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ISRAELI FAMILY AND COMMUNITY Women's Time

Editor

HANNAH NAVEH
Tel Aviv University



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This volume of essays by prominent researchers in Israeli history and society is the first of two interconnected volumes that engage in women's time in two modes: the first is that of recounting stories and histories of women, along with other marginalized groups, categories and classes, and placing them back into history; the second is that of applying a feminist gaze to the dominant order and reason to expose its policies of inclusion/exclusion. The studies in this volume illuminate the complex and multifaceted nature of issues of feminist concern, from the gendered aspects of historiography and national commemoration, to an emphasis on the heterogeneity of the body of Jewish women in Israel: while some may perceive the goal of stepping into the public sphere as the manifestation of women's interests and rights as a class, others, who do the same, regard their actions in compliance with national interests.

Women's time is based on a procedure of resistance to self-evident truths and knowledge, which are too often constructed within the terms of androcentrism and patriarchy. Women's time decenters dominant narratives and releases gazes, problematics and interests, which have been systematically refused time. The concept of women's time also constitutes a model for further investigation of other obliterated narratives, and therefore serves the well-being of all human beings, in Israel and outside. The second interconnected volume is Hannah Naveh (ed.), *Israeli Family and Community: Women's Time*.

Hannah Naveh is Professor of Hebrew Literature and holds the Chair of the NCJW Women and Gender Studies Program, Tel Aviv University. Her recent publications include *Min, miḡdar, politikah* (Sex, Gender, Politics: Women in Israel) (Tel Aviv, 1999) (co-author); and *Nosim ve-nosot: Sipurei masa ba-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-hadashah* (Women and Men Travellers: The Travel Narrative in Hebrew Literature) (Tel Aviv, 2002).

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"How can we reveal our place, first as it is bequeathed to us by tradition, and then as we want to transform it?"

Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time"
New Maladies of the Soul

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“Gone to Soldiers”: Feminism and the Military in Israel*

Orly Lubin

In the last decade, more and more young women have been trying to get into combat units when drafted to their obligatory term of duty with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In 2000 the Israeli parliament passed an amendment to the Law of Military Service, which stipulated women's right to equal choice of army professions. The more persistent of the drafted women usually became trainers of fighters in several facilities and different professions; several women even became pilot candidates (so far, only one has completed the entire training cycle for fighter pilots). This tendency has become a major issue of debate among feminists: should feminists struggle for the implementation of equal rights in the army in the form of the inclusion of women in exactly the same roles and functions of men, or is feminism about dismantling all modes of violence, the army included? Should women representatives in the parliament fight for the right of women to “be all that they can be,” fighters included, or would such a struggle send the wrong message, harm the feminist goal, and finally play into the hands of those who try to satisfy women's demands at the minimal cost?

Suspicious as we all are when told that something is being done solely to promote our equality in society, I would like to turn the tables and ask the opposite question: not “do we need to be in the army,” but “what does the army need us for?” What needs do we *really* serve, other than the (redundant) increase in labor force or the (false) appearance of equal participation in performing national duties?

Being a woman soldier, or at least having the option to become a soldier, gains women entrance into the modern nation's metanarrative and its cultural manifestations as equal, active members. On the other hand, entering the collective, that is, consigning oneself to “what it means to be a woman in this place, on this territory” means paying the price of serving the collective's needs, usually by following the models of looks, behavior and womanhood provided by these cultural manifestations. In the case of Israeli women at large, and women soldiers in particular, that would mean serving the needs of the collective's army by following the original model of the women of the Palmah, the voluntary fighting forces prior to the establishment of the State

of Israel and the IDF. This study will take a close look at representations of several Palmah women and of other women whose identity and womanhood correspond to theirs, are linked to it or are derivative of it. The kind of womanhood, and the kind of national participation, offered by the prominent representations of Palmah women achieved a forceful presence in and profound impact on the understanding of “what it means to be an Israeli woman”: always a soldier, and therefore part of the Israeli militaristic society, but always also providing the necessary repressions and veiling of the violence needed for the perpetuation of this militarism, in its civil form and especially in its materialization within the army.

The Ritual

“Going to the army” consists of a set of rituals: some communal, such as arguing with your peers and with army representatives about where the best place to serve is, some both collective and individual, such as deciding whether to refuse to serve on pacifist, emotional or ideological grounds, and some familial, culminating in the family trip to the enlisting point. All involve the woman soldier, as well: she, too, is accompanied to the army base; she, too, can also refuse to serve, though in her case both the decision and the process are much less complex and complicated; and she can decide to try and “improve” her term of duty by applying to serve in certain preferred units.

But by and large, the “going to the army” rituals are male-centered. At their core is the construction of male fraternity, enacted both among peers and within the family, between father and son. Father and son are a close unit within the family: they share the threat of fighting in a war, of which the women of the family are exempted. Nevertheless, they cannot disconnect their male unity from the family: the family is needed exactly because of that threat, the threat of being killed, or wounded.

Going to the army is, by definition, implicitly accepting the possibility of being killed. If you're lucky, you'll survive; but by the very act of joining one is, in effect, walking towards death. And it is here, at the juncture of life and death, at the moment of being called upon to choose death, that the woman is needed. She is there, part of the final rituals before the actual act of being drafted: the larger family circle getting together the day before; the family car driving to the army base; the crying mother and lover, saying goodbye. Her presence as mother represents and reminds of that which is broken at this very moment: the familial chain; but as the lover she is also the promise of its possible continuation. He who goes to die, who is about to lose his place in the world as a link in a continuous line of family ties, can be encouraged to do so only when there is a promise, visible to his eye in the figure of “his” woman, that it will not be lost. And so at one and the same time the woman represents

the promise of not dying, the promise of familial continuation represented by the mother-woman; and the justification (and aim) of dying, that is, the conquest and preservation of territory for the (national) family imaged through the (imagined) conquest of the female body of the woman-lover.

Left behind, her womb symbolically emptied of her son-soldier and filled with her lover-soldier, the woman becomes the axis of the ritual taking place every day, every minute of the army service: the ritual of replacing the narrative of battle and death, of violence and wounds, with a narrative of continuity, of family tranquillity, of stitching the wounds of the torn body and of the torn-apart family, of returning home, and of desire. The narrative of desire, then, and the narrative of constituting a family which is its supposed culmination, are subservient to the military narrative, to the narrative of conquest, thus both reflecting and maintaining it.

A Chain of Narratives

The military narrative, which is inherently a narrative of death, is replaced, then, not only by sets of rituals which recast it by creating narratives of friendship, loyalty, mutual reliance, fraternity and heroism, but by an additional narrative — the narrative of desire. These narratives and the sets of rituals they produce have to include the woman's presence in order to "soften," socialize and accommodate the threat of dying. Thus, the set of rituals of heroism or of fraternity, for example, may include women as spectators; and the inclusion of women in the rituals pertaining to the heroic dead (the "living dead") involves their role as commemorators and carriers of legacy.¹

In replacing the narrative of death (and the preparations for death through the life of the fraternity), the narrative of desire places the body above rather than below (ground), displaces violence (from the battlefield to the battle between the sexes, thus metaphorizing and depoliticizing violence altogether), and mutes the threat of death, of being wounded, of pain, which the violence inherent in the military narrative carries with it.

But the narrative of desire also carries with it a threat, the threat desire always poses to culture: the threat of the untamed, uncontrolled, that which can burst out at any given moment without submitting itself to the norms and dictates of cultural and social proper order. Thus, stories of desire almost never make their way into women's stories of their life, hence making their life appear orderly and normative. The story of sex life in the Palmah, or the lack thereof, is revealed as part of the unequal life of women in the Palmah as told by Netiva Ben-Yehuda in her fictional autobiographies.² Interestingly, desire appears constantly in one autobiography written by a woman about the era — Geula Cohen's *Underground Memoirs*. These memories are the story of an underground fighter who belongs to a peripheral group fighting the British Mandate in its own

way, disobeying the dictates of the formal, hegemonic leadership of the Jewish community of the times. Cohen's autobiographical rhetoric, entirely different from the usual rhetoric to be found in women's autobiographies in general and of this era especially, is extremely focused on the body. She describes in detail bodily reactions ("That pounding of the heart, which hit me for the first time when I stood there in front of Gera [her radio instructor and commander] and would hit me twice a week in front of the transmission microphone..."; "Both hands raised upwards and my body is severed from them by dislocation and is severed from the ground underneath it as well. Two hands raised in the evening dusk up a mountain amongst mountains and the hands are mine, but I gaze at them as strangers...");³ and she describes bodily contact, for example with a woman warden as she tries to escape from prison:

I bend down on her to tie, pull the rope to her chest and attempt to bind — but horror! There is nothing, there is no one, there is no body to tie, there is nothing to bind: underneath me there is only a boiling twitching lump of soft and liquid meat over dry and stiff bones, which run wild and hit and cut all over the place. And before I know what's what — this boiling lump underneath me thickens with muscles and jumps forth and slides to me with mighty force and is already in front of me and is already on me, is already on top of me, and I am already underneath it, and a fistful bony hand ringing a heavy iron bunch [of keys] strikes and gets stuck in my chest....⁴

The entire book is the story of emotional, bodily reactions; of the body in action, the body in reaction to events. And these descriptions are almost always layered with passion: political passion, military passion, patriotic passion — but always also with the nuance of sexual passion. When she reads the first bulletin issued by the political dissident group Lehi (Lohamei Herut Yisrael, Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), Cohen reacts:

The concepts — homeland, freedom, war, enemy — old acquaintances of mine, were now baptised for the first time in their lives and I tasted in them the taste of the Beginning. My ears were full with groans-cries arising both within me and outside of me at one and the same time: yes... more... good... that is it....⁵

Yet it is only in the margins of the political sphere and the social sphere that such blunt descriptions of body, bodies, desire and emotions translated into passionate bodily reactions can be written. And in their bluntness, they expose the danger they contain: the danger of loss of direction, leading to abandoning the main road, the danger of moving to the margins, desire's site of existence. The fear of losing the way, that is, the normative, accepted social route, results in repression of desire, which returns and erupts in the writings of those who are already beyond that route, who are already in the margins.

The narrative of desire, then, needs taming: it needs to be contained within a set of rules and regulations, a set that is conveniently supplied by the heterosexual romance narrative, always culminating in marriage and inclusion in the proper social order. In this order two bodies, of two distinct sexes and genders, are united by the community (in its presence, by its appointed policing authorities), and are expected to perform certain rituals and avoid others. The rituals to avoid are basically those of desire: they should be either annihilated or performed away from the public gaze.

Thus, in order to mute the violence to the male body, which is inherent to the chain of narratives resulting in those of death and desire, the military narrative has to be finally replaced with the narrative of the family — that is, in place of a narrative of breaking the familial chain, a narrative of its continuation; in place of a narrative of pain, a narrative of comfort and warmth associated with “family.” The woman needs to be constantly there, ready in the background, visually and mentally forming a space and design with her female body, into which the narrative of military violence will dissolve at its critical moment.

Dual Penetration

The female body, inherently necessary for displacing the violence to the male body, also brings with it the complex and ambiguous erotics of penetration. Being penetrated is that which defines the female body and differentiates it from the male body, which is coherent, separated from the outside and secure from penetration from the outside. Thus, the presence of the woman in the army is on the one hand the ultimate protection against the threat embedded in the male fraternity: the threat of the homosexual penetration. The unit of males only — relying on each other and also literally leaning on each other, touching each other, sharing their nakedness, practicing on each other's bodies during drills and training sessions — creates a homosocial environment.⁶ And if the homosocial environment breeds homoerotics, the cloudy shade of homosexuality begins to threaten the bright sky of the fraternity, and the body — the male body, the particular male body — appears to be potentially exposed to penetration and to lose its “natural” “immunity”; it can, in fact, potentially, be penetrated, that is, become “woman,” since penetration is the trait of the female, and being a woman, as Freud taught us, means being castrated: not having that which is “male.” Woman, therefore, is defined both by the lack (of the male sex organ) and by being the penetrated. Hence, being penetrated (as in homosexuality) means also being castrated, since it means being a woman.

The woman in the army protects the soldier from the threatening homosexual “castration” through her promise of visible, handy, available

heterosexuality, and by her role of being *the* penetrated, thus “exempting” the male from being thus positioned. Yet on the other hand she is also a sad reminder of the possibility of penetration: the realization that the male body is, after all, vulnerable to penetration as well. It is vulnerable to two kinds of penetration: the erotic one, as part of possible homosexual relationships, and the penetration of the bullet.

The woman's presence, then, paradoxically, both enhances the dangerous possibility of sexual penetration and makes it ominously present, as she is the very manifestation of “penetration,” and, at the same time, also calms the fear and detracts its threat, as her presence transfers the state of being penetrated to its rightful “owner,” thus promising heterosexuality and setting the ground for death's opposition — the creation of a family, and the protection and safety of “home.”

It is clear now that the woman needs to be both absent and present in the military sphere: since her presence raises the shadow of the haunting penetration, of castration and of death, she needs to be invisible, absent, not part of the military visual space so as not to awaken the ghosts of violence. But her presence, which raises these threats, is acutely needed to chase away these very same haunting ghosts: when visible to the eye, she is the penetrated one, veiling the man's possible castration. She needs to be there — and not there; part of the army, always part of the visual space — but always not really part of it, always also an outsider; there to help eliminate all that threatens in the army, in the fraternity, in violence — and not there so as not to arouse the very same threats through that which she signifies: the penetrated.

It is only through this dual existence (yet another stereotype of womanhood: duality) that woman can become the connecting thread between the military space and the familial space. The female body needs to be present at the same time in both spaces: the military one and the romantic, familial one; she needs to become a dual presence: a home at the army base, a soldier who is a mother/lover, a homemaker who wears a helmet together with the guys. Only then does she become continuity itself. Only this dual body — fighting and bearing children, with the soldiers but always also back home and waiting for them to return — can make the connection between the two domains.

The promise of this connection is precisely the reason why the army needs woman in the military space: she will become the smooth surface connecting between the private and the public sphere, the space that is life and continuity and the space that is death and violence. This apparent, false continuation conceals the deep abyss, the gap, between the two spheres; it conceals the fracture, the rupture between them. It makes them appear as one, continuous space, within which the male soldier can move back and forth, to combat and back to desire, to death and back to family, to his comrades and back to his lover — a movement that erases all that differentiates between the two worlds

and thus all that is frightening in the military sphere: it erases the military's one and only trait, violence.

Creating the Dual Positioning

The female body's occupation of both spheres, the military site and the space of the home, and the reinforcement, maintenance, replication and repetition of this duality, entail investing vast cultural energies of representation which will create a visual environment and a visual and literal model to be followed and repeated.

The women drafted to the Palmah sometimes had to struggle for their right to be drafted, and for the recognition of their ability to serve in the same capacities as men. Not everyone was happy with their inclusion; on the contrary. Debates about their very inclusion were carried out on all levels. Yitzhak Sadeh, chief commander of the Palmah units and the Haganah's Chief of General Staff (1945), finally decided the troops could not miss the opportunity to increase the number of soldiers given the eagerness of women to be drafted. Nevertheless, they were usually assigned the traditional roles of women, necessary in the Palmah (whose members lived in *kibbutzim* and participated in their regular daily routine, such as cooking). The few who did fight were pulled back after a short while, following a story about women's fragility which Netiva Ben-Yehuda exposes as a fabrication (benign or not so benign).⁷ Her fictional autobiography is a clear testimony to the roles allocated to the women fighters and their humiliation as combat soldiers; and the few other testimonial anthologies or personal memoirs reveal — not necessarily with the same accusing approach chosen by Ben-Yehuda — the “real” life of women in the Palmah; in other words, their dual capacity as being placed in the domestic space, but not limited to it, and as handling arms, but not controlling them.

“Generally speaking,” says Surika, Sara Shpechner Braverman — the only one of the three women members of the paratroopers' mission from Mandatory Palestine to occupied Hungary during the Second World War who came back home (Hannah Senesh and Haviva Reik were captured and killed) — in a volume of collected memoirs of Palmah women, “I saw us women participate in the war as fighters of a static war — post commanders, section commanders and *Ma'aziyot* [settlement commanders] — and I am not talking about the few that fought in the actual battles.”⁸ This oxymoron, “static war,” is the major characteristic of both the memoirs and the photographs taken of Palmah women: Figure 1 shows a soldier in 1948, obviously posing for the camera; her choice of position is static, her choice of location — a phallic pole, her smiling face bending towards it. Should she choose to move, to take action, this phallic pole will give her no direction; it points only to itself, the arrows point only to the pole.

FIGURE 1
WOMAN SOLDIER (1951)



Plate no. 12 SP (1) in the M.H.T. (Michal Heiman Test) 1997
Photographer unknown (Courtesy of Michal Heiman)

The promise of a "static war" is also embedded in the 1970s photograph of three soldiers, posing for the traditional photo in uniform and with rifles, but their hold on the rifle does not endow them with control over the phallus: the flowers in the barrels make sure they won't be used (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
THREE WOMEN SOLDIERS (1974)

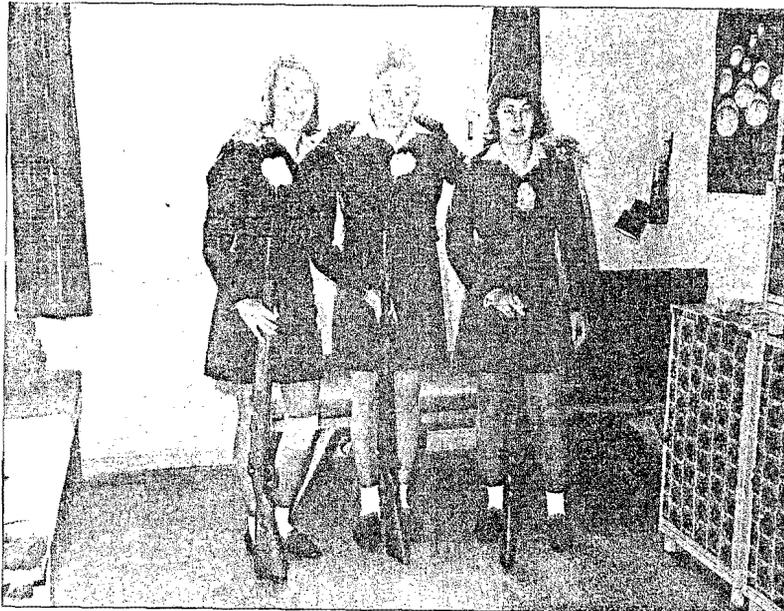


Plate no. 18 in the M.H.T. (Michal Heiman Test) 1997
Photographer unknown (Courtesy of Michal Heiman)

In these two photos the woman/women are both part of the army and not; part of the fighting forces but with the phallic (pole, rifle) force stopping them from actually becoming part of the fraternity, lest they lose their ability to occupy both spheres. Even when she is on top of the phallic symbol, the urban "horse" of the urban cowboy/macho, and the caption says "Haganah dispatcher/running on motorcycle," her eyes staring into the horizon, she is yet one more model put on display, her gaze staring ahead just as it has stared a minute ago into the mirror, not forgetting the slight tilt of her Palmah "gerev" (sock) cap, static despite the potential movement inherent in the male vehicle (Figure 3). And when she is actually running, covering territory — desolate desert emptiness — and conquering the land with her own legs, the caption

chosen by the editors of the booklet in which this photograph appears, reads: "The boys are coming, the boys are coming!" (Figure 4).

Roland Barthes, when describing the effect of photography, talks about the "punctum," that minor, peripheral detail, whose very presence changes the viewing, turns it into a new photograph with sublime value. It is the "element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."⁹ The punctum, Barthes says, is not intentional: "from the viewpoint of reality (which is perhaps that of the Operator [the photographer]), a whole causality explains the presence of the 'detail'."¹⁰ Putting flowers in the rifle barrel (Figure 2) is clearly an ironic self-reference, alluding to the traditional pose and its translation into the popular Hebrew song "flowers in the barrel and girls in the turret [of the tank]"; and in any case, inside a room and at the beginning of training (see their new, starched uniforms), there is no shooting — nor enemy; the road sign (Figure 1) might point to an actual site when viewed from a different perspective; and photographing the dispatcher in action, in movement (Figure 3) may result in a blurred, unclear image. So, the photographer may have an explanation for these "details." But "from the Spectator's viewpoint," Barthes continues, "the detail is offered by chance and for nothing."¹¹

The puncturing force of the detail seems to be culture bound. The recurring phallic objects "puncture" (pun unintended) me, a woman who is already a child of the feminist revolution; the empty vast stretches of land conquered by the boys, now returning to the home-making girls, punctures only a post-Zionist woman, for whom the empty land "shoots out like an arrow" from the photograph as an unintended exposure of the Zionist myth of "a people without a land returning to a land without a people," and the static positioning is a punctum only when the photographs are reread from a perspective of visual culture. In fact, not only the punctum is culture bound; its opposite, the studium, is, finally, culture bound as well. Here is what Barthes writes about the studium:

It [the scene of the photograph] has the extension of a field, which I perceive quite familiarly as a consequence of my knowledge, my culture; this field ... always refers to a classical body of information [historical, cultural].... Thousands of photographs consist of this field, and in these photographs I can, of course, take a kind of general interest, one that is even stirred sometimes, but in regard to them my emotion requires the rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture.¹²

The punctum, says Barthes, "will break (or punctuate) the *studium*."¹³ These photos of Palmah women are regular, traditional — I've seen thousands of them — and they arouse my interest, as I understand them as part of the materials for my self-constitution, and they even arouse excitement, as they draw me into a scene I identify with. But I am also reading them — the

FIGURE 3
A HAGANAH DISPATCH RIDER ON HER MOTORCYCLE (17 MARCH 1948)



Photo by Zoltan Kluger (Courtesy of the Government Press Office)

FIGURE 4
"THE BOYS ARE COMING, THE BOYS ARE COMING!"



Photographer unknown (Courtesy of the Government Press Office)

studium — through a certain “ethical and political culture,” and when so doing it is almost impossible not to notice how the shot, the framing, the angle of the camera, the positioning and staging of the woman actually create this “ethical and political culture” in the first place. By reacting to what now becomes punctum, that detail (the tilt of the hat, the arrows leading nowhere) which shoots — now — out of the photo, we realize how the visual not only reflects political culture, not only reflects that which is then burned into our memory and is now projected back onto the photo, but actually invents an imagined image which becomes an imagined female subjectivity.

“To some extent,” writes Irit Rogoff in her study of visual culture, *Terra Infirma*,

the project of visual culture has been to try and repopulate the space with all the obstacles and all the unknown images which the illusion of transparency evacuated from it. Space, as we have understood it, is always differentiated, it is always subject to the invisible boundary lines which determine inclusions and exclusions.... Clearly space is always populated with the unrecognized obstacles which never allow us actually to “see” what is out there beyond what we expect to find. To repopulate space with all of its constitutive obstacles as we learn to

recognize them and name them is to understand how hard we have to strain to see....¹⁴

Departing from Barthes to point to the mediation of the rational, i.e. the ethical and political culture, to trace points of puncture that transcend the rational, and to reveal a new reaction, a new reading, a new image, we now look at the photos, and at the testimonial memoirs, as exposing that which they are lacking, as including traces of that which they exclude.

Resting on the way to besieged Safed is a group of soldiers, men and women (Figure 5). But among many men, there is only one woman, as if a representative of her gender. She is very visible as the lone, single woman, sitting at the edge of the group, but her status is unclear. She is either an integral part of the group — or trailing in the back; she is either not carrying anything — or her gun, radio, backpack are well hidden behind her slim back. The one clear detail in her positioning is her hand held to her mouth, with a hint of the obligatory erotic leaf of grass between her teeth. Here is a woman soldier; she is clearly on her way to battle together with the other men. But at the same time she is the only one of her kind, only a token stand-in for her gender, and therefore inconsequential in terms of the male fraternity; she is also not totally similar to them as she is at the margins, she is not carrying anything that might help her in combat, and she still remains erotic in her posture. She is both part of the fighting army and not; she is both in the military sphere, but still a “woman” remaining also at “home” — both by virtue of her erotics and because she is the only woman actually present at the site of battle.

Such are also all the other photographs: the women are always both part of the military sphere but never entirely; both representing home, desire and family, but at the site of the male fraternity. Although they appear as “studium,” being so regular and intellectually mediated (by the knowledge of the history, the organization and the myths of the Palmah, that is, its participation in both military activities and farm work at the kibbutzim which hosted them, and the traditional roles women took upon themselves in this structure), they contain that “punctum” detail, that trace of the excluded or uniqueness of the included, which when noticed — as it leaps at today's viewer — points to the duality of the representation of the Palmah women: both there and not there, both part of the army but always also part of away from it, of “back home.” The excluded gun of the woman on her way to combat; the exclusion of the bullets from the rifles with the flowers, or of the wheels of the male transportation vehicle, the motorcycle, which are cut off by the frame so it can't move, all these are unrecognized details which nonetheless appear to the eye (“shoot out like arrows” to “repopulate space,” in Barthes' words) as constructing the form and the character of the subjectivity constituted by the photos.

FIGURE 5
A GROUP OF SOLDIERS ON THE WAY TO BESIEGED SAFED (1948)



Source: *Yiftah aluzat ha-sufah: Sipurah shel hativat Yiftah-Palmah* (Yiftah in the Grip of the Storm: The Story of the Yiftah-Palmah Brigade), published by former Brigade members (November 1970), p. 9.

When the Palmah women testify in retrospect, this duality is told mostly through that which is the ultimate representation of both penetration and home: pregnancy, and the female nurturing characteristic. “When it was my turn to work in the [kibbutz] kitchen,” says Rina Tadmor Averbuch in the memoir collection, “I always made sure that Zvi Gatzub, who couldn't stand tomatoes, had some other food — ‘bimkom’ [replacement]. A minor thing, minor detail, and yet. A girl has this ‘caring,’ ‘motherly sense.’ And it had significance.”¹⁵ The search for significance elsewhere, other than in the battlefield, characterizes some of the memoirs but not all; time and again they complain of getting pregnant at “the wrong time.” Ziona remembers:

When I was a signaller I was trained to work on illegal immigrants' ships. But when finally I received the order to board such a ship I was already pregnant. I was devastated. I had to tell Nachum Sarig the truth about the pregnancy. My mission was canceled; I wanted to go, but ... I have not participated in the wars and did not do anything special. When my friend Michal, a member of Kibbutz Ginosar just like me, told me she

participated in the operation to release the illegal immigrants at Atlit I was consumed by jealousy, I went out of my mind. And I already had a child and I'd missed out, I simply missed the important things.¹⁶

And Sara laments: "In 1945 I was released from service. In 1948 my heart broke — I already had a baby and I'd missed the war."¹⁷

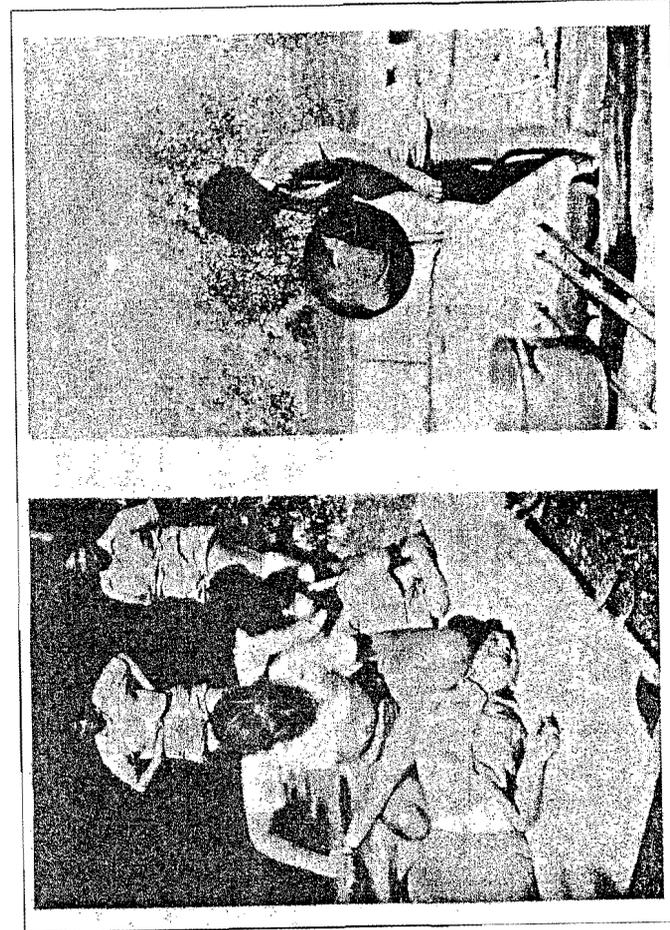
Pregnancy marks the moment which is the juncture of both spheres; it is the very creation of the surface continuation between the penetration (the military sphere, the male fraternity and the threatening bullet) and the home and family lineage, as well as between being at the site of fighting and being at the site of home and nurturing. "We worked in the kitchen," tells Rochele.

We cooked outside, and ate at the sheep-pen wing. The first two got pregnant. We knew those pregnant should be taken care of, that we should make sure they ate right. The members' food was very meager. So every morning we went to the pregnant women and asked them what they wanted to eat. One morning, I asked and they said scrambled eggs and a pickle. I prepared what they wanted and arranged it all on a tray, and just as I was about to serve them — shots were heard. All of a sudden we've been shot at. I lay down with the tray in my hand and as I was falling down I thought of the scrambled eggs. That "the pregnant" won't get their scrambled eggs.¹⁸

The combination of combat and nurturing is strictly balanced in one of the spreads in the reunion booklet (Figure 6): two photos are neatly laid out one alongside the other; in one the women are training for one-on-one body combat, bringing to mind the male heterosexual pornographic erotics of women touching each other, and right next to it is a photo of a woman cooking in a huge pot, for the entire battalion, presumably: the military balanced by nurturing, the erotic balanced by the motherly. As a matter of fact, in both cases, both when participating in the fighting (a signaler in action, albeit with her femininity intact [Figure 7]) and nurturing (distributing food to the forces at Kibbutz Negba, buckets in hand but also helmet on the head [Figure 8]), there is an erotic edge to the image: the food-distributor, a shadow of a smile on her face, is coming out of a dark, unmarked tunnel, with an entrance but an invisible end. This image represents both a desired haven, a comforting, nurturing, protecting womb, and a location threatening in its secrecy, the vaginal engulfing, swallowing "Dark Continent." The signaler too displays a shadow of a smile in the middle of the battle, but the shot is also wide enough to include the flora surrounding her and her hand leaning on the cylinder, the gaping, round open end of which is dark, inviting as shelter and frightening as a trap with no visible end.

But even before pregnancy, when still within the frame of military activity, the woman is both there and not there. "I've always been alongside the

FIGURE 6
WOMEN TRAINING FOR COMBAT, AND WOMEN COOKING



Source: *Yifut ahuzat ha-sufah*, p. 162.

FIGURE 7
A HAGANAH MEMBER OF THE COMMUNICATION BRANCH IN ACTION
(17 MARCH 1948)



Photo by Zolran Kluger (Courtesy of the Government Press Office)

FIGURE 8
DISTRIBUTING FOOD TO THE FORCES AT KIBBUTZ NEGBA (30 OCTOBER 1948)

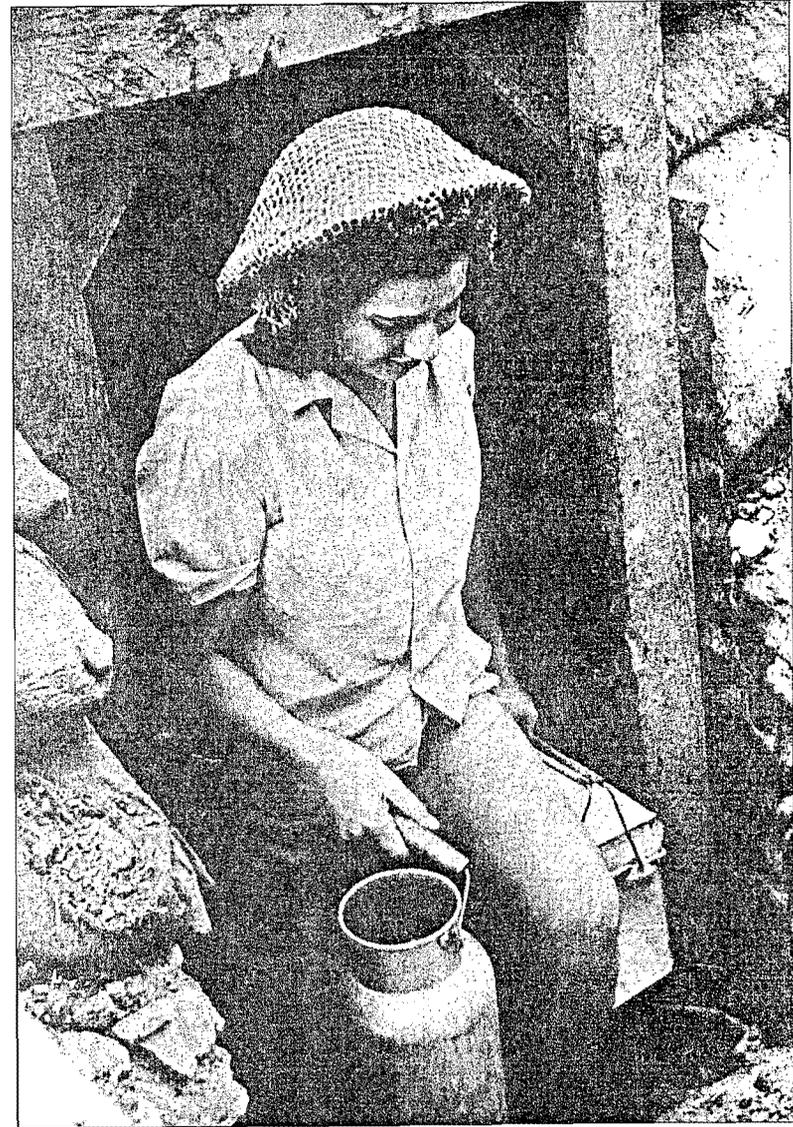


Photo by Teddy Brauner (Courtesy of the Government Press Office)

events," describes/complains Yael:

Partner to cleaning the weapons, before and after the action, to pulling out the weapons and to their concealment. In our battalion they did not take women to real actions. Maybe I did contribute something but I never took part in real combat. I went through life feeling it is not the real thing. I got married. When I brought a note from the doctor confirming I'm pregnant I was released from the Palmah.¹⁹

And when they are in the lookout itself — "Girls at the post" at Mount Canaan (Figure 9) — the shot is so wide they appear as two tiny, smiling figures inside the huge, protecting structure, lost inside it as they smile, almost dissolving into its vast space, not threatening the male ownership of the vast empty territory captured by the camera and not sharing the responsibility of its conquest by the male soldier. Thus they altogether resemble a photo from the family album depicting a trip to the traditional Independence Day IDF open base exhibit, hardly in control of anything, their military function undermined by the shadow of buildings to escape to in the background.

The duality of both being there and not being there appears in its full clarity in a famous unstaged photograph (on the cover of *Ba-Mahaneh*, the IDF's magazine) featuring Ziva Arbel as "The young woman with the gun," as the caption reads, at a cease-fire in the Ben Shemen forest following the conquest of Lod in July 1948 (Figure 10). Again, there is only this one single woman among a large group of men, as if a representative, a symbol, of women's presence among the male fraternity; totally exhausted, she is leaning against a (phallic, decapitated) tree, a bandage on her forehead and the gun on her hip signaling her participation in combat, and her bare feet and *keffiyeh*-covered long hair signaling her erotic femininity. No one in the photograph is facing the camera; one guy to the left is smiling at someone, the guy next to him seems to be whistling to himself, and a whole group on the right is gathered around looking at something — a map, maybe. Only Ziva Arbel stands on her own, excluded from the group and not looking anywhere; her slightly opened mouth is not engaged in conversation but is making an effort to breathe, she alone, she and the gun, not part of anything, just standing there separated from the others even by her different exhausted appearance. Both there and not there, both a partner (bandage, gun) and totally different and separated, both the symbol of the erotics of penetration and the promise of heterosexuality in the midst of the ignoring male fraternity.

Otherness

But if her functions vis-à-vis the male soldier are what make woman part of and differentiated from the military fraternity, she still needs to be marked as

FIGURE 9
MOUNT CANAAN: GIRLS AT THE POST (FEBRUARY–APRIL 1948)



Source: Ah, *pigishah she-kazot ... Yuvot le-hakhsharat ha-tzofim* 4, 1946–1996 (Ah, What a Meeting ... The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Scouts No. 4 Training Group, 1941–96) (internal publication, n.d.), p. 20.

FIGURE 10
THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH THE GUN (JULY 1948)



Photo by Boris Carmi (Courtesy of Carmi's estate)

unique in her very participation in the army: to be marked as the "right" national woman, the figure to symbolize the Nation and to be the model for national female subjectivity. That cannot be achieved through her otherness to the male; she needs to be differentiated from others within the group of women, as Ziva Arbel is differentiated from all other women by being the only one at the battle, and by the gun she carries.

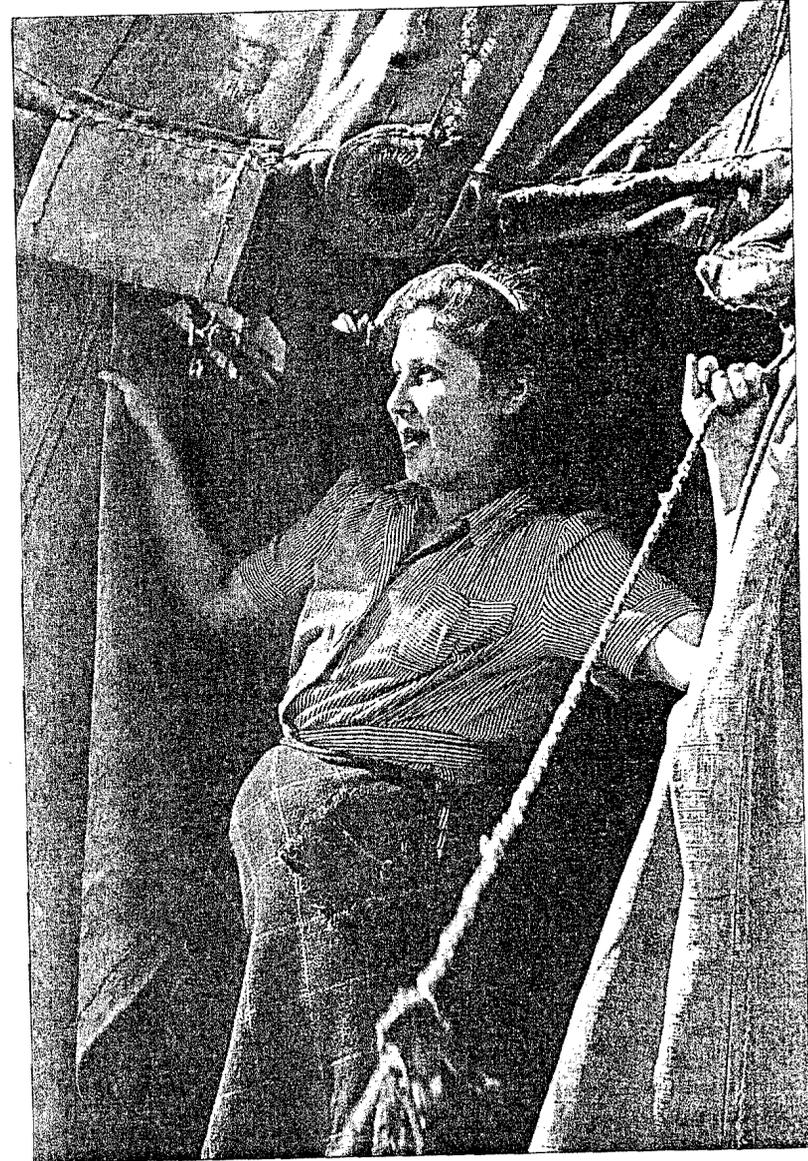
She is differentiated by her non-pregnancy; becoming pregnant removes her from the group of the optionally fighting women. Pregnancy is reserved to the woman who will become part of the nation — but is still outside of it: ultimately, she is the new immigrant. Here she is at the entrance to a tent (which could have been just as well an army tent), her belly thrust forward as if to emphasize this difference (Figure 11). No less striking is the otherness of the older, urban, so very Jewish bourgeois woman (Figure 12). The similarity between her hand lifted to her face and Moshe Dayan's hand lifted to his forehead, though genderly differentiated, foregrounds the otherness embedded in the little black handbag hanging on her arm, a city handbag, a mother from the city burying her kibbutz son in the presence of he who symbolizes the national ideal of capturing and occupying territory and working the land. Here she is, older, so "other" than the other women we are expected to accept as ourselves, as our image, the woman fighter and the woman farmer, who has no belly and no handbag.

But the model of national womanhood needs also be differentiated by her bodily function, the very characteristic that would make her identical to other women. She needs to be differentiated from other possibilities of womanhood, not only through not performing the act of pregnancy, but also through the very representation of her female body. This differentiation is accomplished by separating women whose body wounds can be represented from those whose wounds are not to be represented, in order to enhance even further their function as flesh and blood — and not as representations.

By being flesh and blood, as she is in culture, woman leaves "representation" to man. He, now, can become the "living dead"; and he is not constantly confronted with the threat of the material penetration of the bullet, since the present bodily woman is corporeality itself and thus subsumes the flesh and blood which can be harmed in battle. Being his "other," she now marks him as the master of the domain of "representation." The "real," material penetration is the domain of woman; the domain of man is the represented penetration — the living dead. Man is representation of corporeality; he is the result, to follow Judith Butler, of materiality becoming culture. The corporeal body, says Butler, is repressed and excluded from culture by culture, by being signified as the unrepresented; the woman is stereotyped as being corporeality, as both outside culture and within culture.²⁰

In order to maintain this order of things a woman's body will not be represented as wounded; the representation of the wounded is reserved to the

FIGURE 11
PREGNANT NEW IMMIGRANT AT THE ENTRANCE TO HER TENT, 1 JANUARY 1949



Photographer unknown (Courtesy of the Government Press Office)

FIGURE 12
FUNERAL OF RO'I ROTBERG IN NAHAL OZ



Photo by Moshe Eitan (Fuchs); from *Ba-Mahaneh*, 30 April 1956
(Courtesy of Military [IDF] and Defense Establishment Archives)

male soldier as he becomes a living dead. The "right" female body has to remain within the domain of materiality. Thus, a representation of a wounded female body is the mark of the "other," the other nationality, where representing womanhood does not affect "out" females' materiality nor their ability to become the symbol of the nation when in a domestic, presumably nonmilitary, context.

It is the Palestinian woman's body, then, which, when represented wounded, becomes an "other" and marks the Jewish woman soldier as that which she constructs herself, and is culturally constructed, to be: the nationally "correct" femaleness. This "other" is the torso of Na'ima Mahmud — headless, legless, and uterus-less after being penetrated by a gas grenade thrown by an Israeli soldier standing a few meters away (Figure 13). The representation of the penetrated female body is being displaced onto the other; thus, the Israeli woman soldier is kept marked as "corporeal" rather than "represented," and material penetration becomes twice removed from the male soldier's body, which maintains its power to become a representation rather than corporeality when wounded, when penetrated. The Palestinian woman, then, functions in the already familiar dual capacity, except now she is constructed as a subject rather than an object which will function in its duality as the otherness necessary for the Israeli female subject to differentiate and thus constitute herself as the "right" national subject. She, the Palestinian, is both the other — the representation of bodily wound — but also a model to be imitated by the Jewish newcomer, thus becoming the tool with which the "new" Jewish woman can differentiate herself from the "old" (i.e. diasporic) Jewish woman; and that is achieved not only by putting distance between the new, working-the-land woman fighter and the urban, bourgeois woman, but also by performing as a native.

Here again is Ziva Arbel, and again on the cover of *Ba-Mahaneh* (Figure 14); the caption, which reads "Who is jealous of the pitcher?" became the title of a song, inspired by the photo, written by Avraham Halfy and Mordechai Zeira, the words of which are easily imagined. In the photo Arbel performs nativeness: the *keffiyeh*, the pitcher, drinking water directly from the pitcher as the "natives" do. But this is not a representation of nativeness as an origin, but as performance; and as such, it also exposes itself as performance, as a performative self-constitution, since it contains also traces of the excluded, the erased, the repressed: that which is perceived as the "true" native. In order to appear natural one needs to look like — to imitate, to perform — the natural, but this necessary imitation then becomes the punctum that exposes it as imitation.

This punctum "shoots" out of the photo when it is compared with another — the imitated original performance: that of the Palestinian woman (Figure 15). This photograph was taken by Hanna Safieh in Bethlehem in the 1940s; and although the similarity between the two performances is clear to the eye, so is the difference: while Arbel drinks directly from the jar, the Palestinian woman holds it at a distance, away from her body, separate from herself, not an extension of herself and not making her one with the symbolic "regional" object, as does the imitating Arbel. The power relations between the two "identical" women, power relations that keep the Israeli woman higher up in the hierarchy and therefore her nativeness unquestioned, is maintained through the

FIGURE 13
NA'IMA MAHMUD, 1988



Photo by Micha Kirshner; from Micha Kirshner, *Ha-yisraelim: Tatzlumin, 1979–1997* (The Israelis: Photographs, 1979–1997) (Or Yehuda: Hed Arzi, 1997), p. 93
(Courtesy of the photographer)

distribution of the visual of nativeness: while Arbel's photo became one of the icons of Palmah women, and thus the model Israeli woman, the other photo was exposed publicly to Jewish spectators only in 2001 by an Israeli Jewish woman, Rona Sela, in an Israeli museum exhibit rereading the visual context of Zionist culture. This exclusion over a long period of time of the visual of "being native" maintained the ethos of the nativeness of the newcomer.

FIGURE 14
"WHO IS JEALOUS OF THE PITCHER?" (JULY 1948)



Photo by Boris Carmi (Courtesy of Carmi's estate)

FIGURE 15
BETHLEHEM, THE 1940s

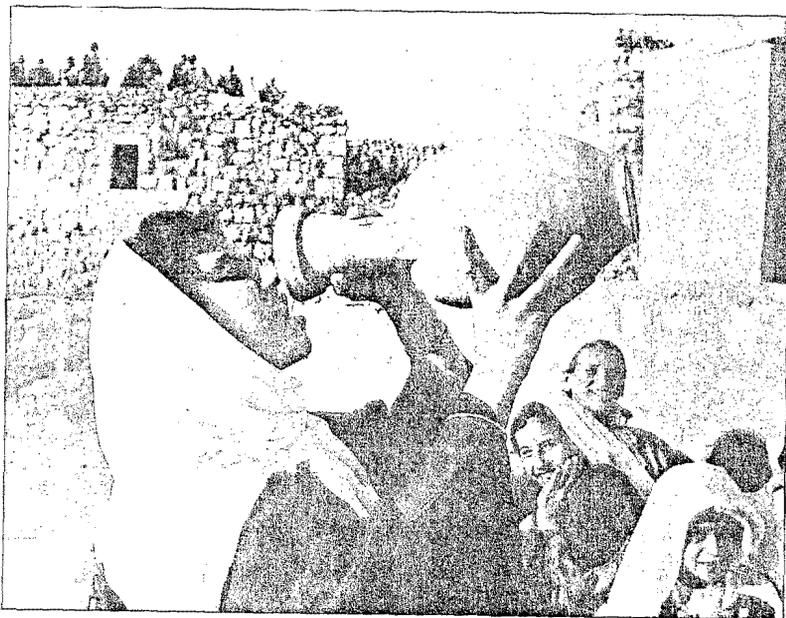


Photo by Hanna Safieh (Courtesy of Raffi Safieh)

Finally, then, the complex role of the woman soldier is exposed as a performative act similar to the performativity of that which she is structured to protect: the military male fraternity. In his staged photographs Adi Nes exposes the hidden homoeroticism of this fraternity, and its "neutral natural" standing as performative. Himself imitating famous homoerotic and homosexual photographs while using as his subject uniformed models, Nes focuses on the elements that create homoerotics, but he also exposes both the male soldier and his fraternity, and the homoerotic undercurrent, as performative. It is especially clear in one photograph in which a "wounded" soldier lies in the arms of his brother-in-arms, who paints the wounds on the recumbent body, with the palette itself clearly visible (Figure 16).²¹ Thus it is not only womanhood or heterosexuality or the use thereof in the narrative of militarism that is performative, but also the narrative of military fraternity and its practices.

But even with the presence in the scene of visual culture of such products as Nes's photos, these other performative acts of self-constitution as the "real," "good" Israeli woman, modeled as they are in accordance with the

FIGURE 16
ADI NES, UNTITLED, 1995



(Courtesy of Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv)

representation of Palmah women, still dominate the scene of the construction of Israeli womanhood as part of the metanarrative of the military aspect of Israeliness, which is to this day the main defining feature of Israeli nationality as much as daily civil life.²² These apparatuses of displacement, based on the stereotype of female duality, perpetuate the complex and contradictory, but finally destructive, role of the female body in the construction of the necessary conditions for war — and of war itself. Active refusal to fulfill this role, or an active exposure of its performativity and thus its imaginary inventedness, through cutting the Gordian knot of the dual function of the female body, are the only modes of relieving the woman's body from the cycle of affirmation, enforcement and maintenance of male military rule and violence.

NOTES

- * My special thanks to Professor Hannah Naveh for her enlightening comments, help and friendship, and to the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics at Tel Aviv University, and to its director Professor Ziva Ben-Porat, for their support.
- Both the concept of the heroic dead as the "living dead" and the feminine role associated with it were researched extensively in Hebrew literature. See Hannah Hever, "Hay ha-hay ve-met ha-mat" (Alive is the Living and Dead is the Dead), *Siman Kri'a*, No. 19 (March 1986), pp. 188-92; Dan Miron, *Mul ha-ah ha-shotek: Iyunim be-shivat milhemet ha-atzma'ut* (Facing the Silent Brother: Essays on the Poetry of the War of Independence) (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1992); Hannah Naveh, "Al ha-ovdan, al ha-shkhol ve-al ha-evel ba-havayah ha-yisre'elit" (On Loss, Bereavement and Mourning in the Israeli Experience), *Alpayim*, No. 16 (1998), pp. 85-120; Hannah Hever, "Gender, Body, and the National Subject: Israeli Women's Poetry in the War of Independence," in Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Avi (eds.), *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society* (New York, 1999), pp. 225-60. Michael Gluzman, "Ha-estetikah shel ha-guf ha-merutash: Al tarbut ha-mavet be-'Hu halakh basadot" (The Aesthetics of the Smashed Body: On Culture and Death in "He Walked in the Fields"), *Sadam*, Vol. 5 (2001), pp. 347-77.
 - See, for example, Netiva Ben-Yehuda, *Bein ha-sfirot: Roman al hathalat ha-milhamah* (1948 — Between the Calendars: A Novel) (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 340-9.
 - Geula Cohen, *Sipurah shel lohemet* (Underground Memoirs) (Tel Aviv, 1995), pp. 128, 249. All translations are mine.
 - Ibid.*, p. 214.
 - Ibid.*, p. 13.
 - "Homosocial" refers to the notion of socialization and sexual identity development in relationships that exclude — or seem to exclude — women. According to Eva Kosovsky Sedgwick, "in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence." See her *Between Men* (New York, 1985), p. 25. For elaboration in Jewish and Israeli culture, see Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, 1997); Michael Gluzman, "Ha-kniah le-heteroseksualiyut: Tziyonut ve-miniyut be 'Altneuland'" (The Yearning for Heterosexuality: Zionism and Sexuality in "Altneuland"), *Teoriyah u-Vikoret*, No. 11 (Winter 1997), pp. 145; Yosef Raz, "Ha-guf ha-tzva'i: Masokhizm gavri ve-yahasim homoerotim ba-kolno'a ha-yisre'eli" (The Military Body: Male Masochism and Homoerotic relationships in Israeli Cinema), *ibid.*, No. 18 (Spring 2001), pp. 11-46.
 - Ben-Yehuda, *Bein ha-sfirot*, pp. 317-21.
 - Aya Gozes-Saburaj, *Sapri li, sapri li: Haverot Palmah mesaprot* (Tell Me, Tell Me: Stories of Palmah Women) (Tel Aviv, 1993), p. 56.
 - Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1984), p. 26.
 - Ibid.*, p. 42.
 - Ibid.*
 - Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.
 - Ibid.*, p. 26.
 - Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York, 2000), p. 35.
 - Gozes-Saburaj, *Sapri li, sapri li*, p. 27.
 - Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
 - Ibid.*, p. 19.
 - Ibid.*, pp. 115-16.
 - Ibid.*, p. 64.
 - Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, 1993).
 - I thank Professor Donald Mengay and Channing Sanchez for teaching me this aspect of homosexual photography, and pointing to the specifics of Nes's work of imitation.
 - For the militarization of the civilian sphere, see the extensive work done by the members of "New Profile: Movement for the Civil-ization of Israeli Society", at www.newprofile.org.

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