



## THE POST-HOLOCAUST JEW IN THE AGE OF “THE WAR ON TERROR”: STEVEN SPIELBERG’S *MUNICH*

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*As a film about “terror” spilling over from its local context (the struggle over Palestine) into the global arena, Munich transcends the specificity of the so-called “Palestinian question” to become a contemporary allegory of the Western construct of “the war on terror.” The essay explores the boundaries and contradictions of the “moral universe” constructed and mediated by the film, interpreted by some as a dovish critique of Israeli (and post-9/11 U.S.) policy. Along the way, the author probes whether this “Hollywood Eastern” continues the long Zionist tradition seen in popular films from Exodus onwards, or signals a rupture (or even latent subversion) of it.*

IN HIS GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED *Schindler’s List* (1994), Steven Spielberg, an American Jew “perceived by many as *the* formative representative of American popular culture,” allegorized his own journey “from a ‘nondidactic’ popular entertainer to his much publicized ‘rebirth’ as a Jewish artist.”<sup>1</sup> More than a decade later, he continued this journey with *Munich* (2006). But whereas *Schindler’s List* ended on a note of triumphant Zionism,<sup>2</sup> *Munich* appears to cast doubts if not on the moral core of Zionism itself, then at least on some of its tactics and modes of operation as carried out by its embodied political incarnation, the State of Israel. This essay explores the boundaries, limitations, and contradictions of the moral universe constructed and mediated by Spielberg’s *Munich*, probing whether this “Hollywood Eastern”<sup>3</sup> continues the long Zionist tradition prevalent in so many of Hollywood’s popular films, from Otto Preminger’s *Exodus* (1960)<sup>4</sup> onward, or signals a rupture (or even a latent subversion) of it.

Drawing on and fusing an eclectic array of genres (the war film, the 1970s spy thriller, the travelogue) and wrapped in the contemporary veneer of self-doubt, *Munich* is a soul-searching journey in pursuit of morality and justice. Described by Spielberg himself as “a prayer for peace,”<sup>5</sup> it was made at the peak of the al-Aqsa intifada as part of his plan to produce what he called “peace projects.”<sup>6</sup> *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland hailed the film as representing “a new departure for the director, his most political movie

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yet," and wrote that while Spielberg "still loves Israel" and still "longs for its survival and wellbeing," he is now "paying attention to the moral costs—the impact not so much on the Palestinians, but on the Jewish soul."<sup>7</sup>

*Munich* merits exploration for a number of reasons. Claiming to be inspired by real events and based on George Jonas's thriller, *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team*, the film follows a cell of Mossad assassins as they set out across Europe to kill the eleven Palestinians allegedly responsible for murdering eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.<sup>8</sup> As a film about terror spilling over from its local context (the struggle over Palestine) into the global arena, *Munich* transcends the specificity of the so-called "Palestinian question" to become a contemporary allegory of the Western construct of "the war on terror" that is embedded in the film's underlying ideological project. Moreover, in an ironic twist on "the Jewish question," the film connects the emerging discourse on and of the war on terror to the reincarnation of the "Jew" (traditionally perceived as the classical "other" of old Europe) as the "Israeli," by confronting him with the "Palestinian."

#### CHALLENGING (?) THE MORAL PARADIGM OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Even before its Tel Aviv premier in January 2006, *Munich* was criticized for its perceived sympathy for the Palestinian cause in Israel by commentators who had not seen the film and by Israeli officials in the United States invited to advance screenings. Concerning its critical reception in the United States, *Haaretz* chief U.S. correspondent Shmuel Rosner reported that all the American Jewish critics (most notably Leon Wieseltier in the *New Republic* and David Brooks in the *New York Times*) argued against the film. The underlying (yet open) assumption uniting the American reviewers, regardless of whether they praised or criticized the film, was the unquestioning acceptance of Israel's moral superiority; the anger leveled at Spielberg was based on what Zionist critics saw as his "chutzpah" even to attempt to equalize the two sides in the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What still remained a taboo within the framework of the American debate, even among its more liberal participants, was any acknowledgment of the moral superiority of the Palestinian cause (or not to mention any attempt to explore the possibility of it being so). Furthermore, the debate did not even present the dialectical option offered by what Rashid Khalidi calls "the contrasting narratives regarding Palestine,"<sup>9</sup> but unequivocally presupposed the moral superiority of the "Israeli narrative."

Thus, Spielberg's *Munich* was perceived by many American Jews as betraying both American values and the *Schindler's List* legacy, which not only globalized the memory of the Holocaust but also promoted and celebrated the establishment of the State of Israel as the redemption of this historical tragedy. Yet the debate built into the film's marketing strategy (for which

Spielberg had hired Israeli public relations consultant Eyal Arad, whose political clients included Binyamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon) was aimed both at enhancing its publicity and at providing it with ammunition against any serious accusations of being anti-Israeli. The controversy attached to this film, then, played out within the safe boundaries of the "Jewish world." Palestinian and pro-Palestinian perspectives were strikingly absent from these debates, which were dominated by critics and commentators frantically defining the dangerous "other," the Palestinian terrorist.

In his introduction to the 2005 edition of Jonas's *Vengeance*,<sup>10</sup> first published in 1984, Jewish American journalist and writer Richard Ben Cramer provides the moral imperative for the book (as well as the film) when he describes it as "a cautionary moral tale—perhaps more apt today than it was when it was first published." According to him, the moral core of this "cautionary tale" is founded on the following questions: "Can a free society descend to murder to punish murder? Does fighting terrorism require terror? Does it inevitably put a nation's defenders into the world of the terrorists—and onto their level?" In Cramer's view, Israelis "have been forced to confront these questions for decades—more often in the last ten years. And now, post 9/11, Americans are in the same soup: Our own CIA has politically gone into the business of 'targeted killing.'" Cramer's moral imperative, much like Spielberg's, is disturbed not so much by the morality of the "just revenge" as by its utilitarian ends ("does it work?" he asks in his introduction). Cramer reminds us that at the end of the story Avner, the leader of the commando team and the main protagonist of the book (and film), is "still convinced of the justice of his acts. But their utility? He can't say. Still, the pace of assassinations by Israel only increased. Did terrorism decrease? Could her citizens say they lived more free from fear? Will we?"

It is not an accident that the utilitarian morality message (violence begets violence; vengeance breeds vengeance) that undergirds Cramer's and Spielberg's moral argument is delivered in the film by Robert, the Mossad cell's Belgian toymaker-turned-explosives-engineer. Nor is it an accident that this role was played by Mathieu Kassovitz, the celebrated director of *La Haine* (1995), a film that chronicles in mock-documentary fashion a day in the life of three male youths from a rough suburb (*banlieue*) near Paris: Hubert, a black; Vinz, a white Jew; and Said, a second-generation North African Arab. *La Haine* hinges on Vinz's morbid fascination with power, which is actually a delayed revenge fantasy against the *Goy* that manifests itself in his wish to avenge the death of his friend Abdel by murdering a French policeman. Revenge, it should be noted, even if delayed or unsatisfied, has become a dominant (though not always open and/or conscious and acknowledged) theme in post-Holocaust Jewish life—especially in the imaginative space of desire that the State of Israel occupies for many Diaspora Jews, who perceive it as a tool of revenge against the *Goy* (conveniently displaced onto the Arab and particularly the Palestinian).<sup>11</sup> Vinz's revenge fantasy is countered by Hubert's argument that hatred breeds hatred and violence begets violence,<sup>12</sup> which is the same

argument made by Robert in Spielberg's film. "All this blood will come back to us," Robert tells Avner with anguish. By the final scene, Avner seems to agree: "Every one we killed was replaced by six more."<sup>13</sup>

Thus the Jewish American director Spielberg assigned the task of voicing Jewish moral torment in *Munich* to the Jewish French filmmaker Kassovitz. By asking "What have we [the Jews] become?" Robert/Kassovitz also echoes the self-righteous discourse associated with the Israeli Peace Now camp, whose objection to the occupation is based not on what "we" do to the Palestinians, but on what "they" do to "us." Indeed, as Joseph Massad writes, "Golda Meir, who is depicted in the film as a righteous and lovable leader, had once said 'We can forgive you for killing our sons. But we will never forgive you for making us kill yours.' It is this racist sentiment which structures the story *Munich* wants to tell."<sup>14</sup> In one of his "What have we become?" speeches, Robert/Kassovitz warns Avner of the danger of sinking to the level of the terrorists, "that's what makes us Jewish," the bomb-maker pleads. Yes, he admits, we (the Jews) have suffered terribly, but "we don't have to do wrong just because we were wronged."

Ironically, or not, the criticism that was leveled at Spielberg by self-proclaimed Zionists (a criticism that was also inflamed by his collaboration with

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Tony Kushner, a mild critic of Israeli policies who is a hate-figure for U.S. ultra-Zionists) helped him present his film as morally courageous, nonbiased, balanced, and respectful of the two opposite narratives of the "conflict." But in reality, as Cramer himself asserts unequivocally, the book's main assertion was that "Israelis, reacting to terror attacks, had become killers themselves."<sup>15</sup> This assertion reverts again to Israel's common strategy of presenting the Israelis as the conflict's main victims, reacting to atrocities but never perpetrating them.<sup>16</sup>

The moral superiority of the Israeli Jews in *Munich* is manifested in a variety of ways. For example, while the death squad is planning to kill the Palestinian politician in his Paris flat, his little daughter, wearing a red sweater (in a conscious intertextual homage to the Jewish girl wearing a red coat in the scene depicting the liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto in *Schindler's List*), answers the phone that is about to explode. Reacting quickly, the cell delays the installation of the explosive in order to save her life. In another vengeance operation in Beirut, they rescue the wife of a suspected terrorist before they kill him.<sup>17</sup> While Steve, the South African member of the commando unit (played by Daniel Craig, who is also the new James Bond), declares that "the only blood that matters to me is Jewish blood," the other members of the cell, Robert and Avner in particular, are presented, despite their dedication to the cause, as deeply concerned about harming any innocent life. Avner, especially, becomes the iconic figure of the supremely moral Israeli soldier who shoots and cries: After talking to his wife over the phone and hearing his daughter bubbling, he bursts into tears, his body shaking with sobs.<sup>18</sup>

### THE DIASPORIC BODY AND THE ISRAELI SOUL

In an ironic historical displacement, the figure of the ethically sensitive Israeli, which characterized the idealized self-image created by the soft Zionist discourse (the "shoot and cry syndrome") of the Ashkenazi left in the 1970s, finally reached America at the beginning of the new millennium. Traditionally, Americans had tended to favor the "powerful eroticized counter-image to the diasporic Jew"<sup>19</sup> epitomized in Otto Preminger's *Exodus* (1960) by Ari Ben Canaan, a role immortalized on screen by Paul Newman. As a projection of a "fantasized Sabra, an ideal ego constructed by nascent Israeli manhood," Ari Ben Canaan introduced to the global cinema audience "the birth of the mythic 'new Jew' . . . a model of pride for both Israeli and American Jews."<sup>20</sup>

Sander Gilman has written that "the Jew in the Western Diaspora does respond, must respond, to the image of the Jews in [Western] cultures."<sup>21</sup> Spielberg's response was to construct a new image of the Israeli that responds not only to traditional images of the Jew in Western culture but also to the weakness and vulnerability associated with the Jew as victim of the Holocaust. Through the post-Holocaust figure of Avner, *Munich* hybridizes the traditional stereotype of the diasporic Jew with the figure of the Israeli; it is especially through Avner's character that the film constructs a new Jewish identity. Like all Jewish identities constructed across Western cultures after World War II, this identity cannot be dissociated from memories of the Holocaust, which also provides the script for the new post-Holocaust Jew in the age of the global war on terror. For obvious reasons, to represent a Jew after the Holocaust is a problematic and delicate endeavor, though perhaps less so for Jewish filmmakers, particularly diasporic ones. Although their films do not represent how their national public views Jews and Jewishness, they do correspond to how those inscribed as "others" see themselves or want to be seen by the dominant global culture, for which Jews and Jewishness continue to remain an indefinable signifier.

Unlike Ari Ben Canaan, who had not even a shadow of a doubt regarding the morality of his actions, Avner, his postmodern replica, seems to be consumed by moral anguish. The brooding, angst-ridden Israeli hero thus comes to dominate the new discourse of the Zionist Hollywood epic. Nowhere was this new discourse more prominent than in one of the promotional trailers of the film, where the handsome Eric Bana, who plays Avner, appears as a chiaroscuro silhouette, a visually dramatized metaphor of the tormented "Jewish soul." This logo, in which the gloomy Mossad hero meets his dark shadow, thus constitutes his doppelgänger moment.

*Munich* is crowded with Avner's flashbacks to the moment of trauma, the massacre of the athletes, even though this was not his personal trauma. In his *Open Democracy* review, Stephen Howe rightly asks, "And if, as one supposes, the Munich scenes are supposed to be running through Avner's head, we're offered no reason why he should be so haunted. He wasn't there. Those

scenes weren't even on TV. Why not any of the equally vicious incidents he's witnessed, or perpetrated, himself?"<sup>22</sup> The answer to this question is that these flashbacks not only blur the distinction between the national and the personal, the collective and the private, but also enhance the moral superiority of the agents of this cautionary tale. Even when the Mossad agents kill, their motivation transcends the bounds of the individual soul. Their vengeance is motivated by ulterior cause, the desire to redeem the traumatized collective Jewish soul. The assassins'—and the audience's—resolve, as Freedland perceptively observes, "is renewed with every reminder of, and every flashback to, that horror."<sup>23</sup>

The flashbacks to the moment of trauma are in line with the romanticization of the Mossad assassins, which is yet another manifestation of Hollywood's fantasy of the new Jew, whose muscular body is a container for the anguished Jewish soul. The body-soul dualism—the brawny body of the Jewish state and the soft soul of Diaspora Jewry (incarnated by Robert/Kassovitz)—is thus resolved. Whereas in *Exodus*, Hollywood's paradigmatic Zionist epic used by *Munich* as a point of reference, this duality was reconciled through the affinity between the muscular Ari Ben Canaan and the Holocaust survivor Karen, in *Munich* the union is embodied in the figure of the sensitive Mossad hero. This American Jewish image of fantasized Israeli masculinity has not escaped the more realistic gaze of the "real Israeli." Several "former Israeli intelligence agents," Freedland notes, "have said the notion of assassins suffering mid-session doubt is pure fantasy."<sup>24</sup>

In the bonus section of *Munich's* commercial DVD, Spielberg talks about his desire to humanize the people. Yet *Munich*, despite some rare moments of depicting Palestinians as human beings, demonstrates that in the political and moral universe constructed by Hollywood, Arabs (Palestinians in particular) have not as yet reached the level of being (or even becoming) "people."<sup>25</sup> Humanization is almost entirely reserved for the Israeli Jews, whose point of view dominates the narrative. Massad rightly observes that Spielberg humanizes

Israeli terrorists in *Munich* but expectedly not the Palestinian terrorists who are portrayed as having no conscience. It would seem that, unlike their Israeli counterparts, Palestinians shoot but do not cry! We see the Israeli killers laugh, cry, make love, cook, eat, kill, regret, question authority, but we also see them lose their souls. It is true that *Munich* wonders whether the policy of terrorism that Golda Meir unleashed out of anguish at the murder of the Israeli athletes might have been misguided, but the film insists that it is the Palestinians who forced the choice of terror on Israel. *Munich's* point of contention with Meir's policy rests on the film's claim that because Jews have a morally superior code, Israel need not

respond to Palestinians in kind, a sentiment articulated by Robert, the explosives-expert.<sup>26</sup>

The Palestinians in *Munich*, like other colonized people in many Hollywood films, are not constituted as subjects but used essentially as a mirror, a passive receptacle for the projection of Jewish Israeli fears and anxieties. They are left with neither biography nor history—neither the personal biography of any of the individual terrorists nor the history of their people. The ultimate humanization, Freedland explains, “is the voicing of doubt. The Israelis are redeemed in the audience’s eyes by their moral anguish.”<sup>27</sup>

*Munich* is for the new millennium what *Exodus* was for the short Zionist century.<sup>28</sup> If Ari Ben Canaan was a hero with unquestionable moral superiority, then Avner, his broken mirror image and dark doppelganger, is a hero who seems to question the morality of his mission but ultimately, despite his soul-searching journey, demonstrates Jewish moral superiority. As Bradshaw observes, “Avner exists to incarnate not the righteous avenger, but the righteous questioner, the Jewish man of action who comes to doubt the moral worth (or even the effectiveness) of what he is doing.”<sup>29</sup> Ironically, Avner’s very act of self-doubting gave him, in the age of the war on terror, a surplus moral authority. The Jewish assassins, unlike their Palestinian counterparts, cry when they shoot.

*Munich* also introduces the evolution of the classical Zionist hero à la Hollywood. If Ari Ben Canaan is the hero typical of the nationalist-heroic genre, to use Ella Shohat’s terminology,<sup>30</sup> then Avner resonates with the typical hero of, to use Shohat’s words once again, “the Palestinian wave in Israeli Cinema.”<sup>31</sup> But the Palestinian wave in Israeli cinema, despite its focus on the Israeli Jew (and particularly the self-tormented leftist Ashkenazi hero of the genre), has begun to open up to the Palestinian “other,” as is evident, for example, in films such as Daniel Vaxman’s *Hamsin* (1982). Spielberg’s film, in contrast, is still at the stage of denial of the Palestinians (despite Spielberg’s claims to the contrary). The only task left to the Palestinians in *Munich*, besides serving as foil for Israeli/American Jewish angst, is to be the dark trigger for their white moral dilemma.

### CHALLENGING (?) THE MORAL PARADIGM OF A PLANET POST-9/11

As much as *Exodus* is a film about a love affair between Israel and America,<sup>32</sup> so is *Munich*, which was filmed at the height of the hot romance between the neo-con George W. Bush administration and the Sharon and Olmert Israeli governments. The American-Israeli love affair is built into the film itself, made by a reborn American Jew who chose an Israeli topic (played in American English for the most part by non-Israeli actors) as a moral paradigm for the post-9/11 planet. Spielberg’s own intentions for the film are made clear by Freedland, who quotes from the director’s comments in several interviews:

I worked very hard so this film was not in any way, shape or form going to be an attack on Israel. On the contrary, *Munich* is a plea for Israel to be true to what Spielberg would say was its moral self. That plea, in itself, represents a form of advocacy for Israel: look, it says, Israel is not some brute military power, but a country of real, morally conflicted human beings. This is a contribution several dovish Israeli artists—like the novelists Amos Oz and David Grossman—have made to their country before: by revealing Israel's internal dissent, they show their nation in its best light.<sup>33</sup>

The 1972 trauma of Munich is linked in the film to the larger trauma of the Holocaust, which, in the tradition of the Hollywood Zionist narrative, is introduced as the ultimate justification in this tale of vengeance. Avner's mother is a Holocaust survivor who is proud of her son's deeds even without knowing (or pretending not to know) their gruesome details. Her statement that "We [the Jews] have a place on earth at last" is presented, within the moral paradigm introduced by *Munich*, as the ultimate and unchallenged justification for her son's murderous acts on behalf of the Jewish state. But the definitive moralizing message of the film is suggested by its title, *Munich*. As the *Guardian* film critic Peter Bradshaw noted, "When I first saw the title, my immediate thought was: 'Who's playing Neville Chamberlain?' Indeed, as he explains, his false association "is one of those coincidences that somehow isn't a coincidence."<sup>34</sup> In the title of the film, as Bradshaw perceptively observes, "There are queasy resonances locked in that city's name, between the appeasement of the Nazis and Israel's angry determination not to give an inch to its would-be destroyers."<sup>35</sup>

The Munich event, as many critics noticed, has transcended the uniqueness of the Israeli dilemma to become a global question, the question of terror. In an ironic twist to the Jewish question, the so-called Palestinian question has become an actor on the international scene. Fortress Israel's success in globalizing the Palestinian question and turning it into the Western frontier

of the war on terror is assimilated into *Munich's* underlying ideological project. This point is made clear by the travelogue nature of Spielberg's Zionist thriller: The war on terror takes the Mossad assassins all over Europe and the Middle East in order to end in New York. The Palestinian question thus becomes the West's question, and Israel's moral dilemma is extended and transformed into the West's moral dilemma. Yet Israel's moral dilemma transplanted into *Munich's* moral dilemma is in fact a pseudo-moral

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question. The real moral question demands acknowledgment that Europe is responsible not only for the "final solution" of the Jewish question but also for Zionism's creation of the Palestinian question.



Bradshaw observes that

Spielberg locates a key moment in 1970s New York City, where his camera seems to linger on almost every Manhattan landmark except the one we expect and fear to see the most. When that finally appears the effect is . . . moving in its simplicity. This is the lesson we should have learned after 1972, Spielberg appears to be saying: that hacking off the snake's head is strategically absurd, politically counter-productive, ethically illiterate.

It seems that Bradshaw, much like Spielberg, does not dare to question the identity of the real "snake." Consequently, the ideology produced, disseminated, and perpetuated by Israel remains unchallenged. Rather than discuss state terror and the birth of Israel by terror and violence (a point that is addressed by *Exodus*), *Munich*, made during the heyday of the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign against Israel, prefers to treat the symptoms of terror rather than its root causes. As Freedland notes, the film has been seized by the American Left "as a cogent argument against George Bush's war on terror and, particularly, the covert U.S. policy of targeted assassinations against al-Qaida leaders."<sup>36</sup> What Freedland, like most pro-Israel critics of the film, conveniently forgets to mention is that this policy itself was imported from Israel.<sup>37</sup>

The evidence, suggested by Philip Sand, of the devastating influence of popular culture on the torture-culture practiced in Guantanamo raises many questions about where the legitimacy of the moral universes (including systems of moral justification) created by popular filmmakers may lead.<sup>38</sup> Hence Spielberg, called the most popular filmmaker in the history of cinema, has a double burden to carry. His moral authority, built on the success of *Schindler's List*, is fully exploited in *Munich*, which, following *Exodus*, Hollywood's ultimate Zionist apology, perpetuates the myth of Israel's unchallenged moral superiority.

Not only does *Munich* fail to provide a comprehensive political and historical context to the conflict, but it does not even reach the base of a moral position beyond its short-sighted views. As with all historical processes, agency and deep structure must be understood as a complex interplay of factors. The true essence of the Munich attack lies not in the multiple interactions of a single dramatic event but in a series of interconnected multidimensional historical processes that began with the colonization of Palestine by European Jewish settlers, a colonization that was transformed and displaced in contemporary Western public and media discourse by the notion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Spielberg, the American Jewish master of the popular image, reproduces in *Munich* this essentialist view of Israeli Jewish ethics unchallenged. And the moral superiority he purveys continues to be created and perpetuated by Hollywood, the world's largest manufacturer of more than just images.

## ENDNOTES

1. Yosefa Loshitzky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on "Schindler's List"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 12.
2. For a further discussion of this issue, see Yosefa Loshitzky, "Holocaust Others: Spielberg's *Schindler's List* versus Lanzmann's *Sboab*," in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, pp. 104–118; and Haim Bresheeth, "The Great Taboo Broken: Reflections on the Israeli Reception of *Schindler's List*," in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, pp. 193–212.
3. For a discussion of the term "Hollywood Eastern," see John C. Eisele, "The Wild East: Deconstructing the Language of Genre in the Hollywood Eastern," *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 4 (Summer 2002), pp. 68–94. The terrorist genre, according to Eisele, is a subgenre of the Eastern.
4. For a further discussion of *Exodus* as a prime Hollywood Zionist narrative, see Yosefa Loshitzky, "Screening the Birth of a Nation: *Exodus* Revisited," in Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), pp. 1–14; and Yosefa Loshitzky, "National Rebirth as a Movie: *Exodus* Revisited," *National Identities* 4, no. 2 (July 2002), pp. 119–31.
5. Jamie Wilson, "Spielberg Hopes to Use Film to Connect Israelis and Palestinians," *The Guardian*, 6 December 2005, p. 16.
6. Wilson, "Spielberg Hopes to Use Film to Connect Israelis and Palestinians," p. 16.
7. Jonathan Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," *The Guardian*, 13 January 2006, p. 5.
8. For a discussion of the film see, among others, Roy Brand, "Identification with Victimhood in Recent Cinema," *Culture, Theory & Critique* 49, no. 2 (2008), pp. 165–81; and James Schamus, "Next Year in *Munich*: Zionism, Masculinity, and Diaspora in Spielberg's Epic," *Representations* 100, no. 1 (2007), pp. 53–66.
9. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 14.
10. Richard Ben Cramer, "Introduction," in George Jonas, *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. XV.
11. For a further discussion of this displacement, see Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); and Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*.
12. For a further discussion, see Yosefa Loshitzky, "The Post-Holocaust Jew in the Age of Post-colonialism: *La Haine* Revisited," *Studies in French Cinema* 5, no. 2 (2005), pp. 137–47; and Yosefa Loshitzky, "Intifada of the *Banlieues*: *La Haine* Revisited," in Yosefa Loshitzky, *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 94–116.
13. The reference to the number six is not accidental. Symbolically, it resonates with the number of Jews who perished in the Holocaust.
14. Joseph Massad, "Munich, or Making Baklava," *The Electronic Intifada*, 3 February 2006, <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article4449.shtml> (accessed 13 August 2009). An identical article under a different title was also published in the Egyptian *Al-Abram*. See Joseph Massad, "Baking the Cake," *Al-Abram Weekly On-line*, 2–8 February 2006, Issue No. 780, Culture, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/780/cu1.htm> (accessed 13 August 2009).
15. Ben Cramer, "Introduction," p. XIII.
16. For a further discussion of the centrality of the victim's position in Israeli cultural and public discourse, see Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*; and Yosefa Loshitzky, "Pathologizing Memory: From the Holocaust to the *Intifada*," *Third Text* 20, nos. 3–4 (May/July 2006), pp. 327–35.
17. This episode is based on the April 1973 covert operation Spring of Youth in Beirut in which Ehud Barak, Israel's current defense minister and former prime minister, led an elite commando squad in the disguise of a brunette, high-heeled woman. The hit squad assassinated three PLO leaders (one of them, Kamal Nasser, a poet and PLO spokesman) and several others as "collateral damage," including two Lebanese policemen and an Italian woman living in the

same building. In the real-life incident, however, the wife of the PLO leader (Yussef El-Najjar) was not rescued but rather shot to death with her husband as she attempted to shield him from the death squad. For an interesting account of the killers (including the brunette-wigged transgender Ehud Barak), see Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: New York Review Books, 2003) pp. 182–86.

18. For a discussion on the trope of the crying Mossad agent, see Boaz Hagin, "Male Weeping as Performative: The Crying Mossad Assassin in *Walk on Water*," *Camera Obscura* 23, no. 2 68 (2008), pp. 102–139.

19. Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, p. 1.

20. Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, p. 2.

21. Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 4.

22. Stephen Howe, "Munich: Spielberg's Failure," *Open Democracy*, 26 January 2006, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich\\_\(film\)#cite\\_note-15](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich_(film)#cite_note-15) (accessed 17 August 2009).

23. Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," p. 5.

24. Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," p. 5.

25. For some of the major studies of the representation of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood cinema, see Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch, 2001); Lina H. Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (London: I.B Tauris, 2006); and Jon Tim Semmerling, "Evil" *Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

26. Massad, "Munich, or Making Baklava."

27. Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," p. 5.

28. I am borrowing the term "short Zionist century" from Idith Zertal, *Death and the Nation: History, Memory, Politics* [in Hebrew] (Or Yehuda: Dvir, 2002).

29. Bradshaw, "Road to Nowhere," p. 7.

30. Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*.

31. Shohat, "The Return of the Repressed: The Palestinian Wave in Recent Israeli Cinema," *Israeli Cinema*, pp. 237–74.

32. For a further discussion of this issue, see Loshitzky, "Screening the Birth of a Nation: *Exodus* Revisited," and Loshitzky, "National Rebirth as a Movie: *Exodus* Revisited."

33. Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," p. 5. Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian* film critic, describes Munich as "a curious film . . . as if Amos Oz tried to write a Frederick Forsyth thriller." Amos Oz is one of the prominent voices of the Peace Now movement, currently in a state of terminal decline in Israeli politics. The *Yorim VeBochim* syndrome is deeply ingrained in the movement's ideology. For a further discussion of Oz's Orientalism, see Yosefa Loshitzky, "From Orientalist Discourse to Family Melodrama: Oz and Volman's *My Michael*," *Edebiyat: A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 5, no. 1 (1994), pp. 99–123; and Loshitzky, "In the Land of Oz: Orientalist Discourse in *My Michael*," in *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, pp. 90–111.

34. Peter Bradshaw, "Road to Nowhere: Spielberg's Take on the Middle East Misses the Big Picture," *The Guardian*, 27 January 2006, p. 7.

35. Bradshaw, "Road to Nowhere," p. 7. Obviously, Bradshaw's uncritical use of Israeli propagandist discourse using the word "destroying" with regard to the Palestinians is problematic if not misleading.

36. Freedland, "Blood Breeds Blood," p. 5.

37. For an excellent analysis of the import of Fortress Israel to the new post-9/11 global space, see Naomi Klein, "How War Was Turned into a Brand," *The Guardian*, 16 June 2007, p. 34.

38. Philippe Sand, professor of law at University College London, reveals that the American television drama, *24*, featuring counterterrorism agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland), inspired lawyers at Guantanamo to come up with new interrogation (i.e., torture) techniques. Lieutenant Colonel Diane Beaver, a military lawyer at the American "black hole," said that Bauer "gave people lots of ideas." Cited in Richard Norton-Taylor, "Top Bush Aides Pushed for Guantanamo Torture," *The Guardian*, 19 April 2008, p. 1.