Zombies and Zionism: The Dead and the Undead in Israeli Horror Films

Olga Gershenson

SHOFAR

➡ For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/784521

Article

Zombies and Zionism: The Dead and the Undead in Israeli Horror Films

Olga Gershenson

ABSTRACT

Horror films are often understood as a reflection of current cultural anxieties and national concerns. In Israel, where the military plays an outsized role, several horror films are set in the army. This article focuses on the two zombie films: *Poisoned* (2011) and *Cannon Fodder* (2013).

Unlike other monsters, zombies don't come from the outside. They are part and parcel of the society consuming their fellow citizens. In *Poisoned*, the outbreak stems from an army-distributed vaccine. The infected soldiers turn into zombies and attack their own. In *Cannon Fodder*, the first zombies are Arabs, the traditional enemy of Israeli film. But later, the Israeli military is revealed as the real source of the deadly virus. As the infection spreads, both IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians turn into zombies. Thus, the army is turning into monsters the very society that it is supposed to protect, ironically, through excessive aggression against the enemy.

Within the horror genre, zombie films specifically take issue with the dominant social structures in a given society. If in the United States context, films about zombie outbreaks reflect popular distrust with Big Government and Big Business, Israeli films reflect a distrust with Big Army. The IDF zombies, then, represent a new symbol on Israeli screens. In contrast to the trope of the heroic "living-dead" (*ha-met ha-khai*) of earlier Israeli culture—the warrior whose death is sanctified by national agenda—the new undead is a symbol of a society that has turned on itself.

Keywords: horror genre, IDF, film, zombies, Israeli society

Horror films are often understood as a reflection of current cultural anxieties and national concerns. In Israel, where horror is a recent addition to the national cinematic offerings, the army has emerged as the most common setting for such films.[1] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is central to the plots of *Poisoned* (*Muralim*, 2011, Didi Lubetzky), *Cannon Fodder* (aka *Battle of the Undead; Basar tutakhim*, 2013, Eitan Gafny), *Freak Out* (*Mesuvag harig*, 2015, Boaz Armoni), and *The Damned* (*Mekulalim*, 2018, Evgeny Ruman). Other films, including *Rabies* (*Kalevet*, 2010) and *Big Bad Wolves* (*Mi mefakhed me-ha-ze'ev ha-ra*, 2013), both by Aharon Keshales and Navot Papushado, *Jeruzalem* (2015, Yoav and Doron Paz), and *Children of the Fall* (*Yeldei ha-stav*, 2017, Eitan Gafny) feature Israeli soldiers and army themes. These films have a lot in common: they thematize the connection between deadly violence and masculinity. In all these films, whether the monsters are demons, ghosts, serial killers, or zombies, their monstrosity originates from within the Israeli military apparatus, not from an outside threat like in a traditional war film. Here I will focus on two representative films, *Poisoned* and *Cannon Fodder,* that transpose the trope of a zombie outbreak onto the iconic Israeli setting of the army. The zombie scenarios offer a chance to read these films through the lenses of both Israeli culture and genre convention, in other words, to examine the negotiation of local and global, of national and transnational.

This approach makes a theoretical contribution to the Israeli film scholarship, which has been characterized, as Dan Chyutin and Yael Mazor show, by "continued dependence on the national cinema paradigm." In this paradigm, scholarship tends to consider the films "mainly in relation to the idiosyncratic characteristics of an internal *Israeli* conversation."[2] Placing new Israeli zombie films within the context of global horror will broaden the conversation and push the study of Israeli cinema in the direction of film studies' recent "shift towards the transnational."[3] With that in mind, what do Israeli adaptations add to the zombie trope? What do zombies add to Israeli representations of the army? To answer these questions, I will first set the stage for my analysis by offering a brief overview of zombie scholarship and then situating the IDF in Israeli society and culture.

OUR ZOMBIES, OURSELVES

Although the first zombie films appeared in the 1930s, George A. Romero's trilogy (starting with *Night of the Living Dead*, 1968) established the iconic image of the zombie—a slow-moving, reanimated corpse; a symbol of dehumanization; and a vehicle for social critique. Throughout the 1980s, cinematic zombies proliferated and gradually evolved (or devolved?) into "splatstick" comedies. As the 1990s began, the zombie epidemic on screen fizzled out, with Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive* (aka *Braindead*, 1992) closing that cycle.[4]

At the start of the new millennium, hordes of zombies swamped screens again, with zombie horror undergoing what Kyle Bishop calls a "renaissance."[5] Literally hundreds of films of every possible genre have been produced since, including, notably, romantic comedies, or zom-coms, such as the British *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and later American *Zombieland* (2009). Besides movies, there have been television series, operas, musicals, video games, and a host of participatory activities like zombie marches and pub crawls. Their mass popularity led Adam Hart to observe that zombies have turned from monsters to "domesticated pop cultural images."[6]

The zombies themselves have transformed as well. *28 Days Later* (2002, Danny Boyle) introduced fast-moving "infected." They were no longer dim-witted, revived corpses of the Romero tradition; instead, they were alive, frenzied, and at times, inventive. According to Peter Dendle, they reflect a new set of anxieties. The slow-moving zombie of yesteryear represents the threat of depersonalization, when "an individual may be reduced to a drone, automaton, a thing."[7] The infected, however, channel a feral violence, a pure rage—"uncontrollable, impersonal, insatiable rage."[8] The fear then is not of loss of self, but of uncontrollably expressing the aspects of self we do not like.[9] Today's zombification brings out what is already inside. As Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton quip, "Zombies are us."[10]

As the zombies keep changing, so do their political and ideological meanings. Since Romero, zombies have been used as metaphors for consumer capitalism and the military-scientific complex. In the splatstick films, they are just a source of physical comedy. Starting in the 2000s, zombies, funny or not, became metaphors for a broad range of social issues. In the

post-9/11 world, for instance, zombies have served as the primary metaphor of terrorism, and more recently, ecological crisis.[11] They have been used to signify feared and oppressed others, such as the disabled, homeless, and undocumented immigrants.[12] Zombie films work out class and race tensions, echoing the zombie's origins in Haitian folklore. This fluidity of meanings led Michael Drake to conclude, "Zombie then becomes simply the name we can give to an illness of which we suffer the symptoms."[13]

Another important aspect of the millennial zombie revival is its globalization. After originating in the United States and United Kingdom, zombie films internationalized, with features coming from not only North America and Europe, but also Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Norway, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan—and now Israel.[14] All these international zombie films reflect the influences of the Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy, as well as *Dead Alive*, *28 Days Later*, and *Shaun of the Dead*. Rushton and Moreman explain that the zombie tradition "is increasingly supplemented and augmented by individual film-makers and writers wanting to explore what happens to *their* places. . . . Motivation and circumstance land in the local, albeit as a potentially endless series of permutations of the universal."[15] The motivations of the filmmakers go hand in hand with global markets hungry for films with local character that are still universally accessible.

THE PEOPLE'S ARMY

The army in Israel is a national institution that extends beyond providing security into various aspects of civil life. Its disproportionately large role has led sociologists to conclude that Israel's political culture has a military orientation. Baruch Kimmerling calls militarism a central organizing principle of Israeli society.[16] Uri Ben-Eliezer shows how military thinking seeps into and then dominates everyday life in Israel.[17] In part, this is because army service is a common denominator for most people. The majority of Jewish Israelis serve in the army, as do Druze and Circassians. Those who are exempt—Palestinian citizens of Israel, ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students, and conscientious objectors—are marginalized. While women are conscripted into the army, they also are marginalized. Men are overrepresented

in the higher echelons of command and in prestigious positions. Despite gesturing toward gender equality, the army remains a masculine institution, positing the warrior as a key symbol of Israeli manhood. Due to this dynamic, the IDF functions as a powerful mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, as social and identity marker, reflecting one's class, race, gender, religion, and politics.

Because of the nearly universal conscription, the IDF plays an analogous role in Israel as college does in other cultures. It is normalized as a "natural" stage in one's life, a transition from youth to adulthood, with far-reaching consequences for one's career and social network. It starts with the army assignment. Combat units enjoy the highest status in the army hierarchy.[18] Below them are support units and soldiers in auxiliary positions. At the bottom are "jobniks," a derogatory term for soldiers with desk or menial jobs. Of course, while the army's ideals of heroism and sacrifice are based on battle fighters, the vast majority of soldiers serve in noncombat roles.

Moreover, these ideals lag behind reality. Ever since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Ashkenazi middle-class recruits, who traditionally formed the elite and the backbone of the army, have shown decreased motivation to serve.[19] Following the protests against the 1982 Lebanon War, young Israelis have increasingly questioned the army's status and legitimacy; they also favor personal goals and fulfillment over sacrifice for the nation.[20]

Given the IDF's centrality, it is no wonder that army themes loom large in Israeli culture. It is hard to find an Israeli film without an army reference. If a character is not enlisted now, they have served in the past, have reserve duty, meet up with friends from their unit, deal with war trauma, or worry about a loved one on the frontline. The soldier appears as a key figure in Israeli film. To be sure, the figure and its meaning have changed over time.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when films of the heroic-nationalist genre supported the new state's agenda, the dominant image of the soldier was of a hero ready to sacrifice his life for the Zionist collective. This image crystallized in the mythic figure of the "living-dead" [*ha-met ha-khai*], which in this context has nothing to do with zombies. It refers rather to the warrior whose spirit lives on after a death sanctified by national agenda. In the 1970s and 1980s, an era of growing criticism of the army, the cinema gradually chipped away

at soldier worship, warning Israeli Jews against the dangers of militarism and nationalism. In the 2000s, a time of lost hope for peace and renewed fears of attack, Israeli soldiers are depicted as victims of the regime's violence.[21]

Israeli zombie movies set in the IDF belong to a new global hybrid subgenre that Steffen Hantke calls military horror films, like Neil Marshall's *Dog Soldiers* (2002). What links war and horror in such films, he argues, is an "insistence on violence."[22] Importantly, "the tradition from which these military horror films receive their impulses toward explicit gore is not that of the horror but the war film."[23] Ido Rosen even suggests that all Israeli horror films have roots in local war films.[24] Alternatively, I will demonstrate that Israeli military horror does not directly draw from Israeli war films (although it references them). Rather, applying the transnational approach, I will show that they constitute an Israeli adaptation of the global horror genre. *Poisoned* and *Cannon Fodder* bridge the global zombie trope and local army representations.

POISONED: BETWEEN *SHAUN OF THE DEAD* AND *HALFON HILL DOESN'T ANSWER*

Poisoned is set at a remote army base, where the protagonist, Danny (David Shaul), is a maintenance worker. When a routine vaccination goes wrong and the entire staff of an elite commando unit turns into zombies, it falls to him to rise to the occasion and battle an army of flesh-eating monsters. Along the way he undergoes a transformation from victim to hero, earns the respect of his military ace father, and almost gets the girl.

Like other Israeli horror filmmakers, Didi Lubetzky looked for ways to adapt the genre to the local reality. He set his plot on an IDF base, parallel to high school or college, where American horror films are often set. In addition to the IDF setting, Lubetzky wanted to tap into the American tradition of holiday films. Much as Hollywood horror films often take place on Halloween or Christmas, Lubetzky set *Poisoned* on Passover. Passover is uniquely suited to this role: it is a major Jewish holiday that the Zionist movement appropriated as a story of national redemption. It is also a holiday associated with the Ten Plagues, making the Exodus story into a kind of horror. Finally, Passover in everyday Israeli culture is a time for family

gatherings; like Thanksgiving or Christmas in the United States, its familial associations are both positive and negative. The Passover theme is actualized in the film through plot, dialogue, and music, as a put-upon protagonist struggles for liberation. The fact that he struggles against zombies offers avenues for humor and satire, in line with the contemporary trend of horror comedies. These themes are expressed in the film's musical motif, combining an Ennio Morricone-style "spaghetti western" motif with a traditional Passover "Four Questions" tune.

Poisoned also reflects the influence of splatstick comedies of the late 1980s through early 1990s, especially Sam Raimi's largely apolitical *Evil Dead* franchise. However, the film's setting at an IDF base on Passover inevitably invites political interpretations. Even the film's title hints at it. In the original Hebrew, *mur'alim* has double meaning: literally it means those who are poisoned; metaphorically it refers to hard-core army enthusiasts "poisoned" by their infatuation with the combative militarism. The title suggests that the army itself is a poison.

Poisoned also pays tribute to other iconic horror, action, and comedy films. Like many other global zombie films, its definitive influence is Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). Like Shaun, Lubetzky's Danny is an unlikely hero, forced to grow up and take responsibility in the face of zombie apocalypse. But beyond the plot structure, *Poisoned* draws on Wright's signature cinematic style, including its long, carefully planned shots with dynamic action, constant movement in and out of the frames, fast zooms, synchronized sound and action, and jump cuts that advance the narrative. All these stylistic features, as I will show, result in a particular brand of visual humor, where comedy is achieved not only through dialogue, but through cinematic means. More significantly, *Poisoned* follows in the footsteps of *Shaun*, which despite its share of gore, relies on humor that is "character oriented, notably verbal . . . , and situational."[25] *Poisoned* also pays tribute to the iconography of Westerns, and to other genre films, especially action movies like *Die Hard* (1988, John McTiernan), signaling its preoccupation with the theme of masculinity.

But *Poisoned* also is indebted to Israeli films, especially army comedies. *Halfon Hill Doesn't Answer* (*Giv'at halfon eina ona*, 1976, Assi Dayan), a

paradigmatic army comedy with elements of the *bourekas*, or Israeli ethnic comedy genre, was particularly influential. In *Halfon Hill*, a remote desert army base becomes a setting for madcap events, completely undermining the army's serious image shaped by earlier dramas. *Halfon Hill* introduced recognizable signifiers of army life for comedy. Its iconic dialogue, a mash-up of army slang and the idiosyncratic malapropisms of its *bourekas* characters, contributed to *Halfon Hill*'s tremendous popularity. *Poisoned* draws on both an army base setting for over-the-top comedy and on the IDF's unique argot for its dialogue, where army-speak is interspersed with catchphrases from American action movies.

A later comedy, *Driks' Brother* (*Akh shel driks*, 1994, Ori Inbar and Doron Tsabari), featured a mild, unheroic protagonist Shlomo (Tal Friedman) bullied by his fellow servicemen and abused by his superiors. More realistic and less buffoonish than *Halfon Hill*, *Driks' Brother* was influential as a satire of army mores, establishing the trope of a weakling soldier who at the end finds his backbone and reasserts himself in the face of adversity. *Poisoned* echoes *Driks' Brother* in themes, setting, mise-en-scène, and even cast.

ZOMBIFYING THE IDF

In *Poisoned*, Danny's character is introduced through the story of his father, Bino Aharonovitz, who, in 1982, killed forty-seven enemy combatants with nothing but his commando knife and still asked for "more martyrs." The year 1982 refers to the Lebanon War, the first Israeli war fought without governmental and social consensus. With heavy Israeli losses and severe civilian casualties in Lebanon, the war provoked opposition in Israel and throughout the world, and undermined the IDF's image as a moral and humane army. Much like the Vietnam War in the United States, the failures of the Lebanon invasion in the 1980s mark a moment of disillusionment regarding national unity in Israel.[26] This is the army that Bino Aharonovitz represents. This opening not only comments on the legacy of the Lebanon War, but it also signals that the film will satirize Israeli militarism.

In contrast to his macho father, Danny's only "weapons" are his garden tools. He cuts himself on his shears, yelps, and sucks on his finger like a baby.

He clearly faces impossible expectations and is failing to meet them. Music augments comedy and helps in developing Danny's character: while other soldiers on this commando base are busy with aggressive, hypermasculine training, he trims the bushes while humming ABBA's 1976 hit "Dancing Queen," signaling his distance from alpha-maleness. His inferior status at the base is confirmed when Danny's fellow soldier, Ben Dov (Yehuda Fridman), headbutts him. "How is this Aharonovitz's son?" he asks his friend, as Danny lays on the ground, wiping his bloody nose.

Danny's emasculation is further established when he catches a glimpse of Maya (Orna Shifris), his high school crush, who arrives at the base to give soldiers immunization shots. He panics and escapes to a storage shack to find comfort in the company of Shauli (Artur Perry), his only friend at the base. But even Shauli acts in line with codes of masculinity and misogyny. He naps under a neon Marlboro sign, sitting with his feet on the table like a sheriff in a Western. To encourage Danny to ask Maya out, Shauli slaps him on a cheek and gives him a motivational speech, interspersing army slogans and slang, in the style of *Halfon Hill* dialogue ("What doesn't kill you, toughens you; what kills you, toughens up your mom").

A true bastion of masculinity at the base is the office of the commander, Menny (Rudi Saada). The walls are decorated with portraits of his heroes—generals, politicians, and athletes—and with award plaques. Ironically, the awards are for best maintenance, which is Danny's job. Before Menny sends him on a series of absurd cleaning tasks, an army version of Passover cleaning, he denies Danny's transfer request. Echoing a similar scene in *Driks' Brother*, Menny tears up Danny's request. "From this base," he explains, "one can get out either in a coffin or with a psychiatrist." Filmed in threatening close-ups that make him look like a monster, the scene emphasizes Menny's combative masculinity. Even Danny himself, when he runs into Maya, enacts his best version of machismo, adapting a low voice and his version of a confident posture, before he is off to trim the endless bushes.

The actual horror starts when Danny reports to the commander's office after hours. He sees Menny's secretary Rona (Magi Azarzar), performing what he thinks is oral sex. Mortified, he turns to exit, stopping when Rona slams her hand on the desk and lifts her head. She is chewing something

Figure 1. Zombies in the IDF uniforms in *Poisoned*. Courtesy of Didi Lubetzky.

bloody. Danny runs out to see the courtyard full of zombified soldiers (Figure 1). Only then does it dawn on him what is going on. The scene's visual comedy is inspired by *Shaun of the Dead*, where the titular character also does not grasp immediately that he is surrounded by zombies.

Danny's encounters with the zombies both playfully engage with zombie tropes and satirize the Israeli army. When Rona advances at him in an iconic zombie walk, he points a gun at her and shouts in Arabic: "Stop, or I'll shoot!" The IDF training to fight the Arab enemy clearly fails in the face of the new threat. That idea is further developed when Danny tries to radio for help, saying, "The secretary ate the commandant . . . over," before cutting himself off. As is typical in a horror film, he realizes that no one will believe him. He regroups, assumes a more masculine, in-control voice, and instead of zombie outbreak, reports a terrorist. In these scenes, the traditional enemy of Israeli war films—an Arab militant, a Palestinian terrorist—is conspicuously absent. Instead, the horror stems from within the army as an institution, with its soldiers zombified, or "poisoned," by the army itself. In fact, viewers later learn that the zombie outbreak originated when the army distributed the spoiled vaccination.

Significantly, like in *Shaun*, the zombies in *Poisoned* are slow-moving. They are a herd of depersonalized automatons, going through the motions

out of vestigial habit. In fact, nothing much changed for the soldiers after they turned into zombies. They still keep working on their training exercises, zombie-walking through an obstacle course. Rona is still performing oral sex on Menny—a clear jab at women's position in the army. Danny also acts exactly as he did before the outbreak—he tries to fit in. When he runs into Ben Dov, his main abuser, Danny rolls back his eyes, tilts his head, and growls. This is both a satire of army mores and another nod to *Shaun of the Dead*, where the characters imitate zombies to blend in.

Like Shaun, Danny will mature throughout the film. His transformation starts in a storage shack, his only safe place. He takes off his army shirt, remaining in a white tank top, like Bruce Willis's character John McClane in *Die Hard*, and climbs up through a trapdoor marked "Emergency Exit." His short climb parodies the escapes through ventilation shafts in *Die Hard* or *Dawn of the Dead*. But as Danny pops up on the roof, he sees a zombie there. The zombie belches and throws a half-eaten foot in Danny's face. When he ducks and his tank top is stained with blood, he looks both like a parody of an action hero and of a "muscle Jew" of the earlier Zionist ideals.

These themes continue in the next scenes. In another *Die Hard* moment, Danny starts coordinating an escape plan with Maya on the radio. First, he attempts to call for help, only to see the communication fail—a trope of horror films, but also a satire of army bureaucracy. When he dials the command, he gets a message: "Your place in line is number 40 . . . 7." His call home goes equally wrong. His mother is not listening to him; she just asks if he has eaten, a cliché of Jewish mothering. Her voice is heard over family seder with the song "We were slaves, and now we are free" reinforcing the film's Passover theme. When Danny gets his father on the line, he doesn't listen either. But for the first time in his life, Danny stands up to him. "Listen to me," he says, "people are dying here!" He doesn't have a chance to finish the call because zombified Shauli rises from behind him in a classic horror shot. Danny shoots his former friend in the head—this is his first kill, and his first crisis. "I couldn't deal with them even before they turned into monsters!" Danny tells Maya on the radio: "My father thinks I am a failure. Everybody here thinks I am a joke. And the only guy I liked just tried to eat me." He rants as he struggles to open a can of "Loof"—the army-supplied canned

meat. Loof has been the staple of field rations for so long that it has gained an iconic status in Israeli culture, resulting in an entire folklore corpus of army jokes and recipes. Loof's appearance in the film pays tribute to *Halfon Hill*, where it is featured in a beloved comedic plot. In *Poisoned,* too, Loof plays an important role—Danny dishes it out to distract the zombies as he gets his car keys from the office.

Ironically, in spite of the military arsenal at the base, it is army food that becomes his weapon. His other ammunition is equally incongruous. When Maya asks him how he will fight Menny, Danny grabs a tiny hammer and says, "He'll say hello to my little friend." The line is from *Scarface* (1983, Brian De Palma), where Al Pacino's character boasts a giant machine gun. Danny's hammer is literally small, a parody of the standard arsenal of weapons in horror and action films. Danny looks particularly unheroic next to Maya, who is geared up like a professional soldier. And yet, Danny's transformation from victim to hero has begun. To mark it, he smashes the award plaques in Menny's office; he is fighting zombies as much as he is avenging his abuse at the base and asserting his liberation from the slavery of his "jobnik" assignment.

Danny further rises to the occasion by distracting the zombies to give Maya a clear shot at Menny. He draws their attention by singing the Passover song: "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt—now we are free." They follow him in the same way in which the zombie horde follows Shaun away from the pub door so that his friends can enter. This scene is a perfect mash-up of army comedy, Passover themes, and tributes to *Shaun of the Dead*.

When zombies bite Danny, the camera zooms on his bloody finger, in a callback to an earlier scene where he cut his finger gardening. Like Shaun, Danny finds himself in the same situation before and after the zombies. But now he responds differently: he chops off his finger with his garden shears, laughing maniacally at the pain, and then picks up a chainsaw—a classic horror prop. With that his masculinization is complete.

In the fight scene that follows, Danny takes on zombies while armed to the gills with his gardening tools. He uses shears, a chainsaw, and a weed whacker to slice, pierce, and cut through the lot of them. With its heroic action music, choreographed movements, slow-motion effects, frame freezes, and jump cuts, the scene testifies to its eclectic influences. "*Had

Gadya, motherfucker," yelps Danny, as he is about to hit a zombie with a weed whacker, mashing up a famous line from *Die Hard* ("Yippee ki yay, motherfucker") and a classic Passover song about a cyclical nature of violence. In a reversal of roles, Danny headbutts Ben Dov before slicing into him with a chainsaw. But Danny's main battle is with Menny, as the Western showdown music indicates. "You've just made one mistake," he says to Menny. Then, he jumps up Bruce Lee-style, and descends in slow motion to slay Menny with his shears, finishing his thought: "You should've given me a pass!"[27] This scene transplants the conventions of horror and action movies to an Israeli army base to great comedic effect. The comedy, though, grows darker in the next scene, when at the end of the battle the camera surveys the courtyard strewn with slain zombies in IDF uniforms, some in yarmulkes. The sun shines on the bloodied remains. Without movements and growling, their corpses look like the real bodies on actual battlefields seen in Israeli war dramas and on the news. *Poisoned* here is no different from other recent Israeli war films, which "expose and display the soldier's torn and open body."[28] The tone shifts, and instead of zombie antics, we are confronted with the reality of war. The comedic tone returns when Danny tells Maya (who also survived) how he killed the zombies. Now that he is a hero, he is shown bare-chested with an Israeli flag in the background (Figure 2). The irony is inescapable.

In the film's final scene, Danny's father arrives at the base, Tupperware in one hand, shotgun in the other. With his bandoliers and sunglasses, he looks like an action movie hero. But the casting complicates his character—Danny's father is played by Tal Friedman, famous for the lead role of an abused soldier in *Driks' Brother*. This casting suggests the generational perpetuation of violence. The Aharonovitz senior throws the Tupperware box to Danny: "Mom sent you food." He surveys the result of Danny's battle and reports on the radio: "My son took care of it." Not turning his head, he asks Danny, "Do you need anything?" "A psychiatrist," says Danny, his answer calling back to Menny's line ("From this base one can get out either in a coffin or with a psychiatrist") and contrasting with his father's in a similar situation ("More martyrs"). "Pussy," responds the father. They both remain in character.

In the last shots, the camera follows Danny and Maya as they walk into the green meadow. But it is not a romantic happy ending. "Do you know that

Figure 2. Danny and Maya after the battle in *Poisoned*. Courtesy of Didi Lubetzky.

I'm not really a combat soldier?" asks Danny. She answers, "Do you know that I have a boyfriend?" This ending is bittersweet, with Danny finally earning the approval of his heroic father, and instantly compromising it with his demand for a psychiatrist. The promise of Maya's love also doesn't deliver. Still, normality is restored and the army is back in control, assuring us that the zombie outbreak was just an isolated accident. In that, *Poisoned*, unlike other Israeli horror films, is reserved in its critique of the army. In the original script, the film had a different ending: in the postcredit scene, Rona (whom we never see killed), walks out of the base and hitchhikes. A car full of soldiers stops for her, and when she gets in, it is clear that the epidemic will continue to spread.[29] This more pessimistic ending was dropped in the final version, with the only hint at the massive scale of the outbreak remaining in the scene when Maya ponders, "But what if it's everywhere in Israel?" Danny immediately reassures her, "The IDF are not idiots." But then both do a double take, as a comical sound effect draws our attention to that important moment, when the film goes on record with its skepticism regarding the IDF.

As Israel's first zombie film, *Poisoned*'s release was highly anticipated.[30] The premiere itself was a special event with unmistakable signs of the global zombie craze: journalists received materials in bloodstained army files and

the public was offered zombie makeup. The screening was such a hit that for a few months afterward, *Poisoned* played in Tel Aviv's Cinematheque, the city's premier theater—extremely unusual for a short film. Its weekly Friday midnight screenings attracted a young crowd, which in Israel means active and recent soldiers. It even sparked some zombie marches—with young people in makeup and bloodstained IDF uniforms parading through central Tel Aviv. Beyond this cult following, the film was broadcast on Israeli Channel Two and came out on DVD. It is still available on local VOD. *Poisoned*'s zombie army had clearly entered the Israeli mainstream. It is less clear whether it fully joined the global cinematic zombieland. Beyond the festival circuit, *Poisoned* did not get worldwide distribution, something that *Cannon Fodder* would accomplish just two years later.

CANNON FODDER: FROM *PREDATOR* TO LEBANON

Eitan Gafny's *Cannon Fodder* pays tribute to and parodies action thriller and zombie horror, especially *Predator* (1987, John McTiernan), Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy, and Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004)—influences that define other global millennial zombie horror. Like *Poisoned*, *Cannon Fodder* adapts classic horror scenarios to the context of the IDF and Israeli society. The film's Hebrew title, *Basar tutakhim*, literally "cannon meat," already signals both the genre's cannibalistic gore and a satirical stance toward the IDF. But *Cannon Fodder*'s social satire is directed not only at the army with its cult of masculinity, but also at racial tensions and inequality in Israel, a common theme in many zombie films ever since Romero.

The precredit sequence shows cells moving under the microscope, inviting associations with a disease or a biological weapon, a common source of contagion in zombie narratives. The sequence ends with a fadeout to the caption "Israel, October 5," a date inviting association with the Yom Kippur War, which broke out on October 6, 1973. With its massive losses and weakened confidence in the IDF, that war induced a lasting national trauma in Israel.[31] The credits roll over the montage of cells and news footage from Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Together, the caption and the images draw on a convention of zombie horror and ground it in the local reality.

The action starts when an Israeli general, Gideon (Amit Lior), sends an elite team to capture Mansour, a top man in Hezbollah, who is responsible for developing a powerful new weapon. A senior special ops agent, Doron (Liron Levo) leads the team. Gideon, a grizzled man of action, wears an eye patch, calling to mind Moshe Dayan, the iconic general celebrated for Israel's victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and later disgraced by the military failures of 1973 and scandals concerning his personal life.[32] Doron does not want to get involved. He is plucked for this mission from his honeymoon, to the objection of his new wife. As Ido Rosen observes, this action cliché in a local context also references Israeli heroic-nationalist films, such as *He Walked in the Fields* (*Hu halach be-sadot*, Yosef Milo, 1967), where a character needs to prioritize the needs of the community over his private life.[33]

In another action cliché, Doron prefers to work alone but is forced to take on a team. The team, Daniel (Roi Miller), a Russian immigrant; Moti (Emos Ayeno), an Ethiopian immigrant; and Avner (Gome Sarig), a religious soldier in a yarmulke, are a picture of over-the-top military machismo. Their aggressive banter and macho demeanor parody symbols of masculinity in American popular culture. When Daniel packs a machete, Doron calls him "Rambo." The composition of the team is a nod to *Predator*'s diverse team, which follows the demographic logic of the earlier American "unit" films, with the unit representing a microcosm of the nation. The team's composition in *Cannon Fodder* also reflects the tensions within Israeli Jewish society. In the course of the mission, the tensions between them escalate. Moti is called "Obama," "Cosby," and "*kushi*," an Israeli racist slur. In his turn, Moti calls the religious Avner "Mea Shearim 2.0" (referring to an ultra-religious neighborhood in Jerusalem), and a "settler." Daniel, the Russian immigrant, explains the ethnic hierarchy to Moti, a representative of an even more disparaged group: "When we came from Moscow, my father was a porch monkey. He barely taught seventh grade here after being a college professor in Russia. . . . But then you guys arrived, and with time, we rose through the ranks." With the refugees from Eritrea taking the lowest place, the Ethiopians will advance, he promises Moti, "And I'll be a real Sabra." This monologue problematizes racial tensions, a universal theme in international zombie films. But it also echoes their representation in Israeli popular culture, especially in

the famous sketch comedy episode *Lool* (1973, Channel 1, IBA), where Arik Einstein and Uri Zohar take turns playing various immigrants gaining status with each new wave of Jewish immigration to Israel.

The team's trek through the forest, once they cross the border into Lebanon, is modeled on the jungle scenes in *Predator*, including the alarming percussion on the soundtrack, signaling that the team is in over their heads (Figure 3). That idea is reinforced, when they find the corpses of a previous IDF mission, and Doron pulls a dog tag out of the remains exactly like in *Predator*. But for a local touch, Avner recites the Kaddish, the Jewish mourning prayer, over the remains. By the time they face the first zombie attack they know that this is no regular military mission.

When the team reaches Mansour's house, a zombie epidemic is in full swing, as they learn from Mansour's daughter, Noelle (Yafit Shalev). The scenes in the house, where the team is under siege, pay tribute to Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, with its characteristically claustrophobic, apocalyptic feel. Set in dark rooms with high-contrast lighting, the scenes show the escalating tensions between the team members. With Avner bitten and Noelle captured, they disagree about their course of action. Avner is turning more violent and dangerous, whereas Noelle is becoming a fighting

Figure 3. Israeli commandos trek through the hostile territory in *Cannon Fodder*. Courtesy of Eitan Gafny.

partner. As the zombie hordes attack the house, she alone understands their nature and how to fight them. Moreover, as a scientist, only she can devise the antidote. Her representation as a woman and as an Arab is ambivalent. Like the woman scientist in Romero's *Day*, Noelle is set to become the most knowledgeable, resourceful, and dedicated of the group—she is a "true professional," like Barbara in the more feminist remake of Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1990, Tom Sevini).[34] Such characterization of an Arab woman subverts not only the gender politics of the horror genre, but also the national politics of Israeli cinema. But the film also underplays her Arabness with a nonstereotypical portrayal: she is young and attractive, and dressed in a tank top and pants; the camera emphasizes that she is a Christian—and not Muslim—by zooming on a cross on her necklace. (Later, when they arrive in Israel, she will lose the cross, thus undergoing a symbolic conversion.) She speaks perfect English, rather than Arabic, thus conveniently avoiding any Arabic dialogue in a film set almost entirely in Lebanon. Played by an Israeli Jewish actor, the casting further erases her Arabness, replicating an outdated practice in Israeli cinema of casting Jewish actors to play Arab roles.[35] At the same time, the film satirizes the racist responses of the soldiers who find it difficult to accept Noelle as a team member. Moti cautions against trusting her, "We are in a fucking third Lebanon war here," whereas Daniel warns Noelle directly, "No terrorist bullshit," and calls her "Osama," dialogue that exposes Israeli racist fears.

Noelle explains the nature of the zombies to the team: "They are still human, they are sort of like us," citing *Dawn* almost verbatim ("They're us"). Indeed, these zombies, like in Romero's *Dawn* and *Day*, retain some shreds of their humanity. But they are also fast-moving, feral, and animalistic, greedily biting into humans and then gnawing on their body parts like jackals. As in other films featuring the fast-moving infected, starting with *28 Days Later*, these zombies embody raw urges unmitigated by social norms.

Cannon Fodder adds local flavor to these familiar tropes by dressing zombies in Arab dress and traditional headscarves. On the surface, featuring Arabs as zombies signals that they are the monsters, dehumanized twice, both as Arab enemy and as zombies. The group shots of zombies echo the representation of Arabs in Israeli films, not as individualized characters, but

as the "abstract agent of death."[36] However, what complicates this picture is that the Israeli military is revealed as the outbreak's real source. As Doron learns from Noelle, Mansour developed a new virus on the Israeli order. The virus was supposed to kill Lebanese leaders without leaving any Israeli traces. But because the Israelis rushed Mansour, he took an experimental dose of the virus himself and became "patient zero." Moreover, to force Mansour to collaborate, Gideon ordered his men to abduct young Noelle. In the thematic logic of the film, the IDF is evil and immoral, whereas the images of greedy zombies gnawing on human bones merely satirizes how Israel sees Arabs.

In addition to social satire, zombies also provide the opportunity for gross-out comedy. A zombie devouring a human pulls out a spinal column from the body, like in *Dead Alive.* Others chomp on limbs and get tangled in intestines. Linda Badley juxtaposes the splatstick films with their "gross-out physical humor and self-referentiality" to "an earlier generation's black humor and social content."[37] In contrast, *Cannon Fodder* does both: it combines political and social satire in the manner of Romero with the comic gore gags of the later zombie comedies.

The scenes of the team's return to Israel are a chance to show apocalyptic pictures of civil collapse, characteristics of zombie narratives. The camera pans over black smoke rising from the buildings, with zombies running in the deserted streets. Under a promotional poster for the town that reads, "Naharia—for people who love life," zombies are tearing into bloody body parts. The film's last battle unfolds under the bright Israeli sun on a seashore. The Israeli zombies are drawn to this paradigmatic local site by their vestigial memories just as American zombies are drawn to the mall. In a grotesque parody of the leisure routine, adults and children flock to the beach. Instead of sunbathing, they devour human bodies and fight among each other in a frenzy. The dwindling team shoots, stabs, and blows up zombies as they are making progress to the shore, to get to Doron's yacht, where his wife is waiting for him. Daniel is bitten in the battle, and like Jake Weber's character in *Dawn*, he sacrifices himself by staying on shore, to allow Doron and Noelle to get to the boat. Ironically, this IDF commando, obsessed with the danger of Islamic terrorism, dies as a suicide bomber, blowing himself up along with the onslaught of zombies.

The last scene delivers, if not a happy ending, then at least poetic justice and gross-out comedic gore. On the boat, Gideon holds Doron's wife hostage and demands the blood sample. But when the vial is in his hand, Noelle chops it off, and Doron pushes Gideon overboard. With Mansour's blood safe and Gideon defeated, things seem to look up. But in the last shot, we see that Doron's wife has been bitten. Despite the comedic tone, the ending is ambivalent at best: both Lebanon and Israel are overrun with zombies, and the prospect of an antidote is scant. As Shaviro observes, in zombie films, "the protagonists' survival is not the same as their triumph."[38] This ending challenges representations of the army and nation in earlier Israeli war films. In *Cannon Fodder*, characters' deaths do not lead to triumph, and their sacrifices are superfluous, as Israel is beyond saving.

That idea is emphasized in a satirical postcredit sequence, parodying Israeli television news. On a TV screen to the side of the credit roll, a news anchor (played by real-life Israeli anchor Gadi Sukenik) reports on the usual violence and peace protests in the Middle East. The illusion of normalcy breaks when he mentions "infected citizens." In the following conversation, a liberal activist (Michael Hanegbi), in a keffiyeh scarf and a left-wing party T-shirt, argues with an Orthodox rabbi in a giant black hat (Meni Florentine). They talk over each other, in the manner of real-life Israeli television panelists. The activist's advocacy for the rights of "the undead people" echo real-life left-wing discourse. "Are we not responsible? Are we all that different from them?" screams the activist, inviting parallels between Palestinians and zombies.

The rabbi's response parodies the national-religious discourse in Israel. He screams back: "These things shouldn't walk among us, in the land of the chosen Jewish people. It's an abomination!" The metaphor of zombies as Palestinians is further developed when the activist suggests having a dialogue with the undead. "It is a land for all of us," he argues, his words alluding to the concept of Israel as "State of all its citizens," in contrast to the Jewish State. But the rabbi pushes with the theological argument: "It's about keeping the Jewish tradition! As it is written, when there is no more place in hell, the dead will walk the earth. . . . We've sinned, and now we are paying the price!" He is cut short when the camera zooms out to show

zombies invading the studio. The picture becomes increasingly shaky, so that the film ends with essentially found footage, like Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004). In the end, in this satirical vignette, zombies are a metaphor not just for Others, but for Israel's fear of Others.

Like *Poisoned*, *Cannon Fodder* was highly anticipated.[39] But when it actually screened in Israel, the enthusiasm fizzled out. As one critic put it, "It's not funny enough, and it's not scary enough."[40] Although a failure locally, *Cannon Fodder* was picked up for world distribution, dubbed into English, renamed *Battle of the Undead* (in line with the global trend[41]), and sold to a number of markets, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Russia, and South Korea. Thanks to international distribution, it has turned out to be a commercial success, paving the way for other independent horror productions in Israel.

ZOMBIES AND ZIONISM

Film scholar David Skal writes that horror films can be seen as expressions of past wars haunting the present. That is because "Wars tend not to resolve themselves, culturally, until years after actual combat stops."[42] Israeli horror films are haunted by its various wars, with the 1982 Lebanon War casting a particularly long shadow over *Cannon Fodder*, and even over *Poisoned*. *Cannon Fodder*, especially, can be placed in the context of the cycle of "Lebanon films" that started coming out in Israel about twenty years after the first Lebanon War, including *Beaufort* (2007, Joseph Cedar), *Waltz with Bashir* (*Vals im bashir*, 2008, Ari Folman), and *Lebanon* (2009, Samuel Maoz). Although the Lebanon films express a critical stance toward the war, considered commonly both unnecessary and morally fraught, the Israeli servicemen in all three films are essentially represented as victims. As Raz Yosef shows, the IDF soldiers are depicted as children, abandoned by their symbolic parents—the government and the military. The individual psychological trauma that the soldiers undergo masks their actual historical role as perpetrators.[43] Like these films, *Cannon Fodder* also returns to the repressed traumas of both the 1982 Lebanon War and even 1973 Yom Kippur War. The Israeli military leadership also betrays the film's main characters. However, the IDF is not

absolved from responsibility. The zombie epidemic and the fall of not only Lebanon, but also of Israel, results directly from the army's actions.

As scholarship reflects, zombie films take issue with dominant social structures, reflecting current national and social issues in a given society.[44] If starting with Romero, the dominant metaphor of zombie films has been "a general popular distrust with big government and big business,"[45] Israeli adaptations of the genre reflect a distrust with what may be called, in the local context, Big Army.

Significantly, zombies in general, as Steven Shaviro argues, do not stand for "a threat to social order from without." Unlike other monsters, in zombie films it is the society that turns on itself (zombies consume their fellow citizens).[46] Likewise, in *Poisoned*, the zombies are IDF soldiers, and the outbreak stems from the army poisoning itself and attacking its own. In *Cannon Fodder*, the army not only poisons itself, but it also turns into monsters the very society it ought to protect, ironically, through excessive aggression against the enemy. This aggression backfires, and the picture of the enemy (Arab zombies) becomes the picture of us—the undead do not have a nationality. Ultimately, as the postcredit sequence shows, the zombies in *Cannon Fodder* are a metaphor for fear of the Other.

FROM THE "LIVING-DEAD" TO THE UNDEAD

For global markets hungry for endless permutations of the genre, Israeli zombie films emerge as successful local adaptations. Their IDF setting provides an exotic backdrop with local character. At the same time, these films' adherence to global tropes ensures that they are universally accessible. In terms of the time of their appearance, their range of influence, the social issues they address, and the filmmakers' motivations, Israeli zombie films fit squarely into global trends.

Taking part in these global trends does not obliterate local cultural meanings. Paradoxically, it is by adapting global zombie tropes that these films make a significant intervention into particular Israeli conversation—representation of the IDF. In some ways, the appearance on Israeli screens of zombie soldiers can be seen as a response to and a disavowal of the figure of the "living-dead" of earlier Israeli literature and film. This myth worked

to accomplish, in Hannan Hever's words, "the symbolization of violent death,"[47] whereby "the death of the individual was authorized and justified by contributing to national life and significance."[48] In Israeli cinema, the myth of the "living-dead" soldier is actualized in the heroic-nationalist genre. Raz Yosef writes that in such films, "The national myth represents the warrior whose life has been sacrificed on the nation's altar: even though his physical body is absent and dead, the soldier continues to live on in the imagined national consciousness. The individual existence is subsumed within the collective, and the warrior's death is justified and endorsed by taking on a greater and more general national and transcendent meaning."[49] As Karen Grumberg shows, the "living-dead" then emerges as an ambivalent figure, vacillating between "a human and also a symbol, living and also dead, hero and also victim," signaling "a forceful affinity among victimization, power and the culture of death" in Israeli cultural imagination.[50]

Later Israeli war films have revised this paradigm and resolved the ambivalence of the "living-dead" myth. As Raz Yosef shows, instead of repressing the materiality of death, films like Amos Gitai's *Kippur* (2000) and the films of the Lebanon cycle started visualizing the dead and the wounded bodies of Israeli soldiers. Such exposure, argues Yosef, not only reveals their trauma, but it also strips the soldier's body of its "metaphoric national meaning—that is, it loses its mythic status as 'living-dead'—and turns instead to its corporeality, to its flesh, blood, and bones."[51] In other words, he concludes, "the body's physical appearance sabotages any attempt at its nationalist appropriation."[52]

If the graphic representation of bodies on the battlefield already resists the heroic myth of the "living-dead," what happens when the nonheroic undead swarm the screens? The undead mark a cynical return to the "living-dead" myth, and restore ambiguity between the living and the dead. Whereas the "living-dead soldiers" were physically dead, but symbolically alive through the nation's revival, the undead—zombies—are soulless bodies operating on the residual drives of hunger and violence.

The IDF zombie films from the 2010s signal the emergence of a new stage of representation, reflecting an era when Israeli society is stuck in an ideological crisis, headed by leaders whose authority is compromised by corruption or political gaming. This is a time when the Israeli regime's

claims of democracy, social justice, and equality appear increasingly dubious, especially in light of the expanding occupation. The films then serve as a fitting commentary on the zeitgeist. Like recent Israeli war films, they continue to sound warnings about the dangers of militarism and toxic masculinity; they also are cynical about the army and its place in society. In IDF zombie films, the Israeli army is a self-destructive perpetrator, turning on itself. The movies' unhappy endings and black humor testify that while the old value system is no longer valid, nothing has emerged in its wake.

NOTES

1. Israeli cinema traditionally eschewed genres, with horror being particularly rare. Israeli horror films have proliferated only since 2010. For background, see Gershenson and Hudson, "Nightmares of a Nation."
2. Chyutin and Mazor, "Israeli Cinema," 193.
3. Higbee and Lim, "Concepts of Transnational," 8.
4. The history of zombie films, including Romero's significance, has been told many times. The anthology *Zombie Culture* by McIntosh and Leverette is particularly useful. The term *splatstick* is credited to Bruce Campbell, who used it to describe the *Evil Dead* trilogy. For further discussion, see Badley, "Zombie Splatter."
5. Bishop, "Dead Man," 16.
6. Hart, "Millennial Fears," 336.
7. Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 6.
8. Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 6.
9. Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 7.
10. Moreman and Rushton titled their collection of essays *Zombies Are Us*.
11. For 9/11 meanings, see Bishop, "Dead Man." For ecological potential, see Pollock, "Undead."
12. Lauro, "Introduction." See also essays included in the section "Zombies and Other(ed) People" in the same volume.
13. Drake, "Zombinations," 240.
14. On the internationalization of the zombie trope, see Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 2. A brief perusal of his encyclopedia shows a range of international productions.

15. Rushton and Moreman, "Introduction," 3–4.

16. Kimmerling. "Patterns of Militarism."

17. Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*. For the updated overview of literature on relationships between civil society and security apparatus in Israel, see Sheffer and Barak, "The Study of Civil–Military Relations."

18. Prior to recruitment, young people take physical and psychological tests, the results of which are summarized in a number called "profile," ranging between 21 and 97. The higher the profile, the better the chances to be assigned to an elite unit. Low profile is perceived as disappointing or even embarrassing.

19. Sheffer and Barak, "Introduction."

20. Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari, "Introductory Essay," 24.

21. Kaplan, "From Hero to Victim."

22. Hantke, "The Military Horror," 702.

23. Hantke, "The Military Horror," 706.

24. Rosen, *Pkhadim Leumiim*.

25. Badley, "Zombie Splatter," 48.

26. Shapira, *Israel*, 379–89.

27. I am referring here to Bruce Lee's jump in *Enter The Dragon* (1973, Robert Clouse).

28. Yosef, *The Politics of Loss*, 42.

29. Author's interview with Didi Lubetsky, Tel Aviv, December 18, 2017.

30. See, for instance, Shavit, "Festival Heifa."

31. Shapira, *Israel*, 329.

32. See Bar-On, *Moshe Dayan* and Dayan, *My Father*.

33. Rosen, *Pkhadim Leumiim*.

34. Grant, "Taking Back the Night."

35. For a discussion of such practice, see Bardenstein, "Cross/Cast."

36. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 55.

37. Badley, "Zombie Splatter," 44.

38. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 89.

39. Fishler, "Sirtei ha-eima."

40. Raveh, "Metim."

41. Peter Dendle notes the increasingly common usage of the word "undead" in the titles of recent zombie films (*The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 4).

42. Skal, *Monster Show*, 386.
43. Yosef, "War Fantasies." The earlier wave of Lebanon films, made in Israel in the late 1980s–early 1990s, represented the IDF soldiers as persecuted.
44. Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam*, 115; Bishop, "Dead Man," 18.
45. McIntosh, "The Evolution of the Zombie," 9.
46. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 86.
47. Hever, *Suddenly, the Sight of War*, 39.
48. Hever, *Suddenly, the Sight of War*, 175.
49. Yosef, *The Politics of Loss,* 43.
50. Grumberg, *Hebrew Gothic*, 21.
51. Yosef, *The Politics of Loss,* 47–48.
52. Yosef, *The Politics of Loss,* 170.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Badley, Linda, "Zombie Splatter Comedy from *Dawn* to *Shawn:* Cannibal Carnivalesque," In *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*, edited by Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette, 33–55. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008.

Bardenstein, Carol. "Cross/Cast: Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema." In *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg, 99–126. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Bar-On, Mordechai. *Moshe Dayan: Israel's Controversial Hero.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012.

Ben-Eliezer, Uri. *The Making of Israeli Militarism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Bishop, Kyle. "Dead Man Still Walking: Explaining the Zombie Renaissance." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 37, no. 1 (2009): 16–25.

Chyutin, Dan, and Yael Mazor. "Israeli Cinema Studies: Mapping Out a Field." *Shofar* 38, no. 1 (2020): 167–217.

Dayan, Yael. *My Father, His Daughter.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985.

Dendle, Peter. *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia. Volume 2, 2000–2010.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012.

Drake, Michael S. "Zombinations: Reading the Undead as Debt and Guilt in the National Imaginary." In *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*,

edited by Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui, 229–41. New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Fishler, Doron "Sirtei ha-eima ha-israeliim: Ha-prikha nimshekhet." *Maariv*, October 27, 2011.

Gershenson, Olga, and Dale Hudson, "Nightmares of a Nation: Israeli Horror-Satires *Rabies* and *Big Bad Wolves*." *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 1 (2019): 44–66.

Grant, Barry Keith. "Taking Back the Night of the Living Dead: George Romero, Feminism, and the Horror Film." In *Zombie Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sarah Juliet Lauro, 212–22. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Grumberg, Karen. *Hebrew Gothic: History and the Poetics of Persecution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019.

Hantke, Steffen. "The Military Horror Film: Speculations on a Hybrid Genre." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 4 (2010): 701–19.

Hart, Adam Charles. "Millennial Fears: Abject Horror in a Transnational Context." In *A Companion to Horror Film*, edited by Harry M. Benshoff, 329–45. Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

Hever, Hannan. *Suddenly, the Sight of War: Violence and Nationalism in Hebrew Poetry in the 1940s*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Higbee, Will, and Song Hwee Lim. "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies." *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 1 (2010): 7–21.

Kaplan, Eran. "From Hero to Victim: The Changing Image of the Soldier on the Israeli Screen." In *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*, edited by Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg, 59–69. Austin: Texas University Press, 2011.

Kimmerling, Baruch "Patterns of Militarism in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 2 (1993): 196–223.

Lauro, Sarah Juliet. "Introduction: Wander and Wonder in Zombieland." In *Zombie Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sarah Juliet Lauro, vii–xxiii. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Eyal Ben-Ari. "Introductory Essay: Cultural Constructions of War and the Military in Israel." In *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, edited by Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari, 1–34. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

McIntosh, Shawn "The Evolution of the Zombie: The Monster that Keeps Coming Back." In *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*, edited by Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette, 1–19. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008.

———, and Marc Leverette. *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008.

Moreman, Christopher M., and Cory James Rushton. *Zombies Are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.

Pollock, Greg. "Undead Is the New Green: Zombies and Political Ecology." In *Zombies Are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead,* edited by Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton, 169–82. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.

Raveh, Yair. "Metim mehalkhim." *Pnai Plus*, March 12, 2014.

Rosen, Ido. *Pkhadim Leumiim Besirtei Haeima Bekolnoa Haisraeli*. MA Thesis. The Steve Tisch School of Film and Television. Tel Aviv University, 2017.

Rushton, Cory James, and Christopher M. Moreman. "Introduction—They're Us: Zombies, Humans/Humans, Zombies." In *Zombies Are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead,* edited by Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton, 1–11. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.

Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012.

Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Shavit, Avner. "Festival Heifa 2011." *Walla*, October 10, 2011. https://e.walla.co.il/item/1867008.

Sheffer, Gabriel, and Oren Barak. "Introduction." In *Militarism and Israeli Society*, edited by Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, 1–14. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

———. "The Study of Civil–Military Relations in Israel: A New Perspective." In *Militarism and Israeli Society*, edited by Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, 14–42. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Skal, David J. *Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror.* New York: Norton, 1993.

Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Yosef, Raz. "War Fantasies: Memory, Trauma and Ethics in Ari Folman's Waltz with Bashir." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010): 311–26.

———. *The Politics of Loss and Trauma in Contemporary Israeli Cinema*. New York, London: Routledge, 2011.

CONTRIBUTOR

Olga Gershenson is professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies and of Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. A multidisciplinary scholar, her interests lie at the intersection of culture, history, and film. Her first book, *Gesher: Russian Theater in Israel, A Study of Cultural Colonization* (2005), pioneered the study of Russian immigrant cultural production. Gershenson's latest book, *The Phantom Holocaust* (2013), reveals unknown Holocaust films from the Soviet Union. According to the journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, it "will serve as a foundation for all further research and reflection on the topic." Along with film, Gershenson researches spaces, examining the relationship between places, politics, history, and culture. She edited a collection *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (2009). Her special issue of *Eastern European Jewish Affairs* charts for the first time a map of new Jewish museums throughout postcommunist Europe, examining the relationship between politics, history, and culture. Gershenson is now writing a book about new Israeli horror films.