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**Book review: CHAIM NOY, A Narrative Community: Voices of Israeli Backpackers. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2007**

Gabriel Cavaglion

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CHAIM NOY, *A Narrative Community: Voices of Israeli Backpackers*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2007.

Israel, the Holy Land, a center of spiritual pilgrimage since biblical times, is today witnessing a remarkable reverse phenomenon where Israelis make their own pilgrimages abroad. The number of departures each year is more than three and a half million, which amounts to more than half of the total population of Israel. Even more peculiar, in this context, is the phenomenon of Israeli backpackers. Rough estimates made by tourist operators one decade ago suggested that approximately 50,000 backpackers travel every year to Asia. According to other scholars, if backpackers to Africa and South America are included, the approximate number of total Israeli backpackers climbs to 75,000 every year (Mevorach, 1997). These figures have steadily increased over the last 10 years. Shortly after completing their mandatory military service, young Israelis set off on extensive backpacking trips to 'exotic' and 'authentic' destinations in so-called Third World regions.

*A Narrative Community* is a gathering of the words and stories of Israeli backpackers that delves into a lively interplay of quotations, constructed dialogues, and social voices to examine the crucial role they play in forming a 'voiced community'. The methods, which include qualitative sampling and interviewing, clearly demonstrate modes of negotiating, manifesting and embodying speech.

*A Narrative Community* illustrates how, framed against the peaks of Mt Everest, the travelers' storytelling becomes an inherently social performance of power relations, shared experiences, values and aesthetics. The book takes the form of a narrative analysis of Israeli trekking stories and deals with the issue of backpacking from a highly novel angle. As other scholars have done (Mevorach, 1997; Simhay, 2000) it focuses on the sociological and cultural implications of this particular form of tourism. Then, based on 45 in-depth narrative interviews, the work examines how identities and a sense of belonging emerge on different social levels – the individual, the group, and the collective – through voices that evoke both the familiar and the Other. Among other things, it stresses that youthful Israeli backpacking is in many ways emblematic of a socially constructed rite of passage, a soft continuation of military service that include precise planning of routes, walking in small cohesive groups, and repeated tests of abilities to withstand hardship, adventure, and to take risks. But backpacking also has many of the characteristics of a 'ludic reaction to a demanding and "serious" military service' (p. 6).

Noy's idiosyncratic qualitative methodology is both innovative and refreshing. It includes his own 'inner trip' in addition to stories of veterans of the 'Great Journey'. His book can thus be seen as ritual access to 'subject matter over which the speaker has command' (Goffman, 1981: 187). The narrators first draw the audience into the adventurous and exciting universe of their tales, and then begin the audience's travel narrative by establishing a symbolic-ritualistic interaction.

The transformation involves not only the trip but also the interview. Noy, as an academic traveler, captures emotional expressions, subtle nuances beyond words, utterances, and expresses their impact not only via his own interpretations as a scholar but also through his inner feelings as a 'participant observer'. He opens by saying: 'I still consider myself a narrativist in the romantic sense: one who is truly fascinated with how people conjure up and create realms of being through storytelling' (p. vii). Like an anthropologist who penetrates and investigates secret religious cults, he is successfully attuned to the 'unique vernacular and forms of expression' and feelings generated by the narrative performances of backpacking groups.

He presents his book as the product of an academic journey, a discursive voyage, or in his words a 'travelogue of fascination with the language of immersion into profound scenarios' (p. ix). The book shows how backpacking leads to 'narrative capital and to the assumption of a new identity and a new sense of communal belonging' (p. 195).

The opening section of the volume provides a socio-cultural account of the emergence of widespread backpacking tourism and explores the persuasive nature of the genre that underlies the ideological aspects of backpackers' narrative performances. The central chapters are devoted to quotations and social voices. They include a socio-linguistic introduction to quotation in narrative, an exploration of social space through quotations of choral voices versus individual voices, and an examination of the voices of 'Others': natives, other tourists, the uninitiated, or those who do not belong to the community because they did not undertake the Journey. In this original section he analyzes instances in which quotations designate those who are positioned outside the backpackers' community by creating a unique collective voice of the sect of 'veterans'. Noy concludes by discussing 'the consequence of this state of heightened polyphony: the communal sonority that is composed of the overall sounds of communal voices and the relation of this sonority to space and collective identity' (p. ix). The final section suggests that the narrators frame and live their travel experiences in terms of identity and self-change.

As the backpackers share their experiences with the author – somewhat like very colorful postcards that juxtapose images and forms of persuasive narration – Noy interweaves his own academic trip, extending it beyond a well-told story to reach profound and multi-dimensional conclusions. It is no accident that his introduction is subtitled 'itinerary' and the chapters are presented as 'sites': we, as readers, are also invited to join his trip, and experience many landscapes and a special musicality. Backpackers' testimonials, as sounds and voices, are typeset to capture discourse. Breaths and pauses are noted, and are formatted on the printed page as a separation between lines. Back-channel cues are parenthesized, aligned to the right on the same line as the utterances to which they refer. These devices indicate in fact how highly complex these stylized occasions of storytelling are and how much of the condensed messages and meanings they create are transmitted unconsciously by the participants (p. 23). The musicality of the text is suggested to the readers through terms such as 'polyphony', 'intermezzo', 'chorus' and 'crescendo'.

In addition to this style that sometimes extends to poetic features, Noy is a well equipped theoretical backpacker, who adheres to a clear academic methodology and bases his accounts on many scientific and theoretical sources. His bibliographical grounding is outstanding. Therefore, as a reader who has been guided by an expert I can identify with the following backpacker's narration (p. 84):

It was our luck that we had a pretty ah  
 A pretty responsible porter—  
 a guide  
 he told us  
 'guys (*hevre*)  
 I will walk ahead of you  
 I'll take your backpack  
 I'll take your equipment  
 and I'll leave a  
 couple of hours ahead of you [in order] to reach the cabin'  
 it somehow shows you the courtesy of the peo—  
 his responsibility  
 his concern  
 now  
 now we really knew what it means.

*A Narrative Community* makes a significant contribution to modern tourism literature by exploring the sociolinguistic dimension of tourists' accounts and the transformation of self that occurs with the experience of travel. Because of its unique interdisciplinary nature, it will be of interest not only to tourism and folklore scholars, but also to those interested in sociolinguistics and social discourse performances.

#### REFERENCES

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 Simhay, D. (2000) *This Path Starts from Here*. Tel Aviv: Prague [in Hebrew].

**Gabriel Cavaglion**  
 Ashkelon Academic College, Israel

CHRIS BRAECKE, GEERT JACOBS, KATJA PELSMAEKERS and TOM VAN HOUT, *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics: Special Issue on Discourse in Organizations*. Lodz: Lodz University Press, 2006, 219 pp.

The special issue on Discourse in Organizations of the *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* is a collection that is diverse, not only in the selection of the organizational genres