Interestingly, tour guides fit many characteristics (although usually not all at once) (Salazar in press). The first dictionary meaning of broker is that of *a middle person, intermediary, or agent generally; an interpreter, messenger, commissioner*: Many scholars, including in this special issue, describe tour guides as people who facilitate, but also control, the contact between different groups of people (Salazar 2010). They see a tour guide as a person who is familiar with and knowledgeable on all aspects of the host culture and who has some understanding of the background of the guest(s). A second meaning is *one who acts as a middle person in bargains*: Tour guides often direct tourists to souvenir shops and typically receive a commission from the seller if something is bought. The contribution by Annelou Ypeij, Eva Kraah and Floor van der Hout illustrates this nicely. This economic aspect is important because many tour guides can only work seasonally, earning a highly unpredictable income.

Third, a broker is *a go-between or intermediary in love affairs*: Tour guides can and do help tourists with relationships, ranging from various types of friendship to commercial sex services, sometimes offering even themselves (and Valerio Simoni’s contribution to this special issue adds additional layers of complexity to this important but often undiscussed aspect of tourism brokerage). A fourth dictionary meaning is that of *a retailer of commodities*: Tour guides are those delivering the “products” being sold by travel agents or websites. One can think of tour packages or, more abstractly, the tourism imaginaries that nourish them (Salazar 2012). David Picard’s article on how guides on the island of La Réunion strategically position themselves between the imaginaries that separate as well as connect tourists and the destination is very illuminating in this regard. Finally, dictionaries also define a broker as *a retailer; contemptuously, peddler, petty dealer, monger*: This meaning resembles the previous one, but refers to the cases where tour guides do not act very professionally – behaviour that is often, but not exclusively, related to unlicensed guides (and Valerio

Simoni, once again, shows that the particularities of “guiding” in certain destinations may be far more complex).

The contributions to this special issue by Jackie Feldman, Amos Ron and Yotam Lurie show that tour guides are excellent subjects to study processes of cultural brokerage in general. With more people travelling wide and far, tour guides have taken over some of the culture brokering anthropologists did when much of their authority was derived from “having been there”. Whereas anthropologists are traditionally seen as “outsiders” trying to access and disclose the inner cultural workings of a society or group of people, “local” tour guides do the opposite. They use their perceived societal positions as (relative) “insiders” and “gatekeepers” of what is culturally intimate to establish contacts with interested cultural outsiders. It should not come as a surprise, then, that many anthropologists have relied on tour guides as fieldwork assistants (e.g. Hastrup 2014; Salazar 2010).

### **Tour Guiding Technicians**

This special issue focuses on the technologies and techniques of tour guiding, a topic that has been dealt with more in hands-on guiding manuals (e.g. Amato 2002) than it has been analysed critically by anthropologists. I have conceptualized tour guides as “mechanics” (Salazar 2010). Mechanic is to be understood here in the sense of a highly skilled technician, working to keep tourism operating properly. Tour guides maintain the tourism system as it is, assuring the continuity and perpetuation of the chain of tourism imaginaries that exist about the destinations visited by tourists (Salazar & Graburn 2014). Their role can be machine-like because, at times, the circulation of tourism imaginaries appears automatic or even involuntary (Salazar 2005). In other words, tour guides perform partially as actors of hegemonic forces well beyond their reach. In old English slang, the term mechanic refers to a person who cheats (at gambling games). Guides are also mechanics in this sense of the word: independent social actors and cultural producers capable of manipulating the narratives and experiences they are supposed

to deliver to suit their own agendas.

Guides are thus more than mere transmitters of tourism imaginaries. On tour, guides broker not only cultural differences but also the interests and imaginaries of a variety of stakeholders, and, like ethnographic fieldwork, guiding is always to some extent improvised, creative and spontaneous, defying complete standardization. While guides perform scripted roles, having a variety of “puppeteers” manipulating their moves (e.g. tour operators, authorities at various levels, and law enforcement), they are not like shadow puppets with little or no control over their own performances. Narrating and enacting tourism fantasies can be liberating because it offers a small window of opportunity to undermine the structures of tourism power while, at the same time, reifying them.

Tour guides play a Janus-faced role in more than one instance. From a service-oriented point of view, they should look simultaneously towards their clients and towards their own (or the represented) heritage and culture. Successful tour guides are “sophisticated culture brokers who often very thoughtfully put together cohesive commodified personas drawn from multiple cultural frameworks” (Bunten 2008: 382). Ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy characterize this liminal state, and sometimes their sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. This is even more so in cases where guides are marginally positioned in the society where they operate.

### **Broker Mechanics**

The various contributions to this special issue deepen our understanding of the toolbox that tour guides have at their disposal. The multiple tools on which they rely to do their job are eclectic, and their toolbox can sometimes be cluttered (Salazar 2010).

Based on ethnographic fieldwork on the island of La Réunion, David Picard looks at how guides mediate between various discrete imaginary and social spaces by transforming the banalities of local everyday life at the destination into deeply moving narratives. Going beyond the well-known fact that tour guides use their skillset to connect tourists with

places and peoples, Picard shows how they also connect the social worlds of local life with the imagined realities of global society.

Annelou Ypeij, Eva Krah and Floor van der Hout focus in their contribution on the tourism-related interactions between (urban) male tour guides and rural women at weaving workshops in the Machu Picchu region, Peru. These women are dependent on guides to bring tourists to their workshop, while the guides are dependent on the received commissions that accompany these visits. The authors make us aware of the fact that not only tour guides have a toolbox of techniques at their disposal. Because of gender and ethnic inequalities, the weaving women have developed strategies to maintain more equal relationships with the guides, based on mutual interests, trust and reciprocity.

Jackie Feldman argues for more in-depth studies of the ways in which power structures affect the off-stage identities of tour guides. Jewish-Israeli immigrant tour guides (including Feldman himself) use their performances of the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims as an expression of their own sense of belonging to place and history. This raises interesting questions about how “localness” is negotiated in tourism encounters. Feldman’s suggestion that the identity tour guides enact may also be who they become is not that far-fetched.

In a topically related paper, Amos Ron and Yotam Lurie discuss how Jewish-Israeli tour guides specialize in guiding Christian pilgrims draw on strategies of imitation, distinction and fabrication to achieve what they term “intimate mediation”. Through these cultural mediation techniques guides can let tourists see the same physical sites as something different and let them experience the sites in a distinct manner.

Irit Dekel discusses the special mediating role of predominantly freelance tour guides in four home museums in Germany. In these “homely” contexts, the guides draw the visitors in (making them feel at home) as well as keeping them at a distance. The latter is achieved through techniques of hierarchical differentiation and temporal displacement. Importantly, the position(al)ity of the guides, and the roles

they take, change between groups and is different in the four museums.

Jonathan Skinner shares his personal experience as a docent at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham, England. Docents (or room stewards) are a particular type of guide in that they are learned persons trained in identifying the types and needs of the visitors. No historical roles are re-enacted here. Actually, the opposite happens. Relatively empty spaces such as the Tribune room leave plenty of room for tourism imaginaries to fill in, a process guided by docents and guidebooks alike.

Finally, the informal guiding activities Valerio Simoni studies in Cuba, a highly regulated tourism environment, make him problematize the identification of who counts as a tour guide and what counts as "mediation". This attempt of classification becomes an ethical, political and epistemologically fraught act when it confronts the resistance of people under study who wish to avoid univocal identifications as "guides" and "mediators".

### **The Future of Tour Guiding**

An old-fashioned term for tour guide is "mercure", referring to the Roman god Mercury. In Roman mythology, Mercury was the messenger of the gods (Hermes is the analogous Greek deity). His role as a guide consisted of leading departed souls on their journey to the afterlife. Always on the road, wearing winged sandals and a winged hat, Mercury was known for his eloquence, ingenuity and aptitude for commerce. A perfect patron for tour guides, so it seems. Unlike the Roman god Mercury, however, guides are expected to be the messengers of worldly ideologies and imaginaries. Rather than resembling the Roman god Mercury, many tour guides must survive in working environments that are decidedly "mercurial" –unstable, liable to sudden and unpredictable changes.

The context in which tour guides are operating has dramatically changed (Salazar in press). Guiding in tourism settings now increasingly happens in conjunction with, or solely by non-human agents. Maps, travel guides, interpretative signs, and information boards have existed for a long time. However, the ex-

plosive growth of new information and communication technologies, Geographic Information Systems and Global Positioning Systems has led to a revolution in the touring landscape, which has evolved from loanable audio guides and digital display guides to applications and content (e.g. podcasts) that can be downloaded at any time, in different languages, and often free-of-charge, to one's own mobile device (cell phone, PDA, tablet, MP3-player, etc.).

One consequence of these developments is the perception that information and communication technologies can, in some cases, substitute for what human tour guides previously provided, notably the one-way delivery of directional and services information, commentary, site interpretation and language translation. However, the tour guide profession itself has been undergoing an entire transformation, through which guides have gradually lost some important mediating roles. The widespread availability of guidebooks already "mediated" access, but new GPS-based apps make this even much easier than before. Not only do tourists draw on electronic sources to obtain information about the places and peoples visited, they also use these to double-check what tour guides tell them (in case they still rely on such services). However, the biggest threat to "traditional" tour guide practices does not seem to come from technological developments, at least not directly.

The main competitors to (professional) tour guides are not machines but people, partially outside the traditional tourism sectors, who offer guide-like services (Salazar, Bryon & Van Den Branden 2009). This can take different forms, and many of these are linked to internet-mediated hospitality movements. In the same way that hospitality historically led to tourism, internet-based hospitality networks such as Couchsurfing have inspired for-profit initiatives such as Airbnb (AirBed & Breakfast). In terms of guided tours, the internet offers an incredibly wide range of possibilities. Most internet-mediated guiding initiatives are oriented towards the international market and thrive on the stereotypical distinction between (mass) tourist and (individual or small-group) traveller. The stress is on highly personal-

ized and tailor-made tours and narratives in which the interaction with locals and the gaining of novel experiences are dominant. The growing popularity of internet-based hospitality networks are widening and broadening the field of hospitality actors. They both challenge and contribute to a redefinition of professional tour guiding.

### No “Tourism Machine” without Mechanics

The broker, a once classic figure in anthropology, is back in view. Already in the 1950s, Eric Wolf remarked that “the study of these ‘brokers’ will prove increasingly rewarding, as anthropologists shift their attention from the internal organization of communities to the manner of their integration into larger systems” (Wolf 1956: 1075). Human tour guiding is a brokering service that adds to the tourist experience in ways the latest information and communication technologies can impossibly match (yet). The most obvious aspects are that human tour guiding can be interactive with both tourists and others, and that the tourism experience can be flexibly changed and even customized to individual needs and expectations (Salazar in press). Tour guides are instrumental in tourism because they provide the system (“the tourism machine”) with not only a local(ized) but also a human face – giving them an advantage over developing technologies tools such as virtual, audio or mobile guides.

Aside from assuring they have sufficient tools in their guiding toolbox, guides need to understand the currency of their services in a global market that is highly unstable and influenced by continuous changes in tourist preferences. This requires them to endlessly vary, reinvent and customize their services. Moreover, the various contributions to this special issue nicely illustrate the minefield of power relations through which tour guides skilfully must navigate. In this context, mastering fashionable tourism discourses (e.g., the vocabulary of nostalgia and ecotourism) is an asset. In other words, guides need to learn how to tell seducing tourism tales (Salazar 2013). They are *mechanics* because they must be well skilled, and they must labour hard to mirror fashionable tourism imaginaries, selling and tell-

ing a message that is not always their own, providing stories and experiences that keep the well-oiled tourism machine going.

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## CONCLUSION: AN EMERGENT PERFORMANCE PARADIGM IN GUIDING STUDIES

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In an age of medialization of tourist guiding, in which some declare that “the robot will replace the current human guide” (Al-Wazzan et al. 2016), it is refreshing to come across a collection of papers in which the impending high-tech medialization of tourist guiding is not even mentioned. While much of the contemporary literature deals with the various electronic substitutes for human guides, the authors of the different case studies in this issue do not even raise the exigency that the guides they studied might be relieved by intelligent machines. In fact, none of the papers relate to the impact on guiding of the process of medialization, which is currently playing havoc with established forms of tourism (e.g. Cohen 2017). I suggest, however, that this disregard is not so much an oversight or a consequence of wishful thinking, but is rather due to the particular perspective on guiding taken by most of the authors of this collection.

In approaching such a rich and interesting collection of papers, two principal questions come to mind: on the one hand, what are their commonalities, or what endows the collection with an identity of its own; and on the other hand, what innovative message does it bring to the community of researchers and students? In these concluding comments, I shall briefly relate to those questions.

Most, though not all, of the contributions share similarities in the kind of guiding context they are investigating, in their methodologies, and in their choice of empirical topics and theoretical approaches. Rather than examining the guide’s role as a “pathfinder” (Cohen 1985) in leading tourists

through uncharted territory, or on special-interest excursions, the authors focus primarily on routine, frequently repeated tours, in a variety of relatively well-established destinations or attractions of contemporary mainstream tourism (with the exception of Simoni’s article).

The authors use qualitative, basically anthropological observation methods; in the instances in which authors had themselves been guides (e.g. Feldman, Skinner and Ron), these are interspersed with auto-ethnography. The choice of mainstream group tourism leads the authors to focus on the role of the guide as cultural mediator in the “contact zone” between the world of the tourists and of the (alleged or apparent) native people and cultures (Feldman, Ron and Lurie, Picard), or between the present and the people or lifeways of the past (Dekel, Skinner). Importantly, the authors study guides who are citizens of the destination countries, and often members of the visited ethnicities, rather than guides from the tourists’ country of origin, who might play a very different role in guiding their groups, as Feldman notices.

These commonalities have influenced the choice of the theoretical orientation shared by most articles in this collection (with the exception of Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout’s article): they focus explicitly or implicitly on the guide’s artful “performance” (especially Feldman, Picard, Dekel, Skinner), in the sense of a conscious display of identity, appearance and actions before an audience, as in Goffman’s dramaturgic approach (in contrast to “performance” as a competent or satisfactory execution of the guiding

role, as in Weiler & Black 2015: 92–96).

In terms of Goffman's dramaturgic model, the guide can be seen as an actor on a stage, performing in front of an audience of tourists or visitors. The audience consequently appreciates or judges the guide's performance in terms of its persuasiveness, rather than its veracity. Hence, the success of the guide's performance will depend on the extent to which he or she is able to create a rapport with the audience and make his or her story credible.

Though the contributors to this collection are not the first who approached guiding from the performance perspective (see e.g. Henning 2008; Hansen & Mossberg 2017), the authors offer the fullest and most many-sided treatment of performance in guiding I am aware of. They thereby initiate or promote a "paradigm shift" away from Cohen's (1985) early model of the role of the tourist guide, and announce an innovative "performative turn" in guiding studies: they conceive the guide as a performer, whose human rapport with the audience plays a crucial role in the success of the guided tour. It is the embodied character of the guide's performance which makes the significant difference from mere dissemination of information, and even of interpretation, on which recent studies of the mediating role of the guide tended to focus (e.g. Reisinger & Steiner 2006; Weiler & Black 2015: 45–70), and it is the anthropological methodology deployed by the authors which enabled them to bring this difference out. It should be noted that this performative aspect of the guide's role is not directly threatened by the medialization of guiding: though the provision of information and interpretation by electronic devices could be personalized (e.g. Kenteris, Gavalas & Economou 2009; Lee 2017; Smirnov, Kashevnik, Balandin & Laizane 2013), such substitutes cannot fully replace the fleeting human bond between the guide and his or her audience created by a successful guide/performer. The incisive use of the performative approach to guiding is, to my mind, the principal innovative contribution of this collection.

In the role of the professional guides on routine guiding tours of historical or cultural sites, discussed in most articles in this collection, perfor-

mance is central. Their routes are conventional, and hence they do not have to engage in "pathfinding" (except in the case of excursions in the Peruvian Andes, discussed in Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout's article), and the visited sites are sometimes of little intrinsic interest, if not brought to life by the guide's performance. Thus Jonathan Skinner describes the guides in Strawberry Hill House, an ostensibly empty historical house, using virtually empty rooms as a template to take their audience to an imagined past (the 1750s), when those rooms had been full of valuable objects. The guide's performance is here crucial in inspiring life into object-less rooms, by telling the story of the construction of the House and the fashioning of the rooms; a successful performance thus creates an imaginary bond between the visitors and a "hyperreal" past, recreated by the guide.

While the bulk of the papers deal with the normative performance of officially licensed or otherwise recognized tourist guides, Simoni's paper shows how the credible performances of unofficial street-guides, the Cuban *jinteros*, serve to mis-guide clueless tourists, for their gain, while Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout are primarily concerned with how excursion guides in Peru stealthily deploy the power of their role to take advantage of the local vendors of tourist wares, rather than with their own performance in guiding tourists.

"Performance" is a broad concept, comprising several distinct components, which are brought up in the articles in this collection; these can be divided into three groups:

1. The guide's presentation of self, expressed primarily in his or her self-representation, projected identity (mostly as a member of the visited society) and attire.
2. The guide's conduct, expressed primarily in his or her bodily postures and rhetoric.
3. The props, primarily the choice of the site for addressing the audience, and the display and use of various auxiliary objects to support a presentation or to involve the audience.

For example, the article on Israeli Jewish guides, guiding Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, differs

in the description of the guides' performances. Feldman combines elements from all three categories (identity, choice of site, attire, and auxiliary props, such as bread, wine and salt), thus intentionally bringing his performative style closest to a theatrical performance; while Ron and Lurie refer primarily to the various mediating rhetorical techniques, by which the guides carefully maneuver between sharing the pilgrims' feelings of exhilaration and safeguarding of their own separate Jewish identity. In the home museums studied by Dekel, the guides' performance consists primarily in taking up the bodily postures and imitating the voices of the historical personages who have lived in those homes in the past, while the guides in the Strawberry Hill House (Skinner) and those on La Réunion (Picard) use both attire and rhetoric in their performances. The informal guides in Cuba use their identity and rhetoric devices to convince tourists of their credibility. The diverse configurations of these components might help to distinguish analytically between diverse guiding performance styles.

Guiding performances are rarely neutral; inherent in most of them are particular messages. However, in contrast to some recent studies (Brin & Noy 2010; Dahles 2002; Obrador & Carter 2010) highlighting the political message inherent in guiding presentations, the intended messages of the guides' performances are little discussed in this collection. It is also difficult to gauge the relative effectiveness of the various performative styles deployed by the guides, since the articles say little about the audiences' reactions to the guide's performances. Here some of the drawbacks of the anthropological approach to guiding can be noticed: the absence of quantitative instruments to gauge the reactions and opinions of the audiences regarding the guides' performances.

Related to the performance approach to the guide's role, are some specific themes to which the articles in this collection make an innovative contribution: the temporal dimension in site presentation and the impact of guiding on the guide's personal identity. I will briefly discuss these two themes.

*The temporal dimension of site presentation.* Guides frequently invoke the past when they explain the

present state of a site. This is obviously the case in heritage tourism, where remnants of the past are interpreted to imaginatively recreate a historical time, often with an implicit religious or political message. But the phenomenological modalities of the effort to connect the past to the present have been less thoroughly examined in the guiding literature. Dekel's paper offers an excellent example of the manner in which the guides construct the temporal distance between the present time and the time in which the protagonists, to whom the home museums are devoted, lived: they use rhetoric devices to condense or to expand the temporal distance (in terms of high vs. low temporal displacement) between "now" and "then", irrespective of the physical temporal distance between those points.

Some authors show how guides construct the past–present connection in other ways: Picard dwells upon the rhetorical devices by which the guide constructs his role as a messenger between "a lost... magical world of the past... and [the] contemporary world," while some other articles, such as Feldman's and Skinner's, similarly dwell upon the temporal dimension in the guides' presentations of the visited sites, by endowing them with a mythological, historical or cultural depth, and bringing them imaginatively to a life, that they might lack in the actual present.

*Person-role relationship.* There is a rich literature on the "emotional labor" involved in guiding, framed in terms of the person-role distance or gap (Hillman 2006; Mackenzie & Kerr 2013; Sharpe 2005), which is also common in some other service occupations. The person-role gap is implicit in Feldman's characterization of the guide as a "commodified persona" (a term taken from Bunten 2008). This gap is particularly pronounced, and difficult to handle, in the rather unique situation of Jewish guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, discussed by Ron and Lurie and Feldman. Ron and Lurie make an important innovation by raising the epistemological and ethical issues involved in breaching the gap in terms of Wittgenstein's concept of "language games".

Feldman brings up an interesting innovative per-

spective on the person-role relationship in guiding: the guiding role as shaping the guide's personality – in his case, becoming an Israeli native through guiding Christian pilgrims. This turn of perspective might well have been facilitated by the fact that the author had himself worked as a guide prior to turning to the study of guiding, indicating the importance of an auto-ethnographic perspective for gaining insight into the complexities of the person-role relationship in guiding.

The examination of the complexities of cultural mediation by tourist guides was the editors' principal aim in preparing this special issue. The articles demonstrate the different ways and means by which the guides' performances seek to make their presentations and explanations credible. But this raises some broader questions regarding the role of guides in the touristic process: are they merely serving as confirmers of the (historical or cultural) "authenticity" of the visited sites, or do they play a more active or creative role, namely, as authenticators of sites, customs or beliefs? In other words, how do the guides participate in the ongoing process of authentication of sites, customs or events? Interestingly, it could be argued that the common view of the guide as dispensing information and interpretation can be seen as an instance of the mode of "cool" authentication (Cohen & Cohen 2012) of well-established sites, customs or events, while the performance approach to guiding might reveal the guides' "performativity" in the process of creation of new "authentic" sites, customs or events, by the deployment of rhetoric devices, which "hotly" authenticate (ibid.) them.

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