

"The world is filled with remembering and forgetting":

Poetic Commemoration of the Battle in Huleikat

Yael Shenker and Omri Herzog

Abstract

The battles fought at Huleikat in the 1948 war tell a tangled and compelling story. Israeli fighters from various brigades fought there in several operations, and the area's conquest in 1948 was strategically significant for Israel. The article focuses on three memories or in fact three strategies of remembering that revolve around the site of these battles: the monument erected at the place, a photograph of Hill 138.5 in Huleikat taken by photographer Drora Dominey that was displayed in an exhibition of Israeli monuments, and a few poems of Yehuda Amichai who fought in that area and lost his close friend Dicky. Emulating terms of analysis proposed by Julia Kristeva this article makes a distinction between semiotic and symbolic memory and argues that Amichai's poetry, like the 138.5 Hill photograph, belongs in a semiotic realm that breaches the limits of consciousness and offers an alternative to national memory. The article further argues that these three memories enable us to trace the painful paths of individual and collective memory as well as the ways in which death mediates among memory, remembering, forgetfulness and obliteration in Israeli culture.

*The world is filled with remembering and forgetting
like sea and dry land. Sometimes memory
is the solid ground we stand on,
sometimes memory is the sea that covers all things
like the Flood. And forgetting is the dry land that saves, like Ararat.¹*

¹ Yehuda Amichai. *Patu'ah Sagur Patu'ah* (Open Closed Open). (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1998), p. 112. English translation from Yehusa Amichai, *Open Closed Open*, trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 2000), 111. All subsequent quotations from this book will be brought in this translation.

Yehuda Amichai fought in the War of Independence² in the Negev Brigade.³ His memories of that war, of fallen friends and the terror of battle were woven into some of his poems. One memory, of a savage battle during which his close friend Dicky was killed, recurs in several poems.

Dicky, a member of Kibbutz Giv'at Brenner, fought in the War of Independence in the Ashdod area and was killed at Huleikat in 1948. Amichai mentions him in several poems. We know nothing else about him. Facing the stone monument erected at Huleikat in memory of the combatants of the 54th Battalion of the Giv'ati Brigade, we look for his name. Only full names are carved into the monument; there are neither nicknames nor abbreviations. Dicky, at least under this name, is absent. The monument stands in the vicinity of others in the area where heavy battles were fought during the War of Independence; each monument commemorates a battle or a participating brigade. Dicky, we assume, fought in another battle in the area. We look for him on other monuments too, but don't find his nickname there either.

We remember Dicky privately, as poetry readers. Our acquaintance with the nickname "Dicky," rather than his full name, is entwined with the intimacy we feel between him and us through Amichai's poetry. However, as part of Memorial Day ceremonies and the Israeli school curriculum, Amichai's poetry participates in the formation of the collective memory of war and of the fallen. This formation allows us to "appropriate" the private memory of the poet, a

² We use the official term for the 1948 war, the Independence War of Israel as a Jewish state.

³ Like the Giv'ati Brigade mentioned later, the Negev Brigade belonged to the Palmach (Strike Forces), the main military force of the Jewish yishuv in Palestine before the State of Israel was founded. The Palmach was later disbanded, and these brigades were incorporated into the IDF under their names.

Palmach combatant who lost a close friend, and to transform it into our own private memory, which surfaces when we reach the monument at Huleikat.

The questions that concern us in this article arise from two kinds of tension: between appropriating private memories and welcoming public memories, and, as expressed by Amichai, between the simultaneous wishes to hold on to forgetting as to dry land but also to drown in the sea of memory. As we proceed, we will look at three different "memories," three strategies of remembering that revolve around one site – Huleikat.

The battles fought there tell a tangled and arresting story. Combatants from various brigades fought there in various operations, and the area's conquest in 1948 was strategically significant during the war.⁴ Yet we will not address the battles' historical or military context but their manifestation in different, both verbal and visual, memories.

Three texts will guide our journey: the monument erected at the place, in memory of the combatants of the 54th Battalion of the Giv'ati Brigade, which conquered the area in Operation Yoav,⁵ thus bringing it under Israeli control; a photograph of Hill 138.5 in Huleikat, which features an additional monument in memory of the combatants of the Negev Palmach, and which was displayed in an exhibition on monuments in Israel by Drora Dominey and France Lebée-Nadav;⁶ and poems by Yehuda Amichai, who fought in the area and lost his

⁴ The Huleikat area included several Palestinian villages and posts that the British army had abandoned. It was important for the Palmach to take the posts in order to keep open the road to the Negev. Three main battles were fought in the area, two by the Negev Brigade, the third by the Giv'ati Brigade. Only at the third attempt did the area come under the control of the Jewish entity.

⁵ Operation Yoav, which aimed to lift the siege on the Negev and to connect it with the south, was carried out by Palmach brigades, as well as by armoured and engineering forces.

⁶ Drora Dominey and France Lebée-Nadav. *Kol Makom: Nof Israeli im Andarta* (Everywhere:

close friend Dicky. Tied to the same site and the same battle, these three memories will allow us to trace the tortuous paths of private and national memories and the manner in which death mediates the tangled, erratic knot between memory, remembering, forgetting and obliteration in Israeli culture.

In *Ha'uma Vehamavet* (Death and the Nation) Idit Zartal argues that the Gordian knot between territory, memory and death underpins Zionist identity.⁷ Death in the Zionist ethos revolves mainly around the sons' sacrifice for the nation's sake, and this sacrifice is the crucial foundation of the Israeli ethos, deemed indispensable for the existence and continuity of the Jewish people in the Promised Land.⁸ The many canonical expressions of this theme in the literature of the "Tashach (1948) Generation"⁹ transmit the broad cultural vision that the Jewish people can achieve independence and security only at the price of its sons' blood.

For the young men and women who gave their life to defend the country, the reward is intertwined with collective memory and realized as a symbolic immortality – "a sort of transformation of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham," as Dorban and Palgi state, adding that "most of this literary genre targeted

Israeli Landscape with a Memorial). Meir Wigoder (Ed.). (Tel Aviv: Xargol Books, 2002). A bilingual English-Hebrew edition, under the English title *Everywhere: Landscape and Memory in Israel*.

⁷ Idit Zartal. *Ha'uma Vehamavet* (Death and the Nation). (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2002).

⁸ See: Phyllis Palgi. *Mavet, Evel Uschol Bahevra Ha'israelit Be'itot Milhama* (Death, Mourning and Bereavement in Israeli Society during War). (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1974).

⁹ The term "Tashach (1948) Generation" refers to a group of key Hebrew writers who described people's lives in Palestine and, later, Israel in the 1940s and 1950s, with emphasis on the ethos of national actualization. Some of their works have become canonical texts that extensively glorify the ethos of self-sacrifice, for example, Moshe Shamir's *Hu Halach Basadot* (He Walked Through the Fields) (1947) and *Bemo Yadav* (With His Own Hands) (1951); Haim Gouri's poetry books, such as *Pirhey Esh* (Flowers of Fire) (1949); Aharon Megged's novel *Hana Senesh* (1958), and many more.

especially the young generation in the expectation that emotional identification would perpetuate the tradition of sacrifice and unchallenged heroism."¹⁰

The rhetoric of sacrifice is inextricable from the formation of national identity, and the readiness for self-sacrifice has been a cornerstone of Israeli society. Yael Zrubavel notes that:

[T]he idea of a patriotic contract between the state and its citizens is based on the reciprocity between individuals willing to die for their homeland and the nation that guarantees to commemorate their sacrifice and to cherish their memory. Myths and symbols of heroism reinforced the fundamental ethos of self-sacrifice, and the official educational system, youth movements and other pedagogical agents actively promoted the message among the young generation.¹¹

In Israeli culture, death and bereavement have been represented, among other, by various monuments scattered throughout the country. This representation moves along a symbolic axis whose antipodal concepts – destruction and redemption – fuse into one, tying a Gordian knot between Israeli nationality and an overarching mythical or Jewish-religious authority that

¹⁰ Yehoshua Dorban and Phyllis Palgi. "Mekomam Vetafkidam Shel Yitzugim Kolektiviyim Betahalich Ha'evel shel Hayahid: Sippuro Shel Yatom Milhama Israeli (The Place and Function of Collective Representations in the Individual Mourning Process: The Story of an Israeli War Orphan), in *Ovdan Uschol Bahevra Ha'israelit* (Loss and Bereavement in Israeli Society). Ruth Malkinson, Shimon Shimshon Rubin and Eliezer Vitztoum (Eds). (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publishers, 1993), 198.

¹¹ Yael Zerubavel. "Hantzahat Hanoflim Vehanechonut Lehakrava: Tmurot Ba'Asorim Ha'ahronim" (Commemorating the Fallen and the Readiness for Self-Sacrifice: Shifts in Recent Decades). In *"Ubedamam Haboker Ya'ale": Zikaron Vehantzaha Be'israel* ("And Through their Blood the Morning Shall Rise": Memory and Commemoration in Israel). Elli Shiller and Gavriel Barkay (Eds.). (Jerusalem: Ariel, 2005), 63. Our translation. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Hebrew in this article are our own.

controls the nation's fate.¹² Since the individual's destruction makes possible the community's redemption, the representations on monuments, in memorial ceremonies, poems and stories span a range of images imbued with martyrological pathos.¹³

To offset this martyrological metaphoricity, we insist on looking also for those absent from it; those whose death breaches it, or those who could not have taken shelter in it anyway. Behind the monumental landscape, shadows of other repressed memories are lying. Behind the monuments in the Huleikat area the former Palestinian villages Huleikat, Barir and Kauchav are present,¹⁴ but also are the possibilities of young lives cut short, on both fighting sides. The imperative to remember does not apply to these possibilities directly, as it is immutably bound to death and its national meaning; and among these other memories there is also Dicky, Amichai's friend, whom we know only by his private nickname.

I. The Monument

¹² Sidra Ezrahi. "Hamilhama Basifrut Ha'ivrit" (War in Hebrew Literature). In *Zman Yehudi Hadash: Tarbut Yehudit Be'idan Hiloni – Mabat Entziklopedi* (New Jewish Time: Jewish Culture in a Secular Age – An Encyclopedic View), Vol. 3. Yirmiyahu Yovel, Yair Tzaban and David Shaham (Eds.). (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 206.

¹³ Nurit Gertz. "Me'atim Mul Rabim: Retorika Umivne Beneumey Habhirot Shel Menahem Begin" (The Few Against the Many: Rhetoric and Structure in Begin's Election Speeches). *Siman Kriah* 16/17 (April 1983), 106-114. Translated and revised edition appeared under the English title "The Few Against the Many: Rhetoric and Structure in Begin's Election Speeches," in *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 30 (Winter, 1984), 95; Immanuel Sivan. *Dor Tashah: Mithos, Dyokan Vezikaron* (The 1948 Generation: Myth, Portrait and Memory) (Tel Aviv: Ma'arahot, 1991), 29-34.

¹⁴ The name Huleikat appears in Israeli culture only in connection with the battles fought there; the name of the Jewish settlement built in its stead is Heletz. On the ruins of the Palestinian village Barir in the area, the kibbutz Bror Hail was established. And the Arab village of Kauchav is echoed in the name of the Kochav Michael.



Image 1: The monument at Heletz (Huleikat)

Photograph: France Lebée-Nadav and Drora Dominey

An evident attempt to reconstruct Dicky's story or the area in which he fought would be to recall the place itself and describe it "from the beginning," from the "first memory," that is, to start with the historical description of the place or the battle. Let us, however, start from the end, from what is now present, the monument at Heletz, the Hebrew name of the historical battle site. Like any monument, this one, too, rises in a space marked by its own story: a battle fought by a company that lost many combatants, a city that commemorates its sons. And this story, like many other monuments, conceals another, the story of Huleikat, an Arab village founded in the 19th century, where some 500 residents had lived, and which was razed at the end of the War of Independence.

The monument at Huleikat is a stable, entrenched sign of the battle fought in this space in the past and now over. It is an archaeological site that signifies national struggle, though without reaching into the deep layers of this

space. Rather, it dominates the site by the authority of visual conspicuousness. It artificially wounds the landscape as a panoramic lighthouse that commemorates the wound, the pain and the loss of fallen soldiers. Its soaring presence serves as a pleated gown of memory and forgetting that cover each other: it remembers and reminds of the battles and the fallen because they have already been or will be forgotten; otherwise there would be no reason to remind us of them. The monument returns them symbolically to the earth but also obliterates their names, their faces and lives, even the course of the battles, the horror, the agony and the blood, because it supplants all these with its lapidary force, with a signifier that supplants past referents. The monument draws attention to itself, emptying the tiny hill underneath it of the signs of historical reality –the battle fought at the place, the dead. It supplants what was once a real site with a sign, and the concrete floor on which it stands, the pre-monument foundation, articulates the license to level the ground toward the reflooring of both the space and memory.

To this purpose the monument forgets – and in many senses deliberately, vigorously obliterates – the fabric of life in the Arab village before the battles, stating the act of forgetting with the phallic authority of the "only possible memory." But isn't the public statement of forgetting a tacit act of memory whose signs show through the folds of deliberate forgetting?

Well entrenched, the monument sways between the imperative of memory and the threat of forgetting; yet precisely its physical properties – an impressive, tall concrete mast –indicate how volatile the many layers and folds

of memory are, how brittle and subjected to the constant threat of collapse, which as such, justifies the existence of memory.

The monument foremost remembers the "fallen." Erected in 1952, the monument at Huleikat was the first official memorial site in the area. It mentions the 54th Battalion, which fought at Huleikat in the last and decisive of three battles, during which the area was conquered. In an article on the Huleikat monument, in which he expands on the process of its erection, the attending conflicts and the spatial, architectural and symbolic choices, Maoz Azariahu quotes the designers' commemoration plan:

To erect a memorial to our comrades who fell in battle, whose function will be double: a handsome, broadly ranging memorial tombstone, whose dimensions will surpass those other battalions have thus far built, and this tombstone will stand on the way to the Negev and remind all those going down to the region that our soldiers fought here heroically to liberate the Negev, and all those passing by will see the names of the heroes who gave their lives in this war. The names of all the dead will be inscribed on a tablet.¹⁵

The demand to erect a monument larger than the commemoration sites of other battalions allows the monument to signify both the past and the battalion's persistent power. The text carved into it, like many texts inscribed on other monuments, is brief: "Passer-by – remember us on your way down to the

¹⁵ Maoz Azariahu. "Hahelech – Beridetcha Lanegev Zchor Otanu" (Passer-by – remember us on your way down to the Negev), *Iyunim BeTkumat Israel* 5 (Sede Boker: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1995), 12.

Negev." This sentence, aimed to be etched into the memory of its readers, means to engage in the act of memory those who were not present during the battle or who did not know the combatants. But remembering is not merely a choice or a possibility; it is an imperative. The inscription demands that those who happen to be there "remember us," and the objective of such a demand is to create, according to Zerubavel, a "master commemorative narrative" that contributes "to the formation of the nation, portraying it as a unified group moving through history".¹⁶ On behalf of whom is the monument "speaking"? Whom does it wish to remember – those fallen in battle or those who fought at this place? The fierce battles that raged here or the battalion's strength?

The author of the text inscribed on the monument is Aba Kovner, who fought in the uprising of the Vilna ghetto and later joined the Palmach. Azariahu describes the controversy between the battalion's veterans, who wished to commemorate the brigade's strength, and the parents of the fallen, who wished to commemorate their sons. The gist of the controversy pertained to the inscription on the monument. Everyone agreed that the inscription proposed by Aba Kovner would be carved on the front, but the bereaved parents asked for the list of names to appear next to it. A compromise was reached whereby the inscription would appear on the front, but the path leading up to the monument

¹⁶ As described by Azariahu (*ibid.*, *ibid.*), the choice of the commemoration site was related not only to the battle fought in the area but also to the wish to set it up along the main road to the Negev, so that passers-by would remember those who had made the passage possible. Later it turned out that the main road would run elsewhere (the highway between Kiriat Malachi and Beer Sheva), but the monument was left at the planned site.

would be planned so that passers-by would encounter first the names of the fallen.¹⁷

Uttered by the dead soldiers, the "live" present imperative "remember us" is addressed to those who peer through the layers of time. It thus belongs to a widely ranging discourse of living-dead combatants in Israeli culture,¹⁸ that is, casualties of Israel's wars who are still present in public consciousness, talking and instructing. Nathan Alterman's "Magash Hakesef" (Silver Platter), first published in 1947 and since then a canonical text at state memorial ceremonies, is a central poem on the figure of the living dead. It signifies the Zionist ethos through the fallen/sacrificed young woman and man represented as still alive and breathing in the national consciousness, who, in their after-death life, even actively constitute its history:

Silently the two approached

and stood there unmoving.

There was no saying whether they were alive or shot.

The nation, tear-rinsed and spellbound, asked,

saying: Who are you? And the two sighed

their reply: We are the Silver platter

on which the Jewish State has been given you.

¹⁷ Ibid., 351.

¹⁸ Hanan Hever. "Sifrut Israelit" (Israeli Literature). In *Zman Yehudi Hadash: Tarbut Yehudit Be'idan Hiloni – Mabat Entziklopedi*, 232.

They spoke. Then enveloped in shadow at the people's feet they fell
The rest will be told in the annals of Israel.¹⁹

Haim Guri's canonical poem "Hine Mutalot Gufoteynu" (Behold Our Bodies) also represents the fallen as physically resurrected:

Behold, our bodies are laid out in a long, long line.
Our faces have altered, death looks from our eyes, we do not breathe.
[...]
Lo, we shall arise and press forward again as of old, return to life.
We shall march, formidable, resolved to bring aid,
For all still lives within us and floods our veins.²⁰

Hever notes that the poetry of the War of Independence commonly features "a mythic, optimistic ending of a battle that ends in the combatants' ambiguous death."²¹ This does not mean that the soldiers survived the battle but, rather, that their physical death is transfigured into their vigorous ghostly presence in the collective consciousness. The movement between life and death, between the dead body and the collective living psyche, is the ideological response to the collective psychic distress of a generation for which war-related bereavement was a formative experience. "The battle for life in which lives were forfeited

¹⁹ Nathan Alterman. *Magash Hakesef: Mivhar Shirim* (The Silver Platter: Selected Poems) (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publishers, 1974), 12. English translation by Dr. Daniel Gordis, in: Eyal Lewin, *Ethos Clash in Israeli Society* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 196.

²⁰ Haim Gouri, *Pirhey Esh* (Flowers of Fire). (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1949), 66. English translation by L.V. Snowman, in: Eyal Lewin, *Ethos Clash in Israeli Society* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 131-132.

²¹ Hanan Hever. "Chai Ha'met ve Met Ha'chai" (The Dead are Alive and the Living are Dead), *Siman Kryia* 19 (1986), 189.

called for a myth," Hever writes. "In its synthesis between the living and the dead, this myth offers the choice of personal death as the consummated hope for the national life this very death embodies."²² Thus, the psycho-cultural solution offered by the living dead resolves the keen paradox of a society that sacrifices the lives of its sons for the sake of collective values, foremost the preservation of life.

Like the young woman and the young man in Alterman's "Magash Hakesef," or the resurrected in Guri's poem, those killed in the battle of Huleikat, as represented in the monument, are also living dead who are still speaking. "R

emember us": remember now the mute speaking from the grave, in the first person plural that is no longer there, yet speaks. The inscription on the monument lets the dead utter the imperative to remember, turning their heroic death, through which their voice still resonates, into transcendental sublimity.

The names of those fallen in battle are listed in alphabetical order on both sides of the Huleikat monument. There are no ranks, no nicknames, all are equal. All the fallen belong to the uniform order of the brave, honest, idealist, handsome youth. In this context, Dan Miron notes: "Some of those killed were certainly also homely and dishevelled. Were they doomed to forgetting? Or, in order to remember them, must we falsify their appearance, thus castrating their identity, their one and single essence, and embellishing it with gravedigger makeup and turning their figures into the stereotype of the handsome young man

²² Ibid., 190.

with blowing hair?"²³ With its intimate, inviting phrasing, the monument replies to Miron's rhetorical question. To the viewer it offers an opportunity to remember the ethos rather than the fallen themselves, those summoned to an anonymous roll call and saddled with the sublime mythical role to found a nation in the shadow of or through death. The monument transforms the wanderer, who merely happened to pass by the site, into an active partner in the "community of memory." "Remembering" those who do not belong to your private memory, whom you've never known, is the duty of those who happen to be at the place: remember the faceless yet still living fallen soldiers.

But the words and names are not alone in commanding anonymous, collective memory: the landscape engineering, a more covert, more "natural" method, is based not only on the inscription's frontal presentation and on leading the viewer along a path to the half-hidden list of the names of the fallen, but foremost on the cypress row marking the way to and from the monument.

In the Israeli landscape, cypresses have several entrenched meanings: besides marking the boundary of agricultural land or of an orchard, they also mark the "land of death" and are typically present in cemeteries or in the vicinity of monuments. Unyielding to the wind, these hardy, soaring trees are planted close to memorial sites to signify the combatants' braveness and virtues. In Israeli culture, this botanical signification turns a given space into a semiotic site rife with meanings. The cypress row attests to the contract between the state and the fallen, to the sacrificial ethos that animates Jewish-Israeli national identity.

²³ Dan Miron, *Mul Ha'ach Hashotek: Iyunim Beshirat Milhemet Ha'atzma'ut* (Facing the Silent Brother: Studies in the Poetry of the War of Independence). (Tel Aviv: Keter and The Open University, 1992), 248.

The sturdy, evergreen cypresses are not only a metaphor for the fallen but also their avatar, thus underscoring their virtues and ongoing vitality, survival and presence in Israeli space.

The monument and its environment, as text and site in space, function as an "intermediate space." It is not the tomb itself, but it signifies the space where the fallen are transformed from private, living individuals into an anonymous group commanded to be living-dead. It signifies, furthermore, the transformation and killing of memories of daily life before the war. The location blurs the fallen combatants' private identities and, at the same time, ensures the obliteration of the "private" that could have perdured. The monument and its environment erase not only the battle itself and the dead's previous lives, but also what existed there before the battle. The Hebraization of Huleikat into Heletz and its marking as an Israeli national memorial site erased the marks of Palestinian life before the battle. Thus, like the battle that erased the Palestinian presence, and supplanted it with another, the monument, too, erases the memory of the Arab village, supplanting it with another, exclusive, memory of both the lives of the fallen and the residents of Huleikat, who, paradoxically, are standing in the same roll call of folded memory, of obliteration.

II. The Hill



Image 2: Huleikat Hill,

Photograph: France Lebée-Nadav and Drora Dominey

Though displayed in an exhibition of photographs of monuments in Israel, Lebéé-Nadav and Dominey's photograph is unusual: Instead of documenting a monument, it "looks" for something else. The photograph of the bare hill seeks what was before the national-mythological remembrance mediated by the monument. This photograph, whose force lies in its triviality, reveals, among other, how a plethora of monuments generates a mythical overload, that is, it undermines the ability to distinguish the uniqueness of each. The dirt road, the distant cypresses, even before they were saddled with a symbolic role: this is the landscape preceding memory, any memory, or the monument. The hill's pre-monument landscape dispenses with the necessity of mediation, of ritual signification and of erasing the space for the sacred phallic representation of "memory." With its forgotten, apparently unimportant generic quality, this landscape offers an unmediated memorial site that erases the monument to make room for the preceding landscape, in order to wait for the monument.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes looks at portraits and, in the process, examines the relation between photography and death. "Now it is this same relation which I find in the Photograph; however 'lifelike' we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythic denial of an apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of Tableau Vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead."²⁴

²⁴ Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida*. Trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981), 31-32.

The photography of monuments is entirely different, as it is not a living mask concealing death. The monument itself is a "mask" cast over the landscape, which seeks to exhibit death, to make us notice historical death under the surface of symbolic space. Thus, the monument, the photograph's object, calls into existence what the photographic medium means to conceal through "the primitive theatre." The object present in the photograph is not "the dead," of whom the monument wishes to remind us through its presence in concrete space, but the very possibility of approaching or reaching them through the living picture.

Photography, Barthes notes, "mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially."²⁵ As a document of life, the photograph points to death. The photographed monument, even if it calls on us to remember through the voice of the dead, does not capture the living moment but produces it as a mechanism, as a ritual repetition that obscures the "living moment" that generated the photograph. Yet even if the landscape has changed over the years, the monument is static and eternal, thwarting the possibility of "capturing" the living moment that was once there.

In more than one sense, the hill's photograph reveals the "living moment" prior to the monument, but also the monument's own death as a living object of memory. Compared with other photographs in the exhibition, of monuments in Safed, Kfar Yehoshua, Huleikat and others, this photograph, like a sort of punctum of the entire exhibition, seeks to "reveal" the "living moment" of the Israeli memorial industry. "This hill was so beautiful that I couldn't help taking a

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

picture of it," Lebéé-Nadav said in a conversation,²⁶ thus showing how, against the project of concrete inscriptions and names, space as such loomed for a single moment, the space preceding the monument, the space that preserves its enigma and does not surrender to the cement death mask of the monument's life. Still, the "clean" pre-memory space, too, features a set of cypresses, as though it were getting ready to forgo its independence and enlist in the service of national memory.

The hill's photograph unwittingly reveals yet another layer in the context of the Israeli landscape. The geography of monuments belongs to a wider national geography marked by such terms as northern front, southern front, combat zones, border zones, central, southern or northern command zones, heroic zones and border settlements. The geography of combats, conquests and the sense of perennial danger, which the monuments also serve, marks the areas of national past and present. But it also functions as a mask, or as a facelifting that dresses dunes, hills and Palestinian villages in a gown of concrete and cement. Forgotten by the national gaze, this once living space is no longer visible. This photograph peeps behind the mask and pierces the landscape of monuments, serving as both its visual opposite and potential spatial realization. Thus, the hill preceding both the monument's erection and the living sign of remembering the dead, prompts a game of visual splitting: in its anonymous emptiness it offers only the intersection's bleak landscape, out of which two unpaved roads run toward the unknown: to the absence of the monument and of

²⁶ The conversation was held during her exhibition at the "TLV Artists Studios Gallery," Tel Aviv, May 2000.

the living memory it signifies, and to the foundation from which the potential of a memory without sign can emerge.

III. Dicky

We didn't know Dicky, not personally. And yet, as we looked at the Huleikat monument we "remembered" he had fallen there. Our memory was structured by Amichai's poems about him. This is where we "met" him, this is where we found out where he had fallen. First we encountered his name in a short dedication, "Lezecher Dicky" (In Memory of Dicky)²⁷ which precedes the poem "Geschem Bilde Krav" (Rain on a Battlefield). Later we found him in other poems too.

In "Huleikat – Hashir Hashlishi al Dicky" (Huleikat – The Third Poem about Dicky), Amichai writes:

In these hills even the oil rigs
are already a memory. Here Dicky fell
who was four years older than I and like a father to me
in times of anguish. Now that I'm older than him
by forty years, I remember him like a young son,
and I an old grieving father.²⁸

²⁷ Yehuda Amichai. *Shirim 1948-1962* (Poems 1948-1962). (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1969), 21. English translation from Yehuda Amichai, *Selected Poems*. Trans. Assia Gutman and Harold Schimmel, with the collaboration of Ted Hughes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 66.

²⁸ Yehuda Amichai. *Gam Ha'egrof Haya Pa'am Yad Petucha Ve'etzba'ot* (Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm with Fingers) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1989), 12. English Translation from Yehuda Amichai. *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*. Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (Eds. and Trans.). (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 179.

And in another poem, "Kinot al Hametim Bamilhama" (Laments for the War-Dead):

My good friend who died in my arms, in
his blood,
on the sands of Ashdod. 1948, June.

Oh my friend,
red-breasted.

5.

Dicky was hit.

Like the water tower at Yad Mordechai.

Hit. A hole in the belly. Everything
came flooding out.

But he remained standing like that
in the landscape of my memory
like the water tower at Yad Mordechai.

He fell not far from there,
a little to the north, near Huleikat.²⁹

²⁹ Yehuda Amichai. *Me'achorey Kol Ze Mistater Osher Gadol* (Behind All this, a Great Happiness Hides) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1974), 89. English Translation by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell under the title "Seven Laments for the War-Dead" *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 94.

In many poems Amichai returns to the hills where Dicky fought and fell, to the hill's landscape which precedes the monument. Amichai remembers the dead not while standing before their monument but in places that did not wear the concrete-and-cement gown of memory. His memorial landscape is the same as that which Lebee-Nadav's photograph of the hill tries to reconstruct from the pre-symbolic space antecedent to "memory." Amichai's Huleikat is a place of private remembering that morphs into real memory among many readers of his poems.³⁰

Like Yehuda Amichai, Dicky belonged to the Palmach combatants who fought at Huleikat before Operation Yoav. The monument at the place lists the combatants of the 54th Battalion of the Giv'ati Brigade who fought in that operation. Dicky's name, therefore, does not appear on the list even though this is where he fell. Combatants of various brigades and battalions each have their own monuments. The official explanation for Dicky's disappearance is meant to be satisfactory: there are certain commemoration rules and memorial priorities. Still, like other Amichai readers, at Huleikat we remember Dicky.

Amichai's verbal monument makes memory possible. Like a physical monument, his words are set on a blank page, and the material reality of writing replaces what was lost. Yet Amichai, who often sees memory as elusive, doubts the very possibility of remembering:

Is all of this

³⁰ Paradoxically, Amichai became "the voice of the Israeli national," mainly because of his writing on private and idiosyncratic memories. See: Nili Scharf Gold, *Yehuda Amichai: The Making of Israel's National poet* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2008). 312.

sorrow? I don't know.

I stood in the cemetery dressed in
the camouflage clothes of a living man: brown pants
and a shirt yellow as the sun.

[...]

Memorial Day for the war-dead: go tack on
the grief of all your losses –
including a woman who left you –
to the grief of losing them; go mix
one sorrow with another, like history,
that in its economical way
heaps pain and feast and sacrifice
onto a single day for easy reference.³¹

In another poem, "Me'adam Ata Ve'el Adam Tashuv" (From Man You Came and to Man You Shall Return), we read:

Cry for the photograph that remembers in our stead,
Cry for the remembering paper,
Cry for the tears that don't remember.³²

Amichai aims the act of remembering at the photographed gaze, which documents the fallen and replaces their etching in memory; grieving over the

³¹ Yehuda Amichai. *Me'achorey Kol Ze Mistater Osher Gadol*. 89. English Translation from Yehuda Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 94-95.

³² Yehuda Amichai. *Me'adam Ata Ve'el Adam Tashuv* (From Man You Came and to Man You Shall Return). (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1985), 45.

dead and grieving over missed potential life become enmeshed. Memory seeks to bridge the chasm between the statement of death (by an old photograph, a monument, a poem) and the duration of a bygone life. This is why memory always needs mediation. Yet mediation indicates that the real is out of reach, as is the living moment Barthes looks for in the photograph. It thus shows that Amichai's demand for memory means remembering another option. He does not make do with the memory of the moment of death, with the frozen picture of loss and its symbolic meaning. Remembering is aimed at both life prior to the war and the likelihood, even as fighting rages, that it will not end in death, that is, at the possibility of staying alive, of surviving the battle. Death freezes the landscape of memory, yet the poetic "resuscitation" of memory takes us back to the moment preceding death, when there was still another possibility, that of the fist as the palm of an open hand and fingers ("Huleikat – Hashir Hashlishi al Dicky"):

And you who remember only a face,
don't forget the outstretched hands
and the legs that run so easily
and the words.

Remember that even the road to terrible battles
always passes by gardens and windows
and children playing and a barking dog.

Remember the fruit that fell and remind it
of the leaves and the branch,
remind the hard thorns
that they were soft and green in springtime,
and don't forget that the fist, too,
was once the palm of an open hand, and fingers.³³

Amichai's commanding monument ("remember and remind") is the living person's "living memory." Against the national martyrology commanding death in combat as the "pinnacle" of life, Amichai pits the imperative of choosing life by returning to "the moment before." Do not "remember us" anymore as dead, as sacrificed or as slain, living-dead soldiers. And this will, perhaps, prevent the open hand from turning into a fist.

Already in 1948, in the first poem Amichai dedicated to Dicky, remembering the moment of death articulates the difference between the dead and the living:

"Geshem Bilde Krav" (Rain on a Battlefield)

It rains on my friends' faces,
on my live friends' faces,
those who cover their heads with a blanket,
and it rains on my dead friends' faces,

³³ Yehuda Amichai, *Gam Ha'egrof Haya Pa'am Yad Petucha Ve'etzbaot*, 18. English Translation from Yehuda Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, p. 12.

those who are covered by nothing.³⁴

As Hever noted, Amichai distinguishes two temporal axes: During "the time of the living," life goes on; during "the time of the dead," life has stopped. "This is how," Hever adds, "the poem undermines the very core of the basic metaphor of the living dead. It shows that the metaphor has forfeited its status as a transcendental representation that hovers over these discrete temporal axes and bridges them to allow the dead and the living to exist simultaneously."³⁵ Amichai challenges not only the possibility of memory or the mask donned by the space under discussion, but also the invitation the monument extends through the mouth of the dead. Before the monument was erected at the place where Dicky fell, Amichai already knew that it would not include his real memory.

Since Amichai seeks a private, living memory, he proposes an act of remembering independent of the monument, perhaps even clashing with it. Yet he, too, needs a site of remembering. In the cycle "Behayay, Behayay" (In my Life, on my Life), he describes a ritual return to the site:

I always have to revisit the sands of Ashdod
where I had a little bit of courage in that battle, that war,
soft hero in the soft sand. My few scraps of heroism I squandered
then,

³⁴ Yehuda Amichai. *Shirim 1948-1962*, 21. Translation: *Selected Poems*, 66.

³⁵ Hanan Hever. *Pit'om Mar'e Hamilhama: Le'umiut Ve'alimut Beshirat Shnot Ha'arba'im* (Suddenly, the Sight of War : Nationality and Violence in Hebrew Poetry of the 1940's). (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 2001), p. 193.

that's why I always revisit the sands of Ashdod. Now they've become
vacation sands – swimmers, children at play,
warning flags, a lifeguard. In those days
there were no warning flags, no guard, no one to save us.³⁶

The above poem was included in Amichai's last collection, *Patu'ah Sagur Patu'ah* (Open Closed Open), which was published two years before his death. In this collection Amichai goes one step further in his search for the landscape of private memory. The cycle "Umi Yizkor et Hazochrim" (And Who Will Remember the Rememberers) opens as follows:

Verses for Memorial Day, a psalm of remembering
for the war dead. The generation of memory-veterans
is dying out. Half at a ripe old age, half at a rotten old age.
And who will remember the rememberers?³⁷

For Amichai, the only possible memory belongs to those who knew the fallen personally. But, like the monument makers, he too is worried about oblivion; he, too, is looking for ways to extend the limits of the "community of rememberers." His poems seem to do so, and his readers, too, remember. Yet Amichai specifies: the generation of rememberers is dwindling. The only possibility of preserving the memory of the fallen is by "remembering the

³⁶ Yehuda Amichai, *Patu'ah Sagur Patu'ah*, 110; English translation from Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open*, 109. All subsequent quotes from this book are from this translation.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 173; *Ibid.*, 169.

rememberers." The fear of oblivion, the defiance of absence and the wish "to turn the fallen from absent into present" animate the "reminding" person. Since the object of memory is only the rememberer, toward the end of his life Amichai suggests, in the same cycle of poems, the paradox of forgetting as a means to reach the dead:

And who will remember? And what do you use to preserve memory?

How do you preserve anything in this world?

You preserve it with salt and with sugar, high heat and deep-freeze,
vacuum sealers, dehydrators, mummifiers.

But the best way to preserve memory is to conserve it inside
forgetting

so not even a single act of remembering will seep in

and disturb memory's eternal rest.³⁸

For Amichai, forgetting is at times the only way to bear a "living memory." Having been in battles and known the fallen, Amichai wishes to preserve memory within forgetting, "to let it be," to keep it intact. He does not fear forgetting, since it is not contrary to memory. Rather, it makes memory possible, just as memory makes forgetting possible.

... Sometimes memory

Is the solid ground we stand on,

³⁸ Ibid., 177; Ibid., 171.

sometimes memory is the sea that covers all things

like the Flood. And forgetting is the dry land that saves, like Ararat.³⁹

Forgetting may save the rememberer. In the flood of memory imposed on Israeli society – for historical, national and mythical reasons – forgetting may be the Promised Land, as memory threatens to drown everything, even ourselves. Zerubavel mentions, that "any remembrance thus entails its own forgetfulness, as the two are interwoven in the process of producing the commemorative narratives,"⁴⁰ and just as land owes its existence to the surrounding waters, forgetting is indispensable to memory.

In this context, the Lacanian model may help understand the reverse movement from national-monumental memory toward the forgetting Amichai suggests. He depicts himself as a remembering and forgetting subject, yet the subjectivity of the poetic speaker is shaped by its negation, that is, by anti-subjectivity, in a process that is the perfect reversal of the formation of subjective narcissism described by Lacan.

According to this model,⁴¹ the first gaze that identifies with the image seen in the mirror is the primordial awareness of a unified self-scheme; this is the first production of meaning, which is the condition for the development of subjectivity. Lacan underscores that the bodily wholeness achieved through the

³⁹ Ibid., 112; Ibid., 110.

⁴⁰ Yael Zerubavel. "Hantzahat Hanoflim Vehanechonut Lehakrava: Tmurot Ba'asorim Ha'ahronim," 214.

⁴¹ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." In: *Ecrit.* Trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock, 1977 [1949]). See also: Rivka Feldhay, "Drash Nashi" (A Feminine Interpretation). *Teoria Ubikoret 2* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1992), 69-88; Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*. Trans. David Macey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 79-83; 231-232.

mirror is imaginary, as it clearly conflicts with a dependent, uncontrollable body.⁴² This awareness elicits not only satisfaction and elation, but also inevitable frustration due to the incongruence between the image and reality.⁴³

"Sometimes memory is the solid ground we stand on," Amichai writes. The memory of the fallen is, of course, entirely amorphous, made of shards arranged by a quasi-literary mental act: the memories are edited, highlighted, erased and rewritten. They are stored in the unconscious, from which they are retrieved unchecked, often even in an imaginary, unreal manner: do I properly remember Dicky? Do I remember what is to be remembered? Does the figure's preservation in memory do justice to the historical person? How can one control the forms of memory?

Of course one cannot. The monument acts as an imaginary mediator of arbitrary memory. Robust and stable as a mirror, it states its control of the imperative to remember. It instructs the viewer to act without an object – to remember "us –," even though it is unclear whom, and how to conjure up the speaking dead and to properly respond to their vague rhetorical demand. The imperative itself, as manifested in cement letters carved into the tower's wall, is a sort of mirror that forges the remembering national subject. There was no such subject up to the encounter with the mirror/monument, or else the latter would have no purpose. Facing the verbal imperative and the physical presence, the

⁴² "The mirror stage is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual Gestalt of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity [...] It is invested with all the original distress resulting from the child's inter-organic and relational discordance" (Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," 12).

⁴³ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Hebrew translation by Debby Eilon, (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005), 232.

subject assumes the ability to remember. He can stand, ponder, commune with; in other words, turn himself into an individual subject who performs his role: "to remember."

The completeness of the "remembering subject," which the monument means to form, is imaginary. The monument wishes to reflect an a priori image: the terror of battle, the heroism of the fallen, their contribution to the homeland. Yet Amichai's poems describe how the impervious national image encounters another body, which cannot control its memories, cannot always manage them properly. For him, "memory is the sea that covers all things": it includes private memories of the dead friend, which are both positive and negative, fragmented and arbitrary, an imaginary battle and the moment of terrible death, a sense of loss and orphanhood; it may even raise the secret, unsanctioned question: "What did Dicky die for?"

The encounter between the private person and the monument generates the "remembering subject," that is, the living person commanded to discard personal memories and enshrine the memory of the battle and the fallen in a national myth. Lacan describes the first gaze into the mirror as the moment of loss of both the object of desire and the source of satisfaction, signified by the mother. The fundamental absence of potential fusion with the mother's body⁴⁴ prompts the subject to identify with an alternative presence – the father's – mediated by language and the rules of cultural censorship. Subjectivity is thus animated by two parallel moments: the consciousness of loss, derived from the meaning attributed to the primary identification, and compensation of that loss

⁴⁴ Alain Vanier, *Lacan*. Hebrew translation by Amos Skverer (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2003), 40; Anika Lemaire. *Jacques Lacan*, 81.

through assimilation and internalization of linguistic, socio-cultural commands associated with the father.⁴⁵

Similarly, the volatile, uncontrollable knowledge of the dead friend is supplanted by the formal conditioning of the "roll call of the fallen" and of the anonymous imperative to remember them uniformly, according to the law of the national father, who also constitutes historical knowledge. The primary knowledge of private, wayward, elusive memory gets lost: to be a "remembering subject" facing the monument one must sacrifice or give up that primary knowledge of "maternal" familiarity unmediated by the national father's language and its political imperatives. In order to remember one must both lose Dicky's, and any other friend's, primary meaning and adopt the monument's phallic rules: to bow one's head before the anonymous roll call of the fallen and to transform the private into the national.

This, however, is a partial compensation. Julia Kristeva divides the traces left by the crisis of identification and meaning in poetic expression into two orders: the symbolic and the semiotic.⁴⁶ The first obeys the rules of social censorship imposed by "the Name of the Father" and is moored to the power relations to which this censorship belongs. The second is derived from the signifiers of desires. These constitute a metonymic and idiosyncratic language that defies censorship and is expressed in psychotic outbursts that disrupt order and reproduce the absence of an organizing linguistic structure, thus stressing

⁴⁵ Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, 83-84.

⁴⁶ Julia Kristeva, "Revolution in Poetic Language." In *The Kristeva Reader*. Toril Moi (Ed.). Trans. Margaret Waller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986 [1974]), 100-105.

the incongruence between inside and outside, signifier and signified, desire and verbal expression.⁴⁷

Amichai's poetics does not surrender to the symbolic monument, that is, to collective imperatives of memory, to participation in the roll call of rememberers. "Who will remember the rememberers," he asks, who will allow the rememberers to crack the monument and substitute their private, defective, conflicted, spilling memory. His poetry serves as a semiotic area that breaches the limits of consciousness; here private memory makes inroads into proper public memory, inserting into the verbal system the traces of loss, longing and desire.

Longing and desire are addressed to the dead friend, Dicky, but also to the possibility of unmediated, pre-linguistic, pre-monument memory of the photograph of the bare hill, the hill not signified by the "vacuum sealing, dehydrating, mummifying" effects of words, forever carved into concrete, and of collective imperatives of memory that impose a single, regulated, supervised narrative. "Cry for the photograph that remembers in our stead," Amichai writes, turning the reader's attention to the alternative option of replacing the photograph, the object, the monumental narrative with the first person plural, though not of the "remember us" but of the rememberers themselves.

The rememberers can surrender to semiotic memory through the poem, as they can "conserve it inside forgetting so not even a single act of remembering will seep in." The act of forgetting faces the monumental image

⁴⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 281-282.

that defines "the remembering person," offering an alternative memory: of the fist that was once the palm of an open hand, and fingers; of Dicky, the person named Dicky, who exists in a space not defined by his death in combat or by his national mission, which signifies his death. To remember all this, one must forget the photograph that cries in our stead, one must avert one's glance from the monument, one must return the remembering subject to what it previously was.

The memories we chose to describe, the photographs and the monuments, Amichai's poems – through all these we have attempted to transform what is absent into present. All "memories" are necessarily mediated; the awareness of mediation is part of the attempt to point to something that lies "beyond the visible," "beyond mediation." The specific photograph of Hill 138.5 remembers Huleikat through the landscape as it "obliterates" the monument. The photograph is searching for "the landscape preceding the monument." Amichai, who belongs to "the generation of rememberers," writes about the dead, seeking out "the moment of choice," what preceded the "Ashdod dunes," that is, what has been forgotten.

We are now back at the journey's outset. We are looking for Dicky's name on the "wrong" monument, always on the "wrong" monument, as there is no right one. But when the journey in search of Dicky comes to an end after several years, a more complex explanation for this disappearance has surfaced.

Drora Dominey and France Lebee-Nadav's journey in the 1990s, during which they photographed monuments throughout Israel, commemorated the

monument standing at Huleikat at the time and the adjacent hill. Several years later, in 2003, a second monument was erected there, at the initiative of the Head of Sha'ar Hanegev Council in conjunction with friends and families of other combatants who had fallen at Huleikat but were not listed on the first monument. As the story of the second monument's setup reveals, the first wished not only to remember but also to conceal and obliterate.

The site was conquered during Operation Yoav by the Giv'ati Brigade, which is commemorated by the monument erected there. Yet this operation was preceded by others, among which was a cruel, failed battle in which most combatants were killed, including Dicky from the Palmach's Negev Brigade, who commanded the combatants. Most of these, the majority from adjacent kibbutzim, did not belong to the Palmach or weren't combatants at all, but were chosen in meetings by kibbutz members per request of the Palmach. Those who finally joined the battle were mostly holocaust survivors or recent immigrants from Oriental countries. Most did not know the language and had not been trained for combat; some didn't even know to what action they were being enlisted. Most, including Dicky, were killed at once, and the battle was lost. The Egyptians buried the dead close to the area. Three months later, the dead were exhumed and buried in a mass grave in the military cemetery at Kfar Warburg. Thus, they were deprived not only of a private death but also of a private, identifiable body that could be buried in a private grave. Years later, friends of the fallen, some of whom had voted at the meeting that had sealed their fate, stated that the battle had been doomed to fail and even described the Palmach's

disrespect for people's lives and the tension between Palmach combatants and kibbutz members expected to volunteer .⁴⁸

The Huleikat monument does not list the names of those combatants and in many ways even suppresses their existence and the battle they fought. Carrying the names of those killed in the first lost battle, the new monument is to redress this wrong. The Head of the Regional Council, who helped initiate the project, sought to extend the limits of military memory and to include also failures and untrained rank-and-file citizens who had found themselves in a military operation.

Dicky, a member of Giv'at Brenner, commander of that failed battle, had been forgotten by the site's official memory. But even the attempt in 2003 to remedy that memory leaves him outside the project of memory. On the new monument not his nickname but his full name, Haim Laksberger, appears. Thus, those who knew and remembered him, as a real person or through Amichai's poems, can't find him there either.

And yet, despite the official Israeli enterprise of memory shaping, memory has its own ways. Our search for Dicky, Amichai's poems, the photographer's attempt to depict the landscape preceding the monument and the command inscribed on the monument – all these plead for memory. Yet the force of memory lies in its capacity to blur the boundary between what is present and what is absent, between the private image and collective commemoration, between "living memory" and "dead memory." Memory systems unwittingly

⁴⁸ See Tali Lipkin Shahak, "Hakrav Ha'avud" (The Lost Battle). *Maariv Sofshavua*, 3 February 2006, 12-18, and Shabtai Gravartzik, "Huleikat, Yuli '48, Hakrav Shehushkah: 21 Harugim Bekrav Shelo Haya" (Huleikat, July '48, the Obliterated Battle, 21 Dead in a Battle that didn't Happen). *Makor Rishon*, July 7 2010, 25.

stalk this border-crossing, its pain and inability to "remember." Dicky cannot be "found" on the monument, nor in the photograph and the poems, and, perhaps, his very disappearance allows his presence in memory.

Private memory is mediation. Like the photograph, a monument or a poem, it is an imaginary bridge between death and us. Like a poem that tries to tear off the death mask, like our search for Dicky behind the monument, like the photograph that wishes to point to what lies beyond it, memory means to breach the limits of legitimate, imposed national mediation or representation. It strives to reach the moment before death, the moment when there was still a face, a body and a first name, when there was still another possibility: to discard metaphors for the sake of what was real, to return to the moment when the fist was the palm of an open hand and fingers. To reach out for this moment, a bygone moment wrapped in forgetting, is to implore the future at this place: not only structured memory should shape the present, but also private memories, which, though not necessarily adding up to a sublime collective meaning, still allow us to remember the lives that are gone. They let the rememberers forget the dead and remember their lives; they let them give up symbolic resurrection and, thus, bring back the fallen to living thoughts and feelings; they let them forget national commemoration and its forgetting and, instead, remember the rememberers.

