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Raz Yosef

Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media, Volume 49, Number 1,
Spring 2008, pp. 93-105 (Article)

Published by Wayne State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/frm.0.0016>



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Phantasmatic Losses National Traumas, Masculinity, and Primal Scenes in Israeli Cinema— *Walk on Water*

Raz Yosef

None of us ever knows the world of our parents. We can say that the motor of the fictional imagination is fueled in great part by the desire to know the world as it looked and felt before our birth. How much more ambivalent is this curiosity for children of Holocaust survivors, exiled from a world that has ceased to exist, that has been violently erased. Theirs is a different desire, at once more powerful and more conflicted: the need not just to feel and to know, but also to re-member, to re-build, to re-incarnate, to replace, and to repair.¹

In her influential book *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch, daughter of Romanian Holocaust survivors, describes the sense of exile that many European Jews of her generation experience: exile from a world that she has never seen and never will see since it has so utterly changed, having been almost completely destroyed by the catastrophic sudden violence of the Holocaust. Children of Holocaust survivors live, to an even greater extent than their parents, in spatial and temporal displacement from a world that became extinct, from the place of origin, from the incomprehensible and traumatic persecution of the Jews during World War II. Although they did not themselves experience the trauma of exile, separation, and destruction of the home, the second generation is marked by their parents' ordeal: like them, they too are forever exiled, marginalized, living in the Diaspora. "Home" has become a lost

Framework 49, No. 1, Spring 2008, pp. 93–105.

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object, always in another place, distant in time and space, and although it is possible to visit the actual geographical territory that was the place of “origin,” these are not the same countries that their parents had lived in before the annihilation, but places from which the Jews and their memories were deported. These “lost” countries from which their parents were exiled nonetheless constitute for them an ambivalent place and source of identity and identification. Hirsch calls this secondary memory, the memory of the second generation, “postmemory” which “characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shattered by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor re-created.” Postmemory, thus, is “distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection.” It is “a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation.”² In other words, postmemory grieves for a traumatic loss that cannot be repaired, imagines where one cannot recall, constructs what cannot be retrieved, represents the unrepresentable.

By correlating the child’s past, before it came into being, with an imaginative investment, Hirsch’s account is reminiscent of Freud’s account of primal fantasy in which a child is listening to or gazing at his parents’ sexual activity—witnessing his own origin, his own conception. The subject is invested in the entire phantasmatic scenario and not in a particular object, and his identifications may oscillate between different positions.³ In the fantasy of the primal scene, the child simultaneously occupies both the position of one of the parents and that of the observer. The child takes one of his parents’ place in order to dissimulate and contain a loss that is connected to that parent, in an attempt to create a new past, to repair and compensate for what is perceived as the parent’s lapses or flaws. The notion of returning to the past to generate an event that has already made an impact on one’s subjectivity lies at the heart of both the primal fantasy and the Holocaust second-generation discourse. In both cases, the subject is sent “back in time” in order to reconstruct, to “remember,” a traumatic event that had a profound effect on his/hers psychical life. In the case history of “The Wolf Man,” Freud stresses that the traumatic childhood memory of the primal scene does not necessarily have to occur in reality in order for it to have a far-reaching influence on the mental life of the patient: “It does not necessarily follow that these previous unconscious recollections are always true. They may be; but they are often distorted from the truth, and interspersed with imaginary elements.”⁴ Freud’s warning that the traumatic primal scene should not be accepted as pure fact is not a denial of its truth-value, but rather reflects a shift in emphasis from the content of the traumatic memory to the act of remembering itself.

Thus, adding Freud’s account of the fantasy of origin to Hirsch’s concept of postmemory as the way in which the trauma of the Holocaust is “experi-

enced” by the second generation, it is clear that there is no vertical-linear cause and effect relationship between the traumatic event and its representation. Rather, I contend that fantasy plays a central role in the formation of traumatic memories.⁵ Eytan Fox’s Israeli film *Walk on Water* (2004) well illustrates this idea. The film is a Holocaust second-generation male fantasy that endeavors to restage and repair the traumas that shaped the Israeli heterosexual male subjectivity by displacing them to a form of primal fantasy.⁶ The phantasmatic restaging of the traumas enables the film to ensure their containment and imagined recovery and thus protects itself from the horror that these traumas evoke and from the present violence still being committed. In this sense, both the film and its protagonist are traumatized—both attempt to forget what must inevitably be remembered.

The film should be understood within the context of the Zionist desire for a new Jewish masculinity. Zionism was not only a political and ideological project but also a sexual one. The liberation of the Jews and creation of a new nation were closely intertwined with a longing for the redemption and normalization of the Jewish male body. In the fin de siècle anti-Semitic scientific-medical discourse, the male Jewish body was associated with disease, madness, degeneracy, sexual perversity, femininity, and homosexuality. The Zionist movement was intent on transforming the very nature of European Jewish masculinity as it was perceived to have existed in the Diaspora. Israeli films expressed this national desire for “Jewry of Muscles” through various visual and narrative tropes, enforcing the image of the hypermasculine colonialist-explorer and militaristic nation-builder, an image dependent on the repudiation of the “feminine” within men.⁷ *Walk on Water* reflects this sexual politics. The phantasmatic displacement of the trauma ultimately serves the film to reconstruct the normative Israeli masculinity and to reaffirm and perpetuate Zionist sexual and national norms.

This version of Jewish militaristic masculinity had violent and discriminatory consequences especially for the Palestinian population. The film attempts to tie the traumatic story of the Holocaust second generation to the trauma of the Palestinian Other. This may lead, therefore, to the encounter with the Other, through the very possibility of listening to the Other’s wound. However, the film does not take this challenge and eventually appropriates and incorporates the Palestinian loss in favor of reconstruction of Israeli national masculinity. Indeed, the film refuses to deal with the tragic pain and loss on both sides of the national barrier. It shuts itself inside an insulated phantasmatic bubble, blind to the violent reality outside.

Recasting Primal Scenes

In the opening sequence of *Walk on Water*, Eyal, an Israeli Mossad agent, is disguised as an innocent tourist aboard a ferry crossing the Bosphorus Strait, which connects Europe and the Middle East. He is tracking the activ-

ity of a Hamas activist, Abu-Ibrahim, who is vacationing in Turkey with his wife and young son. The Palestinian boy notices the foreigner observing him, turns around and smiles at him. Eyal returns the smile. A bond is formed between the two. The mother scolds her son for his lack of manners, ordering him to look ahead. However, the boy's curiosity increases, and he gazes at Eyal once more. This time the father reprimands his son more harshly, but not before turning his own suspicious gaze toward the uninvited voyeur. Eyal leaves them, enters the bathroom and removes a hypodermic syringe from his pocket. He proceeds to follow the family, who have disembarked from the ferry to the promenade, where the father buys his son a red balloon. Suddenly, Eyal emerges from behind and plunges the needle into Abu-Ibrahim, who collapses and dies within a few seconds. His wife cries for help in vain. The boy looks helplessly at the traumatic sight of his dead father and lets go of the balloon, which drifts away in the wind. A getaway car awaits Eyal nearby, whisking him swiftly from the assassination scene. The camera returns to the Palestinian child, shown in close-up, tears moistening his large eyes.

This opening sequence is a *mise-en-abîme* of the entire film: it presents the dilemma, the enigma, that the entire film attempts to work out. This enigma, I suggest, is the enigma of the origin. The sequence is constructed as a fantasy: the cinematic cliché of the balloon drifting in the wind, the bold colors dominating the cinematic frame, all invest the scene with an unrealistic ambiance. This scene, which involves a narrative of voyeurism, investigation, and violence, is a symbolic version of the primal scene fantasy: the subject imagines himself within the traumatic Oedipal scene, fulfilling the child's fantasy of eliminating the father. These essential elements of the primal scene fantasy will be repeated throughout the film in different versions and will construct its course and meanings.

On returning to Israel, Eyal finds that his wife, Iris, has committed suicide. He refuses to seek therapy to help him work through the trauma, and remains emotionally detached from the loss. Meanwhile, he is sent on another mission: to befriend the two grandchildren of a notorious Nazi criminal, in the hope that through them information about their grandfather will be revealed. Eyal perceives this mission as an insult to his position in the organization, but his commander in the Mossad, Menachem, insists on sending him, not only because he is fluent in German but also because of his family's past: Eyal's parents were Holocaust survivors from Germany. The German granddaughter, Pia, is a volunteer on a kibbutz in the north. The grandson, Axel, who is gay, is traveling to Israel in order to convince his sister to visit their parents. Axel does not know that Pia had been avoiding contact with her family because they still maintain a relationship with the Nazi grandfather, who has returned to Berlin after having escaped to South America in the aftermath of World War II. Masquerading as a tourist guide, Eyal joins Axel, and on a long journey from Tel Aviv to Berlin, Israel to Germany, the

Israeli male subject returns to the past, revealing and reconstructing the traumatic scenes that have marked his identity.

Eyal not only refuses to confront the catastrophic event of his wife's death, but he also denies his parents' traumatic history. When Menachem assigns him to this new mission to follow the grandchildren of the Nazi criminal Alfred Himmelman, Eyal doubts the relevancy of the operation. Furthermore, he criticizes his commander for his inability to forget the traumatic past. Unlike Eyal, Menachem, a Holocaust survivor who had survived World War II together with Eyal's mother, experiences the past as if it is occurring in the present. The restoration of his past takes the form of a vendetta against those who had murdered his loved ones. In the absence of Eyal's biological parents (now dead) Menachem serves as a substitute father figure. Menachem also represents the paternal Zionist authority and its desire for revenge against the Nazi murderers as a way of finally being able to let go of the horror that had afflicted the Jewish people, and thus begin a new chapter in its history.

The Zionist attitude toward the memory of the Holocaust has been ambivalent: on the one hand, from the 1940s the Israeli collective memory was quick to internalize and appropriate the Holocaust, granting it a central status in the process of establishing the State of Israel and in the formation of the myth of the creation of the New Jew; on the other hand, the individual stories of the survivors were not addressed or permitted to permeate the collective consciousness and as a result they faded away almost entirely.⁸ The heavy burden of the survivors' past was silenced because it did not suit the image of the new tough and brave Jewish masculinity that Zionism wished to create. The Zionist desire for a heterosexual Jewish manhood is an integral part of the Zionist effort to forget the traumatic "shameful" past of the Jews in the Holocaust. The desire expressed by Menachem to uncompromisingly avenge the crimes perpetrated by the enemies of the Jewish people, is an expression of Zionism's new perception of masculinity. Eyal, the native-born Sabra, is an extension of this Israeli, militant, masculine heterosexual tradition. When Menachem asks Eyal to go on the undercover mission, spying on the Germans, he presents photos of Himmelman, his son, and his two grandchildren, and Eyal asks: "How do I get into this picture?" Eyal is caught in a sequence of images that will reactivate traumas that he had not experienced when they had actually happened but which have nevertheless defined his male identity.

These traumas are reactivated as soon as Eyal meets Pia and Axel. While the German siblings dance the "Hora" in the dining hall of the kibbutz where Pia lives, Eyal breaks into Pia's room and plants a listening device on her bedpost. He monitors their conversations from his own apartment through a computer on whose screen a wavy electronic graph of their voices is seen. At the beginning Eyal disregards the words, conceding no importance to the content of the things he hears: Axel attempting to persuade Pia to return to Germany, "and so, Hansel and Gretel fought for some fifteen minutes, he



Eyal (Doron Ashkenazi, front) and Axel (Knot Berger, back) in the underground station in Berlin in *Walk on Water* (Eytan Fox, 2004). Photo: Yossi Zvekker. *Courtesy of United King Films.*

begged, sounding very dramatic,” Eyal reports disparagingly to Menachem. The German language conversation nonetheless takes Eyal back to an earlier experience that had not been represented or comprehended while it was occurring, back to a traumatic childhood memory that was related to his parents. His parents had never spoken of the Holocaust trauma, and Eyal had grown up with lack of knowledge of their past. In another scene, he tells Axel: “I grew up without any German products in the house, without going to Germany, without speaking of it.” And he adds: “When they were alone, believing that I was not listening, they spoke German.” Listening in on Axel and Pia speaking in German constitutes a kind of symbolic reenactment of the primal scene in which the child eavesdrops on his parents’ intimate secret. In this retroactive reconstruction of the traumatic scene of origin, Eyal witnesses the process of his own creation, his muted history, the unspoken Holocaust past that has constituted his subjectivity. Moreover, like Freud’s “Wolf Man” who disguised the primal scene in a children’s fairy tale about wolves in order to facilitate a discussion of the event that had not been registered in his consciousness, so too does Eyal displace the trauma of his Holocaust-survivor parents to the legend of “Hansel and Gretel,” the German children who survived a trauma of physical abuse, in order to represent the unrepresentable.

The phantasmatic retrieval of the past establishes and gives form to the second generation’s desire to break the silence concerning the Holocaust,

while revealing the coded secret that originated in the parents' trauma and has become an essential element in the protagonist's unconsciousness—all without directly discussing the trauma itself.

Phantasmatic Identifications

Eyal's fantasy, however, goes beyond merely being present in the traumatic scene of origin, the forbidden past that he had never witnessed. He actually inserts himself into this traumatic past in an attempt to contain and correct it. In his fantasy, Axel, the German homosexual, echoes Eyal's "feminine," Diasporic, German-Jewish origin. From their first encounter, the difference between Eyal's tough, heterosexual, native-Israeli masculinity and Axel's "effeminate" one is apparent: during their joint trip across Israel, Eyal prefers to listen to "masculine" music by the "Boss," Bruce Springsteen, whereas Axel prefers the "feminine" music of Gigliora Cinquetti.

Axel is silent about his homosexuality throughout these scenes. Gradually, a close, intimate, even homoerotic, relationship develops between the two.⁹ Sitting around a bonfire at the Dead Sea, Eyal tells Axel: "I have always wondered how it was to grow up in Germany, and then to realize what had happened during World War II." Both the German "effeminacy" and the historical recollection of the Holocaust are associated with the Jewish past that Eyal's culture has refused to acknowledge. Just like Axel, the German who does not speak of his sexual past, so too had Eyal's father, the German Jew, never discussed the world he had left behind in Europe. The fact that Axel hides his sexual preference from Eyal is somewhat odd, as Pia comments later when recalling Axel's habit of shamelessly flaunting his gayness when he was a boy. However, this contributes to the ability of the siblings to trigger Eyal's primal fantasy: the silence about his parents' history in Europe parallels Axel's silence regarding his sexual history.

Axel's sexual identity is eventually revealed to Eyal during a night out at a Tel Aviv gay nightclub. Eyal notices the German dancing with a waiter he had met at the restaurant, and he leaves the place in anger. The following morning, when he picks up the siblings from their hotel on the way to Jerusalem, Eyal discovers that the waiter with whom Axel had spent the night is still with them. He is an Arab from Jerusalem called Rafiq, and he takes Axel to a clothing shop there, where his cousin works. Eyal angrily demands back the money that Axel pays the cousin for an apparently overpriced jacket. For Eyal, Axel is simultaneously the German homosexual sleeping with the enemy and the object of his rescue mission to save the "effeminate" innocent man from the scheming Arab. The rescue mission, however, is a failure: Axel had not wanted to be saved, and we later learn that he has returned the money to the cousin.

Eyal complains to Pia that she and her brother have kept their familial and sexual history a secret: "He didn't tell me anything, and neither did you." The

silence of Eyal's parents concerning their past reverberates in the silence of the Germans, who occupy in fantasy the positions of the father and the mother. "Why don't you go home for your father's birthday," he asks Pia. "Did he tell you about that?" she wonders, and Eyal replies, "Is it a secret?" "I just don't want to go, I don't want to go back there," she says. Pia is the German woman hiding her Nazi past while also, like Eyal's parents, refusing to return to Germany.

When Pia and Axel condemn Eyal for his behavior toward the Palestinian salesman, he retorts sarcastically: "How could I forget that you Germans were so humane. Suffering has always touched you." Pia and Axel are simultaneously and paradoxically both the victims and the victimizers, in the image of the German-Jewish parents as well as that of the German-Nazis. Axel and Pia's paradoxical construction enables Eyal to identify with all possible positions in his fantasy: being both the Israeli savior and the Jewish victim, hence both the native-Israeli child and his Diasporic parents.

Indeed, only in the film fantasy can the Israeli male have his cake and eat it too. The film, thus, stages for the Israeli male subject an imaginary scene in which he can appropriate and inhabit all positions. This effects a reconfiguration of the subject itself: Eyal appears and participates in a desubjectivized form in the phantasmatic scene. In other words, Eyal sees himself reflected in all of these positions, he is a traumatized male subject who narcissistically and repetitively appropriates and identifies with all the positions in the phantasmatic scenario. This enables him to dissimulate the trauma, recovering it in an imagined way in his fantasy.

Traumatic Repetitions

In her seminal work on trauma, the literary scholar Cathy Caruth, defines trauma as an "unclaimed experience." Trauma, she writes, is "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event."¹⁰ One of the main characteristics of trauma is belatedness: the trauma victim cannot grasp or represent the traumatic event at the time of its occurrence, and so the traumatic experience continues to haunt the victim and is repeatedly reenacted in his or her dreams or everyday life. The traumatic event is not repressed, but returns in a deferred action to consciousness. In other words, trauma is established through a relationship between two events—a first event that is not initially necessarily traumatic because when it occurs it is still too soon to comprehend its full significance; and a second event that may not be inherently traumatic in itself but does trigger a memory of the earlier event, which is only then embedded with traumatic significance.

Walk on Water is characterized by a repetitive form—that is the symptom of the traumatic structure of the cinematic text itself. Events that occur in the first part of the film and are not registered in the protagonist's consciousness

as having psychical significance, are repeated in different variations and receive their meanings in a deferred relation to the events that take place in the second part. The return to the traumatic scene enables the film to ensure the imagined recovery of the loss in the fantasy.

In a key scene, Eyal rescues Axel and his queer friends at an underground station in Berlin from two drunken German men who seem to be neo-Nazis. During the violent scuffle, Eyal draws his gun and calls out in fluent German toward the “neo-Nazi”: “Get the hell out of here before I blow your head off.” The German language which for Eyal marks the muted Holocaust traumatic memory—the secret scene of origin—emerges again as an unintentional reconstruction of the event that could not be disowned. This scene revisits and repairs the earlier scene in which Eyal had failed to “rescue” Axel from the “greedy” Palestinian salesman in Jerusalem. This time the Israeli man not only successfully saves the German homosexual, but symbolically also rescues the German “effeminate father” from the “Nazi” enemy, thus completing the work of the past in the present, and achieving the victory that the Diasporic Jews, his parents’ generation, had never managed to accomplish. This is a manifestation of the son’s Oedipal fantasy to reclaim the role of the failing Diasporic father in order to make amends for his faults and heal his trauma, which have shaped the son’s own identity. Like the sexual politics of the Zionist discourse, Eyal’s assignment, and the mission of the film itself, is to redeem the “feminine” father from the position of the victim. This is done by Eyal when he assumes a paternal position in relation to his father, by reinventing him a second time, by means of an appropriation narratively disguised as a last-minute rescue, so that he, the native-Israeli son, can be reborn, this time, and finally, as a child.

At the end of the underground station incident Axel invites Eyal to his father’s birthday party, which is taking place at the family villa that he calls his parents’ “kibbutz.” The villa itself is located near Lake Wannsee not far from the notorious “Villa Wannsee” where “the final solution” was conceived on January 20, 1942. In this traumatic space, reinvented as a kibbutz, Axel compels his family to dance a Zionist “Hora” dance. This scene repeats and repairs the “Hora” scene in the first part of the film, when Eyal had refused to join Axel and Pia’s dance in the kibbutz dining-hall. This time Eyal not only joins the dancers, but it is also he who has brought the Hebrew music for Axel from Israel. In other words, Zionism is restaged by the redeemed father and by the mediation of the savior son in the phantasmatic space in order to heal the trauma of the past.

This notion receives particular emphasis in the subsequent scene. During his stay at the villa, Eyal discovers that old Himmelman—the Nazi grandfather—is indeed alive. At the birthday celebration for Axel’s father, the grandfather descends from his room accompanied by a nurse and attached to an oxygen tank, to meet his family. Eyal leaves abruptly to meet Menachem, who has suddenly materialized in Berlin. When Eyal suggests kidnapping

Himmelman in order to bring him to trial in Israel, to his astonishment Menachem tells him that he had never reported this mission to the Mossad. He hands Eyal a lethal hypodermic requesting that the young man assassinate the Nazi. The fact that Menachem has emerged miraculously in Berlin and that Eyal's mission had never been officially registered in "reality," reiterates the notion that the film is actually the fantasy of the protagonist. Eyal returns to the villa. But, standing in front of the sleeping Himmelman's bed and holding the syringe, he finds that he is unable to complete the act. Axel, who on that same evening has discovered Eyal's true identity as a Mossad agent, suddenly appears, and immediately following Eyal's departure from the room, switches off his grandfather's oxygen supply. The Nazi grandfather suffocates and dies.¹¹ Eyal has thus prepared the way for Axel, who has triggered the memory of Eyal's parents, to redeem himself: he is no longer the German effeminate victim and is now able to fight his own battle. Finally, after the "parents'" trauma has been healed—in other words, after the "feminine" threat that Axel represents has been lifted—Eyal can place himself in the position of the victimized child. Indeed, at the close of the dramatic scene, the two are seen sitting on the edge of the bed, Eyal—the cold, macho, Israeli man who was unable to cry (at age fifteen physicians had discovered that his tear ducts were dry)—tells Axel about Iris's suicide and the note she had left behind, while he weeps for the first time: "I cannot kill anymore. I don't want to kill anymore." He can now finally place himself in the role of the child.

Walk on Water is a perfect Oedipal fantasy that reenacts and repairs the father's trauma in the eyes of the son in order to reestablish Eyal's normative heterosexual masculinity. Now he can carry on a normal life in the community and raise a family, as he will indeed do with Pia at the end of the film. Like the official Israeli discourse, the film appropriates the Holocaust traumatic memory for the purpose of constructing Eyal's new masculinity. The reinvention of straight manhood as sensitive, open, and liberal is apparently achieved but at cost of the repudiation of the male "femininity."

The Trauma of the Other

The phantasmatic recasting of the Holocaust trauma reactivates in the film one other trauma—that of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, which is also connected to the role of the child that Eyal has entered. Ostensibly, the film criticizes the Israeli militant aggressive masculinity and presumably maintains that only the act of confronting the repressed Holocaust trauma can lead to an Israeli acknowledgment of the losses to both sides incurred by bloody Israel-Palestinian conflict. While Eyal is listening to the German siblings, the image of his dead wife reemerges together with an image of the traumatized Palestinian boy that Eyal had left behind on the Turkish promenade, looking at him and weeping. This image of the child, however, does not only represent, if at all, a traumatic event that had occurred in reality and that Eyal now recalls.

Eyal, in fact, could not have seen the crying Palestinian boy, since by the time that image had appeared on the screen, Eyal was inside the getaway car and far from the assassination scene.¹² This event, therefore, is not referential—it does not refer directly to the reality. Rather, it alludes to the protagonist's psychological reality, to his fantasy. Eyal phantasmatically identifies with the weeping boy who approaches him in his fantasy, requesting to be seen and heard, asking that Eyal listen to *his* trauma. The boy beseeches him to be a witness to his traumatic wound, to take ethical responsibility for his trauma. The boy's appeal is the product of Eyal's fantasy, and thus his own male Israeli subjectivity becomes connected with and founded on the loss of the Other.

Nevertheless, the film does not acknowledge the structural implication of the Other's trauma on the construction of Israeli manhood. The end of the film, as a repetition of the essential elements of the fantasy of origin revealed in the opening scene (the assassination of the father by way of injection and seizing his place in relation to the mother and the identification with the child), allows the correction of the Holocaust trauma and Eyal's rebirth. The film displaces and appropriates the Palestinian child's trauma in favor of the protagonist's Oedipal trauma in order to ensure its imagined recovery. This imagined recovery of the loss is achieved through the Israeli subject being able to inhabit all possible positions in *his* fantasy: he is both the child victim, through the phantasmatic identification with the Palestinian boy, and the father who was removed from the scene. The trauma of the Palestinian boy is thus appropriated and subjugated to the trauma that had established Eyal's subjectivity. In other words, the Palestinian loss is detached from a specific space and time and projected onto the traumatic scene of origin of the Israeli subject. Thus, the film, like the dominant Israeli discourse, uses the Israeli traumatic memory of the Holocaust in order to expropriate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its regional, historical, and political context.

Walk on Water fails to listen to the trauma of the Other. The film does not take ethical responsibility for the Other's traumatic wound. Instead, it channels the trauma of the Other in favor of reconstructing the Israeli male heterosexual subjectivity. In this film, the Israeli subject indulges in a love affair with *himself*, dissimulating and recovering the lost object by identifying with him and inhabiting his place. This is an autoerotic fantasy of incorporation, and thus it is no wonder that, immediately upon his return from Turkey, Eyal's fellow Mossad agent shows him a newspaper headline that hails the successful elimination operation, telling him: "Here, give yourself a blowjob."

Raz Yosef teaches at the Film and Television Department at Tel Aviv University and Sapir College, Israel. He is the author of Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema (Rutgers University Press, 2004) and of numerous articles on gender, sexuality, and ethnicity in Israeli visual culture. He is currently working on a new book entitled The Mourning After: Loss, Fantasy, and Sexuality in Contemporary Israeli Cinema.

Notes

I would like to thank Nitzan Ben Shaul and the anonymous readers of this text for their helpful and insightful comments.

1. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 242–243.
2. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, 22.
3. This description echoes, of course, Laplanche and Pontalis's definition of the Freudian fantasy: "Fantasy . . . is not the object of desire, but its setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequence of images. He forms no representation of the desired object, but is himself represented as participating in the scene although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it . . . as a result, the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question." Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin et al. (London: Methuen, 1986), 16.
4. Sigmund Freud, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," in *Case Histories II*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 284.
5. On the role of fantasy in the construction of traumatic memories see Susannah Radstone, "Screening Trauma: *Forrest Gump*, Film and Memory," in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Berg, 2000); E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
6. On the representation of the Holocaust in Israeli cinema, especially of second-generation films, see, for example, Ilan Avisar, "Personal Fears and National Nightmares: The Holocaust Complex in Israeli Cinema," in *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz*, ed. Efraim Sicher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 137–159; Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Nurith Gertz, *Holocaust Survivors, Aliens and Others in Israeli Cinema and Literature* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004, in Hebrew); Mihal-Regine Friedman, "Witnessing for the Witness: *Choice and Destiny* by Tsipi Reibenbach," in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 81–93; Judd Ne'eman, "The Tragic Sense of Zionism: Shadow Cinema and the Holocaust," in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 22–36.
7. On this topic see Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
8. On this subject see Anita Shapira *Old Jews New Jews* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997, in Hebrew).
9. For example, at the Dead Sea, Eyal introduces Axel to the Israeli military male homosocial ritual of nocturnal bonfire and black coffee. Wrapped in a blanket, Axel complains about the extreme cold, and Eyal responds "No, don't move away. The only way to get warm is to sit close to one another. Every Israeli soldier knows that." This male intimate camaraderie reaches a climax with an orgasmic outburst of collective urination.

10. Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.
11. The old Nazi's murder by suffocation is an ironic reversal of the way the Jews were suffocated by the Nazis' poison gases in the death camps.
12. Boaz Hagin is currently working on an article discussing the weeping in *Walk on Water*. I would like to thank him for this observation and for stimulating discussions about this film.