From imagined to actual perpetrator: Folman in
Waltz with Bashir (dir. Ari Folman, Israel/France/Germany/
US/Finland/Switzerland/Belgium/Australia, 2008).
Courtesy Ari Folman

Perpetrator Trauma and Current Israeli Documentary Cinema

Raya Morag

"Let the atrocious images haunt us."
—Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

The major catastrophes of the twentieth century, most notably the Holocaust, have set victim trauma and witnessing at the heart of post–Second World War world consciousness. As a result, offering perpetrator trauma as a new paradigm and legitimate field of concern, as this essay ventures to suggest, might at first seem problematic at this stage in history and may immediately and inevitably bring to the fore confusion, opposition, disapproval, and even repulsion. But the paradigm is not meant to undermine the victim's status in today's culture, let alone to shake the foundation of trauma ethics. The changing face of twenty-first-century war justifies a new perspective and a new epistemology for a post-victim/post-witness era.

The preliminary definition of *perpetrator trauma* offered by this essay emanates from an analysis of recent films that make up a

93

new current in Israeli cinema. In contrast to fiction and documentary films produced between the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987 and 2006, after the end of the second intifada, the Israeli new wave focuses not on the trauma of the victimized Palestinian—although clearly this remains an issue of urgent political concern—but rather on that of the Israeli as perpetrator of atrocities. This is not at all to say that Palestinian victimization and trauma do not remain an urgent concern but to note the ways in which some Israeli films have registered, or redirected, that concern through an examination of Israeli action and effects. In just a few years, three major Israeli documentaries— *To See If I'm Smiling* (dir. Tamar Yarom, Israel, 2007), *Waltz with Bashir* (dir. Ari Folman, Israel/ France/Germany/US/Finland/Switzerland/Belgium/Australia, 2008), and *Z32* (dir. Avi Mograbi, France/Israel, 2008)[1]—have changed the cinematic-cultural agenda, raising vehement controversy while receiving numerous prizes.[2] Shifting the traumatic perspective away from Palestinians and onto Israeli soldiers, this new wave reopens a debate about perpetration, one that for the first time includes women who are former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers.

One of the keys to this new trend is provided by the obvious failure of current Israeli fiction film (especially the war film genre) to address perpetrator trauma, especially in relation to Israeli soldiers' service in the Occupied Territories during the intifada. Twenty-five years after the end of the first Lebanon war, Israeli narrative cinema is driven by what seems to be a compulsion to return to Lebanon as a preferred ideological zone (as in Berlinale Silver Bear winner *Beaufort* [dir. Joseph Cedar, Israel, 2007] and Venice's Golden Lion winner *Lebanon* [dir. Samuel Maoz, Israel/ France/Lebanon/Germany, 2009]). The typical intifada situation in which the Israeli soldier-turned-cop confronts a civilian population (a major characteristic of new war[3]) and serves state terror is displaced onto a more traditional war film in which one soldier confronts another (or in which one soldier confronts a civilian population mixed with a military force), so that the potential for ethical reflection on the war becomes partial and limited. The Lebanon films share another prominent characteristic—a remy-

thologization of the Israeli combat soldier through a process of sacrificial victimization that overshadows the subject position of the perpetrator and, inevitably, of the Palestinian victim as well. Here, heroic victimization (by the war, the generals, or the government) wins. In other words, current Lebanon war fiction films involve a twofold process of displacement: from the intifada to the first Lebanon war and from the figure of the victimized Palestinian to that of the (heroic) victimized Israeli soldier.

In the face of this insidious displacement in fiction films, it is no wonder that the new trend in documentary cinema based on confession attests by its very nature to difficulties entailed in the subject position of the participants vis-à-vis atrocities. On a personal level, the soldiers find it difficult to acknowledge that they have committed atrocities and to take responsibility—despite committing themselves to confess (and even while they are confessing). On the level of cinematic enunciation, both autobiographical and nonautobiographical cinematic language encounter difficulties in articulating the confession and reenacting the yet unacknowledged deed. And on a social, extratextual level, acknowledging perpetrator trauma is difficult for Israelis since it means a concomitant acknowledgment of societal perpetration.

One of the immediate outcomes is the discord caused by acknowledgment of guilt regarding human lives. The films constitute a continuum. On one end are those that depict perpetrators who have carried out the most extreme atrocities (including exacting revenge on innocent Palestinians), which leave them emotionally numbed and with unresolved guilt—gradually willing to take responsibility for their deeds. On the other end are films that depict complicit indirect perpetrators who have carried out actions that are short of murder but who nonetheless participated in or turned a blind eye to other, lesser actions. In the films, complicit indirect perpetrators are more able to confront their guilt directly and engage in self-reflection. The split between direct and indirect perpetration makes the other's corpse the ultimate Other for the perpetrator of atrocities.

By exploring this continuum, I will address the questions of how the trauma of the perpetrator manifests itself in these recent

Israeli films, how the epistemological—and somatic—conditions of guilt should be understood, and whether this cinematic trend paves the way for Israelis to assume moral responsibility for their deeds. Finally, describing the characteristics of perpetrator trauma will lead to a preliminary definition of what I term the *perpetrator complex*[4] and to a preliminary reflection on the possible relevance of the perpetrator trauma paradigm for analyzing related "new war" films in twenty-first-century world cinema.

The Perpetrator as Unwanted Ghost

Before analyzing the representation of perpetrator trauma in these films, we should ask if trauma research offers the tools necessary to cope with the posttraumatic subject position of the perpetrator. It is somehow taken for granted that psychological trauma research from Sigmund Freud's *Etiology of Hysteria* (1896) to the present has been carried out from the perspective of identification with the victim. Dealing with the trauma of the perpetrator is excluded and perceived as unseemly or even unimaginable. This interest in the victim, as well as continuous discussion surrounding the crisis of testimony (in psychoanalysis, the courts, literature, and the writing of history and trauma), was widely analyzed during the 1990s and the first decade of this century vis-à-vis war, the Holocaust, and domestic and state violence (beginning with the work of Judith Lewis-Herman, through Shoshana Felman, Felman and Dori Laub, and up to Dominick LaCapra and Giorgio Agamben).[5] Psychiatric and psychological trauma research is not alone in its identification with the victims and its devotion to illuminating their ordeal. This is also true of contemporary humanities-based trauma studies, whose main tenets embrace the temporality of the victims' traumatic memory (in, for example, the work of Bessel van der Kolk, Cathy Caruth, and Ruth Leys) and trauma research in cinema studies (including the work of Janet Walker, E. Ann Kaplan, and Anton Kaes).[6]

In the late 1990s, however, especially during the deliberations of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, three major theoretical transformations emerged and played a sig-

nificant role in human rights discourse. First, each category—victim, perpetrator, bystander, beneficiary—was examined independently of the others. Second, the main categories (victim/perpetrator) were considered hetero- rather than homogeneous; that is, a differentiation was made between institutional perpetrators, sectoral perpetrators, victims by proxy, secondary victims, and so on.[7] Third, and consequently, the victim/perpetrator binarism was broken, opening the possibility for interchange between the two categories. These new theoretical insights have yet to be adopted by new trends in cinema research, which seem to perceive the transcendence of this binarism as an inevitable act of critique in certain political situations, especially in relation to the post-9/11 "new war."

Despite its limitations, this short review reveals that the concept of perpetrator trauma is to a large extent repressed in trauma research. This abhorrent category is rejected and obscure, thus making the scholar's (or the therapist's) identification with the field extremely tenuous. Taking into account the huge difference between the twentieth century's totalitarian regimes and the twenty-first century's democracies that have been implicated in perpetration, it is important, even if admittedly difficult, to work conscientiously with this field. We must, therefore, be aware of the present-day perpetrators' deeds without making identification with their trauma a confusing ethical stand toward the victims. We must preserve the lessons of the past but look afresh on the current world with the new epistemological challenges it forces us to face.

The Israeli Case: Somatic Tensions and Epistemic Crises

The new current attests to the difficulty that Israeli documentary cinema encounters in breaching the repression and denial prevalent in Israel, which, despite undergoing myriad internal political and ideological ruptures during these years (1987–2006), maintains its self-image of a victimized Jewish society.[8] This is evidenced by the fact that, despite the emergence of the new wave, by 2010 only a few such films representing perpetrators had been released, and relatively few perpetrators—male or female—appeared in

them.[9] It is no wonder, then, that in *Waltz with Bashir*, *Z32*, and *To See If I'm Smiling*, the complex subject position of the posttraumatic perpetrator is structured through a series of (mostly somatic) tensions. These might be summarized as the use of total facial exposure versus concealment behind digital masks, corporealization versus phantomization, archival footage versus documentary animation, simulacral aura versus desire for referentiality, and realist versus Brechtian reenactment.

The films display five prominent characteristics of perpetrator trauma. The first is the crisis of evidence, which attests to the epistemological impasse of confronting the epistemic dynamics of horror with evidence of the horror. The second is the crisis of disclosure, represented in the films by various types of concealment. The third is the crisis of gender, ingrained in internal masculine and feminine self-definitions as well as in intergender power relations. The fourth is the crisis of audience—the absence of an imaginary supportive community. The last is the crisis of narrativization, which reveals the unbridgeable gap between prewar identity and the perpetrator's confession.

In what ways do *Waltz with Bashir*, *Z32*, and *To See If I'm Smiling* present these crises? Discussion of the textual tensions constituting the subject position of the posttraumatic perpetrator will clarify the epistemic and somatic conditions of guilt and thereby the ethical substance and implications of perpetrator trauma.

Waltz with Bashir: The Complicit Indirect Perpetrator

Waltz with Bashir, Ari Folman's award-winning autobiographical animated documentary, charts the director's quest to recover his lost memories of the 1982 massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila in Beirut, Lebanon. At the end of his quest for the forgotten last three days of the war, through various encounters, especially with former comrades-in-arms, Folman recalls the traumatic incident, which returns to him as a picture of Palestinian women walking and crying. He discovers that, on the night of the massacre, he and other IDF soldiers launched flares illuminating the refugee camps, thus indirectly assisting

the Christian Phalangists to avenge the assassination of Lebanese president Bashir Gemayel.

As a posttraumatic film, *Waltz* presents the trauma of the complicit indirect perpetrator, though it defines the degree of complicity ambiguously. On the one hand, it shows a complicity largely of omission, silence, inaction, and failure to oppose the injustice vociferously and actively. On the other, it shows what might be defined as active complicity with the government war machine, performing as an important cog in facilitating atrocities. Put another way, although the film presents the genocide in the camps, the Israeli veteran does not assume responsibility for his complicity, either on the individual or the collective level. The film avoids a clear ethical position toward the historical trauma in Lebanon—and, by implication, toward Israeli involvement in the Occupied Territories in the intifada era, during which this film was made.

Waltz structures a causal narrative in which Folman's missing memory and his uncanny unutterable feeling of guilt do not originate from his complicitous and traumatic act of shooting flares but from horrific childhood memories related to the Holocaust. This effect is exacerbated by Folman's structuring the narrative on the personal chronology of (a victim's) belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit*). That is, the film follows the course of the subject's recognition of an earlier trauma, which is also Israel's founding trauma. In Folman's imagination, as the quest reveals, the earlier trauma has appropriated the later one.[10]

The work of "postmemory," described by Marianne Hirsch as the response of second-generation Holocaust survivors to the trauma of the first, "characterizes the experience of those who . . . have grown up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the powerful stories of the previous generation, shaped by monumental traumatic events that resist understanding and integration."[11] During Folman's quest, his best friend, the therapist, tells him that the unconsciously assimilated memories of his parents imposed on Folman "the role of the Nazi" when he was a soldier. The double postmemory shift from indirect perpetrator in Lebanon to direct perpetrator in the

Holocaust, and from the Lebanon camps to "those" camps, involves blurring identifications of childhood innocence and youthful complicity through mechanisms of repression and projection.

In fact, Folman's is a unique case of postmemory because his position as a second-generation Holocaust survivor involves more than one loss event and one agency. Hirsch explores the second generation's identification with the parent-victim but not an identification with the Nazi perpetrator through the subject position of the victim. In other words, her victim-oriented paradigm[12] does not include more than one option of postmemory, whereas *Waltz* suggests an expanded concept, by which second-generation postmemory work might be comprehended as more heterogeneous. This unconscious work done under conditions similar to symbolic kidnapping or lifelong captivity is characterized in the psychological and psychiatric literature by identification with the hostage taker.[13] For the son of Holocaust survivors—raised under conditions of enforced symbolic captivity—becoming an (indirect) perpetrator in Lebanon caused the horrific figure of the Nazi, the direct perpetrator, to haunt his (post)memory. This complex dynamic of identification processes ultimately blocked Folman from acknowledging his deed for twenty-six years, causing his unresolved guilt to grow to enormous proportions. The intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked specifically to collective trauma, allows this alteration. Displacement of ambiguous guilt over his indirect complicity in the genocide in Lebanon to the unambiguous past of the Second World War, for which, of course, Folman cannot be blamed, permits his (indirect) refusal to acknowledge his role. That is to say, although his postmemory does not change Folman's subject position from perpetrator to victim, it fails to provide him with a much-needed full circle of retransference: from past to present, from imagined perpetrator to actual (though indirect) one. Experiencing the postmemory subject position of the perpetrator ultimately creates an epistemological deadlock and a crisis of narrativization.

Moreover, the quest for the missing days entails finding the missing piece of his memory. Although this missing piece is shocking live footage of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, it still

functions as the protagonist's revelatory insight and the end of his self-tormenting search for missing memory. This redemptive narrative structure, not recognized by LaCapra, Eric L. Santner, and Richard Wilson,[14] prevents the circumstances surrounding the massacre from being dealt with—it refuses questions of how this came to happen, who allowed the Phalangists to enter the camps, what is the ethical meaning of the IDF presence, and so on. Moreover, the film does not relate to the incommensurability between Folman's revealing the missing piece, finding evidence of the deed, and the genocide. Indeed, as LaCapra contends, "Certain events, which should really pose ethical and political problems as serious problems, are assimilated in a way that is too easily redemptive . . . when the beginning [of the narrative] . . . gives way to a . . . revelatory insight at the end."[15] In other words, a crisis of narrativization (and disavowal of this crisis) inevitably follows the structuring of a redemptive narrative.

Waltz also presents perpetrator trauma as a crisis of evidence, realized through an iconic and indexical contrast between the animation that illustrates the quest and archival footage of the massacre seen for the first time in the final scene of the film. Folman's quest for the missing days involves meeting five of his former comrades-in-arms (whose stories are told in flashbacks intertwined with his own) and other figures. The last to whom we are introduced is Ron Ben-Yishai (Israeli Television's military correspondent at the time), whose voice-over explains the evolution of events. The first journalist to enter the refugee camps, Ben-Yishai describes the morning after the night of the massacre as Colonel Amos Yaron, IDF commander in the Beirut sector, arrives. Depicted from a high angle and extreme long shot, which emphasizes the as yet unseeable, Yaron looks at the group of women, children, and Phalangists running away from the camps, and he shouts (in what, in retrospect, will be evidence of the extreme complicity of the IDF as indirect perpetrator): "Stop the shooting! Stop the shooting immediately!" Following the women and children, who turn back and re-enter the camps, Ben-Yishai's voice-over is heard: "Suddenly I see a hand of a child and a curly head. . . . My daughter is the same age as this child." The camera shows the scene from Ben-Yishai's

point of view: the (animated) alleys of the refugee camp filled with the bodies of young men. Lying one on top of another, the heap, as Ben-Yishai's voice-over tells us, is chest-high. Then, over this animated scene, the sound of weeping women is heard. The camera is positioned behind them as they walk and cry. The track ceases gliding when the camera shows Folman's shocked expression as he stands before them; the close-up also represents the revelatory moment of regaining memory twenty-six years after the event. The editing cuts from the close-up to archival footage of the women crying, showing the camp full of slain bodies, until it stops on the curly hair of a small child. Cut. End.

The crisis of evidence is based on conflictual yet complementary relations between the iconic sign and the indexical. An intriguing hybrid, the film's innovative language (animated documentary) has its origins in the "old" logic of cinema aesthetics—with the alleged disparity between the icon (animation) and the index (live footage)—and moves between the two. This transformation endows the archive with a truth value that animation apparently lacks and with an eeriness and uncanniness that are "not associated with the realms of the icon or symbol."[16]

With regard to anxieties surrounding the status of representation in our (supposed) postmedium condition, Mary Ann Doane claims, "[Rosalind] Krauss stressed the abrupt and striking meaninglessness of the indexical trace or mold, its sole proposition that of 'thereness,' irrefutable presence. . . . In [her] argument, there is no tension between the index as trace and the deictic index; both involve the sheer affirmation of an existence, the emptiness of a 'meaningless meaning'" (3). In *Waltz*, the "thereness," with its abject materiality embodied in the crying women and the corpses, becomes utterly distinct from the phantom quality of the animated bodies that occupy the film until the introduction of photographed ones. Consequently, the "thereness" of the archive becomes firm—indeed, irrefutable—evidence of the deed; but it still preserves the epistemic gap between the deed and its acknowledgment. That is, the "sheer affirmation of an existence," as is described by Doane, is presented as an unacknowledged deed and projects its emptiness on the realm of the episteme.

For Folman and spectator alike, "The index makes that claim by virtue of its privileging of contact, of touch, of a physical connection. The digital can make no such claim and, in fact, is defined as its negation."[17] The immediacy and certainty of the corpses (which, according to these terms, negate the animated corpses that Folman encounters on the first day of the war) stand in contrast to the ease of manipulation of the digital and to its immateriality and timelessness, which proffers "the vision (or nightmare) of a medium without materiality" (142). In the final scenes, because of the sound, the presentation of the women is a portent of the privileged status endowed to the referential. The sound bridge of the women's cries (heard over their animated image and continuing through the archival scene) intensifies the difference and sameness of these two realms, as eventually both reflect the desire for a traditional, photographic, logic. The sound fortifies the representational shift from the phantom as (dis)embodied voice (animated women crying) to the speaking body (archival women crying).

The archival footage of the wailing women, which allows an effective visceral connection to the past as well as transmission of emotional truth, conceals the lack of any reference to the perpetrator assuming guilt. In viewing the footage, one does not need further evidence. As Susan Sontag tells us, "The very notion of atrocity, of war crime, is associated with the expectation of photographic evidence."[18] Moreover, the final scene offers a horrific fascination with the negative sublime, the realm of the abject. From the ambiguous title of the film (dance as a death trap) to the archival footage (the camps as a death trap), the spectral evidence does not resolve the irresolvable guilt.

The crisis of evidence is manifested at the level of the technological unconscious as well. In order to describe the language of the film, especially during the interviews, I suggest the term *photoanimation*. The source of inspiration for this term is the "photo-painting" of the German artist Gerhard Richter. In contrast to Richter's technique, however, Folman did not draw the animation on top of his photography; rather, he filmed a series of interviews and drew the film's animation based on that material. The drawn objects very closely match the filmed ones. By imitating photogra-

phy, the animation demonstrates a contemporary desire for referentiality.[19] As *Piece of Cake: The Making of "Waltz with Bashir"* (dir. Ari Folman, Israel/France/Germany/US/Finland/Switzerland/Belgium/Australia, 2008) reveals, most of the scenes were photographed in the studio by utilizing uncomplicated substitutes to create the basis for the animation—for example, using a tennis racket instead of a guitar for the *Apocalypse Now* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) beach scene or filming a member of the staff dancing for the club scene.

To say it differently, *Waltz* hardly takes advantage of the well-known ability of animation to stretch the boundaries of reality or the laws of physics and physiology. Its emphasis on the referential quality of the photographic as a type of mirror underneath the animation is an important contributing factor to the indirectness of the complicit perpetrator. Conceptualized through old logic and new appearance, the choice of photo-animation, like the choice of the redemptive narrative structure and the sound of women's cries over the animation, masks the indirect position of the complicit perpetrator with a feeling of closeness to reality—to truthfulness. In fact, however, it fails to commit to an ethical stand toward the truth that has been revealed.

In changing the viewers' perception of the nature of (documentary) cinema by creating a high affinity between previously untapped manipulative techniques and a hallucinatory, nightmarish mode, *Waltz* has established new forms of spectator engagement and audience address. Closer to fiction than to reportage, *Waltz* has given aesthetics a prominent role, both as a novel mediator of the desire to know that is typical of more traditional forms of documentary cinema and as a way to portray the documentary unconscious. The conflux aura of handmade painterly-based animation, digital images, and traditional photography explain *Waltz*'s new spectatorial experience. In the incessant tension between the simulacral aura endowed to the animation and the desire for referentiality evoked by the photo-animation, *Waltz* provokes a steady level of epistemological crisis.

A deep ambivalence toward acknowledging the complicitous perpetration is realized in the interconnectedness between the crises of narrativization and evidence and that of disclosure.

The film presents different kinds of ontological concealment. Most of the locations, incidents, and people are easily recognizable in the animation; however, the animation still functions as a major strategy of semidisclosure. Moreover, two of the former soldiers whose confessions appear in the film conditioned their participation on concealment: animation made possible the creation of two fictitious characters with voices dubbed by professional actors.[20]

A somehow renewed *Rashomon* (dir. Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950), the film found success (totally unexpected by its makers) in its bare equivocation: by mixing genres, cinematic modes, old and new media, cinematography and digital photography, and autobiography and collective memoir, *Waltz* promotes the culturalization of politics rather than the assumption of collective responsibility. In this, *Waltz* might be seen as a portent of new-millennium perpetrator trauma culture based on moral quandary and uncertain epistemology. Undoubtedly, this new form of festival-art-film — that is, *Waltz*'s hybrid expressivism — points to a new impasse. Its immense success is evidence of potential mobilization of world audiences into an experience of multiplicitous complexity while simultaneously suggesting an (irresolvable) solution to current (post-9/11) aesthetic, traumatic, and epistemic impasses.

In contrast to the hazards embodied in this indirect perpetrator trauma film, the films analyzed below demonstrate a different engagement with the spectator.

Z32: Cinematic Shelter for the Posttraumatic Perpetrator

Two years after the events *Z32* examines, the director Avi Mograbi accompanies an anonymous ex-Israeli soldier to Deir as-Sudan near Ramallah in the Occupied Territories, where he and comrades from his elite unit had been summoned to murder six innocent Palestinians in retaliation for the deaths of six Israeli soldiers. The ex-soldier gradually confesses his crime in front of the camera and his girlfriend. During the entire confession, the two are concealed under variously shaped digital masks.[21] The director intervenes throughout by performing Brechtian songs that reflect on his own involvement in the unfolding confession.

Mask-to-mask: guilt transference in *Z32* (dir. Avi Mograbi,
France/Israel, 2008). Courtesy Avi Mograbi

A crisis of disclosure: the ex-soldier in *Z32*.
Courtesy Avi Mograbi

Z32 presents the trauma of a perpetrator who has actually
committed an atrocity.[22] In contrast to *Waltz*, which is centered on
Folman's quest to reclaim his memory, *Z32* is centered around the
ex-soldier's long confessional process, partly motivated by this visit
to the actual site of the atrocity. A renarrativization of the flow of
events preceding the killing, through which the veteran strives to
overcome his numbed and undeciphered guilt, is repeated cease-

lessly; the whole film is thus bracketed by the formative process of acknowledgment. Interdependence of the crises of narrativization, audience, and disclosure is embodied in a multiconfessional form: the role of the confessor is played out to various degrees by all of the participants in the drama. The film stages three confessors (and an accompanying chorus akin to that in a Greek tragedy), all of whom wrestle with the retelling of the eye-for-an-eye narrative.[23] The first is the actual perpetrator, who struggles with the act of confession and with a wish for imaginary guilt transference and forgiveness. A film student, the ex-soldier also functions as the director of the scenes in which he and his girlfriend talk. He directs himself (and his girlfriend) during his gradual acknowledgment of the deed, exposing himself to both his inner and outer gazes. The digital gap between shooting the film—without masks but with the protagonists aware of their imaginary presence—and postproduction serves the tensions entailed in gazing through a mask: being someone versus being no one, visibility versus invisibility, feeling versus numbing. As the confession unfolds and more details are revealed (the excessive pressure to conform via groupthink,[24] the craze of killing, revulsion over touching a corpse), it is evident that the veteran should have wrestled with deep moral and ethical dilemmas alongside his military duties. However, only during the confession, two years after the event, does he finally realize that his military duties and his moral and ethical responsibilities conflict in major ways.[25]

The crisis of narrativization is exemplified in its double, contradictory function: on the one hand, narrativization becomes a substitute for, and a defense against, conscious guilt—that is, against the production of truth, through constant discursive references that replace exact descriptions of offenses with generic names. Moreover, the ex-soldier chooses repeated renarrativization to transfer his guilt to his girlfriend ("Now tell my story as if you had been there, as if it's me"), hungrily seeking his self in the mirror constituted by the significant other. Telling becomes a self-persecutory mode, a substitute for real punishment that (due to the mask) will never take place. On the other hand, this self-tormenting procedure gradually becomes a way to work through

memory, to be ethically committed, and thus to undermine the evasion of guilt. The crisis of narrativization rests, that is, on the contrast between the narcissistically aggressive and the mentally adaptive dimensions of guilt.[26]

The second confessor is the girlfriend, whom the veteran positions in the imaginary role of his former self—male combat soldier turned war criminal. He asks her again and again to confess his story while she tries in vain to embody the dual role of reenactor and audience. Her failure to describe even the initial stages of the chronology proves the IDF's policy of gradually habituating soldiers to what Neta C. Crawford calls "structural systemic atrocity."[27] That is, her failed reenactment reveals her boyfriend's submission to an (inimitable) climate of profound ideological distortions and deeper attitudes of indifference, including denial of the humanity of civilians. While assimilating the unbearable thought that her lover is a murderer, the girlfriend expands the boundaries of confession by raising moral issues:

She: But I don't understand how you could have felt joy, pleasure, intoxication.

He: Babe, you think I'm a murderer?

She: I . . . no . . . I . . . no . . . I don't think you're a murderer—but . . . I'm sure the wife of the person you killed and his children see you as one.

He: And you? Do you see me as a murderer?

She: It was murder; he was not a terrorist! It was not done in defense! It is murder, it was murder, and you were part of it, so what can I say?

He: And do you forgive me?

The girlfriend's failure to confess is noticeable when the veteran's first-person masculine account of the story is transformed in her rendition to a failed mimicking of his tough voice. Her failure also attests to the crisis of gender, both masculine and feminine. Her repeated failures and resistances expose the tension inherent in shared responsibility, since she represents not only the gap between women (in their traditional role of nonparticipation in

or nonsupport of wars, let alone war crimes) and men, but also between the actual perpetrator and society, the indirect perpetrator. Being part of Israeli society, the girlfriend embodies a level of collective morality through her negative attitude toward normalization of systemic violence that took place during the period of the second intifada. In this, she not only signifies the tensions of collective morality (or its absence), humanization (or dehumanization), and mimicry (or the refusal of mimicry), but also the importance of women as a potentially oppositional force in a highly militarized society, struggling to break through the chains of traditional masculinity.

The third confessor is the director, Avi Mograbi, who—mainly through the postmodern post-Brechtian songs he writes—intervenes to advance the revelation of truth while simultaneously performing-confessing his complicity in what he defines as "giving a cinematic shelter to a murderer instead of turning him over to the courts." The gap between contradictory forms of intervention (identification with, criticism of, and complicity with the protagonist), on the one hand, and the combination of confessional acting out and performance of confession, on the other, exacerbate the crises of narrativization and audience. Beginning with the first scenes, in which Mograbi is shown near his desk struggling to breathe through a black hood, the director succumbs to a postmodern ironic playfulness and takes on various roles: imaginary detainee; disclosed perpetrator; investigator; military policeman who locates the crime zone; and the (post-)Brechtian narrator.[28] Positioned in front of his own camera, he is both protagonist and docu-auteur; like the girlfriend, he crosses the boundaries between participant and listener, thereness and hereness.

Z32 is simultaneously a cinematic indictment and a cinematic cover, a work that tracks the ambivalence of complicity while the docu-activist's confession ironically celebrates the epistemic impasses of his complicitous act. The crisis of disclosure continues throughout the entire film. The mask chosen by the ex-soldier to hide his identity (and prevent the threat of being arrested abroad) connects him in a ghostly way to his victim, the innocent Palestinian who was chosen arbitrarily and whose name he does not know.

Like him, the perpetrator becomes anonymous. In the Israeli visual culture of the intifada, the mask symbolically functions as the hood, frequently used in the torture of detainees or prisoners. Is this also a kind of self-projection into the preferred pre-revenge status of the absent victim—that is, the prisoner? Or is it an imaginary hood in the hands of the cinematic executioner—the director? The imaginary torture that the veteran did not suffer turns into a self-tormenting procedure symbolized by the mask that links the crisis of disclosure to the crisis of narrativization.

During face-to-face—or, rather, mask-to-mask—encounters, the mask increases the veteran's anxiety since, in acting out different strategies of denial and concealment, he is afraid of losing face in front of his girlfriend. Moreover, the mask seals off the body and prevents sentience in the sense discussed by Emmanuel Levinas.[29] In fact, the body itself functions as a mask: a faceless entity, it serves as a barrier to itself. The ex-soldier positions himself and his girlfriend on the sofa or in the kitchen, usually framed in medium shots, thus limiting their bodily interaction and movement. Similarly, in the Deir as-Sudan scenes, the ex-soldier, confused by his inability to recall the space of atrocity and to bridge the gap between his unbearable memory and the normalized present life he evidenced, can't find his way. His body lacks orientation, is almost blind.

Analyzing how the norms of war neutralized morally significant relationships to violence and injurability, Judith Butler contends,

Those who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization. . . . Does violence effect the unreality? . . . If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). . . . Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object. The derealization of the "Other" means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral.[30]

In *Z32*, Mograbi's use of a variety of digital masks intensifies the spectral estrangement (*Verfremdungseffekt*) of which Butler writes.

Moreover, the mere variety of masks in the film disrupts their taken-for-granted camouflage status. Transformation from a noticeable, opaque mask to one that is almost unnoticeable and transparent further reflects on the connection between the absent subject (the dead) and the perpetrator (the living ghost).

As it suggests the apotropaic function of the mask (to ward off evil), the psychoaesthetic shift in *Z32* to more "face-like" digital masks hints at constant dialectics with evil and exorcism. Is disclosure (of booby traps, of the atrocity, of the dead, of the perpetrator, of those hiding him) evidence of a culture that fetishizes the act of concealment? At the height of this process of masking, Mograbi superimposes his face between the ex-soldier and his girlfriend, reflecting on the contrast between the faceless masks and his face, literalizing his position as an intermediary.

Giving cinematic shelter to a murderer? The director in *Z32*. Courtesy Avi Mograbi

The ex-soldier wears a very noticeable mask with clear contours when he confesses to his girlfriend the first offense in which he was indirectly involved. He tells her that, in clear disregard of recommendations, a pressure-sensitive explosive device was placed near the Palestinian post from which a sniper had shot IDF soldiers. The next morning on their way to school, "four kids stepped on it and were blown to bits. Four brothers were killed." In the next scene, in front of the director's camera, as the ex-soldier talks about

preparing for the revenge mission, the mask he wears is so incon-
spicuous that the viewer is forced to reconsider what we are seeing.
The more the ex-soldier is involved, the more imperceptible the
mask becomes, as if his bare face is indeed being revealed to us.

These concealment games become highly controversial as
the spectator gradually becomes aware of the theme of revenge.
In fact, at the center of the interdependence between the crises of
narrativization, audience, disclosure, gender, and evidence in *Z32*
stands the subplot of revenge—one of the oldest topics in Western
literature and to this day a ubiquitous element in popular culture.
Yet, in current psychoanalytic and trauma theory, even among
theorists such as Lewis-Herman, Robert Jay Lifton, and Leys, the
emphasis remains more on the role that shame and narcissistic
injury play in the psychic life of trauma survivors than on revenge.

The processes leading to the act of retaliation described
by the ex-soldier throughout his confession—and as *To See If I'm
Smiling*, described below, also reveals—are typical of the second
intifada period and conform to the major reasons for a predilec-
tion to war crimes indicated by Lifton.[31] Analyzing the mechanism
at work in what he terms "an atrocity-producing situation," Lifton
claims: "Extreme trauma creates a second self. . . . It's a form of dou-
bling in the traumatized person. . . . There have to be elements that
are at odds in the two selves, including ethical contradictions."[32]
Moreover, he says, "The second self functions fully as a whole self;
for this reason it is so adaptable and so dangerous. It enables a
relatively ordinary person to commit evil. . . . Another function
of this doubling is . . . in the case of perpetrators, the transfer of
conscience. The conscience becomes associated with the group,
with the sense of duty."[33]

Crawford elaborates on Lifton's characterization, emphasiz-
ing that this situation is typical of counterinsurgency wars, the new
"war on terrorism," and wars of occupation, which, she claims, are
"particularly prone to sustained atrocity [when the conflicts are]
driven by profound ideological distortions."[34] She calls attention
to the preexisting social structure: "These are systemic atrocities in
the sense that they are produced not so much by individuals exer-
cising their individual human agency, but by actions taken under

the constraints of a larger social structure" (188–89). An act at the limits of social rationality, revenge—following Lifton's and Crawford's insights—demonstrates the destructive forms of masculinity that seem prevalent in the intifada period. It also demonstrates the difficulty that entails in assigning moral responsibility in cases of systemic atrocity.

The original script of *Z32* is brimming with stories the ex-soldier tells about abhorrent acts he was involved in during his military service. Mograbi cuts these stories out of the film and focuses on the revenge killing. This is made particularly clear in the title sequence, which appears after the first third of the film following the story about the children but before the ex-soldier confesses to the revenge killings. In this, Mograbi subverts the relationship between the integral cinematic form and the title sequence as a miniaturized, compact cinematic form embedded within it. He thus initiates the spectator into the perpetrator trauma narrative by differentiating between participation in indirect and in direct atrocities.

In many respects, the revenge subplot is emblematic of the quintessential cyclical character of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially during the second intifada. Perhaps more than any other symbol, revenge offers a way of thinking about Israeli-Palestinian relations in terms of time because it signifies the regressive power of the inescapable past to persist and to retreat to some supposed original moment of violence. Recalling Aeschylus's tragedies, Daniel Hack writes: "Revenge is usually understood as belonging to the past, both structurally and historically: although the seeking of revenge involves planning for the future, this future is conceived of as a direct product of and response to events in the past."[35] The revenge cyclicality, however, worsens the crisis of evidence by transporting the confessional act back to its mythical-religious origins. The notion that a random group of victims must pay for the guilt of others simply because they belong to a certain people suggests reasoning based on religious ideology, since it presupposes a notion of collective guilt or sin. From the Israeli perspective, in terms of the kind of war waged, this concept is translated into the "sin" of Palestinians "winning" an attack. Therefore, in a profoundly pitiless act, the extreme anger of the avenger becomes punishment:

by death in the case of the victims, and by fear of death among the Palestinian civil population at large.

This scapegoat function, described by René Girard, is both depicted and displaced in *Z32*.[36] The interweaving of crises is revealed by the representation of revenge caught in the dialectic between its status as a mythical and transhistorical (if cyclical) form and its status as a backward desire grounded in historical time and place. A perverse mode of healing, the aim of the attack was not merely to avenge the dead soldiers but to avenge the damaged self, which underwent unbearable experiences during military service. During the confession, however, revenge reveals that the perpetrator is unable to make the act a repository for traumatic emotion—one that may have the potential to assist in recovering a sense of agency, cohesion, or meaningful action. The ex-soldier exposes a hidden prohibition on Israeli soldiers' collective and public mourning of Palestinians by telling his girlfriend that, after the deed, back at the base, the whole regiment cried over the dead Israeli soldiers. The nature of this confession paradoxically imitates the act itself—a cyclical, repetitious acting out.

Through this acting out and its multiconfessional performers, *Z32* explores various issues relating to perpetrator trauma. These include the ability of stand-ins to reflect upon or participate in a trauma they did not experience; the concept of complicity; the different layers of intrapsychic and interpersonal processing of the actual occurrence; and the possibility of finding relief, if not redemption, in retelling a trauma. The film emphasizes the huge discrepancy between the indirect perpetrator trauma film (*Waltz*) and the direct perpetrator trauma film, though the cinematic shelter given to the murderer still preserves a high level of ambivalence toward the deed.

To See If I'm Smiling: The Female Soldier as Perpetrator

In *To See If I'm Smiling*, director Tamar Yarom interviews six women who had been IDF soldiers and served in the Occupied Territories during the second intifada. As is widely known, in Israel, at age eighteen, almost all women are conscripted into the military. In

contrast to *Z32*, in *Smiling*, a number of years after their release all of the women fully confess to their participation in, or complicity with, wrongdoings and human rights violations during their military service. In distinction to the male perpetrators in *Waltz* and *Z32*, who are concealed behind animated figures or digital masks, *Smiling* does not hide the protagonists and thus does not present a crisis of disclosure. The female perpetrators talk openly to the camera about their deeds: Meital, a medic and medical officer, posed for a picture of herself with the naked body of a dead Palestinian; Libi, a combat soldier, humiliated and abused Palestinians during her shifts at a checkpoint; Rotem, a video surveillance officer, supervised a chase during which a child who threw an incendiary bomb at IDF soldiers was killed; Dana, an education officer, did not report looting carried out by her platoon; Tal, a welfare officer, searched and examined Palestinian women at checkpoints; and Inbar, an operations sergeant, did not report abuse of a Palestinian child by IDF soldiers and assisted her commander in replacing the criminal report with a false one.

The interviews capture some of the reality experienced by female soldiers who were not charged with crimes but who must wrestle with deep moral dilemmas that are the result of their (indirect and/or complicit) perpetration. In contrast to Folman in *Waltz* and to the anonymous ex-soldier in *Z32*, the women in *Smiling*, most of them holding apparently privileged positions as noncombatant soldiers and therefore exposed to a relatively lower level of atrocity-producing situations, talk about their past very directly, with a level of self-awareness and acknowledgment of guilt uncommon in the male perpetrator's confessions. Devoid of self-pity and narcissistic self-blaming, they share their stories with Yarom through a rare intimacy—their exceptional openness influenced, so it seems, by the empathy of the director, herself an ex-soldier who had gone through similar tribulations during the first intifada.[37]

The confessions here are characterized by a pattern similar to the biblical account of the fall, showing a more drastic before-and-after contrast than those of the male soldiers. The narrativizations of the women indicate an unbridgeable gap between their naive idealism before being drafted and their later shattered adjust-

ment to, and complicity with, a reality described by one of them as the "Wild West." Gender crisis in *Smiling* is embodied in the female encounter with a more typically male world of atrocities. Repressed by both their brothers-in-arms and the intifada, the female soldiers, desiring acceptance into the prevalent comradeship, underwent incessant subordination to forces that trapped them in a contradictory situation in what they wrongly believed were equal relations.

Being part of a male-dominated system, the women describe, in an unsentimental and self-alienating yet painful tone, how they had to adjust to appalling events perpetrated by their male comrades, including the bombing of Palestinian houses and consequent street fighting during Palestinian riots. Tal, for instance, confesses:

My first operation took place on my twentieth birthday. . . . It was the first time I had encountered a population in a real distressed state of fighting, of war . . . when your house is destroyed, and you are out on the street with all your belongings, which are pretty much nothing, and in amok. . . . My commander orders me: "Go ahead, take a bat and beat them! You are with us, so do it!"

As in this case, the women attest to a sense of selfhood that was fundamentally enmeshed in violent circumstances by their surrounding militarily disciplined world and the gendered reality of the intifada.

Women soldiers at the checkpoint in *To See If I'm Smiling*
(dir. Tamar Yarom, Israel, 2007). Courtesy Tamar Yarom

Moreover, all of the women talk about the unbearable lightness of mortality in the Territories and their shocking encounters with the ubiquity of (Palestinian and/or Israeli) death—on the army base, at suicide bombing sites, in the hospital, and in the streets. Part of a daily routine, this new intimacy with the "utmost of abjection" (as Julia Kristeva calls it),[38] the corpse became highly menacing, especially when emerging in abusive situations. Inbar, for instance, recalls an incident in which a Palestinian man reached the fence of the military base in which she served, and he climbed it, shouting "*Allāhu Akbar!*" (God is [the] greatest!). Since this happened at the height of the second intifada, instead of being shot in the leg (the order at other times), he was shot dead. "The body remained hanging over the fence, and I didn't know what to do with it," she states, marking the corpse as both a common and an impossible presence.

The ghostly presence of an abused or dead Palestinian, especially a dead child, has a visual correlative in *Smiling*. A repeated image, which appears between the confessions, shows a war zone—we see poverty, deserted streets, hostile looks, the absence of life—taken through the open back door of a jeep driven by an unseen driver constantly traveling the streets of some Arab city in the Territories. This no-one's-point-of-view imparts both the feeling of being haunted by ghosts and the feeling of falling down. Like most of the footage used in the film to illustrate the confessions, such images have almost never been shown on Israeli television. Yarom chose to insert only images that are atypical of the usual intifada iconography, to challenge the Israeli spectator.

Shot by the organizations Btselem, Breaking the Silence, and Machsom Watch; the Ramallah news agency, Ramatan; and foreign news agencies like the Associated Press, these illustrations were occasionally turned into reenactments by Yarom. For example, she encloses the illustration used in Rotem's confession (of her part in chasing after Palestinian children that had thrown stones and bombs) in a frame reminiscent of a video surveillance monitor. In this way, she transforms arbitrary illustrations into truth-laden reenactments. The result is a unique case of the absent subject discussed by Bill Nichols in his analysis of fantasy in documentaries. According to Nichols, "A lost object haunts the film. The attempt to conjure that specter . . . signals the mark of desire. . . . Attempts to

come to terms with death, catastrophe, and trauma are extreme or limit cases of the more general desire to come to terms with loss."[39] However, in *Smiling*, there are two specters—one is the female perpetrator who, although present, becomes the living dead after the event; the other is the victim, the lost child.

The crisis of narrativization, less severe than that of the male perpetrators in the other films, is embodied in *Smiling* mainly in the women's confessions of the enormous difficulty in both conjuring the dead (mainly the Palestinian child) and forgetting them. Paradoxically, their avoidance of concealment does not enable the camera to function as a prosthetic extension of the dead. The return to the lost object, the corpse, and to the irretrievable moment of perpetration becomes, therefore, their—and the film's—major imperative. The no-one's-point-of-view and illustration-turned-reenactment constantly conjure ghosts.

In the impossible fantasmatic-traumatic space of the intifada, the female perpetrators present two spheres of gender crisis: motherliness and femininity. Tal, Inbar, and Rotem devote their confessions to what they conceive is a failed, almost treacherous, motherliness, while Libi, Dana, and Meital struggle with images of femininity revealed to be unsuitable in a highly masculine militaristic order. In the following, I describe two representative cases: Rotem's perpetration, linked to failed motherliness, and Meital's, linked to failed femininity.

The interwoven crises of gender and evidence are embodied in the image of bloodstained hands that stands at the core of Rotem's confession. As mentioned earlier, she reveals that, during a chase that she directed as a video surveillance officer, a child who threw an incendiary bomb was killed. Shocked over the unavoidable in- *jus in bello* ([in]justice in war) as well as the impossibility of *jus post bellum* (justice after war), she recalls her initial acknowledgment: "I used to go home on leave and call my friend in the army: 'Sivan, it won't come off!' . . . I keep trying with soap! . . . I have blood on my hands! I don't know what to do!' " The link between bloodstained hands and evidence entails religious connotations well known in the Judaic (and Christian) tradition. The perpetrator's hands attest to the crisis of evidence: similar to Isaiah's rebuke, they serve as an indexical trace of the unseeable,

bleeding-to-death body; however, as a deictic index they also imply what Doane describes as "an emptiness, a hollowness that can only be filled in specific, contingent, always mutating situations."[40] The duality of the (Peirceian) index as both a trace and a *deixis* points to the duality of the resurrection of the unseeable event by the unseeable bloodstained hands. In other words, the tension between the two attributes of the index intensifies the crisis of evidence.

In contrast to the confessions of the male perpetrators seen in the other films I have discussed, Rotem does not blame (implicitly, as in *Waltz*; or explicitly, as in *Z32*) their military training, the nature of war, or her commanders. She describes her guilt in biblical-religious terms, as if she has internalized both the ancient and modern male voice. Moreover, being trapped in a prophetic male inner voice is irresolvable given her relationship to the child for whose death she feels responsible. In this regard, her "masculine" behavior during her shift generates the unbearable subject position of being both a fe(male) perpetrator and a female, and this is exemplified in her loneliness. Isolated from the bonding that is characteristic of male veterans after they leave the army, when repeatedly asked after her release what is wrong, she tersely answers: "I killed a child."

Another of the main protagonists in *Smiling*, Meital, a medic and medical officer, was responsible for the southern West Bank Hebron sector. Her confession is built on two interrelated stories that connect the crisis of gender to intergender and ethnic relationships. Both stories concern rituals of purification meant to overcome fear of contamination from the corpse and from the deeds against Palestinian victims.

Meital describes her first encounter with a corpse, which she was ordered to clean because, while suffering a nonfatal injury and slowly bleeding to death, the victim lost control of his sphincter. She scrubs his body, "And then his eyes opened again. It happens. It's a reflex. And it's a very scary moment. It's as if he's coming back to life." With self-loathing, Meital describes how she was required again and again to clean the corpses of Palestinians before they were returned to the Palestinian Authority so that "they wouldn't see what we did to [them]." Thus, the second story depicts what became a "normative" situation of her being alone in the sector when the corpses arrive:

Another body . . . and cleansing . . . then . . . something very funny
happens. He has an erection. A dead body with an erection. We laugh
a little because it's embarrassing. And . . . some female sergeants that
I knew arrive from the operations room. One of them has a camera
and . . . without even thinking, I tell her: "Come take my picture." I sit
down next to the dead body and . . . I have my picture taken.

Using static camera and close-ups or medium close-ups during
the entire confession, Yarom depicts Meital's facial expressions
(shock, disgust, self-alienation, shame, embarrassment, determi-
nation to tell, deep sadness) as she tells these tales.

In both stories, the Palestinian corpse is brought to life
through the subversion of the (symbolic and actual) castration
imposed on it. The crisis of gender is revealed in how the two
stories emphasize the tension between the triumph of the female
perpetrator over the defeated body of the male other and its seem-
ing indestructibility. As the narrative proves, the oppressive forces
that placed the female perpetrator involuntarily in a vulnerable
position culminate in her complicitous purification (in this case,
cover-up) of the other's harmed body. Simultaneously, induced or
seduced by malicious circumstances, she abuses it. Overcoming
corporeal vulnerability, the excremental becomes magic because
the dead insists on keeping the abject disruptive forces constantly
unassimilated, calling into question the dialectics of contamina-
tion and purification.

The revolt of the dead against objectification also occurs
through the act of seeing, which is closely related to the scopic
regime of Israeli culture. Although, as Sontag tells us, the dead are
profoundly uninterested in us—they do not seek our gaze—the
Palestinian "look" is strongly connected to the perpetrator's refusal
to see.[41] The confessions that the six women make in *Smiling* show
that the Israeli culture of perpetration during the second intifada
is based on phallocracy, omnipresence, and the omnivoyeuristic
impulse. However, as the paradox of living on in a state of deadness
proves, the escalation of omnivoyeurism (as exemplified in Rotem's
video surveillance, Meital's photography, and Tal and Inbar's
checkpoint body searches) is concomitant with the perpetrator's
denial of what they see, or refusal to see. As Butler states, "This 'not

seeing' in the midst of seeing, this not-seeing that is the condition of seeing, has become the visual norm, and it is that norm that is a national norm, one that we read in the photographic frame as it conducts this fateful disavowal."[42]

Is the picture of Meital with the dead body a case of fascination with abomination? Is this the "first . . . transgression that gets you into the hallowed halls of the taboo"?[43] As hinted at above, there is no doubt that, as a traumatic gendered experience, cleansing and erasing the traces of the castrated other has meaning beyond ethnic difference. Meital's act also means a sexualization of the act of seeing and photographing that is distinct from, though in tandem with, the sexualization of the depicted scene of degradation. An interesting twist in the common Barthesian connection between photography and death, the moral indifference of the photograph is belied by its investment in the reiteration of the scene.[44]

That scene is one of bodily witnessing. This is clarified by John Durham Peters's etymological analysis of the bodily basis of testimony, which sheds light on the erection as the victim's testimony to the dehumanization he suffers:

Testimony stems from *testamentum*, covenant (*testis* plus *mentum*). *Testis*, which in Latin means both witness and testicle, itself stems from *tertius*, meaning third (party). In ancient Greek, the word for witness is the word for testicle: *parastatês*, which literally means by-stander. In German, *Zeugnis* means testimony, and *zeugen* means to testify as well as to procreate. . . . This curious web of metaphors . . . attests to some deep assumptions about the physicality of witnessing.[45]

The erection might be seen as a bodily testimonial to the victim's trauma. From the Israeli viewpoint, the act of purification validates death but also makes the corpse "live" again, apparently conjuring its sexual "prowess"—that is, its will to testify. This photograph freezes the testimony of the dead body in tandem with Meital's wrongdoing indicated by the perverse sadistic pleasure of her smile, which is referenced in the very title of the film.[46] After her release from the army, the smile stands in contrast to her self-loathing as she sees the corpse's "testimony."

Posing and smiling for a picture is therefore the site of perpetration, a means of mastering the ghostly-manly power of the other, of finally arresting and degrading it. Meital's denial of her vulnerability to the other through a fantasy of mastery means active involvement in the perspective of war, the elaboration of that perspective, and the validation of its ignored or broken rules. In this instance, the photograph functions in part as a way of registering a certain lawlessness. The corpse has been deprived of honor by the sadistic use of his pose (so to speak) to take a picture during the most intimate moment of dying. The symbolic violence of taking that picture becomes an irreparable act.

Smiling presents the aftereffects of Meital's act. When she is released from the army, she becomes depressed (much like Boaz in *Waltz*), suffers from insomnia, and starts drinking. In the final scene, years later, she looks for the first time at the photo she wanted to distance from her conscience. We do not see it, only her face. In shock, with tears and pain, she says, "How in God's name did I ever think I could forget this?" The female ex-soldier breaches the unspeakability of the corpse in a continuing inner dialogue with it. Her willingness to relive her wrongdoing becomes an ethical act that indicates her willingness to recognize the Other: both the victimized Other and the perpetrating Other within herself.

Pain and shame—Meital in the last scene of *To See If I'm Smiling*. Courtesy Tamar Yarom

Likewise, Rotem and the other women in *Smiling* resemble Meital in that they cope with their guilt by disclosing their vulnerability. The film reveals that women are more likely to express the tension between direct and vicarious participation in wrongdoings. In this sense, the unconcealed trauma of the female perpetrator is different from the (concealed) trauma of the male perpetrator.

Does *Smiling* indeed depict the intifada's (atrocity-producing) situation in the Territories as more powerful than gender differences? The film reveals that such differences were highly influenced by the masculine order of the intifada and Israeli actions. Moreover, in Israel, where their military service is compulsory but much more likely to be spent in support roles than actual combat, female soldiers rarely succeed in radically negotiating gender identities within the military institution. The question still remaining is what types of transformations in their gender ideology and practices were caused by the traumatic events. The confessions prove that the female soldiers' marginal place in the male-dominated military, along with their so-called equality in quasi-combat jobs, not only makes it more likely they will follow orders and try to fit in but traps them in morally corrupt circumstances. The film offers various conflicting accounts of what it means for women to wage war. Only the posttrauma of military service compels the women to examine their previous norms and explore avenues for asserting possibilities of agent selfhood. According to *Smiling,* military service does not radically transform traditional gender relations but leads to later acknowledgment of how the gendered norms of war operate when atrocities are carried out.

Conclusion: The Perpetrator Complex

Considering direct versus indirect perpetration, murder versus wrongdoings, and denial versus acknowledging responsibility lets us compare these films so as to best evaluate the implications of perpetration and its acknowledgment. On the one hand, there are striking similarities among all three films that I have discussed; on the other, *Waltz* stands apart as a different cultural phenomenon, not because of its far-reaching cinematic innovation, which made

it the only one of these films to attain major international success, but because of its distanciation from the intifada period and its radical ambiguity. As we have seen, the female perpetrators in *Smiling* confess their guilt openly and so pave the way for other Israelis to acknowledge their own deeds. Similarly, *Z32* exposes (albeit anonymously) the very existence of the horrific deeds; though its masks become part of Israeli society's ongoing cover-up of atrocities, they paradoxically allow the veteran to be seen as any ex-Israeli soldier. That is, the digital mask not only conceals the identity of the specific perpetrator but also enables this nonidentity to become an all-identity, thus inviting a direct embodiment.

In other words, the split between the confession of the direct perpetrator and that of the complicit indirect one suggests not only the deep schism inside Israeli society toward its still hidden moral obligation but also ongoing repression of the evils of the intifada and Israel's response to it. Above, I claimed that the atrocity-producing situation of the intifada was more dominant than gender differences in shaping the moral stance of both male and female soldiers. It is therefore clear that the confessions of the indirect perpetrators, though aimed at rupturing the repression, are but another indication of it. As both the Breaking the Silence project and this new wave of documentaries show, once the worst period of Palestinian terror and Israeli military action had passed, IDF veterans were able to contribute a new perspective to the discourse surrounding the chronic ills of the occupation.[47]

The differences in the perpetrators' willingness to acknowledge guilt demonstrate the importance of taking into account the ecology of perpetrator trauma—that is, the environment in which trauma is recognized and the backdrop (both traumatic and nontraumatic) to the events. In different ways and to varying intensities, these films structure the sociocultural contexts that label, shape, and give meaning to their depictions of perpetrator trauma during war as well as recognize a range of emotional attitudes toward the confessions. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra emphasizes "the importance of providing social contexts in which former perpetrators may acknowledge their past actions and attempt to work out a different relation to former victims . . . —including the dead—in a manner that enables empathic response and the

possibility of mourning."[48] Though LaCapra is not referring here to the posttraumatic perpetrator, his suggestion is very much in line with Lewis-Herman's claim that a political movement to promote societal recognition of (victim) trauma is essential. As I see it, the films' emergence demonstrates a relatively mature phase of Israeli sociocultural life, one that may set the backdrop for assuming responsibility and encouraging mourning of those formerly conceived as ungrievable.

The deep tensions and crises characterizing *Waltz with Bashir*, *Z32*, *To See If I'm Smiling*, and the other films briefly mentioned, on one hand, and the unpredictable ecology of trauma, on the other, should lead us finally to consider perpetrator trauma as a complex. This means accepting that the perpetrator's relationship with society is immanently irresolvable. In contrast to a victim's testimony, which is meant to address an imaginary supportive community, the perpetrator's confession, as these films prove, takes another, double path. The posttraumatic perpetrator simultaneously addresses his or her guilt as well as society's indirect complicitous guilt, thus defining the conflictual character of the perpetrator complex. Moreover, as the ex-soldier's subjection to postmemory in *Waltz* or the imaginary transference of guilt in *Z32* indicate, there is a gap between psychological and ethical terms. As *Smiling* and, to a lesser degree, the other films demonstrate, only by maintaining a permanent division between a perpetrator's trauma and his or her deeds (though both relate to the same event), by giving a full account and by relating to the trauma in ethical—rather than psychological—terms, will the perpetrator advance the willingness of society to accept that he or she was sent at its behest. Indeed, while guilt raises spectatorial identification that might serve to weaken common processes of disavowal taking place on the collective level, an intense identification with the psychological level of the confessor, as *Waltz* illustrates, blocks the way for this necessary weakening. This instability characterizes the perpetrator complex. Thus the complex involves an ambiguous relationship between the psychological and ethical levels of perpetrator trauma so that, by definition, it includes the propensity of perpetrator trauma to remain on the periphery of collective moral responsibility. This becomes more acute if we accept the view that

society's responsibility "has three integral and essential components: not just the responsibility to react to an actual or apprehended human catastrophe, but the responsibility to prevent it, and the responsibility to rebuild after the event."[49]

As I hope my analysis of the new wave of films demonstrates, Israeli cinema, attached on one side to the legacy of the Holocaust and on the other to the Israeli occupation, is a highly relevant case for probing the limits of both victim and perpetrator traumas and for revisiting and recontextualizing the crucial moment in which the victim/perpetrator cultural symbiosis is dismantled. Finally, I venture to suggest that the perpetrator complex and the crises in representation of perpetrator trauma discussed in this article—crises in evidence, disclosure, gender, audience, and narrativization—are not limited to the Israeli new wave of films, but rather can characterize to some extent any new war cinematic text that struggles to conjure this ghost and to represent its trauma, as the films *Long Night's Journey into Day* (dir. Deborah Hoffmann and Frances Reid, US, 2000) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (dir. Errol Morris, US, 2008), for example, so amply illustrate. The question is whether, in the age of new war, documentary cinema is capable of liberating world audiences from trauma envy and thrusting trauma culture into the realm of ethics.

Notes

1.   See also *Undercover Dreams* (dir. Yehuda Kaveh, Israel, 2003), *One Shot* (dir. Nurit Kedar, Israel, 2004); and *Aftershock* (dir. Yariv Horowitz, Israel, 2002).

2.   *Smiling* won the Audience Award and Silver Wolf at the
      Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival
      (2007), best documentary at the Haifa International Film
      Festival (2007), and best documentary at the Annual Israeli
      Documentary Forum Awards (2008). *Waltz* was the first animated
      film to have received a nomination for either an Academy Award
      or a Golden Globe for best foreign language film. It was also
      the first Israeli film since 1971 to be awarded a Golden Globe
      for best foreign language film. *Z32* won first prize at the Gijón
      International Film Festival, Spain (2008).

3.   On the definition of new war in contrast to old war, see Neta C.
      Crawford, "Just War Theory and the US Counterterror War,"
      Perspectives on Politics 1, no. 1 (2003): 5–25; R. G. Frey and
      Christopher W. Morris, "Violence, Terrorism, and Justice," in
      Violence, Terrorism, and Justice, ed. Christopher W. Morris and R.
      G. Frey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–17;
      Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict*
      (London: Guilford Press, 1997); James Turner Johnson, *Morality
      and Contemporary Warfare* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,
      1999); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a
      Global Era*, 2nd ed. (1998; Stanford, CA: Stanford University
      Press, 2006); and Michael Walzer, "After the Gulf," in *Just
      and Unjust Wars*, 4th ed. (1977; New York: Basic Books, 2006),
      xi–xxiii.

4.   See Raya Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and
      Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, forthcoming).

5.   Judith Lewis-Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic
      Books, 1992); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials
      and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard
      University Press, 2002); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub,
      *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and
      History* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing
      History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University
      Press, 2001); and Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans.
      Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

6.   Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive
      Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma,"
      in *Trauma Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore:
      Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158–81; Cathy Caruth,
      Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (Baltimore:
      Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A*

Genealogy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Janet
Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust*
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); E. Ann Kaplan,
*Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and
Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005);
and Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock: Cinema, Weimar Culture, and the
Wounds of War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
See, in contrast, my discussion of the perpetrator-survivor in
Raya Morag, *Defeated Masculinity: Post-Traumatic Cinema in the
Aftermath of War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

7. See Tristan Ann Borer, "A Taxonomy of Victims and Perpetrators:
    Human Rights and Reconciliation in South Africa," *Human Rights
    Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2003): 1088–116, table 1, 1116.

8. Idit Zertal, *Hauma ve-Hamavet: Historiya, Zikaron, Politica* (*Nation and
    Death: History, Memory, Politics*) (Or-Yehuda, Israel: Dvir, 2002).

9. Since 2004, of the tens of thousands of soldiers who served in
    the Occupied Territories since the beginning of the second
    intifada, 650 have anonymously confessed to committing
    atrocities. Breaking the Silence (Shovrim Shtika, launched
    in 2004) is an organization of veteran Israeli soldiers that
    collects what they term testimonies of soldiers who served in
    the Occupied Territories during the second intifada. It became
    a strong motivator for this revelation process. See testimonies
    on the Breaking the Silence website, www.shovrimshtika.org/
    testimonies_group_e.asp (accessed 3 April 2012); and Morag,
    Waltzing with Bashir.

10. *Waltz* also refers to the Warsaw Ghetto through the infamous
    picture of the child raising his hands and to the *Nakba* through
    its well-known iconography of Palestinians getting on crowded
    trucks. This layering of distinct traumas contributes to further
    ambiguity. See Nurit Gertz, "Zichro shel haRoe Nehefach
    leRuach Refaim Rah'ah" ("The Old Shepherd's Memory
    Becomes Evil Ghost"), *Haaretz,* 14 April 2009.

11. Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs
    and the Work of Postmemory," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1
    (2001): 12.

12. Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today*
    29, no. 1 (2008): 103–28.

13. On Stockholm syndrome see, for instance, James T. Turner,
    "Factors Influencing the Development of the Hostage

Identification Syndrome," *Political Psychology* 6, no. 4 (1985): 705–11; and Judith Lewis-Herman, "Complex PTSD: A Syndrome in Survivors of Prolonged and Repeated Trauma," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 5, no. 3 (1992): 377–91. According to Hirsch, "Postmemory . . . is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences—and thus also the memories—of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story." Hirsch, "Surviving Images," 10.

14. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*; Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Richard Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109–20.

15. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 156–62.

16. Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign: Introduction," *differences* 18, no. 1 (2007): 2.

17. Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *differences* 18, no. 1 (2007): 136.

18. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 74.

19. Doane, "Indexicality," 1.

20. We know Carmi Cna'an and Boaz Rein-Buskila only by their voices. The actors Yehezkel Lazarov and Mickey Leon, respectively, play their roles because Carmi and Boaz refused to expose themselves.

21. At only one point during his entire confession in *Z32* did the perpetrator mention his first name, Ronny. This is hardly noticeable. The spectator's feeling of watching an anonymous figure regardless of this mention is, of course, an outcome of the mask that he wears.

22. The title *Z32* is taken from the case number assigned to the confession by Breaking the Silence.

23. See Mograbi's film *Avenge but One of My Two Eyes* (France/Israel, 2005).

24. See Neta C. Crawford, "Individual and Collective Moral Responsibility for Systemic Military Atrocity," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2007): 187–212.

25. On the relationship between the moral, ethical, and military dilemmas in the context of IDF soldiers involved in atrocities, see Ariel Handel, "Me'ever laTov ve-laRoa—Hatismonet: Busha ve-Achrayout beEdouyot Chayalim al Maasehem baShtachim haKvoushim" ("Beyond Good and Evil—The Syndrome: Shame and Responsibility in Soldiers' Testimonies"), *Theory and Criticism* 32 (2008): 45–69. Handel analyzes accounts given to Breaking the Silence.

26. Freud has suggested that guilt is not only a deep-seated, intractable form of aggression but also the height of civilization. Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21 (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), 133–55.

27. Crawford, "Individual and Collective Moral Responsibility," 189.

28. Back in his living room after a visit to Deir as-Sudan, the site of the murder, Mograbi sings his wife's arguments:

    Why help him find his way? It's a filthy fable not a three penny musical!
    She says: This is not material for a movie!
    He's playing the repentant sinner, and you're in the role of the supposed observer,
    He's purging himself through you
    And you'll cash in on another profound film.

29. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. R. A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 86–87. Levinas developed the theory of the face-to-face encounter, the intersubjective ethical relation at its precognitive core; that is, being called by another and responding to that other. He emphasized the characteristics of this experience: a continuum of sensibility and affectivity—in other words, sentience and emotion in their interconnection.

30. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 33–34.

31. Lifton analyzes Nazi doctors, Vietnam War veterans, My Lai, and the Iraqi events. Although he depicts some differences between these cases, especially in regard to the Holocaust (in terms of the level of denial, the belief system [anti-Semitism], and the reintegration of the self), the structure of an atrocity-producing situation and the form of dissociation he calls "doubling" appear

in all. See Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973). See also Robert Jay Lifton, "Haditha: In an 'Atrocity-Producing Situation'—Who Is to Blame?," *Editor and Publisher*, 14 June 2006, editorandpublisher.com/Columns/Article/Haditha-in-an-Atrocity-Producing-Situation-Who-Is-to-Blame-.

32. Cathy Caruth, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 137.

33. Robert Jay Lifton, "Understanding the Traumatized Self: Imagery, Symbolization, and Transformation," in *Human Adaptation to Extreme Stress from the Holocaust to Vietnam*, ed. John P. Wilson, Zev Harel, and Boaz Kahana (New York: Plenum, 1988), 29.

34. Crawford, "Individual and Collective Moral Responsibility," 190.

35. Daniel Hack, "Revenge Stories of Modern Life," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2006): 278.

36. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 8, 14.

37. During a talk we had in December 2008, Yarom told me that she interviewed one hundred ex-soldiers for the film. Prior to *Smiling*, she had made a docudrama titled *Sob' Skirt* (Israel, 2002), based on her experiences during military service. The drama, which won several prizes in Israel, deals with a female soldier confronting her comrades-in-arms about their abusing a Palestinian detainee. After finishing *Sob' Skirt*, she still felt the story of female perpetrators had to be told. The production of *Smiling* took four years. For an analysis of *Sob' Skirt*, see Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir*.

38. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

39. Bill Nichols, "Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2008): 74.

40. Doane, "Indexicality," 2.

41. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 113.

42. Judith Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 966.

43. The picture of Meital with the dead body in *Smiling* confirms
    Michael Taussig's claims regarding the photos of Abu Ghraib.
    See Michael Taussig, "Zoology, Magic, and Surrealism in the War
    on Terror," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. S2 (2008): S98–S116.

44. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*,
    trans. Richard Howard (1981; New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

45. John Durham Peters, "Witnessing," *Media, Culture, and Society* 23,
    no. 6 (2001): 712–13.

46. See, as a comparison, Williams's analysis of Errol Morris's
    Standard Operating Procedure (US, 2008) and especially of the
    photo of masturbation, in which, she claims, Lynndie England,
    the female soldier, "performs her job as a female humiliator."
    Linda Williams, "Cluster Fuck: The Forcible Frame in Errol
    Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure*," *Camera Obscura* 25,
    no. 1 (2010): 46; and Julia Lesage, "Torture Documentaries,"
    Jump Cut, no. 51 (2009), ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/
    TortureDocumentaries/index.html.

47. See *Women Breaking the Silence (Shovrot Shtika): Female Soldiers
    Testify on Their Service at the Occupied Territories* (*Hayalot Meidot
    al Sheroutan baShtachim haKvoushim*) (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem:
    Aecid, 2009). Thanks to Avichay Sharon for assisting me with
    this material and with the video testimonies.

48. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 214.

49. International Commission on Intervention and State
    Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International
    Development Research Centre, 2001), 17.

Raya Morag is an associate professor in cinema studies in the
Department of Communication and Journalism, Hebrew University
of Jerusalem, Israel. Her research deals with posttraumatic cinema
and corporeal feminist film critique. She is the author of *Defeated
Masculinity: Post-Traumatic Cinema in the Aftermath of War* (Peter Lang,
2009) and *The Defeated Male: Cinema, Trauma, War* (in Hebrew)
(Koebner and Resling, 2011). Her book *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator
Trauma and Cinema* is forthcoming (I. B. Tauris, 2012).

The complicitous event of raising flares in *Waltz with Bashir*