Article

The said and the unsaid: Performative guiding in a Jerusalem neighbourhood

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Abstract

This paper describes a guided walking tour of a formerly Palestinian neighbourhood in Jerusalem and an important battlefield in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. The paper assumes a critical performance approach to guided tours in examining how through performative guiding, identities, histories and places are (re)constituted. We conceive of performative guiding as a situated event which both takes place in and simultaneously signifies and reconstructs the environment wherein it transpires. The tour we analyse was given by a Jewish-Israeli guide to a Jewish-Israeli audience, and was attended by the first author. The guide's apparent inclination towards the Israeli and Zionist narrative regarding the story of the neighbourhood is highlighted through an analysis of the commentary given. Through an examination of things said and unsaid, we highlight the dual role of performative guiding: relaying historical information and reaffirming partisan narratives.

Keywords

Jerusalem; language; performance; Qatamon; tour guide; 1948 War

Critical performance approaches to tourism suggest that actors in the industry act as agents which, covertly – under the umbrella of recreational and leisurely tourist practices – negotiate ideologically charged issues. Tending to activities, institutions and discourses that involve tourists through the lens of performance approaches may suggest that the public, embodied and aesthetic nature of these activities is part and parcel of how places and collective identities are established (Adler, 1989; Coleman and Crang, 2002; Edensor, 1998; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Noy, 2008).

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With specific regards to guiding, it has been acknowledged that tour guides play varied roles in tourism (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Katz, 1985). One of these roles concerns the guide's authoritative and knowledgeable position vis-a-vis his audience. This authority and knowledge may be used in a selective manner. As Katz (1985:15) observes, 'information and interpretations are selected [by the tour guide] primarily in order to arouse feelings of belonging to the place and to evoke collective experience of identification with symbolic heroes, groups and localities'. Guides interpret scenes and their meanings based on their own identity, which in turn solidifies and strengthens their collective's narrative. Most of them are not there to challenge orthodox meanings, either because they fully identify with them or because of fear that they may be being perceived as subversive, thus alienating their listeners.

While earlier works have established the sociological characteristics of the tour guide's role(s) and her or his authority, a recent wave of studies has been inspired by the performative shift in tourist studies. These works address not only the tour guide but also the guided tour as a whole, primarily in terms of public performance (for another approach see Zhang and Chow, 2004). We use the term performative guiding hereafter to denote a situated practice by which a guide walks a group through a specific location (a symbolic site, a nature reserve or an urban neighbourhood, for instance). The tour is a mobile event that takes place along a physical route. Words, narratives and bodily gestures serve to signify the spaces within which the tour takes place.

The guided tour emerges as an ideologically charged social event, where the authority of the guide (when played out competently) can potentially (re)shape the identities, places and histories that are implicated in and by the tour. A number of critical studies have taken up the performance approach to guiding, addressing specifically guided tours that are conducted in uneasy and politically contested contexts (Bowman, 1992, 1996; Brin, 2006; Clarke, 2000; Cohen-Hattab, 2004; Feldman, 2008; Noy, 2011).

Some of the above works studied the specific context in which we situate our research, namely the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Feldman (2008), for instance, has recently showed how through the performative cooperation between Jewish Israeli tour guides and Protestant pastors during tours in the Old City of Jerusalem, Zionist and Protestant renderings of politically contested spaces are established. Consequently, spaces and places are reconstructed as the Bible Land, the Palestinian Arabs are marginalized, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is avoided altogether. In another recent study of Jewish tourists in East Jerusalem, Noy (2011) examines tour guides' contesting narratives in the symbolic site of Silwan/City of David, describing the contrasting performances that are performed by ideologically opposing tourist operators: right-wing Jewish settlers versus left-wing activists. Through promoting ethno-national ideology, Jewish settlers' tours serve to both affect Zionist Jewish attitudes towards Jerusalem and, more concretely, to transform the spaces within which they are conducted, shifting these spaces' designation from local Palestinian neighbourhoods into formal tourist sites operated by State tourism authorities and their agents. These and other works highlight the notion that Israeli tour guides stand out among other nationals in the sense that they are expected to satisfy a high public demand for a feeling of belonging (Cohen et al., 2002; Katz, 1985).

While the bulk of research cited above has focused on current flashpoints and arenas of tension and conflict, such as the highly controversial Separation Barrier and the West

Bank town of Hebron, little scholarly attention has been paid to sites where the clash between Jews and Palestinians has already been relegated to recent history. Modern-day Israel includes a wide range of such places, former Palestinian towns, neighbourhoods and villages. Immediately before, during and after the 1948 war and the concurrent establishment of the State of Israel, these areas were depopulated of their original Palestinian inhabitants (sometimes of their own accord and sometimes forcibly), and then razed to the ground or re-populated by Jews. Even if these places are remembered by Palestinians and are a focus of longing, more often than not their transformation into Jewish locales is regarded as a fait accompli. In fact, it is precisely this that renders the analysis of non-flashpoints so interesting and revealing for us: it is in these sites that one would least expect to come across a lopsided narration.

In Jerusalem alone, many tours to non-flashpoint sites are conducted in formerly Palestinian neighbourhoods such as Baq'a, Ein-Kerem, Musrara and Talbieh. These tours usually cater to a Jewish-Israeli audience, and are conducted by Jewish-Israeli guides. Their appeal concerns the 'old world' charm of the built environment and the often green surrounding of the neighbourhoods. This paper follows a walking tour of Old Qatamon, a formerly Palestinian neighbourhood located in south-central Jerusalem. The neighbourhood was not only built and populated by Palestinians up to 1948, it was also the scene of landmark events pertaining to the 1948 Arab–Israeli war. The tour was attended by Jewish-Israeli participants (including the first author) and guided by a Jewish-Israeli guide. After describing the neighbourhood and the tour thereof, an analysis of the guide's performance is given. An examination is carried out into what narratives were presented and highlighted and what terms used when dealing with such sensitive and potentially politically charged issues as the events that took place in Old Qatamon in 1948. Through this, a general insight into the political performative nature of such tours is offered.

Old Qatamon: from its inception to the 1948 war

Today Old Qatamon is a much-coveted neighbourhood located south of the city centre and south-west of the Old City of Jerusalem. Most of what is now considered 'Old Qatamon' (a name meant to distinguish it from an adjacent cluster of post-1948 neighbourhoods known collectively as the 'Qatamons') was built in the years between 1917 and the 1948 Arab–Israeli war south-east of the 19th century Greek Orthodox monastery of St Simeon. When referring to the era leading up to, and including, the war of 1948, the neighbourhoods' original name of 'Qatamon' will be used.

A leafy, almost pastoral neighbourhood, it is still adorned with many of the original houses and trees which were built and planted by its original inhabitants. These middle- and upper-middle class Palestinians, mostly belonging to several Christian denominations, had relocated to Qatamon from the Old City, as well as from adjacent Palestinian, predominantly Christian, towns such as Ramallah and Bethlehem. A few other residents were Jewish, Greek or British. In an otherwise mostly rural Palestinian society, Qatamon stood out as one of the very few bastions of Western, upwardly mobile and, indeed, urbane Palestinian middle-class sophistication in the Jerusalem area. Its residents

exemplified Western taste in dress, music and pastimes; sent their children to the best of schools; were usually secular, multilingual and cosmopolitan. Memories of former residents evoke a sense of an urbane bourgeoisie and highly cultivated lifestyle.

Among the residents were: Khalil al-Sakakini, the renowned Arab-Palestinian linguist, teacher, writer and author; Sami Hadawi, statesman, historian and author; Fadwa Toukan, poet; Tawfiq Jawhariah, musician and painter; and others – lawyers and doctors, building contractors and businessmen (Kroyanker, 2002). A number of consulates were located in the neighbourhood, including those of Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Italy, Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Four small hotels operated, three of which were under Arab ownership and management, all catering to a cosmopolitan clientele (Kroyanker, 2002).

By the 1940s Qatamon had well over 100 buildings. Kroyanker (1985) and Davis (1999) both describe the characteristics and style of these houses: private homes in particular, but to some extent also the buildings of rented apartments, were an expression of the builder's material wealth and sophistication. Davis mentions a 'highly individualized architectural detail, creative stone cutting around doors and windows, stylized facades and elaborate stonework.' (Davis, 1999: 34) Many houses were surrounded by well-tended gardens. Indeed, the memoirs of another resident of Qatamon call it 'the flower garden of Jerusalem' (Toubbeh, 1998).

Despite also being home to a few Jewish, Armenian and Greek families, as well as to families of British officers and civilians who were part of the Mandate administration, and notwithstanding the European-cosmopolitan and Christian nature of the neighbourhood's social and cultural makeup, Qatamon retained a distinct Arab-Palestinian character. This spelt disaster in the wake of the 1948 war and the ensuing hostilities throughout Jerusalem. Palestinian paramilitaries used the neighbourhood as a base from which sporadic attacks were carried out against adjacent Jewish neighbourhoods. Arab forces, composed mainly of Iraqi soldiers, took up residence in and around the topographically – commanding St Simeon monastery – a key point in any unfolding eventuality.

Jewish leadership worried about the neighbourhood's strategic location within the city, which enabled it to be a potentially dangerous Arab stronghold wedged in between the Jewish concentrations of central and southern Jerusalem. Alarm at the possibility that Qatamon, populated and defended by Palestinian civilians and paramilitaries (as well as other Arab soldiers, mainly from Iraq and Jordan), would spell the loss of the city's southern Jewish neighbourhoods, led to successive attempts to depopulate the neighbourhood. Some of these attempts were highly controversial, such as the terror attack carried out against the Semiramis Hotel in early 1948, in which 26 were killed and dozens wounded.

The Arab civilians and paramilitaries set up a local guard and defensive force, purchased arms, set up checkpoints and helped residents to barricade their homes against potential Jewish attacks. But the Semiramis bombing, as well as the deadly outcome of the Jewish takeover of the adjacent Palestinian village of Deir Yassin in April 1948 led many to feel threatened and leave the neighbourhood in search of a safe haven. In preparation for the takeover by Jewish forces, the neighbourhood was subjected to weeks of artillery shelling (Krystall, 1999).

In late April, Jewish paramilitaries were able, after fierce fighting, to take over the St Simeon monastery. By early May 1948, once Arab forces retreated completely, the whole neighbourhood fell into Jewish hands. About 150 Arabs were killed in the fighting. According to one testimony, a Red Cross official later found a number of Arab bodies in a cave in the vicinity of the neighbourhood. A *Haganah* (the main Jewish paramilitary organization) officer on the scene refused to help in ensuring they receive a proper burial (Krystall, 1999). At least one historical source refers to incidents in which Jewish paramilitaries raped women and mutilated bodies (Davis, 1999).

The remaining Arab families fled Qatamon in early May, and massive looting of their homes was recorded. According to several witnesses quoted by Levy (1986) and Krystall (1999), the looting of Qatamon houses far exceeded that of other Arab neighbourhoods that fell into Jewish hands. It was carried out by civilians and soldiers in broad daylight, and according to at least one historian, top officers took part, even at the risk of jeopardizing the success of the battle over the city (Milstein, 2005).

Within a few months, families of Jewish refugees and immigrants took up residence in the houses left behind by the fleeing Palestinian families. Often hard-pressed for room and less-sensitive about Qatamon's architectural heritage, many of the new residents damaged the elegant houses with improvised additions and tended to neglect the once-blossoming gardens around them (Kroyanker, 2002). Fischbach (2003: 8) estimates that about 6000 Jews invaded, or were settled in, the deserted Arab houses of Qatamon. Of these, some 1200 were forced out of the Old City's Jewish Quarter, which had fallen into Jordanian hands in late May. According to Krystall, the new residents took quickly to their new spacious and comfortable homes and some refused to relocate later. Civil servants who were relocated in Jerusalem by the government often demanded to be given former Palestinian homes in Qatamon and some were granted this demand.

The transformation of Qatamon into a Jewish-Israeli neighbourhood was complete when small synagogues appeared on its streets and the small Catholic chapel was turned into a clinic. In another definitive step, symbolic and meaningful, the neighbourhood was given a Hebrew name, Gonen, which is seldom used outside of officialdom. Its streets were given Hebrew names as well.

During British Mandate times, only two streets in Qatamon even had a name: Qatamon Street and Jordan Street, also nicknamed Sansur Street after one of its wealthy residents (Kroyanker, 2002). Qatamon Street thus turned into Hizkiyahu Ha-Melech (King Hezekiah, a major Biblical figure), and Jordan Street became Tel-Hai (a landmark Zionist settlement and battleground in the north of Israel). In an almost extreme contrast to the neighbourhood's original Arab-Palestinian character, the names given to the other streets also pertained to Biblical figures, Jewish settlements and paramilitary units associated with the war of 1948 (The Siege, The Convoys, and so on). The nature of the naming and re-naming of Qatamon's streets stood in sharp contrast to pre-independence days, when British rulers, rendering street names, exercised utmost political caution. Understanding full well their ideologically charged power in a land to which two opposing national movements were striving to justify belligerent historic claims, the British decided not to name streets after Biblical figures or give names 'not calculated to be generally acceptable to all parties and communities' (Azaryahu and Kook, 2002: 205). This cautious,

non-partisan policy was especially maintained in mixed Jewish-Arab towns such as Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. The post-1948 naming and re-naming effort symbolized not only this policy's irrelevance in a district (indeed, almost an entire city) depopulated by Palestinians, but also a symbolic attempt to make this new reality cognitively concrete.

The Allure of Old Qatamon

Old Qatamon, as it is known today, holds a threefold appeal to tourists. These are its lush and leafy setting (in an otherwise mostly arid city), its charming architectural heritage and its pivotal role in the fighting over Jerusalem in the 1948 War. The latter primarily refers to the battle to control the St Simeon Monastery, strategically located on the edge of the neighbourhood, which exacted a heavy toll in fallen soldiers but which ultimately led to securing Jewish control over all of southern Jerusalem. This was one of the toughest battles fought in the city. It has gained a mythological status, and was thoroughly described in the 1972 epic novel *O Jerusalem* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. It was also the setting for the climatic (albeit imaginary) events in the 2006 best-selling Hebrew novel *A Pigeon and a Boy* by Israeli author Meir Shalev.

There has been a recent explosion of guided walking tours to Old Qatamon. These tours, given in Hebrew and English, have been offered by Israeli and Palestinian operators, and cater to a wide variety of participants, from high school pupils to university students, from new immigrants wishing for a better knowledge of Jerusalem, to keen hikers. An extensive, though not exhaustive, list of operators includes the Jerusalem Municipality, the Ben-Zvi Institute, the Bet Shmuel cultural centre, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (no less than eight different tours), 'Makom' and 'Tlalim' (tour operators working mainly with closed Israeli day-trippers), the Association of American and Canadian Immigrants in Israel, the 'New Spirit – Students for Jerusalem' group, the Jerusalem Mosaic Hiking Club and Al-Quds University. Private, licensed guides have been taking tourists to Old Qatamon as well, and a few books (mostly in Hebrew and English) have also been dedicating chapters with suggested walks through the neighbourhood. While different operators and authors most certainly focus on different themes and therefore provide various emphases and partake in the performative (re) construction of the neighbourhood (Bhattacharyya, 1997), it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse and evaluate each of the above tours.

Unlike many other places in Israel and the Occupied Territories, which are current flashpoints or at least prone to heated debate, Old Qatamon is almost a world unto itself. It is a quiet district, inhabited by middle-class Israelis, and certainly not one of the current hot-spots of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. There is little dispute regarding its history, including the events of the 1948 war. Rather, this paper explores the question of how 'problematic' historical elements (elements which might cause 'uneasiness' among Jewish-Israeli listeners) are relayed (how they affect the performance vis-a-vis the group) by a Jewish-Israeli guide. For instance, how much emphasis is placed on the neighbourhood's original national and ethnic makeup? Whatever became of the original inhabitants? What happened to their homes and material belongings?

The following anecdote may serve to highlight the sensitivity involved in guiding people through an area such as Old Qatamon. In one guided walking tour, given in early

2009 by the first author, some participants indicated that they were offended by use of the term 'Palestinians' when referring to the original inhabitants of Qatamon and some of the irregulars fighting against its transfer into Jewish hands in 1948. These participants insisted that the general term 'Arabs' be used instead, as there was no 'Palestinian people', allegedly, especially back then.

The 25 April 2009 tour

In April 2009 the first author joined a walking tour of Old Qatamon offered by the Jerusalem Municipality's Tourism Authority. This tour is one in a long list of walking tours offered to the public, free of charge, all led by Ministry of Tourism licensed guides. The description on the municipality's website was succinct: 'The story of a border neighbourhood in the War of Independence: a hostel with no beds, nocturnal invasions and one pretty monastery.' The tour, despite being one of the longest on offer, seemed especially appealing as about 100 tourists took part in the two parallel tours leaving City Hall towards the neighbourhood that Saturday morning. All participants were middle-aged Jewish-Israelis. The guide for the tour was a well-established licensed tour guide who specializes in walking tours in Jerusalem, a veteran paratrooper in the Israeli army, boasting an intimate knowledge of the country and especially of the city.

Walking towards the neighbourhood, the guide briefly addressed historical monuments and points of interest along the way (see Fig. 1 for indication of the route of the tour and selective points). Old Qatamon itself took up about two-thirds of the time devoted to the tour, as we made our way along the northern outskirts of the neighbourhood, from the Museum of Islamic Art to the St Simeon Monastery. Our guide, having to keep to a tight schedule, opted for the shortest route to the monastery, meaning that we hardly ventured into the inner streets of the neighbourhood, where the most spectacular houses still stand.

From the short description on the municipality's website, it was obvious that the tour would emphasize the capture of Qatamon by Jewish paramilitaries in the 1948 war. Still, the ignoring of the ethnic and social makeup of the neighbourhood was all too conspicuous. At the beginning of the tour, the guide briefly addressed the architectural styles in which most of the neighbourhood's buildings were built. But the unvoiced questions about who built them, who resided in them, and when, were left unanswered.

'Here is where Jewish paramilitaries of the *Palmach* [the elite combat troops of the *Haganah*] blew up a few houses, to signal to the people here that they better leave', the guide told us. Using a rather general and neutral term, he added that local 'lads' formed a protective force against the Jewish paramilitaries, which was organized and headed by 'Abu-Dayya, a goatherd' from the Hebron area who was earlier involved in a famous battle south of Jerusalem in which 35 Jewish paramilitaries were ambushed and killed. This near-exclusive orientation of the tour towards the fighting in the neighbourhood in April 1948 continued throughout; anecdotes pertaining to the cosmopolitan and sophisticated character of the neighbourhood as it used to be were conspicuously absent.

We came by the building that once served as the Park Lane Hotel. A noted historian of Jerusalem's architectural heritage recalls it (from personal memory) as an elegant and respectable establishment, with two African doormen wearing white gowns and red

turbans, lending the hotel a 'splendid colonial character' (Kroyanker, 2002: 233). Our guide ignored the building altogether. We then passed by the adjacent Theodori House, a 1930s apartment building designed by a noted architect for a Greek-Orthodox client. The house is a prime example of the so-called 'International Style' of architecture and a true embodiment of what Qatamon used to be and represent. Yet, it was reduced by the guide as the 'foremost *Haganah* post against the Arab gangs' during the war.

Walking towards our next stop, the first author asked the guide privately if he planned to tell us more about the people who built Qatamon and populated it up to the events of 1948. The guide's reply was that construction here began with the St Simeon Monastery and the former residence of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarch, details he had already mentioned to the group. He mentioned those who built Qatamon: 'They were Greek-Orthodox, some Catholics and Protestants, all of them Arabs. And there were some Jews, too.' He referred to the inhabitants as being middle- and upper-middle class, and threw in the names of some of the most noted families to have lived in the neighbourhood. These details were divulged in a private conversation and in response to a direct inquiry. Until the end of the tour, the other participants heard none of this, nor were any questions on this issue voiced. (We are aware that asking questions during the tour is itself research practice as well as participant performance.)

The group walked uphill to reach a small garden by a modern apartment block. This, the guide told us, was Shaheen Hill, on which Arab forces had their foremost posts until the *Haganah* blew up the original houses that were built here. Shortly preceding the capture of the St Simeon Monastery, this crucial development signalled the transfer of the neighbourhood into Jewish hands. As the guide mentioned, this was one of a few pivotal events that 'persuaded the inhabitants here to leave', alongside the Jewish attack on the Semiramis Hotel a few months earlier and the attack on the village of Deir Yassin earlier that month. Other landmark battles from the 1948 war were briefly mentioned in connection to the battle fought here.

At the same stop the guide told us more about the blowing up of the Semiramis Hotel in early January 1948. He outlined the events of that dramatic winter night: the arrival of the *Palmach* paramilitaries, the detonator that didn't work at first, then the blast and its tragic outcome. The guide added that a then-leading Zionist stateswoman, Golda Meyerson (years later to become Prime Minister Golda Meir), was appalled when learning of this operation. Not because of the carnage, but rather because the original plan was to target another hotel in the neighbourhood, where the Czech vice consul happened to be staying that night. If he were killed, a fateful arms deal with the *Haganah*, which he was there to discuss, would never have materialized. Meyerson was referred to by her given name, Golda, as she is popularly called among Israelis.

Widespread looting followed the massive flight of local residents, the guide said, insinuating but not articulating a sense of moral aversion. He did, however, mention that from a practical point of view the looting caused damage, as Jewish refugees from Jerusalem's Old City soon entered the deserted houses and found them completely bare. Even the doorframes were taken. Interestingly, the guide made a passing reference to the names of the streets we were passing on the tour, and how they were all connected to Jewish paramilitary units fighting in the 1948 war, even if not directly in the battle for Qatamon. This was so, he said, because of the crucial importance of what took place here

during that very war. But the issue of the original street names, why they were changed or then given such charged names was left alone.

The next and final stop was at the park surrounding the St Simeon Monastery. It included a detailed account of the battle of late April 1948, which highlighted the bravery and resilience of the outnumbered Jewish fighters, facing an almost certain death and having to make cruel decisions about killing their wounded comrades rather than allowing them to be captured by the Arabs. The guide referred to junior officers who fought in this battle and in the coming years became noted generals by using their popular nicknames ('Raphul' instead of Raphael Eitan, 'Dado' instead of David Elazar). Passing references to Masada and the Jewish Holocaust were made: two hallmarks of Jewish suffering and courage in the face of near annihilation. The guide repeatedly reminded us how this was the battle 'which determined the fate of Jerusalem'. He led the group to a monument on which the names of the fallen Jewish fighters are engraved and with this the tour was concluded.

Therein and thereof: Things said and unsaid while touring Old Qatamon

The performance of tours as public occasions is twofold. In a somewhat tautological manner, tours are conducted in particular sites and spaces ('therein'), which supply a stage for the tour. Yet at the same time, these tours also refer to and signify certain components in these sites and spaces ('thereof'). In other words, tours both assume the presence of the sites and partake in reconstructing them performatively.

Listening to the remarks and questions of participants of the Old Qatamon tour, it appears that only a few enjoyed an intimate knowledge of the neighbourhood's history, even those aspects which preceded the paramilitary operations of 1948. These aspects, pertaining to the original inhabitants and their social status (as reflected in their homes and lifestyles), were paid lip-service by the guide. He appeared well aware of them, and consciously decided not to share them with the group. Perhaps he was right in doing so, as no one in the group seemed interested and no questions were asked. In this respect there seemed to be a tacit agreement between the guide and the group that this tour should focus almost exclusively on the capture of the neighbourhood in the 1948 War. The rest became irrelevant. The short amount of time spent highlighting the non-combatant history of Old Qatamon recalls Adler's (1989) observations regarding time and itinerary as resources of performance.

A mention of the looting of the neighbourhood's houses remained almost the only reference to the civilian, non-combatant facet of Qatamon, next, perhaps, to the beauty of those houses. If neither had been mentioned, one might think that Qatamon was little more than a monastery surrounded by battleground. There was nothing that the guide said that could somehow echo the keen sense of pain and loss evoked by Palestinians in their writings about the expulsion from Qatamon or any other formerly Palestinian neighbourhood in the city (see, for example, Davis 1999: 65–66; Sakakini, 1990: 115–18; Toubbeh, 1998: 66). Only a couple of the Arab families and individuals who are relevant to the events of 1948 were mentioned by name; the rest, if mentioned at all, were little more than nameless extras.

While the guide's erroneous referral to the Arab soldiers fighting in the battle for St Simeon Monastery as Jordanians rather than Iraqis could be dismissed as a slip of the tongue, it is rather more important to note that the term 'Palestinian' was not mentioned even once. This 'belittlement' of the Palestinian narrative continued when a leading Palestinian paramilitary, Ibrahim Abu-Dayya, was referred to simply as a 'goatherd' (Abu-Dayya may indeed have been a simple goatherd, but he was also responsible for some of the Palestinian's most notable successes during the 1948 war).

On the other hand, the Jewish narrative was paramount and most of the narration revolved around the attempts to capture the neighbourhood and secure a Jewish contiguity throughout central and southern Jerusalem in the 1948 war. Junior officers and soldiers who later became celebrated generals were mentioned by their popular nicknames ('Raphul', 'Dado') rather than by their full names and army titles. This also applied to political figures ('Golda'). As a discursive means, this made it easier for the listeners to identify with them and gave the entire narration a sense of shared intimacy. The use of nicknames, especially for army generals, is commonplace in Israeli culture, and was established as part of the *Sabra* ethos. This ethos simultaneously cultivated an admiration of high army generals, while lending them an air of informal familiarity (Katriel, 1986).

The passing references to Masada and the Holocaust are especially telling. Few names evoke a stronger sense of collective pride and sorrow among Jews. Masada is an ancient Jewish stronghold in the desert south-east of Jerusalem, where Jewish rebels held out against Roman besiegers around the mid 1st century AD. According to contemporary historical sources, about a thousand rebels and their families committed mass suicide there, preferring death over capture by Roman troops. In the battle for the St Simeon Monastery in Qatamon, when withdrawal from the battlefield was considered in the face of increasing wounded and diminishing ammunition, Jewish officers gave the order for the wounded to blow up the monastery, with them inside, after those capable of walking left. This difficult decision was taken when there were not enough able fighters to carry away the wounded, and capture by Arab troops was unthinkable. Although ultimately this was not to be done, when recounting this fateful development, all our guide had to say was, 'a second Masada'. The heroic connotation was obvious.

The mention of the Holocaust was only implied, but was no less resonant. It was cited in reference to the same story regarding the near-lost battle for control of the monastery. Apparently, the medic who had to decide, under fire, who should attempt escape and who should be left behind to die, carried a tattooed number on his arm. He had survived Auschwitz and was now forced to carry out a '*selection*'. This everyday term carries a horrendous connotation among Jews, relating to the selection carried out upon their arrival at the death camps by the Nazis, as to who should die right away and who would be granted the right to live a while longer.

Our guide strongly hinted at an obvious comparison between the fateful battle for the monastery and the ultimate Jewish tragedy – that of the Nazi death camps of the Holocaust. This comparison, even if merely insinuated, renders the battle story an epic meaning. It also corresponds with numerous other occasions where the Holocaust is evoked in the political context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Zandberg, 2006; Zertal, 2005). Thus, while sidelining the Palestinian narrative (civilian and paramilitary), Jewish

paramilitaries who took part in the battle for Qatamon were put on the pedestal reserved for the rebels of Masada and the victims of the Nazi death camps.

Even more interesting was the use of the term 'gang members' when referring to Arab fighters, lending them a near criminal tone. Our guide was hardly alone in doing so: the term 'gangs' is common terminology in Israeli historiography when referring to Arab irregulars, since before and during the 1948 war (see, for example, Rubinstein, 1988 – with specific reference to Qatamon; Shimoni, 1947; Vilnay, 1993; Wallach, 1974; see also Segev, 1999). The term appears also in *Pathways in Jerusalem*, a popular Hebrew guidebook, widely used by tour guides and the general public, published by a leading institute, and sponsored by a leading bank. The same book refers to the Jews as 'fighters' (Wexler, 1996). Ironically, the same pejorative term was applied by the British Mandatory authorities to a radical Jewish splinter group, which in Israeli historiography is named *Lechi* (acronym of the Fighters of the Freedom of Israel). The British named this group the Stern Gang after its leader, Abraham Stern.

This derision of the Arab side of the story is hardly restricted to the context of the national conflict between the Jews and Palestinians. Generally, the Jewish-Israeli narrative tends to belittle Palestinian history and culture and give it one-dimensional labels. Johnson (2008), for example, shows how the recommendations of a leading Israeli publication for foreign tourists in Jerusalem can render shallow any Palestinian aspect of the city. The troubled political situation and its origins are hardly mentioned, though they are crucial to any real understanding of the city, and tips for the Palestinian parts of town are reduced to superficial stereotypes: haggling in the Old City bazaar and where to find the best cheap humus eateries.

Conclusion

In this paper we employed critical performance approaches as we examined a guided tour taking place in Jerusalem. We highlighted performative guiding as touristic events that both take place in, and simultaneously construct, the space(s) wherein they transpire. This critical approach uncovers the covertly ideological nature of tour guiding as well as the contested and negotiated nature of places and sites (Coleman and Crang, 2002). Performative guiding in the neighbourhood of Qatamon reconstructs its meanings, and through alluding to historical events reaffirms collective identities (Katriel, 1997; Macdonald, 2008).

Highlighting the performative nature of the tour at hand was done through an analysis of the commentary given (and, indeed, that which was unspoken) throughout the tour. By examining what was relayed and avoided by the guide, and by looking into the language being used, an attempt was made to reveal the strong influence exerted on the guide by his or her belonging to a national reference group. It is our assertion, with regard to this and similar tours, that this sense of belonging shapes the nature of the words, and is especially apparent with regard to sites and events which hold special place in the reference group's collective memory.

In this paper we have not contrasted tours provided by, and offered to, people of different national affiliations (Clarke, 2000; Noy, 2011), nor did we focus upon a tour of any

current flashpoint. Rather, tending in detail to a Jewish-led tour of a Jewish group supplied sufficient evidence that one does not have to go to current, extreme flashpoints to witness ideologically charged performances. These exist also in tranquil and quiet districts where the tensions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict are mere echoes.

As far as Old Qatamon is concerned, there are no real conflicting narratives: the neighbourhood was established and populated mainly by Palestinian Arabs belonging to middle- and upper-middle class families and, often, to Jerusalem's sophisticated, non-Jewish elite. Many of its houses are prime examples of the International Style and Eclectic-Monumental architecture. During the first 5 months of 1948 these houses were gradually deserted following a growing fear among its residents – fears that were fuelled by Jewish paramilitary operations in the neighbourhood and other places. In early May, Jewish forces managed to take control of the entire neighbourhood after putting up a fierce fight for the St Simeon Monastery. The neighbourhood's homes were systematically ransacked.

No one disputes these historical facts, and every tour guide is well aware of them. It is precisely for this reason that the performative (re)constitution of the neighbourhood and its history shifts from the presentation of opposing narratives (as is the case with flashpoint sites), to the work of omissions and selective references. In guiding a locale such as Old Qatamon, the guide avoids ideologically charged pitfalls and further ascertains the notion that these remain untouched. This approach, of 'let bygones be bygones' is precisely what sets guided tours in non-flashpoints from those taking place in flashpoints.

The performance builds on what a particular guide chooses to relate to his or her audience(s), and what to omit; highlight and downplay, and reciprocally, on what issues the audiences of guided tours ask about, or accept as fait accompli. The spoken and the unspoken elements of the performance are not randomly distributed. The Jewish-Israeli guides and their audiences do not act in a void; rather, they are part of the Jewish-Israeli story of Qatamon and the collective memory of it. The guides and their audiences may not have grown up in Qatamon or fought in it, but as Jews and Israelis they almost automatically identify themselves with the neighbourhood's Zionist narrative. And while this narrative may or may not conflict with the Palestinian one, it clearly places emphasis on the neighbourhood's role in the general battle for Jerusalem in the 1948 war.

When working with a Jewish-Israeli group the guide is likely to be careful not to anger his or her listeners, or alienate them in any way. Reference to the pre-1948 civilian background of Qatamon and especially to the Palestinians who have become refugees and had their homes looted during and after the war, might shed a less radiant light on the epic battle 'which determined the fate of Jerusalem'. That is why these topics are often treated cursorily or ignored altogether. This is also why a certain terminology is used – one which creates empathy with the Jewish narrative while distancing the Arab one.

Israeli (2002: 113) has made the following observation:

> In retrospect, one wonders today how the entire Jewish city of West Jerusalem [grew] in the same neighborhoods that had belonged to, or had been occupied by evacuated Arab populations, without leaving on record any signs of public expressions of remorse, regret or soul-searching.

Israeli writes of his 'puzzlement' at the insensitivity showed by the new settlers who carried out an 'almost inhumane act of displacement of others', and adds:

> It is only during these past few years that Israeli historians have begun digging up the documentation of those formative and fateful events, and with a cool-headedness borne out of maturity and self-confidence …. In the process a number of taboos have been violated … causing not a few explosions of anger among the Israeli public. (Ibid.)

Apparently, the 'maturity' and 'self-confidence' Israeli refers to is mostly restricted to academia. Tour guiding is not concerned with emotional explosions or anger, and there is hardly a more convincing illustration of this than the tours led through the lush and tranquil streets of Qatamon neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Future research may show how this applies, similarly, to many other formerly Palestinian towns, villages and neighbourhoods throughout the city and the country.

Note

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