Chapter 13

Heritage Utterances in Jewish Destinations: Travelers, Texts, and Museum Visitor Books

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> And all the Jews that pass by carve their names upon the stones of the pillar.
>
> —Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (at Rachel's Tomb)

Juxtaposing the notions of "travel" and "writing" usually leads to discussions of the grand genre of travel writing, that is, to the familiar Western and often imperial literary trope that supplies narrative descriptions of traveled places, peoples, events, and experiences. This chapter digresses from this tradition to inquire into a different juxtaposition of the terms "travel" and "writing" presently pursued in the context of modern travelers to Jewish sites of heritage.

This juxtaposition builds on praxis-centered sensitivities and sensibilities, which are attuned to the richness of human practices involving writing, on the one hand, and travel, on the other hand, and the synergy arising when these are performed together. I explore travel writing in the sense of writing practices that are pursued ritually and routinely during travel, and specifically as part of *visits to heritage destinations*. At stake are situated, or, better, "sited," inscriptions and evocations of presence and identity, roles and relationships, spaces and mobilities, in the shape of autographs and short comments inscribed in guestbooks, comment/visitor books, and similar writing platforms and installations in diverse Jewish destinations. These writing practices are part and parcel of the activities travelers pursue while on tour, and I see the texts they produce as markers that represent what their authors wished to

express and which function as public traces of traveling activities and encounters. In a recent study of visitor books in Wales, Rita Singer argues that such texts are "microforms" of travel writing.[1] Singer's study supports earlier discussions that view such "supposedly spontaneous messages" as in fact "a highly complex form of travel writing, despite or because of their extreme brevity"; these texts are best viewed as a "retained contact zone between the travellers and their foreign destination."[2]

The question of whether writing while traveling is a subgenre that can be subsumed under the large array of genres relating to travel writing, or whether travel writing and writing while traveling are separate literary categories that index diverse sets of practices—the former representing travel, the latter an ingredient thereof—bears consequences. If travelers' inscribed utterances compose a unique literal subgenre of travel writing, then their study may contribute to our understanding of James Clifford's conceptualization of identity, travel, and translation. According to Clifford, "travels and contacts are crucial sites for an unfinished modernity,"[3] and the texts travelers and visitors inscribe lie precisely at the contact interfaces between guests' and hosts' cultures, between mobility and immobility, and between individuals and institutions. Similarly, in her focus on "contact zones," Mary Louise Pratt famously argues that such writing and writing facilities (comment books, guestbooks, and nowadays also online platforms) embody "the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect."[4]

What is sure is that scholars studying the conjunctions of travel and of writing practices agree that under the shadow of the grand genre of travel writing, there is much that has received only little attention. As such, the study of various genres of travel writing may shed light on issues hitherto un(der)explored. Specifically, studying this subgenre of travel writing may illuminate the constitution of Jewish modernity (or modernities) in contemporary Jewish sites and destinations, addressing mobilities and itineraries, but also visitors' contextualized written performances and those they wish their texts to address.

Travelers' on-site writing practices are approached in a contextualized manner, which accords with the way they were created. While as texts they present a sign system (language), their production is a/the matter of an embodied social action. In line with this framework, I argue that the texts that I study, and the activities associated with writing (and reading) them, are socially and culturally informed performances that are constitutive of travel. The texts are part of a rich array of stylized travel activities, that shape those who engage in them into travelers of a particular type and trope. It is, as Emily Moskva

observes, a matter of a "quest for self-realization" on tour.[5] Presently, the identities under consideration are (traveling) Jewish identities, as performed in Jewish sites and spaces.

This inquiry is also informed by the study of modern travel and tourism, which occupies a nexus of disciplines including tourism studies and related fields: sociology and anthropology of travel, and heritage and museums studies. One of the cornerstones of the field of tourism studies was laid in the mid-1970s by anthropologist Dean MacCannell, in a seminal study titled *The Tourist*.[6] MacCannell's main argument was that contemporary tourists are not merely recreating, but are invested in a complex set of organized public activities that bare consequences for modern societies and large-scale (global) social structures. More than mere leisure, tourists are literally re-creating the emergent social structure of global modern middle-class and consumer culture. In this way, MacCannell's and Clifford's works correspond.

Yet *The Tourist*'s main contribution concerned the structure of tourist sites and the meanings that they offer to those visiting them. The analysis, which employed Erving Goffman's dramaturgical concepts (resting on a fundamentally public and theatrical appreciation of social encounters and social life),[7] addressed and revealed these sites' highly institutional function, meaning, and modes of operation. MacCannell's work successfully channeled the study of contemporary tourism in the direction of the simultaneous exploration of institutions and tourists, including the role of the former in affording stages for the latter to participate in and on. The point is that when visitors write in visitor books, they are interacting with an institutional platform, negotiating the meaning of their travel and visit, and participating in a collective endeavor.

Reading Travelers' Utterances

I turn to address "tourists' texts,"[8] which are the inscriptions that tourists and visitors voluntarily and publicly inscribe at the sites they visit. These texts are *indexical traces* left by travelers, that serve as reminders of the visits' fleeting nature and of their authors' identity and agency. One pertinent question concerns addressivity, or who are these travels talking with/writting to? Who do the authors imagine their audience(s) to be? The question emerges because in these mediated texts, no one specifically awaits the message at the receiving end. It seems that travelers address other visitors (current and yet-to-come/future visitors), sites' management and personnel, spiritual entities (prayers, for instance), and also the authors themselves, who would remember the texts they authored and the embodied (and often social) acts of inscribing them.[9] "To write," Jacques Derrida reminds us, "is to produce a mark that will constitute a

sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be rewritten."[10] Tourists' texts offer a special case of the Derridean machine, as they juxtapose the trope of mobility, embodied in a heightened state of modern travel/tourism, with the trope of immobility, embodied in the stationary institutions and attractions that travelers visit and in the lingering quality of their written traces, in a dramatic fashion. Travelers' texts are not simply "machines," as are all texts, but machines that are publicly placed "elsewhere," in cultural contact zones and sites of heritage.

The texts presented below include brief and condensed written utterances inscribed in visitor books. I use this term as an umbrella term to reference a variety of on-site media that serve to elicit written communication in different sites and under different circumstances. Terms such as "comment books/logbooks," "records," "catalogs," "visitor/guest registers," "autograph albums," "little books/booklets," "journals," and "signing books" are variously employed in academic literature, curatorial terminology, and popular vernacular to refer to these writing platforms.

Finally, since this chapter's focus is on sites that resonate of Jewish themes and heritage, I note that heritage tourism is the fastest growing subindustry in global tourism (at least in the pre-COVID-19 era). The heritage industry revolves around the dialectics between past and present and can be defined as "a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past."[11] "Heritage" concerns how the past is "carried' into the present (and the future too), and how such mediation, which is accomplished by various media and institutions, including tourism, museums, archaeological and historical sites and discourses, ties individual experience with a collective and imagined sense of sharedness. Contemporary tourists, Pierre Nora famously claims, can observe myriad sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) rather than actual or ecological environments of memory (*milieux de mémoire*).[12]

The formidable agenda of (re)constituting the past hints at why heritage sites and practices offer rich data for performance-inspired studies. By definition, the materiality of heritage exhibitions concerns the embodiment of intangible myths and narratives: since under Western epistemology past and future cannot be immediately accessible or directly sensed, there is need for *mediatory work* to be done in order to experience them; in order to bring that "foreign country of the past"[13] to the present, or alternatively to carry heritage tourists to that foreign country. Consequently, heritage projects stand or fall on how proficiently and persuasively they "produce the past,"[14] and, I would add, how that past produces a future. Heritage sites are particularly subject to institutional staging and mobilized mediational constructions, whereby the intangibility of

bygones and the elusive sense of the future are recalibrated into powerful narratives of collective identities that are presented to, and accessed and materially consumed by, tourists.[15]

All this is true for sites that address and reconstitute Jewish themes and heritage. When I discuss such scenes, centrally at stake are the different geocultural locations and political positionalities of Jews on the global grid, including of course—with the rise of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel—issues revolving around attending Jewish displays and displays of Jews inside and outside Israel. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett shows in her discussion of displays of Jewish culture(s) in the early decades of the twentieth century, Zionism has powerfully (re)shaped and homogenized the representation of Jews in Israel, and arguably elsewhere.[16]

In the following I offer observations and readings of tourists' texts in three sites that are located on the grid of modern Jewish destinations and routes of travel: (1) Rachel's Tomb, (2) the Ammunition Hill National Memorial site (East Jerusalem), and (3) the National Museum of American Jewish History (Philadelphia). Schematically, the first site's themes concern modernity and the shift from pilgrimage to modern tourism in the context of pre-state Zionism; the second site's themes concern Israeli (Sabra) military-national commemoration and martyrdom; and the third site's themes concern contemporary Jewish identity and heritage in the United States. While these sites differ along multiple lines—the first site is associated with more religious communities and practices, the second with a secular Israeli community (at least initially), and the third with Jewish American communities—these are sites of Jewish identity, memory, heritage, where ritual and public acts of writing transpire routinely. Since my focus is set on situated acts of writing, my descriptions will linger on material institutional arrangements through which visitors' texts are elicited, produced, and displayed.

"And All the Jews That Pass by Carve Their Names upon the Stones of the Pillar": Texts at Rachel's Tomb

The first site is Rachel's Tomb, and specifically the voluminous visitor books that were offered there during at least the first half of the twentieth century. Writing at Rachel's Tomb, however, began not with the presentation of heavy paper but centuries earlier.

Although the site where biblical Rachel was buried is uncertain, Rachel's Tomb—located to the south of Jerusalem at the northern outskirts of Bethlehem—has been a site of worship and pilgrimage destination for centuries for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.[17] The site is unique in that it is located somewhat

peripherally, which is to say that unlike other holy sites (the Western Wall and the Cave of the Patriarchs, for instance), it is not located in an urban center, and (perhaps not unrelated) it appeals centrally to female visitors.

One of the early descriptions of the site as a place eliciting inscriptions and engravings is supplied by Benjamin of Tudela, during his travel to Palestine in 1173. Benjamin of Tudela depicted the tomb as a small and open structure, which contained four pillars and a round top. Although the description is brief, this traveler nonetheless referenced on-site activities in the shape of writing practices: "and all the Jews that pass by carve their names upon the stones of the pillar."[18] Benjamin of Tudela's account does not inform us whether he himself partook in the ritual he documents, nor whether these were *only* Jews that he saw writing.[19] Since Rachel's Tomb was holy for the Christians and Muslims too, it makes sense that not only Jews were authoring inscriptions. In any case, there is nothing extraordinary or surprising in the activities the traveler from Tudela described, as engraving and inscribing texts and pictorial marks in sites of worship were common practices since antiquity.[20]

In a recent study focusing on Jewish graffiti in antiquity, Karen Stern demonstrates its ubiquity in spaces and structures that are not only holy and not only Jewish.[21] Stern shows how Jewish inscriptions are highly visible in holy sites and pilgrimage destinations, often side by side with non-Jewish inscriptions. These texts, Stern argues, were both performed and interpreted as acts of devotion. "Acts of carving, scratching, writing, and painting," Stern writes, "served as gestures . . . which extend and expand upon common notions of [Jewish] prayer as an 'expressive system.'"[22] In regard to the description Benjamin of Tudela offers, it might be that his "ethnographic eye" was more susceptible to Jewish texts and practices than others, or (not contradictorily) that he sought to stress the site's Jewish livelihood as performed by devotional Jewish activity.

Since the accumulation of autographs and occasional notes was easily accessible to the visitors (both those who wished to sign and those who wanted to look at others' autographs), it supported a sense of continuity and consequently a sense of community. A chain of recent and old pilgrims' traces was collectively created and became part and parcel of the materiality of the sites to which they made pilgrimage. These traces were not only collectively created but also appreciated, and Stern discusses, within the devotional framework, not only acts of inscribing, but also acts of reading. Devotional graffiti at sacred sites, she argues, "solicited an audience of passersby . . . who served as witnesses to the writers' supplications."[23] In light of this, the documentation Benjamin of Tudela supplies may itself be considered Jewish devotional activity.

The next traveler I discuss is Judith Montefiore, who visited the tomb during her 1827–28 travel to Palestine. She too indicated noticing the graffiti pilgrims wrote on-site and reveals her own decision to sign her name with that of her husband (Moses, who did not join her on that trip). Judith Montefiore's visit to Rachel's Tomb is of historical consequence because soon after (in 1831), Sir Moses Montefiore successfully obtained a legal Ottoman document (firman), which opened the formal way to renovate the site's physical structure. Montefiore's renovations were significant, and included the construction of heavy steel doors, which, for the first time, limited access to the site's interior. It is likely that the visitor books were introduced as part of Montefiore's modernization of the tomb or shortly later: these artifacts were commonly presented in various institutions in Europe since early modernity, and with the added ability to lock the tomb's inner space, they could be safely maintained.[24] Little is known of the history of the books at Rachel's Tomb, but it seems that two dozen voluminous visitor books were presented, completed and stored on site, each of which contained thousands of autographs and short notes inscribed during a period of several years.[25] Most of the books were lost or destroyed during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and only two volumes reappeared after 1967, covering the years 1936–42 and 1942–47.

The two surviving volumes are interesting for two reasons, which have to do with the identity of the authors who inscribed therein. The first author is surprising: it is an institutional agent and concerns the figure of Shlomo Freimann, who was the tomb's beadle between 1919 and 1947. In his capacity as the shamash, Freimann was responsible for the maintenance of the site's visitor books, a position that he was deeply committed to. Freimann positioned the books on a stand to the right of the tomb, with a dip pen by their side, where it was visible and accessible to visitors. This location also allowed Freimann to introduce the books to visitors and personally invite them to sign as he saw fit.

Freimann was not only responsible for the location of the books on the site's premises (which would have had implications), but he also managed the books' interior spaces. First, quite technically, he divided the large pages, which were initially black (unruled), into columns and rows, structuring the inner layout and readying it for visitors' orderly signatures (see Figure 13.1). Freimann also numbered the pages and added dates (marking the beginning of each day that the site was open for visitors). He furthermore numbered visitors' signatures, transforming random entries into well-organized records. Second, Freimann himself signed the book regularly, on each of its pages, where his round autograph decorates the top of each page, sometimes appearing a few times on the same page. Third, at times Freimann added information about visitors' signatures, such as the date of the visit (when it was omitted), or clarifying comments (when he thought these were needed). For instance, near four short signatures written in Farsi (May 1932), he wrote four separate times "From Persia," thus indicating these visitors' place of residence. If the visitor book can be viewed as a collection of sorts (of autographs and comments), then we can say that Freimann played a historically minded curatorial role. Fourth and last, Freimann used the wide space that the books' pages offer also for writing notes, including documenting happenings at and near the tomb and bureaucratic matters and checklists that he needed to attend to. He wrote in the book of his perspectives and positions with regard to national events that took place in Palestine and abroad, which he thought had an effect on Jewish life. This touches on the fact that Freimann pursued an ideological agenda in the capacity of serving as the site's shamash—and the curator of its visitors books—and the public sacred spaces of the visitor books offered him a place where his positions and concerns could be voiced and read publicly.

On February 18, 1943 (the Purim Katan evening of HaTashag), Freimann indicated that the site was open all night for the benefit of visitors and prayers, to which he added a wish that the visitors' prayers "shall be well-received and accepted soon." On October 22, 1942, with arrival of news of the horrors of the Holocaust, Freimann wrote a wordy entry where he appreciatively described in detail the hundreds of Jewish prayers who had come to the site to pray the prior evening (specifying their ethnic and communal affiliations). He was moved by the large number of visitors and their devotion and reflected in the book that "it has been many years since such a large crowd had been observed." In a comment from April 12, 1945, Freimann addressed political changes in the United States, noting in bold letters: "The President Roosevelt died, and the new president is Truman." And then, on May 9, 1945, he wrote, "Today it was formally announced that Germany has surrendered unconditionally," marking a "V" near the text.

I mentioned that Freimann used the books also to keep records and lists of various items, including small financial dealings and the price of religious services that he supplied (usually lighting candles in the memory of deceased people and praying for them). Finally, he saw himself as the Jewish/Zionist guardian of the tomb, and as such he monitored, reported, and interfered with various Palestinian activities, which, he suspected, were aimed at undermining the site's Jewish character. In the visitor books, he reports repeatedly and negatively on the Arab activities at or near the site. For example, on August 28, 1946, Freimann writes that he had successfully opposed attempts to have an Arab policeman permanently stationed at the tomb: "I absolutely insisted and did not allow their foot to touch the ground. I [then] immediately called the Beit-Lehem Police, who threw them out."

At the same time, the books at Rachel's Tomb also served the public function that visitor books typically fulfill, that is, recording visitors' and pilgrims' signatures and comments. Most of the texts in these books are in Hebrew, English, and Yiddish (though other languages, too, are presented), mostly written by women visitors who frequented the site more than men.[26] The texts mainly address women's health and fertility, which were associated with the site's distinct feminine and maternal themes: Rachel's biblical and postbiblical images portrayed a caring maternal figure, who prayed for her descendants' sufferings and exiles following the destruction of the First Temple (recall Jeremiah, who spoke of "Rachel weeping for her children" [Jer. 31:14]). For instance, on June 5, 1936, a female visitor signed her name and cited a fertility prayer asking God to be fertile and pregnant with male children ("vehakadosh barukh hu, yiphkeda bevanim zekharim, zera shel kaima, Amen"). A week later, on June 12, 1936, another visitor wrote: "For the health of the body, for complete recovery" (livri'ut haguf, lirfu'a shlema)—an expression that is repeated often in the texts. Visitors occasionally also wrote short prayers in the memory of deceased relatives and of men who died in battle.

Figure 13.1 presents an opening from Rachel's Tomb visitor book. The opening captures both the dense aggregation of visitors' signatures on the book's wide pages, *and* the shamash's grids and texts: Freimann's signatures appear on the top of each column (six signatures), together with the dates and indications of special events (New Year). A few of his texts are inscribed inside the columns as well, in between visitors' entries (such as at the lower right corner, where he reports what he did with the tomb's key).

In her comparative studies of Rachel's Tomb, anthropologist Susan Sered addressed the site's feminine qualities, and how they shaped the ritual of female visitors and worshippers.[27] Sered was the first to systematically study these visitor books, observing how they reflected changing national moods. Sered notes that the site became very popular during the 1940s, when it came to possess new meanings of national and patriotic character, which was a result of the "societal liminality" in which the Yishuv society as a whole was embedded. In a period that shortly followed the horrors of the Holocaust, on the one hand, and before the declaration of the State of Israel, on the other hand, the Jewish population yearned for collective symbols that would unify Jews within the Yishuv and worldwide, and offer hope and consolation. Rachel's image and the site that materialized it were ideally suited for this purpose, and the meanings turned from personal health and fertility to national concerns and collective hopes. Sered sees visitors' and pilgrims' texts as reflecting a shift in "social mood," to which I add that by inscribing what visitors wrote at the tomb was as

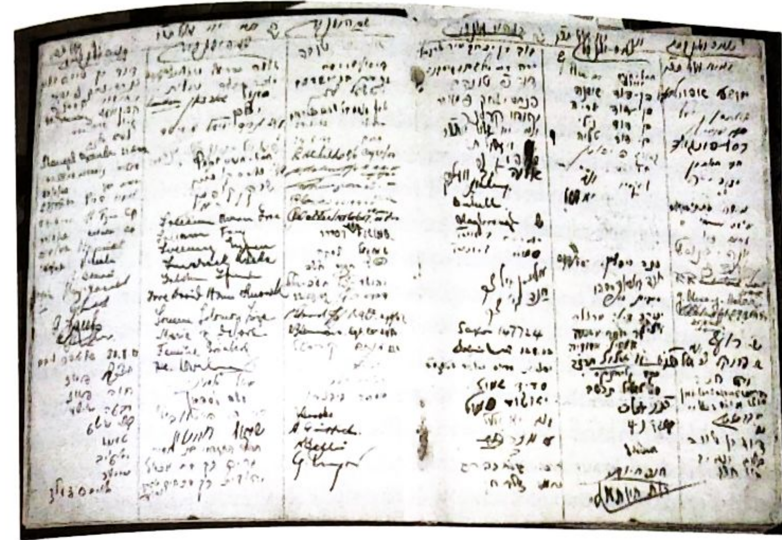

Figure 13.1. The visitor book at Rachel's Tomb: pilgrims' and the shamash's texts. Photo by the author.

much a public reflection of their sentiments as it was a reinscribing of the tomb's (changing) collective meaning(s).

On July 7, 1942, a male visitor wrote a lengthy text, which is typical of later entries in bringing together personal events with larger national events and political themes:

> After all the efforts that I have made to lead a happy life, I wasn't able to succeed. I forced myself to join the army, for which I wasn't prepared and [the idea of] which never crossed my mind before. But eventually I was drafted. I ask [you] not to blame anyone in the world [for this], for I have done this out of my own free will, when [I felt that] the situation had come to it. My Brothers, Sisters, and Acquaintances: mention me often, cherish me in your hearts, and mention and know that I was a friend or an acquaintance to you, by the name of Asher of the age of 27. May, with God's help, we shall live together happily. . . . Soon the victory [will come] and Am Israel's redemption, due to the merit of our Mother Rachel. In sincere friendship, yours loyally, Asher.

This elaborate entry brings together the visitor's personal narrative with national issues and events and explicitly addresses the fact that it was written at

a particular location. That is, on top of its indexical quality, the text makes an explicit reference to the site, suggesting both routinely and ritually that the aforementioned wishes will be granted "in the merit of our Mother Rachel." In terms of addressivity, this relatively elaborate text makes use of the book's space of inscription for pursuing a public address and for testifying dramatically to a crucial junction in the life of this young visitor. The visitor-inscriber Asher uses the book as medium to publicly communicate and share his feelings. His text is characterized by an open addressivity structure, that is, by addressing whoever will read the entry, where the book is located—and to call for a general act of witnessing of his hopes, fears, and possible sacrifices.[28]

More than the rich assortment of writing genres pursued by the shamash and by the visitors on the pages of the tomb's visitor books, what stands out is that the books' writing surfaces are in effect hybrid documents that present multiple types of Jewish authorships produced on the same symbolic-cum-material space. With the intervention of the site's shamash, who in effect curates not only the site but also the book, these books acquired the status of bona fide institutional documents that functioned as part of the institution of Rachel's Tomb (at a time when its collective meaning was undergoing significant changes). "Documents are composed in and of particular places," Eric Laurier and Angus Whyte remind us,[29] and the writing practices pursued by both the shamash and the visitors, contributed to (rather than merely reflected) the signification of the site as a Jewish space and destination that is at the same time material and symbolic.[30] The books' pages amount to surfaces that were at once front stages (public) and back stages (personal and organizational use): they included genres that are typically public, and genres—such as bookkeeping itself—that are typically institutional and hidden from public eyes.

As for the shamash, one wonders why Freimann wrote what he did where he did, and not, say, in a booklet kept away from the public eye. It might be that the impressive visitor books were for Freimann the most readily available mnemonic devices; as their custodian, he was sure not to lose them or lose sight of what he wrote there. Alternatively, it could be that in historical view of occurrences in and around the tomb, he wished that his notes, especially those reporting on events nearby and how he addressed them, would be preserved. And the visitor books—he was only partly right in assuming—could grant this. The third explanation lies in symbolism: recall that Freimann signed on top of every column, and in every page in the book, suggesting a correspondence between his function as the gatekeeper of the site's space and use (physical), and of the visitor book's space and use (discursive). Finally, it could be that his inscriptions established a dialogue with visitors' inscriptions, and were made to

be seen and read by the latter. In other words, perhaps they were made purposefully public, with visitors' as their intended audiences. Along these lines it might be that Freimann, who was born in Jerusalem and was a "local," sought to bring a different perspective or "voice" to the book's pages, that of a local or a resident, which would inform and interact with visitors' voices: tourists and pilgrims from near or afar. Of my experience in studying visitor books, it is not unheard of that staff members too write in the book, and texts I have seen range from brief technical lists to substantial comments. Research, too, depicts occasions of more intense involvement, for instance, in Kevin James's study of visitor books in Victorian Britain, where it was common for the management to address visitors' texts, giving a dialogic bend to the book.[31]

I elaborated on the beadle's extensive interventions in Rachel's Tomb's visitor books for three reasons. First, we often read visitor books for what visitors write in them, neglecting to notice contributions—and other types of interventions—performed by nonvisitor authors. Addressing these books inclusively requires seeing them as institutional media that are mobilized, in degrees—and the way this is pursued and the aims for which it is pursued. This brings us to the second reason for which the beadle's interventions are significant, which is political. Rachel's Tomb was for centuries a site of pilgrimage and visitation that appealed to pilgrims and travelers of different religions. Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, however, it has been disputed politically, with the tomb occupying a highly contested location. Indeed, recently it was exceptionally included in the Israeli side of the dividing wall, surrounded by towering walls, fortified watchtowers, and fences.[32] Moreover, as Susan Sered shows, the shift toward nationalism was also a break away from the site's traditional feminine symbolism.[33] In light of this, Freimann's interventions are significant as they embodied and contributed to the changing Jewish—and masculine—character of the site of Rachel's Tomb.

Third and last, Freimann's particular management of the visitor books draws our attention to locations and occasions where spontaneous, graffiti engravings on nonregulated surfaces were replaced by writing practices associated with the media of the visitor books and the conventions that surround their use. Historically, this is a modernization process that has most likely commenced around the time Moses Montefiore restructured the tomb's building (1831). As shifts in media go, at stake are never only techno-material aspects, but also political and institutional ones. Graffiti writing in antiquity, Stern stresses, often amounted to Jewish prayers, which "entailed writers' deliberate, occasionally violent, and indelible modifications of their environments."[34] Visitor books, contrariwise, are institutional media, which are not lasting, and which may be, and often are, closely managed by the institution. Indeed, the

very presentation of such media—including where they are offered, when, to whom, and how reading and writing practices are managed—are at the institution's hands.

Ammunition Hill Texts: National Commemoration Performances and (a Few) Zionist Disputes

The second site is the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Museum (AHNMM). The museum, which is located in northeast Jerusalem at Ammunition Hill, which marks the place of a known battle between the Israeli army and the Jordanian Legion during the Six-Day War (June 6, 1967). Unlike Rachel's Tomb, this is a modern national commemoration complex, which possesses a clear conservative ideological mission at its foundation: through memorializing the thirty-seven Israeli soldiers who died in the battle, and the soldiers who died at the Jerusalem front more broadly (182 soldiers), the site is an instantiation of the Zionist-military ethos, promoting the idiom of the "liberation and unification of Jerusalem" with an emphasis on military might. Unlike Rachel's Tomb, this site's gender hue clearly revolves around men, hegemonic masculinity, and national chauvinism.

The site physically encompasses a spacious hilly area, and a museum that was inaugurated in 1974 and legally declared a National Memorial Site by the Knesset in 1990. It holds a special aura in Israel's commemoration landscape and it is a "must" site for Jewish visitors to Jerusalem—both Israelis and international tourists. Jerusalem Day ceremonies (attended by the president, prime minister, cabinet ministers, and military generals) are hosted there, and many schools and military units visit the site. The visitors, approximately 200,000 annually, walk through the original trenches and bunkers where the 1967 battle took place, which now supply stages for the telling of heroic stories of combat, patriotic sacrifice, and national triumph. The site thus demonstratively embodies Zionism's "national cult of memorializing the dead,"[35] and it stands out in terms of its salience and popularity even within the context of East Jerusalem, which is dotted with numerous Israeli military commemoratives.

In meetings and interviews I held with the site's directors, they all reiterated the linkage between the site and two major heritage sites in Jerusalem: the Western Wall and Yad Vashem. This was part of the discourse of Zionist national revival, weaving together traditional Jewish themes (Western Wall), Holocaust remembrance (Yad Vashem), and male heroism associated with recent Israeli militaristic nationalism—"the holy trinity" (*ha-shilush ha-kadosh*), as one of the site's directors called it. Reiterating the national myth of revival and

tying the Ammunition Hill museum to the significant and far more attractive sites of the Western Wall and Yad Vashem is strategic and serves to elevate the site symbolically and promote it as a major heritage attraction. Cultural geographer Maoz Azaryahu observes that Jerusalem is a place where the "encounter between the living and the dead is socially organized and culturally regulated within the framework of national tradition,"[36] and the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, and Ammunition Hill are nodal points in this interconnected topography. Consider, in comparison, that Rachel's Tomb is a prayer site for health, healing, and motherhood.

The AHNMM presents information about the overall military campaign over Jerusalem, as well as many commemorative exhibits and devices, which include engraved texts: the Golden Wall of Commemoration with the names of the soldiers who died in the Jerusalem front, a book-like device whose large steel page records information about the soldiers, soldiers' handwritten letters and personal journals, and more. Many of the artifacts are discursive, and include texts and representations thereof, which enhance the display's authenticity, personalize and humanize the image of the soldiers, and glorify the image of the generals. Within this venerated, somber, and textual atmosphere, an effective national narrative of remembrance and identification is unspooled. It is within this ideological as well as material context that the site's impressive commemorative visitor book is revealed.

During my ethnographic visits to the museum (between 2006 and 2012), I observed and spoke with visitors and with the site's management. All of the visitors whom I observed were Jewish, consisting of three main publics: local Israelis doing sightseeing in Jerusalem (mostly traveling from peripheral towns), international Jewish heritage tourists who traveled to Israel as part of a Zionist organization (such as the Taglit or the Birthright project), and ultra-Orthodox families who live in the surrounding Jewish neighborhoods and enjoy the site's spacious outdoor area (entrance was then free).

The first thing to note about the AHNMM commemorative visitor book is not what it contains but rather where it is contained. While visitor books are typically positioned near the exit, where they are ideally suited to elicit "an audience-contributed gesture of closure," as Tamar Katriel observes,[37] the location of the Ammunition Hill book is quite different. It is not positioned near the museum's exit but in a place that is the symbolic reverse location: in one of the museum's innermost halls, near the Golden Wall of Commemoration and the flickering memorial flame (Figure 13.2). There, the book is located in a deeply somber space that is densely decorated with national symbols, including three large flags that hang from the hall's ceiling (the flag of the State of Israel, the flag of the Israeli army, and the flag of the Jerusalem Municipality).

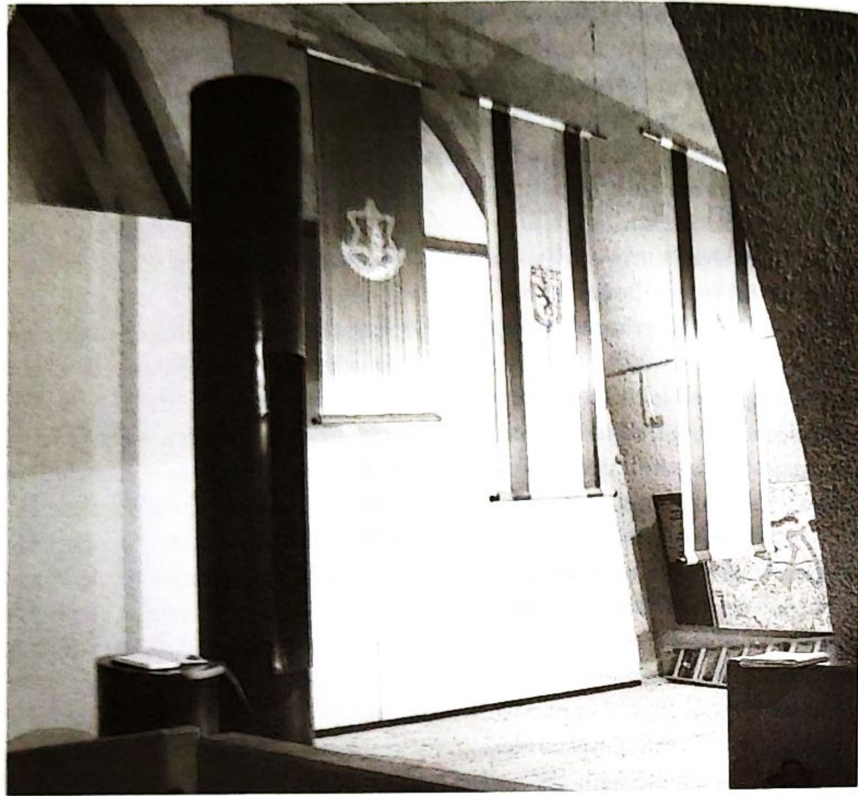

Figure 13.2. Symbolic positioning of visitor book in the Ammunition Hill Museum. Photo by the author.

Positioned uniquely inside the museum's "sacred" interior, the book is not set to elicit reflexive comments or closing gestures. Rather, it enhances the sense of visiting an ideologically charged site and supplies an interactional interface right at the visit's ideological crescendo. The book's positioning in a heightened commemorative setting is further stressed by the fact that it is the *main* exhibit in the hall and by its material presentation: it is offered inside a monument-like installation made of heavy, black steel. The installation's steel floor is elevated from the floor, and visitors who wish to read (or write) "must rise for the occasion," where they will see the book on a polished wooden platform. Befitting the commemorative setting, and in line with the medium's performative role, the book itself is heavy and bears a formidable appearance: it has a hard leather cover, bearing a military logo in dark red ink, and one hundred large pages (measuring 26 × 34 cm). And in its material, too, it is distinct: it is made of thick parchment-like material, and not of paper.

A few of these features specifically resonate with Jewish audiences and evoke traditional Jewish practices. The pedestal on which the book rests, which requires the visitors to stand while reading and writing, and the material of the book's pages (parchment) echo the materiality associated with the Torah (albeit that latter is scroll and not a book). The fact that the installation is slightly elevated from the ground further evokes the Jewish ritual of reading from the Torah at the synagogue in particular ritualistic occasions (the *aliyah laTorah*).[38] In addition, a silver plate attached to the pedestal explicitly instructs visitors how to write in the book: "*Students, Soldiers, and Visitors.* Please indicate your impressions in a concise and respected manner. Kindly, regard the visitor book in a manner appropriate to the Ammunition Hill Site." Ken Arnold argues that museum labels "stand in for the absent curator, prompting a form of conversation of sorts," and this label is revealing in terms of who the museum addresses as its imagined audiences and how it instructs the composition of commemoration inscriptions ("respected manner").[39] The label further helps establishing a semiotic association between the artifact (the book) and the museum/site.

Looking inside the book's thick pages reveals added national and military symbolism, which repeats, corresponds with, and augments the plethora of symbols crowding the site's spaces. Running down the center of each page is a column of four symbols printed in military shades: the symbol of the State of Israel, of the city of Jerusalem, of the Israeli Defense Forces, and of the Ammunition Hill site. Again, while the physical placement of the book inside the museum premises designates it as an institutional artifact (or a Derridean "machine," see above), the printed symbols discursively reassert this connection from within each and every page. These pages compose what Jan Blommaert termed "'special' paper, inviting 'special' writing."[40] Visitors' texts are visually enmeshed into the book's symbolic layout (see Figure 13.3), creating a hybrid genre of visual-cum-textual signs: it offers traces of interactions between travelers and the site, or between impromptu utterances and institutional emblems.

Most of the texts present utterances that comply with and (re)affirm Zionism's militaristic narrative, as recounted by the museum.[41] Travelers' basic written formula here concerns the expression of an acknowledgment of the Zionist-militaristic sacrificial narrative, which consists of showing deep appreciation and paying homage to those who fell in action. Yet the addressees of these emotional expressions vary. The following entries, which appear in Figure 13.3, offer illustrations of *different* addressees and commemoration themes, as well as of the book's bilingual (Hebrew and English) character. The first three entries

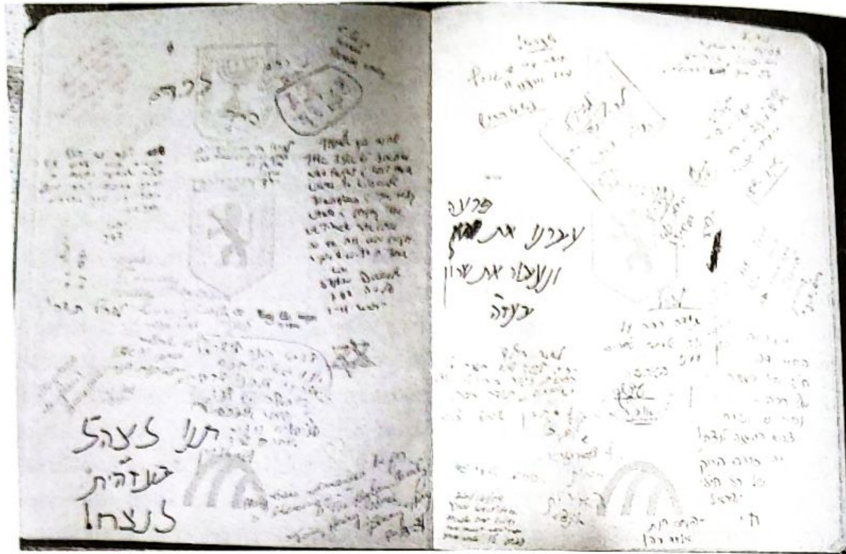

Figure 13.3. Commemorative texts inscribed inside the Ammunition Hill visitor book. Photo by the author.

are written in Hebrew and appear on the left page, and the fourth entry is in English and is located on the bottom half of the page on the right.

> 17/8/03
> To the museum!
> I enjoyed very much getting to know, learning and seeing what happened in the wars. The museum is very well kept and educational. Keep up the good work. Aviah [surname]
>
> From Battalion *299*, "Horev," we thank you for [your] investment . . .
>
> Gratefulness to *God* who sent his messengers—the I.D.F. to save his People. With God's help, he shall further help us in the future. Shifra [surname]
>
> Through the help of GD and His constant surveillance, Israel + Jerusalem are *ours* and we will NEVER LET GO!

The first two entries present one of the most common genres of inscriptions that travelers write on this commemorative stage, as they refer to and often also

address the site itself and those who "invest" in national commemoration. In the first text, the formulaic opening exposes the utterance's addressivity structure. The opening is followed by a description of the visit in highly positive terms (evaluations), attesting to its informative and educational value. Also, the inscriber supplies an evaluation of the material condition of the facility ("very well kept"), complimenting, in this way, those seen as responsible for its maintenance. The inscriber then commends the site's personnel and finally signs. In the second entry the structure is reversed, as the signer begins by naming the addresser, which in this case is not an individual but a military group of visitors (a battalion). But the focus of the text is similar, and rests on recognizing the labor that commemorating agents had put into maintaining the site. By thus structuring the texts, the visitors comply with the local norm of signing the commemorative book, producing coherent and relevant utterances, which adequately correspond with the museum's ideological charter: supplying information about the battles and doing this as an "educational" mission (which the visitor reaffirms). These entries also offer normative identities that can be, and are indeed, performed on national surfaces such as these. We have here the Israelis, who are Jews, but whose Jewish identity is subsumed within their Israeli-militaristic identification. This is a modern, national identity, where, by and large, the Jewish group is "unmarked" (no need to write or sign "I am Jewish"). It is perceived as synonymous with the category of citizen in the first text and military in the second text.

However, most of the book's commemorative texts are not directed to those institutional agents who serve in maintaining commemoration, but rather express gratitude *directly to the dead soldiers who fought and fell in the war.* In these cases, expressions of indebtedness are directed not to the commemorators but to the "commemoratees." Though very different in terms of addressivity, both types of inscriptions present relevant and normative identity categories, including Israeli and Zionist visitors, who supply proof for having visited the site, having understood its national (Jewish-Zionist) narrative, and expressing sympathy with it.

The latter two entries above are rather different. Both present an open addressivity structure, that is, they are not addressed to anyone in particular. Rather, they build on the communication settings that suggest that they will be read precisely where they were written. They are relevant entries in that they express themes concerning gratitude (the first) and salvation or triumph (the second), which are recurrent themes in the museums' commemorative narrative. Yet these texts differ significantly from the earlier ones because they locate the historical agency behind the 1967 Israeli-Arab War not with the military-national system, but with the Almighty. The first of the two is clear about the differences between the Creator and those who are his messengers, and it is

explicit about the identities of both. Historical agency, the text succinctly argues, lies with divine intervention and not with Israel's warfare machine and war generals and soldiers. In these and similar entries God emerges explicitly and acts as a superagent who is responsible for the acclaimed historical victory, and who is therefore the adequate addressee for sentiments of gratitude. Similar themes recur in the second entry, which states the site's national agenda, echoing the AHNMM's mantra ("Forever liberated and united Jerusalem"). The inscriber underlined the term "ours" (first-person plural form, together with "we will"), stressing thus the joint character of Jewish/Israeli experience and fate and performing a sense of community and shared commitments, all under the "surveillance" of God. These texts suggest an oppositional reading of the site or of the modern-national narrative it conveys—and my observations indicate that these texts are usually inscribed by ultra-Orthodox Jewish visitors, who live in nearby neighborhoods and who visit the site for leisure and recreation.

At Ammunition Hill, more than at Rachel's Tomb, the books serve as modern institutional media that is mobilized in the hands of a militaristic-Zionist institution. In its capacity as a commemorative and aggregative surface—a platform that literally brings visitors together—the book creates a semblance of community, an inscribed "imagined (Jewish) community."[42] Hence, regardless of whether individual entries use the first body plural form (we/ours), the book itself accomplished the sociality of "we" and "ours" by its very communicative structure and by the fact that it allows different visitors' traces to linger in a juxtaposed manner. Visitors' handwritten utterances gain their meaning from the site where they are written and presented (indexically) and vice versa: they in turn endow the static nature of the past with dynamicity, spontaneity, and authenticity.

"I'm Not a Jew, but I'm Loving the History": Jewish Heritage in North America

The third and last site is the renewed National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH). The NMAJH was founded in 1976 and was relocated and comprehensively restructured in 2010. It is located right on Independence Mall (overlooking the Independence National Historic Park), a location that symbolically embodies the museum's view of the successful integration of Jewish communities in the United States along legal, cultural, and economic lines, and that instrumentally helps draw large audiences who visit the attractions on Independence Mall.[43] It is an ambitious museum, clearly visible in terms of its impressive size and state-of-the-art appearance, and in terms of the national scope and agenda it encompasses (suggesting an authority that is national, rather than local, state, or regional).

The NMAJH narrates the history of Jewish immigration to and livelihood in the United States, embracing a distinct liberal and progressive view of American Jewish history, identity, and heritage, and the incorporation and success that Jewish communities in the United States have reached. Notably, this is *not* a Holocaust museum, and the Holocaust—as also the establishment of the State of Israel—play a small role in the permanent exhibition space. The museum hosts nearly 80,000 visitors annually. Compared to AHNMM, what stands out is the different ideological perspectives that guide curation in both museums, and relatedly the mood-scape, which is celebratory and nearly festive at the NMAJH, and bleak and morbid at AHNMM. Also, the historical canvas in Philadelphia is broader, which corresponds with the physical space and size of the museum (the NMAJH being much bigger than the AHNMM). In terms of visitors, in Philadelphia most visitors are not Jewish, which is typical of Jewish museums in the United States, while at Ammunition Hill the overwhelming majority is.[44]

What similarity these museums hold concerns the fact that at the NMAJH, too, the core exhibitions consist mainly of handwritten textual artifacts, including originals, reproductions, and representations. From the inventory of the butcher Asser Levy, who immigrated to the United States and settled in Philadelphia in 1682, through the many early immigration certificates and documents (handwritten and/or hand-signed), which testify to Jewish travel and livelihood in the United States, to postcards and letters written by members of the young Jewish communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the museum's high-techish and contemporary-looking exhibitions offer indexical traces of writing activities performed by North American Jews.[45] The exhibition spaces are laid out chronologically, and unlike Rachel's Tomb and the AHNMM, they offer a number of surfaces on which visitors can write. These surfaces include two installations where Post-it-like sticky notes are offered, where visitors can write replies to questions that the museum puts forth, and two relatively small notebook diaries that are located within specific exhibition rooms. I presently limit my comments to the latter notebook diaries.

My focus is on one of the diaries, in which visitors wrote comments (the other diary served only signing names), which is positioned in a room that tells of Jewish travel and immigration to the West Coast in the nineteenth century. The booklet is located near several exemplary items that travelers typically took with them on their trips, including a hand mirror, a Hebrew siddur, and a few writing utensils (Figure 13.4). A museum label near the diary addresses visitors: "Think about the things you might want with you during your long journey to the West. Some supplies are already in your wagon. WHAT ELSE WILL YOU PACK?" The label's text engages audiences playfully, scripting

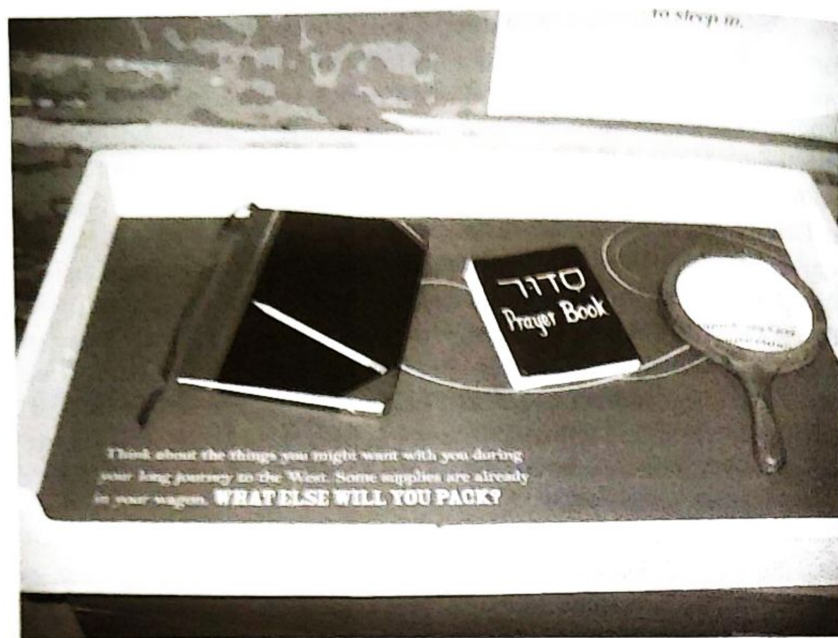

Figure 13.4. "WHAT ELSE WILL YOU PACK?": "Supplies" for historical Jewish travel at the National Museum of American Jewish History. Photo by the author.

them into action in the midst of preparing for travel. There are a couple of points to note here, which is that visitors are themselves travelers (they traveled to the museum), which raises a question regarding what *they* have brought with them to the museum, or reversely, what they have taken away from it. Also, the museum label requests visitors to complete a collection (indicating that some supplies have already been collected), and hence symbolically visitors are invited to supplement the exhibition by adding their *own objects, that is, their texts,* to the contemporary textual (Jewish) "wagon."[46]

Most of the texts in this booklet are written in English and only a few, though clearly visible, are in Hebrew. The booklet's blank and undivided pages do not limit visitors' texts to autographs, and more than half of them are discursive (include text over and above autograph, date, and place of origin). A few young visitors respond to the museum's question "appropriately," that is, in a way that accords with the invitation. One visitor wrote, "I would pack some water and beans," and another indicated: "I would pack weapons just in case something happens. I would bring food too" (a survival priority!). A third visitor wrote quite a lengthy fictional narrative describing events that were supposedly encountered

by the westward-heading Jewish travelers. Yet most visitors do not respond to the label, but use the booklet as they see fit, choosing to leave inscribed traces of their visit as they wish. The texts express visitors' ways of being heritage audiences, or as sociologist Harold Garfinkel would have put it, "doing being" a Jewish audience.[47] A few visitors signed their names and wrote nearby the phrase "so and so was here"—an "epigraphic cliché," as Stern calls it.[48] These inscribers did not respond to the museum's invite, but made use of the available platform to publicly present themselves in situ. Some of the names (Rosen, Cohen, Lustig) clearly suggest Jewish identities, and at other times the code (language) accomplishes this indexically, such as entries written in, or including, Hebrew.

Other entries in this booklet generally address the museum and the exhibits, such as in a text written by a female visitor from New York: "What a beautiful and educational museum." Entries of this type relate to the site's exhibits and, as we have seen above, are common in visitor books, which are appropriately used by visitors as channels for communication with the museum's otherwise unseen and inaccessible curators.

The third and last cluster of entries in this booklet comprises texts that explicitly address the site's Jewish character and performatively shape it into a Jewish space. One opinionated, Hebrew-written entry is directed at the management: "I would have been happy if there were also explanations in Hebrew. Particularly because this is a *Jewish* museum" (emphasis in the original). The entry's language indexically supports its expressive content, making a negative evaluation—a complaint that entails a substantial critique, in fact—of the exhibition, raising a question as to its appropriateness to a Jewish heritage site. Leaving aside the question of whether the museum should or should not be bilingual (English/Hebrew), or more generally a multilingual establishment, the entry has little to do with the westward travel of Jews, and much to do with performatively marking the museum's exhibition spaces as Jewish spaces. It reminds me of visitors' negative evaluations in other museums, which address either material issues concerning maintenance (at AHNMM visitors wrote "why isn't there a watercooler nearby" and "the outdoor space is dirty") or matters of ideological standing (such as the texts above from AHNMM that critique the site's ideological narration). This critique seems to be falling mostly under the first category, suggesting that language (Hebrew) is materially essential to the exhibition, yet hinting at a different, larger critique.

A few other texts perform the "Jewishness" of the museum spaces by the metonymic association of the booklet with the larger exhibition. An inscription written over an entire page reads: "JEWS ARE AWESOME ☺"; and another large text succinctly states: "I ♥ 'ה." The latter text combines three discursive codes: English (the individualistic *I*), visual (referencing love aesthetically, which also

suggests a spillover from new media genres of writing scripts), and Hebrew (holy language used for the holy name).[49] The text contributes to the site's Jewish character by suggesting that this renewed museum with its high-tech exhibitions is a suitable place for the expression of "chic" Jewish devotion.

Two more texts, which were written in August 2012, and which refer to the travel westward, reference Jewish identity more modestly. Under their signatures the visitors added in parenthesis: "(also a Jew)." These interesting parenthesized additions serve as qualifiers that legitimize these visitors' participation in the booklet's writing practices: they, too, are Jews, and hence they, too, can legitimately participate in imagining (other) Jews' travel westward. The word "also" resonates with the notion of the collection (which I mentioned earlier), whereby the undersigned recognize and publicly identify themselves as Jewish, hence as fitting into the collection of signatures that index "Jewish" identity in this site.

These and similar texts perform Jewish identity in situ and help produce the inscriptive spaces of the booklet as a Jewish-scape. For many visitors who inscribe in this diary, Jewish identity emerges as a relevant social category, which is then expressed and stated publicly. Consider a different entry, apparently not written by a Jewish visitor: "This exhibition feels real. I'm not a Jew, but I'm loving the history." Through a somewhat apologetic tone, the entry reveals, yet again, that visitors to the NMAJH perceive the imagined publics that the museum addresses as Jewish and that, therefore, possessing and exhibiting a Jewish identity is appropriate, even advantageous. This visitor reveals her identity as non-Jewish, or as a nonmember of the relevant public.[50] If this is the case, it is reminding of a similar type of apologetic texts at the AHNMM, where, for instance, members of an infinitary unit that did not participate in the historic battle write: "we didn't conqueror Jerusalem but she's always in our hearts. A soldier and an officer, Golani, March 06." A different reading may suggest that referencing the visitor's non-Jewish identity does not serve in an apologetic capacity but rather to enhance the validity of the observation she is making—and the praise she is paying—by indicating that *despite* not being Jewish, she finds the portrayal of Jewish history in America as "real" and expresses genuine affection to the narrative the museum unfolds. Either way, she recognizes a connection between specifically Jewish audiences and the museum and that this heritage category is relevant as a communicative (writing) entitlement.[51]

Disembarking: Tracing Jewish Inscriptive Agencies

I explored travel writing by looking at the subgenre of inscribed and situated texts that tourists and visitors produce in three Jewish heritage sites. Together with recent research exploring the richness of travel-related writing practices, this comparative and multisited study suggests that this subgenre of writing while traveling should be included in the encompassing grand genre of travel narrative. Here is a shift in the scholarly view of the conjunctions of travel and writing practices, seeking to shed light on what has received only little attention thus far. Specifically, studying this subgenre of travel writing may illuminate the constitution of Jewish displays of participation and heritage in contemporary Jewish destinations, across a range of locations and itineraries.

Shifting from the canonic grand genre of travel narrative to brief on-site inscriptions recalibrates the emphasis from the single romantic author-narrator, to highly collective, public, and situated performances.[52] Produced and displayed in situ, these performances mirror and reconstitute the Jewish character of the destination—as expressed in the hands (literally) and through the voices (figuratively) of their inscribers.

Before I address these Jewishing texts, the Jewishness of the sites themselves demands some attention. These sites' stories narrate different periods, and their geocultural/geopolitical locations offer diverse places at which visitors may subscribe publicly to the twin categories of "visitor" and "Jew." The similarities and the variations between the three sites can be cast on a continuum between inclusivity and exclusivity. Consider that while Rachel's Tomb has been a site of pilgrimage for Jews, Muslims, and Christians for many centuries, with the rise of Zionism, access has become growingly restricted. Through physically restructuring the tomb (Montefiore), then through the meticulous and active management of the site and, analogously, of its visitor books (Freimann), and finally and more recently, through the isolation of the site within the separation wall, accessing the tomb has become more exclusive and more political. The visitor books do not reflect non-Jewish texts or inscriptions. The texts written therein reflect, as Susan Sered shows, a shift from century-old concerns of health and fertility as evoked by mostly observing (Jewish) women, to preoccupation with the horrors of the Holocaust, and Zionist national discourse.[53] The Ammunition Hill National Memorial Museum, while open, free to visit, and physically accessible, is nonetheless exclusive, and non-Jewish visitors on the premises are a rare view. The textual variations the pages of the visitor books display emerge rather because Jewish visitors are not a homogeneous ethnic group, and sharp political and theological disputes are expressed (together with other types of discords). Celebrating Jewish ethnonationalism, the museum is open and accepting of displays of support, homage, and admiration of what Meira Weiss called Zionist's "cult of the dead."[54] Lastly, the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia is the most inclusive of the sites, and indeed, inclusivity is part of its liberal public imagination. The large majority of visitors to the site are not Jewish (which is typically the case in

other Jewish and Holocaust museums in the United States). As we have seen, one disputing text offers a critique—in Hebrew—of the lack of Hebrew as an institutional language of display ("Particularly because this is a *Jewish* museum"). Here is a question of language ideologies, suggesting a correlation between ethnicity and language. Moreover, the text embodies an entitlement—tied to the identity of being an Israeli—for expressing this type of criticism.

The three sites offer their audiences diverse types of writing platforms, with different heritage affordances, that is, different interactional possibilities to (re) establish Jewish heritage. At Rachel's Tomb we can assume the institutionalization (and domestication) of on-site writing practices, as these have shifted historically from carving graffiti on the structure of the tomb to inscribing in visitor books. These visitor books are artifacts that have been extensively adapted for their purpose by the tomb's beadle, and there is reason to suppose that Freimann was as careful in the ways he mediated these books' usage to visitors (who can inscribe therein, what can be written, and so on). At Ammunition Hill, the visitor book is positioned in a densely symbolic location, and the pages of the artifact itself contain multiple national and militaristic symbols. Anything written on the books' pages establishes semiotic relations with the symbolic spaces inside the book and outside it—the politically charged spaces of the museum and of East Jerusalem. In Philadelphia, a small and simple (unruled and undecorated) booklet is playfully offered as part of a specific historical display addressing Jewish travel to the West. The siddur nearby might frame the booklet as a Jewish writing surface and text. Museumgoers are asked to name several objects that they suggest taking with them on their imagined travel westward, and symbolically the booklet serves as an inclusive vehicle that itself collects visitors' various texts.

Visitors' texts on these platforms display Jewishness publicly as part of the material fabric of the site. This is accomplished by writing Hebrew words and letters, by code-switching to Hebrew (combining Hebrew words in texts that are otherwise not in Hebrew), or by explicitly mentioning Jews and/or Jewish symbolism.[55] Consider the multiple occasions where, at the Ammunition Hill museum, images of Jewish symbols (Star of David, menorah) accompany images of military weapons and armory (tanks, guns). These multimodal inscriptions read "a Jewish/Israeli tank" or "a Jewish/Israeli mortar," thus also reflecting, authenticating, and amplifying the site's national-militaristic ideological agenda.

Distinctly Jewish names, too, serve to index Jewish heritage and presence, as sometimes do also travelers' places of origin (which they indicate in line with the conventions of signing visitor books). In fact, a spatial national and sometimes global grid of Jewish communities, towns, cities, and mobilities is plotted.[56] Moreover, not only places serve to indicate Jewish origin and affiliation but also times, such as when a Jewish holiday is mentioned in the text (serving a time frame). All this comes to suggest a Bakhtinian Jewish chronotope, where identities, performances, times, and places amount together to a collective narration.[57]

Visitors' inscribed texts at these sites are performances of participation in the production of a collective narrative (even if and when one is critiquing it), which corresponds with the site's narration and with the figures who occupy it: Mother Rachel and the site's shamash, Israeli fallen soldiers of the 1967 war and the museum's militaristic management, and American Jews of past centuries and the curators of the updated/restructured museum. Heritage sites are theatrical, and travelers at these sites partake, via the measures of writing, in scripting their narrative, as well as in a plethora of other performances: (re)citing their narrative, reinterpreting and critiquing it, sometimes merely adding small textual building blocks: "I was here (also a Jew)."