

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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Special Issue **History and Memory in Israeli Cinema**

Editor

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TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

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Summaries

Nurith Gertz and Gal Hermoni

Deconstructing History: Trauma and Subversion in *Kedma* and *Atash*

This article addresses the ideological resistance to a national narrative in two films – the Israeli director Amos Gitai’s *Kedma* (2004) and the Palestinian director Tawfiq Abu-Wael’s *Atash–Thirst* (2004). The core argument is that *Kedma* and *Atash* use two different ways to attack hegemonic cinematic and ideological language: *Kedma* uses a “flooding” technique, while in *Atash* a “drying up” technique is applied. These two terms were coined and used by Deleuze and Guattari in their reading of Kafka’s use of the German language. With these seemingly contradictory approaches, both films hinder the causal movement of events, unravel the bond between signifier and signified, thus dismantling and subverting the hegemonic, teleological, linear narrative. The article attributes those subversive techniques to a post-traumatic condition and, in that sense, reads the post-traumatic condition as one of political-historical resistance.

Sandra Meiri

Memory, Trauma and Ethics in Judd Ne’eman’s Feature Films

In this essay I examine, through four of Judd Ne’eman’s feature films – *The Night the King Was Born* (1983); *Fellow Travelers* (1984); *Streets of Yesterday* (1989) and *Promenade of the Heart* (2007) – the relationship between subjectivity and historical events and traumas, and the ethical role that cinema and artistic creation play within this context. I show how Ne’eman’s films revise the predominant historical memory regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to create an ethical position that enables the recognition of “the Other” as such, and argue that this position is inevitably connected to the process of artistic creation. By compelling the subject to contend with the traumatic experience regarding the internal Other – the constitutive aspect of alienation – artistic creation constitutes an ethics necessary to break through the dense wall of mistrust on both sides (Israeli and Palestinian) and provides an opportunity for genuine dialogue, i.e., an acceptance of the external Other.

Raya Morag

Sound, Image, and Forms of Remembrance: Israeli Narrative Cinema during the Second Intifada

Representation of the trauma of suicide attacks in Israeli narrative cinema produced during the Second Intifada (2000-2004) was obstructed by repression of the trauma and the collectivization of personal memory. The incidence of the suicide attacks created a psycho-social condition of chronic trauma, but the narrative cinema of those years distanced and repressed the attacks, on both the iconographic and sound levels, thereby preventing them from becoming a post-traumatic collective memory, and in effect creating a reality of anti-memory. In contrast, the short films from the tele-cinema project *Moments* (as well as the film *Close to Home*) seek to overcome the time-trap of anti-memory, primarily by means of sound, through the psycho-acoustics of the terror attack. They thus operate to advance acknowledgment of the trauma of the attacks, thereby enabling the formation of post-traumatic memory.

Anat Zanger

The Event and the Picture: Between *My Stills* and *Memories of the Eichmann Trial* by David Perlov

In his last film, *My Stills 1952/2002* (2003), David Perlov composes a unique combination of still pictures recorded on video. Perlov strolls around Tel Aviv and Paris, recording with his camera individual everyday experiences, but at the same time he shows us instances of our collective past, pictures we have not seen and pictures we would like to forget. In order to trace the double sense of time created by the film, i.e. daily and historical time, this article focuses on the unique film aesthetics of “delayed cinema” (in Laura Mulvey’s term) and the Benjaminian concepts of *flânerie* and *passage* as part of a process of decoding the collective unconscious. The film’s standpoint towards “testimony” and “the cinematic event” is also analyzed in relation to the process of making the film, the works of other photographers, and Perlov’s own oeuvre, especially *Memories of the Eichmann Trial* (1972) – all of which are included in the film itself.

Judd Ne’eman

The Wound: The Gift of War

This article explores issues related to the representation of the wound in Israeli war films. In contrast to the war films of the 1950s and the 1960s that hide the spectacle of the wound in the soldier’s body, the 1980s war films exposed the

wound and the warrior's dead body. Through an analysis of the 1980s war films, the article argues that military pedagogy is structured by two goals: on the one hand, to train the soldier to kill the enemy; and on the other hand, to encourage him to hurt himself and even to get killed on the battlefield. This second goal of military pedagogy brings the soldier to a state of "abjection." According to Julia Kristeva, the category of the abject includes bodily wastes, fluids and secretions. For Kristeva, the female body, especially the maternal body, is aligned with the abject due to its association with menstruation, childbirth, and the infant's toilet training. The article traces and analyzes the visual and psychological analogies between the soldier's wound and the image of birth in Israeli war films, seeking to offer a new insight into the source of young men's desire for combat.

Merav Alush-Levron

Mizrahi Memory and Zionist Dominance: Voices from the Margins in Contemporary Documentary Films

The complex manifestations of the Mizrahi (oriental) countermemory in contemporary documentary Israeli cinema, which are explored in this article, determine ethnic otherness in a dialectic manner. The article analyzes the process through which countermemory is constructed in the documentary films by opposing the Mizrahi story to the hegemonic story, and the Mizrahi memory to the formal dominant history. Basing my thesis on the postcolonial theoretical discourse of transformation as presented by Bill Ashcroft, I argue that the construction of Mizrahi countermemory encompasses a re-creation of the Mizrahi past through the Zionist discourse itself. Namely, the subaltern narrative appropriates the Zionist discourse in favor of the Mizrahi discourse. Thus, the writing of Mizrahi subaltern memory disrupts the dominant Zionist history by "interpolating" it. The analysis focuses on the films *Yaldei ha-gazezet* (The Ringworm Children, dir. David Balahsan and Asher Nahmias, 2003) and *Ruah kadim: Khronikah maroka 'it* (Eastern Wind: A Moroccan Chronicle, dir. David Ben-Shitrit, 2002).

Nitzan Ben-Shaul

Tensions between Ethnicity and National Culture and Their Expression in Israeli Films' Articulation of Space

This study deals with the cinematic representation of interethnic tensions in Israel and its relation to Israeli national culture, particularly as it pertains to the films' articulation of space. While films of the 1950s promoted Jewish interethnic intermingling and erasure of the diasporic, ethnically differentiated East-West past of Jewish immigrants to Israel, articulated through a representation of the

development town space as orderly and egalitarian, films of the 1960s and 1970s celebrated ethnic diversity by representing the space of the development town as disorderly and hence free. By contrast, films of the 1980s reversed this ethnic diversity and began articulating the tragic failure of interethnic commingling and the hopelessness of interethnic tensions by presenting the development town space as isolated and dependent. This phenomenon became more pronounced during the 1990s when a variety of “others” such as recent Russian immigrants, Holocaust survivors or gays, whose voices had previously been mediated by the dominant national discourse or silenced altogether in cinematic cultural production, began to represent themselves in Israeli films. This trend, indicating the splintering of Israeli society into various power groups, is taken even further in films of the present decade.