

Introduction

Beyond the Screen: Identity Politics and the Politics of Representation

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, 1990, p.222)

A. The Contribution of Cultural and Postcolonial Studies to the Study of the Nation

“Hugh Seton-Watson, author of by far the best and most comprehensive English-language text on nationalism, and heir to a vast tradition of liberal historiography and social science, sadly observes: ‘Thus I am *driven to* the conclusion that no ‘scientific definition’ of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists’¹. [...] In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983, p.5).

The concept of Nation as “imagined community” is coined by Benedict Anderson, who states that a Nation is a socially constructed community, which is to say ‘imagined’ by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. As Anderson puts it, members of the community probably will never meet one another face to face; however, they may have similar interests or identify as part of the same nation.

The media particularly creates imagined communities by targeting a mass audience or generalizing and addressing citizens as the public. According to Anderson, the creation of imagined communities became possible because of “print-capitalism”. Capitalist entrepreneurs printed their books and media in order to maximize circulation. As a result, readers speaking various local dialects were able to understand each other, and a common discourse emerged. Anderson argued, therefore, that the first European nation-states were thus formed around their “national print-languages”.

Anderson arrived at his theory because he felt that neither Marxist nor liberal theory adequately explained nationalism and meanwhile he falls into the studies around nationalism along with Ernest

¹ Seton-Watson, 1977, p. 5, emphasis added by Anderson

Gellner (Gellner, 1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1983). This school stands in opposition to the primordialism, who believe that nations, as ancient and natural phenomena, have existed since early human history.

Another crucial influence on Anderson's work was the concept of "imagined geographies", which evolved out of the work of Edward Said, particularly his critique on 'orientalism' (Said, 1978). In this term, 'imagined' is used not to mean "false", but "perceived". It refers to the perception of space created through certain images, texts or discourse². Said, in fact, was heavily influenced by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1971).

"Imagined geographies" show the problems created by the use of popular discourse to construct views of other regions or societies. All landscapes are seen as being imagined – there is no 'real' geography to which the imagined ones can be compared. Thus, when being analyzed, these geographies should not be "measured" for their "accuracy", but de-constructed so that the power invested in them can be revealed.

Further scholars have been heavily influenced by the concept of imagined geographies. Gerard Ó Tuathail, for example, has argued that geopolitical knowledge is a form of imagined geography. Ó Tuathail has been, together with Simon Dalby and Klaus Dodds, one of the founding figures in establishing *critical geopolitics* as a domain of research within political geography and international relations. Rooted in post-structuralism, critical geopolitics sees the geopolitical as comprising four linked facets: popular geopolitics, formal geopolitics, structural geopolitics, and practical geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Particularly, *popular geopolitics* is concerned with the ways in which 'lay' understandings of geopolitical issues are produced and reproduced through popular culture. Popular geopolitics studies are, therefore, premised on the idea of a recursive relationship between popular culture and popular conscience. The complexity of the relationships that popular culture has with 'formal' and 'practical' geopolitical cultures has been studied with reference to a range of popular cultural products: specifically, critical studies of newspapers, cinema, comics, music and any kind of media that participates at process of building "imagined geographies".

The relevance of popular culture in the study of the Nation and nationalism has his roots in the academic field known as *cultural studies*.

Cultural studies is extremely holistic, combining history, philosophy, political, feminist, literary and media theory to study cultural phenomena in various societies. In this way, *cultural studies* seeks to understand the ways in which meaning is generated, disseminated, and produced through various practices, beliefs, institutions, and political, economic, or social structures within a given

² Foucault developed a notion of discourse in his early work, especially the *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), where Foucault's defines *discourse* as systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.

culture. Richard Hoggart coined the term in 1964 when he founded the Birmingham CCCS (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies), which has since become strongly associated with Stuart Hall, who succeeded Hoggart as Director.

Many *cultural studies* scholars employed Marxist methods of analysis, exploring the relationships between cultural forms (the superstructure) and that of the political economy (the base). In order to understand the changing political circumstances of class, politics, and culture in the United Kingdom, scholars at the CCCS turned to the work of the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. In the work written from the prison where he was imprisoned by the Fascist regime in the 1920s and 30s, Gramsci modified classical Marxism in seeing culture as a key instrument of political and social control. In this view, capitalists use not only brute force (police, prisons, repression, military) to maintain control, but also penetrate the everyday culture of working people. The key agenda for Gramsci and for cultural studies is that of “cultural hegemony” (Gramsci, 1971).

The theory of hegemony was of central importance to the development of cultural studies. As Hall puts it, “I have said enough to indicate that, in my view, the line in Cultural Studies which attempted to think forwards from the best elements in the structuralist and culturalist enterprises, by way of some of the concepts elaborated in Gramsci’s work, comes closest to meeting the requirements of the field of study. [...] Though neither structuralism nor culturalism will do, as self sufficient paradigms of study, they have a centrality to the field which all the other contenders lack because, between them (in their divergences as well as their convergences) they address what must be the *core problem* of Cultural Studies” (Hall, 1981, p.72).

It facilitated analysis of the ways in which subordinate groups actively resist and respond to political and economic domination. This line of thinking opened up fruitful work exploring agency, a theoretical outlook that reinserted the active, critical capacities of all people. Researchers have concentrated on how a particular medium or message³ relates to matters of ideology, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. Notions of agency have supplanted much scholarly emphasis on groups of people (e.g. the working class, colonized peoples, women) whose political consciousness and scope of action was generally limited to their position within certain economic and political structures.

³Marshall McLuhan’s work results paradigmatic in the development of the theory and language of all media and cultural studies. *Understanding Media* (1964), in fact, represents a pioneering study in media theory. In this work McLuhan proposed for the first time that media themselves, not the content they carry, should be the focus of study popularly quoted as “the medium is the message”. McLuhan’s insight was that a medium affects the society in which it plays a role not by the content delivered over the medium, but by the characteristics of the medium itself. McLuhan pointed to the light bulb as a clear demonstration of this concept. A light bulb does not have content in the way that a newspaper has articles or a television has programs, yet it is a medium that has a social effect; that is, a light bulb enables people to create spaces during nighttime that would otherwise be enveloped by darkness. He describes the light bulb as a medium without any content: “a light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence” (Mc Luhan, 1964, p.8).

In work of this kind, which was popular in the 1990s, many cultural studies scholars discovered in consumers ways of creatively using and subverting commodities and dominant ideologies. Cultural studies concerns itself with the meaning and practices of everyday life⁴. Cultural practices comprise the ways people do particular things (such as watching television, dancing or eating out) in a given culture. In any given practice, people use various objects (such as iPods, fixed-gear bicycles or crucifixes). This field studies the meanings and uses people attribute to these various objects and practices.

Recently, as globalization has spread throughout the world, cultural studies has begun to analyze the match point between local and global forms of resistance. Echoing Marshall McLuhan's pioneering study in media theory *Understanding Media*⁵ (1964), in her work *Understanding Global Media* (2007), the Media and Communication scholar Terry Flew offers a comprehensive overview of global media production and circulation, drawing insight from a range of perspectives, including politics, political economy, media and cultural studies, audiences and creative industries.

Postcolonial theory has highlighted the cultural contradiction and syncretism generated by the global circulation of peoples and cultural goods in a mass-mediated and interconnected world, resulting in a kind of commodified or mass-mediated syncretism (Shohat and Stam, 2003, p.15).

The most influential approaches to these questions have been found in the transdisciplinary and transnational work of Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha.

Bhabha is one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, and has coined a number of the field's neologisms and key concepts (such as *ambivalence*, *hybridity*, *third space of negotiation*, *space in-between*) in order to describe ways in which colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer (Bhabha, 1989; 1990; 1994). One of his central ideas is that of "hybridization", describes the emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism. Instead of seeing colonialism as something locked in the past, Bhabha shows how its histories and cultures constantly intrude on the present, demanding that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations.

Influenced by Bhabha's concept of "hybridization", Appadurai has provided conceptual underpinnings for theories of globalization and global culture that point to *cultural hybridization*, rather than cultural domination. He proposed that the "imaginary"⁶ is composed of five dimensions

⁴ As I introduced in the preface, one of the key texts in the study of 'everyday life' is represented by the Michel de Certeau's work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau, 1980), which examines the ways in which people individualize mass culture, altering things, from utilitarian objects to street plans to rituals, laws and language, in order to make them their own.

⁵ See footnote 3.

⁶As Appadurai puts it: "The image, the imagined, the imaginary - these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete

of global cultural flow, operated across five planes: *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes* and *indeoscapes*. Particularly, *mediascapes* is set up by the global flows of images, narratives, media content and so on through print, broadcast, cinema and, increasingly, internet and digital media (Appadurai, 1996).

Cinema, in particular, plays a special role in the complex process of the building of *mediascapes*. As Andrew Higson puts it, “Individual films will often serve to represent the national to itself, as a nation. Inserted into [a] general framework of the cinematic experience, such films will construct imaginary bonds which work to hold the peoples of a nation together as a community by dramatizing their current fears, anxieties, pleasure and aspirations. A diverse and often antagonist group of people are thus invited to recognize themselves as a singular body with [a] common culture, and to oppose themselves to other cultures and communities. Of course, this work is never completely achieved” (Higson, 1995, p.7).

Higson’s analysis of National Cinema has argued that both national identity and national cinema should be seen from a processual point of view. He suggests that we might define a national cinema by looking at a range of features: its industrial and business aspect, exhibition and consumption and their impact on national culture, the definition used in cultural policy-making and critical circles, and finally, question of representations. I analyze the specific role of cinema in the complex process of nation-building in the following section.

B. *The Contribution of Film Studies to the Study of Postcolonial Identity*

In 1950, Hortense Powdermaker published *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: an Anthropologist looks at the movie-makers*. It is not only the first substantial anthropological study of the American film industry, but also the first anthropological analysis about media and around the relevance of the audiences as fieldwork.

Initially she planned to complete a content analysis of movies, but at the suggestion of Paul Fejos of the Viking Fund, who offered her his support, she incorporated fieldwork in Hollywood into the study. The hypothesis underlying the Hollywood study was that the social system in which movies are made significantly influences their content and meaning. In carrying out the study,

purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (Appadurai, 1996, p.31)

Powdermaker focused on the process through which a film is made and the social interactions entailed in each step of the process.

Fifties year later, in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie's work *Cinema and Nation*, Philip Schlesinger highlighted how consciously or unconsciously, social communication is considered an expression of the cultural geography of the nation-state in a world of sovereign states: "This is the bedrock on which film studies has been based when it invokes largely derivative socio-logical argument about nationalism collectivity. The main task has been to define and depict the relations between nations and film cultures" (Hjort and MacKenzie, 2000, p.29).

In the last twenties years, several scholars have focused their attention on the relevant relationships between Cinema, Nation, and identity, and, particularly, on the specific power of Cinema to represent all the richness of the identity as process, as something always "in-between".

Jim Pines and Paul Willemen's *Questions of Third Cinema* (1989) is the first contribution concerning the study of Cinema as "Third Place". In Bhabha's chapter "The commitment to theory", the author analyzes all the theoretical, and at the same time political, debate that developed after the first "Third Cinema"⁷ Conference, which took place in Edinburgh in 1986. As Bhabha puts it: "We should remember that it is the "inter" – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between, the space of the entre that Derrida has opened up in writing itself – that carries the burden of the meaning of the culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (Bhabha, 1989, p.131).

Almost fifteen years after this fundamental research was completed Anthony R. Gunerante and Wimal Dissanayke published *Rethinking Third Cinema* (2003), a significant anthology addressing established notions about Third Cinema theory, and the cinema practice of developing and postcolonial nations. This anthology contains two relevant contributions by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam.

In Shohat's chapter "Post-Third-Worldist culture: gender, nation and cinema", the author highlights that cinema has the potential power not only to offer countervailing representation but also to open up parallel spaces for antiracist feminist transformation. As Shohat put it: "In this historical moment of intense globalization and immense fragmentation, the alternative spectatorship established by the kind of film and video works I have discussed can mobilize desire, memory and fantasy, where

⁷ The "Third Cinema" movement called for a politicized film-making practice in Africa, Asia and Latin America, one which would take on board issues of race, class, religion, and national integrity

identities are not only the given of where one comes from but also the political identification with where one is trying to go” (Shohat, 2003, p.75).

In Stam’s chapter “Beyond Third Cinema: the aesthetics of hybridity”, the author offers an interesting analysis about the specific “chronotopic multiplicity” of cinema, influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “chronotope”⁸. According to Stam, cinema, in particular, and audio visual media in general, are “multichronotopic”. Although the Russian philosopher and scholar develops his concept of the “chronotope” to suggest the inextricable relation between time and space in the novel, Bakhtin’s description of the novel seems in some ways even more appropriate to film than literature. Cinema, Stam argues, is ideally equipped to express cultural and temporal hybridity. Cinema is temporally hybrid, first of all, in an intertextual sense, in that it ‘inherits’ all the art forms and millennial traditions associated with its diverse matters of expression. But cinema is also temporally hybrid in another, more technical sense. As a technology of representation, cinema produces a constellation of times and spaces: “film’s conjunction of sound and image means that each track not only presents two kinds of time, but also that they mutually inflect one another in a form of synchresis. Atemporal static shots can be inscribed with temporality through sound. [...] Superimposition redoubles the time and space, as do montage and multiple frames within image, opening up utopias (and dystopias) of infinite manipulability” (Stam, 2003, p.37).

That same year, these two authors, jointly published another fundamental contribution to this field of research: *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality and Transnational Media* (2003). The volume, reflecting the burgeoning academic interest in issues of nation, race, gender, sexuality, and other axes of identity, brings all of these concerns together under the same umbrella, contending that these issues must be discussed in relation to each other. Communities, societies, nations, and even entire continents, the book suggests, exist not autonomously but rather in a densely woven web of connectedness. In order to explore this complexity, the editors have forged links between usually compartmentalized fields (especially media studies, literary theory, visual culture, and critical anthropology) and areas of inquiry: particularly postcolonial and diasporic studies and a diverse set of ethnic and area studies. As the authors put it, “In a globalized world, what are the relationalities between Indian and Egyptian cinema, or between Chinese and Japanese cinema? How are issues of

⁸ It is through the essays contained within *The Dialogic Imagination* (first published as a whole in Moscow in 1975 and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist in 1981) that Bakhtin introduces the concepts of “chronotope”, making a significant contribution to the realm of literary scholarship. In the essays “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” Bakhtin applies the concept in order to further demonstrate the distinctive quality of the novel. The word *chronotope* literally means “time-space” (from the old Greek *chromos*, time, and *topos*, place) and is defined by Bakhtin as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.84).

race and caste formulated in other national contexts? What discourses are deployed? [...] As the products of national industries, produced in national languages, portraying national situations, and recycling national intertexts (literatures, folklores) all films are in a sense national. All films, whether Hindu mythological, Mexican melodramas, or Third Worldist epics, project national imaginaries” (Shohat and Stam, 2003, pp.4, 10).

An ethnography of cinema also involves an ethnography of different cinematic techniques and modes of production, “accented cinema”, to quote the important contribution of Hamid Naficy *An accented cinema: exilic and diasporic filmmaking* (2001). This text was an attempt to rewrite the history of contemporary cinema by reinventing the categories we use to think about production, consumption, and spectatorship. If the dominant cinema is considered universal and without accent, the film that diasporic and exilic subjects make are accented. Accented filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their film: they also are empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures and film practices. These film are, as Naficy put it: “fragmented, multilingual, epistolary, self-reflexive, and critically juxtaposed narrative structure: amphibolic, doubled, crossed and lost characters: subject matter and themes that involve journeying, historicity, identity, and displacement: dysphoric, euphoric, nostalgic, synaesthetic, luminal and politicized structures of feeling: interstitial and collective modes of production, simultaneously local and global. [...] In the best of the accented films, identity is not a fixed essence but a process of becoming, even a performance identity. Indeed, each accented film may be thought of as a performance of its author’s identity” (Naficy, 2001, pp.4, 6).

According to Naficy’s perspective, Israeli Cinema represents a paradigmatic production of an “accented cinema”. Particularly, Israeli Cinema, together with Israeli Literature, Israeli Music and Israeli Art, takes part in the everyday production of Israeli national, but at the same time personal, identity. An identity always ‘in-between’: between colonial and postcolonial policy; masculine and post-masculine gendered representation of the country; stereotyped and critical representation of the Other.

C. The Contribution of Gender and GLBTQ Studies to the Study of the Nation

In her evocative book *Bananas, Braches and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe observes that “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (Enloe, 1990, p.45)

If, according to Benedict Anderson, Nation is an “imagined community”, *who* imagine this kind of community? (Wildorf and Miller, 1998, p.11).

To answer with a quote by Anna McClinton: “all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous” (McClintock, 1993, p.61).

From the 1960s, gender studies, as a field of interdisciplinary study which analyzes the phenomenon of gender, began to be related with the study of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. The field emerged from a number of different areas: from the theories of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to the work of feminists such as Judith Butler. Each field came to regard ‘gender’ as a practice, referred to as something that is “performative”. The concept of gender “performativity” is at the core of Butler's work, notably in *Gender Trouble* (1990). In Butler's terms the performance of gender, sex, and sexuality is about power in society. She locates the construction of the ‘gendered, sexed, desiring subject’ in ‘regulative discourses’. In her account, gender and heterosexuality are constructed as natural because the opposition of the male and female sexes is perceived as natural in the social imaginary.

If, in the past, research in the field of gender has mainly addressed issues relating to women, and has, for the most part, been developed by women, Butler's contribution results fundamental in extending gender studies from women's studies to GLBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer) studies. Through this pioneering work, the study of gender has rapidly expanded and there has been a growing interest in masculinity and men's identities, conduct, and problems. Research on masculinities has become a prominent part of gender studies over the past twenty years. Fuelled in part by popular fears of a ‘crisis’ at the heart of modern masculinity, work on gender relations has focused more carefully on the question of how masculine identities are constructed and (re)produced (Van Hoven and Horschelmann, 2005, p.6).

In his 1990 cross-cultural study *Manhood in the Making. Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*, the anthropologist David Gilmore finds that a culturally sanctioned stress on manliness - on toughness and aggressiveness, stoicism and sexuality - is almost universal, and deeply ingrained in the consciousness of men.

One of the most important voices in the new feminist scholarship by men, is represented by Robert W. Connell's work *Masculinities* (1995). The author provides a nuanced and incisive analysis of how our notions of masculinity have evolved in psychoanalysis, social science, and historically in the creation of a global economy. There is not only one but many masculinities, he claims, in a bold critique of the ‘men's movement’ and other simplistic approaches to sexual identity. Instead, Connell delineates the complicated dynamics of masculine politics and recent changes in male identity. Drawing on rich ethnographic work, Connell offers portraits of dozens of men of different classes, some working to change masculinities, some resisting change. Integrating social science,

feminist theory, queer theory, and psychoanalysis in an innovative yet unusually accessible way, he develops a new theory of masculinity politics.

One year later, George Mosse became the first author involved in the study of the relationship between nationalism and gender, with a special focus on the European stereotype of masculinity. In 1985 he encompassed the broader history of the excluded and persecuted (as Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, and the mentally ill) in European history in the work *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Ten years later, in his ground-breaking study *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996), Mosse traced the ways that the model of middle-class male respectability, beauty, solidity, and self-control established in the eighteenth century constantly evoked ‘countertypes’: images of men whose weakness, nervousness, effeminacy, degeneracy, or sexual ambiguity threatened to undermine the ideal of manhood.

As the Israeli-American Geographer Tamar Mayer highlights in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the nation*, because nationalism, gender and sexuality are socially and culturally constructed, they frequently play an important role in constructing one another, by invoking and helping to construct the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ distinction and exclusion of the Other (Mayer, 2000, p.1)

Starting in 2000, several scholars from different and interdisciplinary studies have focused their attention on the relevance of gender theory and the study of masculinity in order to analyze the Nation and nationalism.

In 2001 Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett put together an excellent collection of contemporary research, theory and debate about men, masculinities, and men’s place in the gender order: *The Masculinities Reader*. The volume opens with a substantive introductory chapter that looks at masculinity in crisis, post-feminism, men’s power, changing men, nature/nurture debates and concepts of identity. Recognizing the global dimensions of gender change, the book draws on research from many corners of the world and provides a clear and comprehensive introduction to the key debates informing the study of masculinity, including patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity and violence, but also sexualities, gay friendships, intimacy and homophobia.

In 2005 Connell published, along with Michael S. Kimmel and Jeff Hearn, the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, an interdisciplinary and international culmination of the growth of men’s studies that also offers insight on future directions for the field. The Handbook is organized in a way that moves from the larger, global, and institutional articulations of masculinities, to the more intimate and personal expressions, in order to establish definitions and demonstrate the range of the field.

In Joane Nagel’s important chapter, “Nation”, the author highlights how first of all the nation-state is essentially a masculine institution, where men set policy, occupy the vast majority of positions of

power and make war. Last but not least, Nagel describes how the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes, such as honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, etc, in order to show how the “microculture” of masculinity in everyday life articulates very well with the “macroculture” of nationalism (Nagel, 2005, pp.397-402).

Concerning Israeli identities, in the following section I will analyze the particular relationship between the “microculture” of masculinity in Israeli everyday life and the “macroculture” of Israeli nationalism.

D. *The Contribution of Gender and GLBTQ Studies to the Study of the IDF*

“In Hebrew, both the word ‘man’ (*gever*) and the word ‘hero’ (*gibor*) come from exactly the same three letter root (G.V.R)⁹. So do the phrases for ‘to overcome’ (*lehitgaber*), ‘to strengthen’ (*lehagbir*), ‘masculinity’ (*gaviryut*) and ‘heroism’ (*gvurah*)” (Hirschfield, 19994, p.10).

As Mayer puts it, “we cannot conceive of Jewish nationalism without understanding how masculine a project [it] has been. From its inception, the idea which stood behind Zionism as Jewish nationalism was the transformation of the social, political, economic and psychological profile of the Jews of Europe, the creation of a physically *New Jew*, a *Muscle Jew*, who upon arrival in Palestine would take up arms to protect himself, his communities and what [he] believed was his land, and who would be the antithesis of the pejoratively ‘feminized’ Diaspora Jew” (Mayer, 2000, p.15, emphasis added by Mayer). Mayer argues that because Jewish history in Palestine has been burdened by a continuous struggle of survival, a militarized notion of Jewish nationhood developed which further shaped Jewish nationalism in Palestine (and later in Israel) as masculine. Therefore, the homo-social experiences that the militarized setting has offered and the male bonding experiences that occurred in military units have also helped to build the intimate connection between masculinity and Jewish nationalism (Mayer, 2000, p.15).

In the third part of this work, I will analyze in more detail the history and the development of the IDF, which is also connected with the history and development of IDF studies and the “emergence of critical approaches” (Ben-Ari, Maman and Rosenhek, 2000, p.102).

For now, I would like to analyze the specific contribution of gender and GLBTQ studies in order to study the construction of both Jewish nationalism and Israeli Jewish masculinity.

As highlighted in Nagel’s work about “Nation”, the military is always “highly sexual”. First of all, because of the sexualized nature of warfare, therefore all form of political power, including military power, have and erotic component. A second way that military institutions and actions are

⁹ In Hebrew: גבר, where ב could be pronounced both as *b* and *v*.

sexualized centers on the depiction of the 'enemy' in conflicts. A third sexualized aspect of militarized conflict is the use of the masculine imagery of rape, penetration and sexual conquest to depict military weaponry and offensives. Nagel argues as such that sexualized military discourse is very much from a heterosexual standpoint (Nagel, 2005, pp.406-407).

The development of gender studies has become fundamental in the analysis of the IDF. The most important contribution to IDF studies in the last twenty years is represented by scholars as Eyal Ben Ari (1989, 1995, 2000, 2009); Uri Ben-Eliezer (1998, 2000); Daniel Boyarin (1997, 2003); Danny Kaplan (1999, 2000, 2007, 2006, 2008) and Orna Levy-Sassoun (2003, 2007), one of the few women involved in the 'man's world' of the IDF, who focuses particularly on the roles of women in the IDF. Ironically (or maybe not), it seems that today male scholars still tend to be involved only in "men's studies", while female scholars are mainly involved in "women's studies". However, the recent and quite rich development of GLBTQ studies represents a crucial contribution, not only to the study of the IDF but, more generally, in the effort to deconstruct fixed and gendered categorization. In this sense, Boyarin and Pellegrini's work on the relation between queer theory and the "Jewish question", is a paradigmatic input to what Boyarin calls *New Jewish Cultural Studies* (Boyarin and Boyarin, 1997).

One of the most important contributions produced through these kinds of studies is the relevance of the study of the body as a field of significance: "Queer are like Jews, aren't they? [...] The circuit jew-queer is not only theoretical but has had – and still has – profound implications for the ways in which Jewish and queer bodies are lived" (Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini, 2003. pp.1- 6).

In their 2003 work *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, the authors, provocatively, highlight how all the stereotypes of Jewish 'gender trouble' were not always rejected by Jews themselves.

As Mayer observes, ironically, the early Zionist's notion of the Jew's passivity and femininity was actually in many ways an internalized version of the prevailing anti-Semitic view of time, therefore the *New Jew* was to be the antithesis of the "ghetto Jew" whom Herzl and other Zionist thinkers saw as helpless, passive and feminine (Mayer, 2000, p.286).

The Jewish man's body was seen as "aged, weak and effeminate", calling up yet another countertype to modern masculinity: homosexuality (Mosse, 1996, p.70). The Jewish male's stereotyped body was "given specific bodily features and measurements to demonstrate his difference from norm" (ibid.). Like the homosexual, the Jewish man was seen as limp and slim, and both the Jewish man and the homosexual were condemned as transgressors of a masculine standard of beauty.

As a result, one of the major elements of the Zionist reform agenda involved social engineering that intended to create a dignified, masculine *Muscle Jew* (*Muskeljudentum*): "The New Jew was to

become in some sense an *Übermensch*, a super-human, whose fit body would help his Jewish mind to excel and would thus be able to stand up to anti-Semites. The transformation of the Jewish man's body would be accomplished, Dr. Nordau believed, though involvement in gymnastic[s]" (Mayer, 2000, p.286).

Gymnastics, Nordau believed, would be the most effective way for Jews to develop their bodies: "Solid stomachs and hard muscles would allow Jews to overcome their stereotype...to compete in the world...and to recapture dignity (quotes from Nordau's essays in Mosse, 1993, p.164).

According to Mayer, given the historical events of the twentieth century, it seems ironic as well that much of the Zionist ideology of nation and masculinity was derived from the German experience (Mayer, 2000, p.286).

One of the first and most important contributions on the role of the (male) body in the process of German nation-building is represented by Klaus Theweleit's 1977 two-volume study, *Male Fantasies (Meinnerphantasien)*, a psycho-sexual history of fascist male desire in Germany from its inception in the aftermath of First World War. Theweleit was especially influenced by the psychoanalytic paradigms of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, insofar as their work, like Theweleit's, consistently emphasizes the productive force of fantasy or the unconscious in relation to the material world and its sociopolitical formations. According to Theweleit, it is through the body, and the discourses of the body, that fascist desires (and anxieties) take their sociopolitical formations and effects. The threat to the male soldier of bodily dissolution and collapse is played out, or in psychoanalytic terms, projected onto, the bodies of its others (notably those of women, Jews, communists, the proletariat, homosexuals, and other marginalized groups), who can thus be subjected and annihilated in fantasy, if not in reality.

Apparently, the importance of the (male) body in the process of Israeli nation-building seems to still be relevant today, as it emerges in the 2000 Ben-Ary and Levy-Schreiber work *Body-building, Character-building, and Nation-building: Gender and Military Service in Israel*.

The *body* issue in Israeli studies has become so relevant in the last ten years that in 2002 the Israeli-American Anthropologist Meira Weiss wrote *The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society*. In this work, Weiss examines how the social and cultural paradigms of contemporary Israel are deeply articulated through the body. In order to construct a panoramic view of how the Israeli body is *chosen*, regulated, cared for, and ultimately made perfect, the author draws upon some twenty years of ethnographic research in Israel in a range of subjects. The "regulation" of the body and its imagery starts from the premarital and prenatal screening, and moves to the screening and sanctifying of the body as part of the bereavement and commemoration of fallen soldiers,

concluding the discourse of the chosen body as it surfaces during terrorist attacks, military socialization, war, and the peace process (Weiss, 2002).

As Mayer puts it, “when nation, gender and sexuality intersect, *body* becomes an important marker, even a boundary, for the nation” (Mayer, 2000, p.17, emphasis added).

In order to analyze the particular representation of the body, and its complementary relation with space and *ethnoscapes*, in the next paragraph of this first part of this work, I will try to summarise my personal point of view about what I call the ‘match point’ between postcolonial, gender and film studies, and their relevance to ethnography of the IDF.

E. Gender and Nation, Body and Space and the Connection between Postcolonial, GLBTQ and Film Studies

What is the specificity of cinema as a medium that enables or facilitates certain projections of national imaginary? As Shohat and Stam put it, “how is the image of the nation gendered and sexed? Is the nation implicitly represented as a woman, as in ‘Mother India’, or as a man, as in words like *patria* and *fatherland*? It is at all seen as androgynous or bisexual?” (Shohat and Stam, 2003, p.12).

As we know, cinema is not only a matter of representation, but first of all a matter of production. All around the world, the majority of filmmakers are/have been men, reflecting the dominance of patriarchy/a dominant patriarchy. In considering the way that films are put together, many feminist film critics have pointed to the ‘male gaze’ that predominates in classical Hollywood filmmaking.

The development of feminist film theory was influenced by the improvement of women’s studies within the academy. Feminist scholars began taking cues from the new theories arising from these movements in order to analyze film. Initial attempts in the United States in the early 1970s were generally focused on the function of stereotypes as a reflection of a society's view of women.

At the same time, film theoreticians in the United Kingdom began integrating perspectives based on critical theory and drawn from psychoanalysis and semiotics. In her pioneering work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) Laura Mulvey argues that the sequence of ‘looks’ in classical narrative cinema – that is, that the spectator looks, the camera looks, the male character looks, and the female character is looked at – sets into motion a series of unconscious psychological mechanisms that constitute the film spectator as a gendered subject: the spectator sees through the eye of the camera, which in turn sees through the eye/I of the character who activates the look. According to Mulvey, the character possessing the look in classical narrative cinema is almost always marked as male.

As in gender studies, it is only in the last twenty years that research on masculinities has become a prominent part of film studies. Although studies of men and masculinity have gained momentum, little has been published that focuses on the media and their relationship to men *as* men.

Men, Masculinity and the Media edited in 1992 by Steve Craig addresses this shortcoming. This relevant volume scrutinizes the interrelationship among men, the media and masculinity. In it, scholars from across the social sciences examine how different media, from comic books and rock music to film and television, serve to construct masculinities, how men and their relationships have been depicted and how men respond to media images. In Diana Saco's chapter "Masculinity as Sign", the author highlights that spectators already have identities before coming to a film. In order to think about how masculinity as signs is realized in, for example, the process of viewing a film, according to Saco, we need an orientation that focuses on how it is that our prior experiences with and investments in multiple subjects position mediate our understanding of particular subjectivities like masculinity (Saco, 1992, p.33).

Screening the male, edited in 1993 by Steve Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, re-examines the problematic status of masculinity both in Hollywood cinema and feminist film theory, in order to analyze issues that film theorists have exclusively linked to the feminine and not the masculine: spectacle, masochism, passivity, masquerade and, most of all, the body as it signifies gendered, racial, class and generational differences. The several essays in this volume, in fact, try to explore those male characters, spectators, and performers who occupy positions conventionally encoded as 'feminine' in Hollywood narrative and questions just how secure that orthodox male position is.

Ten years later, in *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema*, edited in 2004 by Phil Powrie, Ann Davies and Bruce Babington, a new collection of essays focuses on masculinity and film, particularly the representation of European masculinity as represented by contemporary Hollywood. Split into four sections – Stars, Class & Race, Fathers and Bodies – areas covered also include "Cinema's queer Jews", a contribution by Michele Aroon about Jewishness and masculinity in Yiddish cinema. Aaron's chapter tackles the way in which cross-dressing and male impersonation simultaneously challenges and reinforces the notorious anti-Semitism thus served to displace a crisis in masculinity onto the Jew, implying another reason for the eradication of Jewishness, that of ensuring a stable patriarchy and masculine identity (Aroon, 2004, pp.90-99).

Referring to Israeli Cinema, as Naficy highlights, the patriarchal ideologies of the Middle Eastern countries, too, contributed to the underrepresentation of women (Naficy, 2001, p.18).

In carrying out an ethnographic study of the representation of the IDF in Israeli Cinema, the matter of gender becomes fundamental, especially in relation to the Motherland of Israel: *Eretz Israel*

(ארץ ישראל), which is feminine by definition¹⁰.

Film genres are often *spatially* overdetermined by gender and sexuality. Traditionally, melodrama is associated with women, the feminine and the domestic space. Such a configuration is postulated in opposition to a masculine space that is outside and characterized by “adventure, movement, and cathartic action” (Mulvey, 1992, p.55). And if gender “is coded dyadically, the poles may be reversed” (Naficy, 2001, p.154).

In Israeli cinema, for example, the outside, public spaces of the homeland’s nature and landscape are largely represented as feminine and maternal. The specific relationship between nature, land and nation is informed not only by the collective memory of the land lost to exile and wars, but also by their own phenomenological experiences in Israeli nation-building as pioneers: *chalutz* (חלוץ); member of kibbutz: *kibbutznik* (קיבוצניק); and then fighter: *kravi* (קרבי).

Israeli films are deeply concerned with territory and territoriality. That of the homeland tends to emphasize boundlessness and timelessness, and it is cathected by means of fetishization of nostalgic longing to the homeland’s natural landscape: Jerusalem’s mountains, the desert of the Negev, the Golan Heights. On the other hand, the Israeli collective “siege” mentality, that is motivated by real or imagined historical and political threats, tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality, and it is cathected to sites of confinement and control, and to narratives of panic and pursuit.

According to Nitzan Ben-Shaul, “there is a pervasive mythical belief held by Israelis that they are a besieged nation and that the whole world is against them. This notion of siege influences the ways in which Israelis evaluate fundamental socio-political concerns” (Ben-Shaul, 1997, p.1).

Such a threat finds its expression in the siege and paranoid *mise-en-scène*, filming, and narrative structures of many Israeli films. As Ben-Shaul puts it: “Claustrophobia and violent environments presented through labyrinthine deployments of shadowy spaces, usually in places where people lack freedom such as] jail, mental institutions and army barracks; abrupt camera movements and editing patterns; temporal circularity; tragically bounded narrative structures; and the depiction of a society under a constant threat, whose members are motivated by suspicion and lack of trust themselves and towards outsider, conducting themselves through conspiracies and plots for which all means are legitimate. It is this formal structure that turns the vague ideas for resolving the conflict which motivate the protagonist into hopeless protest” (Ben-Shaul, 1997, p.69).

Therefore, in the following part of my work, I intend to carry out an ethnography of Israeli cinema, with a focus on this deep relation between “gender and nation” and “body and space”.

¹⁰ Just to give a paradigmatic example, I would like to quote the famous national-love song of 1972: ארץ ישראל יפה, “The beautiful land of Israel” (lyrics by Dudu Barak and music by Shaike Feikov).

For now, to return to where we began the historical analysis of postcolonial, gender and film studies, I would like to conclude with Naficy's words: "What is substituted for the impossibility of return and reunion in the staging of a metaphoric reunion with nature and return to imaginatively constructed categories that represent prelapsarian wholeness, such as imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), invented tradition (Hoobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), or formulation myths of a pure, original people, or folk (Hall, 1996)" (Naficy, 2001, p.156).