

Queer Urban Social Movements and the Zionist Body: National Erection Parades

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In light of the growing interest in queer urban social movements in the Global South and East, this article turns to a discussion in the context of the Middle Eastern, Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article offers a reading of socio-cultural, spatial and visual political aspects of National Erection Parades (Tel Aviv, 2007-2008) – sporadic urban parades organized by queer feminist activists in protest against the Israeli occupation and pinkwashing, during Pride Day and Protest Week against 40 Years of Israeli Occupation. Based on a close reading of photos taken by the activists, I claim that through a visual and spatial design of protest, of a poetic, comic, ecstatic and absurd character, National Erection Parades' activists create a flow, material, messy movement, of a queer feminist desire, streaming in one of Tel Aviv's main neoliberal, heteronormative and national orientated arteries; this fluid movement embodies the renewed, capable, Zionist body – the homonationalist body, in a way that debilitate it. It breaks the moral law that it is subject to, deviates from its structure, blurs its boundaries, diminish its power and cause it to become minor. During the movement, of the becoming minor of the Zionist body, the activists carry the creation of a moment when political action acquires real human bodies. These bodies create a geography of desire and of affect – of bodies affecting other bodies, being affected by them; they cause the surrounding space to become political by redefining its meaning and opening a potential for a variety of possibilities for formatting subjects, social differences and systems in the context of the activists lives under the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Keywords: Queer Urban Social Movements, Embodiment, Fluidity, Pinkwashing, Disability, Desire, Zionism.

INTRODUCTION

In view of the growing interest in queer urban social movements in the Global South and East (See Brown, G. *et al.*, 2010), this article turns to a discussion in the context of the Middle Eastern, Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The importance of this discussion lies in challenging some of the blind spots of North-West geography, planning, and urban dominant scholarly (Yiftachel, 2006), by writing on urban so-

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cial movements and the politics of sexuality from a Middle Eastern perspective, and thus widening global North-West's knowledge on these subjects. This article offers a reading of socio-cultural, spatial and visual political aspects of National Erection Parades (Tel Aviv, 2007-2008) – sporadic urban parades organized by queer feminist activists in protest against the Israeli occupation and pinkwashing, during Pride Day and Protest Week against 40 Years of Israeli Occupation.¹

My analysis of National Erection Parades is based on a close reading of photos that were taken by the activists and by members of Activestills Collective,² who document the event as a political action that resists national narratives of mainstream media and circulate it among leftist publics. However, my photo analysis is related to the political role of photography and of visual culture in general. As Azoulay argues, "While the event that is the subject of a photograph may pass in a tiny fraction of a second, the event of photography may never end, for it is made up of a potentially infinite series of encounters, both in relation to the camera and in relation to the photograph" (Azoulay, 2012, 26). In this sense, and as emphasized by Mirzoeff (1999, 4) and Hatuka (2018), protests gain an accumulative political potential due to the use of photography. In this sense, my reading is an attempt to stretch out in time and space the political moment created by the activists, and to produce its own immanent action. Based on the close reading of the photos, I show how the activists challenge signs and symbols at the nexus of sexuality and space (Zubracki and Milani, 2017), and how they use what Hatuka (2018) calls "design of protest" – a planned event in a space whose physical geometry and symbolic meaning are used and appropriated by its organizers, who aim to challenge socio-spatial distance between political institutions and the people they should serve.

I claim that through a visual and spatial design of protest, of a poetic, comic, ecstatic and absurd character, National Erection Parades' activists create a flow, an actual, material, messy (Longhurst, 2001) movement, of a queer feminist desire, streaming in one of Tel Aviv's main neoliberal, heteronormative and national orientated arteries – Rothschild boulevard. This fluid movement embodies what I refer to here as the new image of the capable Zionist body – the homonationalist body, in a way that "debilitates" it (Puar, 2017, xvi), while braking the moral law that it is subject to; it deviates from its structure, blurs its boundaries, diminishes its power and causes it to become "minor".³

During the movement, of the becoming minor of the Zionist body, the activists carry the creation of a moment when political action acquires real human bodies and is the personalization of political action (Amir, 2011). These bodies form a geography of desire and of affect – of bodies affecting other bodies, being affected by them (Brown, 2008; Ahmed, 2004); they cause the surrounding space to become political by redefining its meaning and opening a potential for a variety of possibilities for formatting subjects, social differences and systems in the context of the activists lives under the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

National Erection Parades occurred in a particular time and place in the local history of LGBT and queer local community: at the climate of the climax in the development of Tel-Aviv as a gay capital of Israel and as an urban space that was (still) considered enabling, even supportive, of leftist movements and radical practices (Misgav, 2015). National Erection Parades carnivalesque, comic, mode of action can be related to this climate of openness and enablement. At the same time, aware of Israel's growing utilization of its LGBT rights record as a function of obscuring or legitimating the occupation of Palestine (Puar, 2017), the activist, as other radical social movements who challenge liberal pride rhetoric's, separated from the main Pride Parade and performed a direct action rather than a pride celebration (Puar, 2017), protesting against Israel's promilitarism, "eugenic, pronatalism" (Puar, 2017, 112) rule.

The Parades were attended by a variety of activists from the local Israeli LGBT, queer and anarchist communities. But, as I show, at that particular time and space – the climate of openness to differences in gender and sexual identities on the one hand, and of stiff, severe and violent fortification in national identities on the other – more than marking a claim for recognition in or identification with identities, the parades demonstrated a queer radical desire to subvert identity, resisting Israel's instrumentalization of sexual exceptionalism of queerness (Puar, 2017). Thus, the opening of the study of queer as social movement to the "impulse of destabilised identities" (Misgav and Hartal, 2019, 58) is crucially significant to the current discussion.

The initiative to produce the National Erection Parades emerged out of social circles close to Black Laundry – an LGBT and queer political organization that was established in the context of the break out of the second Intifada and Israel's harsh military response to it. The organization was based on an unprecedented idea in Israel: the unification of the struggle against the occupation and the struggle against homophobia.

Ziv (2010, 538) claims that it was Black Laundry that "inaugurated the queer moment in Israel". The style of activism the organization adopted – public direct actions inspired by the camp and drag cultures – is one that has come to be identified in U.S. gay politics with the term *queer*. But, the "movement of the concept 'queer' activism across time and space" (Brown, 2015, 73), changes its implications. Indeed, in Israel *queer* appeared as a subject formation and a politics in a different context, of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict inflects local gay identities and politics, as it provides a symbolic terrain in which dramas of identity, belonging, and disidentification are played out" (Ziv, 2010, 537-538).

National Erection Parades were independent acts, in which I myself took part; they were organized by former members of Black Laundry, and were clearly inspired by the style of the activism that had been performed by Black Laundry. The present discussion relies on Ziv's observation about the particularity of the appearance of queer in Israel, but continues to develop within a different theoretical framework.

Ziv relies on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, according to which action is only possible within the boundaries of the state law system (see Kirby, 2006, 45). My discussion focuses on a different type of activism: on the margins of the law. A feminist Deleuzian perspective allows me to conceptualize the actions of national Erektion Parades in terms of desire, as a force that operates on the margins of the law, rejecting the entrance into the national moral law or the state law system, that would subject it to the self/other, hetero/homo, Israeli/Palestinian, able/disable divide paradigm that it prescribes. As a subject formation alternative this politics relies on the fluid state of "becoming" and of operating "beyond the thinking or acting subject" (See Colebrook, 2009, 33).

The idea of a fluid subject formation is developed in Robyn Longhurst's feminist geography. Following Giliann Rose (1995) who generated the conceptual methodology of corporal geography in reference to the lack of critical mapping of actual, material, bodies in space, Longhurst focuses on the mapping of "body fluids that threaten to break the body's boundaries and mess up other bodies and places" (Longhurst, 2001, 23). Like Longhurst and Johnston, who also emphasize the academic risks and costs of theorizing actual materialities of gendered and sexualised bodies (Johnston, 2005), rather than positioning the body in the 'safer' realm, of ideas, I focus on actual embodiments of sexuality and gender in space, on "the body that breaks its boundaries – urinates, bleeds, vomits, farts [...] objects of sexual desire, ejaculates" (Longhurst, 2001, 23). As I show, National Erektion activists brings the notion of messing up bodies and spaces to the heart of Tel Aviv's urban space.

National Erektion Parades' activists function as "publics of public art" (Zubracki, 2012, 740), who use spatial and visual practices of embodiment for the purpose of "place making" (Halberstam, 2005, 6), of unpacking both heteronormative and homonormative geographies (Silvey, 2017; Brown, 2007), and of claiming an autonomous space in which to be on their own terms (Brown, 2007). They create a spatial political moment, symbolic and material, of deviation from the structure of the Zionist body, that causes it, if just for a moment, to be forgotten. They open an area of leakage and non-distinction – a chaotic, uncontrollable area – which allows for a fundamental subversion of the binary-hierarchical division of identities and of the fixation of Zionist Body. Thus they debilitate it, diminish its power and make it "minor". During the movement, of the becoming minor of the Zionist body, the activists carry the creation of a moment when political action acquires real human bodies. These bodies create a "geography of affect" and of desire, of bodies affecting other bodies, being affected by them (Brown, 2007; Ahmed, 2004, 7) and thus causing the surrounding space to become political, as they open a potential for a variety of possibilities for formatting subjects, social differences and systems in the context of the activists lives under the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the first part of the article, I define what I call here the "Zionist body" – an embodiment of the Kantian sublime body structure, an event where a national moral law is embodied in an ecstatic body, which carries and performs it as a moral im-

perative (Wolkstein, 2011). I assume that Max Nordau's (1895, 10-11) vision of "Muscular Judaism" – corporeal and spiritual regeneration of the feminine Diaspora body of Jewish nation and individuals through the cultivation of mental and physical strengths, agility and discipline (Presner, 2007) – is such a law, which was embodied by "the [Jewish] pioneers" (Neumann, 2009),⁴ and can be identified with the significance of the ideal symbolic structure of the Zionist body in general.

Then I focus on the modes of action of queer desire in relation to the Zionist body – a performance of a political, absurd poetics, that ranges between "excessive obedience" to the moral law that the Zionist body is subject to and "ironic deviation" from it (Mor, 2010, xiii), examining how they arise in the photographs. Furthermore, following Jasbir K. Puar's (2017) notable work on the Zionist body, pinkwashing and Israel's bio-political relations between disability, debility and capacity, I show how the activists refuse to return the gaze of the exceptionalizing mandate of Israeli state that utilizes the universal western politics of the "gay international" (Massad, 2002) for blurring its colonial agenda (Darwich and Maike, 2014, 283), while propping up homosexuals as sexual citizens, and hailing the updated image of the rehabilitated Diaspora disabled Jewish body: the capable, masculine, homonationalist (Puar, 2017). They do so by re-embodiment the homonationalist body as "debilitated": a body "toggling between exceptionalized disability and exceptional disability" (Puar, 2017, xvi).

In the second part of the article, I show how queer desire acts on the space as an organ of the Zionist body through the use of the "design of protest" (Hatuka, 2018): it creates moments of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of some of the Zionist frozen and empty symbolic organs; no longer confined within them, queer desire breaks out of their borders and fills them with its realness.

Consequently, I show how the invisible structure of the moral law, which organizes the space and the visual surface of the Zionist body, becomes visible, exposing its violence. This violence arises from the fact that, as a sublime body, the Zionist body constitutes itself based on the unity and uniformity of the desires of the organs trapped within it, channelling them to fit its full extent. Exposing the structure of the law, which determines the control mechanism of the Zionist body, diminishes its power, causes its surfaces to become visual, and thus, minor.

LIQUID ZIONISM – SPERM AND SWEAT, CEMENT AND CONCRETE, ASPHALT AND SOIL

Return the Spiff to the Stiffy!

Mounted on a tricycle, Figure 1 shows a large-scale structure sewn from glossy pink fabric, resembling a huge and swollen male sexual organ, flanked by two large

orange balloons that look like testicles (Figure 1). Beneath it are two sheets of cardboard painted in black gouache to resemble the shape of a tank.

Figure 1: On the way to the “National Erection Parade”,
Tel Aviv. Activestills, 2007.



National Erection parades first set out during the Pride Day and Protest Week against the Occupation in Tel Aviv, 2007. A group of activists from the local queer feminist and anarchist communities, who had rallied the marchers, steered the installation and drove it towards their meeting point on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, just outside of the –

Dizengoff House, the house in which the State of Israel was declared. The ceremony began with drumming on samba drums and continued with a reading of paragraphs from the declaration and booing. Afterwards, we squirted the house with our huge penis, chanting “Chauvinism, racism – thanks a lot Zionism!, Amazing generals – Gimme orphans!,” and “Won’t shoot, won’t labour – occupation: I’m into rebel!” From there we moved along Rothschild Boulevard towards the Haganah [defence] Museum, commemorating the organization that conceived and executed Plan D, the expulsion of Palestinian villages in ‘48. We squirted vigorously on the museum, with cries of: “No defence, No Necessity – the occupation is contemptible! We resist the occupation – we won’t lie down with no munitions!” [...] The next squirting point was the bank intersection, where we alternated between squirting and singing: “The occupation is a disaster that serves the ruling virile powers!”. Later, we also squirted on the slave companies scattered along the boulevard. On 91 Rothschild Blvd., we squirted in memory of 1991, the year full and absolute

curfew was declared on the occupied territories, while we shouted: "Cock! Cock! Yalla! Yalla! Get out of Gaza and Ramallah!" "Stop the killing! Stop the mourning! The occupation fucks up all the rest!" "The parade finished with its final and prolonged squirting at the end of Rothschild Boulevard while we shouted "Won't go up, won't go down on the erection of the homeland", and the absolute truth: "No generals – no attacks!" We are confident that, following this rousing action, the end of occupation is only a matter of days. (Occupation 40, 2007)

The parade made its way up and down the boulevard. Flyers, T-shirts, stickers and posters declared that this march was held –

In honour of the glorious victory of '67, to celebrate the screwing of the Palestinians since '48, and to honour the generals who have proven that theirs are the biggest. (Occupation 40, 2007)

Figure 2: "National Erection Parade", Tel Aviv. Activestills, 2007.



The Law of the Zionist Body's Desire

The queer body that appears in Figure 2 embodies the Zionist body through acts of excessive obedience or ironic deviation from the mode of action that produced it,

and so breaches its boundaries. I define what I call the “Zionist body” according to two claims made by historian Boaz Neumann, yet at the same time challenging the main premise of his study. Neumann highlights the traditional absence of desire as an object of research in Zionist historiography.⁵ He turns to pioneers’ desire within the framework of this Zionist historiography, and thus also links it to Zionist desire in general. According to Neumann,

From a ‘qualitative’ standpoint, these were the [Jewish] pioneers who determined the various molds in to which were poured the ‘code’ for what we recognize today as Zionism (Neumann, 2009, 19)

I draw on Neumann’s claim, but with slightly different wording: instead of signifying the constitution of the pioneer body as the historical origin of the constitution of the Zionist body in general, I am considering it as a model that defines the ideal symbolic structure of the Zionist body.

Another argument in Neumann’s study is his definition of the modes of action of the pioneer/Zionist body, which determines its structure and boundaries. The Zionist pioneer body acts out of ecstatic desire to occupy Palestinian land (2009 45). The “Land of Israel”, according to Neumann, was created through the pioneers’ sublime experiences, that is, through ecstatic bodily modes of action. Neumann remarks that when a pioneer’s sweat seeped into the soil during these ecstatic processes, he felt that his body merged with it, connecting with it while simultaneously creating it as Jewish land. The Zionist pioneer body is therefore an ecstatic body yearning to merge with its object.

I conclude my definition of the Zionist body by presenting the premise of Neumann’s study and the contradiction it creates. According to Neumann, the pioneer body is ecstatic and yearns to merge with its object and thereby re-produce it and create it. Neumann repeatedly emphasizes that the ecstatic pioneer’s desire is not embodied in a Zionist rational that preceded it or that it aspires to; rather, it is a desire with an internal logic, which acts of its own accord and in relation to itself, and in this way creates its object. When the pioneer’s desire works on the surface of the three utopian pioneer territories, which are not real places –the Land of Israel, the pioneer body, and pioneer language – this desire in fact creates them through a double and simultaneous process: de-territorialization and re-territorialization. For Neumann, the pioneer’s desire towards the “Land of Israel” is not desire towards a given external entity, but an (concrete) outcome of their dynamic, immanent desire (Neumann, 2009).

But Neumann forgets or represses the way pioneer’s desire is still motivated by an external and abstract law, disconnected from the real body: the law of the boundaries of the national body. As Yonatan Alshech (2009, 111) claims, Pioneer’s desire played a significant role in the establishment of the community of “we” (Zionist Jews) versus “them” (Arabs), in the forging the boundaries of a yearning community

that blocks, erases the possibility of encountering desires other than itself, homosexual desire, for example (Ilani, 2018).

Pioneer's desire did not tie itself to the desires of the existing Palestinian territory but subjected them to a massive de-stratification that detached itself from them. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, it is a body whose wholeness, consolidation and unity have become conditions for the mode of action of its organs, a desire that has fused itself with the thriving of strata which, from the beginning, accumulated while detached from the real. Being subject to an external law and yearning for it, pioneer's desire shattered immanent desires that could have arisen from the various bodies that gathered into it and turned into frozen territory, detached from the concrete real.

Neumann's pioneer's desire remains completely Oedipal (Alshech, 2009). It is motivated by the logic of guilt in the face of the law of the Zionist body, as an external moral law that is abstract, detached from the real body and from a social context, and it remains obedient and submissive in the face of the boundaries set by this law.

In stark contrast to Neumann's study, which purports to present pioneers desire as an organic, excessive desire, which lacks nothing and is not subject to any external principle, my definition of the Zionist body is based on the Kantian concept of the "sublime". I shall use this concept as a model for thinking about the case in which the law is embodied, imparting its structure to a body.

For Kant the sublime event is a very unusual moment, the only moment in which the ever separate levels of desire and the law are suddenly connected and the law acquires a body. This is an ecstatic event in which the law is embodied in the flesh –in the imagination, in material, and in a living body. Reason breaks through the organic economy of the images of the imagination and demands to freeze it. Thus, in Kantian terms, the purpose of the sublime experience is to force the imagination, against its will, to become a medium of the law and to function as a textual event such that, when it prohibits textual movement, it establishes itself as a moral imperative (Wolkstein, 2011).

Therefore I define the Zionist body as a transcendent, ecstatic body, drawing from Neumann, but in contrast, as an embodiment of the structure of the Kantian sublime event. Through this event the body is shaped by an external factor: the law. The Zionist body is an ecstatic body that expands to the proportions of the law, embodies it and carries it out as a moral imperative.

Between Excessive Obedience to the Law of the Zionist Body and Ironic Deviation from It: Debilitating the Zionist body

In figure 1, normative movement appears in the public space of Rothschild Boulevard: on a bench designated for sitting and resting, bodies are sitting and resting; on a path for walking and cycling, bodies are walking and cycling – each one in the same uniform direction. Such movement in the public space can be referred to

as “good” in terms of liberal-democratic logic, because it is synchronized with the existing political order. It “embodies our control over ourselves [...] our responsibility and rationality” (Amir, 2011, 44) in view of this order. In Figure 2 the boulevard is swallowed up in a dense mass of bodies. Each of the bodies is caught up in the momentum of various movements, in different directions, creating a highly concentrated intensity that completely undermines – in a situational, localized, transient and temporary way – the usual order of movement in that space. With regards to liberal-democratic logic this is a form of “bad” (ibid) movement in the public space: it is perceived as a loss of control, which does not happen in the right place, at the right time, and in the right amount.

Following Johnston (2005, 26-28) that uses Kristeva's notion of “abject” in her analyses of pride parade – when the activists perform both real and symbolic loss of control on the body, they embody the roll of gender queer or gender nonconforming people (Puar, 2017) and Palestinians as “Socially abject groups” within the ‘Us and them’ discourses. While doing so they spatially mark the invisible separation line between them and the normative space around them as politically oppressive.

During the gathering, each of the activists redefines the space of the boulevard through the various ways in which they move within it. The act of defining the space gains intensity, visibility and inertia by virtue of the proximity of the bodies to the erection installation. The situation that is created manages to arouse their surging desire. The enthusiasm is evident in their faces and bodies, their proximity and the exchange of glances between them. Each one of the activists validates, motivates and arouses desire among others; each one creates a context for the actions and body movements of her neighbour, in growing intensity. They become an ecstatic body, an intense flow, one but not unified. In terms of affect geography and queer theory this movement of the activists in the boulevard performs new ways of relating that are beyond normative understandings of what bodies should and should not be able to do in public spaces (Lim, 2007).

In figure 2, the activists radically respond to the ideal mode of action of the pioneers who “undertook various actions in order to have these [sublime] experiences and intensify them” (Neumann, 2009, 47); they absurdly embody the sublime Zionist body and breaks through its boundaries, both through excessive obedience to the modes of action that characterize it (ecstatic actions) and through ironic deviation from it. Neumann demonstrates how pioneer ecstasy roused itself before the expanses of the land: “In a bursting lust for life, I stretched out my arms before the expanse of the horizon“, wrote Tzipora Zaid when she arrived in Sejera,

because a desire ripened within me to embrace and kiss these fields and return their love in kind [...] When Avshalom Feinberg stood before Mount Hermon [...] he longed [...] to race with them [the mischievous rivers], unite with them, to become the melting snow, the leaping waters, the golden sunlight, and the grass trembling with the passion of love. (Neumann, 2009, 46)

The activists engage in actions of ironic deviation from the pioneers' modes of action – the actions of the ecstatic occupation of Palestinian land. The image of tanks painted in gray-green camouflage, with an opaque, rigid and metallic appearance, meant to emphasize the nation's strength, is replaced by a pathetic phallic image sticking upwards, yet tilting as if about to fall under its own weight due to its exaggerated size, and wrapped in a loose, permeable, synthetic, shiny pink cloth – not only failing to camouflage its presence, but rather catching the eye of every passersby.

At the same time, the activists engage in actions of excessive obedience to the pioneers' modes of action. In Figures 2-3, the Erection installation sprays water over the heads of the activists; some of them look wet, from the spray or from sweat. One activist enthusiastically turns her gaze upward towards the erection above her. The Erection is surrounded by ecstatic behaviour that creates a carnivalistic atmosphere. Lewis and Pile (1996, 39) state that “In certain places and in certain times, carnival may be a ritualised resistance [...] a contested territory [...] a site of hybrid ambivalences, or [...] an opiate to the people”. Johnston (2005) stresses that carnival has been attributed with providing an opportunity for self expression among marginalised groups and at the same time for redefining the meaning of urban space. The ecstasy and carnival is evident from multiple points of view, in the appearance of the bodies and the various movements of their organs.

Thus, the queer body embodies the pioneer's actions of occupying the land, but by way of exaggeration, that is, through the parade (on the soil and the asphalt paving the boulevard), the shouts (of pathetic excitement from the symbolic mirrors), and the construction (of the pathetic symbolic organ of the Zionist body, which is usually not visible). These extravagant actions, in these carnival moments of the Zionist body, bring it to the verge of oblivion.

The Nation as a Capable Homonational Politic: A Fragmentation of National Role Division of Sexuality

The great masculine and phallic organ, positioned at the centre of the event, is presented as a ridiculous symbol of the Zionist body, as if ready at any moment for the coital act. Max Nordau (1895, 10-11) called for a reconnection to Jewish tradition, inspiring “[us to once again to become] strong-chested, tautly-jointed, boldly-looking men”. This call was “an important source of inspiration for the pioneers of the second and third Aliya [waves of Jewish immigration to Israel] in creating their pioneer bodies” (Neumann, 2009, 155-157). What arouses pioneer ecstasy is, therefore, a powerful desire to endow the feminine, disabled, pathological, Diaspora Jewry, with a masculine, capable body, having intercourse with the soil of Palestine, merging with it and turning it into one of its organs (Gluzman, 2007, 39). As noted by Longhurst (2001: 7) masculine bodies are perceived as bodies that are ‘in control’, having a clear boundary between self and others, thus othering those

bodies that do not conform to these norms. Therefore, queer bodies are often understood to be in possession of insecure (leaking, seeping) bodily boundaries and it is commonly thought that such bodies are not to be trusted in the public spaces of Rational Men (Longhurst, 2001). Queer desire destabilizes the rational movement of Rothschild boulevard; it blurs the boundaries connecting the organs of the Zionist body, and allows them to spread out beyond its borders.

Puar (2017) argues that as an updated resolution to the disabled Diaspora “Jewish question” Israel reworks the denigrated effeminate masculinity of nineteenth-century European Jewry into the elevated, secular, capable homonationalist masculinity of the occupying and settler colonialist Israeli state. While marketing the image of the homonationalist as a tool to pinkwash its colonial rule, Israel brings Palestinians into biopolitical being by designating them available for injury, supplementing its “right to kill” with the “right to maim” – the mass debilitation of Palestinian bodies (Puar, 2017, x, xvii).

As a visualization of the violence of Israel's pinkwashing, the Erection installation exposes the hidden side of homonationalism – a body that “aspires wellness, empowerment and pride, through the exceptionalized status it accrues”, as a result of state recognition, “while embedded within unexceptional, endemic debility” (Puar, 2017, xvi). The Erection installation visualizes the homonationalist body as debilitated; it appears while its central symbolic organ is detached, creeping and gangling, leaving its body behind. Released from its burden, the organ ‘stands erect’, becoming an independent body, the body of the National Erection, which still indicates the whole from which it was detached, but is no longer subject to its desires.

Puar adds that “building social movements through disability is a valuable way of countering the sexual exceptionalism of queerness – homonationalism – [...] Especially in the context of Israel, where the subject positioning of the ‘queer disabled’ and the ‘disabled queer’ are thoroughly foreclosed”. The Erection installation paradigmatically demonstrates this idea. The image of the Erection deconstructs the image of the capable homonationalist when it is seen repeatedly connected to and disconnected from the body to which it belongs. One moment it is an organ-subject that is active, penetrating and masculine, and the next moment it is an organ-object that is fluid, dragged, disabled, passive and feminine. One moment it is a monumental spectacle of male power and the next it is a pathetic sight of animalistic subjugation. In yet another moment it becomes a disciplined horse that a woman rides for her pleasure, acknowledging it in a mixed gesture of respect and degradation: patting it on the back, shrinking, pushing and shaking it while proudly displaying it in public, before the community that is in that moment imagining itself anew.

One of the main messages emphasised by the activists is based on the connection between Israel's regulation of queerness and of sexuality in general (Puar, 2017). The activists mock Israel's militaristic, prontalist eugenic regime and its growing interest in reproductive capacities of homosexual Israeli Jews. First, the impotent, debilitated, Erection installation itself signifies a symbolic loss of control over the regulation

of sexuality and reproduction. Second, by shouting slogans like “Amazing generals – Gimme orphans!” and “Won’t shoot, won’t labour – occupation: I’m into rebel!”. Additionally, the activists produced a video, documenting the parades, with the voice over of Israeli queer rock band Poliana Frank’s, “Hero Defense Forces”. The song’s lyrics defies the always-eager-to-screw Zionist militaristic body: “Yes I also want to be a hero in the Defense Force \ I’ll also have a pretty woman whiting in my bad \ And when I’ll finish arranging everything \ she will jerk me off and say \ Ahh, you’re amazing” (SocialTV, 2011).

The symbolic loss of control over the regulation of sexuality and reproduction regime of the Zionist body is evident also in the photos. The parade reduces the homonationalist body – into a metonymic visual figure – the huge pink penis – which presents it, somewhat ironically and somewhat humorously, in a double absurd. At first, it seems that the performance is obedient to the moral law this body is subject to – muscular Judaism – in a repetitive way to the point of excessive, absolute affirmation, bordering on humour, and thus, absurd (ecstatically and enthusiastically conforming with the muscular phallic law, fashioning its graven image, presenting it in gargantuan proportions and following behind it like diminutive subjects). But a moment later, it seems that the performance does not obey the law, differentiating itself from it, in complete negation, bordering on irony, and thus, again, absurd – dismembering the Zionist body from its already imaginary organs, dragging around its phallic organ to serve our own desires.

In Figure 2, the pink, shiny and soft object arouses desire and high intensity among the bodies that surround it. The intensity of desire and absurd, obedient and subversive, admiration for the debilitated erection turns into the desire to become an erection, to become a body-erection, merged into it. Notice the activist riding the erection and the activists who directs the erection at an object, a building, which is marked as a target to be squirted at and even penetrated, such that the liquid blurs the boundaries of the Zionist organs, the buildings on Rothschild Boulevard.

The organ chosen to embody the homonationalist body both brings it to its climax and castrates it at the same time. It is not just any muscle of the body, but “the” (symbolic) muscle, a big and enhanced muscle that, in its entirety, boasts about what appears to be nothing less than its own diminution, limpness and wretchedness in a shade of bazooka pink. The noisy colourfulness signifies its reversed, demoted role of femininity/disability that has ironically deviated from its role: not another pale pink negative, but a bright, shiny and positive fuchsia, exaggerated, loud and overflowing.

Through the comical-bodily actions of excessive obedience and ironic deviation, the queer body fills the surfaces it acts upon with its bodily and material realness and turns them into temporary organs, this time, its own. The liquid that is squirted from the head of the pink erection is signified as sperm, which in its turn has intercourse with and ecstatically re-occupies the buildings/organs of the Zionist body. The excessive, pathetic, overflowing act of squirting undermines the law’s preten-

tious claims to its status as natural, transcendental, invisible, transparent, inexplicable and disappearing.

What becomes visible then is the process that establishes the Zionist body, just before its organs are frozen: the activists embody the pioneering body that is establishing its boundaries. As a body embodying another body, the activists bring to life its desire. They, too, “spill (imaginary) sperm” on the “nation building”, which from the time of the pioneers was cast out of “cement and concrete foundations” (they take ownership of the ecstatic pioneering practice of building and having intercourse with the concrete buildings) dripping water, sperm and sweat on the asphalt and soil of the boulevard, now re-stratified.

Zionism in Black, White and Bazooka Pink – Blood, Sugar and Empty Desire

In Figure 3 the queer desire, blurs the boundary between the Zionist body and two of its symbolic urban organs: Rothschild Boulevard and Israel’s national theatre, “Habima”. In the centre of the photo stands the erection installation, just arrived at the intersection between the two symbols of this body. The northern end of Rothschild Boulevard connects to the area of Habima theatre, which is not exposed to our gaze.

Figure 3: The National Erection Parade, near Habima square, Tel Aviv. Activestills, 2007.



The boulevard is named after Baron de Rothschild, whose efforts—the acquisition of land, development of infrastructure, and financial support to settlements – contributed significantly to the conditions that gave rise to the pioneer/Zionist body and to the bodily practices used for the occupation of one of its main targets: the occupation of Palestinian land and the conversion of the land into one of its organs. The horizontal line that cuts the photo (Figure 3) in two is created by a fence covered with posters, which surrounded the premises of Habima at the time to close it off for massive renovations.

Figure 4: Chaim Pinn Hans, 1946. Zionist body of unified organs: National Theatre of Israel Habima, Tel Aviv.



In Figure 4 we see the theatre building in 1946, in its original version, designed by the German-Jewish architect Oskar Kaufmann as a modern interpretation of a Greek temple structure. At the foot of the building, at the level below the staircase leading up to the entrance of the building, numerous bodies are visible from the backside, almost masterfully directed toward a vanishing point located above their gaze, toward the theatre. The collections of bodies are gathered into a mass, organized in a way that is subordinate to the spatial logic that organizes the theatre

building. As a national theatre Habima is a component in a central nervous system, an organ expressing the desire of the Zionist body towards the total occupation of the concrete Palestinian space: the occupation of concrete Palestinian surfaces (by sticking building foundations into them), space (through the traditions of modern European architecture and design), and culture (through establishing a visual language and cultural practices that connect to the roots of European culture). In other words, it is a racialization of this space through its total stratification in signifiers that are drawn from European traditions, signified positively as “white”, and disconnecting the space from the real, concrete, bodily, social space on which it works, that is, the Middle Eastern space, repressed as the opposite of the roused and signified body and negatively as “black” (Rothbard, 2015).

The renovation of Habima theatre in the 2000s, by architects Ram Karmi and Dani Karavan, was a contemporary implementation of the same Zionist concept of “the villa in the jungle”,⁶ The Zionist desire once again connects to its European strata, in the form of a huge white, static, shiny and sparkling concrete block (As Dvir [2011] points out, “the national sparkle”). The colour of the erection reveals through reversal and exaggeration, then, the irony that was to be realized in the future: the “White City’s” stage would grow ever whiter and sparkling to the brink of collapse: bright, dazzling and setting alight the heads of current visitors to the renovated theatre square. The pilgrims for whom it awaits will continue, every day, to flee from it and run for their lives.

When the activists bring the relationship between the Zionist body and its symbolic (architectural) organs into motion, they bring its invisible controlling mechanism into visibility through protest, by means of visual and spatial design and choreography. As is evident from the written manifesto that the activists distributed, the National Erection events were carefully planned in terms of their relationship to the spatial and visual surfaces and symbolic spaces of the Zionist body. Thus, during the parades along Rothschild Boulevard, buildings and sites of historical significance were marked as targets for the installation’s squirting.

Hatuka (2018) argues that many protest actions today are designed as performance that meticulously relates to the choreography of the relationship of the participants’ body and the form of their appearance with the space in which they choose to appear, and the symbols of the governing powers embedded within it. The design of protest, a tool which increases impact, is prominent in many of the current demonstrations worldwide and it points to the fact that citizens recognize that space and the body are important tools that should be used carefully. Hatuka adds that there are two salient dependent variables that have a decisive impact on conveying the message of a protest: the spatial form of the gathering, and the gaze upon it (the image of the protest in the eyes of the viewers located outside of the event), because nowadays the distribution of images of protest plays a key role in its impact. Mirzoeff (1999: 4) emphasizes that “Modern [political] life takes place on screen”, and that the ability to visualize phenomena is one of the main means

by which the state establishes its power; identifying these mechanisms is vital to the criticism of visual culture today, a site where power is exerted upon us by the state (Mirzoeff, 2013, xxxix-xxxviii).

Following Mirzoeff and Hatuka, the visualization of the Zionist body controlling mechanism through the choreography of the protest gains an accumulative political potential due to the use of photography. In the photos, the boulevard is no longer associated with Rothschild (the familiar signs of the boulevard disappear from the frame) and the view of the theatre is blocked. The mode of action of the activists collapses the linear character of the urban planning of Rothschild Boulevard and Habima as organs whose role is subordinated to the wholeness of the body that organizes them, the state. Queer desire acts on the surfaces of this body in a way that cuts its continuities, releases some of its organs, and re-stratifies it in a way that is not completely uniform, yet not completely fragmented. The queer body encounters the surfaces of the concrete buildings that the Zionist body made into symbols. The symbol becomes real through the elongated extension of the body, the pink organ, which merges with and pours itself into the symbol.

The actions of the activists hardly leave a trace of the linear shape of the long boulevard leading to its “stage” (“bima” in Hebrew). In the relationship between the characters (the activists as a queer body) and their background (the Zionist space), the background becomes minor: broken bits of asphalt, slivers of branches, pieces of sky, grass and soil that are cut by the lines of the multiple shapes and directions that do not gather towards any single point on the surface.

At this point, it is possible to see how the queer body deviates from the boundaries of the law of the Zionist body. As suggested by Mor (2015), through a model of action that relies the humorous and the ironic, a possibility opens for social conduct in which the unity of the group is not a condition for the appearance of the individual. Mor develops three models of conflictual poetics, which deviate from the normative political logic that underlies the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This negative logic, which assume a system of necessarily mutually exclusive differences (“them or us”), is replaced with a positive logic, which assumes a system of differences that are not necessarily mutually exclusive (“them and/or also us”). Expressions of irony, humour and parody that accompany poetics based on repetition – quotations, allusions, metaphors – create a multiplicity of meanings placed side by side rather than one in place of another. Mor adds that it is possible to translate these tools into political terms, opening a potential for a variety of possibilities for organizing social differences that do not involve relying on the law as an organizing social principle: “Irony (or ambition, the tragedy of pretensions to total difference), humour (or imitation, the comedy of pedantic repetition), and parody (or sympathy, the satire of selective repetition)” (Mor, 2015, ii, xiii).

The queer body behaves as a political community that does not offer a counter law to the existing law; it does not offer any law. Indeed, it works as a body, that is queer, but this body undermines the boundaries of modern political logic, which

is based on the hierarchical opposition between the unified collective and the completely heterogeneous collective.

Figure 5: Nir Landau, "Walla", 2008.



Figure 6: The National Erection deconstructed and placed in a police car, Tel Aviv. Activestills, 2008



Surprisingly or not, during one of the parades, the Israeli police lost its patience and the erection found itself dismantled into its components, the cheap synthetic materials from which it was built. In Figures 5-6, the Erection becomes a heap of empty paint buckets from the Israeli industrial paint company Tambour, yellowish bits of sponge and strips of white tape. The Erection now becomes the spatial and visual surface that the Zionist desire de-stratifies. Blue and white, the colours of Israel's flag, painted on the police car, now appearing as the cutting strata, divide the surfaces of the Erection and close in on it.

Like in a Masochian contract, that does not require a crime, only the punishment, the image of the Erection (figures 5-6) as a criminal caught in a police car, is lowered to a level where it is entirely associated with its outcome – punishment. Punishment is a condition of forbidden pleasure (which the law 'guards' for itself and punishes those who wish to take a bite out of it). But when the punishment for forbidden pleasure is presented as a condition for that very pleasure, the result is also absurd.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have highlighted the ways in which National Erection Parades queer feminist activists radically challenged Zionist body organs – Tel Aviv's urban spatial and visual textures. Through the actual (fluid) movement of their bodies and through the use of the advantages of the design of protest in the context of contemporary urban social movement practices (Hatuka, 2018, Mirzoeff, 1999), the activists semantically, syntactically and pragmatically reconstructed some of the city's signs and symbols (Zubracki and Milani 2017; Zubracki, 2012). Hence, the activists opened Tel Aviv's urban space to "imaginable, unwritten sites, expressions and 'doings' of sexuality", not merely as an identity in a liberal project, but as a mechanism promoting colonial and imperial interests in the Middle East. In this sense, the analysis of National Erection Parades sheds light not only on particular practices of a singular queer urban social movement but also on its particular radical politics, arising in front of challenges at the intersection between the Global North-Western and the Middle-Eastern politics of sexuality.

National Erection parade activists confronted the effects of Western liberal discourses and social human rights movements on Middle East's politics. In a way they recognised that the local need to "build social movements through disability is a valuable way of countering sexual exceptionalism of queerness", especially "in the context of Israel, where the subject positioning of the queer disabled and the disabled queer are thoroughly foreclosed" (Puar, 2017, 125). The parade organisers chose 'nonrepresentationalist activism', resisting the option of state instrumentalization of queerness for pinkwashing ends, but, more significant, avoided engaging in sexual identity politics, positioning their claims within the wider context of the

Zionist regulation of sexuality. They created a performance that mocked Israel's militaristic, pronatalist eugenic regime and its growing interest in (the reproductive capacities of the muscular, ableist) homosexual Jew as they embodied it as debilitated. In a way, they enliven the figuration of homosexual disability, informing us that in the context of the Israeli occupation they resist "rehabilitating it into a form of capacitating that functions to the detriment of so many others" (ibid).

NOTES

1. The word "pinkwashing" has become a commonly used tag for Israel's abuse of its sterling record on LGBT human rights to obscure or legitimate its occupation of Palestine. See: Massad, 2002; Schulman, 2012; Darwich and Maike, 2014.
2. Activestills collective was established in 2005 as an independent organization by a group of international documentary activist photographers. Committed to social change, the collective aims challenging mainstream media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. See: <https://www.activestills.org/>.
3. Minoracy, a concept derived from the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, is political action aimed at undermining the forces of oppression, resisting the powers of authority, escaping the inevitability of violence, undermining the major power that is oppressing it. See Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 291.
4. The Jewish settlers who settled in Palestine in the beginning of the 20th century.
5. Neumann's research is part of a trend over the last few decades, in which the body becomes a legitimate object of study in the social sciences and in the humanities in general, and in the study of Zionism in particular. Prominent studies are: Boyarin 1997; Gluzman 2007; Presner 2007; Yosef 2010.
6. On Africa as a psychological, geographical and imaginary space to establish and realize the Zionist fantasy, see Bar-Yosef, 2014.

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