■ *Chaim Noy*
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Writing Ideology: Hybrid Symbols in a Commemorative Visitor Book in Israel

This article joins recent ethnographies of written documents which shed light on embedded practices and codes in and through which writing is produced and consumed. The article explores the linguistic ideology of writing through examining inscriptions made in a visitor book in a war commemoration museum in Jerusalem, Israel. These settings supply a dual ideological framework, fusing the modern ideologies of authenticity and national commemoration. Under attention are the physical affordances and circumstances of the visitor book and how they contribute to an "authentic" mode of commemoration-cum-participation via inscribing, where language ideology and national ideology reinforce each other. The analysis suggests that the category "writing" is reductionist, and that under embodied sensibilities it should better be viewed as an array of textual, para-textual, and non-textual visual signs that are fused into the production of materialized hybrid inscriptions. Further, the situatedness and corporeality of inscribing practices carries far reaching semiotic implications, including the transformation of the ontic state of "texts" into that of symbols, calling for the rematerialization of inscribing. [handwriting, language ideologies, museum, commemoration, visitor book]

Writing Situated

It is no news that writing can be an embodied and an embodying ideological practice in and of itself. This appreciation raises inquiries concerning the ecologies wherein writing amounts to an ideologically indoctrinating practice, and the codes that illustrate how writing is indeed charged. In this article I explore writing practices and the codes they produce in a particular cultural site, namely a commemorative visitor book, with the intention of showing how national ideology is inscribed and embodied in an institutional setting. That is, how in a particular setting inscriptions are produced, presented, and consumed as an ideological mode of linguistic communication, or more generally, as a value-laden system of signs.

The exploration is a reaction to Keith Basso's (1974) formative proposal, urging for ethnographic explorations of written materials of sorts, and of the social practices and circumstances in and through which they have been produced. The exploration joins a recent move towards researching the sociosemiotics of writing—and of literacy at large—via ethnographic sensibilities and approaches. Such studies, pursued mostly by linguistic anthropologists (Blommaert 1999b; Danet 1997; Hull 2003; Messick 1993; Salomon 2001; Silverstein and Urban 1996b), linguists (Roy

Harris' semiological integrationism, 1995 and 1996), folklorists (Stewart 1991), and ethnomethodologists (Laurier and Whyte 2001), demonstrate the dimensions and implications of writing as highly situated, contested, and an ideologically pregnant "field of action" (Blommaert 2004).

Under ethnographic sensibilities, writing emerges as an *embodied array of practices*, which transpire in particular nexuses of cultural and material spheres. Such materialities concern physical and technological dimensions, and supply accesses and affordances that account for and shape interactional and expressive possibilities (Hutchby 2001). Inscription surfaces and writing implements, stationary and mobile infrastructures and trajectories, and potential reuses and archival possibilities supply a few of the many aspects that should not go overlooked in the observation of the details of the production of writing, and of the histories and possible futures of written material (Derrida 1987; Laurier and Whyte 2001; Silverstein 1996).

The handwritten documents and representations that I will examine are exhibited in a war commemoration museum in Jerusalem, Israel. The accent is on inscribing practices in a museum's visitor book, which is a remarkably interesting site of socio-cultural linguistic creativity and dynamics, because the communicative space it offers occupies an institutional location: the visitor book lies between-and-betwixt the visitors and the institution, and at the same time it also facilitates communication between the visitors themselves (who occur in the same site but not in the same time). The particularities of written communication in these specific circumstances attest to the social embeddedness and situatedness of writing (Blommaert 2004; Harris 2000; Hull 2003; Nozawa 2007), and help achieve the twofold aims of this inquiry: illuminating the relations between writing practices and language ideologies as these emerge in particular settings, and offering a critique of the notion of "writing" as a single, dematerialized mode of representation.

While the exploration was initially limited to the scope of the visitor book, it became clear to me that attending to the visitor book independently of the linguistic ideology in the museum would rob the former from its natural discursive context, and restrict its "natural history" (Silverstein 1996). The study therefore approaches the book as visitors do, and examines inscriptions throughout the museum halls that lead to the visitor book, as well as those in the book.

The Linguistic Ideology of Handwriting

Attending to linguistic practices via the prism of linguistic ideology directs our attention to how modes and mediums of communication are ideologically charged, and how, implicitly or explicitly, they embody power structures and political intentions in and of themselves (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Blommaert 1999a; Schieffelin, et al. 1998; Silverstein 1979; with specific regards to writing see Blommaert 2004; Schieffelin and Doucet 1998; Silverstein and Urban 1996a; Verschueren 1999). While various perspectives and approaches to the field of linguistic ideology stress different aspects of the interconnection between language, ideology, and social practice (see reviews in Woolard 1992, 1998), I view the term as one which centrally carries epistemic and moral dimensions. These dimensions are oftentimes at the crux of ideological contestations and clashes, as well as of other occasions where ideological work needs to be accomplished in order to maintain social structures (such as national commemoration).

In highly ideological environments, not only explicit ideological tenets are manifested, but also, and perhaps more so, covert processes of trivialization, naturalization, and essentialization (Silverstein 2004). Due to the covert nature of these processes, what is and what is not ideologically accountable, and what can or cannot be discussed, go unnoticed (Silverstein 2003). This should not be surprising, for if language is as formative an arena as Bakhtin, Barthes, de Certeau, Derrida, and Foucault have argued it is, there is no reason that language would not be a central site
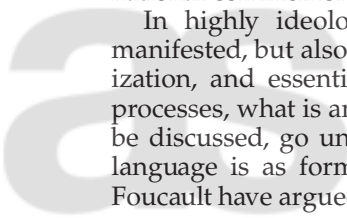
of ideological manipulation and contestation. Yet in late-modern cultures people are uncritically socialized into language and language use under referential and utilitarian régimes: utterances are judged primarily by their contents, or by *what* is expressed (and how clear it is conveyed); and language-as-medium is judged primarily by its communicability or *how well* ideas are communicated (which also implies sociability, as Cameron (2000) shows). In any case, the larger pragmatic picture avoids critical and reflexive examination.

Of particular relevance to this exploration is the ideologically established dichotomy between oral and written modes of communication. This western dichotomy engulfs a persistent preference for the latter mode as standing for more formal, official, and canonic representations of "language." While oral expression has been largely viewed as more "authentic" and "spontaneous," "the 'scriptural,' " de Certeau (1984:134) argues, "is that which separates itself from the magical world of voices and tradition," and thus "legitimates" scientific, political and educational institutions (see Anderson 1983; Harris 2000; Ong 2002 [1982]; Stewart 1991). At stake is no "neutral" analytical conceptualization, but an interested and invested approach, whereby writing enjoys an esteemed, disembodied status.

In the cultural context of the present study, namely Jewish Israeli culture (Sabra culture), several works have observed the working of language ideologies (Katriel 1986; Lefkowitz 2004). Katriel's (1987) work on fire inscriptions in Israeli youth movements touches a particular cord because it examines a site of ceremonial production and consumption of inscriptions in a similar ideological context. Both fire inscriptions and handwritten entries in visitor books share being *handmade signs* of a succinct genre, which are presented and consumed in public spaces where militaristic ideologies and discourses are being practiced. The inscriptions Katriel depicts are produced by youths who decide on the content, graphic, and orthographic features of the inflamed signs.

Hence, like handwriting, fire inscriptions present an *unstandardized medium* of written expression. As such, they convey an important ideological tenet of Sabra culture, which concerns a high regard for authentic, spontaneous, and seemingly un-institutionalized modes of communication. The special cultural role that is reserved to these modes of communication is a result of two converging ideologies: European (especially German) Romanticism, which was at the core of the Zionist national movement, and the revival of the Hebrew language, which was transformed from the (holy) language of religious ritual to the language of everyday interaction (Katriel 1986; Noy 2005).

Co(n)texts: The Visitor Book at the Ammunition Hill Museum

The study addresses two discursive sites, which are, in a way, included within each other. The first site is the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site. The Ammunition Hill is a war commemoration site located near the dividing line between the western and eastern parts of Jerusalem/El-Quds. The site was inaugurated in 1975, in commemoration of the soldiers who died in a battle which took place on that hill, during the Six-Day War (June 6, 1967). It celebrates the victory of the Israeli Army over the Jordanian Legion, and consequently the "historic liberation" and "reunification" of Jerusalem.

The main attraction at the Ammunition Hill is a museum, which is partly built underground and resembles a labyrinth of bunkers. The museum supplies information and presents exhibitions about the campaign over Jerusalem, and it includes a variety of commemorative devices, such as the Golden Wall (on which the names of the soldiers who died in the Jerusalem front are listed), biographical information about the soldiers who fell, and more. The museum hosts approximately 25,000 visitors per year. The visitors can be divided roughly into groups of schoolchildren, members of armed and security forces, local Jewish sightseers, and Jewish Orthodox

and Ultra-Orthodox tourists of North American origin, who are on various tours and expeditions to Israel (usually sponsored by Zionist institutions). Although the museum is relatively small, it has assumed a special place in the national-militaristic ethos: it is emblematic of the 1967 military victory and of the national ideology that testifies to the "eternal unity" of Jerusalem.

The ethnography at the Ammunition Hill Museum was conducted mainly during the summer and autumn of 2006. During this period I conducted conversations with the management and with the visitors, inquiring about the former's ideological stances and the latter's experiences and impressions. I observed and joined visitors as they strolled through the outdoor and indoor premises, paying particular attention to how they approached the visitor book and handled the acts of reading and writing in it.

The location of the museum within and as part of a commemoration site suggests a hybrid institution space of dual semiotics. While the ideological charter of the museum as such is that of "authenticity" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; MacCannell 1976), the ideological charter of (national) commemoration concerns imagining, remembering, and pledging to the nation, in this case through its variety of militaristic nationalism (Anderson 1983; Gillis 1994; Spillman 1997).[1] As we shall see, this duality is one of the site's effective (and affective) rhetorical resources, employed in the capacity of intensifying the experience of the visit and the visitors' commitment to national(ist) ideology.

The second site is the visitor book itself. This site encompasses a communicative medium, which enfolds expanding discursive spaces. The spaces of the museum and the spaces of the book are interlinked and perhaps mutually inclusive: while the book is physically located inside the museum, its 100 pages add a physical surface that *expands* the museum's discursive space. The discursive spaces enfolded within the book can be metaphorically viewed as a virtual extension of the museum, a type of discursive corridor through which visitors can stretch their trip through the premises. The concept of "co(n)text," which I borrow from Silverstein and Urban (1996a), serves to tap into these unique interrelations, which are materialized in actual practices of inscription in both sites—the museum and the book.

While historically the medium of the visitor book served to supply information about visitors and feedback about the site (Findlen 1994; Woodruff 1993), nowadays the pages of visitor books are occupied by a vivid array of inscriptive genres, including comments, anecdotes, appraisals and critiques, sketches and graphite-like drawings, and other types of textual and graphic representations (Macdonald 2002). Hence, from a one-way communication channel between visitors and institutions, visitor books have evolved into a polyphonic space, on the pages of which visitors *express* themselves and can both access and influence other visitors. The discursive spaces of the medium are durable and stationary: they link comments different visitors made across time in the same location. Although visitor books are promising sites of research of representations and practices of writing, they are at present a "virtually unknown genre" (Stamou and Paraskevolpoulos 2003:35).

In literate cultures visitor books are quite familiar cultural artifacts, and are viewed as appropriate spaces for writing. Visitors generally know what a visitor book is and what it is for, and expect to find one in particular institutions (museums, galleries, hotels). In passing comments visitors made near the book, the brief explanation given about its function (usually by parents to their children), was "it's for writing" or "you can write inside." Hence, regardless of particular context, visitor books are recognized as invoking writing, and as such are part of a general literacy related cultural knowledge.

While most of my time at Ammunition Hill was spent watching and interacting with museum goers and visitor book inscribers, I also researched older, archived volumes. The illustrations supplied hereafter are taken from entries in a volume which was compiled shortly before my ethnography took place, during the year between July, 2005 and July, 2006.

Approaching the Book: En Route in Museum Halls

Walking through the bunker-like corridors and halls of the Ammunition Hill Museum, one need not be a scrupulous scholar in order to observe the many instances of handwritten documents and representations thereof. These exhibits entail a variety of genres, including personal letters and war journals, poems, personal signatures, and more—all of which were written by soldiers who fought and fell in the battle. I argue that through these exhibits, the museum expresses an ideology concerning the value and function of handwriting, and the relationship between handwriting and the moral and political realities in which handwriting is performed and about which it is presented. I will consider three illustrations.

Along the walls of the museum entrance corridor, a series of 16 pictures is exhibited (The Uzi Narcis Exhibition). The pictures consist of a strip of handwritten text, taken from the war journal of General Narcis (the commander of the Jerusalem front during the war). The texts are positioned underneath a photograph which describes wartime events, in which Narcis protagonizes (Figure 1).

In the photograph General Narcis and army chaplain General Goren are exchanging embraces. This is a significant act, which, in the context of the 1967 war, symboli-

Figure 1
Narcis's war journal: extract, photograph, autograph

cally embodies the unification of militaristic and religious ideologies. Under the photograph, a paragraph from Narcis's war journal is supplied (with an English translation). The text has a short preface, indicating the time of its inscription (June 7, 1967), and a short postscript, indicating the publication from which it is cited. In the text, an excited description tells of the men's meeting and the chaplain's prayers for the memory of the soldiers who fell. Both Hebrew and English texts are printed in cursive fonts, reminding the visitors that these texts are pieces of an "authentic" handwritten journal, which was composed during the very days of combat.

A closer view reveals that additional printed and handwritten representations appear in the picture. At the top left and bottom left corners of the photograph dedications are visible. Also, General Goren is holding a booklet, which also includes handwritten inscriptions (perhaps *his* war journal). Lastly, the picture's background, on which the photograph and the texts are superimposed, is that of a map of the battlefield area. The light greenish map includes topographical and textual representations, including town names and so forth (*Abu-Dies*, *Yerushalayim*, etc.).[2]

Hence the picture includes a number of handwritten texts inside the photograph and simulations thereof and printed texts under it. This rich array of textual representations is repeated throughout the exhibition, and reveals that handwritten representations are extracts that serve as evidences of the actual course of fighting: the narrative of overcoming the Jordanian enemy, conquering East Jerusalem, and, at the climax, celebratedly arriving at the "liberated" Wailing Wall.

The concluding picture of the Narcis Exhibition is, surprisingly, a cartoon. It depicts Narcis walking hastily into the Old City of Jerusalem and includes a text: "General Uzi Narcis (at speed)," and an indication of the date and hour of its production (June 8, 1967, 11:00). Exhibiting a cartoon in an otherwise solemn commemoration museum could have been viewed as inappropriate, but for the fact that in this item, too, handwritten images are central (the caricature's text, the animator's signature, and an indication of time of production). Indeed, the genre of the caricature, which is entirely handwritten, precisely stresses the handmade texture of the visual material presented in the museum. It thus establishes the artifactualness of the discourse therein.

The second illustration includes the national Israeli flag, exhibited in a glass frame (Figure 2). The flag is the original item that was hanged above the Wailing Wall on June 7. A short text, inscribed in situ by paratroopers on the flag, appears in its inner section on the upper right part (Figure 2a):
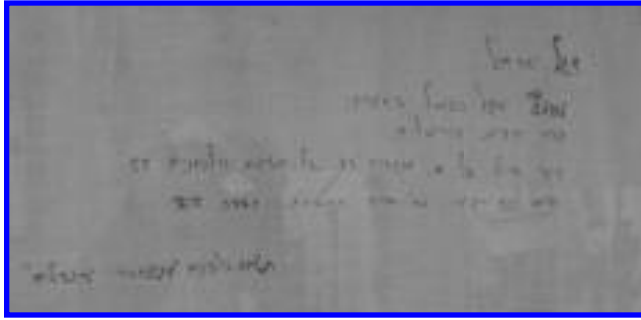

Figure 2
Original '67 flag

Figure 2a (detail)
Paratroopers' inscription

The Flag of Israel
Hanged above the Wailing Wall
At the Temple Mount in Jerusalem
By soldiers of Pl. A. of Regiment 71 of the 55th Paratrooper Division
Today, Wednesday, June 7, in the hour 10:15

The "Jerusalem Liberators" Paratrooper Division[3]

Here, too, inscriptions—produced on the actual body of the national flag—could have been viewed as a desecration of a sacred symbol (such incidents have been reported and dealt with severely). Yet the historical circumstances in which the inscription was made, namely the cathartic "liberation" of the Wailing Wall, together with the heroic identity of the inscribers, justifies a unique exception (similar to the case of the caricature above).

In her discussion of graffiti, Susan Stewart (1991, following Derrida), addresses two conceptions of spontaneous, embodied writing where inscriptions can be viewed as corrupting or cherished, "radically taken as both crime and art" (1991:207). This is true for the above manifestations and for many other occurrences of handwriting at the Ammunition Hill. This mode of expression is either under the law or above it: in the former case it is a matter of vandalism, and in the latter, as evinced in the caricature and in the inscription on the national flag, it is venerated and belongs in a museum.

The third image is also a picture, which is not actually presented in the museum but in the Ammunition Hill offices (Figure 3). There it hangs in the main conference room, where VIPs, donors, and other exclusive visitors are received. It was specifically referred to during a tour the director and I conducted during my first visit.

The center of the picture is captured by a handwritten, English text inscribed on cardboard, fastened to the bottom part of a rifle, which is stuck into the ground upside down (Figures 3, 3a). The post marks the location of the collective burial ground of 17 Jordanian soldiers killed in the battle. A copy of the picture (dated July 1994) was ceremonially presented to a Jordanian Army delegation, which visited the Ammunition Hill compound after the Peace Accord between Jordan and Israel.

Like the writing inscribed on the flag above, here too handwritten text is superimposed on particular, symbolic surfaces, thus creating an overall hybrid inscription. The handwritten text here also evinces proximity to the "bare" ("preverbal") historical events, and acquires the precious quality of authentic representation. Additionally, the physical and functional proximity of rifle and writing 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 (see Harris 2000). This exact notion was conveyed to me during conversations with the chairman of the Museum's Friends

Figure 3
Temporary memorial post

ARMY OF ISRAEL
ZAHAL

BURIED HERE ARE
17 ~~BRAVE~~ JORDANIAN
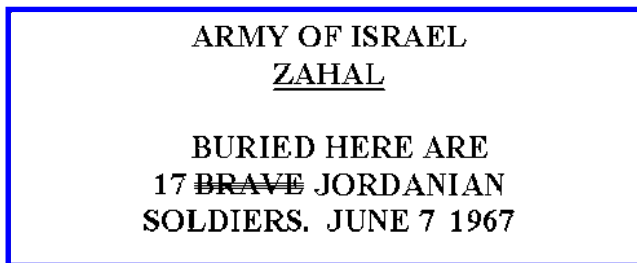**SOLDIERS. JUNE 7 1967**

Figure 3a (detail)
Memorial inscription

Society. During our first meeting, after I mentioned that I teach at a near by campus, the chairman replied pedagogically, "you should know that the victory in this site opened and secured the way to the University Campus at Mt. Scopus." And then, explicitly, "if not for the army and the sacrifices made here, you (*pl*.) couldn't have studied and taught there." This notion is common in nationalist (republican) ideologies, and pervasive in Israeli political and public discourse, whereby intellectualism is viewed as secondary to and reliant upon military might.

Note that the word "brave" was erased (crossed out) from the inscription. This erasure indicates how different views contest over interpretations of conflicted events, even very shortly after these events have taken place. More importantly, the deletion *testifies to* the authenticity of the sign. Now twofold authentic, the sign is both *hand*-written and *hand*-erased.

These exhibits and artifacts offer a glimpse into the profusion of handwritten documents and representations at the Ammunition Hill Museum. When one views

these findings through prisms of linguistic ideology, several reasons for their profu-sion appear. For one, the site is a museum, and as such it is centrally dedicated to the *re*presentation of events that have transpired and are inaccessible in any unmediated way (Karp, et al. 2006; Katriel 1997a; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Stewart 1993). Since writing is durable, it is considered a highly authentic mode of representation, and serves as an ideal tool for generating in the visitors an awe of the authentic (Stewart 1993).

This point holds particular merit when considering Sabra culture. In this cultural context, handwriting and representations thereof serve to mitigate the paradox of the institutionalization (and bureaucratization) of the romantic national ethos of the Zionist Movement (Danet 1990; Zerubavel 1995). While at its onset Zionism adhered to the ethos of a collective movement, which had social idealism and commitment as its ideological dynamo with the emergence of the State of Israel and its subordinate institutions, ways were required by which the romantic "spirit of the pioneers" would be maintained. In institutions like the Ammunition Hill, handwriting serves precisely to downplay the institutional and bureaucratic aspects, and to allow the visitors to relate "directly" to the founding ethos.

Second, the point made above is all the more true in the case of *commemorative representation*. Since the museum is part of a commemorative complex, its institutional charter precisely concerns mobilizing authenticity—in the form of handwritten documents—in the aim of intensifying national commitment and reinscribing collec-tive memory. In terms of commemorative hermeneutics, these documents can be construed as discursive monuments; they are corporeal and of texture (Macdonald 2006). In her research of discursive monuments in memorial sites in the United States, Blair (1999:18) observes how, "no text *is* a text, nor does it have meaning, influence, political stance, or legibility, in the absence of a material form." This profusion, then, illustrates the link between *re*production of texts, memory work, and an embodied sense of nationhood—a linkage which is central to the epistemology of commemo-ration and its persuasive force.

Third, what is specifically commemorated at the site is a battle: an obvious instance of institutionalized brutality and violence. Commemoration is often concerned with moralizing past events, and for the Sabra worldview, which aspires to liberalism and humanism, the events suggest a moral issue that requires an adequate resolution (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1997). Under a progressive (linguistic) ideol-ogy, where people "identify literacy as the indispensable basis of progress and culture" (Harris 2000:7), writing can be resourcefully mobilized to help resolve troubling issues of humanness and culturedness of those partaking in war and killing (and, importantly, of those who gain directly and indirectly from these acts). Handwritten texts supply, yet again, an ideal means: not only does handwriting provide an authentic representa-tion of "events," but it also contributes to the construction of cultured figures of those who participated therein (and, again, of those who somehow gain from it).

Such authentic(ating) inscriptions express the romantic conjuncture embedded in such phrases as "officer and a gentlemen," and "the noble and the savage." The warriors commemorated in the Ammunition Hill are portrayed as literate and edu-cated. They were "men of the sword," but also, and no less so, "men of the pen."[4] What these men wrote (journals, letters to family and loved ones, poems, etc.) they did not write retrospectively or at their leisure. Rather, they were engaged in pursuing and producing writing amidst fighting. Hence, the vulgarly and atrocity of war is mitigated by the evocation of an implicit ideological view of literacy, engendering a cultrate image.

In Sabra culture the romantic relations between handwriting and body are unique and create a much admired informal familiarity and intimacy, which mass-printed documents can not achieve (Katriel 1986; Katriel 1987). Sabra literacy has been largely mobilized ideologically in the service of national aims. Consider the preface of the museum's brochure: "Every man, woman and child is held very dear here, in Israel. Every soldier, serving his country is a human being and not just a statistic. We have

therefore used the first names of the brave heroes who fought in the battle for Jerusalem" (Ammunition Hill: A Guide to the Visitor, English, unspecified date). The text illustrates the esteem with which informality is regarded in Sabra culture, through expressing an explicit ideological stance regarding personal names (Danet 1990; Roniger and Feige 1992). Although the brochure's preface does not concern writing, it conveys a similar linguistic ideology to the one which ascribes to handwriting—perceived as a non-commodified–commodifiable mode of expression—a uniquely esteemed, authentic, and personalized evocation.

In these documents and more so in the visitor book, the notion of personal names touches on the semiotics of the signature as an embodied and authentic(acting) representation. By indicating that the site stresses the use of "the first names of the brave heroes," visitors learn that personal names, performed via signatures, are the social IDs of participation—whether in battle or in other occasions of the nation.

Visitor Book Inscriptions: Sacred and Playful Hybrids

Positioned within the institutional and linguistic environment I have just described, the visitor book at the Ammunition Hill supplies a rather fascinating embodiment of the museum's linguistic ideology. Due to the type of practices related to the visitor book as a communicative medium, namely signing, its presence at the site is both integral to the museum's ideology and functional in promoting it. On the one hand, the book is viewed by visitors as yet another exhibit-cum-monument (a point which has recently been appreciated in museum studies, see Macdonald 2005). In this capacity the book functions as an extension of the museum's space: visitors look at the book and through the book's pages, read the inscriptions, and discuss their impressions, much like they do with regards to other exhibits. My observations indicate that visitors who spent more time appreciating other exhibits also tended to spend more time reading the visitor book, and vice versa.

On the other hand, visitors are invited to *write* in the visitor book. This invitation or summoning is first and foremost generated by the availability of the object of the book itself, and by its accessibility as an appropriate solid space for inscription. As Blair (1999:46) notes of memorial sites, "there are any number of ways that rhetorical texts may hail or *summon* the person, and some of these means are clearly material." Roughly a third of the visitors who pass through the hall look inside the book, and approximately 10 percent of those also inscribe in it. The book's function is specified by a small silver plate, which addresses "Students, Soldiers, and Visitors," and includes directions regarding proper writing: "Please indicate your impressions in a concise and respectful manner. Please regard the visitor book in a manner appropriate to the Ammunition Hill Site." The plate serves several metacommunicative aims: it familiarizes the discursive function of the book to audiences who might not be familiar with it and endows inscribing with a unique aura (reminiscent of other sites of Sabra entextualizations, see Katriel 2004). Additionally, by specifying the uniqueness of this particular, commemorative book, the metacommunicative directions regiment and "genre-rize" visitors' entries.

The book, then, is an *interactive* exhibit/monument which functions *transformatively*: visitors are no longer only consumers of texts and visual signs, but are also producers of the same.[5] Thus, when visitors inscribe in the book, they become contributors to the museum's updated and ever-growing pool of images, symbols, and discourses. Acts of inscribing in the book repeat *in vivo* the type of accumulation of texts, which was evinced in the examples supplied earlier. Like the Narcis Exhibition pictures, or the erasure of the word "brave" from the cardboard post, inscribing in the visitor book results in the juxtaposition of recent texts and older texts, thus establishing different dialogues and semiotic relations between these texts.

In order to further appreciate the ideological implications of the visitor book, it is important to examine several material dimensions, which turn to be affordances that characterize it as a situated medium of communication (Hull 2003; Hutchby 2001;

Figure 4
Visitor book: Hall and installation

Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). First, as trivial as it may be, the location of the book inside the museum suggests that it is not a "neutral" platform, available for any type of expression. As Laurier and Whyte note (2001, para. 2.2), "documents are composed in and of particular places." This is all the more true, as the book is not located typically near the museum's entrance/exit, but in the museum innermost halls, where its most "sacred" attraction is located (the Golden Wall of Commemoration). Walking through the bunker-like corridors of the partly sunk museum building is ideologically suggestive, and by the time visitors arrive at the inner halls, where the book is strategically located, they had had the opportunity to socialize to the language of militaristic nationalism, and particularly to the "sacred register" of commemoration (so central to the discourse of nationhood).[6]

Second, the installation is of an impressive structure, made of severe black steel of two cylindrical shapes (Figure 4). Near by, three huge flags, including the Israeli flag, and the flags of the city and of the military brigade, are hung vertically from the ceiling. These features call to mind a memorial sculpture or monument. The installation's lower cylinder is topped by a thick wooden platform, on which the book is secured. The pedestal-like stand is welded to a steal platform, where visitors stand when they approach the book. While the platform is only an inch higher than the floor surrounding it, it nonetheless marks a distinct space: visitors have to step up onto the platform if they wish to inscribe in or read the book. In this specific context, where only the last three halls have ascending stairs, this bodily act of slight elevation bears cultural meaning. It marks an entry into a symbolically elevated zone, dedicated to the respected practice of sacred (commemorative) reading and handwriting.

The bodily posture of standing, somewhat bent, over the pedestal-like podium, is reminiscent of preachers' and cantors' postures of speech and preaching (one has to ascend in order to access sacred texts, or, in synagogues, *la'alot latorah*). The installation's physical affordances thus create an association with cultural conventions and rituals of communication. While the public is admittedly not present before the inscribers, the many *handwritten* entries do amount to and represent an audience, an imagined community (Anderson 1983). Hence, via communicating with audiences not orally, but through text, not simultaneously, but diachronically, acts of inscription in the book assume a *public* status.

Third, the book itself is of an impressive, formidable appearance. It has a dark leather cover and includes 100 pages of large thick parchment (26 on 34 centimeters).

On its cover, and on each page, four logos are printed vertically: the symbol of the State of Israel, the symbol of the city of Jerusalem, the symbol of the Israeli Defense Forces, and the logo of Ammunition Hill Museum. These symbols correspond with the flags that are hanging nearby and with many other national symbols that are profusely exhibited throughout the halls. The logos create an indexical connection between the ideologically-imbued spaces of the museum, and the ideological-discursive spaces of the book. Inside the book, the official logos replicate the type of hybrid association between text and symbol which is apparent in the museum. Hence, whatever will be inscribed therein is already confined by and in dialogue with the semiotics and aesthetics of militaristic commemoration.

These dimensions—the spatial location of the book inside the museum and its physical qualities—are intended to secure the fact that this particular visitor book affords mediation between individuals and, no less, the nation, and also inspires a type of communication that cites the hybrid handwritings presented in the museum. With regards to the former point, the book serves like an *amplifier*, and supplies necessary magnification for expression of personal voices in national spheres. Here, not space is at stake, as is the case with most media of communication (amplification through space), but rather time: amplification *across time*. Visitor book inscriptions exceed the duration of a museum visit, and thus allow interaction between different, otherwise unfamiliar visitors. Akin to political radio shows and newspapers' "letters to the editor" sections, regular folks can now actually interact with national ideology via the medium, and have their words and voices be expressed ceremonially, in a public sphere.

With regards to the hybrid handwritings presented in the site, the book is like a quiz that awaits the visitors at the inner halls of the museum, where the visitors' mastery of the register of "sacred" expression is examined. Indeed, on several occasions I heard parents correcting their children's phrasing during a metalinguistic negotiation that concerned inscribing. When the young proposed, "I'll write that I really enjoyed (*neheneti*) it here," the parents replied pedagogically, " 'enjoyed' is not a good word. Write that you were *impressed* (*hitrashamt/a*) or *moved* (*hitragasht/a*), and that you are respectful (*rohesh/et kavod*)." These instances illustrate the covert rules of entering and participating in a particular public sphere in Israel via inscriptions.

Inside the book, inscribers employ various thematic, orthographic, and graphic means in order to endow their entries with the aura of commemoration. Many entries include (sometimes exclusively) idiomatic commemorative expressions, of the type plentifully supplied by the museum. These represent some of the highlights of the nation's arsenal of ceremonial, sacred vocabulary: "May Their Memory be a Blessing" (*Ye'hi Zihram Baruh*), "Next Year in Jerusalem" (*Leshana Haba'a Birushalayim*), "Jerusalem of Gold" (*Yerushala'yim shel Zahav*), "For the Glory of the State of Israel" (*Letif'eret Medinat Yisrael*), "In Their Death They Commanded Us to Live" (*Bemotam Zivu Lanu et Hahayim*) are the most popular ones. Occasionally, longer quotations from Jewish prayer and modern Hebrew poetry are supplied.

Note that on a few occasions, these idioms are interestingly supplied inside quotations. In these instances, the inscribers express a metalinguistic awareness of the formulaic—hence quotable—character of the expression they import in its entirety into the entries they inscribe (Lucy 1993). These visitors show not only that they know their (national) idioms, but also that they know what is performatively required of them as visitors and inscribers in commemorative visitor books: to cite them. These occasions are illustrations of what Erving Goffman (1961) called "role distance," where participants express reflexive awareness in relation to the roles which they perform. Yet these inscriptions are rare exceptions that indicate that in most of the entries, the public and the private, the idiomatic, and the personal are completely enmeshed.

Similar to a host of other public discursive arenas, such as radio talk show programs, internet talkback entries, political bumper stickers, and fire inscriptions (all of which are highly developed discursive forms in Israel), the available discursive space

in the book is very limited. In such word-restricted formats, expressions need to be telegraphic, preferably citing or paraphrasing known idioms. Hence the nature of the medium joins in in accounting for the wide use of idioms, which gain a surplus of meaning through reiterational practices (citing, borrowing, paraphrasing, copying, etc.).

Drawing and Writing: Hybrid Inscriptions and Symbols in the Visitor Book

There are additional means by which inscribers associate their entries with the nation's sacred ethos, and at the same time manage to make efficient and effective use of the limited available space. These means interestingly extend beyond textual or phonographic (glottic) writing. In fact, visitors' socialization to the museum's linguistic ideology can be appreciated via the proliferation of *inscriptional hybrids*, which are combinations of textual and non-textual signs. These hybrid entries include in addition to alphabetic marks, a range of signs spanning from orthographic-related marks, such as decorated letters, through simple marks that supplement writing, such as punctuations marks (underlining and exclamation marks are most common, see Figure 5 below), to sketches and drawings which are independent of and yet (inter)connected to texts. Indeed, some 40 percent of the book's openings include at least one instance of a sketch (of a logo or a symbol) and virtually *all of the openings* include para or non-textual graphic signs, such as decorated punctuations marks, inflated letters, lines that circle entries, and more.

Figure 5 (below) supplies an illustration of a number of hybrid inscriptions, crowded in one of the book's openings (dated May 2006). This opening is typical insofar as it represents a common variety of hybridized entries, and yet it is somewhat more airy (and clearer) than other openings. It includes the following entries:

1. A parachute decorated in detail with the inscriber's battalion number ("202"). The entry is inscribed in red ink, which is the color of the paratrooper brigade's logo. To the right of the drawing (or under it, from the perspective available in Figure 5) another part of the inscription illustrates a combination of textual and non-textual elements, i.e., digits. It is a pun, written in English in a vertical layout in the same color and handwriting as the parachute drawing: 1. LIFE. 2. SHORT. 3 YEARS. 4. WHAT? The entire entry is inscribed perpendicularly to the side of the book, which means that the inscriber rotated the book 90 degrees prior to inscribing. One word, "respect!!!" (*kavod*!!!) is written under the digits of the battalion number, and amounts to the textual "body" of the entry. The entry is concluded impersonally with a question mark: "March '06 Until when?" (*Mertz '06 ad matai?*), referring to the estimated termination of the mandatory military service of the inscriber(s). The date does not represent the date of inscription, but rather—inconsistent with visitor books' conventions and consistent with military register—the soldiers' expected date of release from obligatory service. Hence, the date also serves as an identifier and a signature.

The digits of the battalion number are inflated, creating inside them a space for mini-inscriptions. There, a little flame-like drawing is visible, an iconic representation of the motif of the eternal fire (which burns in the nearby hall, near the Golden Wall of Commemoration, echoing the role fire plays in nationalist-romantic aesthetics). Deciphering the pun requires employing several skills, including knowledge of English, familiarity with Israeli militaristic discourse, and a capability of scanning the document in particular ways (including rotating the entire device).[7]

2. A balloon with a string and a tiny decoration (bottom-left of left page, in blue). The drawing accompanies a text, which indicates the inscriber's residence (an agricultural settlement, written inside a "cloud" decoration) and the personal name and age of inscriber ("11"). This entry is also written vertically, yet in an opposite rotation to the parachute entry. Together, the cloud-and-balloon and the parachute entries create an airborne motif.

Figure 5
Hybrid inscriptions in visitor book opening: Logos, texts and symbols

3. On the page to the right: the Israeli flag (white and blue) and under it a Jewish menorah on a podium. Both images are sketched with a light blue, razor-point (Pilot) pen by the same inscriber who wrote the text to their right.

4. Three "text-mostly" entries are also apparent: two on the right page and one on the left page. These entries contribute to an overall symmetrical structure, where each side of the opening contains three entries. The two entries on the right page include punctuation and other text supplementing marks, including an underline (top-right entry) and an underline and three dots (bottom-right entry). The latter entry also includes numerals (to indicate date), which also contribute to hybridize the alphabetic text. In fact, the sole "text-only" entry in this opening is the one located on the upper left side of the left opening.

Note that these hybrid inscriptions do not necessarily evince sacred language expressed in solemn or severe forms. The balloon, for instance, is not particularly associated with national Israeli symbolism, nor is the pun in the parachute entry gloomy. Yet the museum's visitors and management indicated that they do not view these entries as disrespectful expressions. To the contrary, the production of these hybrids of words and graphics indicates that the inscribers have mastered the inscriptional ideology of the Ammunition Hill Museum, and are capable of producing ceremonial, multi-code images. While some visitors seriously cite icons of the highest national order, others produce less hegemonic and more idiosyncratic signs in the production of hybrids. In any case, what the entries say is secondary to the act of their inscription on national surfaces. Tensions between vandal (subversive) and conservative inscriptions, or between "crime" and "art" (Stewart 1991), are played out safely and bearably in the visitor book.

As Figure 5 illustrates, drawing-text hybrids are pervasive in the Ammunition Hill visitor book to a degree that suggests that the book's openings are not "read" so much as they are "viewed." The characteristics of this particular book, with its large blank pages, are especially inductive to the production of hybrid entries, resulting in an overwhelmingly visual document. Indeed, "re-visualizations," "scanning

procedures," and "situated reading practices" have recently been suggested at the aim of exploring the particularities of consuming written documents in and of various institutions (Blommaert 2004; Harris 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Laurier and Whyte 2001).

In the context of viewing museum exhibits, this examining of the book parallels common practices museum goers pursue. Just as visitors walk through the museum spaces, so do they "stroll" through the pages of the voluminous book with their hands and fingers, and then they "stroll" inside the space of a particular opening with their eyes. The observations I made suggest that this process is non-linear or particularly purposive (which is why I refer to it as "strolling"). Unlike printed textual documents, the movement between openings and between entries does not follow a certain direction. Visitors move back and forth, up and down, and their eyes scan and roam the signs choreographically. Unlike printed texts, these openings do not have only one entry point (top-right in Semitic languages), but many—as many and as varied as are the entries (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

Further, unlike most textual documents, which are produced in order to circulate and be in motion (Blommaert 2004; Hull 2003), the visitor book's material conditions frame it as an essentially stationary device that is tightly secured to a place of ritual significance. In this context what moves and circulates is not the document itself, but rather the coming and going of visitors and inscribers. These movements are documented on the book's wide pages, and are revived or reanimated repeatedly, with each "visit" that is made to the book every time visitors' gazes "stroll" through the hybrid entries.

In addition, from the perspective of a commemorative ideology, the aesthetics of the book's hybrid entries represent processes of "monumentalizing" inscriptions: what exists on the pages of the visitor book are not merely two-dimensional inscriptions, but rather discourse that is materialized in a particular institutional context over a particular durée.

A complementary account of the pervasive presence of drawings concerns the visitors' competition over the reader's eye. This competition is a consequence of the profusion of texts in any given environment (Blair 1999). In the sign economy of the medium of the visitor book, which typically includes approximately 1500 entries, otherwise equally accessible, hybrid entries function more effectively than do "text-only" inscriptions in catching visitors' gaze and holding visitors' attention. In Figure 5 the entries that include drawings consume considerably more space, they are usually more colorful, and draw attention before "text-only" inscriptions do.[8] Like the idioms discussed above—which, through citing and paraphrasing practices carry additional meanings—graphic symbols also imbue the entry with considerable additional meaning.

Conclusion

An ethnographic approach to writing practices and codes asks of the situatedness of writing and of the embeddedness of documents. In this article, the qualities and affordances of the visitor book, including its installation and its strategic location in the museum, and the institutional charter, which uncannily merges the modern ideologies of authenticity and national commemoration, supply a specific surround. This surround accounts for the particularities of the code under examination, and for the way writing becomes an embodied ideological practice in and of itself.

More generally, in this environment the emergent code greatly transcends definitions of "writing." Instead of writing, we encounter hybrids that are borrowed from and nation's arsenal and improvised by inscribers. These hybrids combine various textual and non-textual signs, creating *juxtaposed and superimposed symbols*. From a semiotic perspective, the (re)production of hybrid inscriptions accomplishes a rudimental task of national ideology, namely the activation of symbol-creation and symbol-maintenance processes. Indeed, images and symbols are among the earliest

forms of commemoration. By juxtaposing text and symbol, discourse *colonizes* otherwise meaningless shapes and draws them into realms of collective meaning and memory.

Yet more powerfully and more ideologically sophisticated, materialities—in the form of surfaces of and for inscription—are drawn into the semiotic process of inscribing. The result is that orthographic signs become organic parts of *integrated symbols*, which now have text(ure), weight, volume, and presence (Harris 2000:86–90). What is at stake is not, and cannot anymore be, "writing," even when only "bare" alphabetic signs are inscribed, but rather an inscribed artifact. These integrated symbols are "discourse-mediating materials" (Hull 2003:290), which correspond with what Silverstein (1996) calls "textual artifacts," and Hull (2003) and Nozawa (2007) call "graphic artifacts." The embodied state of inscribing suggests that this activity is not only produced via material objects and devices, but also *produce*s or partakes in the production of the same; inscribing does not only use signs, it also produces them (Harris 1995). As Hull (2003:292) reminds us, "anthropologists have long recognized that things are signs, but have often ignored that signs are things." The notion of writing that arises via this perspective is that of an intersection of different semiotic modalities of cultural meaningfulness.

And so we have, first, an *organic continuum* between an array of textual, paratextual, and non-textual marks—what the eye meets is what there is. Second, the embodied, gestural practices of inscribing—or better, engraving—overcome the "code" in terms of representation, and produce materialized signs that assume the status of integrated symbols rather than "text."

In this article the institutional and ideological environments under examination included a memorial site and museum in West Jerusalem, Israel. This site supplies for an absorbing discussion of language ideologies, part of which has been revealed above. Yet in terms of writing ideologies, the conclusions enjoy a broader validity, namely that inscriptions encompass and create objects and materialities. The conclusions suggest a recontextualization and rematerialization of inscribing, and beseech that we rethink the common distinction between "text" and "symbol." How materialities and inscriptions interact in and with various ideologies, how ideologies shape the relationships between the "social" and the "material," and how these serve the powerful and the powerless are matters for further comparative examination.

Notes

Acknowledgments. I am indebted to members of the audience, at the 10th Conference of the International Pragmatic Association (IPrA), Sweden, 2007, as well as to four blind reviewers and to the editor of JLA for their constructive comments. Errors are my own.

1. Over the last two decades there has been a tide of research on commemoration and memory in Israel. For specific works on sites, spaces, and rituals of war commemoration see Azaryahu and Kellerman (1999) and Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman (1997). Regarding the proliferation of small scale museums in recent years, where the discourses of authenticity and of Zionist ideology are converged and laminated, see Katriel's works (1997a, 1997b).

2. A closer inspection reveals yet another level of inscription in the picture. When viewed carefully against the light, one can notice that the picture has been corrupted by several X marks on the spot of the bodily contact between the two men. These marks are very light and have probably not been observed by the museum's management or by most of the visitors. Yet these are handwritten inscriptions, which correspond with the visual image in the photograph inside the picture. Although such nearly unnoticeable ("subliminal") graffiti, which has pictures and objects as its spaces of inscription, definitely represents a site of visitors' handwriting production, I will refrain from elaborating about it in the present discussion.

3. Hebrew transliteration: "Degel Yisrael/munaph me'al Hakottel Hama'aravi/be'Har Haba'yit Birushalayim/biydey hayaley Pl. a. migdud 77 shel Hativat Hazanhanim 55/hayom yom Revie'e Kaf-Heit Eyar Hatashkaz besha'a 10:15/Hativat Hazanhanim "Meshahrerey Yerushalayim."

4. See Shapira's (1999) and Don-Yehiya's (1994) works concerning historical and political notions of war and the "People of the Book" in Zionist nationality.

5. Two comments are due. First, one of the museum's commemorative devices is a large iron book-like installation. Its spine is attached vertically to the wall, and on its steel leafs biographical information about the soldiers who died is supplied. In this case too, a book-like device serves a commemorative function. Yet, while visitors can browse through it, they cannot inscribe in it, which is precisely what they can do in the visitor book.

Second, while in the present scope I pursue the semiotic consequences of the visitor book primarily in terms of a museum exhibit, its functions can be productively explored also in terms of its role as an institutional document. This line of inquiry would address research on documents and how they help construct organizations, social structures, communities, and agencies (Harper 1998; Hull 2003).

6. I employ the notion of sacredness to the politico-national sphere after Durkheim (Gephart 1998).

7. This entry, as well as the illustrations presented earlier, evince the visibility of English at the Ammunition Hill Site and on the pages of the visitor book. In the former case, the frequency of English inscriptions attests to the Site's orientation towards Anglophone Zionist tourists, and in the latter case it represents the frequency of Anglophone visitors at the Site. Indeed, the Ammunition Hill is an attraction for many organized groups of North American Jewish tourists and pilgrims, where work on solidifying the bondage between Jewish diaspora and the State of Israel is being accomplished.

8. On orthographic variety and on how orthographic signs are manipulated in different settings and for different purposes, see Kataoka (1997), and a special issue of Journal of Sociolinguistics, 2000 (vol. 4), dedicated to non-standard orthographies.

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Address:
1/a Shalom Yehuda St. Apt. #6
Jerusalem, 93395
Israel
Tel./Fax: 972-2-6732188
E-mail: chaimnoy@mscc.huji.ac.il