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The Politics of Authenticity in a National Heritage Site in Israel

Abstract

This paper offers a multifaceted appreciation of the political roles played by authenticity in modern tourism. The study, located at a national heritage and commemoration site in Jerusalem, Israel, traces authentic occurrences—manifestations and representations—that culminate in an ideological ecology of authenticity. Through this depiction, the active and often veiled role authenticity, understood as a social structure, plays is foregrounded. A special place within this ecology is reserved for the role performed by the site's visitor book. The paper conceptualizes the commemorative visitor book as an ideological and institutional interface, which serves as an authenticating device. This device allows a transformation of visitors unto ideological social agents who partake in the structure of national commemoration in Israel.

10 Ideas That Are Changing The World

The March, 2008, edition of Time magazine, presented a cover report titled, "10 Ideas That Are Changing The World." Under this promising head, the magazine proposed "forces" that are "more than money, more than politics," which amount to "the secret power that this planet runs on." One of these contemporary "secret powers" is "Synthetic Authenticity." The article goes on to argue, in the practical, neo-liberal and neo-capitalist tone that is characteristic of the magazine, that "Today you are authentic when you acknowledge just how fake you really are" (Cloud 2008).

Time magazine evokes a list of seemingly hybrid and sophisticated concepts (Geoengineering, Reverse Radicalism), which play on the popular appreciation of the notion of "postmodernity." Specifically, the article on authenticity perpetuates the disjointing between power, money and politics, on the one hand, and the politics of representation and authenticity, on the other. It does so by affirming the common appreciation of authenticity as a given and not a construct, for the sake of maintaining the position that authenticity is an object and not an agent. It thus

preserves the veil by which "postmodern" discourses cleverly hide the politics of identities and fortunes.

The article's second effect concerns the juxtaposing of authenticity and identity, locating the former squarely in the center of the latter. Time magazine gives the reader an idea of what contemporary identity supposedly is, or what it should be (Giddens 1991; Taylor 1989). In this way the article taps on "postmodern" notions of selves and identities, and on the anxiety involved in the notions of authenticity/inauthenticity of self in social life.

One of the global institutions, where these two notions undoubtedly play a formative role, is the industry of tourism. Indeed, authenticity, with its myriad manifestations, occurrences and guises, has been influentially argued as the leading motivation and experience of modern tourists (MacCannell 1999 [1976]). This should not be surprising if we consider the nature of the tourism industry. Tourism's essential charter engulfs transporting people from one place—their home, to another—the destination. This corporeal travel holds a promise, which is to transcend mediation processes and short-circuit representational imagery, through *actual* arrival at the desired scenes. Postmodernity's notions of hyper-reality and the surreal aside, for nearly a billion international tourists per year, tourism fulfills the contemporary promise of a corporeal encounter with the genuine attraction, be it a site, place or artifact. To those who can afford it, tourism institutions offer one of the dearest commodities that are available under Western-modern ontology, namely immediate, unmediated accesses to the Real.

This article seeks to examine the formative role authenticity plays in modern tourism, in terms of granting authenticity or bestowing it on people, an authenticity which is at once corporeal and symbolic. If mass transportation means actual travel, then the weight of the authenticity question shifts to how people know whether they have arrived at the *actual place*. Consider Appadurai's (1986) historical discussion of authenticity, correctly delimiting the concept to the modern are. Following Benjamin, on the one hand, and Baudrillard, on the other, Appadurai argues that during periods when long distance travel was hazardous and difficult, there was no need for commodities to be valued or even marked in terms of authenticity. Merely possessing them meant one had the resources of purchasing and physically delivering these commodities. This condition changed with modernity, and where reproduction is possible and geographical access has been largely democratisized, and other means are needed for conferring value. People arrive at various destinations, in this case at a national memorial site, but the question now shifts as to where is it that they have arrived at. What is the meaning, or the story, that the place tells, and in what ways can visitors partake in this story?

I pursue this question by attending to a case study in the form of a national heritage site located in West Jerusalem, Israel. Through attending closely to a number of what I shall call "occurrences of authenticity," this research promotes a conceptual discussion of the functions authenticity plays in tourism. The exploration works its way empirically from representations of the outdoor site as a whole, to the exhibits inside the museum, culminating in the unique artifact of the visitor book, which supplies a stage for visitors' authentic performances (Macdonald 2005; Noy 2008). By attending to authentic occurrences, the paper traces instances and representations of authenticity, which are conceptualized in terms of "voices" that articulate and establish validity and a narrative of identity. In the ecology of authenticity evinced by these occurrences in the commemorative site under examination, the visitor book uniquely serves as an authenticated/authenticating

device. In the conclusions, the role of the visitor book will be discussed in Giddens' (1979, 1984) terms of the agent/structure duality, bringing authenticity into the sociology of institutional and ideological power relations.

The choice of a heritage site as an empirical field of study for this research rests on the unprecedented growth of heritage tourism (Timothy 2003). This growth is not a matter of quantity alone, as presently heritage tourism is arguably the most emblematic form of late-modern tourism. Through the exploration of heritage tourism one can learn much about what contemporary tourism industry in general is about, including tourists' quests. This is the case because heritage, by definition, concerns something that *does not tangibly exist anymore*, and is therefore inaccessible in any immediate way to tourists' bodily senses. Heritage lies in the "land of the past," and accessing it requires—or demands—something that exceeds physical transportation, i.e. excessive efforts in terms of mediation and representation of ideas, symbols, and identities. For his reason, heritage sites amount to sites of authenticity. They account for the resurrection of authenticity, and have supplied particularly rich soil for exploring it, and its framing and construction processes (Bruner 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

Finally, heritage plays an important role in the contemporary, heated scenes of identity politics, which aim, as the Time's article has it, at shaping and informing "who you really are." Heritage sites aim at producing persuasive historic narrative, on which collective identities and related political demands can be validly asserted at the present (Anderson 1983; Zerubavel 1995). Indeed, heritage sites typically evoke the collective's "true" cultural history, and are sites at which identities are fervently negotiated (see Breathnach 2006; Chhabra, Healy and Sills 2003, and various publications in the Journal of Heritage Tourism).

The Authenticity Paradigm in Tourism Studies

Authenticity is a notoriously slippery concept, at least (if not more) as much as the condition which has gave it birth—modernity. According to Benjamin's (2008 [1936]) oft quoted definition, when reproduction and representation are frequent, originality is a prerequisite for authenticity. Specifically in tourism studies, where reproduction and representation are ubiquitous, authenticity arguably amounts to a paradigm, beginning with the influential works of Dean MacCannell (1973, 1999 [1976]).

MacCannell argued that, since modernity is largely characterized by alienation and superficiality, tourism supplies the much sought after *experience of authenticity*. In this sense, tourism is essentially a modern industry, charging individual lives with meaning, on the micro level, and a large social structure, on the macro level, as did religion in pre-industrial societies. For that reason tourist attractions are the present-day equivalents of sacred sites and sites of worship in traditional societies. Attractions supply a structure, both social and experiential, in a world where such structures are diminishing. "The touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experience," MacCannell (1999: 101) typically argued, pointing to a direct link between the state and status of being a tourist, on the one hand, and a particular type of sense or "consciousness" (the tourist's), on the other.

MacCannell's percepts have been widely expanded upon and his contribution was taken to be "as pervasive as it was radical" (Dann 1996. See Cohen 1974, 1979, 1988; Pearce and Moscardo 1986, to mention a few). These elaboration suggest a

conceptual complication of the notion of authenticity, extending MacCannellian insights into other sub-domains in tourism, and furthering the notion that authenticity is not (only) about objects but about experiences and processes. Authenticity gradually comes to be viewed as an infrastructural element in the tourism industry. As Wang (2000: 71) observes, tourism is an "industry of authenticity," wherein "existential authenticity becomes a commodity."

MacCannell's view of authenticity has also been criticized, as alternative re-conceptualizations attempted to deconstruct the dichotomous paring of authenticity versus inauthenticity, suggesting a more complex and diverse notion. Bruner (1994), for instance, suggested a number of definitions (to which I will return), where the notion of originally (Benjamin 2008 [1936]) plays only a secondary role. Katriel's (1997) work, adds a cultural dimension, suggesting that authenticity is culturally negotiated. Both Bruner's and Katriel's works are relevant to the present study because they too are founded on research conducted in heritage sites and museums. These and other contributions have complicated not only the material world of tourism (artifacts, sites, etc.), but had also projected onto the tourists themselves, and their heterogeneous experiences, motivations, meanings which concern authenticity. These extensions and gradations of the concept of authenticity, and its multiplicity have prevented from arriving at one, clear definition, and have also moved the discussion of authenticity from its structural foundation to post-structural appreciations. For the present purpose, the notion of authenticity as a commodity is helpful. Hence authenticity is not viewed as ends but as means. We are less interested in whether something is "authentic" or not, and more in understanding what are the *effects of authenticity*, or *what for* is this or that rendered "authentic." Hence, there is more focus on processes of authenticates and their aims, than on authenticity as an adjective.

In this regard, a number of works have shed light on the role of authenticity in the construction of both individual and collective identities in tourism (Bruner 1991 2005; Noy and Cohen 2005; Taylor 2001). In Noy's works on Israeli backpackers' narratives (Noy 2007), authenticity is employed as a *rhetoric and a semiotic resource*. More than simply as a commodity, authenticity serves to constitute objects and people as worthy, a worth that can be appreciated socially, culturally and materially. Tourists' explicit evocations of authenticity during their storytelling, served to validate and enhance their narrative performances. In these performances, tourists transposed authenticity from the spaces they consumed at the destinations, to the performance of their travel story at home, after returning from their trips. As a result, the occasion of the interview itself became charged with the semiotics of tourism: the tourists told of consuming authentic places, and their performances served to authenticate who they are, and to bestow the aura of authenticity on their selves. "Importing" authenticity into their performances made their claims regarding identity and cultural capital all the more persuasive and effective (Noy 2007).

Site and Method

This study took place at the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site (AHNMS), which is a war commemoration complex located in the northern parts of West Jerusalem. Inaugurated in 1975, the site honors Israeli soldiers who died in the battle on Ammunition Hill during the 1967 War. The site also celebrates the victory of the Israeli Army over the Jordanian Legion, and the "liberation" of East Jerusalem and

the "unification" of the city. The complex comprises two main spaces: an outdoor site that includes commemorative monuments and the original trenches in which the fighting took place, as well as an indoor museum.

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

Most of my research at the AHNMS was conducted over four weeks of ethnography, which took place during the summer and autumn of 2006. During this period I conducted observations of visitors and tour guides, and thirty-seven informal (unstructured) interviews, which addressed visitors' overall impressions of and activities in the site, and specifically their views of the commemorative visitor book and their practices of writing in it. These observations and interviews indicated that the majority of the visitors were either (local) Jewish Israelis, or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists, mostly from North America, and that both populations identify with Israel's national Zionist ideology, and support the nationalist and military ideologies promoted by the site. Additionally, twelve formal interviews were conducted with the site's management and staff, in order to provide a picture of the ideological approaches to national commemoration, heritage tourism, and the means by which the two are jointly exhibited.

In addition to observations and interviews, a study of the entries that were written in the site's commemorative visitor book was conducted. A single volume filled just before my ethnography supplies the case study of this examination. It was chosen because it was the most recent volume to be completed, and because it is typical of the AHNMS visitor books in all respects (cf. Noy 2008). Containing 100 pages, the book took about one year to fill (between July 2005 and August 2006), and contains approximately sixteen hundred entries. Given that it includes a considerable number of entries that were written over a long period of time, and is located at a National Commemoration Site, the book arguably provides a representative sample of inscribers' actions at a symbolic site. The entries in the book vary in length, ranging from one-word inscriptions to short paragraphs, with the majority written in Hebrew (50%) and the rest written mostly in English (45%). The entries were examined in light of the performative appreciation of the book and its function, whereby it is viewed as a stage for visitors (inscribed) performances (see below). In the interpretation of these texts I avoided employing rigorous and systematic procedures, and preferred a contextualized reading that enjoys sensitivities from (critical) discourse analysis and multimodality studies (Fairclough 1995; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001, respectively). Hence the methods used in this research were suited to record the "ecology of authenticity," which refers to various media through which different occurrences of authenticity are manifested.

Locations and Lyrics: Two Authentic Occurrences in The Site

As part of the site and of the economy of authenticity within which the visitor book functions meaningfully, two aspects demand initial attention. These aspects are presently conceptualized as two occurrences of authenticity. The first occurrence concerns the physical location of the AHNMS, which is right where the historic battle took place. The fact is readily mentioned by tour guides, and in the site's webpage and brochures. The museum's director stressed this point in our first meeting, as he was showing me the spacious premises: "You've got a place here where there's *something* you can actually *feel* with your own feet. [You can] move through the trenches. [You can] touch the bunkers. [You can] hear the stories. And people cling to that. 'This guy fell *here*, that occurred *here*.'"[1] With these words, the director addressed the significance of the site's singular location. The repeated appeal to bodily senses and the indications of proximity and immediacy (which sociolinguists call proximal demonstratives, such as "here"), qualify his comments as an example of the discourse of authenticity. The director's description of the site's location, in response to my question regarding its power to attract visitors, suggests that he is pointing out not (only) a condition, namely originality, but also a resource: in the site's authenticity lies its uniqueness.

Indeed, because the site is not particularly impressive (and has not been seriously renovated since its construction), its location is perhaps the most vital resource it possess in terms of its attractiveness. With the impressive expansion of tourism, and the concomitant growing competition between sites and attractions, there is a strong demand, which is met by consistent efforts, at creating distinctions between otherwise indistinguishable attractions. In this symbolic economy, an "authentic" location is a particularly invaluable resource (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

The term "authentic" is bracketed because in its capacity as a resource in the symbolic economy of tourism, authenticity is socially constructed and often manipulated. It is only partially faithful to the original reality which it describes, and represents thus a type of "front stage reality" (MacCannell 1999 [1976]). The fact is that the historic battleground actually extends *beyond* the premises presently occupied by the AHNMS. A large United Nation (UNRWA) complex it situated to the southwest, and a couple of pre-1967 Palestinian houses still stand to the east. Thus, some of the historic spaces documented in the museum and symbolically appropriated by it are de facto inaccessible to visitors. They lie outside the premises of the AHNMS, and in many ways outside the sovereignty of the State of Israel. Paradoxically, these spaces, which include the ex-territorial UN complex (which, to be accurate, serves as The West Bank Office for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East), and the Palestinian houses, represent the type of multinational occupation of spaces in Jerusalem/Al-Quds which is precisely what the ideology of the AHNMS seeks to deny. These are what Bruner (1994) calls "compromises to authenticity," which are "the little white lies of historical reconstruction." Yet here they are perhaps not so white not are they little.

The second occurrence of authenticity is more abstract, and concerns a well-known Hebrew song that celebrates the Israeli victory in the battle on the Ammunition Hill. The "Ammunition Hill" song was written and composed by two prominent figures in the Israeli music scene (Yoram Tehar-Lev and Yair Rosenblum, respectively) in 1968, and has since been recorded repeatedly. The song, which is

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[1] Interview with C. Nir'el (August 2, 2006).

described by its lyricist as a "documentary song," depicts the battle from the perspective of the soldiers who fought there, and is voiced throughout in the first person (plural), and is performed solely by men.[2] The rhythmic verses are interspersed with narrative sections during which only an accordion accompanies the male singer's voice. The narratives describe specific scenes of heroic face-to-face combat, in a low and machismo tone, and in the present tense. These qualities jointly grant the song an aura of authenticity. It sounds as though the soldiers themselves are performing the song.[3]

In a television interview, the lyricist revealed that some of the lyrics are in fact "authentic" quotes taken from an issue of an army journal which was published shortly after the war.[4] The magazine included interviews with soldiers who received the army's medal of honor for their part in the battle. Several of the song's most memorable lines actually appeared first in this issue. Here again, the notion of originality is called for, in order to establish authenticity. In the television program, the lyricist and a few of the soldiers are pictured strolling on the grounds of the site. One of the soldiers notes that there are "a few technical inaccuracies" in the song, and continues, "They really didn't have 120mm mortars, you know" (which is what the song describes). Nonetheless, the soldier readily agrees that "if it's good for the rhyme, and if that's the price for the success of such a popular song, which is a melodic memorial for the battle, then that's ok." Here again, "white lies" are exposed as authenticity correlates only partly with the historic reality from which it derives its unique value.

Flag and Post: Two Authentic Occurrences in The Museum

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

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[2] The song was performed by the Israeli Army's Central Command Band, 1972. It is accessible at the AHNMS's website: www.givathatachmosht.org.il/songs.php. The original animated clip is available through YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GnTDHvWhxA. Accessed March 25, 2008.
The expression "documentary song," is taken from an interview with the Tehar-Lev, the lyricist. See http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3405485,00.html (accessed August 8, 2008).
[3] In a recent television interview with one of the musicians involved in the original production of the song's performance (Izhar Ashdot), the description of the tension that accompanied the production was so intense that it actually got me confused whether it is a musician (reminiscing about the production of a soundtrack) or a soldiers (recalling the intensity of combat). On such occurrences, authenticity is not simply represented but rather enacted.
[4] "The most Beautiful Moments of the Army Bands in Forty Years of Television Broadcasting," broadcasted on Channel 1 (Israeli National TV), February 8, 2008.

For this reason, two additional occurrences of authenticity are discussed, which, again, shed light on economy of authenticity within which the visitor book functions.

The first occurrence inside the museum is an Israeli flag exhibited in a glass frame (Figure 1). This is the acclaimed original flag hung by paratroopers above the Western Wall on the morning of June 7, 1967. A short text, inscribed at the time, appears on the flag's upper right corner:

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

Figure 1: Original 1967 flag

The inscription celebrates the triumphant moment, when Israeli soldiers reached the Western Wall. It does so with an awareness of the occasion's historic dimension. In her discussion of graffiti, Susan Stewart (1991) addresses two conceptions of spontaneous, embodied writing, according to which inscriptions can be viewed as either corrupting or cherished, "[r]adically taken as both crime and art." This is true of the preceding occurrence and of many other occurrences of handwriting at Ammunition Hill. The handwritten mode is either against the law or above it. In the former case it is a matter of vandalism (writing on national symbols is illegal in Israel and in many other countries), and, in the latter, as evinced in the inscription on the national flag, it is an instance to be venerated, belonging in a museum. Handwriting traces and indexes the body of those who wrote it at the moment of inscription. It is presented and perceived as a highly authentic occurrence not because we are asked to believe that the object of the flag itself carries authenticity, but because the handwriting on the flag *authenticates it* by positioning it right at the heart of celebrated historic (i.e. original) events.[5] Handwriting on the surface of the national flag dramatically brings together binaries: the collective (symbol) with the personal (inscription), the abstract (sign) with the embodied (act).

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

The second occurrence concerns a photograph which is not actually located inside the museum, but rather in the Ammunition Hill offices (Figure 2). The photograph hangs in the main conference room, where VIPs, donors, and other exclusive visitors are received. The director referred to it specifically during our meeting (it has since been posted on the museum's new website). The center of the frame is filled by a handwritten, English text inscribed on cardboard, fastened to the butt of a rifle, which is stuck into the ground upside down. The post marks the location of the collective grave of 17 Jordanian soldiers killed in the battle. The text reads: "Army of Israel/Zahal/Buried here are/17 ~~Brave~~ Jordanian/Soldiers. June 7 1967." A copy of the picture (dated July 1994), was ceremoniously presented to a Jordanian Army delegation which visited the Ammunition Hill compound after the signing of the peace accord between Jordan and Israel.

Figure 2: Improvised memorial post

Like the inscription on the flag above, here too a handwritten text is superimposed on a historic artifact and gives it meaning and value in terms of originality and authenticity. The handwritten text evinces proximity to the "bare" historic events, and thus acquires the precious quality of authentic representation. The physical and functional proximity of rifle to writing additionally embodies the ideology that the activities of fighting and writing are enmeshed. The unused rifle functions concretely, but also symbolically, as a necessary precondition for a cultured existence, embodied in the appearance of the inscription. This notion is common in Republican ideologies and pervasive in Israeli highly militarized political and public sphere, whereby intellectualism is viewed as secondary to and reliant upon military might (Kimmerling 1993).

Note that the word "brave" was crossed out of the inscription. This illustrates how different views may compete over interpretations of conflicted events, even immediately after these events occur. More importantly, the deletion further

augments the authenticity of the sign. Now it is doubly authentic, both *hand*-written, *and hand*-erased.

These markers of authenticity are of a type highly characteristic to occurrences of authenticity at the AHNMS. They offer a glimpse into the profusion of handwritten documents, which direct visitors to look not so much at the contents, as at the modalities through which authenticity is established and validated (van Leewen 2001). These modes of communication suggest both authenticity and authentication. Writing, unlike talking, is a durable mode of communication, and thus ideally serves the purposes of authentication. In this context, writing is an ideal tool for engendering an awe of the authentic in the visitors (Stewart 1993).

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

In tourism, handwritten products fall into the larger valued category of authenticity in tourism, namely "handmade artifacts" (Littrell, Anderson and Brown 1993). According to Cohen (1988), tourists accept objects as authentic, even if they are commercialized and presented in institutional settings, as long as they have been handmade by members of a particular group—in this case the venerated paratroopers—or, more generally, people who acted in the epoch being commemorated. Authenticity, however, can also be constructed via culturally specific means. In Sabra (native Israeli) culture, the relations between handwriting and body are inspired by Romantic ideology, and create a much admired informality, familiarity and intimacy, which mass-printed documents cannot achieve. Handwriting in itself conveys an ideology which ascribes to handwriting—perceived as a non-commodified/commodifiable mode of expression—a uniquely esteemed, authentic, and personalized evocation (Katriel 1986; Noy 2005).

Authenticating Tourists: The Visitor Book as an Authentic Occurrence

The final occurrence of authenticity to be discussed, to which the remaining space of this paper is dedicated is that of the visitor book. Earlier I noted that the occurrences of authenticity culminate in the artifact of the visitor book, and in the socio-cultural functions that it performs. This culmination is both empirical and conceptual. Empirically, when visitors arrive at the visitor book, which, I will show, is located in one of the museum's innermost halls, they have already been exposed to and socialized into a particular type of authentic ideology and discursive authentic environment. Hence the visitor book is not merely an additional occurrence, but one at which earlier authentic occurrences culminate. Conceptually, the book offers a compelling stage on which authenticity can be actively performed by the visitors. I will show that it is not so much an authentic occurrence, as it is a device through which other authentic occurrences are generated, namely commemorative entries. I will discuss this in the remaining space, but first, the particular qualities of the visitor book need to be examined.

When approaching the visitor book, one observes that it is framed in significant ways, which grant it a status of a unique artifact. First, rather atypically, this visitor book is *not* located near the site's exit. While visitor books are commonly located

where visitors can write their impressions at the conclusion of their visit, this visitor book is located in one of the museum's innermost halls. It is placed near the Golden Wall of Commemoration, where an eternal flame flickers constantly, and where a somber voice is heard, monotonously reciting the names, ranks, and military affiliations of the soldiers who died in the battles. In this way, this visitor book is not meant to capture reflective comments or encapsulate how the visitors "signal their passing" through the site (Stamou and Paraskevolpoulos 2004). Instead, it is part of the museum's ideological arsenal of commemorative devices, which is meant to induce emotional involvement and provide an opportunity to partake in the national(ist) rite of commemoration.

Second, the visitor book supplies the main attraction in the hall where it is located. It is positioned within a structure that is made of a large and impressive formation, consisting of two cylindrical columns of black steel, each about one meter in diameter. The shorter column is about one meter high, and functions as a kind of table on which the book rests. Near it rises another pillar, which is about four meters tall. The entire composition rests on a base that is slightly elevated from the floor, so that those visitors that wish to read (or write) in the book must step up and enter a designated zone. In its overall design, the structure resembles a monument or a memorial, lending the book a solemn and dignified character and designating it as a unique exhibit, perhaps even as a monument in itself.

When attempting to appreciate authenticity with regards to this device, i.e. the visitor book, one should bear in mind this thick symbolist framing. In light of this environment, the book offers surfaces for writing that are effectively part of the museum's commemorative space. In fact, these surfaces offer a *physical extension of the commemorative and symbolic spaces of the museum*. In this respect, the space provided in the book is unique because whatever is registered in/on it instantly becomes part of the exhibit: anything and everything that is inscribed on them by visitors is transformed into an exhibit, and thus becomes a (temporary) permanent element of the museum's interior.
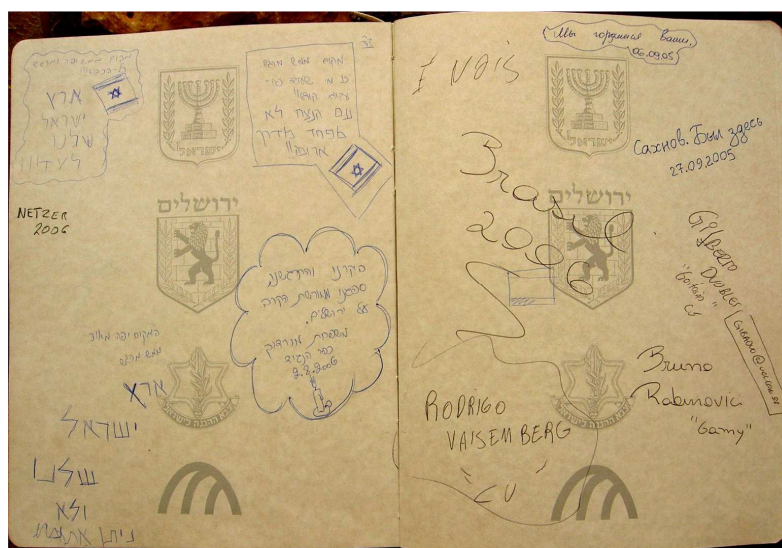

Figure 3: Visitor Book: Authenticating tourists

Figure 3 illustrates a typical visitor book opening (a set of two adjacent pages), which shows a rather lively and crowded assortment of inscriptions. Openings in this book typically contain anywhere between ten and twenty entries, which include short

and long texts as well as aesthetic decorations. These assume the forms of stylized handwriting, surplus of punctuation marks and underlying and encircling lines, and complete graphic symbols and drawings.

Visually, the openings in the book resemble the images that are frequent in the museum. Such is the case with the opening depicted in the figure above. Its similarities lie in the handwritten mode of inscription and the combination of verbal inscriptions with the unique symbolic surfaces, on which they are inscribed. As shown in Figure 3, every page in the visitor book displays a vertical line made of four printed symbols. These are the symbols of the State of Israel, the City of Jerusalem, the Israel Defense Forces and the logo of the AHNMS. They correspond with the flags hanging nearby, and with the profusion of national and military symbols exhibited throughout the halls. These symbols serve to mark the book as a device that provides additional surfaces that are available for consumption at the AHNMS. They suggest that the pages of the book are themselves symbolic. Writing upon them is therefore, already confined by and in dialogue with the semiotics and aesthetics of nationalist-militaristic commemoration.

The book's animated pages present spontaneous inscriptions, produced *in situ* by the visitors. These inscriptions are authentic in the capacity that they record a bottom-up type of production. Here, again, the collective quality of the record, i.e. the various inscriptions occupying a shared space, together with its handwritten mode, endow the book with an authenticity of a type that is particularly cherished in local Sabra culture. As Noy (2007) recently indicated, in relation to the statues of texts among an Israeli tourist community, "these handwritten compilations constitute the travelers' alternative to commercialized forms of tourist publications. The travelers' books are often mentioned in comparison to commercial touristic publications; in such comparisons, the former are of a unique genre, valued for their 'authenticity' and for their up-to-date nature." Such spontaneous expressions are highly sought after in Israeli culture, because they index a culturally esteemed notion of authenticity.

In what follows, two typical entries are examined closely. They are characteristic of the two main populations of visitors: local (Jewish) Israelis and international Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists, mostly from North America international. The entries are represented in their original layout (the first example is translated from Hebrew):

> Example 1:
> 29.8.05
> We were very impressed and moved
> by this place.
> It's very pretty here and well preserved.
> Well done [*kol hakavod*] to those who preserve
> the place and the memory of
> the soldiers who brought us
> the freedom we enjoy today.
> With hope that there will be peace
> among our people
> eternally.
> Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet
> Kampf

This inscription is typical of entries written by local visitors (Israeli sightseers in Jerusalem) because it is written in Hebrew, because it mainly addresses the

AHNMS, and because it expresses respect and gratitude both to the commemorative efforts of the AHNMS and to those who gave their lives during the War. In accordance with the norm of book entries, the inscription also includes the date and the names of its inscribers. While this information would have sufficed, the majority of visitors prefer to produce more verbally elaborate entries. Through these expressive inscriptions, the authors are made present or "presenced" at the site. Through the act of inscribing on these symbolically framed surfaces, the inscribers are *transformed from passive visitors to active producers*: they are now agents participating in the national narrative of commemoration as told at the site.

The discursive structure of this example is also typical of local visitors' entries. The first few sentences address the site's management, and note the positive impression that the visit has made. In the next section, Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet take part in the commemorative narrative and perform what they find to be appropriate at this ritualistic site. In other words, after the writers thank the management, they proceed to evince what they have learned during the visit, which is their way of participating in the rite of commemoration. They evoke the site's narrative, which connects the historic sacrifice with the state of the present, and conclude with a hope that extends into the (mythic) future.

Observe that neither the word "authentic" nor any similar term appears anywhere in the inscription (or in any other of the 1,000 entries in the book). The reading suggested above explains why this and other texts lack any indication of authenticity. There is simply *no need* for such indications. Inscribing in the book, in terms of both its physical location and the voice of its authors, guarantees that what is written is authentic(ated). The visitors need not mention where they are writing, or the site they are writing about. This information is considered trivial in the context of this commemorative visitor book, which is physically stationary and symbolically framed as part of the original (authentic) grounds of the AHNMS.

In example 2, authenticity is performed differently than in the previous example, yet here too, not explicit markers of authenticity can be found. The writer of the following entry comes from a different population of visitors: Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists/pilgrims from North America. Unlike the first example, this entry is written mostly in English (words originally in Hebrew are italicized and translated in square brackets).

Example 2:
Basad [abbreviation for With God's Help]
Thank you for giving your lives to
Yerushalayim
Without you I would
not be standing here
today.
Motti Neigerstein
Canada

This inscription is typical of entries written by orthodox Jewish tourists. Most of it is in English, with a few (special) words written in Hebrew, i.e. the Holy Language (these shifts between languages are "code switches"). Beyond the matter of language, the difference between the entries is evident at first glance. While the previous example basically addresses the site and its management, this entry directly and explicitly addresses the fallen soldiers. If the entry by Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet has the AHNMS at its topic, Noam Brickman's entry has the historic sacrifice

at its main topic. It is almost as though Brickman does not see the site, but rather sees *through* the site.

There are of course similarities between the entries as well. In both cases, the visitors demonstrate their understanding of the narrative unfolded at the site, and they do so through participation, i.e. by choosing to engage and inscribe in the visitor book. Typical of commemoration sites, the visitors tell, or retell, the narrative that ties past to present via a causal link. This link suggests a justification of past events and sacrifices by what the past has granted the present-day condition ("the soldiers who brought us the freedom we enjoy today"/"Without you I would not be standing here today").

This and similar entries, which address the fallen soldiers directly, establish a sense of authenticity through the unique structure of their address. Directly invoking the dead positions the visitor in the *same realm* as those being addressed. The verses, "Thank you for giving your lives," and "Without you," suggest continuity and homology between those making the address and those being addressed. This homology blurs the ontic divide between signifier and signified, reproduction and original, and serves to place the author within the spotlight of authenticity. There is more at stake here than becoming an exhibit via inscription in public space of the visitor book. Here the visitors talk *through* the site, and connect with the historical events and people commemorated by the site, all of which are viewed as objectively authentic.

In other words, the way the book is framed grants the visitors the unique possibility of performing authentically. Authenticity here is not primarily a matter of originality or verisimilitude, but more an issue of directness and lack of mediation, and concerns what Katriel (1997) termed "testimonial authenticity" in the context of historical museums. And again, accomplishing a spontaneous performance of this kind is highly appreciated in the local (Sabra) culture. Thus, different entries are able to perform authentically without explicitly mentioning authenticity. From this platform, visitors are invited to communicate directly with the nation, with the grieving families and with the soldiers, living or dead. When this option is actualized, authentic communication results. There is no need for those writing in the book to indicate that the experience is real, spontaneous, or authentic. Indeed, as ethnomethodologists have taught us, society sanctions people who say (or write) trivial things (Sacks 1992). Doing so suggests incompetence in maintaining one's face, a bit like having to explain a joke. The very act of inscribing and the structure of their expressions establish the writers-visitors as authentic participants.

Conclusions

This paper examines five empirical occurrences of authenticity at a tourist heritage site which shed light on the roles played by authenticity in (heritage) tourism. These occurrences do not qualify, perhaps, as instances of the exotic ("postmodern") Synthetic Authenticity promoted by *Time* magazine, but together, they affectively create an authentic and authenticating environment. Four of these occurrences exemplify authenticity in the singular. That is, they comply with only one definition of authenticity, namely the one based on originality (in contrast with the notions of believability and accuracy-of-reproduction which underlie Bruner's [1994] two other definitions, respectively).

Owing to the ideological ecology at the AHNMS, the fifth occurrence of authenticity there—namely the visitor book—accomplishes a unique function. Framed as it is, the book serves to grant the inscriptions in it a special aura. The book is an esteemed object, and the act of inscribing in it satisfies various definitions of authenticity, both symbolically and physically. First, these acts of inscription are actual, and in this sense they produce inscriptions that are original. Second, these acts are "spontaneous," i.e., not manipulated, at least from the point of view of Sabra culture, and the way it perceives acts of writing by hand (Katriel 1997). While the institution bestows, through the book, an aura of national symbolism on the visitors, in the contract between the two sides, the visitors also validate the institution. The visitors' entries confirm the vitality and relevance of the site, for without the visitors' lively and spontaneous inscriptions, the book would remain a blank document, an empty space. It is the visitors who validate the book—by choosing to engage it, to interact with it, and to leave their traces therein (in the form of aesthetisized and genred commemorative entries). The traces they leave through their actual, physical, presence grant the site the status of an esteemed, relevant and vibrant institution of national commemoration.

Thus, there is mutual benefit to be gained in this interaction—the site bestows authority upon the visitors, while the visitors validate the site. This exchange can be productively conceptualized it terms of authenticity: by engaging the visitor book and producing commemorative discourse, visitors produce originality in situ. The visitors are also *reproducing* commemorative discourse that *resembles* what they have learned in their visit to the site. These aspects involve authenticity based on the notions of both originality and believability (Bruner's first and second definitions).

Furthermore, authenticity and authentication are closely related to authority. This has been shown with respect to the first four occurrences, which demonstrate how, through its capability to produce original facts and spaces, the AHNMS exhibits authority and sovereignty as a formally acknowledged national memorial site. As Bruner (1994: 400) notes in discussing this notion of authenticity, "[t]he more fundamental question to ask here is not if an object or site is authentic, but rather who has the authority to authenticate, which is a matter of power, or, to put it another way, who has the right to tell the story of the site." The AHNMS establishes its authority via a type of authenticity based on the immediate association between the site and the Ammunition Hill battle, and, more generally, between the site and the larger events of the 1967' war (and their sweeping consequences). This is an indexical connection, where the former—the site—indexes the latter—the war (as well as the "unification" of Jerusalem, etc.).

This is true for the first four occurrences of authenticity at the AHNMS. The visitor book, on the other hand, accomplishes a different goal, albeit also in an indexical manner. The book does not validate the association between the site and the historic events, but rather the association between the visitors and the state, *through* the site, and specifically through the device of the visitor book.

This double bind movement between visitors and institution recalls Giddens' (1979, 1984) well-known concept of agent/structure duality. The visitors who choose to engage with the device of the visitor book *become agents* in terms of their active role within the macro socio-ideological structure of national commemoration. Here is a transformatory interface that engages individuals with a macro social structure. The inscriptions in the visitor book are precisely objects that "explicate how the limitations of individual 'presence' are transcended by the stretching of social relations across time-space" (Giddens 1984: 35, 282), a process essential to the construction of the

agent/structure duality. The book serves as a portal, an interface that literally (double meaning intended) *connects the micro to the micro*, and allows the enmeshment of the agent—namely the visitor who is mobilized into becoming an agent—with the structure, which is one of national commemoration. From this perceptive, it is hard to overestimate the uniqueness of the role performed by the visitor book at the AHNMS.

MacCannell (1999: 102) argues that "[t]here is no serious or functional role in the production awaiting the tourist in the places they visit. Tourists are not made personally responsible for anything that happens in the establishment they visit…" While this is true in some cases, observations at the AHNMS demonstrate that it is not always so. These observations indicate that, as inscriptions materialize, tourists become ideological agents, who partake in and perform the macro-social structure of commemoration.

Acknowledgements

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