Chapter 14

Embodying Ideologies in Tourism: A Commemorative Visitor Book in Israel as a Site of Authenticity

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Introduction: Tourism and Authenticities

Authenticity is a central meta-narrative in tourism, accounting for the unique appeal of this interdisciplinary field of study and remarkable growth during the last century. The key role authenticity plays in tourism is not surprising if we consider its very nature. Tourism is essentially an industry that transports people from one place—their home, to another—the destination. This corporeal travel holds a promise: to transcend mediation processes, or short-circuit representational imagery, through *actual* arrival at the desired scene. Unlike the media industry (in which authenticity also plays a constitutive role, see Peters 2001; Van Leeuwen 2001), travel is not marketed as an endeavor that entails mediated images. Rather, tourism is modernity's promise of a corporeal encounter with the Thing itself, with the genuine attraction, be it a site, place, artifact, or combinations thereof. Hence, to those who can afford it, tourism offers one of the dearest commodities available under Western-modern epistemology, namely immediate and unmediated access to (read: consumption) of the Real.[1]

In this chapter, I offer an empirical exploration of the formative role(s) authenticity plays in tourism. I pursue this aim by attending to a case study in the form of a national-military heritage site located in West Jerusalem, Israel. Through attending closely to representations in and of the site, and to artifacts exhibited in it—notably the site's commemorative visitor book, I offer a conceptual discussion of the institutional and ideological roles authenticity or authenticities play in tourism. The exploration works its way from the site as a whole to the unique exhibit/device of the visitor book, which supplies a stage for visitors' performances (Macdonald 2005; Noy 2008). In the conclusions, I thus argue that within the ecology of authenticity evinced in the commemorative site, the visitor book serves as an authenticated/authenticating surface.

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1   I allude to Lacan's (1977) famous distinction between the orders of the Symbolic and the Real, whereby the latter relates to what lies outside language (symbolization), and is therefore ultimately unchanging and "always in its place."

At this point I would have very much liked to propose a straightforward definition of the concept of authenticity, yet "authenticity is a struggle" (as Bruner [1994:403] points out), and the literature, briefly reviewed below, suggests an array of definitions, indicating that the notion of authenticity is indeed in crisis (Van Leeuwen 2001). Hence following the literature review, I will propose a scheme that suits best the particular site I studied, which addresses authenticity through a triple perceptive, combining the notions of semiotics, performance and ideology. But first, off to the site.

The Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site (AHNMS), where I chose to conduct this research, is a heritage site located in West Jerusalem, Israel. Heritage sites and attractions supply particularly rich case studies for exploring authenticity, and the semiotic processes that mediate, frame and construct it. This is because heritage, by definition, concerns events that transpired in the past, and are inaccessible in any immediate way to tourists' bodily senses (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Laurier 1998; on embodiment in tourism in general and in heritage sites in particular see Chhabra, Healy, and Sills 2003; Edensor 1998). As such, a special effort must be made to communicate and mediate them, in order to frame these historic sites, events, artifacts and people as both accessible and real.

Moreover, heritage plays an important role in the contemporary, heated scenes of identity politics, which seek to construct an authentic, historic narrative, on which collective identities and political claims can be validly asserted in the present (Anderson 1983; Zerubavel 1995). In their capacity of producing compelling narratives, heritage sites typically evoke the collective's "true" cultural history, and are sites at which identities are fervently and often explicitly represented and negotiated (Breathnach 2006; Bruner 1994; Chhabra, Healy, and Sills 2003; Wang 2007, and various publications in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*).

Dean MacCannell and Beyond: Tourisms' Authenticities

An academic discussion of authenticity in tourism leads inevitably to the trailblazing works of Dean MacCannell (1973; 1999 [1976]). MacCannell argued that, since modernity is largely characterized by alienation and superficiality, tourism supplies the much sought-after experience of authenticity in our epoch. In this sense, tourism is essentially a modern industry, supplying meaning to life and a general social structure, as did religion in pre-industrial societies (MacCannell 1973). Tourist attractions are the present-day equivalents of sacred sites and sites of worship in traditional societies. As MacCannell (1973:589-590) states: "[T]ourism absorbs some of the social functions of religion in the modern world. [...] The concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society."

While the relationship between authenticity and modernity is central to MacCannell's view, this aspect of his work has been less influential in tourism studies than his approach to authenticity and its central role in the structure of tourist attractions. MacCannell's analysis of tourist attractions and their framing,

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staging and division into front and back regions—all of which contribute to the construction of authenticity—builds on works published a decade earlier. Namely, Berger and Luckmann (1967), Goffman (1956) and Garfinkel (1967) supply the main impetus, which helped MacCannell drive the tourism studies wagon forward, from structural approaches into the early beginnings of post-structural explorations. MacCannell's analysis was less concerned with the authenticity of Things and their (re)production (cf. Benjamin 1968), than with the authenticity of being or of experience. "The touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experience," he typically argued (MacCannell 1999:101). MacCannell pointed to a direct link between the state and status of being a tourist, on the one hand, and a particular type of sense or "consciousness" (the tourist's), on the other.

MacCannell's percepts have been widely elaborated, expanded upon, and also criticized (Bruner 1994). His contribution, to cite Dann (1996:8), was "as pervasive as it was radical." Cohen (1974, 1979, 1988, 1989), for instance, employed MacCannell's proposals and suggested a typology of tourists, which relies partly on the roles and intensities exhibited by the quest for authenticity within travel motivations. Cohen's early works, together with the works of Bruner (1991) and Pearce and Moscardo (1986), made MacCannell's ideas more accessible and appealing to a wider audience of researchers and laid the foundation for the surge of research on authenticity in tourism from the 1990s to the present.

Wang's (1999; 2000) contributions crucially advanced the exploration of authenticity by rejecting MacCannell's implicit assumption that there is such a thing as "objective authenticity" (or authenticity of objects), which can be correlated with the experience of authenticity. Wang (2000:71) observed that tourism is an "industry of authenticity," wherein "existential authenticity becomes a commodity." Through his use of the term "existential authenticity," Wang stressed the psychological aspects of the tourist experience, and the desires, memories and feelings that accompany this state. The tourist experience is felt and lived (Wang 2000:56). Wang's perspective weakens the link between touristic objects and the experience of authenticity in tourism, or between the objective "authenticity of knowledge" and the subjective "authenticity of feeling" (2000:48). Together with notions such as Selwyn's (1996:21-25) "hot authenticity," which is how tourists seek their own authentic selves, authenticity studies in tourism moved toward a more subjected perspective, intricately related to actual practice.

These works effectively paved the way for explorations of the role(s) of authenticity in the construction of identities—both individual and collective—in and through tourism (Noy and Cohen 2005; Taylor 2001). A case in point is my research of Israeli backpackers' narratives (Noy 2004, 2007), where I showed how authenticity is used as a semiotic resource. More than simply as a commodity (cf. Wang 2000), which I think authenticity surely is, I view authenticity as a resource that helps objects and people become worthy, a worth that can be measured symbolically and materially.

Tourists' explicit evocations of authenticity during their storytelling, served to validate and enhance their narrative performances (Noy 2004, 2007). In these performances, the Israeli backpackers I interviewed transposed authenticity, as it were, from the spaces and sights they consumed at the destinations themselves, to the performance of their travel story at home, after returning from their trips. As a result, the occasion of the interview itself became charged with the social semiotics of tourism: the backpackers told of consuming authentic places, and their performances served to authenticate who they are, and to bestow the aura of authenticity on their selves. "Importing" authenticity into their performances made their claims regarding identity and cultural capital all the more persuasive and effective (Noy 2007). More fundamentally, importing authenticity is what performatively established them *as backpackers* in the course of the interview interaction.

Other scholars have pointed out that not all tourists seek authenticity. Some present-day tourists are postmodern, at least in the sense that they are either indifferent to the markers of authenticity, or actually seek and celebrate inauthentic attractions (Ritzer and Liska 1997). This discussion is a bit tricky, because a sense of authenticity can emerge regardless of whether an attraction is viewed as "objectively authentic." Thus "genuine fakes" (Brown 1996) and other socially constructed attractions can also produce a sense of authenticity, which is why postmodern tourists may yet enjoy postmodern authenticity.

Discussions of authenticity and its vicissitudes occupy considerable volumes in the sociocultural explorations of tourism, amounting to a sub-disciplinary field of research. Yet studies of authenticity and its paradigm in related disciplines barely influenced this subfield; and except for MacCannell's work, these studies of authenticity in tourism have scarcely affected research. Thus this chapter also tries to help promote interdisciplinary examinations of authenticity.

The chapter suggests an empirically based study that views authenticity as simultaneously a semiotic resource, a performance, and an ideology in tourism. This is not to say that authenticity is not a commodity, but because it serves an ideological function, it also often serves as a valuable resource, generating genuine performances and moving experiences (Noy 2004; Stephenson 2004). The first of the three aspects in this scheme concerns authenticity's basic quality, which is the signification of originality. If a letter written by a soldier during the war is exhibited in the museum, then it can be said that it is presented as an authentic or original document (in accord with Bruner's [1994] and Van Leeuwen's [2001] first criterion of authenticity).

The second aspect concerns processes of mediation and representation of authenticity, whereby exhibits such as letters written by soldiers who died and the visitor book, are viewed as (authentic) objects and (authenticating) media simultaneously. Now the focus moves from the artifact's originality, to how, where and by whom (and to who) it is presented. Now the questions concern the authority to construct meaning and establish authenticity, and the appropriate (cultural) means by which this is accomplished. At this point I acknowledge

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two qualities: that authenticity is always constructed (and that there are norms regarding replication, restoration, and other manipulations, can nonetheless be judged as legitimate, see Van Leeuwen 2001); and that presentations of authenticity *validate* performances. By the term performance I refer to acts that instantiate social identities and agencies. In this sense, authenticity is a semiotic resource that partakes in these acts and serves to authorize them.

Finally, I use the term "ideology" in this chapter loosely, generally in line with Althusser's view that ideology bears experiential and epistemological hues, relating to the "'lived' relation between men and the world" (Althusser 1990:233). I find Althusser's perspective particularly appropriate because it contains two elements that also characterize authenticity in tourism. The first is that ideology relates not only to actual experience, but also to "imaginary" or "lived" experience (ibid.). This quality is particularly relevant because much of tourism concerns processes of mediation and imagination. The second element concerns the reproduction of cultural tenets, social structures, symbols and power relations, which Althusser (1971) included in his definition of ideology, and which is one function of modern tourism according to MacCannell. Thirdly, my adaptation of the concept of ideology into tourism studies is also influenced by earlier contributions, notably Adler's (1989) notion of "travel ideology," in which tourism-related phenomena are discussed in ideological terms.

Ammunition Hill: Site and Song

The AHNMS is a complex commemorating war in West Jerusalem. Inaugurated in 1975, it honors the Israeli soldiers who died in the battle on Ammunition Hill during the 1967 Six-Day War, and celebrates the victory of the Israeli Army over the Jordanian Legion, the so called "liberation" of East Jerusalem and the "unification" of the city. The complex comprises two main spaces: an outdoor site that includes commemorative monuments and the original trenches in which the fighting took place, as well as an indoor museum.

The museum presents exhibits and information about the battle on Ammunition Hill and the overall campaign for Jerusalem. Most of the features are commemorative devices, such as the Golden Wall of Commemoration, engraved with the names of the 182 soldiers who fell in the battle for Jerusalem and a short film about the Ammunition Hill Battle. In addition, many maps and pictures are employed to illustrate the battles for Jerusalem, and a variety of discursive artifacts, such as the soldiers' letters and personal journals, serve to enhance the display's authenticity and to personalize the soldiers.

The majority of my research at the AHNMS was conducted during four weeks in the summer and autumn of 2006. It is based on an examination of the visitor book itself, as well as on observations of and conversations with visitors. The majority of the visitors I observed and interviewed were either Jewish Israelis or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists, mostly from North America. Both these populations

strongly identify with Israel's Zionist ideology, and are supportive of the nationalistic and military ideologies promoted by the museum. I also interviewed the management, with the aim of determining the museum's ideological agenda.

Before examining the visitor book and its functions, I wish to address two aspects of concern to authenticity, and to suggest an ideological context in which a particular type of culturally constructed authenticity emerges. These constructions of authenticity supply the context within which the visitor book resides and operates as a meaning-making device.

The first point concerns the physical location of the AHNMS—on the actual site of the historic battleground. The museum's (now former) director stressed this point in our first meeting. The management's desire to capture and preserve past events explicitly and authentically was expressed by the director who, while giving me a tour, repeatedly described the site's uniqueness in the following terms: "You've got a place here where there's *something* you can actually *feel* with your own [two] feet. [You can] move through the trenches. [You can] touch the bunkers. [You can] hear the stories. And people cling to that. This guy fell *here*, that occurred *here*."[2]

With these words, the museum director addressed the significance of the site's singular location. Their use, with their repeated appeal to bodily senses and indications of proximity and immediacy ("here"), qualify his comments as an example of the discourse of authenticity. The director's description of the site's location, in response to my question regarding its power to attract visitors, suggests that he is pointing out not (only) a condition—authenticity (defined as marking originality)—but also a resource: the site's uniqueness lies in its authenticity. Indeed, because the site is not very impressive, and has not been renovated since its construction, its location is perhaps its most crucial resource in terms of attractiveness.

Since authenticity serves as a resource in the symbolic economy of tourism, it is manipulated and at least partly construed, and is only partially accurate and represents a type of "front stage reality." Consider, for instance, the fact that the historic battleground actually extends beyond the premises presently occupied by the AHNMS. A large UNRWA complex is situated to the southwest, and a couple of pre-1967 Palestinian houses still stand to the east. Thus, while part of the historic battlefield is located inside the national commemoration site, some of the historic spaces documented in the museum are inaccessible to visitors. They lie outside the premises of the AHNMS. Paradoxically, these spaces—the ex-territorial UN complex (which, to be accurate, is The West Bank Office for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East) and the Palestinian houses—represent the type of multinational occupation of spaces in Jerusalem/Al-Quds which is precisely what the ideology of the AHNMS seeks to veil.

The director also lamented the architect's decision, during the site's construction in the early 1970s, to demolish and remove a few of the original structures and

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fortifications in order to make space for the museum. In this way, the AHNMS itself participated in replacing original relics with a new structure that resembles them. The director's lament can be understood in light of the shift toward authenticity in the management of tourist heritage sites and attractions during the last two decades, and the contemporary wish seemingly to preserve as much as possible from the original historic scenes (cf. DeLyser 1999).

My second point concerns something quite more abstract than the site's actual grounds and buildings. I have in mind a well-known song about the battle on Ammunition Hill. Simply entitled "Ammunition Hill," the song was written and composed by two prominent figures in the Israeli music scene (Yoram Tehar-Lev and Yair Rosenblum, respectively). It describes the battle from the perspective of the soldiers who fought there.[3] For this reason, the entire song is voiced in the first person plural, and is performed solely by men. The melodic verses are interspersed with narrative sections during which only an accordion accompanies the male singer's voice. The narratives describe specific scenes of fighting in a low and macho tone. All these characteristics combine to grant the song an aura of authenticity. It sounds as though the soldiers themselves are performing the song.

In a recent television interview, the song's writer revealed that some of the lyrics are in fact "authentic" quotes taken from an issue of the army journal *Bamahane* published shortly after the war.[4] This magazine included interviews with soldiers who received the Israeli army's medal of honor for their part in the battle. Several of the song's most memorable lines, such as that in which one of the soldiers nonchalantly says, "I don't know why I received a medal of honor, I just wanted to return safely home," actually appeared first in *Bamahane*.

In the television program Tehar-Lev and a few of the soldiers are pictured strolling on the grounds of the site. One of the soldiers notes that there are "a few technical inaccuracies" in the song, and continues (with a short chuckle), "They really didn't have 120mm mortars, you know." Nonetheless, the soldier readily agrees with the lyricist that "if it's good for the rhyme, and if that's the price for the success of such a popular song, which is a melodic memorial for the battle, then that's ok." Here again, authenticity, like other ideological social constructions, adheres only partly to the historic reality from which it derives its unique value.

The song "Ammunition Hill," well-known in Israel, functions in MacCannell's terms as an "off-site marker" (MacCannell 1999:110-111). Markers in tourism supply information about the sites they mark. Some are on-site markers, indicating *in situ* that this is the attraction, while off-site markers do so from a distance. Like many off-site markers, the song's framing function is also accomplished as

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3   The song was performed by the Israeli Army's Central Command Band, 1972. It is accessible at the AHNMS's website: www.givathatachmosht.org.il/songs.php. The original animated clip is available through on the Internet at YouTube (last accessed March 25, 2008): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GnTDHvWhxA.

4   "The Most Beautiful Moments of the Army Bands in Forty Years of Television Broadcasting," broadcasted on Channel 1 (Israeli National TV), February 8, 2008.

an icon. It does more than merely advertise the site as a worthy attraction (in referential terms). Through its first person voices, and the machismo narration, the song also *demonstrates* the ideology of authenticity that dominates the site. It tells not only where to go (destination), but also how and in what to believe once there (authenticity, militarism, and nationalism).

Note that the discussion of authenticity here and in all other instances relating to the AHNMS bears a gender-specific undertone. Authenticity here is intimately associated with images of hegemonic masculinity and heroic manhood, specifically with war and fighting (cf. images of masculinity in Viking Heritage sites, in Knox and Hannam 2007). However, since authenticity is meant to be perceived as an "objective quality"—the object's quality, its gender politics are veiled. While this characteristic is salient at the AHNMS, MacCannell's general discussion of authenticity has been criticized by feminists in tourism research for being gender-blind, and for its role in the maintenance of patriarchal structures (Aitchison 2001).

Approaching the Visitor Book: Discursive Authenticity

Upon entering the partly sunken structure of the museum, which is designed to resemble an underground bunker, the visitor encounters a plethora of discursive artifacts. These are mainly comprised of handwritten documents and representations thereof, spanning a variety of genres: personal letters and war journals, poems, autographs and more. Most of the exhibits were written by soldiers who fought and fell in the battle, and contribute to the ideological context of authenticity within which I will evaluate the function of the visitor book. These artifacts and exhibits are not merely instances of inscribed discourse, but entail specific instances of handwriting, which illustrate the relationship between authenticity, on the one hand, and handwriting, as an embodied mode of communication, on the other. The significance of this relationship cannot be overestimated in a heritage site dedicated to commemoration. For this reason, I wish to discuss two particular instances.

The first illustration concerns an Israeli flag exhibited in a glass frame (see Figure 14.1). This is the original flag hung by paratroopers above the Western Wall on June 7, 1967. A short text, inscribed at the time by the paratroopers, appears on its upper right corner:

The Flag of Israel
Hung above the Western Wall
at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem
By soldiers of Pl. A. of Regiment 71 of the 55th Paratrooper Division
Today, Wednesday, June 7, at 10:15
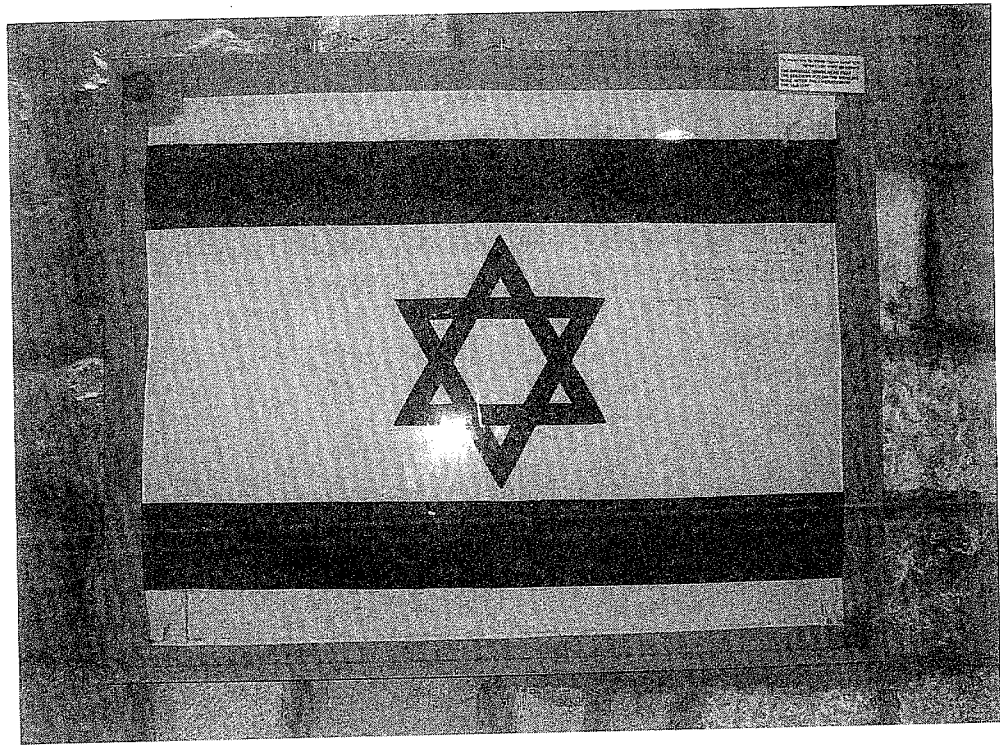The "Jerusalem Liberators" Paratroop Division

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Figure 14.1 Authentic 1967 flag
Source: Photo by the author.

The inscription celebrates the triumphant moment when Israeli soldiers reached the Western Wall. It does so with a (reflexive) awareness of the occasion's historic dimension. Specifically, by referring to the paratrooper division explicitly and by signing as they did, this inscription celebrates the paratroopers' division and ties the esteemed device to the renowned "liberation" of Jerusalem.

In her discussion of graffiti, Susan Stewart (1991:207, following Derrida), addressed two conceptions of spontaneous, embodied writing, according to which inscriptions can be viewed as either corrupting or cherished, "[r]adically taken as both crime and art." This is true of the preceding manifestation and of many other occurrences of handwriting at Ammunition Hill. The handwritten mode is either against the law or above it. In the former case it is a matter of vandalism (writing on national symbols is illegal in Israel), and, in the latter, as evinced in the inscription on the national flag, it is an instance to be venerated, belonging in a museum. Handwriting traces or indexes the body of those who wrote it at the moment of inscription. It is perceived as a highly authentic mode of representation not only because the flag is the original item (original items can be manipulated), but because the handwriting on the flag authenticates the flag itself, by positioning

Figure 14.2   Temporary memorial post
Source: Photo by the author.

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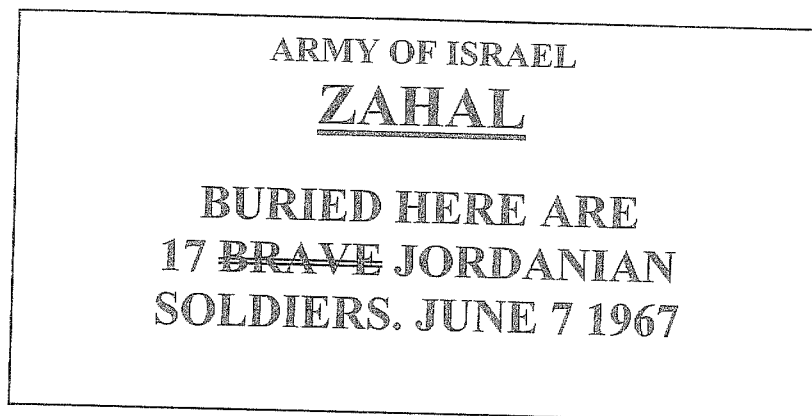17 ~~BRAVE~~ JORDANIAN
SOLDIERS. JUNE 7 1967

Figure 14.2a Memorial inscription (detail)

it in the heart of celebrated events.[5] As Van Leeuwen (2001) stresses, authenticity is very much tied with modality, or more accurately, with the social semiotics of modality. Handwriting on the surface of the national flag dramatically brings together binaries: a collective symbol with a personal inscription.

The second illustration I wish to discuss is a photograph which is not actually situated in the museum, but rather in the Ammunition Hill offices (Figure 14.2). It hangs in the main conference room, where VIPs, donors, and other exclusive visitors are received. The director referred to it specifically during my first visit (it has since been posted on the museum's new website).

The center of the frame is filled by a handwritten, English text inscribed on cardboard, fastened to the butt of a rifle, which is stuck into the ground upside down (Figures 14.2, 14.2a). The post marks the location of the collective grave of 17 Jordanian soldiers killed in the battle. A copy of the picture (dated July 1994), was ceremoniously presented to a Jordanian Army delegation which visited the Ammunition Hill compound after the signing of the peace accord between Jordan and Israel.

Like the writing inscribed on the flag (above), here too a handwritten text is superimposed on a historic artifact and gives it meaning and value. The handwritten text evinces proximity to the "bare" ("pre-verbal") historic event, and thus acquires the precious quality of authentic representation. The physical and functional proximity of rifle to writing additionally embodies the ideology that the activities of fighting and writing are enmeshed. The unused rifle functions concretely, but also symbolically, as a necessary precondition for a cultured existence, embodied

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5   In a recent television interview, one of the paratroopers who inscribed on the flag recollected the historic events. His story was incongruent with the text that appears on the flag. It might be that the decades have dimmed the paratrooper's memory of the occasion, or that there were more than one original flag. The point is that authentic artifacts are a problematical category of things.

in the appearance of the inscription. This exact notion was conveyed to me in conversation with the chairman of the Museum's Friends Society. During our first meeting, after I mentioned that I teach at a nearby campus, the chairman replied pedagogically, "You should know that the victory in this site opened and secured the way to the university campus at Mt. Scopus (where I teach)." He added, more explicitly, "If not for the army and the sacrifices made here, you (*pl.*) couldn't have studied and taught there." This notion is common in nationalist (Republican) ideologies and pervasive in Israeli highly militarized political and public discourse, whereby intellectualism is viewed as secondary to and reliant upon military might. It grounds the point I made earlier concerning how heritage sites negotiate identities. In this instance, however, at stake is not the Israeli-Arab conflict, but less overt identities and ideologies within the Israel public (Kimmerling 1993).

Note that the word "brave" was crossed out of the inscription. This act illustrates how different views may compete over interpretations of conflicted events, even immediately after these events occur. More importantly, the deletion *testifies to* the authenticity of the sign. If we consider authenticity's relation to modality, now the sign impresses as doubly authentic—both *hand*-written, *and hand*-erased.

These markers of authenticity are of a type highly characteristic to the AHNMS. They offer a glimpse into the profusion of handwritten documents, which direct us to look not so much at the issues (content) as at the where, how and on what (modality). This mode of communication suggests both authenticity and authentication. Writing, unlike talking, is a durable mode of communication, and thus ideally serves the purposes of authentication. We look at what was written back then, and we "hear" the events anew. In this context, writing is an ideal tool for engendering an awe of the authentic in the visitors (Stewart 1993).

This point is even truer in the case of *commemorative representation*. Since the museum is part of a commemorative complex, its institutional charter is precisely to mobilize authenticity, in the form of handwritten documents, in order to intensify national commitment and re-inscribe collective memory. In terms of commemorative hermeneutics, these documents can be construed as discursive monuments; they are corporeal and of texture (Macdonald 2006).

In tourism, handwritten products fall into the larger valued category of authenticity in tourism, namely "handmade artifacts" (Cohen 1988). According to Cohen, tourists accept objects as authentic, even if they are commercialized and presented in institutional settings, as long as they have been handmade by members of a particular group—in this case paratroopers—or, more generally, people who acted in the epoch being commemorated (Cohen 1988:378). Authenticity, however, can also be constructed through culturally specific means. In Sabra (native Israeli) culture, the romantic relations between handwriting and body are unique, and create a much admired informality, familiarity and intimacy, which mass-printed documents cannot achieve. Handwriting in itself conveys an ideology which ascribes to handwriting—perceived as a non-commodified/commodifiable mode of expression—a uniquely esteemed, authentic, and personalized evocation (Katriel 1986; Noy 2007:131).

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Inscribing Acts of Authenticity

Bearing all this in mind, let us approach the visitor book as visitors do. Let us observe that the book is framed in two significant ways which grant it unique status as an authenticating device. First, atypically, this visitor book is not located near the site's exit. Instead, it is located deep inside the commemorative museum. While visitor books are usually placed where visitors can write their impressions after they complete their visit, this visitor book is located in one of the museum's innermost halls. It is placed near the venerating last hall, where the Golden Wall of Commemoration is located and the eternal flame flickers. Thus positioned, this visitor book is not meant to capture reflective comments or encapsulate the visitors' "gesture of closure" (Katriel 1997:71). Rather, it is part of the museum's commemorative arsenal of devices, meant to induce emotional involvement and provide an opportunity to partake in the rite of commemoration.

Second, the visitor book is actually the main attraction in the hall in which it is positioned, its centrality augmented by the structure of which it is a part. This structure is a large and impressive formation consisting of two cylindrical columns of black steel, each about one meter in diameter. The shorter column, about one meter tall, functions as a kind of table on which the book rests. Beside it is another pillar about four meters tall. And the entire composition rests on a base that is slightly elevated from the floor, so that those wishing to read (or write) in the book must step up and enter a specially designated zone. In its overall design, the structure resembles a monument or a memorial, lending the book a solemn and dignified character and designating it as a unique exhibit - perhaps even as a monument in itself.

We thus approach the pages of the visitor book and its inscribed entries (see Figure 14.3, below) with this thick framing of authenticity. The book offers surfaces for writing that are effectively part of the museum's commemorative space. They are an *extension of the physical space of the museum*. In this respect, the space provided in the visitor book is unique because whatever is registered in/on it instantly becomes part of the exhibit. In other words, these are *authentic(ating) surfaces*: Anything and everything that is documented or inscribed on them by visitors is transformed into an authentic exhibit, and thus becomes a permanent element of the museum's interior.

Figure 14.3 illustrates a typical book opening, showing a rather lively, crowded and colorful production. Openings in this book typically contain anywhere between ten and twenty entries, which include short and long texts as well as aesthetic decorations: from orthographic and para-linguistic devices (exclamation marks, aestheticized autographs), through underlying and encircling lines, to graphic symbols and drawings.
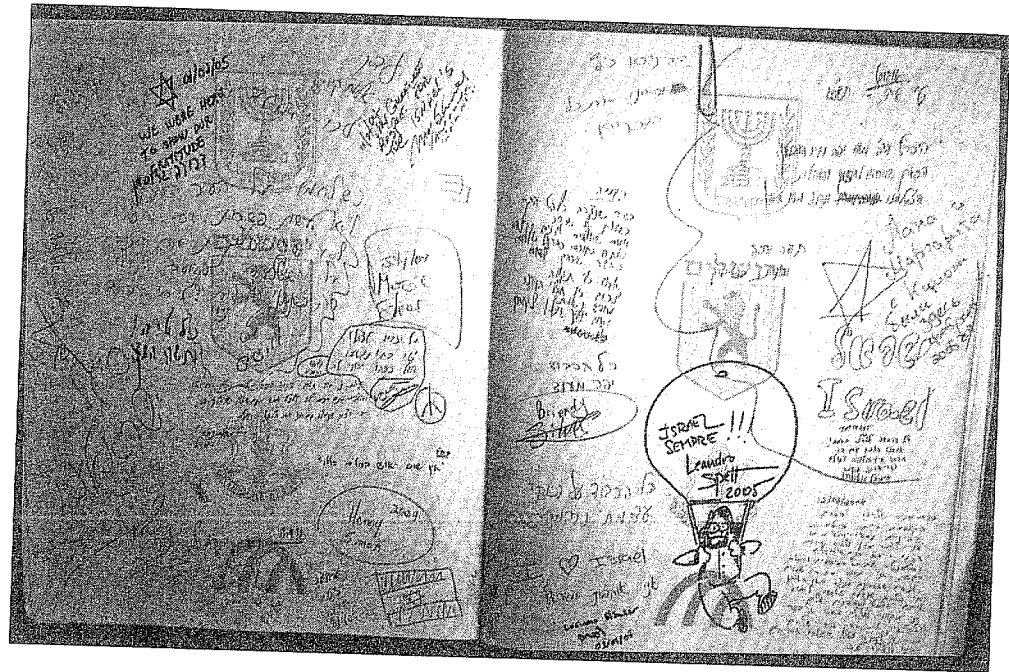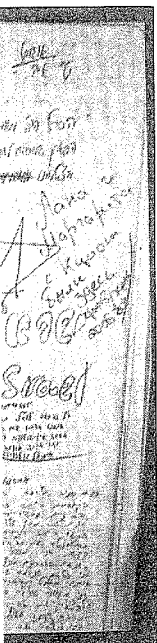
Figure 14.3 Visitor book opening: Authentic(ating) spaces
Source: Photo by the author.

Structurally speaking, the book's openings resemble the images presented above. Such is the case with the opening depicted above. Its similarities lie in the handwritten mode of inscription and the combination of verbal inscriptions with the unique symbolic (material) surfaces, on which they are inscribed. As shown in Figure 14.3, every page in the visitor book displays a vertical line made of four printed symbols. These are the symbols of the State of Israel, the City of Jerusalem, the Israel Defense Forces and the logo of the Ammunition Hill Museum. They correspond with the flags hanging nearby, and with the profusion of national and military symbols exhibited throughout the halls. These symbols serve to mark the book as a device that provides additional surfaces that are available for consumption at the AHNMS. They suggest that the pages of the book are themselves symbolic. Writing upon them is therefore already confined by and in dialogue with the semiotics and aesthetics of nationalist-militaristic commemoration.

The book's animated openings (Figure 14.3) evoke spontaneous inscriptions, created *in situ* by the visitors. These inscriptions represent and record a bottom-up form of "authentic" production. Here, again, the collective quality of the record (i.e. the various inscriptions occupying a shared space) together with its handwritten mode, endows this book with a particular type of authenticity, one that is cherished in Sabra society. As I indicated in my study of handwritten documents in Israeli backpackers' communities, "these handwritten compilations constitute the travelers' alternative to commercialized forms of tourist publications. The travelers'

books are often mentioned in comparison to commercial touristic publications; in such comparisons, the former are of a unique genre, valued for their 'authenticity' and for their up-to-date nature" (Noy 2007:131). Such spontaneous expressions are highly sought after in Israeli culture, because they index a culturally esteemed notion of authenticity.

I now wish to examine two inscriptions more closely. I will precede this inquiry with a seemingly surprising finding: neither the word "authentic" nor any similar term appears anywhere in the book's more than 1,000 entries. The following inquiry seeks to address this finding, and to show how authenticity is produced without any explicit recognition of its presence. I submit the following two illustrations in their original layout. The first example is here translated from the Hebrew:

Example 1:

30.11.05
We were very impressed by the way
the place is presented.
We were very favorably influenced
by the place.
We extend our condolences
to the bereaved families
and thank all those who sacrificed their lives
for the State of Israel.
Meitar, Ella and Yahel

This inscription is typical of entries written by local visitors (Israeli sightseers in Jerusalem). It is in Hebrew, mainly addresses the AHNMS and expresses respect and gratitude both to the commemorative efforts of the AHNMS and to those who gave their lives during the 1967 War. As is the norm in visitor book entries, the inscription also includes the date and the names of its inscribers. While they could merely write their names, the date of their visit and where they are from, most visitors choose to create more elaborate entries. Through these detailed inscriptions, such as Example 1, the authors are made present, or are "presenced," in the site. Through the act of inscribing on these uniquely framed surfaces, the inscribers are transformed from passive visitors to active producers: they are agents participating in the national narrative of commemoration as told at the site.

The structure of this example is also typical of local visitors' entries. The first few sentences (first four lines) address the site's management, and note the positive experience it bestows. In the next section (last four lines), Meitar, Ella, and Yahel take part in the commemorative narrative and perform what they think is appropriate at this ritualistic site. Put a bit differently, after the writers thank the site, they show what they have learned and absorbed during the visit, which is to

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partake in the rite of commemoration by extending condolences to the deceased soldiers' families.

This reading of the entry explains why there are no indications of authenticity here or in similar entries. There is simply *no need* for such indications. Inscribing in the visitor book, in terms of both its physical location and the voice of its authors, guarantees that what is written is authentic(ated). The visitors need not mention where they are writing, or the site they are writing about. This information is considered trivial in the context of this commemorative visitor book, which is physically stationary and symbolically framed as part of the "authentic" grounds of the AHNMS.

I now turn to a second entry, which again employs no explicit markers or signifiers of authenticity, yet authenticity is nevertheless performed, albeit differently than in the first example. The writer of this entry comes from a different population of visitors: Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists from North America. Unlike the first example, this entry is written mostly in English (words originally in Hebrew are italicized and translated in square brackets).

> Example 2:
>
> *Basad* [abbreviation for: With God's Help]
> To all the soldiers
> who willingly gave
> their lives for us, I
> want to express all
> my gratitude & emotions.
> Without you, we wouldn't
> be standing here today.
> Thank you so much, on my
> behalf & on all of the *Medinat Yisrael* [The State of Israel]
> behalf for everything you
> have done for us.
> Sincerely,
> Omry
> July 3, 2006

This inscription is typical of entries written by more observant Jewish tourists. Most of it is in English, with a few special words written in Hebrew, i.e. the Holy Language (these are what sociolinguists call "code switches"). Beyond the matter of language, the difference between the entries is evident at first glance. While the first example basically addresses the site and its management, this entry directly and explicitly addresses the fallen soldiers. If the entry by Meitar, Ella, and Yahel had the AHNMS at its center, Omry's entry has the historic sacrifice at its center. It is almost as though Omry does not see the site, but rather sees *through* it.

There are of course similarities between the entries as well. In both cases, the visitors demonstrate their understanding of the narrative as told by the site, and they do so through participation—by writing in the visitor book. As is typical at commemoration sites, the visitors tell, or retell, the narrative that ties past to present via a causal link. This link suggests a justification of past events and sacrifices (present and future ones as well) by what the past has granted the present day condition ("we wouldn't be standing here today").

Yet this and similar English entries, which address the fallen soldiers directly, establish a sense of authenticity through the unique structure of their address. Directly invoking the dead positions the visitor in the same realm as those being addressed. The verse, "To all the soldiers who willingly gave their lives for us" suggests a communicative continuity between those making the address and those being addressed. This homology blurs the ontic divide between signifier and signified, and serves to place the author—in this case Omry—within the spotlight of authenticity. There is more at stake here than becoming an exhibit via inscription in the visitor book. Here the visitors talk *through* the site, and connect with the historical events and people commemorated by the site, all of which are viewed as objectively authentic.

In other words, the framing of the site and the visitor book grants museum visitors the possibility of performing authentically. Thus, different entries are able to perform authentically without explicitly indexing authenticity. From this platform, visitors are invited and enabled to communicate directly with the nation, the grieving families and the soldiers, living or dead. When this option is actualized, authentic communication results. In terms proposed by Van Leeuwen (2001, following Goffman's distinctions), at stake is the authenticity of the "encoder/transmitter." "[R]ecording and distribution technologies," Van Leeuwen notes, "become involved in the production of meaning themselves" (395). Hence there is no need for those writing in the book to indicate that the experience is "real/authentic/original" (society sanctions people who say trivial things, Sacks [1992]). The very act of inscribing (modality), the surfaces on which inscribing is performed (encoder/transmitter), and the structure of their expressions establish the writers-visitors as authentic participants.

Conclusion

> There is no serious or functional role in the production awaiting the tourist in the places they visit. Tourists are not made personally responsible for anything that happens in the establishment they visit ... (MacCannell 1999:102).

In this chapter I illustrated various constructions and performances of authenticity in tourism, and specifically heritage tourism, through a case study of the AHNMS. I took my time throughout the chapter in arriving, as do tourists, at the actual device of the visitor book, which was, in a way, this chapter's (authentic)

destination. I have done so because, as MacCannell has showed, no one arrives at the destination from nowhere, as a *tabula rasa*. Instead, numerous off-site markers—from advertisements and personal recollections, to representations in art, literature and cinema—permeate our modern lives, ignite our desires and inform our expectations regarding destinations.

The visitor book is positioned *within* an ecology of authenticity and at the same time it is *part of* that ecology. This ecology shares norms of modality, which concern the accepted ways of constructing and farming of authenticity, and the way it partakes in meaning-bestowing performances. This means that the semiotics of authenticity emerge due to the ways the book is framed, and because the book itself is an authenticity-framing, or authenticating, device. The pages and openings of the book are created as surfaces for tourist performances, which are uniquely endowed with (uniquely endowing) the quality of authenticity. This occurs as these performances cross the divide from the mundane (everyday) to the symbolic (tourism), and as their producers shift from being passive visitors into active agents. This transcendence, a trespassing into the land of the past and the symbolic (and the dead), charges these visitors' inscribed performances with the aura of authenticity.

MacCannell's quote demonstrates the astuteness of his observations on tourism, a quality that has made his work so appealing. Yet in the present case, the matter seems precisely the reverse. Tourists' performances in the visitor book assume their authentic quality precisely because they amount to *material productions*, whereby tourists become personally responsible for what they do. In fact, it is what they do that is what "happens in the establishment they visit"! The construction of authenticity is such that tourists' productions are made to assume the state of "objective authenticity." This is why the authenticity effect occurs implicitly, and any explicit references to authenticity on the pages of the book are absent. The tourists need not index authenticity themselves; instead, they are offered the opportunity to perform it.

Under these circumstances, the best way to conceptualize authenticity is in terms of the ideological role played out by modality. This view allows us to group together different representations and functions of authenticity, and to see how they all serve institutionally to create and sustain a "lived experience" which is both real and imagined (Althusser 1990:233). At the AHNMS, this "modality ideology" works in alliance with other ideologies. Remove authenticity from the triangle of authenticity, nationalism and militarism, and the effect of the AHNMS collapses. At this site, the ideology of authenticity's modality is in charge of epistemological issues (Althusser 1990:233), which is to say that it is responsible for letting visitors *know* or *feel* the two other grand ideologies. It is through the "lived experience" of and partaking performatively in authenticity, that militarism and nationalism are persuasively *created and embodied*. As we saw, this is accomplished cleverly, by producing a physical and aesthetic experience among the visitors, as they become ideological agents on the pages of the visitor book.

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