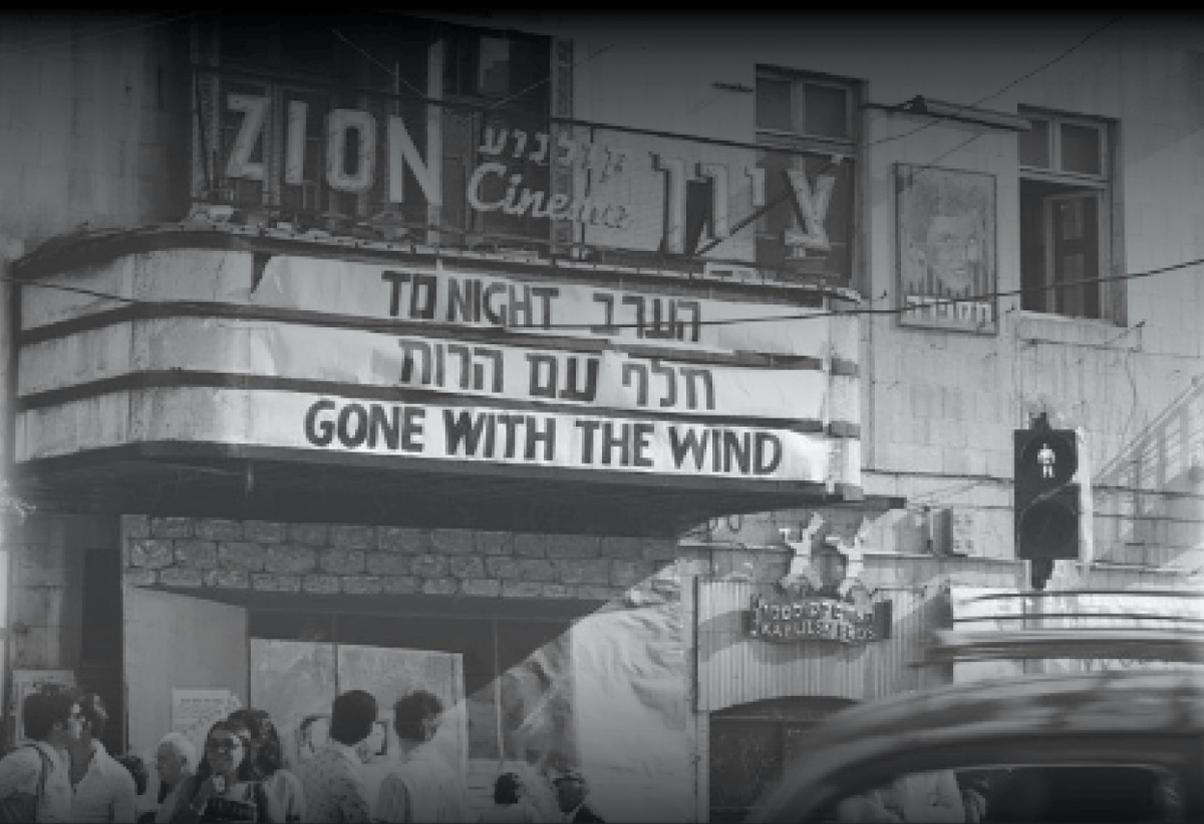# CASTING A GIANT SHADOW

The Transnational Shaping of Israeli Cinema

Edited by

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1

"I HAVE A GREAT PASSION FOR AMERICANS"

The Juggler *and the Question of National Cinema*

Dan Chyutin

Within Israeli film scholarship, the relative lack of reliance on the critical category *transnationalism* appears to bespeak of a difficulty in its integration into the existing body of work. The problem, I would argue, has its origins in the scholarship's initial investment in exploring, to quote Ella Shohat, "the agency of cinema in narrating the nation."[1] This emphasis on the nation did not exclude discussions of a transnational nature, as Shohat's formative *Israeli Cinema* (1989) clearly shows through its broader East/West perspective. Yet even if the expansion of such discussions ultimately drew scholarship further away from the narrow confines of the national cinema paradigm, the shadow of the nation still lingered in the attempt to submit these to localized explanations of Israeli film. In this sense, a frequent implicit assumption is that Israeli cinema is made most meaningful in relation to its national territory and society, particular history, particular language, and cultural codes; that it is, after all, "Israeli" and thus requires a specific kind of Israeli literacy to be best understood. And while such an assumption may be correct, it has arguably prevented studies from exploring the full scope of Israeli cinema's transnational operation and meaningfulness.

A particularly telling example of this difficulty, in my mind, can be found within scholarship's treatment of cinema in Israel's founding period

(1947–1967). As this was a period when the Israeli film industry concentrated on making heroic-nationalist films that foreground the tenets of Israeli-Zionist nationalism, it also makes itself particularly amenable to analysis through the national cinema perspective. Yet rather than submit to this perspective and its exclusionary tendencies,[2] scholars often challenged it by including Hollywood films made in and about Israel during that period as part of their consideration of postwar Israeli cinema. So brazen and exceptional was this inclusion—blurring rather than maintaining the commonly defined demarcation lines between *Israeli* and *non-Israeli*—that it often necessitated the concomitant inclusion of special explanatory caveats. Yosefa Loshitzky, for one, devotes a whole chapter to *Exodus* (Preminger 1960) in her book on Israeli cinema (2001), justifying this choice with the explanation that "although *Exodus* is *not an Israeli film*, it has become an inspiring model text for the heroic-nationalist genre in Israeli cinema."[3] For her recurrent references to *Exodus*, Nurit Gertz used similar terms: "Though *Exodus* is an *American film*, made by an *American director*, it succinctly captures the ideology of the national cinema and *plays a role in the history of Israeli cinema*: the creators of films that were produced in its aftermath saw it as part of the repertoire of Israeli cinema and incorporated some of its ingredients."[4] For his part, Moshe Zimmerman went so far as to argue that the title of "Hebrew or Israeli film" should be given to all films "that have some meaningful bearing on the country (they are set in it, their plots are relevant to its inhabitants, or the bulk of their creators are its residents)."[5] Accordingly, he includes in his analysis of Israeli cinema such movies on Israel as *Exodus*, *Sword in the Desert* (Sherman 1949), *Judith* (Mann 1966), and *Cast a Giant Shadow* (Shavelson 1966), which are often associated with Hollywood studios—and by implication with America. Yet even as Zimmerman is reluctant to follow other scholars in seeing these texts as strictly American, he still sections them off from other postwar films that fall more comfortably under the heading of "Israeli cinema."[6] As such, his and other similar maneuverings testify to a certain uncomfortableness with speaking about "foreign" film texts, which a resolutely transnational theoretical framework could alleviate.

This chapter centers on postwar Hollywood cinema about Israel, using it to explore not only this phenomenon's transnational workings, but also the limits of scholarship's attempt to incorporate transnationalism into its consideration of Israeli film. For these purposes, I offer a close reading of *The Juggler* (Dmytryk 1953), an early Hollywood film about Israel. The

Figure 1.1. Kirk Douglas on the set of *The Juggler* (Dmytryk 1953). Collection Christophel / RnB © Stanley Kramer Productions (licensed by Alamy).

first part of my argument follows the general model of past scholarship, which often has related to such films as capturing the constitutive myths of Zionist "Israeliness" while inflecting them toward particular "American" sensibilities. Yet it also moves beyond past scholarly efforts in its attempt to provide a more rigorous contextualization of these sensibilities in relation to the realities of postwar America. This allows me to counter readings of *The Juggler* as an unequivocal celebration of Zionist myths, foregrounding instead those dimensions of mythology that the film problematizes or ignores in order to avoid collision with contemporaneous American ideology. Armed with these insights, the second part of the argument draws on the film's reception history to uncover its complex matrix of transnational identification. Such complexity, I stipulate, has been largely marginalized in Israeli cinema scholarship's analysis of postwar Israeli-themed Hollywood productions, circumscribed as it is by national coordinates.

Israeli-Zionist Values and Postwar American Sensibilities

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, American popular opinion on the Jewish people exchanged past traditions of antisemitism with an unabashed embrace. First and foremost, this shift affected the public perception of American Jews, who began to be recognized as "consummate insiders in American culture."[7] For Jews themselves, recognition came hand in hand with the desire to "be like everyone else"[8]—most explicitly in the move to the suburbs, whose call "for a homogenization of differences . . . led them to diminish community and tribal ties while emphasizing continuing mobility and the individual pursuit of happiness above all else."[9] Concomitantly, American acceptance of Jews extended its reach to include an acceptance of Israel. The foundation of the Israeli state offered Americans a way out of seeing Jews only as emblems of victimhood, dependent on America's good graces for their survival. Israel's successful struggle for independence made the fledgling state appear, if not an equal, then at least a powerful ally to America. In the framework of Cold War pragmatic internationalism, it consequently became important to stress in the public sphere how American and Israeli "cultures were kin,"[10] articulating a shared basis for geopolitical collaboration. Vocal in promoting this message were American Jews, who searched in cultural kinship for means of associating themselves with a positive image of Jewry while "affirming their 'Americanness.'"[11]

Hollywood played a major part in this process. Though many Jews inhabited its ranks, the American film industry before World War II—and especially during the 1930s[12]—tended to downplay Jewish particularity due to fear of alienating its mainstream audience base. Things changed in the immediate postwar period, when an atmosphere of racial tolerance allowed studios to produce two films dealing with American antisemitism—*Crossfire* (1947) and *Gentlemen's Agreement* (1947). Yet even as these movies addressed a specific cause of concern, the Jewish community "felt that [they] would do more harm than good" by undercutting Jews' status as all-Americans.[13] Later, as American Jews became more accepted, their presence on the American screen grew while concurrently becoming "de-Semitize[d] and de-Judaize[d]" in order "to avoid challenges to a homogeneous view of American life."[14] This strategy made it difficult for the main studios to deal with Israel, a context that could potentially emphasize Jewish particularity over a universalized American ethos. As a result, the burden of representing Israel fell on the shoulders of "those at the beginning

of successful careers, and especially left-liberal writers, directors and producers," who were less encumbered by the reservations of Old Hollywood. "Eager to reassert themselves in the wake of the Holocaust and its painful passive imagery," these cineastes gravitated toward Zionism's image of the New Jew and committed themselves to helping Israel "by dramatizing its story and heroes for Americans."[15]

A direct result of this newfound commitment was *The Juggler*—the second Hollywood fiction feature about Israel and the first to be shot in Israel.[16] For the film's principal creators—Michael Blankfort, who adapted his eponymous novel to the screen, and Stanley Kramer, who served as producer—Israel's struggle for statehood had been a powerful social drama as well as a way of reconnecting with their Jewishness. They therefore fervently believed in the value of giving it cinematic expression and making it an object of widespread veneration. Sharing in this belief were other members of the production. The film's (gentile) director Edward Dmytryk, for one, explained that he "did the film in order to see Israel, a country that was pulling itself up and doing *wonderful* things for the world."[17] Similar sentiments were retrospectively expressed by the film's (Jewish) star, Kirk Douglas, who was excited "to be in the land of my ancestors, my heritage," and recognized that in spite of the various hardships besetting the country, "it was *wonderful*, finally, to be in the majority."[18] It is this sense of "wonderful" that the filmmakers wanted to bring out—though perhaps only in very broad strokes, since, as Kramer asserted, it would have been wrong for the picture to "get caught up in 'Zionism'" and marginalize the "universal dimensions" that apparently made Israel "the closest place to the United States."[19]

The Juggler follows Hans Muller, a Holocaust survivor who lost his wife and children and seeks refuge in Israel. The Israeli immigration relocation camp causes Hans to feel claustrophobic, and he escapes its close quarters. While roaming the streets of Haifa, he flees an Israeli policeman, after mistaking the latter for a Schutzstaffel (SS) guard. Hans wounds the officer and, thinking him dead, decides to head for the border. On the way, he encounters Yehoshua, an orphaned boy who offers to be his guide. The two travel the countryside until they reach a kibbutz, where Yehoshua is injured by a land mine. While the child is recuperating, Hans remains in the kibbutz under the false identity of an American tourist and falls for one of its members, Yael. Growing more comfortable, he even agrees to resume his past profession—a juggler—and perform for the local children. At the

height of the performance, however, police detective Karni, who has led the manhunt after Hans, arrives on the scene. The juggler barricades himself with a rifle; Yael attempts to convince him to come out peacefully, saying that the policeman was in fact only wounded. Hans undergoes a psychic breakdown; he lays down his arms, ultimately collapsing to the ground and into Yael's embrace.

These basic narrative coordinates offer the infrastructure to which the filmmakers apply much of Zionist ideology on the nature and function of Israeliness, modulated through their particular American emphases. In this engagement, like contemporaneous films defined more conventionally as Israeli, *The Juggler* foregrounds Zionism's three main symbolic foundations: immigration (Aliyah), the Sabra ideal, and ingathering (Kibbutz Galuyot). In terms of the first foundation, the emphasis on Aliyah as the means and emblem of national redemption is most notably present in the opening sequence, titled "The Refugees Arrive," which features refugee boats entering the Haifa port. The interaction between the refugees and the Israelis portside, made either through crosscutting or shared frames, establishes this immigration as a return—not to a foreign land but to a home where family and friends are already present to greet them. The jovial music, smiling faces, and waving hands provide affirmation of the supreme positive value of this meeting. Such affirmation, in turn, helps contextualize the appearance of refugee maladjustment in subsequent scenes as something that must be endured for a worthy cause.

This framing of Aliyah interacts with postwar American discourses in a variety of important ways. Most significantly, the film's reliance on the Zionist valorization of immigration seems intent on resonating with the contemporaneous conception of "the United States [as] a nation of immigrants, some persecuted, all coming to better their lives, experience freedom, and achieve economic success."[20] While this strategy ensured legibility for a broad American audience, it held particular relevance for American Jews, who at that period highlighted their immigrant heritage as part of "a similar drama of acceptance and assimilation."[21] By linking the narratives of immigration, the film then implicitly positioned American Jewish experience as a privileged site where the commonalities between Israel and America become apparent.

At the same time, so as to afford this kinship, certain dimensions of Zionist immigration had to be modified and/or elided. Firstly, *The Juggler* only speaks of Aliyah in the context of the Holocaust. In this, the film

recapitulates the postwar American position on Israel as being less a national project with particular geopolitical ambitions and more a solution for the global humanitarian problem of Jewish genocide. This framing is also meant to address the tension surrounding American Jewry's reluctance to immigrate to Israel. As Jacob Neusner reminds us, "American Jews take very seriously indeed the existence of themselves as a distinctive community and the continued existence of the State of Israel as well." These two commitments nevertheless find themselves in conflict when this constituency fails to take to heart "the challenge of Aliyah" and voluntarily renounce their exilic affiliation.[22] By speaking of immigration only through the terms of the Holocaust, the film thus offers American Jews a Zionist Israel where that challenge is nonexistent. The call for Aliyah is made pertinent solely to the victims of recent European persecutions—and not to an American Jewry undergoing an unprecedented golden age. At the same time, since the American Jewish story has its origins in European antisemitic persecution, a certain level of helpful parallelism is still maintained between American Jews and the recent arrivals at Haifa port, imagined more as refugees than as voluntary immigrants (Olim).

The Israel that the film's immigrants meet, and that supposedly provides remedy for their ailments, is shaped in light of the second symbolic foundation of Zionism—the Sabra ideal. *The Juggler* foregrounds several aspects of this golden standard in a manner that is indicative of its American concerns. In relation to Sabra asceticism, the film shows how Israelis often deprive themselves of luxury due to the challenges of founding a state, as when Yael introduces a small shack without an indoor bathroom as her house. Importantly, on this latter occasion, as in several others, a contrast is established between such bare conditions and the affluence of America. These allusions seem to evoke the contemporaneous fear that the shift toward suburban middle-class existence has made Americans unable to cope with hardships such as those endured by their forefathers in their struggle to build a nation. At the same time, however, *The Juggler* also bolsters American self-image by presenting Israeli characters as evocations of America's Puritan/Protestant work ethic. Paradoxical in a sense, this representation exposed American audiences to both the challenge and the inherent possibility of recovering their traditional national ethos.

The asceticism of Sabras is linked to their investment in a socialist vision of egalitarianism, most clearly represented in the ethos and practice of the kibbutz. *The Juggler* highlights this vision through various kibbutz

scenes featuring group activities: for example, when all the members form a human chain to lead Hans and the child away from the minefield after Yehoshua is injured, or when members dance the hora around the campfire in synchronized motions. Significantly, however, even as such events are foregrounded and contextualized, their socialist underpinnings are ignored. Considering that McCarthyism was at its height during the film's release, this disavowal could best be understood as an attempt by the filmmakers to rid Israel of the stigma of communist affiliations, turning it into an idealized nonpolitical democratic society.

This whitewashing of socialism, in turn, not only makes the kibbutz seem more democratic but also more pioneering. By placing Israeli pioneers front and center, *The Juggler* attempted, in the spirit of the contemporaneous public discourse, to surface an analogy with "the mythic heritage of the American West" and "remind Americans of their own rugged past." Yet in so doing, the film also brushed against the postwar fear around how "American society was becoming 'soft.'"[23] This is evident, for example, in a scene in which the kibbutz "head of cows" Mordechai tells Hans of his impression of New Yorkers: "Such crazy people," he says; "No room for trees, for cows, just people. Push, push, push." This invocation comes to portray Americans as fundamentally dissimilar to Israelis. They are defined not in relation to the Western frontier's rugged pioneer tradition but to a supposedly unnatural and unproductive East Coast metropolitan lifestyle. One may also find in this a more specific comment on the debilitated state of American Jewry based on the traditional perception of New York as a Jewish stronghold.

The Juggler also engages another archetypical role that the Sabra played in the context of nation building—that of the hero warrior. In addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict as the context of warfare, the film makes its presence known throughout via images of encirclement, as when Lucy, a little refugee girl, denotes the names of Arab countries surrounding Israel or when Yael tells Hans that "the only way to get out of Israel these days is by plane or by boat." In this, the film adopts "the David and Goliath metaphor"[24] prominently featured in American public discourse on Israel's geopolitical situation and uses it to paint a picture of a country "continually threatened by its more numerous and brutal neighbors"[25] and of its inhabitants as "tough fighters who use violence only as a last resort."[26] As with references to pioneering, the vision of an Israeli "warrior nation" complemented the American frontier myth where "a modern people set out to tame a wilderness of 'savages.'"[27] Moreover, it also connotatively referenced

"America's own story of independence more than one hundred fifty years earlier,"[28] in which a small nation in the making had to fight against greater states for its survival.

Yet it is also important to note that unlike subsequent Hollywood films about Israel, such as *Exodus*, *The Juggler* does not foreground Israeli combativeness. Indeed, the actual presence of the conflict exists in only one scene, when Hans and Yael encounter an enemy patrol near a destroyed Arab village; as he tries to fire upon the unsuspecting soldiers, she stops him by stating, "We don't kill people in cold blood." The depiction of this event departs mainline Zionist mythology, representing a desire to underplay Israeli military heroism through avoidance of spectacular battle scenes and through subsuming it *exclusively* under the heading of defensiveness, if not passivity. This strategy shows the limits of analogizing Israel and America as sister warrior nations, for it all too closely relates the former to the persistent image of Jews as universal symbols of vulnerability and the latter to the position of robust protectorate of the free world. In this, one finds echoes not only of the criticism leveled by the early Eisenhower administration against Israeli militarism for being an obstacle to Middle Eastern stability but also of a broader American hesitancy to ascribe the role of aggressor to the generation of Holocaust survivors that had suffered so much from aggression.[29]

Zionism's third foundation—ingathering as the desired outcome of a meeting between Aliyah and Sabra culture—is expressed in the film primarily through Hans's journey. Hans is a man whose chosen profession acts as a metaphor for his existential state. Like the juggler's bouncing balls, he is everywhere and nowhere; he can never have a home, since, in his mind, "a home is a place you lose."[30] The narrative's objective is to prove him wrong—to show that a person must always have a home and that for the recently displaced Jew, this home must be Israel. Because *The Juggler* positions Israel as a resolution for Holocaust traumas, its treatment of home appropriately takes on therapeutic terms. Accordingly, Hans follows the commonplace cinematic trope "of the survivor as a psychologically wounded soul."[31] The locus of his agony is the memory of being tortured by and losing his family to the Nazis. His journey toward acquiring a home is therefore a journey toward reclaiming sanity by letting go of such recollections. The achievement of this goal, as the film notes occasionally, is contingent on Hans being able to acknowledge his problem (personal transformation) and seek help from others (social transformation).

This process of psychic amelioration, which is synonymous with accepting Israel as a therapeutic home, is mapped onto a physical traversing of Israel, thereby reflecting the Zionist emphasis on journeying through the landscape as means of Sabra indoctrination. Yet the film's treatment of the journey trope diverges from the Zionist ethos in important ways. Thus, for example, if the Zionist ethos figured wandering as a cure for the ailments of Holocaust survivors, *The Juggler*, invested as it is in the American image of Jewish vulnerability, uses this activity to explore Hans's psychological resistance to assimilation. Also significant in terms of divergence is the choice to structure the journey as a police procedural—a popular Hollywood genre that made little impact on early Israeli film. *The Juggler*'s use of this narrative form asserted its *distinct* American flavor. Moreover, it also served to move away from issues of Zionist indoctrination and tackle the unique postwar American problem of anticommunist blacklisting. Thus, in one telling sequence, Lucy's father asks that she hand over her autographed picture of Hans to Detective Karni for identification purposes, explaining that "sometimes, for the sake of the law, we have to give up our friends." Read in light of Dmytryk's role as a friendly witness to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), this moral lesson therefore becomes an implicit apologia about "naming names,"[32] rather than a statement about Israeliness.

Being that the journey is insufficient in curing Hans of his malaise, the film supplies two characters who amplify its salubrious effects. The first of these is Yehoshua, who becomes Hans's travel guide. The choice of having a child fulfill this role relates to Zionism's cult of youth, which set the perennially young Sabra apart from old diasporic Jewry. Yet beyond this general connection, Yehoshua's age makes him a suitable surrogate son to Hans, a replacement for the children he had lost. Yael, the other major figure in Hans's assimilation story, plays a similar function. She supplants Yehoshua's guidance with further initiation into the Israeli-Zionist value system in the context of the kibbutz. Even more importantly, however, her romance with Hans, according to the film's logic of replacement, renders her a proper substitute for the wife who perished and helps him assimilate by "reconstitut[ing] his family in the New Land."[33]

The process of reconstitution is made possible not so much because of Hans's psychic agility but because he seems innately equipped to be part of the national body. Though an immigrant, Hans is not representative of the physical frailty and excessive erudition that Israeli Zionism associated

with diasporic Jewry. Rather, as portrayed by a virile Douglas, he captures the essence of the Israeli-Zionist "tough Jew." Accordingly, his assimilation does not require any substantive change, for the raw material of Israeliness is already there, buried under a layer of psychic maladjustment. This understanding is expressed forthright during the hora dance scene, when Hans and Yael become part of a greater ensemble of kibbutz members engaged in the Zionist ritual of circle folk dancing. Through careful synchronization of music and physical movement, the scene puts forward the rite's symbolic function of engendering harmonious collectivity. Hans is overwhelmed by such intense inseparability, declaring that "we danced together, as if we were practicing for years." Rather than feel removed from the collective rhythm, he identifies with it as something that has been a part of him all along. Israeliness need not be learned—only recovered.

The definition of this new family as Israeli Zionist, in turn, coincides with its (paradoxical) definition as American. Thus, upon their first encounter, Hans Muller assumes the identity of Hans Schumann, an American who is a friend to the stars. And all through the remainder of the film, he is treated as an American, offering several occasions for Israeli characters to explain to him their national differences. Additionally, as Hans's interlocutor, Yehoshua is turned into Josh, a Sabra who is literate in American popular culture, including *Hopalong Cassidy* and Rita Hayworth. Yael is perhaps the least noticeably American of the family's members. Nevertheless, her blond locks and formfitting outfits still make her appear closer to the stereotypical representation of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) shiksa, later exemplified by Eve Marie Saint's character in *Exodus*. In this characterization, for Patricia Erens, "the freedom and equality of the Israeli woman is coopted and transformed into a symbol of sexual freedom (*cum* promiscuity)."[34] Yet even while trading upon the conventional voyeuristic pleasures of Hollywood cinema, Yael connotes a traditional domestic ideal, as when she says to Hans, "I want a husband. And children. To build a good home in a good country." Such aspirations seem to speak more to the American fantasy of the white-picket-fenced suburban bourgeois home than to kibbutz communalism, where traditional family structures were eschewed.

Though such overlaying of Americanism onto the Israeli-Zionist ideational structure seems cosmetic in nature, it points to deeper changes the film performs in the Zionist concept of ingathering. If for Zionism this concept was founded on a "negation of the diaspora" whose traditions must

be forgotten, here amnesia is supported only partially. As the symbol of ingathering, Hans is pushed toward forgetting only a segment of his exilic past—the Holocaust. Once this element is erased, however, other elements of the past may be fully accepted—most notably his juggling, which he had forsaken because it reminded him of his fatal miscalculation, staying in Nazi Germany so as to hold on to his precious career. When he juggles in front of the kibbutz kids, Hans effectively demonstrates that Israeli-Zionist society has room for vestiges of his diasporic history. As such, the film seems to imagine Israel away from the prevailing melting-pot ideology and fashion it as a pluralistic nation of immigrants.

This rendering of Israeli-Zionist assimilation chimed with the contemporary American national image, which had substituted traditional melting-pot commitments with a pluralistic acknowledgment of (certain) difference. Furthermore, it carried special resonance for American Jews, who like Hans were also becoming insiders in their society and were similarly challenged in maintaining their cultural heritage. By permitting Hans to abandon only part of his diasporic past, *The Juggler* thus offered American Jewry a way out of this predicament—"an ethos of controlled acculturation" that preserves markers of distinction.[35] Finally, and even more narrowly, this representation held particular relevance for Hollywood Jews. Both Hans and Jewish Hollywood used entertainment as a means of assimilating into a foreign society. By allowing Hans to reclaim his juggling in a national context that values productive work, *The Juggler* legitimized entertainment as an occupation of substance and by extension positioned Hollywood Jews as key players in America's national drama of pluralism and assimilation.

Yet as much as this version of Israeli-Zionist ideology is brought forth to garner American popular support, its distance from the actual ideological reference point renders it fundamentally unstable. For this reason, perhaps, *The Juggler* cannot offer the cathartic ending traditionally provided by the Israeli-Zionist cultural metanarrative, wherein the outsider becomes a full member of its host society. Rather, more than catharsis, the film ends with a crisis: the mental breakdown of its main character, which prompts him to ask for assistance but hardly guarantees recovery. This crisis proves that like Hans, *The Juggler* also struggles with the task of bringing two national value systems into dialogue, and of negotiating the complex matrix of identification and removal that is engendered as a result. The film's open-ended denouement, in turn, attests to a basic sense of unrest in the transnational

relationship between Israel and America and between American and Israeli cinemas during a formative period of their historical development.

The Juggler between Israel and America

In accounting for postwar Hollywood films that narrate Israel, Israeli cinema scholarship largely coalesced around two complementary claims: on the one hand, that these films were *Americanizing Israel* by foregrounding for an American audience those Israeli-Zionist myths that resonate with American mythology; and on the other hand, that their impact on Israeli culture, and specifically cinema, was in *Israelizing America* by allowing Israelis to imagine that America can also be theirs. The fact that such filmic texts surfaced points of divergence between Israeli and American national images has occasionally been acknowledged. Yet the scholarly emphasis was placed on how postwar Hollywood cinema exposed similarities between these images and thus enabled a transnational mode of identification that ultimately serves to *solidify a viewer's own national definition*. This, by extension, helped scholars maintain their commitment to the national within the Israeli cinematic context, essentially by arguing that postwar Hollywood films about Israel and contemporaneous Israeli heroic-nationalist films similarly buttress the nationalist model of Zionist Israeliness, even as they appeal to American models and traditions.[36]

While not dismissing scholarship's investment in trans/national sameness, I would nevertheless like to offer a counter-reading that highlights "difference and disjuncture" in global cultural operations.[37] As already shown, *The Juggler* not only sustains conventional Zionist-Israeli myths through their similarity with American perspectives—it also discloses a misalignment between these national mythologies. This misalignment, in turn, creates a complex and fractured web of transnational identification, one that arguably typifies both *The Juggler* and other contemporaneous Hollywood "Israeli" movies. A testament to that effect, I would argue, can be found in the film's reception, which exposes dimensions of filmic experience that have so far been neglected by Israeli cinema scholarship's limited engagement with the transnational. Studying this pattern of reception, then, may give credence to Andrew Higson's point about the need for scholars to shift "emphasis away from the analysis of film texts as vehicles for the articulation of nationalist sentiment . . . to an analysis of how local audiences construct their cultural identity" vis-à-vis the screen.[38]

The Juggler received a lukewarm response in the American press. Critics did point to some redeeming dramatic qualities but also observed faults. Of the film's rendering of Israel, recurring compliments were given to the filmmakers for faithfully depicting the Israeli landscape in a manner that revealed the young nation's challenges and triumphs. Indeed, it is in such scenes that an authentic vision of Israel seemingly came to the fore—a portrait "of the youthful, ancient land and of the young idealists who have come to wrest a living from the time-eroded soil."[39] Yet for these reviewers, Israeli authenticity was nevertheless compromised by employing the conventions of Hollywood genres. Thus, for example, *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted with distress that "the original idea . . . of pursuing the fate of so socially a useless figure as a juggler through the new Israel, needing only manual workers, is a promising one. But the film's conflicts arise not so much from this as from a completely conventional man-on-the-run story."[40] *The Christian Science Monitor* expressed comparable sentiments when describing the filmmakers' decision to not capitalize on "the pioneering atmosphere of the new state, plus the fact that its cherished sites are known only by name to most of us."[41] This avoidance, according to the reviewer, turned *The Juggler* into "a chase film which, for all its psychological pretensions, follows a standard pattern."[42] Otis L. Gurnesy Jr. from the *New York Herald Tribune* was more generous yet still faulted the film along similar lines: "As a story, 'The Juggler' is a psychological melodrama, and it is doubtful whether the adventures of a psychopath, however pitiable, are quite the right glass through which to view modern Israel. The device causes the film to stress the qualities of hope, compassion and brotherly love, but it filters out the subtler realities and strengths of this environment."[43]

Such evaluation shows critics to be conscious of potential dissonance between Israel's national image and their own foreign framing devices. This becomes an explicit theme in Nathan Glick's extended article on *The Juggler* for the Jewish American journal *Commentary*. At the outset, Glick argues for an affinity between American and Israeli cultural images: "The themes of the 'Western,'" he writes, "are the themes of Israel: refuge from tyranny and from city life, the crude settlement carved out of a wilderness, the drawn-out guerrilla warfare with a primitive native enemy, the conflict between individualist and communal ethics, the hope of a new beginning."[44] The writer does not dismiss such thematic affinities but rather sees the "virtues of *The Juggler*" as originating from them. Yet at the same time, he also recognizes that occasionally the desire to find cultural commonalities also

pushes the Hollywood film to blatantly misrepresent Israeli realities. Such is the case in the choice to figure the traumatized Holocaust victim, who does not sit comfortably in the American-Israeli cult of pioneering, as a Hollywood insider—a strategy that "neutralizes the American spectator's presumed resistance to the foreignness of the subject by assuring him that the hero is, after all, only Kirk Douglas acting a part." Other examples, in his mind, include how "the whole meaning of the concentration camp is squeezed into the claustrophobia of close quarters, and the hero's reaction becomes a variation of the 'Western' theme, 'Don't fence me in,'" or how "the Israeli kibbutz comes to resemble a comfortably appointed American adult vacation camp."[45] Manipulations of this nature, according to Glick, profess the "inability of the American film-makers to absorb what is alien to American experience."[46] Accordingly, so as to avoid aggressive appropriation, the writer seems to argue that a proper "Hollywood approach" to Israel must account not only for sameness but also for difference.[47]

American audiences did not flock to see *The Juggler*.[48] Like the critics, they may have felt disappointed that the film presented an inorganic attempt to Americanize or Hollywoodize Israel's national image, rather than an organic attempt at surfacing an authentic common ground of identification. Such feelings would have emerged as a result of the film's release during a transition period in general American attitudes toward Israel, when Jews were gradually seen less as perennial victims and more as tough fighters or pioneers, mirror images of America's idealized self. *The Juggler*'s focus on a tormented Holocaust victim was therefore out of step with the times; consequently attempts to bring this protagonist closer to the American ideal—"a tough hombre in the kibbutz"[49]—appeared forced and foreign. Yet even if we accept this claim, it would be wrong of us to argue that audiences were entirely unconvinced by the film's message. American Jews, for one, may have found ample ground for connecting with its narrative. As Deborah Dash Moore explains in the context of two representative postwar Jewish communities:

> *The Juggler* affirmed convictions of Miami and L.A. Jews that survivors belonged in Israel, the one Jewish home and homeland. Its vision of rebirth amid pioneering struggles offered solace to Jews who had uprooted themselves from their homes. As permanent tourists, Jews in Miami and L.A. *peered into the distance for a redeeming image of a homeland with which they could identify.* Israel promised to heal the wounds of the Holocaust not only for survivors, who had suffered as grievously as Hans, but also for American Jews, who had

observed the disaster from afar. If Yael could win Hans, who pretends at several points in the movie to be an American from Hollywood, then the fair and beautiful Israel surely could capture the hearts of American Jews.[50]

What this account reveals is that the film's depiction of vulnerable Jewish immigrants to Israel held sway over an equally vulnerable Jewish American constituency struggling to become an American insider. This identification, in turn, did not necessarily bolster identification with America as a national home. If anything, American Jews "peered into the distance" toward a nation that seemed more accepting of vulnerability and hence more appropriate to their needs than a postwar America invested in national robustness. As a result, for them, *The Juggler* activated the particular transnational conundrum of "dual loyalty."[51]

This conundrum was seemingly resolved in later years as American and Israeli national images became more closely aligned around the trope of robust pioneering. For American Jews who were now feeling more like insiders, this meant that identifying with Israel served as an avenue to strengthen their identification with America. Common wisdom stipulates that 1960s films on Israel such as *Exodus* helped facilitate this process by encouraging the American Jew "to overcome the split in his [*sic*] identification" through their celebratory presentation of hardened Israelis.[52] Yet one could argue that these subsequent works did not overcome the tension of dual loyalty visible in *The Juggler* but rather repressed it. For as much as American Jews wanted to identify with the vigorous American pioneering spirit, this was not part of their particular heritage; the only way to participate in this ethos was through a proxy with a similar yet distinct national narrative. The similarity, articulated through the trope of pioneering, made possible this vicarious identification; yet it is an acute recognition of national difference that sustains vicariousness, for otherwise the inability of direct identification would assert itself too forcefully. In short, even if the aforementioned alignment helped American Jews feel like regular Americans, the process seems to have necessitated that they detach themselves from their national boundaries and feel like regular Israelis. Even more paradoxically, this alignment may not have potentially prevented non-Jewish Americans from entrapment in their own dual loyalty. Perhaps to a lesser—yet in no way insignificant—degree, Americans used "images of Israelis [to] construct their self-image at mid-century."[53] This need for foreign images to solidify one's own self-image was arguably motivated

by anxiety surrounding the ability to realize America's pioneering spirit. Indeed, at certain junctures, *The Juggler* surfaces this fear when explicitly contrasting American laxity with Israeli productiveness. Such contrasts arguably moved to the background as Hollywood films became increasingly invested in professing similarity between Israel and America. Yet tropical alignment did not elide a basic imbalance—that Israelis were not just similar to Americans in terms of pioneering spirit but were *distinctively better*, a superior Other with which to identify beyond American borders.

The Israeli reception of *The Juggler* (*Ose Halehatim*) presents equally complex patterns of identification. Like their American counterparts, Israeli critics saw the film as projecting a foreigner's perspective that distorted Israel's national image. Such distortions made the work unserviceable for Israelis in the solidification of Israeliness; whether implicitly or explicitly, the Israeli reviews saw *The Juggler* as catering primarily to non-Israeli audiences. *Herut*'s critic Yizhar Aharon, for one, abhorred this "foreign" vision, with its "typical plot of hunters and hunted, characteristic of the Hollywood film."[54] The film's inaccuracies testified "to the filmmaker's ignorance of Israeli existence," leading the writer to exclaim that *The Juggler* "did not justify all the publicity that was given to it and all the hopes we had placed upon it as a film about Israeli life."[55] Uzzi Ornan, critic for *Haaretz*, was a bit more forgiving in his evaluation. He reports of having been able to "breath the dry dust of the Galilee mountains" during the screening, even while pointing out that the film's limited perspective "undermines its claim to represent Israel." He particularly notes that "there is no great feeling of the Israeli motif in the movie, and it seems as if Stanley Kramer was focused mostly on the work itself than on the background."[56] This strategy, Ornan explains, could alienate Israeli viewers, who may find the film's representation of Israel "too polished." But if such polish was for Aharon a distortion that hurt the film, for Ornan it was what made *The Juggler* "a work of art."[57] Even more supportive was *Davar* contributor B. David. Though noting various inconsistencies that deprive the film of Israeli authenticity, David failed to see them as a major impediment. Rather, in his opinion, "What simultaneously evokes our amazement and admiration is that—in spite of minor faults, and without hurting the interesting story and the high level of filmmaking, the screenwriter and director succeeded . . . in casting a sympathetic light onto life in Israel and address—superficially at face value, but succinctly—some of the major problems that occupy our mind in the days of ingathering."[58] Importantly, he doesn't ask that the film produce

verisimilitude but rather encourages the very polish which characterizes a foreigner's perspective, recognizing that this can help rally international support to the Israeli cause.

Though not as popular as the later *Exodus*, *The Juggler* did run for five consecutive weeks in Tel Aviv during October and November in 1953, with additional screenings being held there and in other cities (Haifa, Jerusalem, etc.) as late as October 1956. Such relative acceptance by the general Israeli audience raises questions about the particular nature of identification that stood at its basis. One could follow the argument of Israeli film scholarship and claim that *The Juggler* gave Israeli viewers the opportunity for self-identification, solidifying their own national identity as Israelis vis-à-vis a mirror image. To agree with this perspective is to presume that reviewers overemphasized the film's divergence from Israeli national definitions and that for regular viewers this departure was not apparent or at least was minor enough so as not to upset their self-image. Yet even if such a claim holds water, audiences could not have been so blind as to not recognize that they were identifying with themselves through *foreign* images. And perhaps the foreignness of such images, even if submerged in familiarity, made them more appealing for identification than homespun representations. Evidence to this dynamic may be found, for example, in famed Israeli novelist Amos Oz's retrospective account of his relationship to Hollywood. Here, Oz describes how during his childhood, "Tarzan and Flash Gordon films" represented a "world [he] would like to live in, the 'paradise lost,' where order reigned supreme." Such "larger than life" images "fit marvelously with [his] Zionist education. . . . That is to say: there are few idealists surrounded by a host of savages. They're solitary, but they're just. They seem weak, but in fact we are assured that they're not really weak."[59] Yet this nice fit did not necessarily eliminate a hierarchy. For even if both Hollywood and Zionist indoctrination professed an idealized existence, only the latter was in continuous friction with Oz's familiar reality. The American dream of Hollywood could remain untested and untainted, while all else appeared "a partial and flawed realization of a perfect template."[60] It is for this reason that Oz stresses his identification with the heroes of Hollywood over those of Zionism. And it is for this reason, as well, that to identify with the Hollywood version of Israeli life in *The Juggler* does not so much signal a desire to access Israeliness as it imagines a more perfect Israeliness, one that cannot exist but *elsewhere*. Thus, as was insinuated by the critic B.

David, what attracts Israelis to the film is not the prospect of the *same* but of the *better*.

It may also be possible, however, that this *better* was conceived as a radical departure from, and challenge to, the underlining sameness of Israeli and American national ideologies. Here one can trace a different route of fascination through the various items about *The Juggler*'s production in the Israeli film fan magazines *Kolnoa* and *Olam HaKolnoa*. These publications catered to an Israeli population whose average yearly attendance in cinemas during the 1950s was only surpassed by that of the British and who resided in a country where "about 80 percent of the movies shown . . . were American."[61] The government feared that Hollywood's power over Israeli audiences could be detrimental to the causes of cultural and moral indoctrination; national press critics, often holding themselves up as educators, also "slighted American movies and their popularity even as they recognized that the cinema provided an escapist break."[62] *Kolnoa* and *Olam HaKolnoa*, on the other hand, celebrated Hollywood, providing Israelis with accounts of glamour that countered not only postwar Israeli austerity but also the socialist ideology used for its justification. Such was the nature of articles on *The Juggler*'s production, which chronicled the arrival and departure of key personnel,[63] activities on set,[64] and public events with the film's actors and how they were received by the local crowds.[65] Expressions of audience enthusiasm on such occasions were registered throughout, indicating a mode of identification that aligned itself with the cult of the stars rather than that of pioneering. Such is the gist behind one "slightly cynical but typical detail" noted about the film's Israeli crew members: they "walk just like Americans, while the Americans opened an offensive upon the short khaki pants, and walk in them to their heart's delight."[66] Thus, if enjoying a signifier of Israeli national culture allowed Americans to experience themselves as more pioneering than their lifestyle afforded, identification with Americans permitted Israelis to imagine an Israeliness liberated from the stern parameters of Israeli-Zionism. *The Juggler*, in this view, may not therefore be read as an affirmation of conventional national definitions; its foreign perspective, if anything, opened up the possibility for Israelis to rework these definitions in light of a different set of values—one that glorified beauty and materialism. And in so doing, these audience members were able to acknowledge more fully what Yehoshua declares at one point during the film—that they "have a great passion for Americans."

   With an acknowledgment of such divergence, we may finally ask: Should *The Juggler* be included in scholarly considerations of postwar *Israeli* heroic-nationalist cinema? And, for that matter, what about the inclusion of other contemporaneous Hollywood films about Israel, which all share similar divergences in representation and reception (though perhaps not to the same degree)? If one imagines the heroic-nationalist cinema as a genre whose purpose is teaching Israelis the Zionist definition of *Israeliness*, then such Hollywood pictures may not be neatly incorporated into its corpus; quite simply, they are *too American* to perform this educational role properly. Yet one could also talk differently about heroic-nationalist Israeli cinema—to draw on how it was defined by the postwar Israeli film industry as a product meant mainly for export.[67] In this view, heroic-nationalist cinema was not expected to stand on national particularity like an internal socializing agent; rather, it needed to bridge one national culture with others, creating a transnational space of intelligibility, even at the cost of courting tension and disjuncture among its ingredients. To look at this cinema in such a way allows us to better ascertain its affinity to postwar Hollywood films about Israel, which were equally invested in the precarious project of creating transnational bridges. Even more than the national currencies they traded upon, it was the nature of this transaction that made these cinemas kin and allowed postwar film critics to mention *The Juggler* in the same breath as Israeli cinema, even to the extent of claiming the Hollywood movie to be "a remarkable *Israeli* achievement in the international arena, whose influence is greater than that of many emissaries."[68] And if such categorical confusion compromises the national purity of heroic-nationalist Israeli cinema, seemingly the most national of all Israeli film genres, then what may be said about Israeli cinema at large? In overly localizing Israeli film, do we not risk containing it to the nationally bounded concepts of Israeliness, in spite of the fact that it has persistently eluded them throughout its short history?

Notes

   1. Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (1989; rev. ed., London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 250.
   2. Over and against such scholars who wish to define a national cinema by differentiating it from Hollywood, Andrew Higson rightfully reminds us that "Hollywood is not only the most internationally powerful cinema—it has also, of course, for many years been an integral

and naturalized part of the national culture, or the popular imagination, of most countries in which cinema is an established entertainment form." See Andrew Higson (1989), "The Concept of National Cinema," in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 56.

3. Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 2. My emphasis.

4. Nurit Gertz, *Motion Fiction: Israeli Fiction in Film* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1993), 51. My emphasis. In this and all subsequent quotes from Hebrew sources, the translation is mine.

5. Moshe Zimmerman, *Signs of Movies: History of Israeli Cinema in the Years 1896–1948* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dionun-Tel Aviv University Press, 2001), 112.

6. Ibid., 343–362.

7. Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 138.

8. Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 16.

9. Ibid., 19.

10. Mart 2006, 59.

11. Ibid., 121.

12. Eric A. Goldman, *The American Jewish Story through Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 2.

13. Ibid., 80.

14. Mart 2006, 119.

15. Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 229.

16. The first Hollywood film about Israel, *Sword in the Desert* (1949), was entirely shot on the studio lot. Of *The Juggler*, only the exteriors (about 40 percent of the film) were shot in Israel, while the interiors were done in Hollywood. For more on the production process, see Nathaniel Gutman, "American Films in Israel" (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1971), 12–18.

17. Quoted in Donald Spoto, *Stanley Kramer, Film Maker* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), 141. My emphasis.

18. Kirk Douglas, *The Ragman's Son: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 203–204. My emphasis.

19. Idan Tadmor, "With Stanly Kramer" [in Hebrew], *Olam Hakolnoa*, August 7, 1952, 13.

20. Mart 2006, 132.

21. Ibid., 134.

22. Jacob Neusner, *Stranger at Home: "The Holocaust," Zionism, and American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 125.

23. Mart 2006, 58.

24. Ibid., 26.

25. Ibid., 67.

26. Ibid., 65.

27. Ibid., 58.

28. Ibid., 69.

29. Ibid., 78–79.

30. Lawrence Baron, "The First Wave of American 'Holocaust' Films, 1945–1959," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (February 2010): 103.

31. Ibid.

32. Blankfort, who had initially been assigned to direct *The Juggler*, was refused a passport to travel to Israel in early 1952 after being named a communist in Congress proceedings. Kramer then reassigned the film to Dmytryk, a member of the Hollywood Ten who by then had been exonerated as a friendly witness. Margot Klausner, the head of Israel's Herzliya Studios, asserted that Dmytryk got the job as a reward for "becoming a 'king's witness' and giving up the names of his friends." See Margot Klausner, *The Dream Industry: 25 Years to Herzliya Studios LTD, 1949–1974* [in Hebrew] (Herzliya: Herzliya Studios, 1974), 42; "State Dept. Nixes Passport to Mike Blankfort for Israel, Snagging Kramer," *Variety*, May 7, 1952, 3.

33. Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 216.

34. Ibid., 217.

35. Heilman 1995, 23.

36. See, for example, when Shohat retrospectively (2010) defends the choice to include the postwar Hollywood "Israel" films in her *Israeli Cinema* by asserting the need "to broaden the discussion of 'national cinema' generally, and 'Israeli cinema' in particular," while at the same time, as further legitimization, arguing that these texts' "narrative movement *replicated* the official [Israeli-Zionist] metanarrative" (Shohat 2010, 271; my emphasis). For a rare and remarkable counterexample that foregrounds discrepancy, see Boaz Hagin, "'The Catskill Mountains with Arabs': Pluralizing the Meanings of Melville Shavelson's *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966)," *Jewish Film & New Media* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 1–27.

37. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, no. 2 (June 1990): 295–310.

38. Higson 2001, 65.

39. Richard L. Coe, "Israel Is Setting for 'The Juggler,'" *Washington Post*, July 3, 1953, 8. For positive references to the representation of landscape in contemporaneous reviews, see, for example, Hollis Alpert, "Kirk Douglas's Journey Back; an Italian Repeat," *Saturday Review*, May 9, 1953, 29; "Review: The Juggler," *Variety*, December 31, 1952, accessed August 21, 2016, http://variety.com/1952/film/reviews/the-juggler-1200417369/.

40. "Juggler, The, U.S.A. 1953," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, January 1, 1953, 101.

41. "Kirk Douglas Star of Film from Israel," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 25, 1953, 4.

42. Ibid.

43. Otis L. Gurnsey Jr, "The Juggler," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 6, 1953, 22.

44. Nathan Glick, "The Juggler: Hollywood in Israel; *Tough Hombre in the Kibbutz*," *Commentary* (January–June 1953): 615.

45. Ibid., 617.

46. Ibid., 617.

47. Ibid., 615.

48. Edward Dmytryk retrospectively defined *The Juggler* as "a modest success with the public" (171). Contrastingly, film historian Tony Thomas included it in a group of films made by Kramer for Columbia in 1952–1953, all of which "were disappointments in the box office" (103). See Edward Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life but Not a Bad Living* (New York: Times Books, 1978); Tony Thomas, *The Films of Kirk Douglas* (Secaucus, NY: Citadel, 1972).

49. Glick 1953, 615.

50. Moore 1994, 247. My emphasis.

51. On dual loyalty in the context of American Jewry, see for example: David Nathan Myers, "Dual Loyalty in a Post-Zionist Era," *Judaism* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 333–343.

52. Loshitzky 2001, 6.

53. Mart 2006, 176.

54. Yizhar Arnon, "The Juggler" [in Hebrew], *Herut*, October 13, 1953, 3.

55. Ibid.

56. Uzzi Ornan, "The Juggler" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, October 9, 1953.

57. Ibid.

58. B. David, "The Juggler" [in Hebrew], *Davar*, October 16, 1953, 14.

59. Amos Oz (1968), "The Lost Garden" [in Hebrew], *Keshet Kolnoa* [reissue] (Jerusalem: Sam Spiegel School, 2013), 198.

60. Ibid., 199.

61. Anat Helman, *Becoming Israeli: National Ideals & Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Lebanon, NH: UPNE/Brandeis University Press, 2014), 113.

62. Ibid., 134.

63. See, for example, "'The Jugglers' Have Arrived" [in Hebrew], *Kolnoa*, October 2, 1952, 1–2; Yaacov Baal Teshuva, "The Makers of 'The Juggler' Leave the Country" [in Hebrew], *Olam Hakolnoa*, October 30, 1952, 3, 16.

64. See, for example, Bela Dor, "'The Juggler' Is Coming to Us" [in Hebrew], *Kolnoa*, September 18, 1952, 2; R. Natan, "'The Juggler' Shoot Coming to an End" [in Hebrew], *Olam Hakolnoa*, October 16, 1952, 12–13.

65. See, for example, Idan Tadmor, "Kirk Douglas Conquers Tel Aviv" [in Hebrew], *Olam Hakolnoa*, October 9, 1952, 3; Sylvia Keshet, "Amidst the Stars" [in Hebrew], *Kolnoa*, October 26, 1952, 1.

66. R. Natan, "On the Set of 'The Juggler'" [in Hebrew], *Olam Hakolnoa*, October 9, 1952, 18.

67. Nathan Gross and Yaakov Gross, *The Hebrew Film: Chapters in the History of Silent and Talking Film in Israel* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: self-published, 1991), 265.

68. David 1953, 14.