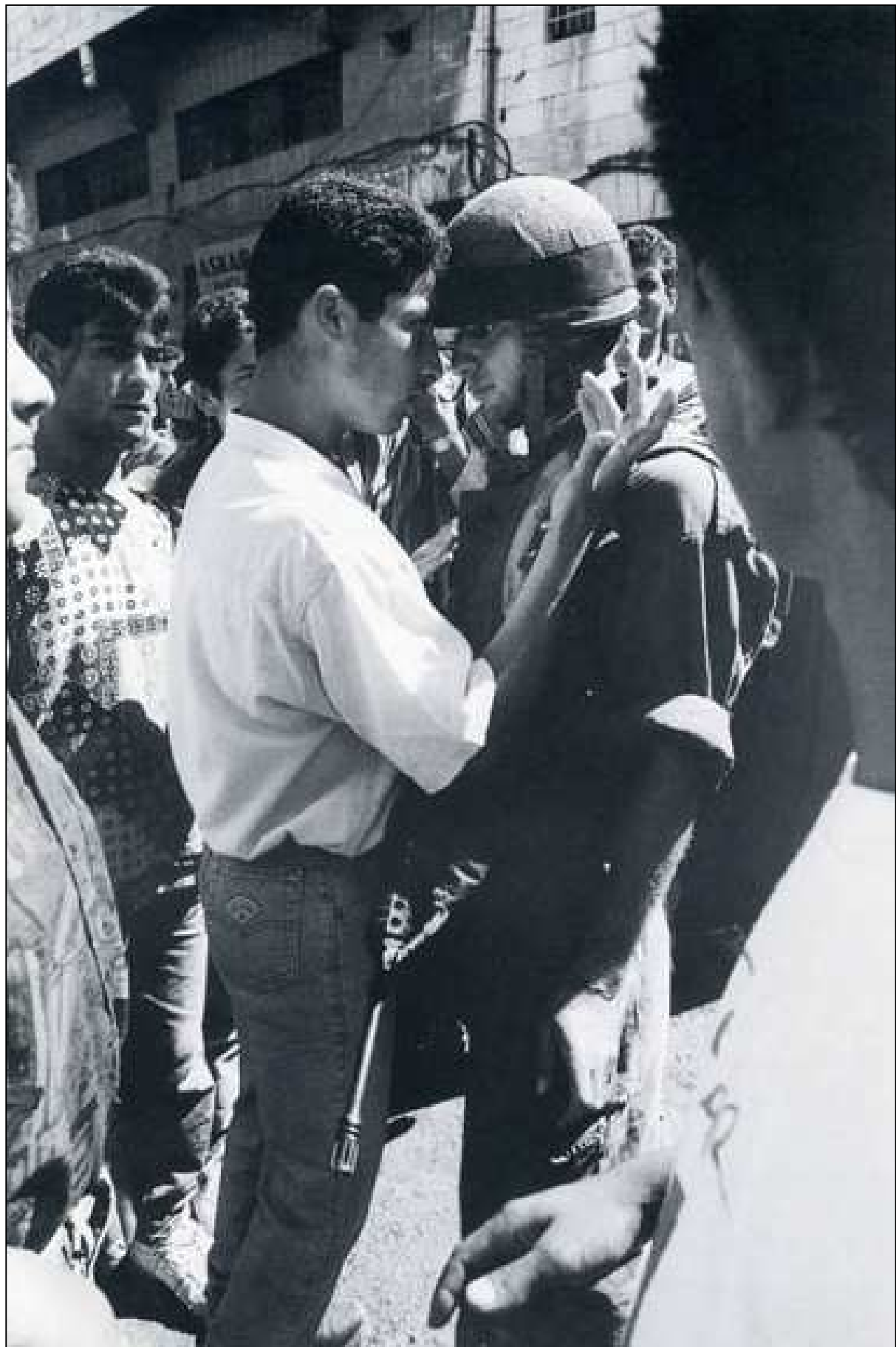


Chapter Four

Apocalypse Now: Lebanon's Mud and the Metamorphosis of David to Goliath



4.1 The First Lebanon War and the Beginning of the Intifada

“The epoch of the *Sabra* has been terminated with two shootings... Rabin was the DNA sequence of Israel. When he died, we died too” (David Grossman for the First Commemoration of Rabin’s assassination, *Maariv*, November 5, 1996).

Background

The Yom Kippur War upset the status quo in the Middle East, and the war was the direct antecedent of the 1978 Camp David Accords.

United States President Jimmy Carter invited both Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to a summit at Camp David to negotiate a final peace.

The talks took place from September 5 to 17, 1978. Ultimately, the talks succeeded, and Israel and Egypt signed the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from the Sinai (fig.4.1), in exchange for normal relations with Egypt and a lasting peace.

Meanwhile, with the rise to power of the right-wing *Likud* party in the 1977 elections, Israel assisted Lebanese Christian militias in their sporadic battles against the PLO¹.



Fig. 4.1 Borders of Israel in 1982
(Courtesy of *Koret Communications*)

¹ The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is a political and paramilitary organization founded in Cairo at the 1964 Arab League summit. The resounding defeat of Syria, Jordan and Egypt in the Six Day War of 1967 destroyed the credibility of Arab states that had fought to be patrons for the Palestinian people and their nationalist cause. The war radicalized the Palestinians and significantly weakened Nasser's influence. The way was opened, for Yasser Arafat to rise to power. He advocated guerrilla warfare and successfully sought to make the PLO a fully independent organization under the control of the fedayeen organizations. At the Palestinian National Congress meeting of 1969, Fatah gained control of the executive bodies of the PLO. Arafat was appointed PLO chairman at the Palestinian National Congress in Cairo on February 3, 1969. From then on, the Executive Committee was composed essentially of representatives of the various member organizations. The PLO suffered a major reversal with the Jordanian assault on its armed groups during “Black September” in 1970. The Palestinian groups were expelled from Jordan, and during the 1970s, the PLO was effectively an umbrella group of eight organizations headquartered in Damascus and Beirut, all devoted to armed resistance to either Zionism or Israeli occupation, using

In 1978, Israel established a security zone in southern Lebanon with mostly Christian inhabitants, in which they began to supply training and arms to Christian militias which would later form the South Lebanese Army.

Israel's main partner was to be the Maronite Phalange party, whose paramilitary was led by Bashir Gemayel, a rising figure in Lebanese politics. Gemayel's strategy during the early stages of the Lebanese Civil War was to provoke the Syrians into retaliatory attacks on Christians that Israel could not ignore. In 1978, Begin declared that Israel would not allow genocide of Lebanese Christians, while refusing direct intervention. Hundreds of Lebanese militiamen began to train in Israel, at the IDF Staff and Command College. The relationship between Israel and the Maronites began to grow into a political-strategic alliance, and the Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon began to conceive of a plan to install a pro-Israel Christian government in Lebanon, as it was known that Bashir wanted to remove the PLO and all Palestinian refugees in the country.

In July 1981 the PLO opened a heavy and indiscriminate artillery barrage on the Galilee panhandle using *Katyusha* rockets and 130mm cannon. This barrage lasted 10 days driving the residents of northern Israel underground into bomb shelters. Industry and commerce came to a standstill. Israel's reaction was severe (and a ceasefire came into effect on 24 July. However, during this ceasefire, Israel recorded 240 "terrorist actions" committed by the PLO against Israeli targets including the assassination of an Israeli diplomat in Paris and encounters with PLO units attempting to cross over from Jordan. On June 3, 1982 Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov was shot and seriously wounded in London by terrorists belonging to the Abu Nidal terrorist organization. The PLO denied complicity in the attack but Israel, faced with mounting attacks against its interests both at home and abroad, retaliated with punishing air and artillery strikes against PLO targets in Lebanon. The PLO hit back firing rockets at northern Israel causing considerable damage and some loss of life. On 4 June the Israeli cabinet decided that it would no longer remain silent in response to these provocations and authorized a large scale invasion.

methods which included direct clashing and guerrilla warfare against Israel. After Black September, the Cairo Agreement led the PLO to establish itself in Lebanon.

On June 6, 1982, Israeli forces under the direction of Sharon invaded southern Lebanon in “Operation Peace for Galilee,” an operation which was supposed to be short and painless, but saw Israel stuck in Lebanon’s mud for 18 years.

The Mud of Lebanon

When the Knesset voted on the war, only *Hadash*² opposed the war and even submitted a no-confidence motion against the Israeli government.

Following the Israeli Government's 1985 decision to pull back its positions in Lebanon, Operation Peace for Galilee seemingly ended. A follow-up decision ordered the IDF to maintain a buffer zone, the Security Zone, inside Lebanon.

A small contingent of IDF units were left to patrol the Security Zone in order to prevent infiltration into Northern Israel, and to provide a deterrent force against any attempt by Palestinian or other militia groups to fire longer range weapons into Israel proper.

Over the following decade, the IDF expanded and institutionalized its presence in the Security Zone as commanders on the ground, establishing better fortified posts and more troops.

However, this presence was a direct response to the rise of Hezbollah³ as a serious political force throughout Lebanon and a potent guerrilla army in the south.

Hezbollah fighters engaged in steady low-level confrontations with the IDF. Operations included attacks on convoys and routine patrols, placement of roadside bombs and remote control activated devices and occasional attempts to storm IDF outposts.

The conflict was a long-standing stalemate. Hezbollah was unable to inflict sufficient damage on either the IDF presence in Lebanon or on the quality of life in Israel's northern towns to force

²*Hadash*, in Hebrew: חד"ש, literally “new”, is also the acronym for *HaHazit HaDemokratit LeShalom VeLeShvion* (in Hebrew: החזית הדמוקרטית לשלום ולשוויון, literally *Democratic Front for Peace and Equality*).

It is a Jewish and Arab socialist front of organizations that runs for the Israeli parliament, which was formed on 15 March 1977 when the Rakah (which was renamed Maki, a Hebrew acronym for *Israeli Communist Party*, in 1989) and Non-Partisans parliamentary group changed its name to Hadash in preparation for the 1977 elections.

The party supports evacuation of all Israeli settlements, a complete withdrawal by Israel from all territories occupied as a result of the Six-Day War, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in those territories. It also supports the right of return or compensation for Palestinian refugees. In addition to issues of peace and security, Hadash is also known for being active on social and environmental issues. In the 2009 last elections the party won four seats at the Knesset.

³*Hezbollah* (Hezbollah means ‘party of god’ in Arabic I think) is a Shi'a Muslim militant group and political party based in Lebanon, which first emerged in response to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Starting as only a small militia, Hezbollah has grown into an organization with seats in the Lebanese government, a radio and a satellite television-station, and programs for social development.

Israeli concessions. Israel was unwilling to either expand its control of Lebanon or to take the war to those countries that armed, funded and trained Hezbollah.

By the late 1990s a change in the political dynamic of the conflict became more apparent. While Israel was strategically able to sustain its losses (normally around two to three soldiers killed each month), the will of the Israeli public to accept what were seen as pointless deaths began to fade.

On February 4th, 1997, two transport helicopters carrying troops into Israel's self-declared Security Zone in Southern Lebanon collided, killing all 73 soldiers aboard. The event sparked days of national mourning. Out of this trauma, a number of women living on the northern border with sons serving in Lebanon came together and drafted an open letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling on him to bring the boys home.

The women's letter would, over the coming weeks, evolve into *The Four Mothers Movement*⁴.

Within days of the letter being published in the nation's newspapers, hundreds of people around the country, mainly mothers, were openly expressing their solidarity with the view expressed by the *Four Mothers*. While the issue of withdrawal from Lebanon had long been taboo in mainstream political circles, the *Four Mothers* appeal to core Israeli values opened up a floodgate of pent up frustration.

Over the course of the coming two years, the Movement grew from its original core band to a national organization with several hundred active members. The *Four Mothers* held protests, sponsored advertisements in newspapers, and, perhaps most effectively, held vigils outside the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv the day after any IDF soldier was killed in Lebanon.

The persistence of the movement sparked a national re-evaluation of the policy guiding Israel's continued presence in the Security Zone.

This culminated in a large protest rally in Tel Aviv, organized by the *Peace Now*⁵ movement.

⁴ *The Four Mothers*, (in Hebrew: ארבע אמהות) at the beginning were Rachel Ben-Dor, Miri Sela, Ronit Nachmias, and Zahara Antavi, who had sons serving in Lebanon and who lived in Kibbutzim and towns in Northern Israel. These women, who took the name The Four Mothers Movement, gained immediate media attention and their numbers quickly swelled and has collected over 25,000 signatures in a petition drive throughout the country, addressed at getting the government to leave Lebanon. The Four Mothers Movement was unique in the country, a truly grassroots organization, not affiliated with any party, drawing supporters from across the political spectrum. While retaining the name The Four Mothers, the movement included a variety of concerned citizens: women and men, married and single, with or without children, students, and ex-soldiers, some of whom have themselves served in Lebanon

By the time the 1999 election rolled around, a majority of Israelis now supported unilateral withdrawal from the Security Zone.

Recognizing the shift in public sentiment, Ehud Barak, the Labor Party's candidate for Prime Minister, announced that if elected he would move to bring the IDF back to the Blue Line⁶.

Barak was elected by a landslide. The IDF announced that it would hand over the Security Zone to the South Lebanon Army by July 2000.

On 24 May 2000 Israel finally withdrew from the Security Zone to behind the Blue Line.

The following month, the UN confirmed that Israel's force deployment was now entirely consistent with the various Security Council resolutions with regard to Lebanon.

It is estimated that around 17,825 Lebanese were killed during the first year of the war, with differing estimates of the proportion of civilians killed. This number of civilian casualties is not the total number of civilian casualties from 1982-2000. Beirut newspaper *An Nahar* estimated that 5,515 people, both military and civilian, were killed in the Beirut area alone during the conflict, while 9,797 Syrian soldiers, PLO fighters, and other forces aligned with the PLO, as well as 2,513 civilians were killed outside of the Beirut area.

Concerning the Israeli casualties, more than 1200 Israeli soldiers were killed.

In 1982, an international commission investigated the reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of Lebanon. The commission's report concluded that "the government of Israel has committed acts of aggression contrary to international law", that the government of

⁵ *Peace Now* (in Hebrew: שלום עכשיו - *Shalom Achshav*) is a non-governmental organization with the aim of promoting the need for achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Following Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977, 348 Israeli military reserves officers petitioned Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin urging him to continue with the drive for peace. This petition led to the creation of *Peace Now*, which opposed the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon, holding a massive rally after the Sabra and Shatila massacre.

Throughout the years of its activity *Peace Now* has opposed the building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which it perceives as being calculated to undermine the possibility of peace with the Palestinians.

The signing of the Oslo accords marked a milestone in the activity of *Peace Now*, which has since strived to support governments that acted according to the "land for peace" formula, and demonstrate against governments that had different approaches to the peace process.

⁶ The Blue Line is a border demarcation between Lebanon and Israel published by the United Nations on June 7, 2000 for the purposes of determining whether Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon. At the same time, an extension, expressly not to be called the Blue Line nor considered the legally demarcated international boundary according to the UN, identified the Israeli withdrawal line between Lebanon and the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Israel had no valid reasons under international law for its invasion of Lebanon, and that the Israeli authorities were also involved directly or indirectly in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila⁷.

The Time of Palestinian Uprising

Israeli military occupation of Southern Lebanon and the continued Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip contributed to growing discontent with the status quo.

On December 9, 1987, a general popular uprising broke out in the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip and quickly spread throughout Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Intifada⁸ was not initiated by any single individual or organization, but the PLO soon established itself at the forefront, enhancing their presence in the territories. Local leadership came from groups and organizations affiliated with the PLO that operated within the Occupied Territories.

According to Kimmerling, the Israelis were helpless and unable to repress the rebellion, which was carried out by young men and women throwing stones at Israeli troops. Israel reacted by using excessive force, breaking bones and giving beatings, shooting live ammunition and later rubber bullets, imposing curfews and other collective punishments, demolishing houses, and holding thousands in administrative detention and prison.

The Palestinian popular uprising was complemented by an escalation of guerrilla activities inside Israel, including the stabbing of civilians and the use of firearms to target private and public transportation.

The *Likud* government did not provide any real answer to this new situation, with the exception of increasing its aggressive rhetoric, which simply widened the gap between the ideology of

⁷ The Sabra and Shatila massacre took place in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, between September 16 and September 18, 1982. Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were massacred in the camps by Christian Lebanese Phalangists while the camp was surrounded by the IDF. In that period of time, the IDF occupied Beirut, dominated the refugee camps of Palestinians and controlled the entrance to the city. After the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, leader and president-elect of the Lebanese Kataeb Party, a Maronite group, entered the camp and murdered inhabitants during the night. The exact number of victims is disputed, from 700–800 to 3,500. The IDF enabled the entrance of the angry Kataeb Party group to the refugee camps, by providing them transportation from outside Beirut and firing illuminating flares over the camps.

In 1982, an independent commission chaired by Sean MacBride concluded that the Israeli authorities were, directly or indirectly, responsible and Ariel Sharon was held personally responsible for allowing the Phalangists into the camps.

⁸ *Intifada* is an Arabic word which literally means "shaking off," though it is usually translated into English as "uprising", "resistance" or "rebellion". It is often used as a term for popular resistance to oppression.

“Greater Israel” and the reality of a feeling of precarious personal security among the Israeli people (Kimmerling, 2001, pp. 49-50).

In the 1992 Israeli elections, the Labor party returned to power, promising to solve internal security problems by granting autonomy to the Palestinians, as agreed in the Camp David Accords, at September 13, 1993, the date of the Declaration of Principles by the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the chairman of the PLO Yasser Arafat.

From Oslo Accords to Rabin’s Assassination

The Oslo Accords, officially called the Declaration of Principles, was the first direct, face-to-face agreement between the government of Israel and the PLO. It was intended to be the one framework for future negotiations and relations between the Israeli government and Palestinians. Negotiations concerning the agreements, an outgrowth of the Madrid Conference of 1991, were conducted secretly in Oslo, on 20 August 1993. The Accords were subsequently officially signed at a public ceremony in Washington, DC on September 13, 1993, in the presence of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and U.S. President Bill Clinton (fig.4.2).

The Oslo Accords were a framework for the future relations between the two parties, providing for the creation of the Palestinian Authority, which would have responsibility for the administration of the territory under its control and also calling for the withdrawal of the IDF from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

It was anticipated that this arrangement would last for a five-year interim period during which a permanent agreement would be negotiated (beginning no later than May 1996), however, permanent issues such as positions on Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, security and border



Fig. 4.2. Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat at the Oslo Accords signing ceremony on 13 September 1993

s were deliberately left out to be decided at a later stage.

In Israel, a strong debate over the accords took place, with the left wing supporting them and the right wing opposing them.

According to the Israeli government, Israel's trust in the accords was undermined by the fact that after they were signed, the attacks against Israel intensified, which some explained as an attempt by certain Palestinian organizations to thwart the peace process.

Important sections of the Israeli public opposed the process. Notably, the Jewish settlers feared that it would lead to them losing their homes.

As these protests dragged on, Rabin insisted that as long as he had a majority in the Knesset he would ignore the protests and the protesters.

The culmination of Israeli right-wing dissent over the Oslo Peace Process was Rabin's assassination.

On 4 November 1995, Rabin participated at a rally organized in the Tel Aviv city hall in support of the Oslo process. More than 400,000 Israeli citizen took it part.

After the rally, Rabin walked down the city hall steps towards the open door of his car, at which time Yigal Amir,⁹ a radical right-wing Orthodox Jew who opposed the signing of the Oslo Accords, fired three shots towards Rabin.

In Rabin's pocket was a bloodstained sheet of paper with the words of the song *Shir Lashalom* ("Song for Peace",¹⁰ fig.4.3), which dwells on the impossibility of bringing a dead person back to life and, therefore, the need for peace.

Rabin's assassination came as a great shock to the Israeli public. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis thronged the square where Rabin was assassinated to mourn his death.



Fig.4.3 The blood-stained sheet of Shir LaShalom lyrics that Yitzhak Rabin was reading from at the time of his assassination.

⁹ Yigal Amir was a law and computer science student at Bar-Ilan University (Established in 1955, The Bar Ilan University aims to forge closer links between Torah and universal studies) and a right-wing radical who had strenuously opposed Rabin's signing of the Oslo Accords. During his studies at BarIlan University, he was active in organizing protest rallies. Amir is currently serving a life sentence for murder plus six years for injuring Rabin's bodyguard, Yoram Rubin, under aggravating circumstances. He was later sentenced to an additional 8 years for conspiracy to murder.

¹⁰ See footnote 11, chapter 3, paragraph 3, p.113

Young people, in particular, turned out in large numbers, lighting memorial candles and singing peace songs.

Especially in the metropolitan areas, as Kimmerling puts it, the *leit motif* was “How were we [The secularist peace seekers] able to let them [the religious fundamentalist] kill Rabin? Where were we during the right–wing demonstrations that depicted Rabin as a traitor?!” For a moment, it appeared that a new kind of civil and secular society was in the making, built around a new secular martyr, Rabin (Kimmerling, 2001, p.53).

After his assassination, in fact, Rabin was hailed as a national symbol and came to embody the Israeli peace camp ethos, despite his military career and hawkish views earlier in life.

Rabin’s assassination was a formidable event in Israeli life. As Weiss puts it: “following the assassination, the blow to the nation and the collective body was the first one to be spelled out” (Weiss, 2002, p.131).

For some artists Rabin’s assassination, the First Lebanon War and the First Intifada during the 1980s and 90s strengthened the drive to deal anew with certain questions of identity.

As Gal argues, criticism originating in the 1970s turned its attention to art and its institutions and to the political sphere. Art was perceived as a means through which to fight for social and political rights, and in the 1980s these issues became more visible. During these years, the ethos of a pluralistic society was reborn and the artistic object became one cultural product among many others, especially in the area of consumption. Corporations acquired works of art in Israel and around the globe. During this time, painting was once again at the forefront, photography gained aesthetic status, and both media dealt with national issues, collective identity, difference, gender, and colonialism (Gal, 2009).

In the next part of this chapter I will analyze how these issues were represented in the political turn of Israeli art and cinema of the 1980s and 90s.

4.2 This is not a Western...

I would like to feel like you, the mothers.
I would like to write against the madness of the homeland
In which we send youth to war
Again the word patria
Todos por la patria
In whose name we send the children to war and to death
It's not good to die
(Menache Kadishman, 1999, p.92)

“Years ago, when he shot the Egyptian truck driver, he fell like an Indian in a Western, the death of the Syrian he felt in his own body”. As we can see in Oded Yedaya’s photograph *Like in a Western* (1982, fig. 4.4), according to the artist’s description, for the first time in the Arab – Israeli conflict, the Israeli soldier starts to see the enemy as a human like himself.

As he explained to me during a conversation we had on May 5, 2011 in his Art School¹¹ in Tel Aviv, he took this

picture in Lebanon, in the city of Zor: “It was June and it was very hot where we had to handle some war’s prisoners. I tried to figure [out] what they were thinking about us, and

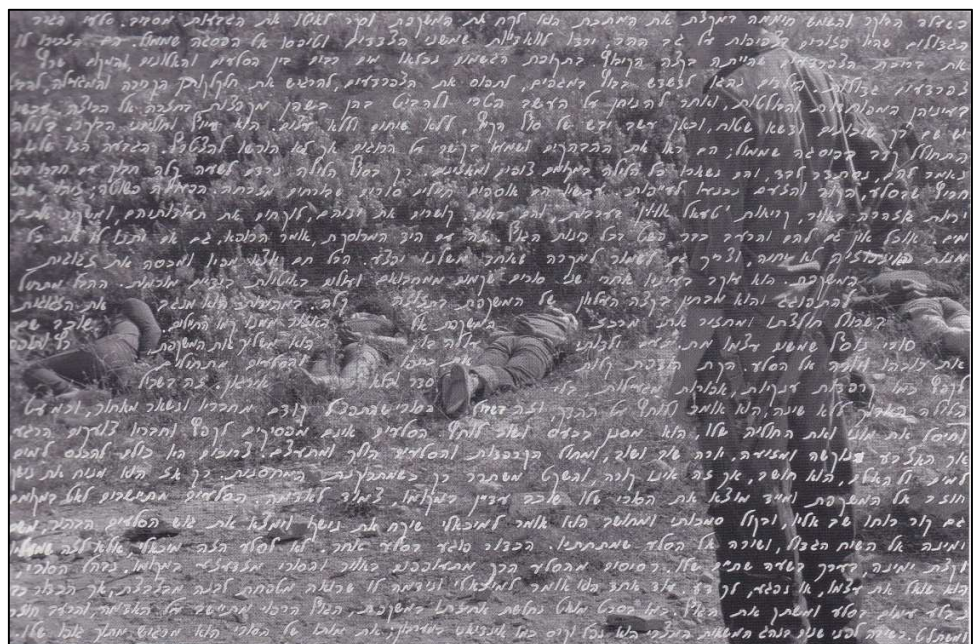


Fig. 4.4 *Like in a Western*, Oded Yedaya, 1982

¹¹ The *Minshar* School for Art, founded in Tel Aviv by Oded Yedaya, is an art school with the goal to educate through studies and creation in the vast disciplines of art: Cinema, animation, photography, theater, visual media, visual arts and writing, and to encourage the involvement of the artistic action in its political and social environment. The school promotes a constant searching for new forms of expression through art, and wide-scale collaboration between the different disciplines of art, which leads to social, political and public activity, as well as personal, introverted creation that enables a dialogue with public.

suddenly my memory took me back to '73, during the Yom Kippur War, when I was in Syria.

That's why the text is not really according to the picture. But memory is actually always the result of the combination of different memories. Writing on the picture gave the opportunity to do something that usually is very hard to do for a photographer: putting in the picture also my personal memories. [...] At that time, not only in Israel, but also in the USA, where I studied photography and visual art, all the world of photography was representing soldiers just as heroes, without dealing with the specific personality of the soldiers, which at that time was explored just in the literature. Nobody showed the army during the foggy days, when the soldiers are sad or when they are tired. I think that I was very influenced by the film *Paratroopers* by Judd Neeman and from how he dealt with the issue of personality of the soldiers in a special unit, because I was in a special unit too, not of Paratroopers but *Sayeret*, the one which was in Entebbe.

I grew up in a kibbutz, where at that time they pushed us a lot to serve in the best unit of the IDF. But the fact that we had to serve our country doesn't mean that we don't have our personality and our personal point of view. And we found ourselves in the mass of Lebanon, I found myself many times in the situation in which it was necessary try to understand the point of you of the Others. Actually, also the fact itself of taking a picture, looking in the viewfinder is not so different to take the aim to shoot and killing somebody. And it changes a lot how far you are from the enemy, so sometimes it can change your perspective and let you decide to not kill. Talking about this picture, I can really say that I think now all of them are still alive...”.

As we saw in Yedaya's work, against the background of the First Lebanon War followed by the First Intifada, staged by the inhabitants of the occupied territories, plastic art of the 1980s saw an ever-growing exposure of installations and performance.

As Gal argues, the sense of Israeli collectivity that had been criticized in the 1970s after the Yom Kippur War was once again under critical attack and the last sacred cows of Israeliness were slaughtered by the birth of identity politics in a multicultural society that saw itself as a bundle of many narratives that functioned as an alternative to the homogeneity of modernism. During the 1980s, the critical standpoint of previous decades was transformed into a means of direct, political criticism of Israeli society. The first Lebanon War and the outbreak of the first intifada inspired pointed, critical works of art with clear political messages (Gal, 2009).

Moshe Gershuni, for instance, who in the 1970s worked as a conceptual artist, was now creating expressive art. In his work of 1982 *Isaac Isaac* (fig.4.5), Gershuni refers to the Biblical story of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), in the context of the first Lebanon War.

As Barzel argues, the motif of sacrifice has become central in the



recent Fig.4.5, *Isaac Isaac*, Moshe Gershuni, 1982

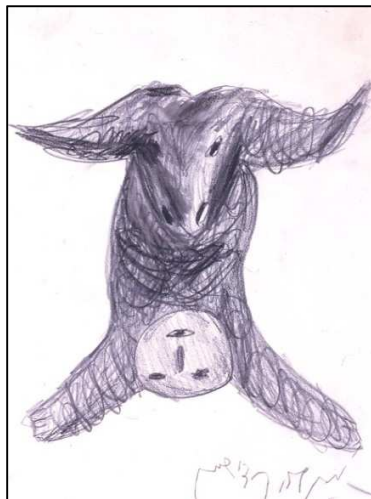


Fig.4.6, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, Menache Kadishman, 1982, pencil on paper

works of certain prominent Israeli artists, as an expression of identity involving national and personal despair, which they convey by means of mythological metaphors of the irrationality of human fate. The blood-red, highly expressive paintings of Gershuni reveal a disgorging process of biographical self-destruction and insanity parallel to the insanity and catastrophe of reality itself (Barzel, 2006, p. 207).

Also Menache Kadishman focuses on the theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac as a reaction to the controversial Lebanon War in 1982, when his son was called to serve in the army and his personal fears mingled

with a broader national angst.

Meanwhile the biblical myth of Abraham tells us about the miracle of the angel who stopped him from slaughtering his son. In Kadishman's work *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1982, fig.4.6, 4.7) there is no God, only men in powerful government positions who ask us to sacrifice our sons in war. Isaac's binding ropes were not untied, the slaughtering knife



Fig.4.7 *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, Menache Kadishman, 1982

in the hand of his father, Abraham, was not stopped by the arm of the angel, but was stuck in the living flesh of his son.

As Kadishman affirmed: “A man who sacrifices his son, sacrifices himself. Both are victims. The sacrifice of Isaac is not an abstract symbol for me. It is part and parcel of my own biography and that of my generation, and it may be the biography of my children after me” (Kadishman, 1999, p.25).

As Kadishman told me during a conversation that we had on May 14, 2011 in his studio in Tel Aviv: “it is always a matter of priority. When you want something you have always to sacrifice something else, and in Israel we decided to sacrifice our children”.

Children, fathers, husbands. In the 1980s several Israeli Artists supported the Peace Now Movement, in order to interrupt the War in Lebanon and the Occupation of the Territories.

David Tartakover, one of the most relevant Israeli Graphic designers¹², designed *Peace Now*'s logo in 1978, which became the name of the organization. It was also the first political bumper sticker in Israel and is still one of Israel's most popular stickers.

According to Joel Beinin and Rebecca L. Stein, “His unique work creates a synthesis high culture, between the written text and visual imagery and between personal statements and collective representations of local cultural values” (Beinin J. and Stein R.L., 2006, pp. 214-218).

In his 1989 work *Pain* (fig.4.8), the poster bore the Hebrew title *Ke'ev* (literally “pain”), a word which can also be read as *Ke'av*, meaning “as a Father”. On the picture of a kid representing the “child of the country”, Tartakover wrote: “Daddy, what are you doing in the Occupied Territories?”



Fig. 4.8, *Pain*, David Tartakover, 1989

¹² David Tartakover was born in Haifa in 1944. After volunteering in the Paratroops unit from 1962 to 1964, he studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, and he graduated at the London College of Printing. Since 1975, he has operated his own studio in Tel Aviv, specializing in various aspects of visual communications, with particular emphasis on culture and politics. As graphic designer, artist, researcher and curator he also collected a huge archive of miscellaneous material, representing the history of Israeli design.

In 1998, after 16 years of engagement in Lebanon, and 1245 soldier deaths, Tartakover produced another provocative poster, calling on the IDF to leave Lebanon, *1245 Soldiers already left Lebanon. On unilateral withdrawal* (fig.4.9). Therefore in 2000, in order to commemorate the 18th Anniversary of the Lebanon War and the I.D.F. withdrawal, Tartakover realizes a new poster, *Life to Lebanon* (fig. 4.10), paying with the numerological value of the letters of the word "life", which in Hebrew is 18, like the years of the engagement.

During the time of the First Lebanon War, the First Intifada also broke out. The politics of identity that



Fig. 4.9 *1245 Soldiers already left Lebanon. On unilateral withdrawal*, David Tartakover, 1998

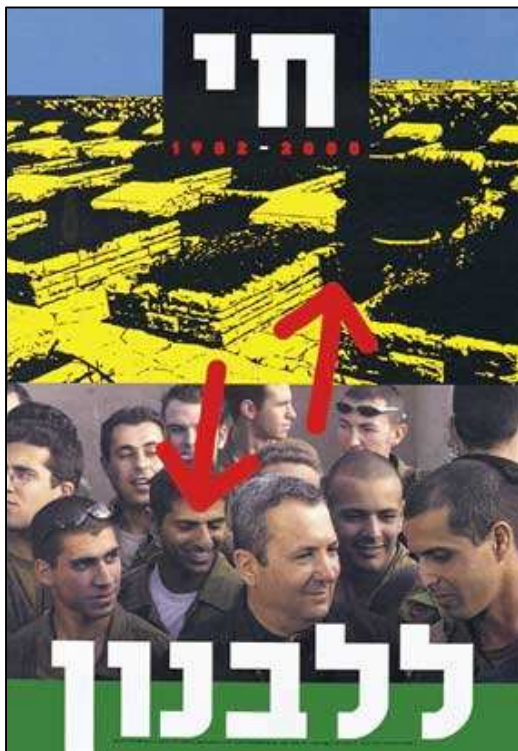


Fig. 4.9 *Life to Lebanon*, David Tartakover, 2000

had blossomed

in the 1980s continued to gain power in the 1990s and gave rise to the Other in artistic practices.

For instance, Khaled Zighari's *Head to Head* (1995, fig.4.11) presents a violent, frightening, and pathetic duet between a soldier and a Palestinian civilian facing off. As Gal argues, they are twins in a violent, inextricable, brutal dance. Beyond the national conflict this picture achieved the status of a political document exposing the real in a radical way (Gal, 2009).

At the time of Lebanon War and the First Intifada the launch of cable broadcasting and of commercial television channels also led to a world of communication flooded with images.

As Steven Livingston argues, the CNN effect produced by the extent, depth, and speed of the new global media has created a new species of effects qualitatively different from those which preceded them historically (Livingston, 1997, p.3.). Several Israeli artists during the 1990s begin to work on and with the global media in their artworks.

Many of the paintings of David Reeb, for instance, are inspired and based on newspaper photographs which documented events and circumstances that occurred when Israeli security forces confronted Palestinian residents. As Zalmona observed, in his painting the visions are normally confronted through a continuity of a contact-sheet of images depicting scenes from a wide spectrum of domains (Zalmona, 2006, p.250).



Fig.4.11, *Head to Head*, Khaled Zighari's, 1995



Fig.4.12 *Tel Aviv-Gaza*, David Reeb, 1989

Since 1988 Reeb has been collaborating with photojournalist Miki Kratzman, taking his press photographs and reproducing them in his paintings.

As Berzel observed, using linear and contour methods of painting, Reeb often divides his canvases into squares to create a cinematic/comic-strip-like sequence of events, reflecting media's culture (Berzel, 1987, p. 117).

Tel Aviv - Gaza (1989, fig. 4.12), for example, is a cinematic composition built of frames, allegedly taken from a film photographed from two perspectives, one

in black and white and the other in color, one representing conflict in the occupied territories and the other a pastoral scene in Tel Aviv. In this way Reeb attempts to destabilize the fictive serenity of Israelis and to re-expose them to the violence beyond the Green Line, which became a kind of *leit motif* of his art.

As Reeb explained to me during my visit to his studio in Tel Aviv, on July 8, 2009 “most of my art works are made from the frame of video that I personally shot when I was taking part in demonstrations against the Occupation of the Palestinian Territories. [...] I was interested in representing *Tzava* because I live here, and this is such a part of our society, it doesn't matter which kind of ideology you are following or not.”

But you were also a soldier, right?

“Of course, but it was completely different in my time. I never served in the Occupied Territories. Today the army fight not in order to defend our territory but to not change a situation which is the same from '67. Even the security fence which was built in the last few years is not defining any kind of border but just confirming the fact that in the Israeli mind the West Bank is considered as part of Israel”.

The issue of the border becomes a very relevant one in the Israeli art of the 1990s.

Another Israeli artist who in those times worked on the representation of Israeli *ethnoscape* is Tsibi Geva. Geva's “*keffiyeh-pattern*” (fig.4.13), symbol of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thought time has been transformed into a barrier, a safety net delineating the space like a fence, a grid, a death wall.

As Geva told me during my visit to his studio in Tel Aviv, on July



Fig. 4.13 *Keffiyeh*, Tsibi Geva, 1990

22, 2009, “the *keffiyeh* as object looks always interesting to me because it was also a kind of symbol of the *palmachnikim* at the time of the *Hagana*. Only in the 1980s I started to study and to work on the *keffiyeh* as symbol of the Palestinian resistance, until when the continuous abstraction of the *keffiyeh* pattern let me see in on it a kind of ‘fence’, the fence which divides us from the Palestinians not only physically but more than anything in our mind.”

Also Adi Nes’s works created from 1995, which came to be known as the “soldiers series” deals with the subject of the border and the nation.

As he explained to me during a meeting which we had in Tel Aviv on January 22, 2009, referring to his work of 1998, *Untitled* (fig.4.14), “the act of pissing, is not only a matter of masculinity and brotherhood, but also a symbolic way of marking (and metaphorically occupying) a territory. Because masculinity and occupation are both a kind of pattern of our national identity. Actually, my professional career started with my degree project on the gay identity during the

time of my mandatory army, when it wasn’t so easy to be openly gay in such a macho-centric society. [...] This is the reason because all my staged photographs, even if represent a kind of *show-off*, are all printed by colors and not in black and white, because I wanted distance in purpose from the mythological representation of the Israeli hero. Today there are no heroes anymore. We are not fighting against anything, but just trying to do our best to survive in such a kind of no-sense war.



Fig. 4.14 *Soldiers*, Adi Nes, 2000

That's why also in this my other work [*Soldiers*, 1988, (fig.4.15)], a remake of one of the more iconic photos created in the service of the Zionist dream [the *Ink Flag*¹³], I chose to remove the flag because is the typical symbol not only of the nationalism, but also of the machismo. All these kinds of issues were a fundamental part of the Israeli identity, which now doesn't know anymore in which kind of direction to go".



According to Zalmona, starting from the 1980s, the macho

Fig.4.15 *Untitled*, Adi Nes, 1998

ritual of masculinity and strength, which was, as we have seen, an important and predominant feature of the Israeli identity right from the beginning, starts losing its magic, the *Sabra* is depicted as a war casualty or as a joke. The very motif of the house has cracked, the symbol of the clear identity is becoming more and more complex (Zalmona, 2006, p.252).

In the next and last part of this chapter I will analyze how the political crisis of Israel and the corresponding crisis of the Israeli *Sabra* identity are represented in the political turn of the Israeli cinema of the 1980s and 1990s.

¹³ See chapter 2, paragraph 2, pag.62

4.3 Ethnography of the Political Turn of the Cinema of the Eighties and Nineties

“Who am I protecting? The cedar trees? The sheep? Who? I can buy good cherries at the shuk, close to my house. Six hundred dead. Six hundred widows. Fuck you. How can you live with it? How can I go on living after all this shit?” (*Time of Cherries*, Heim Bouzaglo, 1991).

Good Morning Lebanon!

With the disillusionment and self-criticism that followed the difficult period of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, for the first time Israeli society was ready to take a hard, analytical look at political and military issues and at institutions of the state.

What began in 1982 as a limited military action in southern Lebanon escalated into a large-scale war. As Kronish puts it, “during this period “Lebanon” became a symbol for darkness and death” (Kronish, 1996, p. 111).

The incursion into Lebanon in 1982, which lasted far longer than originally planned, generated not only political movement but also oppositional artistic movement in the forms of poems, plays, photographs, and, of course, film, dealing with the political situation.

As Kronish observes, after 1982 filmmakers began to analyze army procedures, expectations of young people before the army service, and the difficult societal problem of personal rejection from the army. Their work also examines some of the more problematic aspects of war, including the political decisions that create an ongoing state of war and the moral codes of military behavior in handling civilian populations, particularly during the War in Lebanon and the Intifada. Their films also grapple with personal loss and the psychological debilitation caused by war, including the difficulty of rebuilding one’s life in the aftermath of war trauma.

In stark contrast to the heroic films of earlier periods, these films deal essentially with the fear, distress and sometimes even despair of a nation which functions largely in the shadow of military service and an ongoing state of war (Kronish, 1996, p. 117).

In 1983 Assi Dayan dealt for the first time with the delicate issue of the draft in *Final Exams* (*Bechinat Bagrut*, fig. 4.16). The film tells the love story of Roni and Orna, the most talked about couple at their high-school. When Orna gets pregnant unexpectedly, at first they decide to terminate the pregnancy. Later, this decision is revisited when they receive news about the death of Omri, their good friend from high school as a soldier in the *Golani*¹⁴ brigade.

When their parents try to convince them no to have the child, Roni suddenly finds himself in the threatening them: “if you don’t let us have the baby, I will draft myself in the Golani. If the age of 18 is enough to let us die for the country, why can’t we try to be parents?”

Dayan’s new provocative movie not only deals with the absurdity of dying for the country, but also, for the first time in Israeli Cinema, with the not compulsory choice of joining the IDF. Omri, in fact, decides to join the army even before the end of the school, because he has “nothing to do” and at least he can try to start a “new life.”

The theme of the draft and the social role of the IDF in Israeli youth was also in 1984 explored by Dan Wolman, in *Soldier of the Night* (*Chayal HaLaila*, fig. 4.17).

The movie tells the story of Ze’ev, the son of a high officer, who is not allowed to continue his *miluim* service because of medical illness.

At the beginning of the movie Ze’ev meets Iris, and they embark upon a sexual relationship.

As the story unfolds, Iris realizes that Ze’ev goes out at night on special secret missions which he claims are part of his duty on some secret army unit.



Fig. 4.16. Poster of *Final Exams*, Assi Dayan, 1983

¹⁴ The Golani Brigade (in Hebrew: הקטיבת גולני, also known as the 1st Brigade) is an Israeli infantry brigade that is subordinated to the 36th Division and traditionally associated with the Northern Command. It is one of the most highly decorated infantry units in the IDF. It has since 1948 participated in all of Israel's major wars and nearly all major operations, including special operations like Operation Entebbe, Operation Litai, and various operations during the Palestinian intifadas.

As their relationship develops, she hears of a series of murders. The police discover that all the victims are IDF soldiers.

When the radio reports a series of nightly murders, Iris begins to suspect her boyfriend.

Only at the end does Iris realize that Ze'ev

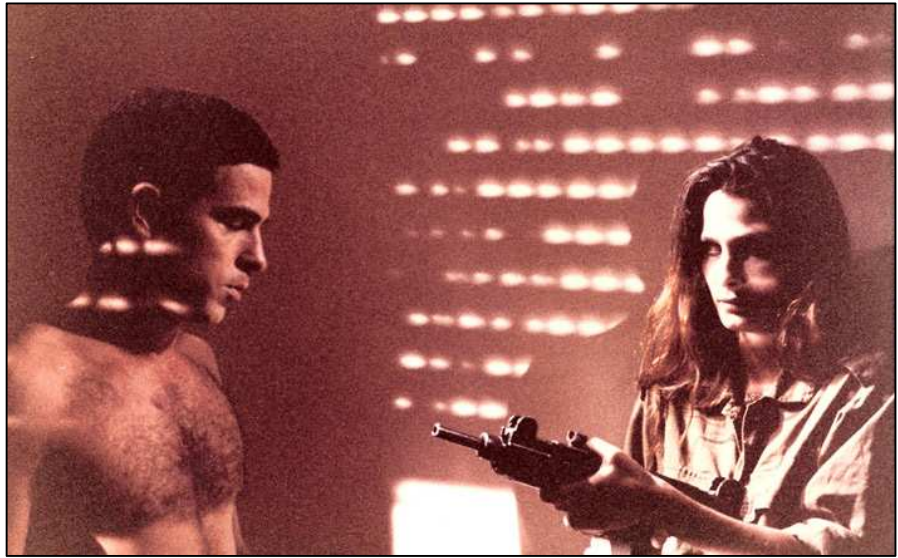


Fig.4.17 Frame of *Soldier of the Night*, Dan Wolman, 1984,

has been rejected from the army and that he has gone mad.

Because he wanted to be like the “others,” and like his father, in fact, he spent his nights on mysterious expeditions, dressed in military uniform and carrying a weapon.

Being exempt from the army due to personality inadequacy, Ze'ev takes revenge on the system by murdering soldiers.

The movie ends with a visit to his father at the army base where, after killing each soldier who tries to stop him, he kills himself by crushing his head in a television display that is screening some war actions.

On April 1st 2011, I had the opportunity to meet Dan Wolman at the Tel Aviv Cinemateque. During the interview, he said that he started to think about this movie when his parent's neighbour was found, during *miluim*, shot in his head in his car, in an Arab village in the Galil: “The army said that he committed suicide but his family supposes that he was murdered by some Arabs. As usual, the Arabs became ‘the Jewish’. So I start to think why he couldn't kill him somebody just like me? So what I did with the movie was trying to find the ‘enemy’ inside myself.

That's why the film starts with the murder of the army doctor, because Ze'ev wants to be like everybody else, like in a ‘tribe’ where the witch-doctor doesn't let him being part of the tribe. And like in the cannibal rituals, he kills the other soldiers in order to become one of them, a ‘real’ man like them. Also the love story between him and his girlfriend is very macho-centric, as

we see at the beginning of the movie with the sex game with the strings of the Paratroopers' boots. She in fact is attracted by him also because he has to go to 'serve' in the middle of the night and at the end of the movie she becomes like him, even dressing his uniform."

FM: The movie was shot at the time of the War in Lebanon. Do you think that what happened at that time had an influence on your movie?

DW: "It took me 3 years to shoot the movie: from 1981 to 1984. It was the time of Lebanon War, when in order to kill terrorists the IDF killed also a lot of innocent people..."

At that time, the IDF Film Unit also decided to produce the first movie on the Lebanon War, at the beginning for internal educational purposes, as a film for discussion with soldiers about moral ambiguity, as well as an attempt to provide guidelines for conduct with the civilian population in Lebanon. Only in 1986 it was purchased for theatrical distribution. *Two fingers from Tzidon* (*Shtei Etzabot MiTzidon/Ricochets*, fig. 4.18), directed by Eli Cohen and co-written with Baruch Nevo, it is a war film that blurs the boundaries between fictions and documentary. Actual soldiers play their real-life roles, as do the occupied, for example as in the case of the South Lebanese village Al Hiyam, whose inhabitants play themselves.

The story focuses on Gadi, a young officer who, upon completion of his officer training course, is sent directly to Lebanon to serve with an infantry unit.

As Shohat puts it, "as an archetypical Peace Now soldier he wants to excel as a soldier and at the same time maintain civilized behaviour and moral principles" (Shohat, 1987, p.258).

Gadi consents to the hard line approach taken by his commanding officer against the local population.

When the Israeli soldiers track a Palestinian guerrilla leader to the home of a Lebanese villager, Gadi volunteers to storm them alone, but his inexperience and instinctive trust of the local civilian population at first cause difficulties.

In the final, climactic sequence the young officer is faced with a moral dilemma about risking the lives of innocent



Fig.4.18 Poster of *Two Fingers from Tzidon*, Elci Cohen, 1986

civilians in order to apprehend armed terrorists.

Although pressured by his commanding officer and his men to attack with full strength, he never loses sight of his inner morale code and searches for another route in order to protect the civilians.

According to Kronish, in this way he adheres not only to his own ethical instinct, but also to those instilled in him by his army training (Kronish, 1996, p. 111-112).

As Gertz observes, this movie was based on two difference models and can be construed in two ways. On the one hand, it may be regarded as an example of the political cinema of the 1980s, which attempted to replace national values with universal humanistic ones.

On the other hand, many occurrences in this film substantiate the humanness of the Israeli soldiers, who, even in the battle, refuse to harm innocent civilians (Gertz, 1999, p. 155).

The collection of humanistic values is built through a series of substantiations: the soldiers' humane treatment of women, children, and the elderly; tolerance of the opponent's religion, for example the Druze soldier in the unit gives evidence of national tolerance merely by being there. Each substantiation is inserted into a complete episode that initially alludes to the accusations of Israeli inhumanity and then challenges the accusation.

As Gertz highlights, while on a mission to flush territories out of a Lebanese house, Gadi encounters an old man lying on a mattress. Gadi moves away without touching him, only to discover that the old man is actually lying on a cache of explosives. The subtle accusation, that the IDF harms innocent old man, is countered with proof that it is the enemy, after all, that exploits innocent old people in pursuit of its goals (Gertz, 1999, p. 156).

Regarding the *ethnoscape*, like the plot and the protagonists, the footage of the landscape and the surroundings sends two different messages: one national, the other universal and humanistic.

As Gertz analyzes, on the one hand, pastoral landscapes, close-ups of a bird in her nest, a bee on a flower, and a flock of sheep, all preceding scenes of gunfire and combat, portray the war as a contrast to nature and life. However, the tranquillity here is deliberately shown through Israeli eyes: the Israelis live harmoniously with the landscape and the Arabs rupture the idyll. The Israeli soldiers are having a quiet picnic amid placid scenery. They are harming no one, even the bird, resting peacefully in her nest. Suddenly a Lebanese car veers into sight from around a bend, opens fire on the soldiers, kills their commander, and drives the bird out of the nest (Gertz, 1999, p. 158).

As Shohat argues, the movie's narrative thus privileges the tormented "shoot and cry soldiers" who supposedly suffer from the very fact of being conquerors, who do not hate those they occupy, and who, despite the death ready to surprise them at every corner, are still capable of expressing affection toward the Lebanese. Despite the hardship of war, in other words, they maintain a civilized ethos (Shohat, 1987, p.259).

Neeman defined this movie as "Explicit propaganda", using universal humanistic anti-war messages to consolidate the heroic-nationalistic ethos rather than subvert it (Neeman, 2001, p.312).

According to Shohat, the film should not be perceived simply as propaganda promoting the idea that Israeli policies are not so bad after all. It must be perceived even more as symptomatic of a sincere belief in the ethical and conscientious Israeli fighter: "The humanist-socialist education of the dominant elite perpetuated such myths, encapsulated in such tropes as *tohar haneshek* ("purity of army"), implying the killing of only necessary targets, never touching civilians, *musar halehima* ("moral of fighting") and *kibosh naor* ("enlightened occupation"). The Israeli invasion of Lebanon is never questioned. By focusing on the narrow question of the humanity or inhumanity of Israeli soldiers rather than on the larger political context, the movie becomes a kind of promotion brochure for official Israeli policies and perspectives" (Shohat, 1987, p. 260).

On November 29, 2010, I met the director Eli Cohen in Tel Aviv, who worked on the movie as a civilian on contract to the Army.

My first question to Cohen was how he could place the movie in this kind of "propaganda" issue. EC: The first journalist attacking the movie was Dalia Karper, working at *Haaretz*. She said that was a false movie. But cinema's rules are not so easy. Often you fall in love with the bad guy. Sometime even with the criminal, or the murderer. Even in an anti-war movie you can fall in love with the hero, or anti-hero, whatever, so it is not too easy to define the border between anti-militarism and \ anti-nationalism.

I would like to define *Two Finger from Tzidon* as the combination of two "opposing extremes."

On the one hand we have the typical war movies, like all the movies from the Second World War to the Vietnam War, with the typical army unit representing the entire army stereotype: the quiet but strong man, the one who is always going to fix everything, the coward. The use of cliché was the easiest way for me to not be too political, because during every step which I made, I had to

figure out if it was acceptable for the army, that was the producer, and all the staff which was working on *miluim* service, even the cameramen.

On the other hand, it was one of the very few movies shot in the time and in the place of the war: that's why at the beginning the IDF believed to do a documentary, instead of a fiction. But, how should one deal with the reality and the fiction together, starting from all the Lebanese people going around the set? We were really inside the war, and this is the reason why they called me, in order to document what was "really" happening. But it wasn't a studio, therefore even a small accident could be a reason to say that IDF was risking, again, the life of our children, for nothing. So, in order to answer your question, in my opinion, the main message of the movie was trying to say "what they are doing there?" There was not any political agenda, just the aim to show the complicated situation in which soldiers are mixed with civilians, that basically is the situation of all the last wars, all around the world: this was the agenda!

In this sense, the symbolic ending of the military vehicle stuck in the mud on the way out from Lebanon and the collaborative delirium of the Israeli soldiers who succeed in releasing it from the mud is hardly critical.

I still remember, that was our last shot, during the last day of the "war," just before to leave Lebanon in order to start the "security belt operation," which ended only with the retrial in 2000. We were really in a hurry, because we had to reach the last convoy, in order to reach Lebanon. The international media were not allowed to cross the border, so they were waiting for us at Fatma Gate, in Metula. So when they saw our troupe, they started to shoot us, and, suddenly, people all around the world watched us on TV. I still remember that a lot of friends of mine called me from all over the world. Suddenly we became the representation of reality, *aval, afuch shel afuch*, (in Hebrew: "the opposite of the opposite") we were fiction, by definition! So what is the real difference between reality and representation?

FM: And how was the reaction of the audience?

EC: Actually, the first audience was a group of 20 generals, at the *Kiryat*¹⁵. When the screen was finished the main reaction were sentences like: "after 2 minutes I felt really like I was back in Lebanon" or like "I trembled for the entire movie."

¹⁵ *HaKiryat* (in Hebrew: הקרייה, literally "The Campus"), is an area in central Tel Aviv, containing various government structures, including the major IDF base. It was one of the first IDF bases and has served as the IDF headquarters since its founding in 1948

Talking about the Israeli audience, the movie was really appreciated in all Israel,¹⁶ also because for the first time in the history of Israeli wars, there wasn't consensus. Just the extreme rightwing and the extreme leftwing didn't like it.

FM: Actually, talking about the Israeli audience, it was very impressive for me to discover that the song of the movie is still one of the "soundtrack" songs in the everyday life of the IDF...

EC: I wrote this song taking the words from a poem which a *Golani* gave me, written, even in a not such a good Hebrew, on a small paper. Because of the lyrics, we decide to call the movie "Two Fingers from Tzidon":

Two fingers from Tzidon
I sit, depressed
Patrol all day guard duty ,
Looking for who to shoot
I see a pretty girl in the village
And I am reminded of you
Far from the eye, far from the heart
You forgot me and it hurts
Thinking about you a lot
A worn-out soldier, in Lebanon¹⁷.

Eli Cohen co-scripted the screenplay with his friend Baruch Nevo, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Haifa, who became a friend of Eli Cohen during the time of *tironut*¹⁸.

I met Baruch Nevo on November 11, 2010 at the University of Haifa in order to discuss his point of view as a screenwriter.

BN: It was 1983. At the beginning I was supposed to go in Lebanon with Eli, just as a friend, and, of course, as psychologist. The aim of our survey was to film a documentary for the IDF, but from the first moment, talking with the soldiers, we realized together that making a fiction could be much more interesting than a documentary. The IDF also decided to give us an entire

¹⁶ According to Neeman, the box office was over than 800.000 tickets (Neeman, 1999, p.312)

¹⁷ Soundtrack from *Two Finger from Tzidon*

¹⁸ *Tironut* (in Hebrew: טירונות) is the Hebrew name for the recruit training of the IDF. At the end of each basic training program, recruits are sworn into the IDF and receive their corps berets, after which they go to their respective professional training courses. In most units, there is a ceremony called *distance-breaking*, which involves the commanders telling the recruits their names, after which they are no longer these specific recruits' commanders and may call them by their first names only. After the *tironut*, a recruit is certified as a rifleman of a level that depends on the training program.

unit which was in *miluim* for a month. One of them was Alon Abutbul, who at that time was just a soldier in recruit service, and not a famous actor as he is known today.

Actually, for all the time of he shooting the IDF was sure that we were making a documentary, and actually this was the plan at the beginning. But time to time the documentary became a fiction, even if it was based on fact which really happened.

FM: What was the main reason you decided to make a fiction instead of a documentary?

BN: Because we wanted a movie, which represented, for the first time, the Israeli soldier not as super hero, and super macho, but just as they really were. Not actor but soldiers, not a studio but the real set of Lebanon. And it worked, because at the first screening at the *Kiryat*, generals were crying, pretending to hide it behind the tissue.

FM: Wasn't there also a lot of criticism about the fact that movie wasn't so critical of the IDF?

BN: It was interesting how the "left-wing" said that we didn't show enough all the bad stuff of the army, and the "right-wing" said that we did it too much, even showing soldiers in the act of crying. But actually we didn't have any political aim, neither any political pressure. We wanted just to show individual experience in the everyday life of the IDF, stuck in the mud of Lebanon.

FM: Talking about "Lebanon's mud", what about the last scene of the movie, when the entire unit is represented as literally stuck in the mud?

BN: Actually the idea of the last scene in the mud was really pioneering, and only after the movie it became a kind of metaphor of the Lebanon War...

The Lebanon War was also a great influence on a movie which was supposed to take place in a different time of War, *Late Summer Blues* (*Blues Le Chofesh haGadol*, fig.4.19), by Renen Schorr.

Presented on the Israeli screen in 1987, the movie deals with the time of the War of Attrition, as the filmmaker explained me when I met him on May 5, 2011 at the Sam Spiegel School, the School of Cinema whose director Renen Schorr himself.

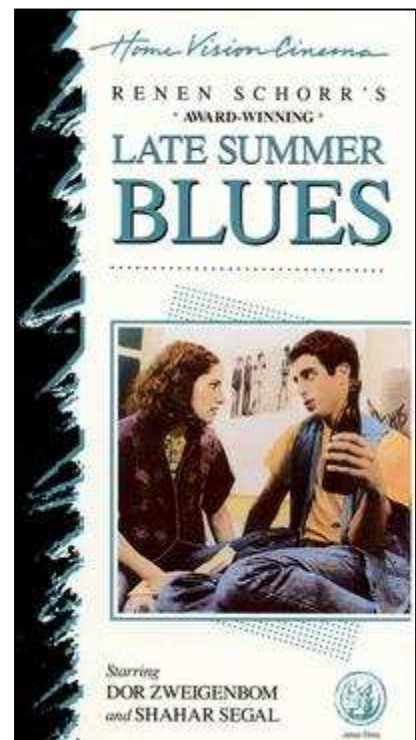


Fig.4.19 Poster of *Late Summer Blues*, Renen Shor, 1987

RS: I was a journalist in the IDF and I finished my draft during the Yom Kippur War, which was very critical for me and all my generation. At that time, Israeli cinema was dealing with the issue of the young people, talking with universal issues which could happen everywhere, like in the American Graffiti films. So I decided to put me and my friend on the screen, because the time of the draft was crucial for me. In this sense, it was a very autobiographical movie, dealing with a political issue, because it took me ten years to make it, and during this time exploded the Lebanon War.

FM: So how did the Lebanon War influence the screenplay of the movie?

RS: I started to interview people coming back from Lebanon to understand if the issue of the draft was still relevant and I realized that actually it was a lot...

The movie starts with a ceremony in a Tel Aviv high-school in order to commemorate a student's "death for the country" and deals with a group of Tel Aviv high-school students in their last summer before being drafted into the IDF. A group of close friends celebrate the bittersweet changes coming to their lives during the summer of their high-school graduation: the last days of innocence prior to joining the army during the 1970s War of Attrition with its daily death toll.

During these short and charged weeks they will try, individually and as a group, to dream, to fulfill their ambitions and to change reality by their graduation ceremony show. They all experience different conflicts about joining the army. Margo cannot join the army because he is diabetic. Medically unfit for service, he dreams of being an Israeli Fellini and documents all the gang on Super-8 film.

Arileh does not want to join the army because he is a pacifist: "the pacifist has no border with enemies beyond." He is a budding draft resister who sprays protest slogans in downtown Tel Aviv.

Mossi, is conflicted between joining an elite group in the army like his older brothers and joining the army band like his girlfriend Naomi. A gifted musician, serving in the combat unit would block his musical development for the time that he is in uniform. Forced to join a combat unit, he decides to marry her before joining the army.

Yossi, the class' first draftee, is the lovable innocent excited to train to be a paratrooper when he is killed just after three weeks of training.

When the friends get over their shock at the news of Yossi's death in a military accident, they decide to prepare a graduation performance in his honor and put on a very impressive "protest"

show, singing “We don’t want them to tell us what’s right and wrong. We don’t want wars, orphans, tombstones.”

Significantly, the film concludes with a sarcastic song rendering of Trumpeldor’s *Tov Lamut Bead Hartzenu* (“It’s Good to Die for Your Country”):

“Hey Jo what’s going on?

We miss you...Tell us, it was a good deal?

God is there?

Actually not, but at least I met Jimi Hendrix...see you soon guys!”

The film ends with Margo’s epilogue: If I wasn’t diabetic I could be in the army like all the others. Because of that, I decided to study in Paris, in order not to freak out, waiting for my friends, coming back from the army and talking only about the army. I spent three years studying Cinema in Paris, until, in 1973 the Yom Kippur War started and Naomi called me to tell me that Yossi lost his life in the Golan. His parent’s asked me if I still have the film of our last summer, when we were still so pure...”

As Neeman observes, this group portrait comes to grips with Israeli militarism and the spirit of the period, associated with the international student protest, the Vietnam War (Neeman, 2001, p.250).

This movie represents the beginning of a trend for *sarbanut*¹⁹ avoiding serving in the IDF, which at that time was almost nonexistent.

Renen Schorr based the story on his personal experiences, one of which was the *michtav hashministim*²⁰. On April 28, 1970 the twelve graders from Tel Aviv wrote a letter to Prime Minister Golda Meir disagreeing with the “occupation,” and they wanted her to end the “War of Attrition.”

After the movie was shown, other letters, similar to *michtav hashministim* were written, and the graffiti *Arileh Tzodek* (“Arileh is right”) appeared throughout the country.

Looking at Them and Seeing Us: Screening the Intifada

After 1967 Israelis found themselves in the clear position of occupying power. As Spivak puts it, “What were artists, primed historically to know themselves only as victims in a relation to neighbouring collectivises, to do? How were they to deal with the inversion of the imagery of

¹⁹ *Sarbanut* (in Hebrew סרבנות) literally “Recalcitrance” is used to describe Refusal movement to serve in the IDF.

²⁰ *Michtav hashministim* (in Hebrew: מכתב שמיניסטים) literally, “the letter of the 18 years old kids.”

David and Goliath when Palestinian children, armed only with slings, were confronting Israeli soldier armed to the teeth?" (Shohat, 1987, p.264).

According to Neeman, the 1980s conflict films embrace a subversive historiography and foreshadow the work of Israeli New Historians, who arrived on the scene in the late 1980s. The broadcast of this film broke a thirty-year silence in Israel about the *Nakba*²¹, the disaster inflicted by Jews on the Palestinians people in the 1948 war (Neeman, 2002, p.145).

As Neeman puts it, "each new film contributed to the dismantling of the Zionist master narrative and the creation of a new, cinematically articulated history of Zionism. The conflict films allocated in cinema a new space for both Palestinian trauma and Israeli guilt. [...] Unlike the master narrative in early Zionist cinema, in which the Jewish protagonist restores the land of the fertility, the hero in 1980s conflict films fails to carry out his mission" (Neeman, 2002, p. 149).

As we saw in the previous chapters, following the 1967 war Israeli collective identity was presented in a transformed state, in which the figure of the pioneer was ultimately superseded by the figure of the warrior man of arms. The identity and image of the collective group, central to the narrative of Israeli films, began to evolve accordingly. Tales of a company of warriors purportedly engaged in self-defense supplanted the idea of the pioneering group constantly engaged in constructing a socialist and egalitarian new society.

As Neeman argues, at the end of the twentieth century, more than a generation after the 1967 war and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the army's main concern has become the political and military suppression of Palestinian resistance: "On the level of mythic history, the quested who has sought to redeem the land from a desolate state now discovers that the land under the care of its indigenous inhabitants had not laid waste in the first place and that he himself now stands in the role of the waster. [...] Whereas early Zionist cinema had portrayed a Jewish protagonist as a pioneer conscious of his utopian mission, the 1980s conflict films disrupt this sense of *telos* and feature heroes who can only get a parallax view of reality" (Neeman, 2002, pp.152-153).

²¹ The 1948 Palestinian exodus, also known in Arabic as the *Nakba* (literally "disaster", "catastrophe", or "cataclysm"), occurred when more than 700.000 Palestinian Arabs left, fled or were expelled from their homes, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The events of 1948 are commemorated by Palestinians on the Nakba Day. It is generally commemorated on May 15, the day after the Gregorian calendar date for Israeli Independence Day (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*), celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel, which took place on May 14, 1948.

While early Zionist cinema portrayed a pastoral representation of a group of Jewish pioneers striving to “free the waters and revitalize the wasteland,” the 1980s conflict films portray these actions as utterly misplaced. The soldier becomes himself the ultimate cause of the suffering of both people. Thus, reading the conflict films from the vantage point of the suffering of both peoples.

As Shohat puts it, “rather than expressing any clear ideological perspective, they translate *Sabra* confusion and bewilderment at the realization of the existence of the Other, the Palestinian, as victim” (Shohat, 1987, p.240).

The political films of the 1980s, in fact, deviate dramatically from the traditional representation of the Israeli/Arab conflict by focusing more on the Palestinian dimension of that conflict. The war-genre schema that mediated most of the heroic films, and which was intrinsic to the David/Goliath perspective, was no longer suitable at a time when the Jewish side wields disproportionate power in relation to the Palestinian, as opposed to the venerable tiny-Israel-mighty-Arabs trope. According to Shohat, the Arab here is no longer an anonymous enemy but rather a Palestinian fighting for their national rights and, simultaneously, the object of desire within the love story. The films also grant Palestinian characters close-up and point of view shots that foster emotional identification with them (Shohat, 1987, pp.244-245).

One of the first movies to deal with the Occupation was *A Very Narrow Bridge* (*Gesher Tsar Meod*, fig.4.20), made in 1985 by Nissim Dayan.

The film was the first Israeli feature to be shot in the Occupied Territories. As Shohat describes, the IDF authorities originally refused to permit a production on the West Bank and only at the last minute did Haim Hefer, the co-scriptwriter, convince some old friends from his *Palmach* days, presently in power, that whatever the problems in the script, it was still far from



Fig.4.20 Poster of *A Very Narrow Bridge*, Nissim Dayan, 1985

the reality. The production company was even obliged to buy uniform and guns from the same source that supplies the IDF, even though American film productions were usually given the equipment, and often more sophisticated equipment, such as tanks (Shohat, 1987, pp.242-243).

The script was based on “The Woman from Ramallah”, a short story written in 1971 by Haim Hefer, one of Israel’s most well-known writers of the *Palmach* generation. In the cinematic adaptation, Benny, is sent to do his reserve duty as a prosecutor for the civil administration in the occupied West Bank of the 1980s.

Stoned by a group of children while driving through Ramallah, Benny leaps out of his car and pursues them into their school. Upon opening the door of the school library he comes face-to-face with Laila, the school librarian from a prominent Christian Palestinian family in Ramallah, who tells him to keep his hands off the boys.

Their love grows against a background of stone-throwing and terrorism, until they become obsessed with something which intellectually they know is dangerous and foolish, but which emotionally they can no longer control.

The movie importantly reflects the intolerance of both Jewish and Arab communities that cannot condone a serious relationship between an Arab woman and a Jewish man.

As Kronish points out, Benny’s love for Laila causes a rift in his family and a crisis in his relations with the IDF unit. At the same time, Leila is dismissed from her job as librarian in a nearby refugee camp school, and her life is threatened because of the shame she has brought on her family (Kronish, 1996, p. 133).

Benny and Laila are unable to struggle against such barriers and the film ends with the lovers being forced to separate.

In fact Laila’s brother, Tony, a PLO fighter, does not murder his sister but tells her to escape to Jordan. Laila takes the bus from the Allenby Bridge to Jordan.

According to the Film Studies scholar Yosefa Loshitzky, the use of the love-story formula is intimately related to the politics and ethics of representing the Israeli occupation. In the final scene of the film Benny cries to Laila before she boards the bus crossing the Allenby Bridge into Jordan: “I have nowhere to go.” Ironically, then, the occupier within this ideological framework is represented as the victim: “He has no place to go back to. The military has expelled him, he has no home, he has nothing, and now his love is also being taken away” (Loshitzky, 2001, p.134).

As Loshitzky argues, the movie is a fantasized version of the Israeli occupation that implicitly suggests that even the toughest oppressor has a human face, and that *l'amour fou* can transcend political reality.

The story of the movie, in fact, is told from the point of view of Benny, the occupier, and the camera constantly follows him. As Loshitzky puts it, “from a postcolonial perspective the love story can be seen as an expression of the relationship between the occupier and the occupied, the colonizer and the colonized. The Zionist Israeli occupier colonizes not only the land but the natives as well by entering their women. [...] His attitude toward Laila epitomizes the contradictions inherent in the ideology of ‘enlightened occupation.’ He encourages her to liberate herself from the two principles that dominate the patriarchal codes of Arab society: family honor, which needs to be maintained by women, and the modesty that symbolizes the purity of women. The film, therefore, despite its call for tolerance and love between the two peoples, fixes the woman in a double state of occupation” (Loshitzky, 2001, pp. 135-136).

In 1986, another movie follows the occupation not from the perspective of the occupied but rather from that one of the “enlightened” occupier: *The Smile of the lamb* (*Hiukh Ha Gdu*), by Shimon Dotan. According to Shohat, in fact, both on the narrative level and on the image track, it is the occupier protagonist who forms the dynamic force, who generates and focalizes the narrative, and it is he whom the camera obediently follows, even when he walks through Palestinian towns (Shohat, 1987, p. 255).

Based on David Grossman’s novel, *The Smile of the lamb*, the film examines a clash between three strong personalities in a political triangle on the West Bank: Kratzman, the IDF Governor of the West Bank; Kratzman’s best friend, Uri, an IDF surgeon, very liberal in his political beliefs and Hilmi, an eccentric Arab old man who embodies Arab folk wisdom and lives in a cave in the mountain near a village on the West Bank.

At the beginning of the movie, Kratzman and Uri publicly announce their plans to start a medical clinic in an occupied village for the benefit of its Palestinians inhabitants. But instead, both become involved in a violent confrontation with the villagers, in particular with Hilmi.

When the peasants express their resistance by throwing a donkey's carcass on the spot where the clinic is to be built, the military governor retaliates brutally, and, as a result, Yazdi, a PLO terrorist and the adopted son of Hilmi, is killed.

The film depicts many complicated political and emotional issues. Kratzman is a hard-liner who sees Arab-Jewish relations on the West Bank against the memory of the Holocaust. He is compared and contrasted with his friend Uri, who tries to push him towards enlightened rule of the area, and who eventually discovers that Kratzman is having an affair with his wife. When Yazdi, gets killed, Hilmi becomes politically roused, and with Uri he develops a plan to force the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank.

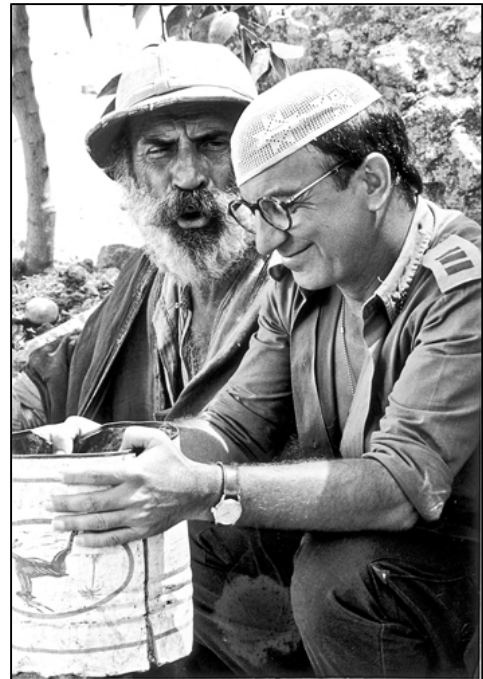


Fig. 4.21 Hilmi and Uri in a frame of *The Smile of the lamb*, Shimon Dotan, 1986

The film revolves around the friendship between Uri and Hilmi (fig. 4.21), which born after Hilmi kidnap Uri and threatens to kill him if the IDF do not withdraw from the occupied territories.

As Shohat observes, fantastic stories from Hilmi's past, such as the hunting of lions in Mandate Palestine, suggest a long historical presence prior to the establishment of Israel and the present state of occupation (Shohat, 1987, p.247).

On the other side, the character of the doctor becomes an example of tolerance and humanity. As Shohat puts it: "it is his poetic sensibility of Uri that makes possible his friendship with the eccentric Palestinian Hilmi. The marginality of Uri, who professes faith in Liberal humanism and in an oxymoronic 'enlightened occupation' is romantically allied with that of a simple land born Palestinian" (Shohat, 1987, p.254).

Like the Palestinian, Uri is oppressed by the military government, and at the end of the movie, the protagonist, the believer in non-violence, is himself sacrificed on the altar of violence. In fact, the ensuing confrontation between Hilmi and Kratzman, which Uri finds himself caught in the middle of, ends in tragedy.

Grossman in the novel refers to the protagonist's "lamb's smile" a synecdoche for the young, harmless person who dreams of practicing "enlightened occupation" and is thus trapped between the Palestinian struggle for liberation and Israeli military rule.

As Shohat puts it, "we encounter here the symptoms of acute discomfort with the very idea of a Jewish victimizer. [...] A predisposition to a discourse of victimization leads to films whose narrative and cinematic codes present the *Sabras* as the central victims of the situation. The lament, therefore, is not primarily for the national oppression of the Palestinian people but rather for the *Sabras*' own torment, as passively innocent Isaacs to be sacrificed in fear and trembling, on the altar of Abrahamic (nationalist) faith" (Shohat, 1987, p.265).

Only after the 1987 and with the outbreak of the Intifada, Israeli filmmakers became much more critical, starting to look at the past in order to talk about the present.

In 1987 Uri Barbash looked back at the time of the Zionist dream of the first settlers in *Unsettled land: Once We Were Dreamers* (*Ha Holmim*, fig. 4.22).

Set in 1919, a group of pioneers who have settled in the Sinai Desert aspire to build a new society, but see their dream shattered in the face of ideological tension within the group and hostility from nearby Arab villagers. An attempt to build trust with their neighbors fails and the drama ends bloodshed.

As Neeman observes, despite being like a remake of the two classical Zionist feature films, *Sabra* (Alexander Ford, 1933) and *They were Ten* (Baruch Dienar, 1960), the film represents a complete reversal of the typical Zionist narrative.

The land is not a wasteland: on the contrary, it looks green and is inhabited. The country does not suffer from drought: it is the, sometimes stormy, rainy season.

Unlike the representation of the Arab *mukhtar* in *Sabra* as wicked and corrupt, in this remake the young sheikh handles the complicated relation between himself and his new Jewish neighbors with dignity and political

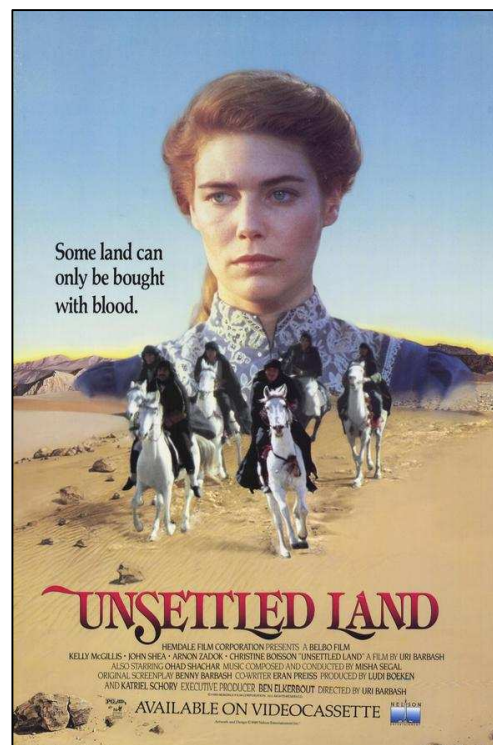


Fig.4.22 Uri Barbash, *Unsettled land: Once We Were Dreamers*, 1987

moderation.

The ensuing burst of violence between the Jewish pioneers and the Palestinians peasants, which historically brought disaster on the Palestinians, is explained in the film by means of a polyphonic commentary, voices of different members of the commune who describe, each in turn, their failure to grasp the reality of their life.

All the narrative, as represented in *Unsettled Land*, communicates a sense of uncertainty about the purpose of the pioneers' mission, as if the arrival in the land was an erroneous act and the quest for a Jewish homeland in Palestine a misplaced venture (Neeman, 2002, p.151).

Regarding the representation of the *ethnoscape*, at the end of the movie, like in *Sabra* and in *They were Ten*, the desert is blooming, but this time the voiceover tells us that if “once we were dreamers, in order to realize our dream we made a compromise with them.”

In this critical movie, as Neeman puts it, “the narrative substitutes the Zionist utopia of the earlier films with a dystopic vision, as its protagonist fail to execute the Zionist utopia project and either leave or die” (Neeman, 2001, p. 270).

In this sense, the dystopic representation of the Zionist dream becomes a metaphor for the time of the Intifada, which Barbash²² deals with directly in 1989 in *One of Us* (*Echad Mi Shelanu*, fig.4.23).

The story takes place during the First Intifada and deals with the cover-up of the murder of a Palestinian detainee at an Israeli military base on the West Bank, who has been reportedly shot while escaping.

Rafi, an IDF investigator, is sent by headquarters to investigate an elite paratroop unit charged with the murder of the Palestinian who was suspected of ambushing and killing an officer of the unit.

When he gets to the West Bank military camp to investigate, he finds that Adir, the officer who was murdered, was a friend from training days in the



Fig. 4.23 Poster of *One of Us*, Uri Barbash, 1989

²² The screenplay was written by the director's brother, Benny Barbash, a peace activist and playwright.

paratroopers. Furthermore, Yotam, another officer, another friend of theirs from training days in the paratroopers, openly admits to killing the suspect for "attempting to escape interrogation".

It becomes apparent, however, that the terrorist did not try to escape. Rather, he was tortured and killed in revenge for having murdered their friend from the days when the three of them served together during the basic training.

As Yosef observes, the film is divided into two parts. The first part is a flashback to the bonding and solidarity that the three friends formed during basic training, focusing on an incident in which Rafa photographed their commander defecating in the bushes. Discovering the humiliating photos, the commander demands the negatives and the identity of the anonymous photographer. The soldiers support Rafi and are willing to accept collective punishment. But soon the male solidarity cracks and Rafi is rejected from the group and asked to turn himself in, although nobody asks him to do this directly.

The case ends with an anonymous denunciation, and Rafi, after being abused by the commander, requests to be transferred to another unit.

The second part of the film focuses on Rafi's investigation of the death of the Palestinian, who apparently was tortured and killed in revenge for the death of Adir (Yosef, 2004, p.72).

A lot of pressure is put on Rafi to close the investigation and to leave the base, and he is conflicted between his loyalty to Yotam as well as to the memory of their friend and his duty to expose the truth.

As the details of the murder and the ensuing cover-up come to light, a clash arises between Yotam and Rafi. In the end the truth comes out, hurting all parties involved.

As Neeman puts it, "the substitution of self-sacrifice for the homeland with the self-sacrifice for Palestine creates an antinomy which unsettles the solidarity between fellow Israeli soldiers" (Neeman, 1993, p.142).

The movie shows a process of demystification where solidarity between fellow Israeli soldiers collapses as soon as a reified self-sacrifice of an Israeli soldier, the one who was killed in the ambush and whose death is commemorated during the investigation, is presented on a par with the reified self-sacrifice of a Palestinian fighter. Rafi, disillusioned, tears away from his total reality, the group of his fellow fighters, and thus faces isolation.

As Neeman argues, this nihilistic allegory explored the evils of occupation and the outer edges of the army ethos, deconstructing its motto “one for all and all for one,” and asserting the moral stance of the individual over the collective (Neeman, 2001, p. 256).

The issue of the Intifada and the representation of the point of view of the Other is metaphorically represented in another very critical and poetic movie of 1988: *Avanti Popolo*, by Rafi Bucai (fig.4.24).

Set in 1967 at the time of the Six Day War, this surreal tragic comedy stands out among the 1980s Israeli-Palestinian conflict films, in its universalist pacifism and leanings toward the absurd.

As Neeman argues, even though its protagonists are not Palestinians (significantly, the actors portraying them are Israeli-Palestinians) and the narrative goes back two decades, it joins other films on the period in advocating the subjectivity of the Other and in deconstructing the heroic-nationalist narrative (Neeman, 2001, p.249).

The movie describes the surreal journey of two Egyptian soldiers, Hassan and Khalid, as they're trying desperately to find their way back to the Suez Canal on their way home.

On the long way home, the movie comprises a series of surreal episodes and encounters along the journey.

Searching for water, they come across a deserted U.N. jeep, where these two Muslims, who have never tasted alcohol before, discover two bottles of whisky. Inebriated for much of the rest of the film, their journey becomes increasingly surreal. When they come across an Israeli patrol, using the only language they have in common, the language of theater, Khalid, a reserve soldier whose civilian vocation is the theater, and whose biggest role so far was that of Shakespeare's Shylock, recites one of the famous monologues from the *Merchant of Venice*, starting with the line “I am a Jew, has not a Jew's eyes?” and ending with the line “If you poison us, do we not die?”

When asked by a soldier “What the fuck's he saying?” the patrol leader retorts: “He got the roles mixed up.”



Fig. 4.24 Poster of *Avanti Popolo*, Rafi Bucai, 1988

In this very critical scene, as Neeman puts it, “the Jews, who excelled in the art of asking questions in the great Talmudic tradition, may have lost their gift, while their Arab rivals have adopted it successfully” (Neeman, 1993, p.128). With this utilisation of the Shakespeare monologue, the director makes a plea for mutual self-expression and understanding, which reaches its climax during the scene where Egyptians and Israelis march along in the desert twilight singing *Avanti Popolo*²³ (fig.4.25).



Fig. 4.25 Frame of *Avanti Popolo*, Rafi Bucai, 1988

Finally they reach the Suez Canal only to be shot dead by bullets coming from both banks.

As Kronish argues, the tragic ending has the two Arabs symbolically caught between bullets from both sides in the conflict, mistakenly hunted by Israeli troops for having caused the death of the Israelis who are caught in the minefield, and simultaneously shot at by their own troops as they approach the Suez Canal (Kronish, 1996, p. 128).

In the movie, in fact, both the Israeli and the Arab soldiers are portrayed as victims of war. They are both individuals who at times think of themselves and at times think of others, including the enemy.

However, the Israeli soldier is portrayed negatively; while once he was portrayed as a compassionate fighter with a mission and a purpose, now he unsuccessfully tries to shoot the Egyptians away as if they were pesky dogs.

The way the Arab soldier is portrayed in the movie is different from the way he is portrayed in the previous ones. If until now he has been portrayed as anonymous, one among many, a terrorist, aggressive, in this movie the Arab is portrayed as an individual with talent and desires, and he is shown together with the Israeli as equal, singing the song *Avanti Popolo* that calls the people to revolt and praises the red flag which represents socialism and equality.

²³ *Bandiera Rossa* (literally in Italian “red flag”), often also called *Avanti Popolo* for its first lines, is one of the most famous songs of the Italian Labor movement. It glorifies the red flag, symbol of the socialist and later communist movement. The text was written by Carlo Tuzzi in 1908 and the melody is taken from two Lombardian folk songs.

In the movie, both, Israelis and Egyptians sing it without understanding what it means. They are both soldiers in the desert, victims of the politicians.

As in *Once We Were Dreamers*, in *Avanti Popolo* the deconstruction of Israeli History also becomes a metaphor for talking about the present of the Intifada.

Only in 1989 did Yitzhak Yeshurun also try to deal directly with the Intifada in the film *Green Fields* (*Sadot Yerukim*, fig. 4.26).

As Neeman argues, this dystopian psycho-drama, the first set against the backdrop of the Intifada in the occupied territories of the West Bank, focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and challenges the audience

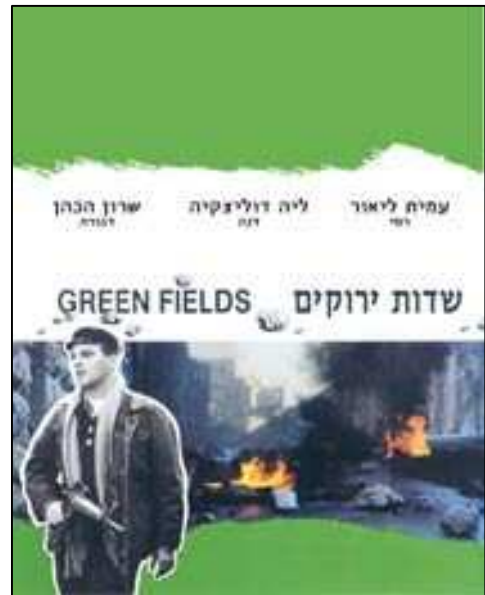


Fig.4.26 Poster of *Green Fields*, Yitzhak Yeshurun, 1989

to face the tragic outcome of their compliance with the moral corruption instigated by the occupation (Neeman, 2001, p.306).

The movie tells the story of a new recruit and his family driving an army van to a base in the West Bank where the graduation ceremony for IDF basic training is about to take place.

The already tense Israeli family reunion turns into a nightmare when, the small group becomes lost and stuck somewhere in a village in the West Bank under military curfew.

As a metaphor for the entire country, all three generations of men in this Israeli family are caught in the middle of the Intifada through a series of errors. The grandfather represents a generation which is slowly disappearing, and he stands by and does not see or understand what is happening around him. The generation of the middle-aged father, which left Israel a few years ago and looks like a tourist, has left the responsibility for dealing with the Intifada in the hands of the young. However, he proceeds mistakenly to murder the young Arab, for no real reason except that he is angered. The young and skinny soldier, represented not at all as macho, feels guilty for not having prevented the murder.

As Kronish puts it, “according to the filmmaker, this is the story of the Intifada: there are Israelis who either do not care or, if they do, are powerless to stop the killing, which is often being perpetrated not by policy and decision making, but by anger and frustration” (Kronish, 1996, p. 116).

After many trials and tribulations, and escapes from one violent confrontation with the Palestinian villagers to another, the young soldier hands over his rifle to his frenzied father who, unable to control his furor, kills an innocent Palestinian. Thus, the misplaced journey of the Israelis in the Palestinian “green fields” brings about death to the innocent.

Regarding the representation of the *ethnoscape*, as indicated by the film’s title, the area looks green, unlike, as Neeman puts it, “early Zionist cinema in which land inhabited by Arabs was often represented as arid and uncultivated and destined to be revitalized by the Jewish pioneers” (Neeman, 1993, p.127).

Notwithstanding this post-Zionist and critical point of view of the filmmaker, the representation of the Israeliness and of the Other in this movie is still a very dichotomic one, not really showing the point of view of the Other but just using it in order to talk about himself.

The first Israeli movie to try to deal with the time of the Intifada and from a “cross bordering” point of view is *Fictitious Marriage* (*Nisuim Fictivim*, fig. 4.27), directed by Heim Bouzaglo in 1988.

The movie tells the story of Eldad, an Arabic teacher, married with two children, who is having a mid-life crisis. Supposedly going on a trip to New York, he leaves his family in Jerusalem and takes a taxi to the airport, where he changes his mind at the last minute, even leaving his luggage there, a representation of all the “baggage” of life experience which he wants to leave behind.

Because we are in the middle of the Intifada, airport security immediately checks the abandoned luggage, discovering only the Bible, an IDF uniform and *garinim*²⁴ inside, a quintessential representation of Israeliness.

Instead of going home to Jerusalem, he disguises himself and takes a room in the Hotel California, a cheap hotel in Tel Aviv.

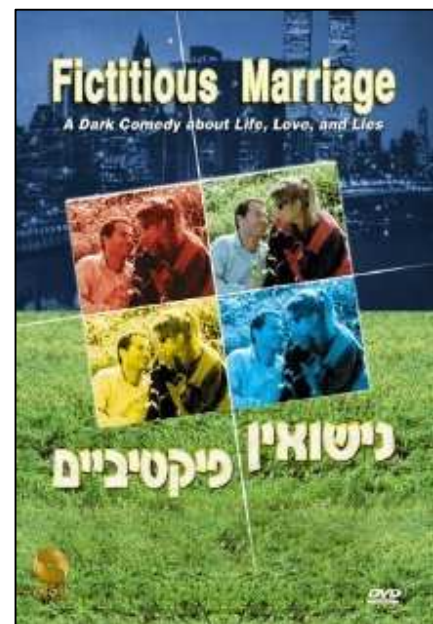


Fig.4.27 Poster of *Fictitious Marriage*, Heim Bouzaglo in 1988.

²⁴ *Garinim* (in Hebrew גרעינים) literally “seeds” but is used in general in order to describe sunflower seeds, the typical Israeli snack food.

At the hotel he passes as an American tourist from New York and has an affair with a naive receptionist who he makes believe he will marry so she can go to America with him and get a working visa there.

Day by day, Eldad starts to change his identity and experiments with different roles and relationships.

One day he is picked up by Palestinian construction workers and becomes one of them, pretending to be mute.

Changing his identity entirely, he forms a warm relationship with the other Arab workers, and one of them even invites him home to Gaza.

Walking in the streets of Gaza during the time of the Intifada, suddenly he finds himself on the “other side,” looking at the IDF soldiers as enemies, even though he is also one of them, as we can see in the very powerful scene when he has a *dejavu* of his personal experience as a soldier in Gaza.

On their return from Gaza, they take an old tire to hang near the construction site for the Jewish children play on. Eldad’s basic distrust of his fellow Arab workers, however, leads him to break out of his role and shout a warning to the children, for fear that the tire might contain a bomb. It immediately becomes apparent, however, that there had been no intention to hurt anyone.

The film is cyclical, it starts with a presumed bomb, ends with another presumed one, both representing Israeli paranoia because of the Intifada.

After this episode Eldad returns home, having failed in his attempt to build a truly trusting relationship with the Arabs. However, as Kronish observes, there is one last visual sign of hope (Kronish, 1996, p. 128).

During all the days that Eldad spent with the Arabs workers, he would often fall over, since he was unable to crouch comfortably as they sat around talking and eating. Now, sitting in his living room, gazing at his children, Eldad sees his little boy comfortably crouching down in the position which Eldad finds difficult.

The film’s final statement seems to be that only by crossing the lines and reversing roles can one unveil the mystification of the Other. As Neeman puts it, “this dystopian allegory of Israeli-Palestinian conflict focuses on the issue of identity *vis-à-vis* the occupation. The protagonist resigns his identity by assuming muteness, while the Palestinian workers regain their voice which had been appropriated by the Israelis” (Neeman, 2001, p.300).

As Bouzaglo told me when I met him on May 5, 2011, at Café *Bacio* in Tel Aviv: “Before the Lebanon War, the Arabs in the movies were just covered under the *Keffiyeh* or the moustaches. Then there was *Avanti Popolo*, which changed the history of Israeli cinema.”

Breaking the dichotomy of “them” and “us,” Palestinians and Israeli, East and West, victim and oppressor, with *Fictitious Marriage* Bousaglo offers the possibility of a “crossing border” identity, an identity “in-between”, as Bhabha puts it (Bhabha, 1990, 1994).

Another movie of this time which tried to explore the richness and the complexity of identity in war-time is *Cup Final* (*Gemar Gavia*, fig. 4.28), directed in 1991 by Eran Riklis.

Returning to the time of the Lebanon War, the movie tells the story of Cohen, an owner of a fashion shop, who is about to fly to Spain for the final of the 1982 FIFA World Cup, when he receives a reserve duty call to Lebanon. When his patrol encounters a Palestinian ambush, he is taken prisoner by PLO fighters.

Ironically, he and his capturers share the love of soccer and both support the Italian team. This common love helps break down the barriers of nationalism and the historical baggage that the two carry. A kind of alliance is forged between the two men, and their relationship heads for a tragic ending as the Italian team, along with the goal scoring Paolo Rossi, make their march toward winning the World Cup.

As Neeman argues, this film employs the Lebanon War as a topic, as well as a backdrop, for exploring the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, here turning from open hostility to familiarity and even comradeship that is born of a common enthusiasm for soccer, granting identity and space to the Other negotiating a dialogue (Neeman, 2001, p.263).

As in *The Smile of the Lamb*, *Avanti Popolo* and *Fictitious Marriage*, in this movie the Arabs are the main protagonists.

As Gertz observes, they propel the plot toward its goal and, as the plot begins, are superior to the Israelis. The Palestinians are well educated and nationally conscious,



Fig. 4.28, Postwer of *Cup Final*, Eran Riklis, 1991

they have first names; in contrast, the Israelis are referred to by their last names, and their national attitudes and the goals of their struggle are not clear.

Left behind to represent the Israelis is Cohen, who, by deliberately minimizing his contribution to the war, personifies the anti-warrior “new Israeli.”

Cup final not only prefers the Palestinian protagonists over the Israeli, but also creates an identity between the two, as in *Avanti Popolo*, and reverses their positions and roles, as in *Fictitious Marriage*.

Israelis and Palestinians who share an interest are capable of forming a relationship and marching together toward one goal. However, in *Cup Final*, as in the other films, the goal is not attained.

The Palestinians perish before they reach Beirut, as they do before they reach the Suez Canal in *Avanti Popolo*. The “bad ending” belongs to the pessimistic ideological message of films in this genre, and its purpose is to attest to the gap between the dream on the screen and the political realities of the time (Gertz, 1999, p. 161).

Although the political films do not lead their protagonist to the fulfillment of the joint goal assigned to them, they set forth a no-man’s land in which such a goal can be attained, what Gertz calls “the surreal zone of art, games, and fantasy.” Moments of song and drama cause Egyptian and Israeli soldiers to fraternize in *Avanti Popolo*; enchanted legends serve at the backdrop of an Israeli-Palestinian alliance in *The Smile of the Lamb*, and a football game brings the sides together in *Cup Final* (Gertz, 1999, p. 162).

Flashes from the Past: Dealing with the Physical and Psychological after-Effects of War

The Vietnam War on the Hollywood screen greatly influenced the Israeli cinema of the 1980s, particularly in the way it deals with and represents post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)²⁵.

²⁵ Post-traumatic stress disorder also known as PTSD, is a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event that results in psychological trauma. This event may involve the threat of death to oneself or to someone else. Diagnostic symptoms for PTSD include re-experiencing the original trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and increased arousal – such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger, and hyper vigilance. Schnurr, Lunney, and Sengupta identified specific risk factors for the development of PTSD in Vietnam veterans (2004, pp. 85–95).

For the first time on the Israeli screen, the soldier is shown as physically and psychologically traumatized.

Regarding the representation of the *bodyscape*, as Yosef points out, these films focus obsessively and sometimes erotically on the physical and psychic mutilation of the soldier who fails to aspire to master positions of the dominant masculinity. By presenting this failure, the military films of the 1980s mark a crisis in Israeli male subjectivity that took place after the 1973 War and accelerated due to traumatic events, such as the War in Lebanon and the Intifada (Yosef, 2004, p.53).

The subject of psychological damage caused by wartime experiences has been tackled in several Israeli feature films after the Lebanon War. Some of them were set not only in the time of the Lebanon War, but, as a result of cinematic adaption of former Israeli novels, also the time of Yom Kippur and even at the time of the War the Independence, in order to deconstruct the heroic and stereotypical representation of the *Sabra*.

One of these movies is the cinematic adaption of Yoram Kaniuk's best-selling novel from 1968, *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (*Himmo, Melech Yerushalaim*, fig.4.29), directed by Amos Gutman in 1987.

Set in Jerusalem in 1948 during the War of Independence, this is the story of a young and beautiful volunteer nurse, Hamutal, and the enigmatic Himmo, the mortally wounded soldier she becomes fascinated with. Himmo, who was once called the "King of Jerusalem" because of his easy charm and his way with the women, now is a blind multiple amputee who cannot speak or move.

The movie, which is a sensitive study of wounded men whose psychological needs are greater than their physical ones, focuses on Hamutal, who volunteers to work at a temporary hospital which has been established in a Jerusalem catholic monastery during the siege of the city. She is assigned to work in the monastery's belfry, which houses the ward of the most seriously wounded soldiers.

Hamutal dedicates most of her attentions to Himmo, who has been the most gruesomely maimed. When she gradually falls

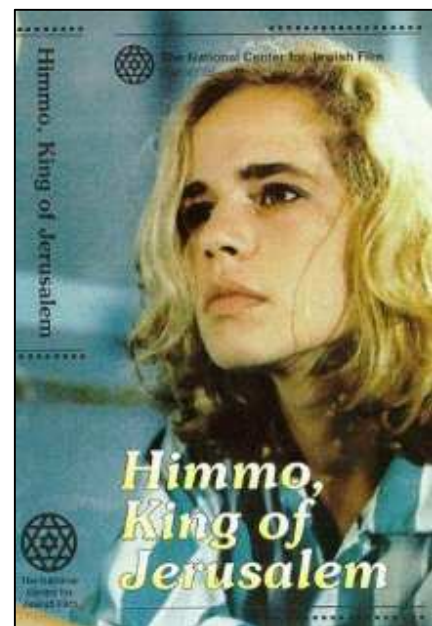


Fig.4.29, Poster of *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*, Amos Gutman, 1987

in love with him, the others in the ward begin to feel neglected and jealous of her favors, and their battle for life becomes a battle against Himmo.

Gradually, channeled by circumstances, the bond between the nurse and the wounded soldier deviates from *eros* to *thanatos*, with Himmo continuously asking Hamutal to kill him in order to end his physical and psychological pain.

As the State of Israel is declared and the siege on Jerusalem is lifted, Hamutal gives Himmo a lethal injection and rings the bells of the monastery.

According to Neeman, Kaniuk's allegory about the sacrifice of the Messiah for the new-born state becomes in Gutman's adaption a meditation on *eros* and *thanatos*, rejecting heroic values and developing his atheistic interests (Neeman, 2001, p.278).

Another movie shot at the time of the Lebanon War, but still dealing with the PTSD of the Yom Kippur War is *Don't give me a damn* (*Lo Sam Zayin*, fig.4.30), based on a novel by Dan Ben Amotz from 1973 and directed by Shmuel Iberman in 1987.

The movie tells the story of Rafi, a Tel Aviv hunk, wounded in the stomach in a shootout with a terrorist, in a terrible incident.

After his emergency treatment in hospital he is sent to a rehabilitation unit, where it soon becomes clear that he will never be able to walk again.

Defining himself as "half man and half dead", he refuses to see his girlfriend Nira and turns his anger and jealousy against his friend, Yigal, who is healthy and whole. Shortly afterwards, Yigal is killed in the line of duty.

The film combines the difficulties of dealing with both physical and psychological trauma, and examines the problems of returning to life and love after being crippled in a military action.

Rafi, who suddenly must try to learn to cope with a life which is vastly different from anything he ever imagined, at first has nothing but bitterness, then slowly becomes obsessed with cripples and prostheses, photographing them and decorating his room with the pictures.

According to Neeman, in this drama, focusing on post-traumatic experiences and shattered masculinity, courage and

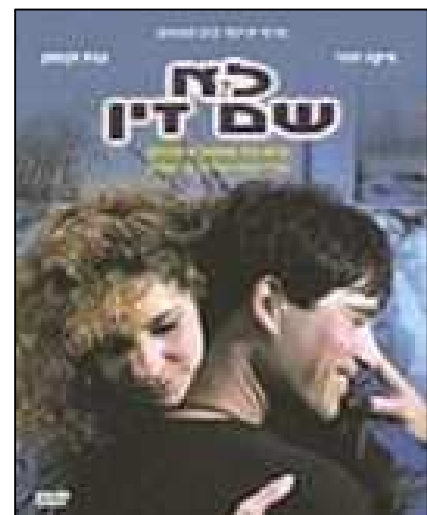


Fig.4.30 Poster of *Don't Give Me a Damn*, Shmuel Iberman, 1987.

self-sacrifice are refuted and subverted through the rhetoric of an angry and vulnerable post-Yom Kippur War *Sabra* (Neeman, 2001, p.287).

Another movie focusing on guilt and self reproach rejecting the ethos of heroic self – sacrifice is *Shellshock* (*Betzilo Shel Helem Krav*, fig.4.31), directed in 1988, by Yoel Sharon. The director himself, badly wounded during the Yom Kippur War, has simultaneously made a film about his own story, trying to recall certain moments of his life which were missing from his memory.

Sharon graduated with a degree in photography from the Haifa Technion. At the outset of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he rushed back from the London International Film School to join his paratroop unit. On the last day of the war his unit, fighting at the city of Suez, was wiped out by an Egyptian ambush. Sharon was badly wounded in the spine and both his legs were paralyzed. Only two others survived the ambush and, as a result, both suffered from shell shock.

Shellshock, exploring the psychological problems of returning to friends, family and work in the aftermath of war, is dedicated to Sharon's paratroop unit, to all those who fell in the Yom Kippur War, to the wounded, and to those who suffered from psychological problems as a result of the war.

The movie tells the emotional story of Micha and Gideon who are assigned to share a room in a military hospital. Both of them are not able to sleep during the night, spending most of the time not in their bed, but wiggling on the floor, which for both of them represents the field of war. As Neeman argues, the obsession with recuperating the moment of death unfolds in this film in a series of death-re-experiencing scenes (Neeman, 1993, p.141).

However, as Kronish observes, they are two very different men: one is a young lieutenant in the reserves, the other a paratroop brigade colonel whose unit was mistakenly wiped out by Israeli jets. One cannot



Fig.4.31 Poster of *Shellshock*, Yoel Sharon, 1988

remember, the other one cannot forget. The two become close friends and try to help each other through difficult moments when they are overcome by their fears and guilt (Kronish, 1996, p. 113).

Micha, a fashion photographer recalls that he was taking pictures of his friends around their troop carrier, shortly before the ceasefire was to come in to effect, when a bomb fell and destroyed his entire tank unit. He is unable, however, to remember the important events that followed, even after developing the pictures that were in the camera, looking for a clue that might help him to recall.

Gideon lives with haunting memories of Israeli phantom jets mistakenly bombing his position and wiping out his brigade. He is afraid to leave his hospital room and shakes every time he hears planes overhead. As he slowly recovers, he finds it difficult to return to normal life, especially since a fellow officer has decided that he is not fit to restart commanding a patrol brigade. Looking for a chance to prove his heroism, arresting terrorist who are holding children hostage in a local school, as he is first to storm the school, he is killed.

The movie ends with Micha going back to his studio, shooting some models in order to recreate the last day of the war, just before the explosion. Then Micha finally understands what has eluded him for so long. He realizes that he killed his friend who was trying to quiet his moaning as enemy troops looked in on their burning troop carrier.

Having to deal with the PTSD, suddenly the soldier on the Israeli screen is not represented as a murderer, as we can see also in another movie dealing with the memory of shell shocked soldiers: *Burning Memory* (*Resissim*, fig.4.32), directed by Yossi Zommer in 1989.

The film opens with a hellish scene of destruction, smoldering metal, dead bodies, scattered weapons, and mud. Gary, a reserve soldier, who survived the Lebanon War, walks among the bodies.

The film is the story of this soldier and his fears, his haunting memories of this final battle, his guilt for what he did and what he did not do to save his friend Hillel, his slow rehabilitation in an army clinic, and his struggle to resume his life.

Admitted to a rehabilitation centre for a three-week therapy program, Gary undergoes group therapy with other shell shocked soldiers, in therapeutic workshops he disrupts collective solidarity among fellow combatants.

Each of the shell-shocked soldiers verbally provokes his fellow fighters to re-experience the moment of death. The therapeutic journey is a land of dead ends where the most fragile one among them commits suicide by hanging himself in the shower next door.

In a series of flashback reconstructing the battle, as Neeman argues, the film makes an explicit anti-military statement, thus echoing the general mood in Israel following the Lebanon War (Neeman, 2001, p.304).

As Kronish observes, in the movie there is also an inherent criticism of the Israeli military.

The patients, in fact, are confined to a military hospital where they are part of a program for the treatment of shell shock. They are also finding it hard to accept the psychiatrist who is hassled by his superiors because there are problems in his unit and, not surprisingly, his limited three-week program does not yield miraculous results. It seems as if the military leadership is still locked into believing some of the heroic myths of “the good old days” and has trouble coping with the dreadful traumas inflicted by war (Kronish, 1996, p. 114-115). The film was based on personal stories of soldiers who suffered during the Yom Kippur War and later during the War in Lebanon, and on the experiences of director Yossi Sommer who served as a paramedic during the War in Lebanon.

According to Neeman, this feature, joining the other films of the 1980s in focusing on post-traumatic experiences after combat, foregrounds a strong nihilistic mood and portrays a psychologically wounded *Sabra* who questions his identity as a soldier and as a man (Neeman, 2001, p.304).

The CNN Effect the Feeling of Emptiness of the Nineties

As Livingston puts it, “advances in communication technology have created a capacity to broadcast live from anywhere on Earth. [...] It is this global, real-time quality to contemporary media that separates the ‘CNN effect’ from earlier media effects on foreign policy” (Livingston, 1997, p.1).



Fig.4.32 Poster of *Burning Memory*, Yossi Zommer, 1989

The technological development of the 1990s in global communication had a lot influence in Israeli everyday life and in representation of Israelis on the screen.

All the key events of the 1990s, from the involvement of Israel in the Gulf War²⁶, to Rabin's murder, were broadcast in the real time.

In particular, the coverage of the Gulf War was new in its instantaneousness. Throughout the war, footage of incoming missiles was broadcast almost immediately.

The media coverage of the Gulf War was heavily televised. For the first time people all over the world were able to watch live pictures of missiles hitting their targets and fighters taking off from aircraft carriers.

In the United States, the "big three" network anchors led the network news coverage of the war: ABC, CBS, and NBC were anchoring their evening newscasts when air strikes began on January 1991.

Still, it was CNN which gained the most popularity for their coverage, and indeed its wartime coverage is often cited as one of the landmark events in the development of the network.

When the telephones of all of the other Western TV correspondents went dead during the bombing, CNN was the only service able to provide live reporting.

Also, alternative media outlets provided views in opposition to the Gulf War. Deep Dish Television compiled segments from independent producers in the U.S. and abroad, and produced a ten hour series that was distributed internationally, called *The Gulf Crisis TV Project*.

In San Francisco, as a local example, Paper Tiger Television West produced a weekly cable television show with highlights of mass demonstrations, artists' actions, lectures, and protests against mainstream media coverage at newspaper offices and television stations. Local media outlets in cities across the country screened similar oppositional media.

²⁶ Forty-two Scud missiles were fired by Iraq into Israel during the seven weeks of the war. Two Israeli civilians died from these attacks, and approximately 230 were injured. Israel was ready to respond with military force to these attacks, but agreed when asked not to by the U.S. Government, who feared that if Israel became involved, the other Arab nations would either desert the coalition or join Iraq. One of the best cinematic transposition of that time on Israeli screen was *The Siren's Song (Shirat ha Sirena)*, directed by Eitan Fox in 1994 and based on a best seller by the same name, written in 1991 by Irit Linur.

As Gertz argues, the Gulf War was perceived worldwide as the “media war.” In the reality of Israel, this perception had additional aspects: “it was the first war in which the Israelis did not face a real enemy who could be fought face-to-face on tank-to tank” (Gertz, 1999, p.170).

As Haim Bouzaglo told me when I met him on May 5, 2011, at *Café Bacio* in Tel Aviv: “the media coverage of the Gulf War influenced a lot also my second movie, *Time for Cherries*, even if it was dealing with the Lebanon War, that was also one of the first wars which we saw directly on the TV. Because of this, it became an issue, also for the reason that it was an Israeli initiative, without any real consensus. It became a long adventure, and also when we decide to retire it took a lot of months and it became a kind of surrealist situation, like our Vietnam”.

Bouzaglo directed *Time for Cherries* (*Onat ha Duvdevanim*, fig.4.33) in 1991. The film is divided into two parts. The first part, set in Tel Aviv, is filmed on a set reminiscent of a commercial set, and “stars” a producer of television commercials.

The story concerns Mickey, a young advertising executive, who is launching a publicity campaign for a popular cigarette brand called “Time” and intends to make ordinary citizens into the heroes of cigarette advertising posters.

Mickey enjoys his family, his work and his life in Tel Aviv. The hero’s family life is portrayed as an advertisement for family bliss and takes place in an apartment that looks like an advertisement for a yuppie apartment.

As Gertz argues, in the first part of the film, the main reflections are of advertising. Patterned after the television commercial, the first part of the movie, is duplicated repeatedly as a film within a film, a commercial within a commercial. The very tendency of the camera to display frames within frames (frames of commercial footage, of television, of mirrors in the apartment) makes reality a picture of reality (Gertz, 1999, p.163).

When Mickey’s army unit is suddenly called up for reserve duty he begins to be obsessed with his destiny, staging a general rehearsal of his death even before he goes to Lebanon.

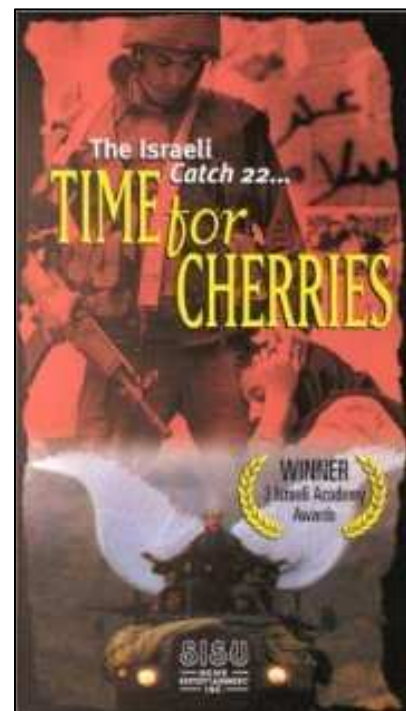


Fig.4.33 Poster of *Time for Cherries*, Haim Bouzaglo, 1991

He visits the cemetery, contemplates his shadow prostrate at the bottom of the grave, consults with the tombstone maker about the text to be written on the stone and visits the town major to find out how one's family is informed of such a death.

In the second part of the movie, which is set in Lebanon, A female American scoop-hunting television reporter follows his unit, in order to make a documentary film on the war.

Through the expedient of the documentary, the film within film shows the complexity of Mickey's unit which comprises a number of very strong characters, expressing several doubts about the entire political reality: the state, the authorities, the war, the Jews, and the Arabs.

For instance, a soldier in the company, interviewed by the American journalist, attempts to explain which enemy he is fighting: "I haven't seen any Palestinian terrorists" he asserts, "All I've seen are Lebanese civilians."

Another soldier and very relevant figure in the film is a magician, a strange individual who presents a show for his friends on their last night in Lebanon. This show provides a moving culmination to the film, a brilliant scene of an imaginary orchestra playing a *grand finale* over the hills of Lebanon, having been a bearer of "peace" in a land of civil strife.

After this brilliant and dramatic show, the magician starts to freak out and, wearing a kind of mask, he starts to talk with his shadow:

Who am I protecting?
The cedar trees? The sheep? Who?
I can buy good cherries at the shuk, close to my house.
Six hundred dead. Six hundred widows.
Fuck you!
How can you live with it?
How can I go on living after all this shit?

This very dramatic and critical scene ends with an army jeep with massive angel wings, containing an operatically singing soldier, rising elegantly over the horizon accompanied by the almost camp strains of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi*.

The obvious cynicism of this symbol is made even clearer when Mickey's unit, followed around by a U.S. television crew, is caught in the eye of the camera as the unit withdraws from Lebanon.

At the end of the movie, the American journalist, who intends to make Mickey the star of a documentary, becomes involved with him in a relationship between *eros* to *thanatos*, telling the cameramen: "Come, let's make some pictures. I want the Lebanese angel."

This sentence is cut off by a tremendous explosion that rocks the square. The Lebanese angel, captured by the camera for one fleeting moment, is immediately replaced with that of the television correspondent's camera. The moment she decides to "test" this angel herself her purported subject and focal points vanished: it has been blown up and Mickey is killed in action just as the Israeli government decides to retreat.

As Gertz observes, in the second part of the movie, most of the footage is shot by a mobile camera that generates suspense and pressure out of dramatic events and gives the film the look of a television documentary. This appearance is reinforced in several scenes, in which the objective lens gives way to that of the television crew that accompanies the soldiers. In these cases, the ostensive film is a film within a film, one filmed by the people who appear in it. Thus the fiction of a television commercial is replaced by the fiction of a documentary (Gertz, 1999, p.164).

As Gertz puts it, "in both part of the films, the protagonists are obsessively preoccupied with describing their deaths. Mickey, who lives the scenario of a TV commercial and fights in the scenario of the war film, dies in the scenario of an apocalyptic audiovisual extravaganza, for which ten entire film is a series of general rehearsals" (Gertz, 1999, p.165).

With tragic irony, the movie ends when he is killed in Lebanon and his picture appears on huge roadside billboard posters for *Time* cigarettes with the slogan: "Have a Good Time."

According to Gertz, as it deconstructs the reality of the war, the movie also attacks the films and the models that describe it and, in so doing, invokes a new cinematic language (Gertz, 1999, pp.166).

As Bouzaglo explained to me: "the American journalist, who tries to take death in real time, represents the paradox of the war in general. Because also the issue of the communication in time of war is another very universal issue, not concerning only war in Israel but all the wars in general".

According to Gertz, a new cultural perception becomes more acute in the Gulf War and merges into the 1990s Israeli cinema model known as "post-modern, urban cinema." This model shifts the focus of tension from relations between Jews and Arabs to relations between citizens and their government: "In so doing, the model reflects the new individual tendency of Israel to disengage from the problems of the nation, the state, and political authorities, and to cloister oneself, geographically and psychologically, in the narrow confines of one's street, engrossed in personal life and uninvolved in the rest" (Gertz, 1999, p.170).

One of the last movies of the 1990s dealing with the representation of the IDF is *Life according to AGFA* (*Ha Haim Al Pi AGFA*, fig.4.34), directed by Assi Dayan in 1992. But this time, the battlefield is a pub in Tel Aviv.

The trendy café-bar becomes a microcosm of Tel Aviv nightlife, and it sets the stage for rival factions to meet. Rich and poor, Ashkenazi and Mizrachi, Arab and Jew, policeman and criminal, Kibbutz member and urbanite, civilian and soldier. The picture represented is one of perpetual civil war between rival minorities in Israeli society, decadent, violent, aimless, and hopeless.

This apocalyptic film shot in stark black-and-white narrates the story of one night in the pub, where Dalia, the middle-aged owner (played by Israeli leading actress Gila Almagor) lives borrowed moments with her married lover, while the barwoman documents all the events with her camera, the waitress takes to cocaine while waiting to be allowed to leave the country and fo to the USA and the Palestinian who works in the kitchen, his so-called otherness manifested in the closed and unseen territory they all inhabit. Dayan himself is reflected through Tcherniac, the pub's local musician who, through his satiric songs, expresses Dayan's own disparaging view of the Zionist dystopia.

According to Kronish, in a rebellion against the self-sacrificing image of his war hero father, Dayan's filmmaking has come to portray anti-heroes (Kronish, 1996, pp. 184-185).

The pub clients, in fact, consist of the burlesque of the archetypal Zionist images, like Ricky, a troubled young woman who left her husband and little boy in the kibbutz and was lost in the big hostile city and Nimrod, a vulgar and aggressive officer, a broken legged warrior who, along with his unit friends, provides a distorted and parodist image of the heroic male *Sabra*.

The movie follows the goings on in the club, until a violent encounter alters everything forever. As morning breaks the army officers, who were earlier thrown out of the bar by the police, return and massacre everybody in cold blood.

As Neeman describes, the bloody closing scene neutralizes the intolerable tensions between all the different groups. The doomsday missionaries are Israeli army officers, once delegates of the



Fig.4.34 Poster of *Life according to AGFA* Assi Dayan, 1992

heroic-nationalist ethos, here dislocated and maimed, the murderous horseman, of the apocalypse. The anarchist mood stands out as a philosophical credo, reflecting the bleak political mood of 1990s Israel (Neeman, 2001, p. 268).

As Neeman puts it, “Zionist utopians sought to create a full integration of the many Jewish ethnic groups on their return to the homeland. The film negotiates the failure of such utopian thinking and its consequent evolution to a cataclysm of self-annihilation” (Neeman, 2001, p. 233).

Thus, Dayan’s apocalypse depicts Israeli militarism and inherent violence as the basis for this society’s own destruction that is due within “a year from now,” as a caption at the beginning of the film says.

As in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979), we don’t know any more if we are at the end or at the beginning of the story, but the apocalyptic end seems to presage what will happen in Israel in few years; the irreversible collapse of the country that is represented by Rabin’s murder.

As the Israeli scholar of Cinema Studies Yael Munk analyzed, the civilian uprising of the Palestinians, which was the first conflict during which Israel lost control over the “battlefield” minimized the discourse of war in Israeli films even further until its total disappearance over the 1990s²⁷. The appearance, therefore, of the few Israeli war movies produced in the new millennium, represent an unusual and noteworthy phenomenon, expressing a new historiographical stance regarding Israel’s national narrative (Munk, 2011, p.97).

In the next chapter, I will analyze the “back to the army” of the Israeli new millennium cinema, in the context of the wars of the new millennium, and how this is again going to change the representation of the Israeli soldier as a David, fighting again, but this time against another David.

²⁷ Except for the short feature *Operation Grandma (Mivtza Savta)*, an Israeli cult film directed by Dror Shaul in 1999. This film is a satirical comedy about the Israeli military and *kibbutz* life. The story revolves around three brothers: Alon, a nonsense IDF officer, Benny, a brilliant electrician, and Idan, a wimpy field trip guide. The film, told from Idan's point of view, narrates how the three brothers try to bury their beloved grandmother in the kibbutz cemetery. Because Alon has a secret security operation set for that same day, they have to work on a tight schedule, so he plans it like a military operation, hence the title.