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*Thank You for Dying for Our Country: Commemorative Texts and Performances in Jerusalem*  
Chaim Noy

# THANK YOU FOR DYING FOR OUR COUNTRY

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Commemorative Texts and  
Performances in Jerusalem

Chaim Noy

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## PROLOGUE

*I am glad he was not my father*

—Anonymous entry in the visitor book at Freud's Museum in London<sup>1</sup>

Visitor books are fascinating cultural artifacts. Typically presented in museums, hotels, galleries, churches, and even airports, the writing surfaces that visitor books offer serve as intricate communicative portals. The books, the face-to-surface interactions they invite, and the inscribed traces of these interactions provide a unique perspective on situated acts of written communication, audience participatory practices, the collective articulation of identity and memory, and visitors' travel trajectories and experiences. Visitor books, perceived here broadly, are public volumes that performatively embody and present encounters between institutions and exhibits and those visiting and consuming them.

On some occasions, visitor books and the entries within them possess a light and humorous air. Such is the case with the anonymous and witty entry of the epigraph, which—Freud would have been the first to note—is Oedipal in nature. A similar occasion comes to mind from some twenty years ago, when my partner and I traveled north to the more forested parts of Israel to spend the weekend in a small and romantic wooden cabin. The cabin had its own guestbook, which contained large, blank white pages. The most recent entry written there, apparently by the guests who preceded us, included a large “smiley” symbol and a short text: *We enjoyed it here a lot. We played pick-up sticks with one stick . . .*

Other visitor books, the entries they hold and the circumstances of their production, are more serious—at times, disconcerting and grave. In Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum, in a visitor book paying homage to survivors of the atomic bombing—a book positioned near a display of writings authored by a few who survived—a visitor wrote in English: “Hiroshima was awful, but it was an act of war: [nuclear] weapons must be kept to ensure that **TERRORISTS** never get a hold of them.”<sup>2</sup>

Another difficult occasion, which also has its roots in the Second World War, took place in 2001, when Jewish physicist and Nobel Prize Laureate Jack Steinberger was honorably invited by the municipality of his Bavarian hometown of Bad Kissingen (from which he fled as a young boy before the war) to sign the town's celebrated visitor book. Before Steinberger, other notables and

dignitaries had also done this, including Otto von Bismarck himself. Yet the question emerged whether or not he should sign the book—not because of Bismarck's signature but because of others' signatures, including that of Adolph Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Hermann Göring. After some deliberations, Steinberger decided to accept his hometown's invitation and sign its visitor book. Yet he chose to do so at a public and educational event: the signing took place at the town's high school auditorium (the high school was then renamed after Steinberger), where Steinberger compellingly explained and discussed the moral reasons behind his decision to sign; the audience included students, local functionaries, and town residents.<sup>3</sup>

The Steinberger story is moving and telling in many ways, and it shows, specifically, what is at stake when addressing visitor books: it's not only the texts, or even the potential texts to be inscribed in them, but also the circumstances affording and surrounding the act of writing. At times the inscribed texts are not actually the focus; rather, they are a *raison d'être* for meaningful social events that revolve around them. In other words, the texts cannot be fully understood without also appreciating the particularities of their contexts of entextualization (production), circulation, and reception, as well as how they shape and impact the environments in which they are inscribed. Indeed, sometimes the visitor book's material trajectory is illuminating, such as with the visitor books that were available at the pilgrimage site of Rachel's Tomb (near Jerusalem) around the turn of the twentieth century. These rich volumes disappeared during the 1948 War, and then resurfaced inexplicably some time after the 1967 War. The untold story of their whereabouts during this period, and the social actors involved in making them disappear, safeguarding them, and then responsible for their reappearance requires exploration and can be revealing.<sup>4</sup>

On still other occasions, the *reactions* to visitor books—their very presence and cultural ramifications—are of interest. Some time ago I shared with a colleague a few insights from my research at the Ammunition Hill site in Jerusalem and my focus on the museum's visitor book. Although I recalled that my acquaintance served in the Israeli army's Paratrooper Brigade (the Ammunition Hill site celebrates this brigade), I could not have expected his reaction. Upon hearing of the visitor book, he became immediately upset. With an expression of disgust on his face, he said: "*Oh, yes, I know that place. No one goes there anymore, it's deserted! Only the adolescent juveniles from the nearby high-school probably go there and jerk off on the book's pages!*" I was caught unprepared. I didn't expect him to know of the visitor book at that specific site (or care about it), and more than that, I surely didn't expect the kind of metaphor he employed. "Where did that come from?" I thought. I could see he felt that the Ammunition Hill site is neglected and

degraded, perhaps desecrated, but to conjure up masturbation on pages of a commemorative visitor book is a different story. This story, too, is telling in that it shows the stormy reactions that people (some, at least) have with regard to visitor books, as well as the visceral metaphors that describe acts *symbolically replacing* those of writing and communication.<sup>5</sup> Others' actions and reactions to visitor books might be still more physical and violent: during Pope Francis's 2014 visit to Jerusalem, a few minutes after he concluded the public prayer at the Abbey of the Dormition on Mt. Zion, an unknown offender set the church's visitor book on fire, completely destroying it (and the many pilgrims' prayers it held).<sup>6</sup>

Despite the different texts that visitor books elicit and contain, the events of their inscription and reading, the emotional reactions they stir, and the significance of these books as historical records, precious little research has been done to document and address them. While literature in the humanities and the social sciences makes anecdotal mention of visitor books, as do works of fiction and newspaper articles (found usually in the travel section), it is safe to say these rich institutional interfaces have largely escaped detailed scholarly imagination and investigation.

In a newspaper article published in *Spectator* magazine in 2012, journalist Theodore Dalrymple contemplates the problems that visitor books present as a research subject and concludes optimistically: "Visitors' books are a neglected source of information about contemporary culture and human psychology. . . . [T]hose who write things in visitors' books are a self-selected sample of humanity, and one cannot derive scientifically valid conclusions from their efforts. But the world cannot be apprehended through science alone."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it cannot and should not; therefore, in this book I reflect on visitor books and the entries they hold, making use of this unique medium to *reflect* on scholarly questions and debates.

## Itinerary

To engage fruitfully with the assortment of questions that visitor books raise—from the social and cultural settings of writing (and reading), through the possibilities and affordances of communication, involving concepts as genre, addressivity, indexicality, multimodality, and literacy, to the ways national identity and commemoration are performed—an encompassing, multidisciplinary trajectory is taken. This trajectory is admittedly eclectic and adheres less to traditional and disciplined bodies of knowledge and more to the intellectual stimulation and curiosity created by the study of visitor books as lively social and cultural sites.

The book consists of three main parts: The first part, “Signing In,” is an introductory section that supplies theoretical underpinnings and background on the Ammunition Hill site and museum. Chapter 1, titled “Tourists’ Traces,” embodies a nexus of disciplines and approaches that converge in this study, and the scholarly coordinates wherefrom I write. I elaborate on the performance paradigm in tourism studies, the ethnography of writing (and reading), medium theory, and ethnonational commemoration and identity in Israel. In chapter 2, titled “The Ammunition Hill Museum,” I introduce the research site, formally called the Ammunition Hill National Commemoration Site. I take the guide’s role as I describe the site’s premises, focusing on the museum and on its exhibits and display. I argue that the site possesses a language ideology, embodied in the mode of *handwritten texts and autographs* widespread in the museum. This ideology serves several functions that are essential for ensuring the site’s claims for authenticity and authority, and for the site’s political agenda to promote collective identity and commemoration via visitors’ written gestures of participation. The commemorative visitor book holds an important place within the site’s ideology; in fact, it epitomizes it.

“Thank You for Dying for Our Country,” is the title of the book’s second, middle part—and is its centerpiece. It holds five chapters. In chapter 3, titled “The Ammunition Hill Visitor Book,” I begin to address the Ammunition Hill site’s impressive visitor book. Inspired by medium theory, I depict the visitor book as a medium that serves as an ideologically mobilized stage on which commemorative practices are enacted and ethnonational Jewish participation is publicly performed and recorded. I attend to the medium’s material affordances and its collective, aesthetic, and visual effects; for most visitors, “inscribing” entails subscribing, which means literally touching and joining an imagined ethnonational collective. In chapter 4, titled “I Was Here!!!,” I look more closely at how, through the use of indexicals, visitors situate their entries on this particular stage and how they charge them with authority and authenticity. By producing handwritten inscriptions, visitors perform their arrival and presence in situ, essentially communicating the act of “I was here.” I also inquire into the entries’ communicative resources, their addressivity and multimodal characteristics, and how, as a collage, they portray a “map” of converging travel trajectories.

Chapter 5, titled “Articulating Commemoration,” offers a performative reading of more elaborate visitor book entries. These are condensed commemoration narratives, the majority of which enact a retelling of the site’s hegemonic ethnonational narrative. My performative-oriented reading sheds light on how visitors’ utterances vary in terms of their ideological positioning and identifications, and their abilities to recognize performances that are subversive and oppositional in different ways. Chapter 6, titled “Write ‘I Was Impressed’ and

Not ‘I Enjoyed,’” rests on the observations that most of the book’s entries are, in fact, not authored individually but, rather, are produced jointly by a number of visitors (family members, classmates, and so on). The co-produced entries sometimes index these interactions and other times conceal them. Following Irving Goffman’s dramaturgical sensitivities, I illustrate the roles involved in producing visitors’ “face” on the pages of the book as coherent and proficient utterances. I also discuss the book’s playful utterances, suggesting the important ideological function of “light,” or playful, acts of commemoration in the otherwise somber and serious environment.

The last chapter in the middle section, chapter 7, explores “Gender and Familial Performances.” In this chapter I look at occasions when gender roles and power relations are effectively manifested, or alternatively, effectively hidden, both in the museum’s display and on the pages of the commemorative book. Against the dominant iconography of Ashkenazi (white), able-bodied army generals, I read the passionate and colorful utterances of young women (directed at “the cute” soldiers), as well as the quarrels and quibbles over the top tier of combatant masculinity among young male soldiers. I discuss these entries through the lens of Israeli ethnicity politics, queering the site’s stable, hetero-normative narrative. Observations of families and classes on field trips collectively signing the book also shed light on the typically *covert* roles that mothers, wives, and female teachers play in producing commemoration, illuminating how intimate social structures are made to support the chauvinist organization of ethnonational heritage.

“Signing Out” is the title of the book’s third and final part, and it is where I depart from the public visitor book. In chapter 8, titled “Like a Magazine Loaded with Bullets,” I present a *second* visitor book at the Ammunition Hill site (which was a surprise finding for me): the “VIP” visitor book. This book was located in the administration offices, and was restricted to esteemed visitors who were invited by the management to sign. The presence of a second visitor book at the same site offers a unique comparative opportunity, illuminating how physically identical media differ in terms of use and mediation, and in terms of the politics they employ and the publics they conjure. The exclusive book acts as a “reverse medium” when compared to the public book, and the entries perform the agency of VIP visitors as actors formatively contributing to heritage projects, rather than lay consumers and ‘ordinary’ audiences of the same. In this vein, studying the VIP visitor book illuminates aspects that concern the running of the site and the way relationships between its management and elites circles in Israel and beyond are maintained.

Chapter 9, titled “Ethnography<sup>2</sup>” (ethnography squared), is a reflexive account of my work and encompasses my signing out and off from the study. It is

how I look back at my ethnography project at Ammunition Hill, and how I “exit” the site. I am interested in the particular ways that ethnographic knowledge is produced, and I pursue this inquiry by re-examining ethnography itself: turning the theoretical lens of performance away from tourists, visitors, and their inscriptions and toward my research practices and technologies, I look back on the time I spent in an ideologically saturated environment. I address ethnography’s routine research procedures, which are typically overlooked, with an emphasis on visual images and mediation, and attend the semiotic transformations embodied in the move from site to text (this book), and from text to audience (you), which are inherent in any ethnographic (travel) narrative.

The closing chapter, chapter 10, “Conclusions” offers a brief conclusion that connects the dots along the route that this travelogue follows. The chapter touches on the book’s major contributions, encompassing both theory and methodology. Theoretically, the book interweaves different bodies of scholarship that are only rarely brought together. These include the fields of tourism studies and visitor/audience studies, which teach the practices and semiotics of tourists and museums; a sensibility gleaned from linguistic anthropology, which illuminates the cultural uniqueness and contextualized nature of linguistic expression (institutions’ as well as visitors’); literacy studies and ethnography of writing, which attune us to the discursive resources available to visitors and to the actual ways they go about producing commemorative entries; and medium studies, which allow the full conceptualization of the visitor book as a communication vehicle.

And as the theoretical bodies of knowledge converging in this book are multidisciplinary, so, accordingly, is the methodology heterogeneous. This study also makes a methodological contribution, therefore, because it joins methods that are not usually included in the same “toolbox”: methods that encompass, moving from single entries outward, ways of reading brief individual entries as situated textual utterances; multimodal analysis (accounting for graphic elements, code switches, and the like); an appreciation of the collection/collage of multimodal entries; a practice-oriented ethnography of writing and literacy that illuminates acts of reading and writing; and a semiotic analysis of material culture and interactional affordances unique to this medium (i.e., the visitor book). It is this quite eclectic array of methods, joined here for the sake of this specific research, that embodies a distinct methodological contribution in the shape of a well-tailored, do-it-yourself methodology.

There are various audiences and readerships I had in mind during the course of this study, and that I have both imagined and had actual conversations with while writing this book. These audiences extend beyond those in ivory-tower academia and include curators and museum personnel, those in the heritage and the tourism industries, cultural commentators and critics, and artists. In addition,

I am in fruitful dialogue with academics from a variety of disciplines, whom I hope will find this study and the discussions therein stimulating. These include scholars of anthropology, media and communication, sociology, folklore, cultural studies, the study of technology, discourse and literacy, material culture, and tourism and museums studies. For these readers, visitor books offer not only amusing or touching anecdotes but also a plethora of knowledge that can be tapped only by empirically rigorous and methodologically nuanced readings.

THANK YOU FOR DYING FOR OUR COUNTRY

## PART



### SIGNING IN

As I arrive at the Ammunition Hill museum one spring morning in 2008 I have a short exchange with Emilia, who sits all day in a small, poorly ventilated booth at the museum entrance. She tells me there is a large group of high school students inside from the southern coastal city of Ashkelon. Indeed, many schools send their students to the site as part of various “school heritage day” activities, wholly sponsored and guided by the Ministry of Education. The museum’s inner hall is bustling and noisy with eleventh-graders who are on their way out to see the museum’s short film about the battle, which is showing in a nearby hall. In black-and-white pictures, the movie depicts the battle scene where Israeli soldiers’ courageous acts are captured and narrated, and stresses the crucial importance of the battle at Ammunition Hill. At seventeen, these youths are only one year away from being drafted to a long and mandatory military service in the Israeli army, and the timing of their visit to the site is not coincidental.

A few teenagers are still lingering around the visitor book installation, including a girl and a boy who are now standing there and talking at length. At one point they begin searching for a writing implement, and without much luck, the boy turns to me and asks if he can borrow my pen. I hand him the pen I am using to take notes, and he walks back to the girl, who stands waiting by the book. He then chooses a page in the book to write in, which is the first available empty page, and bends over the book with the pen in his hand, intending to write. A split second before the pen actually touches the surface of the book, he lifts it up and hands it to his friend, telling her, “You write, you have prettier handwriting.” Taking the pen, she says nothing in response but leans over the large book ready to proceed. At this point,

the boy begins *dictating* the verses of a well-known Israeli song and his friend writes these words. Excerpt 1 (as well as the figure in chapter 6<sup>1</sup>) evinces that she breaks the song's lyrics into separate entry lines along their grammatical and melodious contours without the teenaged boy explicitly directing her to do so. After dictating the entry's first three lines, the boy raises his voice and instructs his friend, "Now larger, *let's pay respect to the I.D.F*" (which is the song's most famous line). After the girl writes it, he tells her to sign, saying "*aleph-aleph*" (the initials of his first and last names) and then changes his mind and says his first name fully ("OrEl"), which she signs in the book as the entry's signature. Then the teenaged boy turns in my direction and asks me for the date, which I tell him, and the girl writes it down near the entry. By this time, all the other youths have left the hall for the movie auditorium, and the girl says, somewhat apologetically, "My class has gone" as they return the pen to me, leaving the hall together.

This is what they co-wrote in the book:

#### Excerpt 1

*ten lasim ta'rosh al dyuna*

Let us rest our head on a dune

*ten lamuzot ktsat lirov*

Let the muses hunger a little

*ten lanuach al kol shaar*

Let us rest on each and every gate

[large and tilted] *TEN ET HAKAVOD LE . . .*

Pay respect to the . . .

[large and tilted] *Ts.H.L.!!*

*I.D.F.!!*

OrEl, A.

5.11.08

I begin with this brief ethnographic observation of youths in the museum to illustrate some of the complexity involved in what might otherwise seem to be a rather simple and mundane activity of writing an entry and signing one's name in a visitor book. But this activity involves practices of different types, and different sets of knowledges and literacies. To begin, there are the activities that are involved in the joint production of the text, and there is the text itself, or the enduring textual residue of the interaction. These are various types of social fabrics, and they illustrate differently how language can be put into use. While

I return to this interaction and analyze it in detail later in the book (chapter 6), it is clear that both the activities that were required in order to produce the text and the text itself are by no means banal. We have, for instance, different production and participatory roles that transpire in this interaction, and they are closely correlated with gender roles. These are specifically directed at the production of the commemorative public text, and this is done seamlessly, with little explicit negotiation of the gender roles the teenagers are proficiently performing.

Other matters do not concern the co-production of the text, but the text itself: its contents, genre, and even—to begin with—its appropriateness for the stage on which it is performed as judged by those composing it. The text that OrEl chooses to dictate in a site of national commemoration, and that his partner to the writing inscribes, is in fact a *quotation*. It manifests the author's knowledge of Israeli culture, as well as his memory and judgment in regard to the appropriateness of this song specifically for this stage. Indeed, the song holds an iconic relation to Israeli identity and Israeli militarism, even though it was initially written as an anti-militaristic satire. Despite a number of mistakes OrEl makes in recalling the verses, he and his friend are willingly participating in national commemoration, offering their own particular contribution. They are doing so in an embodied manner and through a literate practice, namely composing and adding their own text to the commemorative discourse in the visitor book at Ammunition Hill.

I begin with this excerpt to offer an example of the kind of practices, texts, and discussions that this book will include and address. In the following pages, I delve into the abstract theoretical underpinnings that supply the rich soil from which emerge my understandings of the commemorative rituals and performative texts that I observed in Ammunition Hill.



It was part of my attempts to re-contextualize the practices associated with ethnographic writing, and to share and invite the audience to observe the richness and complexity involved in writing.

At the onset of this chapter I suggested that one way to conclude ethnographic research, a way that I suspect is unique to ethnography, embodies a reflexive appreciation of the research moves into, around, and out of the field. Although the term “field” commonly designates a combination of place(s) and set(s) of practices, it in effect holds dialectic relations with research practices and is co-constructed through the organization of daily, mundane, and unnoticeable activities. I illuminated three such moments in and of my research, moments that “undo the ethnographic”—*Dasein*, collecting practices, and (dis)embodied (re)presentation—with the aim of shedding light on my own research activities in situ, and on how I too was a visitor of sorts. A fourth moment took place elsewhere, as I dislocated the field and re-created, through techniques of installation and performance, the public settings in which (public) academic writing takes place. These are the moves, the epistemic gestures, by which I sign off.

## CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS

Museum guestbooks are one of the last remaining formats for slowly hand-written sentiment. They are a low-tech cradle of free speech, a means of public dialogue capable of making us all into thoughtful arbiters of history. . . . The sound of a pen scratching will vanish all too soon.

—BONNIE MORRIS, *The Frightening Invitation of a Guestbook*

Sharing some of the fascination and nostalgia conveyed in Bonnie Morris’s words, I too was interested in the alchemical work handwriting accomplishes, or was made to accomplish, within the coercive domain of ethnonational commemoration and the reproduction of collective heritage and identity. Although the artifact I studied is commonly referred to as a “visitor book,” it is not the visitors’ and it is not clear in what sense it is really a “book.” What it is should emerge, rather, from how it actually functions, how it is interacted with, what it is set to accomplish, and what it accomplishes in situ. As such, I have shown that the Ammunition Hill visitor book is an ideologically mobilized medium that invites, records, and publically displays performances of collective identity and ethnonational Zionist commemoration. It is a thoroughly ideological platform that occupies a vital node in the cultural reproduction of hegemonic discourse, Zionist heritage, and an imagined ethnonational community.

I was able to arrive at these conclusions and make contributions that are theoretical, empirical, and methodological because the study rests on an overall performance sensibility. The main insights the study offers include the intertwining of the four fields I introduced in the beginning of the book: tourism studies; national identity, heritage, and museums; the ethnography of texts and writing; and communication and media studies. I will discuss them succinctly more or less in this order. Following, I will address my methodological contributions.

Regarding the first of these four theoretical fields, tourism studies, this study looks into how language is used in the global context of tourism—specifically, within the thriving sector of the heritage tourism industry. Heritage tourism presently holds a wide-ranging,



global monopoly on the conjuncture of collective identities, histories, and futures. Defined as a “mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 7), heritage sites, museums, and discourses embody the contemporary zeitgeist and powerfully re-produce a collective experience of shared identities, along with the moral stories that delineate the public’s origins and projected narratives.<sup>1</sup>

The pervasive cultural re-production undertaken by the heritage industry is not an abstract project; rather, it is one that takes shape in and through particular settings, situated practices and embodied interactions. Therefore, to understand what visitors and tourists are actually doing when they engage heritage and commemoration, it is illuminating to examine language in tourism from a *performance* perspective. This view promotes a dual contribution, tapping into emerging critical studies of discourse and language in tourism, on the one hand, and promoting a performance approach to texts and literacy practices, on the other hand. While interactions with the visitor book require and foster literacy-related practices in the shape of commemorative reading and writing, the book is a medium and all utterances therein are publicly mediated—that is, performed. This is part of the conceptualization of the book as a communication medium that functions as a public touristic stage.

A performative appreciation of the book’s entries further emerges because the spaces offered by the book are part of the institutional spaces offered by the Ammunition Hill site and museum. The entries inscribed in the book seamlessly assume the status of display and join the visual ecology of tourism and museums, both of which are fundamentally theatrical. So, again, language and public display are joined.

It is not only the qualities of the book and how it is framed within the site’s commemoration environment that suggest it as an appealing stage. Visitors, too, acknowledge this, and their entries are highly attractive public performances. I have shown in detail that inscribed entries amount to *aestheticized performances*: visitors invest time and social resources in producing attractive (visually appealing), thematically relevant, and rhetorically coherent entries. From the entries’ textual genres and rhetorical styles, to their highly graphic nature (embodied in drawings, symbols, and various graphic signs), the pages of the book are as colorful as they are meaningful.

By viewing the commemorative visitor book and the entries performatively, we open the channels between scholarship in performance studies and language and social interaction in the spheres of tourism and heritage for bidirectional exchanges and cross-fertilization. Language and discourse assume the highly visible and performative appearance that so typically characterizes the sphere of tourism and museal display—and vice versa: studies of tourism and museums,

and specifically those producing heritage, gain from a systematic discursive appreciation.

Finally, MacCannell (1976, p. 102) argues that “There is no serious or functional role in the production awaiting the tourist in the places they visit.” But the story with heritage tourism must be different. Tourists both consume and produce public discourse. Their utterances repeat and reinforce national identity, but at least as important, they also establish the global ties between the industries of tourism and the industries of heritage. In other words, the global intersections of these industries are consolidated by the tourists’ own contributions, and the performance approach to the use of language by tourists is then also the study of global and local (glocal) intersections of institutions, discourses, and meanings present in tourism and ethnonational identity commemoration.

The second theoretical contribution here concerns everyday practices by which nationalism and national identity are accomplished. Michael Billig (1995, p. 1) poignantly observes that, “All societies that maintain armies maintain the belief that some things are more valuable than life itself. Just what is so valued varies.” I took the term “maintain” here literally and in regard to process, arguing that governments (and the institutions, corporations, and stakeholders that work with them) greatly invest in *maintaining* the public’s belief that there are things more valuable than life, and in discursively delineating what exactly these things are: what/who is worth dying for, with whom, and who is/are worth killing. How this comes about—that is, the exploration of the mechanisms of hegemonic maintenance and national identity, is, I believe, within the jurisdiction of those studying language and power, and I have attempted to take up that task in this book.

For the third theoretical contribution, studying the commemorative visitor book in Jerusalem showed how ethnonational ideologies are reproduced in actual practice, as evidenced by the placement, contents, and practices surrounding the book. The study reveals sets of mundane practices, which are mostly literacy-related activities, through which visitors and audiences participate in the consumption and production of ethnonational Zionist commemoration. I began the ethnographic exploration of texts and writing by looking at Ammunition Hill as a whole, then at the museum, where I sought to understand its designer’s intentions and curatorial decisions. Only then did I arrive at the object of the visitor book and at the entries and utterances it displays. This breadth supplied a framework, a much-needed contextualization that illuminates the correspondence between the book, its specific and unique location within the museum, and the ideological environment wherein it semiotically functions.

Lastly, drawing ideas from media theory and studies of material culture and museums, I argued that the book should be viewed as a medium, noting where

exactly is it located, and why and how it comes to function as an interactive museal artifact that mediates national identity and discourse. The exploration revealed a strong ideological correspondence: the museum's spaces are perfused with handwritten documents (and remediations and representations of handwriting), which amount to a cursive-scape. This cursive-scape narrates a heritage story, but it also conveys a language ideology whereby handwriting is viewed as a spontaneous, authentic, and valued mode of expression, allowing "voices from the past" to be preserved and heard/read in the present.

Ammunition Hill's gendered language ideology also valorizes the warrior men who produced the handwritten texts that populate the site. It is a moralizing ideology that presents the cultured nature of the soldiers and the generals who, during the actual days of fighting, found time to compose love letters and war journals, and to draw pastoral images of Judean Hills. These were "men of the sword," but also, and no less so, "men of the pen." To restate, while signatures and handwritten and discursive documents are not a rare category of exhibits in heritage and cultural museums, at Ammunition Hill they index the context of their production in order to tell the truth "from within" (by the men who participated in action, while it was occurring), and to personalize and attest to the humanness of their creators. These texts glorify and mythologize the actions of the men who produced them, during, for example, the 1967 War.

The visitor book is an organic element in the museum's cursive-scape and in the language ideology it promotes, and its presence is part of the site's pedagogical mission. (The site sees its agenda as essentially educational.) As such, it is located uniquely in one of the museum's inner and most "sacred" halls, and *not* at the site's entrance or exit, as are most visitor books. Located as it is, it is not set to invite reflections from visitors leaving the site but, instead, participatory reactions from visitors who are at the emotional and ideological crescendo of their visit. The book's location contributes to its framing as a specific kind of stage, one that is specifically geared to participatory action. It allows for a more interactive engagement with the visitors than do other exhibits, which sustains a higher level of involvement and a commemoration narrative where troubling aspects of the past—and the present and the future—are selectively removed.

The book's augmentative operation (where newer entries are added to older entries) powerfully results in a *collective display*. The individual entry does not occupy the center of the commemoration scene; rather, it is a *building block* for a collective design or collage that the book presents. This is a superb instance of materialization and visualization of the site's agenda aimed at constructing, or co-constructing, a sense of community, and it is one of the important messages that the book manages. As a stage, then, the book is not only collective but also *collectivizing*, embodying different visitors' contributions across time, but in a

specific, designated space. And this is a special space, which is a highly decorated and which metonymically captures the space outside the site—Jerusalem, the city in which it is located, which is "forever unified."

As an outcome of the ideological positioning of the book we see that the visitors' entries are unified or stitched together against the background of symbols of the state, the city, and the army. Most of the entries do not address one another explicitly (perhaps evincing what Goffman 1963, pp. 83–84, called "civil inattention"); rather, the message is embodied in the fact that they are visibly positioned together, amounting to a gestalt where the meaning that the book conveys is greater than the meaning communicated by individual entries. From the perspective of both local and international travel, for visitors who arrive and sign in at Ammunition Hill, inscribing means making a mark along a journey's route, thereby reinserting themselves on an ethnonational grid. Again, this is a noteworthy symbolic accomplishment of a manipulated (institutional) nature, because the centers of both the Jewish world and the State of Israel are politically contested spaces. Concealing this contested nature is one of the main aims that the ideology of the site is geared to accomplish, *and it does so manipulatively with the help of the visitor book*.

As for the entries themselves, we see that most of them support and positively contribute to the maintenance of the commemoration project and the conservative collective narrative that the Ammunition Hill site narrates. They are instances of *subscribing through inscribing*, which visitors accomplish by primarily *performing a retelling*: their entries show that (1) they have visited the site, (2) they have understood its ideological message, and (3) they repeat and endorse its essence.

When we look at the entries' topics and structures of addressivity (more on this to come), we see two main groups. One, which is surprisingly the smaller group, is directed at the site's management and at those working in the commemoration industry; this group of supportive entries has as its main topic the visit itself and expressions of gratitude surrounding it. Interestingly, in the second and larger group, the entries are *not* directed at the site (or the museum or the agents involved in actual commemoration); instead, they address the dead soldiers directly ("Thank you for dying for our country"), and have mythic sacrifice and battles for Jerusalem as their main topic.

Not all entries are supportive of the site's ideological agenda. Though only a few (about 11 percent of all the discursive entries) disrupt the hegemonic monologue, these entries, too, perform presence at the site and express an understanding of the ethnonational narrative it promotes. Yet at this point they avoid praising the site or the fallen soldiers, and instead critique one or a few of the narrative's main tenets. Contesting entries address the lack of divine presence

and lack of recognition of divine intervention in the museum's display' or, alternatively, they offer a right-wing, settler critique, doubting the conservative version of Zionism that the site promotes and judging it as "too light." Still other visitors critique elements in the site's narrative, such as the overrepresentation of paratroopers and the contribution of the Paratrooper Brigade to 1967 battles at Ammunition Hill and on the Jerusalem Front more generally.

These are *counter-heritage* and *hyper-heritage* critiques, proposed by audiences who are ideologically committed to contesting stances. They shed light on the publics that arrive at the site, as well as on what the site's display embodies or lacks—as seen through the eyes of these publics. Studying various hegemonic and counter-hegemonic entries suggests that a few reenact the tensions and politics of identity in Israeli society—primarily those concerning gender and ethnicity, which arise as the site celebrates heterosexual, Ashkenazi (white) masculinity.

Though most of this is high-voltage national ideology, some visitors seize the opportunity to express resentment because they were brought to the site against their will (e.g., school students on hurried field-trips of Jerusalem, or a group of tired soldiers who were made to sing Naomi Shemer's "Jerusalem of Gold" and recite names of fallen soldiers). In any case, the fact that there is no monitoring of the medium of the book allows more freedom in writing and expressing non-normative sentiments and entries. That said, I note that the only critique addressing the site's conservative, militaristic, and colonial policy (the site itself is located in occupied East Jerusalem), was an anonymous instance of graffiti painted outside the space of the visitor book (on the site's walls).

Finally, the construction of commemoration works not only through words and texts but also through a dominant graphic and symbolic sphere. The point here is that commemorative expressions—whether produced by institutions or by visitors—are not restricted to textual production—they are essentially *multimodal*. This is an important element in the re-production of national identity and commemoration discourse. Words and graphic symbols that range from formal symbols, such as the national flag, to informal, creative, and personal (idiosyncratic) symbols, such as a balloon or a flower, are tightly woven together to make up *the overall semiotic landscape of commemoration*. There is here an enmeshment of visitors' designs with the encompassing formal design of national symbols, where the former enters the state's "field of force" (Gombrich 1984, p. 233) to become, instantaneously, powerful national motifs.

In some cases, there were more personal and creative symbols inscribed in the visitor book that did not initially seem to enact nationhood and commemoration. The point is, however, that writing in the book performs an annexation of symbols, from the private sphere into the national sphere. Of particular interest were transformative processes that occurred through "lighthearted" or

humorous commemorative entries. These entries altered the meanings of familiar texts, which were initially unrelated to military matters or even critical in this regard. By reusing such symbols and texts as commemorative currency, visitors' naïve reproductions both annexed and revitalized the array of national symbols, while at times deflating or co-opting subversive symbols of their critical messages or imbuing otherwise unrelated texts with national symbolism.

In sum, the study offers a contribution to studies of commemoration and nationalism through its detailed exploration of how these ideologies are mobilized, reproduced, and occasionally challenged through seemingly mundane literacy practices such as writing, drawing, and reading in visitor books.

A related contribution this study makes concerns the *ethnography of texts*, and more broadly, the ethnography of literacy and writing (and reading) practices. This contribution should be appreciated against a consistent tendency across language-related fields to address spoken language as the main focus of interest and research. Consequently, relatively little research has been conducted on writing practices and the social and institutional life of texts, especially in the context of tourism. While "text" is a noun, implying a *fait accompli*, I tried to illuminate the *active roles* that texts play in institutions, their unfinalized nature, and the embodied interactions through which they are produced, circulated, and received. I have endeavored to do so through a practice-oriented ethnography (inspired by praxiological and ethnomethodological approaches). Ethnographic sensibilities can and do play a key role in studies of texts and inscribing scenes (e.g., entextualizations) because they allow the study of writing as a *complex array of embodied practices and gestures*, which transpire in and are oftentimes performative parts of particular ideological, cultural, and institutional nexuses.

The visitor book is an important artifact in the language ideology and the cursive-space that the museum communicates—and in fact, it is arguably an epitome of that ideology. By the time visitors reach the book and interact with it, they have had the opportunity to see, hear, and read dozens of handwritten texts (and handwritten representations and remediations), to enable them to be more competent in producing their own texts. In other words, the location of the book in the museum's innermost and "sacred" hall allows visitors to complete a "crash course" in producing commemorative utterances by the time they approach the book. In their writings, visitors verbally and graphically cite the commemoration texts and symbols that the museum offers, repeating and echoing them "bottom up" and spontaneously, as it were. This is why I stress the active element of reception and reading during the visit, and the development of embodied social memory that is involved in visitors' commemorative roles and activities.

Unlike most documents, however, the Ammunition Hill visitor book is interestingly framed like a monument that is both symbolically and physically

immobile. Hence, what circulate are the visitors, not the book. Yet commemorative texts circulate dynamically at the site when viewed thus: visitors pick them up during their visit and then inscribe them on the pages of the book. This is an instance of *textual circulation* or *entextualization* that is carried out by the visitors themselves, as ad hoc actors within the commemoration complex, where the book's spaces act as receiving surfaces. There is here also the coordination of individual and collective memories through the remembering of past events (via a mobilized, commemoration narrative), and the learning of commemorative literacies. Truly, I have found the visitor book to be so captivating partly because in and around it the phases of production, circulation, and reception are so tightly interconnected and so observably performed.

The book offers an interactional space and surface (face-to-surface interaction), where visitors "meet" one another but more importantly, where visitors "meet" the institution. While visitors send letters, emails, and faxes to the sites they visit, the book is a public institutional document, heavily marked by national emblems and symbols. When visitors choose to produce an entry therein, it immediately joins the thick forest of national symbols presented in—and around—the book. In this way, visitor books powerfully capture and sustain a merger of institutional discourse (top-down) with visitors' "spontaneous" and "authentic" feedback (bottom up). Visitor books are best viewed, then, as bi-directional vehicles for exchange. And if visitor entries join the discursive plethora of national commemoration, then it logically follows that visitors themselves are contributors—participating producers in the Zionist commemoration project.

The ethnography of texts is also the ethnography of the practices surrounding the situated production, circulation, and reception of texts. One of the important contributions this book offers to ethnographic studies of literacy emerges from the close observations of how reading and writing are pursued and negotiated at the site of the visitor book. More often than not, inscribed texts are a result of *joint action*. They present an outcome of a co-production in which a number of visitors are involved, in different roles and to different degrees. Put succinctly, one entry rarely equals one visitor. Groups of visitors that typically compose entries are classmates, family members, and soldiers; and as the idea of the "sole author" dissolves, we see a number of visitors embodying different participatory functions. This is very much in accord with Goffman's (1956, 1974) notions of "production format" and the "participatory roles" involved in all social and cultural production.

The observations suggest that, although there is usually one person who is holding the writing device, sometimes those who actually compose and author the text are *not* those who inscribe it. Power and gender relations come into the observable (and hence ethnographable) sphere when visitors negotiate the

content of the entries they wish to write, their visual appearance, where they should be placed in the book, and even whether they should be written at all.

Another perspective, also inspired by Goffman, is to look at the *double-layer* or twofold participation that writing in the book demands. I suggested earlier that the book is a stage that records and presents entries, yet Goffman's participatory roles and production formats add to this a second and synchronic layer of performances, whereby the book serves as means for interaction during the *actual moments of co-composing an entry*. Visitors negotiate the entry they are writing, use its writing to entertain themselves, draw on it as a resource for conversations with fellow visitors, and implement and embody power relations that structure the production format (insisting that someone write or not write, or dictate what to write).

The story that the entries in the book do not tell—which is a story that ethnographic description is ideally suited to reveal—is what happens when visitors engage in reading and writing in the book. Though this story is not explicitly indexed in the final outcome, the recorded and public entry, it is essential for a nuanced understanding of the entries as commemoration discourse and for the ethnographic study of texts and writing. It directs us to appreciate this medium's ability to conceal the politics of the "production phase" and the roles involved in doing commemoration. Looking at the production of commemorative entries reveals the gender roles and power relations, and suggests that while younger women perform as "fans" of warrior soldiers, the mothers, wives, and female schoolteachers are in the business of orchestrating others (husbands, children) in producing appropriate and representable commemoration entries. It is fascinating to observe how women's domestic roles play, behind the scenes, into public participation and contribution to national commemoration; or how "women can become the connecting thread between the military space and the familial space" (Lubin 2002, p. 169).

Lastly, with regard to the future of ethnographies of writing, I point out the digitation and virtualization of visitor books, and the related migration of handwriting practices onto the Internet. Numerous websites present *virtual visitor books* for their visitors to write in, and there are literally hundreds of easily installed software packages to produce such discursive surfaces for virtual visitors to comment in and to acknowledge their virtual visits. Like the paper visitor books I have explored, virtual visitor books define spaces to be consumed and appreciated, and they do so in the form of comments and posts that address anything from comprehensive virtual museums to personal blogs and websites.

If Bonnie Morris (2011, p. 252) nostalgically laments the end of museum guest-books and with them the public dialogue that they introduce, the inspiring studies presented in the edited collection *Sign Here!: Handwriting in the Age of New*



*Media* (Neef, Dijck, and Ketelaar 2006) illustrate the migration of handwriting (particularly signatures) into digital media and digital spaces. For scholars studying public participation and interaction rituals, this direction is promising, especially with regard to museum and heritage environments, which are dramatically changing their participation platforms to include ever more user-friendly and interventional devices that are digital and that contribute to virtual discourse. In other words, while the visitor books I studied supply a “primitive example” (Lynch 1993, p. 300) of affording devices and participatory platforms, the questions this study addresses are pertinent to media and mediation processes as such—in “new,” as well as in “old” environments—and in how they are brought together.

### Empirical and Methodological Takeaways

This book’s contributions are also empirical and methodological. In terms of the kind of data collected for this study, the picture is rather simple: very little research has been done on visitor books (defined broadly to include guestbooks, log books, and so on). It might be the case that the heterogeneity of visitor books may have brought about some confusion with regard to the medium, and may partly account for the small amount of research that has been done on the medium. This heterogeneity is reflected in the different terms by which the books are referred to in the literature (academic and non-academic): logbooks, comment books, records, catalogues, registers, genres, autograph albums, little books, booklets, journals, and signing books are just a few of the terms used to refer to these volumes. If scholars agree on one thing about this medium, it is the sporadic research that it these books have received, compared to how interesting they actually are. For Shea and Roberts (1998, p. 72), for instance, at stake is a “treasure trove of underused data,” and for Stamou and Paraskevolpoulos (2003, p. 35), it’s a “virtually unknown genre.”

A more substantial reason for the lack of research on visitor books emerges from the view of this medium as a “lower” or popular artifact. Whether viewed by art historians or contemporary discourse analysts, visitors’ utterances seem like graffiti and other informal cultural expressions that rank low in Western literary tradition, and are taken as “evidence of the ‘less educated,’ subversive or ‘vulgar’” (Baird and Taylor 2011, pp. 1–2). Informal inquiries to colleagues and friends support this: they indicate that while they like to look into visitor books (“peek inside to see what others wrote”), they refrain from writing, and their accounts tell of an intellectual distaste for actually getting involved with visitor books. In this respect, addressing visitor books comprehensively, as I did, serves as an homage to popular culture and to the carnivalesque arrangement of voices they can carry.

I will add only one point that touches on methodology: since visitor books are *institutional media*, addressing them requires entering the institutions that present them and doing research therein. Whether this is a cabin in the Redwoods of northern California, an urban hangout for Israeli backpackers in Pokhara, Nepal, or at the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam, there is no way around issues of access and gatekeeping, or for that matter, around the systematic collection and analysis of data. And there is much to gain from the study of visitors, especially with regard to *audiences* and *visitors*. This is a lingering question in museum and tourism studies, for academics, directors, and managers (the latter always seem to be frustrated with the lack of information about their visitors’ experiences and motivations).

In addition to the public visitor book, I also studied the Ammunition Hill site’s so-called VIP visitor book. Compared to the former, I conceptualized the latter as a “reverse medium,” which is presented there for formative and agentic producers of national Zionist commemoration, not for the lay or “ordinary” consumers of the same. This point is particularly salient at the Ammunition Hill site, where most of the publics who visit come from peripheral and marginalized backgrounds, while the VIP book serves the elites. The story that the VIP book tells is not that of an imagined ethnonational community but, rather, of relationships and interpersonal exchanges among and between elite individuals and circles. Its inquiry sheds precious light on the *reconstitution* of local elites and local hegemonic (state) discourse, about the politics behind the politics.

Gramsci (1972) notes the need for unremitting maintenance of ruling classes and circles. The inquiry into the VIP book also sheds light in this direction, addressing the relations between the site’s management and international Jewish or Zionist visitors, and the individuals and groups who are invited to actively support the site (through funding and philanthropic activities or through bureaucratic help). The entries also show the global military complex, and the interesting relations between the Jordanian officers who fought in the 1967 War and the Israelis—the meeting of those who lost the war (guests) with those who won it (hosts), all of whom celebrate the brotherhood-in-arms of these fighting men. All this, without a word about the Palestinians.

The final set of contributions that the book offers is methodological, and I have patched them together and developed them gradually while doing this study. Methodological apparatuses are intimately tied to theoretical orientations, and as the theoretical bodies of knowledge converging in this book are multidisciplinary, the methodology is heterogeneous. The methods that I eventually employed were meant to answer questions raised as I was proceeding, and to supply a comprehensive approach to the semiotics of both texts and the practices surrounding them. These methods had to be able to offer an insightful

reading of the book's entries, bringing together the essentially situated nature of these texts (and of linguistic communication more generally), and the identities of their inscribers and the addressees and audiences to which these texts are aimed. In addition, these methods offered an appreciation of the entries' genres, and of the multimodal combination of verbal and graphic designs—as these emerged from both the individual entries and the collage of collective entries presented on any of the book's spreads.

Indexicality and the use of deictics (pronouns, adverbs, and other words directly linked to the immediate context, such as “here” or “now” or “we”) are essential to texts written in visitor books, because these techniques are how visitors anchor their expressions to the site where they are written. In other words, they are what turns a text into a visitor book entry. The use of deictics testifies to the essentially contextualized nature of language, and unique to this study, to how *written* utterances are contextualized and how different visitors understand the context of their writing differently.

Though indexicality concerns the contextualized nature of language in use, and the relation between identity and the actual linguistic expression, the picture cannot be complete without attending to *addressivity*, or who is being communicated with. Following Goffman, I hold that addressivity becomes more interesting and complex as the performances have both ratified and non-ratified receivers (and admittedly, also ratified and non-ratified performers). I suggest that “open” addressivity structures characterize entries that do not explicitly delineate who they address. The most elementary performance of this kind is: “I was here.” This performative entry instantiates the visitor at the site and addresses anyone/everyone who can access the visitor book. More elaborate and intricate entries demonstrate specific addressees whom they target, over and above the general population of visitors.

Together, indexicality and addressivity, as well as the entries' genres and their physical layout and graphics, were included in what, in chapter 1, I called *Performative Discourse Analysis* (PDA). This is the method by which I was able to account for the highly contextualized nature of the book's entries, and to combine this quality with a more traditional, text-oriented critical discourse analysis. PDA also supplies a better understanding of the differences that the entries in the book manifest, and what the different entries socially and politically accomplish. Interestingly, most of discursive entries (entries that include more than a signature) are addressed to *dead soldiers*, not to the site's management or to those undertaking commemoration. The comparison between these entries presents different genres, ideological alignments, and acts of participation and communication.

But the PDA of entries should be embedded or tightly connected to an appreciation of the medium. In light of medium theory, I argue that the “unit of

analysis” should not be visitor-produced but medium-induced—that is, a spread. A spread or an opening is what visitors see when they address the book, and what visitors can and do manipulate when they flip through the pages. Hence, I was required to address the material, interactional, and visual qualities of this specific book's spreads and the collage of entries they hold.

And so I moved onward, asking where to look and how to do so, where to direct the ethnographic gaze and ear. This led me beyond the entries and the spreads of the book, to the symbolic framing of the book as a commemorative stage within the museum, which was steeped in traditional Jewish symbolism. I insisted that the location of the book inside the museum's space was unique, capturing the most somber senses and moments of the visit.

But there was more, including the practices and processes involved in entering and leaving the site, and in interacting and interviewing the site's employees and members of its management. All this can be best described as an eclectic assortment of methods that were assembled and adapted to address particular research questions and circumstances. Though seemingly ad hoc, these methods, I would argue, are well suited for studies similar to this one; the general “meta-method” of allowing one's methods to emerge from one's research could easily benefit other projects.

As for leaving the site, my closing gesture was reflexive, and pursued by looking back at the research and considering that the “relevant question here concerns what is done when we do ethnography” (Randall, Harper, and Rouncefield 2007, p. 169). This practice-oriented and reflexive move takes the kinds of questions my ethnography asked of visitors and the production of heritage texts, and redirects them toward the ethnographer and the production of scientific knowledge/text.

## Postscript

My last visit to the Ammunition Hill site was on June 18, 2012, on the occasion of the Jordanian delegation's ceremonial visit. It was an odd visit, and although I expected it to be my last, at least for a while, it still took me by surprise. It was about a month before I was to leave Israel for the United States, which for the first time in my life was a journey that was not bound by well-defined time frames of summer vacations, academic fellowships, and sabbaticals. At this time I felt I had learned what I could about writing, mediation, heritage tourism, and the performance of national commemoration, so it was clear to me that this should be my last visit. To my surprise, the site also had “decided” that this would be my last visit: plans for major renovations at the museum required changes to the exhibitions, and the visitor book was gone—permanently removed! I recall that since my first visit to the site, discussions regarding large-scale renovation plans were

mentioned. However, though construction was taking place in other parts of the site, the museum's structure was not renovated. On that hot June afternoon, the installation was in place but the pedestal for the visitor book was empty. I was surprised and also disappointed, feeling that I should have known and anticipated this, at the site where I was allegedly an expert. Perhaps, I thought, I became attached to the book.

The visit was also unusual because it was the first time I met someone at the site I knew—someone from “outside” the field and in my social circle. As I walked back from the theater where the formal ceremony of Jordanian and Israeli officers took place, I was absorbed in thought about the event, and I ran into Tamar Posen-Paikis, who was even more surprised by our chance meeting. Although Tamar knew I was doing research at Ammunition Hill, and although I knew she had lost her father in the 1967 War in Jerusalem and occasionally visited the site, neither of us had imagined the possibility of meeting there. Furthermore, on that day I was wearing a shirt that Tamar had painted, and I am certain that the last thing *she* expected to see after the ceremony was a friend doing ethnography while wearing a shirt she had painted.

Tamar and I have known each other for years, but our families grew closer more than a decade earlier, when our daughters became best friends while attending a Palestinian school in Jerusalem (Yad beYad). Over the years I had participated in a few of Tamar's public art activities, one of which was directed at criticizing national Israeli rituals of commemoration. On this occasion (called Headstand, or *amidat rosh*), about fifty of Tamar's friends and acquaintances gathered at midday in a public park in Jerusalem, preparing to perform a *collective headstand* just before the siren for the National Day of Remembrance went off.<sup>2</sup> Typically, when the all-penetrating sound of the siren is heard, everyone is expected to stop activity and stand straight and motionless (drivers stop their cars and stand near them silently for the duration of the siren). But during this Headstand event, we all did a headstand (for which we had been training together and individually for a few weeks beforehand with a yoga teacher), which lasted, motionless, for the entire duration of the siren's roar (two minutes). This was an embodied critique of Zionist national adherence, a counter-ritual.

At the sunny Ammunition Hill grounds, Tamar was emotional; she said she had alternated between laughing and crying during the ceremony with the Jordanian officers, because it had been deeply touching but also strange. “There were kilograms of testosterone there,” she said, but she also felt deeply moved upon meeting people she knew and fondly remembered from her childhood—people who were, like her, children of bereaved Israeli families. Tamar remarked, “It was like receiving a direct greeting (*drishbat shalom*) from my father.” Her experience was moving and powerful and from “within,” while I observed the occasion from

a distance: it was part of the “field” I studied and I was skeptical as to the moral claims that the Ammunition Hill management made with regard to the reconciliation of officers who fought in the battles.

As part of my concluding visit to the site, this personal encounter took on a symbolic meaning and made me reconsider the inter-relations between the ethnographically demarcated enclave called “the field” and the deeply troubled urban spaces of East and West Jerusalem within which Ammunition Hill operates. These are spaces of the city in which I was born (a year after the city was declared “liberated and united forever”), where I spent nearly all my life and where my family lives; and they can and perhaps should be critically viewed as the “field.”

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It was not until after I was done with my visits to the Ammunition Hill museum that I realized the influence of many personal memories of long hours spent in museums during my childhood and adolescence years. Upon establishment of the Israeli Museum in 1965, Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek invited my mother, Tamar Yizraeli-Noy, who was a prehistory archeologist, to curate the museum's large prehistory display. My mother accepted this invitation and acted as the museum's prehistory curator for the following three decades. As a result, I spent countless mornings and afternoons during my childhood and adolescence roaming the museum's large and modern halls and exhibitions. At times I was excited and curious about small Neolithic figurines (my mother had a special interest in prehistoric art forms<sup>3</sup>) or with the chronologically ordered and somewhat menacing Australopithecus and Neanderthal skulls. In addition, a few of the findings presented in the large and modern halls were ones that my mother had dug (I joined her on her annual excavations), which made me feel privileged and proud, having a personal connection to the exhibits.

And there was also the museum's underground level, which was restricted for visitors and tourists but not for me! That was the museum's backstage (more accurately, understage), where the offices, the huge storage halls, and the restoration department were located. There I would help my mother clean and sort arrowheads, hand axes, and small animal bones, recalling where we found them and hoping that they were significant enough to make their way “upstairs” to the public exhibition halls.

There was another museum in my childhood, one that was much smaller, less mainstream (“national,” or *mamlakhti*), and even marginalized, which was located in the city of Haifa. This was Haifa's Museum of Ethnology and Folklore, which my father, a prominent folklorist who established the study of Jewish folklore in Israel, founded and directed between 1955 and 1983. Clear memories

of that museum are few, and I have no recollections of visitors arriving there at any time, most likely because I visited the museum during summer vacations when schools were closed. As I remember it, the museum was populated only by my father, one staff member who was in charge of the Israel Folktale Archives (a large collection of stories that my father began collecting in 1955, and that was initially stored there),<sup>4</sup> and a couple of volunteers who helped with paperwork and classifying various Jewish “ethnic” items and stories.

Before I reached adolescence, that small museum, which was located on the ground floor of a quiet residential building on Arlozorov Road, was closed, and the artifacts were removed by the Haifa municipality (“boxed and stored in the municipal storage rooms forever,” in the words of Edna Heichal, who worked in the museum and on the Israel Folktale Archives for many years).<sup>5</sup>

The shy ethnology museum comprised a main exhibition hall with colorful displays that impressed me. I particularly remember a white and gleaming Yemenite bridal dress, ornamented with many heavy artifacts that Yemenite brides wear for the henna and wedding ceremonies, and traditional Jewish-Persian and Jewish-Bukharan ornaments. During my visits with my father I slept there on occasion, and one night I dreamt that the costumes became animated and emerged from their dusty wooden vitrines. I also remember a mulberry tree outside, and a friendship that emerged with an older high school girl who volunteered at the museum in the summers. I cannot say when it was that I last visited that museum or why my memories of it to this day are as vague as they are sad.



Jerusalem and Tampa

## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Transcription of text (inscribed discourse):

*Italicized* words present words written initially in Hebrew.

Forward slash (/) represents a line break.

[square brackets] represent text that I added for clarity.

CAPITALIZED words were written in larger font.

Transcription of spoken discourse:

*Italicized words* in present words that were pronounced with stress.

[square brackets] represent text that I added for clarity.

Numbers between parentheses (4.5) indicate length of pauses in seconds and tenths of seconds, when over one second long.

Period (.) resets pause of talk of about 1 second.

Comma (,) indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation and a brief pause in talk (shorter than a second).

Hyphenated words- represents abrupt halt or interruption in pronunciation.

Hebrew letter transcription. The letters *Het* and *Kaf* are represented by “ch,” and *Tsadi* by “ts.” The letters *Alef* and *Ayin* are represented by “a,” and the letter *He* is represented by h.