

Conclusions

Thus, who is Goliath?

“Why have you despised the word of God, to do what is evil in his sight? You have smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife” (2 Samuel 12:9).

“Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson, 1991, p.224).

We started the journey of the representation of the IDF soldier in Israeli cinema at the time where there was no Israeli cinema, because there was no State of Israel.

In the first decade of the 21st century, more than sixty years after the establishment of the state, several Israeli films won awards in film festivals all around the world, establishing the “new,” blossoming Israeli cinema.

As we observed, contemporary Israeli cinema dismantles the equation created by the early Zionist Realist cinema of nationhood and masculinity.

According to Gertz, this cinema does not obliterate the homogeneous Zionist identity; rather, it merges this identity into a broader dialogue of identities and voices: “Instead of simplistically replacing the Hebrew masculine identity with a feminine Jewish one, it integrates both identities and examines them inside and out. This cinema treats space similarly. Instead of replacing the Israeli space with an alternative space, it makes different spaces overlap and commingle. This cinema expresses the crisis in Israeli identity and the attempt to overcome it by combining and blending the spaces, nationalities, and genders created within it” (Gertz, 2003).

New social and cultural groups which were underrepresented within the homogenizing old cinematic discourses, or stereotypically represented in the service of collectivist-nationalist ideologies, are today more visible, as well as self-represented.

Nevertheless, the central and paradigmatic role of gender formations in the cinematic negotiations of collective Israeli identity and national history cannot be underestimated.

Israeli National identities and their deconstruction have been formed mainly by adopting new masculine models and later shattering and dismantling them.

As we saw, the reaction against the victimized and marginalized Jewish position in the Diaspora brought hypermasculine overtones to the generic narrative and aesthetic features of early Hebrew and Israeli films.

From the 1950s and 1960s, the heyday of Israeli collectivism, when films celebrated and helped form the national narrative, the dominant image of the Israeli soldier was that of a hero who captures the very essence of the “New Jew.”

Then, the opening of Israeli culture to alternative, new, and diverse directions was articulated through new approaches to gender and sexuality, which by this point challenged now obsolete cinematic and cultural models.

The journey of the image of the Israeli soldier, which took hold in the 1970s and 1980s, reflects the growing criticism of the military and its violent legacy, and presents the soldier not as a moral hero, but rather as an agent of rage and violence.

At the time of the post-Zionist era, when under the umbrella of the 1993 Oslo Accords many Israelis felt that the Arab-Israeli conflict was nearing its end, and that the country was about to enjoy a period of peace and prosperity, the image of the Israeli soldier that emerged was that of a detached slacker, someone who is interested not in the overall mission of the military but rather to recover himself in his own personal fate.

As Talmon and Peleg observed, the masculine paradigm, which had sustained the Zionist-national discourse, was replaced by a shift to the feminine aspects of mundane experiences within the private sphere and the legitimization of a personal pursuit of happiness and self-realization (Talmon M. and Peleg Y., 2011, pp. XVI-XVII).

As Peleg puts it: “Half a century after the creation of a native Hebrew or *Sabra* superman in the Land of Israel, his iconic image has been gradually replaced, not necessarily by another definitive image but by more variant and ambiguous ones” (Peleg, 2011, p. 38).

And today, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, after the Second Intifada, when peace for most Israelis again seemed like a distant fantasy amid the realities of war, the image of the Israeli soldier came to symbolize the prevailing national sentiment. According to

Kaplan, “feeling like helpless victims of irrational and indiscriminate violence” (Kaplan, 2011, p.60).

However, victims of whom, if the “enemy,” as we saw at the end of this long journey, doesn’t exist anymore, or, if it still exists, is “unseen”?

If David is fighting against another David, who is the Goliath of our time?

Films such as *Beaufort*, *Lebanon* and *Waltz with Bashir* critically explore the complex and crucial role of Israeli cinema in remembering and restaging traumas and losses that were previously denied entry into the shared national past.

As Yosef analyzed, current Israeli cinema exposes and highlights a radical discontinuity between history and memory. Traumatic events from Israeli society’s past are represented as the private memory of distinct social groups, not as collective memory, but as a lived and practiced tradition that conditions Israeli society. This detachment from national collective memory pulls the films into a world marked by a persistent blurring of the historical context and by private and subjective impressions, a timeless world of dreams, hallucinations and myths (Yosef, 2011).

Thus, after exploring the entire journey of the Israeli soldier from the time of *Hashomer* to date, what is the new aesthetic and ideological trend in contemporary Israeli cinema?

Is it the fact that films today place a focus on the soldiers not as fighters, but as victims? If so, what does this mean?

What happened, in fact, to David, when he became an adult, like the State of Israel, half a century after its establishment?

According to the biblical Second Book of Samuel, in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel, but he remained in Jerusalem.

Walking on the roof of his palace, he saw Bathsheba, bathing, and immediately desired her. She was the wife of Uriah, who was a soldier in King David’s army, and at that time was fighting at the front. So David sent messengers to her, she came to him, and he made her pregnant.

But, if something was not done, Bathsheba would be found guilty of adultery and killed. David too could lose the respect of his citizens and soldiers, and he could also be put to death for his sin.

First, therefore, he recalled Uriah from the front, hoping that he would sleep with Bathsheba, assume that the child is his own, and cover up David’s affair. Whether or not Uriah heard of

David's adultery, he refused to go home to his wife. Moreover, he bluntly told the King that he was unwilling to violate the ancient kingdom's rule applying to warriors in active service.

Unlike David, the reader might observe, he would not enjoy the comforts at home with his wife when it was time to be fighting Israel's enemies.

So David sent him back to Joab, the commander, with an explicit message instructing him to abandon Uriah on the battlefield: "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die" (verse 15).

And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men: the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell, including Uriah.

After Uriah had died, David made the now widowed Bathsheba his wife. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, who accordingly sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him, relating the parable of the rich man who took away the one little ewe lamb of his poor neighbor.

Actually, David's action wasn't only impious, but was also very risky, almost to the point of irrationality. The plan was itself perilous. It would involve giving other soldiers an unusual order, in the hope that Uriah would not hear about it.

Joab, too, carried out the spirit of the plan, ensuring Uriah's death, by somewhat different means. He besieged the city in such a manner that the men in Uriah's section would almost certainly come under a fatal assault by the enemy: this made Uriah's death appear like just another casualty of war to the Israelites.

Joab knew from his military experience that his method of besieging the city would result in failure and several casualties, but it was the most practical method of eliminating Uriah without causing suspicion. Joab also knew that David, when he heard a straightforward report of the battle, would be angry at what would seem like Joab's lack of military wisdom.

But when Joab sent a messenger to David to tell him what had happened, this is what Joab told the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Also, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead'" (verses 19-21).

The way Joab intended, via the messenger, to answer David's indignant anger was also brutally. David would have understood that Joab's strange military strategy was not a failure of military judgment but something necessitated by the king's desire to eliminate Uriah. Joab's message shows him to be quite prepared to justify his methods to David. He may even, by describing Uriah as "your servant," be scolding David for having given him such an order.

David then sends the messenger back to Joab with an ambiguous message of his own: "Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it" (verse 25).

To Joab, who was aware that it was the King's desire for Uriah's death that necessitated this military setback, and who may not be too happy about it, David's message could convey an entirely different meaning, like: "Don't be angry at me for causing you to suffer a military defeat. If you lost a few good men because of me, you would probably have lost them sooner or later due to the very nature of war."

Thus, when will there be another war, and against whom? Who will be the next Goliath?

Or rather, how can Israel still be fighting against a Goliath, if Israel is no longer David?

As Israeli historian Boaz Neumann argued in his very critical work *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, the existential Zionist experience of "being-in-the-Land-of-Israel" retains its central place in Israeli experience.

The pioneers, as he showed, were the first to equate the concept of being itself with the physical condition of being in Israel. "Being-in-the-Land-of-Israel" was, for them, not merely being situated in a specific place. It was, for them, *to be* in the Land of Israel, *Eretz Israel*.

Neumann's innovative study examines the responses of early-twentieth-century pioneers to "the Land" of Palestine. After the early Zionist historiography that portrayed these young settlers as heroic, and more critical studies by the "new" historians and sociologists focused on their failures and shortcomings, Neumann argues for something else that historians have yet to identify: "desire", as, I would like to suggest, David's ungovernable desire for Bathsheba.

Desire for the Land and a visceral identification with it begin to explain the pioneer experience and its impact on Israeli history and collective memory, as well as on Israelis' abiding connection to the Land of Israel. For Neumann, the Zionist revolution was an "existential" revolution: for the pioneers, in fact, to be in the Promise Land was "to be" (Neumann, 2011).

But how can be the Land still "promise" if there is no enemy to fight anymore?

What will happen to the (post)Zionist “desire”?

My very personal hypothesis is that, if Goliath no longer exists, at least the mythological image of David has to survive, in order to let the (post)Zionist “desire” survive, even if the David of our days does not really know what to desire anymore.

I would like to suggest too, that this kind of “desire’s need” is something much more unconscious than rational, or, to quote the concept of “cultural hegemony” by the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, this “desire” becomes a kind of consequence of the deep (and also unconscious) “Zionist” cultural hegemony.

As Gramsci scrupulously analyzed, the praxis of cultural hegemony in a society is neither monolithic nor a unified value system, rather it is a complex of layered social structures (Gramsci, 1971).

And, if at the personal level, this kind of cultural hegemony is perceptible, as we saw in the cinematic representation of the IDF experience through the personal gaze of each Israeli filmmaker, when perceived as a whole society, however, the life of each person, and in our case, even of each Israeli director, does contribute to a greater (post)Zionist Cultural hegemony.

Although contemporary Israeli filmmakers no longer present a monolithic and stereotyped figure of the *Sabra*, but a much more varied and ambiguous representation of the Israeli soldier, my hypothesis is that they are incapable of perceiving the greater hegemonic pattern of David’s imagery, developed and reproduced, even unconsciously, in Israeli everyday life.

However, as I mentioned in the preface of this work, in the “cinedramatization of the David consciousness,” the stories which I analyzed in this journey are part of a history that is still in the making.

Therefore, we can not know what will be the next journey of David, who, as grew old, had to leave his kingdom to his son, Salomon, as Nathan prophesied to David, after he killed Uriah (1 Kings, 1).

As far as we know, one of the qualities most ascribed to Solomon is his wisdom. According to the biblical First Book of Kings: “So God said to him, ‘Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have you asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked...’ (1 Kings 3:11-12).

At the end of this journey, what we have seen, from the time of the Bible to the time of the “new” blossoming Israeli Cinema, is how Israeli national identity and David’s “desire” have become inseparable.

But, because both nation and gender are culturally constructed, and because cultures inevitably change through time, we can also expect Jewish Israeli nationalism and gender identity to change as well.

As Tamar Mayer suggests, just as the myths on which Zionism is based have been increasingly questioned and the motivation on the part of young Israeli men to die for the nation is on the decline, we may well find major changes in both (post)Zionism and masculinity in the future (Mayer, 2000, pp. 301-302).

As Yael Munk observed, the new generation of Israeli documentary filmmakers, for instance, seem to express a new form of responsibility toward all kinds of Other, addressing a new ethical approach to all those who share the land of Israel, men and women, young and old, Israeli, Palestinian, and Filipino: “The melting-pot policy that dictated the ideology of Israel’s first decades seems far away, and the growing presence of Others requires a new gaze engaging not only its acknowledgment by the subject but also a revision of the subject’s position” (Munk, 2011b, p. 162).

This courageous empathic approach, which should blur all ancient boundaries, requires a new form of discourse, or, to go back to where we started from, of “cinedramatization of consciousness.”

If David betrayed his soldiers, maybe Solomon should become a new model for developing a new, not only cinematic, but also political and individual “dramatization of the Israeli consciousness”.

Glossary

aliya (עלייה): literally “ascent”, is used in reference to the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*). It is a basic tenet of Zionist ideology, in fact, according to Jewish tradition, traveling to the Land of Israel is an ascent, both geographically (Jerusalem is situated 2,700 feet above sea level) and metaphysically. In Zionist history, the different waves of *aliya*, beginning with the arrival of the *Biluim* from Russia in 1882, are categorized by date and the country of origin of the immigrants.

Ashkenazi (אשכנזי): literally, Jews descended from the medieval Jewish communities along the Rhine in Germany. In Israel, the term *ashkenazi* is often applied to all Jews of European background living in Israel, in order to distinguish them, representing the secular upper middle class, from the more traditionalist and working class of *mizrahi* (Jews from the Arab world and adjacent, primarily Muslim-majority countries). *Ashkenazim*, in fact, usually more secular and with a higher education compared to *mizrahi*, have played a prominent role in the economy, media, and politics of Israel since its founding. Therefore, during the first decades of Israel as a state, a strong cultural conflict occurred between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi*. The cultural differences between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews impacted the degree and rate of assimilation into Israeli society. Segregation, especially in the area of housing, limited integration possibilities over the years.

chalutz (חלוץ): literally “pioneer” it represent also the first Zionist movement to *Eretz Israel*.

chutzpah (חוצפה): is the quality of audacity, in both sense for good or for bad. In modern Hebrew, *chutzpah* is used indignantly, to describe someone who has over-stepped the boundaries of accepted behavior with no shame. But in Yiddish, *chutzpah* has developed ambivalent and even positive connotations. *Chutzpah* can be used to express admiration for non-conformist but gutsy audacity.

Eretz Israel (ארץ ישראל): literally “Land of Israel”, it represent more than a geographical, a mythological place, for all the Jewish Diaspora. This also the name which Israeli citizen call they country, instead of ‘State of Israel’.

gever (גבר): literally “man”, figuratively speaking “macho”

Golani (גולני): The Golani Brigade (in Hebrew: הַטַּיְבָּת גּוֹלָנִי, 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.

haredi (חֲרָדִי): literally *Orthodox*, from *charada*, which in this context (*Orthodoxy*) is interpreted as ‘one who trembles in awe of God’. Today *Haredi* is the most conservative form of Orthodox Judaism, often referred to as ultra-Orthodox. A follower of *Haredi* Judaism is called a *Haredi* (*Haredim* in the plural).

jobnik (ג'ובניק): according to the Hebrew military slang all the soldiers that are not *kravi*, that literary means ‘fighters’ are *jobnik* (ג'ובניק), a combination of the English word *job* and the Yiddish suffix *nik* that it means ‘belong to’.

kibbutznik (קיבוצניק): member of kibbutz

Kiryat (קריית): literally “town” 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

kravi (קרבי): literary “fighters”, is also a metaphoric way to define all the qualities of bravery, honour, heroism and masculinity of the *Sabra*. In 2010, approximately 85% of Israeli *sadir* soldier are *jobnik* (logistic supporters) and only 15% are *kravi*. Despite this fact, since the establishment of the State of Israel till today, the representation of Israeli soldier is in Israeli imaginary and in Israeli media, is always about *kravi*.

mahapach (מהפך): literally “change over”, in the history of Israel this term usually refers to the 1977 national Election, when right-wing *Likud* defatted the *Mapai* Labor Party, which was the only party governing Israel for the all thirty years after his establishment.

mekhdal (מחדל): literally “failure”, “omission”, in the history of Israel this term usually refers to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israel government resulted unready to foresee and successfully carry out the war.

miluim (מילואים): reserve duty service in IDF

mizrahi (מזרחי): Jews descended from the Jewish communities of the Middle East (מזרח). Today the term *mizrahi* is used in Israel in the language of politics, media and some social scientists for Jews from the Arab world and adjacent, primarily Muslim-majority countries, in order to distinguish them from the upper middle class of *ashkenazi* (Jews of European background living in Israel). *Ashkenazim*, in fact, usually more secular and with a higher education compared to *mizrahi*, have played a prominent role in the economy, media, and politics of Israel since its founding. Therefore, during the first decades of Israel as a state, a strong cultural conflict occurred between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi*. The cultural differences between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews impacted

the degree and rate of assimilation into Israeli society. Segregation, especially in the area of housing, limited integration possibilities over the years.

Palmach (פלמ"ח): acronym for *Plugot Machatz* (פלוגות מחץ), literally means “strike force”. It was the elite fighting force of the *Haganah*. The *Palmach* was established on May 15, 1941 and in 1948, with the creation of Israel's army, was disbanded. The *Palmach* contributed significantly to Israeli culture and ethos, well beyond its military contribution. Its members, *Palamchnik* (פלמהניק), formed the backbone of the Israel Defense Forces high command for many years, and were prominent in Israeli politics, literature and culture.

sabra (צבר): literally “Indian Fig *Opuntia* cactus”, is a term used to describe a Jewish person born in *Eretz Israel*, the Land of Israel, because of the allusion to a tenacious, thorny desert plant with a thick hide that conceals a sweet, softer interior, suggesting that even though the Israeli Sabra are rough and masculine on the outside, they are delicate and sensitive on the inside.

sadir (סדיר): regular service in IDF

sarvanut (סרבנות) literally “recalcitrance” is used to describe refusal movement to serve in the IDF.

tirounut (טירונות) is the recruit training of the IDF. In the IDF, recruit training comes in many difficulty levels, each corps or major unit having their own training program. All recruits in the IDF basic training wear the general all-army khaki beret and get their corps beret upon completion, in a ceremony where the recruits swear in to the IDF.

Tzahal (צה"ל): acronym for *Tzva Hahagana LeYisra'el* (צבא ההגנה לישראל), literally ‘army for the defense of Israel’.

tzava (צבא): literally “army”, is used frequently referring to *Tzahal*

yeshuv (ישוב): literally “settlement”, is the term used referring to the body of Jewish residents in the Holy Land before the establishment of the State of Israel.

yeshiva (ישיבה): is a Jewish educational institution that focuses on the study of traditional religious texts, primarily the Talmud and Torah.

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Acknowledgment

This work would not have been what it is today without the fundamental assistance of many people.

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Ugo Fabietti, from the University of Milano-Bicocca. He has not only been my supervisor for many years, but he is a person who has taught me a lot, and not only about Anthropology.

Everything that I have learned so far about Israeli Cinema I owe to Professor Yael Munk, of the Open University of Israel. I would like to give her a special thank you for all her very important criticisms and suggestions, which have greatly improved my work.

This work, however, would never have begun without meeting Professor Judd Neeman of Tel Aviv University. He was the first person to encourage my work on the representation of the Israel Defense Forces in Israeli Cinema. I will never forget all my meetings with him, as professor, as filmmaker and as a friend.

In order to complete my work, it was absolutely necessary to gain access to Tel Aviv University's film archive. Because of that, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Rouben Hacker, the Head of the Department of Film and Television Studies and to Liviu Carmeli, the director of the Archive, who dedicated a lot of time to helping me. I would also like to express my gratitude to the students working at the Archive, who were very helpful in my research as well.

During the four years of my Ph.D., a few professors and scholars of the University of Milano-Bicocca really helped me find my way. Elena dell'Agnese was the person that introduced me to the amazing world of cinema studies. Stefano Malatesta, Marcella Schmidt, and Enrico Squarcina, the "Geographers" of the Department, were not only colleagues, but have also become important friends.

Some other scholars and friends also helped me when I was lost in my work. I would like to say a special thank you to Maya Katzir, for all her historical suggestions, to Ori Cooper, for the Biblical ones, to Sharon Karp for the cinematic side and to Aya Eilav, Naomi Mendel, and Yael Moshe for the artistic one.

A very special thanks to Alona Ferber, who helped me a lot, not only by checking my English, but also in reading all my work, chapter after chapter.

I would also like to thank all the people I interviewed, not only because of their time. Without them, in fact, I could never have written this ethnography. A very special thank to the *Machzor* August '98 unit of *Yachmam* and to the *Miluim* battalion *Yachmam* 341.

Last but not least, thanks to Tzachi, *ha gever sheli*, who introduced me to Israeli life, to army life, and who even showed me the inner world of the IDF.

Grazie...תודות

In 1925 Gilbert Keith Chesterton said: "There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk around the world till we come back to the same place".

This work, as all the most important things that I have done in my life, would not have been possible without the fundamental help of two very special people: Titti Saracino and Enrico Martegani, my parents. Thank you for never stopping to believe in me, and for being, always and everywhere that I live, my Family.

Thanks also to all my cousins, my uncles and especially to my grandmother, Alessandra Macchi, who turned 100 years old this year!

Thanks to Yael, *ha shutafa sheli*, who has become like a real sister to me.

There is another big family, which makes me feel at home, everywhere I am: all of my Friends.

Some of them live in Italy, some of them in Israel, most of them *inbetween*, all around the world...

Some of them are friends of mine from kindergarten, some from high school, some from university. In most of the cases, as with the "Monkeys", I grew up, and I became a better person, with them.

But still, everyday, there is something new to learn, as I did, in the time that I have spent in Tel Aviv. Thanks to all my friends from Tel Aviv University, from Ulpan Gordon and from my art class.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Tel Aviv, the place where I discovered my "creative" side, which is still a work in progress...

Last but not least, a very special thank to all the people working, on both sides of the bar, at Cafe' Bacio, because this was the place where I started, and much more importantly, where I finished writing my entire work, which was, and still is, a very important part of my Life.

Grazie a tutti voi...

...תודה רבה לכולם...

Tel Aviv, September 2011