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# A Different War, a Different Sex

## Gay Identity Politics in Israeli Cinema

## and its Relation to the Zionist Ethos

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**by**

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## Abstract

# A Different War, a Different Sex

## Gay Identity Politics in Israeli Cinema

## and its Relation to the Zionist Ethos

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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This thesis deals with gay identity politics and its relation to the Zionist ethos as it is portrayed in several Israeli films. It primarily analyzes two different points of view of two film directors whose homosexuality plays a central role in their cinematic work – Amos Gutman and Eytan Fox – and examines the way they perceive their gay lived experience. Analyzing Gutman's *Drifting* (1983), *Bar 51* (1985), and *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (1987), I show how he encloses himself in his own queer universe and demands to be acknowledged as such, practicing his authenticity separately from the hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, the sexual politics in Fox's *Yossi & Jagger* (2002) and *Yossi* (2012), suggests that homosexual men should join the national hegemonic space while ignoring their otherness. Since the films in question use the Zionist narrative and the national identity of their protagonists as points of reference, these two approaches are discussed in relation to the Zionist ethos. Several other films with similar points of reference are analyzed as well, including Fox's *Time Off* (1990), *Walk on Water* (2004) and *The Bubble* (2006), Dan Wolman's *Hide & Seek* (1979),

Ayelet Menachemi's *Crows* (1987), Nadav Gal's *A Different War* (2003), Yair Hochner's *Good Boys* (2005), and Mysh Rozanov's *Watch over Me* (2010). Discussing the Zionist ethos, I emphasize Daniel Boyarin's concept of the parallel between Jewishness, queerness, and abnormality. I show how the Zionist yearning for normalcy (the wish 'to be like all nations') and the identification of the homosexual as abnormal are embodied in the cinematic representations.

The analysis in this thesis is mainly based on queer theory, as it strives to deconstruct and destabilize the traditional binaries of heterosexuality and show how the hegemonic discourse is based on those limited binaries. It challenges any political discourse that by naturalizing heterosexuality enforces heteronormative practices. By highlighting queer marginality in the cinematic text and linking it with elements of post-colonial theory and its analysis of the other, I show how gay identity politics discourse subverts or yields to the Zionist ethos.

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## Introduction[1]

In this thesis I analyze gay identity politics and its relation to the Zionist ethos as it is portrayed in several Israeli films. Reviewing Israeli gay cinema since its inception in 1979 until 2012,[2] I identify a juxtaposition between two points of view in regard to its portrayal of homosexuality: on one hand, 'yearning for authenticity,' and on the other hand, 'yearning for normalcy.' These two notions are a scarlet thread that runs through the films I discuss below. Since these films use the Zionist narrative and the Israeli national identity of their characters as points of reference, I discuss these two approaches in relation to the Zionist ethos. In order to show how the films subvert or join the Zionist agenda, I use Daniel Boyarin's concept of the Zionist project as a 'heterosexualizing project' that strives for normalcy in its quest to be 'like all other nations.' Boyarin parallels between Jewishness and queerness, negating them to Israeliness and heteronormativity. In this context, I argue that the yearning for authenticity and yearning for normalcy in gay Israeli cinema are respectively articulated by queer and homonormative narratives and imageries.[3] I primarily analyze films by two directors whose homosexuality plays a central role in their cinematic work – Amos Gutman and Eytan Fox – and examine the way they perceive their gay lived experience. In addition to Fox's and Gutman's works, I also analyze several films with similar points of reference, made by other directors such as Dan Wolman, Ayelet Menachemi, Nadav Gal, Yair Hochner, and Mysh Rozanov. My analysis is mainly based on queer theory, as it strives to deconstruct and destabilize the traditional binaries of heterosexuality and show how the hegemonic discourse is based on those limited binaries. It challenges any political

[1] For sake of convenience, the first mention of each film title appears in Hebrew with English in parenthesis. All other mentions appear in English only. When both forms are identical, only the English form appears. All mentions in the footnotes appear in English only. All names of persons appear according to their 'name authority record' on the Library of Congress catalog. If they do not have such a record associated with them, they are transliterated according to the Library of Congress Hebrew transliteration table (http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/hebrew.pdf).
[2] Although Amos Gutman directed two gay-themed short features in 1976 and 1977, the first commercially distributed Israeli long feature film that placed a homosexual man at the center of its plot was Dan Wolman's *Mahbo'im* (*Hide & Seek*, 1979). See also below, p. 47.
[3] For a definition of 'homonormativity,' see below, n. 9.

discourse that by naturalizing heterosexuality enforces heteronormative practices. By highlighting queer marginality in the cinematic text and linking it with elements of post-colonial theory and its analysis of the other, I show how gay identity politics discourse subverts or yields to the Zionist ethos.

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During the 1980s and through the 1990s, Israeli gay and lesbian[4] activists fought for the expansion of their civil rights and criticized the lack of representation of gay men and women and their marginality within the Israeli society. Legal and social struggles led the way to some civil legitimacy in the central societal institutions that mark the boundaries of the Israeli collective: the military, family, and motherhood.[5] The accomplishments of those struggles enhanced the visibility of gay and lesbians in the mainstream media, and allowed the proliferation of urban gay culture that was securely positioned within the heterosexual national consensus. While central social institutions were seen as a key to equal rights, participation in them was limited to an exclusive group of Jewish, Ashkenazi,[6] wealthy homosexuals and lesbians who could fit themselves into the

[4] The terms 'gay and lesbian' or 'homo-lesbian' were common until the mid-1990s, when they were replaced with the more inclusive term 'queer.' In this text I sometimes use 'gay' and 'queer' interchangeably.

[5] For example, the 1988 repeal of Israel's anti-sodomy law and passage of an amendment to the Equal Workplace Opportunities Law that took into account sexual orientation, as well as the Knesset's (Israeli Parliament) first conference on gay and lesbian issues in 1993 (Yosef, 2004, 142-143). See also Kamah, 2003, 40-45; Walzer, 2000.

[6] 'Ashkenaz' is the Hebrew term for 'Germany' in the Hebrew literature of the Middle Ages. Ashkenazim are Jews descended from Jewish communities of Europe. 'Mizrah' means 'east' in Hebrew. Originally, the term 'Mizrahim' referred only to Jews descended from Jewish communities of the Middle East. Nowadays this term is used to describe Jews descended from Jewish communities of North Africa as well. In the social Israeli discourse, the term 'Sephardim' (Jews descended from Jewish communities of the Iberian Peninsula) is sometimes used interchangeably with 'Mizrahim.' The Ashkenazim were the dominant demographic group when the state of Israel was established, and were considered as the political, social, and cultural elite of their time. The Mizrahim, on the other hand, were a poor, disadvantaged group, led by a small Sephardi elite. During the years, this demographic structure has developed into an 'ethnic gap,' and into the binary of Ashkenazi 'hegemony' against Mizrahi/Sephardi social and cultural 'inferiority.'

normative civil model. Those who did not adhere to the normative, hegemonic image and were not interested, or could not join the Israeli consensus, such as Mizrahim, Arabs, 'feminine' homosexuals, 'masculine' lesbians, or transgender individuals, have found themselves marginalized not only by the heterosexual society, but also by the gay community as well. 'Normality' and 'good citizenship' were the key attributes emphasized by gay activists that strived to 'be like anybody else.'[7]

The 'yearning for normality', as indicated by Warner (1999), is problematic, since "It does not seem possible to think of oneself as normal without thinking that some other kind of person is pathological."[8] The cultural visibility of 'normative' homosexual (i.e. homonormative) imageries in the Israeli gay politics took place at the expense of the cultural invisibility of 'non-normative' sexual imageries that reject the hegemonic social order or being rejected by it.[9] Moreover, the desire to be 'normal' is paradoxical; once the outing is done, the homosexual closet is replaced with a heterosexual one. The 'non-normative queerness' becomes a 'normative homosexuality' (or 'homonormative queerness') that operates within the boundaries of heteronormative conventions and values. 'Yearning for normality,' as well as the negation of the diaspora, and the identification of the diasporic Jew as 'abnormal' are part and parcel of the Zionist project. Below I elaborate on these concepts and reveal their presence in the cinematic text.

Gutman was accused by gay activists of incorporating into his films a depressing, decadent, melancholic, and even homophobic imagery of gay social practices.[10] Homosexuality is not celebrated in his films as a cause for 'pride;' it is associated with

[7] Yosef, 2004 and 2010; Walzer, 2000.
[8] Warner, 1999, 60.
[9] Yosef, 2010. 'Homonormativity' was coined in the 1990's by transgender activists, in reference to the imposition of gay and lesbian norms over the concerns of transgender people. It was since used prominently by Lisa Duggan, as she discussed the assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into LGBTQ culture. See Stryker, 2008; Duggan, 2003. Duggan (2002) explains 'homonormativity' as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative forms but upholds and sustains them."
[10] Cohen, 2012, 79.

pessimism, melancholy, and death.[11] While the Israeli gay community attempted to distance itself from this imagery on its journey to normalcy, Gutman portrayed and perceived gay existence as a tragic, hopeless experience. The 'afflicted' body and soul of his gay characters were an alternative to the hegemonic social order.[12] Furthermore, his casting choices were also a reflection of his foreignness towards the mainstream and the alternative reality portrayed in his works. In *Bar 51,* for example, he cast Juliano Mer (1958-2011), a Jewish-Arab actor, and 'Ada Valeri-Tal (1936-1994), who was known as the first transgender woman in Israel; both are representations of marginal identities that do not 'fit' into the Israeli hegemonic normalcy.[13]

While Gutman's works documented his personal life and the "queer friendships and queer networks"[14] within which he lived and operated, Fox portrays 'Hollywood style' love stories. Both reveal their unique views on homosexuality through their works and situate those views against the hegemonic Zionist ethos in a different way. Gutman's existentialism perceived the individual existence as possible only by othering itself from the collective. He did not attempt to insert the homosexual voice into the mainstream or to conform to the hegemonic Israeli narrative, but rather sought to operate completely separate from it, as a distinct meaningful alternative. Fox, on the other hand, operates within the mainstream boundaries. His films are considered subversive in the eyes of the Israeli mainstream public, as it conceives them as undermining the hegemonic discourse of Israeli heterosexual masculinity.[15] The straight majority occasionally accuses him of

[11] The equation of homosexuality and death is mainly evident in *Amazing Grace*, which is not discussed here. The motif of suicide as a desperate reaction to alienation is demonstrated three times in *Bar 51*.
[12] Yosef, 2004 and 2010; Cohen, 2012.
[13] See also Cohen, 2012, 207, n. 2. Valeri-Tal also plays in Gutman's *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (1987) and *Amazing Grace* (1992). See also chapter 5 below regarding Grace's character in Hochner's *Good Boys*.
[14] Halberstam, 2005, 1.
[15] See Utin, 2008, 159-160. He calls it "caressing radicalism."

being over-supportive of sexual minorities,[16] while gay activists would occasionally accuse of him as over-supportive of the heterosexual Zionist hegemony.[17]

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Israeli gay cinema is a relatively new field of research, with only a few scholarly works published in the last decade. The main two texts on this topic are Raz Yosef's *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (2004) and Nir Cohen's *Soldiers, Rebels, and Drifters: Gay Representations in Israeli Cinema* (2012).[18] Yosef

[16] It would be more accurate to replace "sexual minorities" with "homosexuals", as in fact, lesbians or transgenders were never significantly represented in Fox's films.
[17] Padva, 2009.
[18] Yosef published another book on the same topic in Hebrew in 2010, titled *La-da'at Gever: Miniyut, Gavriyut ve-Etniyut ba-Kolno'a ha-Yisre'eli*, which is a compilation of several articles he wrote since the publication of *Beyod Flesh* (English title: *To Know a Man: Sexuality, Masculinity and Ethnicity in Israeli Cinema*). Additional relatively scarce literature about homosexuality and gay representations in Israeli cinema deals mainly with Fox's films. Yosef re-published his analysis of *Yossi & Jagger* and *Walk on Water* in *The Politics of Loss and Trauma in Contemporary Israeli Cinema* (2011). Kobi Niv writes about *Walk on Water* in *'Avar shaḥor, 'atid ɣarod: he-ḥazon ha-homoseḳsu'ali shel Gal Oḥovsḳi ɣe-Etan Fuḳs be-sirṭam "La-lekhet 'al ha-mayim"* (2011. Hebrew. English title: *Dark past, bright pink future*). Others who write on Fox's films include Jonathan C. Friedman (*The Problematic Ethnic and Sexual Discourses of Eytan Fox's The Bubble* in Performing Difference: Representations of 'The Other' in Film and Theatre, 2008); Raya Morag (*Interracial (Homo) Sexualities: Post-Traumatic Palestinian and Israeli Cinema During the al-Aqsa Intifada (Diary of a Male Whore and The Bubble*) in International Journal of Communication 4 (2010): 932–954 (also appeared as *Queering terror: trauma, race, and nationalism in Palestinian and Israeli gay cinema during the Second Intifada* in Deeper than oblivion: trauma and memory in Israeli cinema, 2013); Rebecca L. Stein (*Explosive: Scenes from Israel's Gay Occupation* in GLQ 16, 4 (2010): 517-536) and Gil'ad Padva & Miri Talmon (*Gotta Have an Effeminate Heart: the Politics of Effeminacy and Sissyness in a Nostalgic Israeli TV Musical* in Feminist Media Studies 8, 1 (2008):69-84). Gil'ad Padva also wrote an overview about new Israeli queer cinema titled *Discursive Identities in the (R)evolution [sic]of the New Israeli Queer Cinema* in Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion, 2011, 313-325. Yosefa Loshitzky briefly refers to Dan Wolman's film *Mahbo'im* (*Hide & Seek*) in her article *Ahavot Asurot ba-Kolono'a ha-Yisre'eli* (*Forbidden Love in Israeli Cinema*), published in Teoryah u-Vikoret 18 (2001):101-108 (Hebrew) and writes about Gutman's *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* in *The Bride of the Dead: Phallocentrism and War in Kaniuk and Gutman's Himmo, King of Jerusalem*, Literature/Film Quarterly, 21, 3 (1993): 218-229). Nurit Gertz writes about Wolman's *Hide & Seek* in her book *Makhelah Aheret: Nitsole Sho'ah, Zarim ɣa-Aherim ba-Kolno'a uva-Sifrut ha-Yiśre'eliyim* (2004. Hebrew. English title: *Holocaust Sorvivors, Aliens and Others in Israeli Cinema and Literature*).

deals with the role of Israeli cinema in the construction of masculinity and queerness in the Israeli militaristic, heterosexual society. He exposes the historical and theoretical intersections between race, ethnicity, gender, sex and nationalism as "ideological constructions produced by Zionist culture."[19] While Yosef looks at the 'big picture' of queer masculinities and nationalism, Cohen deals specifically with representations of gay (i.e. homosexual) identity and "gay reading of … nongay films."[20] His goal is to "understand self-proclaimed gay cinema" in Israel in relation to the "ideological trajectory" of "Zionism, Muscle Jew, ruralism, and militarism," and to show how gay identity in Israel is defined through cinematic representations.[21]

I use both Yosef's and Cohen's analyses as a bedrock to my interpretation of Gutman's and Fox's works, examining their relation to the Zionist metanarrative from a different angle. Predicating on George Mosse's and Daniel Boyarin's readings of Zionism, I look closer at the relationships of the agendas depicted in the films in question with the Zionist metanarrative. I add an analysis of Yossi, which was not critically analyzed neither by Yosef nor Cohen or other scholars, showing the thematic and theoretical linkage between *Yossi & Jagger* and *Yossi*. I also discuss the soundtrack in Fox's films as a meaningful element that plays a role in the cinematic expression of Fox's agenda.

Moreover, most of Yosef's analysis of Gutman's films links between Gutman's work and Leo Bersani's concept of gay sex as a wish for self-annihilation. My analysis, in turn, identifies Gutman's quest for self-expression, showing that although the sexual politics in Gutman's work could be indeed seen as self-destructive, he presents a distinctive cry for authenticity and uniqueness in a mainstream world. Cohen reads Gutman's works as

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[19] Yosef, 2004, 14.
[20] Cohen, 2012, 5.
[21] Ibid., 1. Following Presner (2007), Cohen uses the term "Muscle Jew," referring to Max Nordau's famous term "muscular Judaism," as it "alludes to the necessity of creating a new type of Jew who is corporeally strong and morally fit as the very presupposition of realizing the national goals of Zionism." (Presner, 2007, 1). See also below, p. 11-12.

"saturated with self-loathing"[22] and similarly to Yosef, argues that he wishes for "self-annihilation and reinvention of oneself as 'normal.'"[23] I argue that Gutman indeed expresses a wish to belong, but he does not yearn for normalcy; he strives to maintain his non-mainstream identity within the consensual boundaries, being loyal to his own uniqueness. In addition to my analysis of Gutman's and Fox's works, I also identify other gay-themed films that were produced since 1979 until 2012. Some are mentioned briefly by Cohen, and others were never critically discussed before.

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The first chapter of this thesis is dedicated to an overview of the ideological concepts of normality and nation-building in relation to Zionism. I mainly discuss Daniel Boyarin's concept, which I further dub as "Boyarin's equation," of the parallel between Jewishness, queerness, and abnormality. Later on, I show how the Zionist yearning for normalcy (the wish 'to be like all nations') and the identification of the homosexual as abnormal are embodied in the cinematic representations.

The second chapter analyzes two of Gutman's films – *Nagu'a* (*Drifting*, 1983) and *Bar 51* (1985). Gutman does not ask to take part in the normalcy around him, but he strives to practice his queerness within his own unique, separate universe. He uses elements of camp and melancholy in order to convey his position of queerness as contrary to the Zionist narrative. My interpretation in this chapter is informed by the relation of camp and melancholy to queer and feminist theory.

The third chapter analyzes two of Fox's films, treating them as one work with two 'parts': *Yossi & Jagger* (2002) and its sequel *Yossi* (2012). Although Fox's films are conceived by the majority of the Israeli public as subversive,[24] they actually conform to

[22] Ibid., 58.
[23] Ibid., 80.
[24] See above, n. 15.

the hegemonic Israeli national discourse. In this chapter I base my analysis on queer theory, as it challenges practices that naturalize heterosexuality and enforces heteronormativity. Problematizing Fox's homonormative agenda, I show that the sexual politics in these films suggests that homosexual men should join the national hegemonic space while ignoring their otherness.

In the fourth chapter I elaborate on the way the Zionist narrative constructed and treated its other (homosexuals and Arabs) by analyzing two additional films and relating them to the films discussed earlier. Gutman's *Himo, Melekh Yerushalayim* (*Himmo, King of Jerusalem,* 1987) is a 'queer adaptation' of Yoram Kaniuk's literary work by same title, taking place during the Israeli 1948 War of Independence. Dan Wolman's *Mahbo'im* (*Hide and Seek,* 1979) tells the story of Jewish and Arab lovers through the eyes of a child in British Mandate Jerusalem. In this chapter I show how 'Boyarin's equation' is evidenced by the configuration of queer characters in these two films as abnormal and deviant.

In the fifth and last chapter I discuss the manner by which the Zionist ethos is treated in the Israeli gay cinema throughout the years, asking why the yearning for an authentic queerness was replaced by the yearning for normalcy and (being part of) the establishment? Can other cinematic works on that ideological 'gay scale' between Gutman and Fox be identified? If so, how do they fit within this change of course? I add several other films to the discussion: Ayelet Menachemi's *'Orvim* (*Crows,* 1987), Fox's *After* (*Time Off,* 1990), *La-lekhet 'al ha-Mayim* (*Walk on Water,* 2004), and *Ha-Bu'ah,* (*The Bubble,* 2006), Nadav Gal's *Milhamah Aheret* (*A different war,* 2003), Yair Hochner's *Yeladim Tovim* (*Good Boys,* 2005), and Mysh Rozanov's *Shemor 'Alai* (*Watch over Me,* 2010).

## Chapter 1: Zionism as a Heterosexual Project

The centrality of the negation of the diaspora in the Zionist discourse and the importance given by it to the rehabilitation of the Jewish masculinity was vastly researched and analyzed by many scholars, among them George Mosse, Daniel Boyarin, Michael Gluzman, Sander Gilman, David Biale, Ofer Nordheimer Nur, and Todd Presner.[25] Below is an overview of the ideological framework behind the masculine revolution of Zionism that transformed the Zionist body from "green, emaciated Jewish boy" into a "man cast of steel."[26] My attention is mainly drawn to Mosse and Boyarin and especially to Boyarin's analysis of the Jewish diaspora as queer.

The political Zionism ideology, dominant in the social and political process that culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel, was supposed to be, and was 'branded' as the national liberation movement of and for the Jewish people. At the same time, it was supposed to be the liberation movement of the Jewish man from his diasporic existence. In fact, the political Zionism's founding fathers envisioned the Jewish people emancipation as a derivative of the Jewish man's liberation; it was considered as a 'pre-requisite' for the national liberation, and almost identical to it. The national liberation could not be executed without the transformation of the diasporic Jewish body into the national Zionist body. The European nationality at the turn of the 19th century was constructed as masculine while Judaism was constructed as its feminine negative. The diasporic way of life was perceived by the Zionist discourse as a sick, unnatural,

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[25] George Mosse, Nationalism and sexuality: respectability and abnormal sexuality in modern Europe (New York: H. Fertig, 1985); Daniel Boyarin, Unheroic conduct: the rise of heterosexuality and the invention of the Jewish man (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Michael Gluzman, Ha-Guf ha-Tsiyoni: le'umiyut, migdar u-miniyut ba-sifrut ha-Yiśre'elit ha-ḥadashah. Hebrew (English title: Zionist body: nationalism, gender and sexuality in Modern Hebrew literature (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-me'uḥad, 2007); Sander Gilman, The Jew's body. New York: Routledge, 1991); David Biale, Eros and the Jews: from Biblical Israel to contemporary America (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992); Ofer Nordheimer Nur, Eros and tragedy: Jewish male fantasies and the masculine revolution of Zionism (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014); Todd Presner, Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2007).

[26] Theodore Herzl, *Altnoiland* (Hebrew translation, Bavel, Tel Aviv, 2002), 64.

despised, and futile way of existence; moreover, it was conceived as 'not masculine,' and thus, feminine. Hence, Zionism's role was to liberate the Jewish male from the miserable and sick effeminacy in which he was 'trapped' in the diaspora.[27]

Nationalism, the most "powerful and effective ideology of modern times,"[28] was intertwined with masculinity, sexuality, and respectability. It helped control sexuality and "provided the means through which changing sexual attitudes could be absorbed and tamed into respectability."[29] Moreover, the distinction between normality and abnormality and medical definitions of normal and abnormal sexuality (i.e. masturbation and homosexuality) accompanied the notion of respectability and affirmed the distinction between health and sickness. Appearance and character were classified as normal or abnormal: nervousness and weakness were seen as the result of moral corruption, while virility and manliness were the signs of virtue. Thus, nationalism "adopted this ideal of manliness and built national stereotypes around it."[30]

Manliness was perceived as necessary for the building of the nation as it was defined as powerful, dynamic and sovereign: the same attributes required for the construction of nationalism. In the sexual context, "manliness meant freedom from sexual passion, the sublimation of sensuality into leadership of society and the nation."[31] The 'un-manly' bearing was constructed as the negative of that healthy, strong masculinity: "The idea of masculinity, including its borrowed Greek standards of male beauty, was drafted by European nationalisms into service as national symbol or stereotype. The Greek ideal was stripped of any lingering eroticism while its harmony, proportion, and transcendent beauty were stressed … the ugly counter-image of the nervous, unstable homosexual and masturbator, whose physiognomy was never more sharply delineated thanks to medical

[27] Kamir, 2011; Mosse, 1985.
[28] Mosse, 1985, 9.
[29] Ibid., 10.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 13.

science's attribution of moral and aesthetic values, became an important symbol of the threat to nationalism and respectability posed by the rapid changes of the modern age."[32] The medical discourse in 19th century Europe was used as a social mean to subordinate the other and the foreign. This discourse perceived the other – Jews, Gypsies (Roma), nomads and homosexuals – as responsible for spreading diseases and having pathological sexuality. The Jewish male body was associated with madness, degeneration, sexual perversity, and femininity. Jews were seen as abnormal others, and their existence was seen as a threat to the normal social order.[33] Both the medical and cultural discourses of the turn of the 19th century, which dealt with hysteria, perversion, and decadence, created over and over again analogies between Jews and women and between Jews and homosexuals.[34]

Jewish European men were not identified with the beautiful national heterosexual masculinity, but with its neurotic, ugly and pervert negative. Hence, Jews were perceived as incapable of participating in the European national projects, all the more in a Jewish national project, which was conceived as paradoxical and impossible.[35] Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, who shaped, among others, the Central-European Zionist ideology, created the linkage between the national revival of the Jewish people and the physical rehabilitation of the individual. They rejected the degenerate Jewish body and promoted Zionism as a movement of regeneration that would restore Jewish masculinity. Nordau's 'muscular Judaism,' a term coined in his speech at the second Zionist congress in 1898, and his call "let us once more become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men," are clear examples of the moment in which the male body becomes the symbol of a new society

[32] Ibid., 31.
[33] Gluzman, 2007, 36. See also Yosef, 2004, 17, n. 4.
[34] Gluzman, 2007, 38-39. Examples for these analyses are Otto Weininger's *Sex & Character*, where he equates Judaism with femininity, and Marcel Proust's *In Search for lost Times*, where he analogizes Jews to homosexuals. See also Garber, 1992, 224-233, on the identification of the Jewish man as a woman and a homosexual.
[35] Kamir, 2011.

and a mean for the establishment of the nation state.[36] Hertzl, in *Altneuland* (1902) and other writings, situated the rehabilitation of the Jewish body at the core of the Zionist project, describing the future Zionist subject as a man who would be transformed physically, sexually and gender wise.[37]

Boyarin contrasts the male fantasies of Herzl and Nordau with the constructions of the ideal masculinity in the European Jewish diaspora. The rabbinic tradition of the gentle, studious male was undone with the "heterosexualization of Jewish culture" and the Zionist response to the pressure of modernity, namely the invention of the Jewish man.[38] Analyzing psychoanalysis and Zionism as the "two Jewish cultural answers to the rise of heterosexuality at the fin de siècle," Boyarin notes that Freud perceived Zionism as a masculine entity, a mean to oppress his own Jewish feminine homosexuality.[39] Freud, like Herzl and Nordau, internalized the anti-Semitic interpretation of the pathological Jewish masculinity and thus saw Zionism as a solution to the Jewish question.[40] The Zionist project's goal was to transform the Jewish male into a 'real man', i.e., the ideal Aryan man: "physically strong and active, the head of the family, dominant in the public world of politics at home and abroad." While Zionism's political goal was to make the Jewish people a nation 'like all other nations,' it was accompanied by an attempt to make the Jewish men like all other men. The Zionist motto 'like all Gentiles' had a double meaning, as it was accepted among the Jews as 'like all Gentile *men*.'[41]

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[36] Gluzman, 2007, 18-19, 39. See also Presner (2007) on Max Nordau and the origins of muscular Judaism. As Presner explains, "although fundamentally connected to the Jewish body, 'muscular Judaism' was not about weight-training or bodybuilding per se; rather it was about the cultivation of certain corporeal and moral ideals such as discipline, agility, and strength, which would help form a regenerated race of healthy, physically fit, nationally minded, and militarily strong Jews." (Presner, 2007, 1-2).

[37] Gluzman, 2007.

[38] Boyarin, 1997, 28. See also Presner, 2007, xxiv.

[39] As Boyarin (1997, 297) notes, Biale (1992, 176) and Berkowitz (1993, 18-19) already showed that Zionism was considered to be "as much a cure for the disease of Jewish gendering as a solution to economic and political problems of the Jewish people."

[40] Yet, Boyarin (1997, 4-5) notes that the representation of the Jewish man as feminine was not only a product of the anti-Semitic discourse, but also of the perception of the Jewish society that used it in order to distinguish itself from the Gentile society around it.

[41] "Gentile" ("Goy"; גוי) means in Hebrew both "nation" and "non-Jew man."

Therefore, assimilation that would lend the male Jew the characteristics of an 'Aryan man' would accomplish the same heterosexualizing project as Zionism. As noted by Mosse, "Zionists and assimilationists shared the same ideal of manliness."[42] Boyarin reads this notion as an "equivalence of Zionism and assimilation."[43] Assimilation, in this context, is the transformation of Jewishness into a masculine 'essence' that could not be distinguished from the Aryan 'essence.' It is the oppression or elimination of the Jewish 'feminine characteristics' of passivity and physical and emotional weaknesses, obtaining instead the masculine characteristics of endurance and physical strength. But as Boyarin notes, "Freud's sexualized politics is not so much about freedom from oppression as about passing. It is impossible to separate the question of Jewishness from the question of homosexuality in Freud's symbolic, textual world. In that world, passing, for Jews, entailed homosexual panic, internalized homophobia, and, ultimately, aggression."[44]

If assimilation and Zionism are equal, and Jewishness is equated with homosexuality or queerness, it means that Zionism is for heterosexuals only; there is no room for queerness in the Zionist heterosexual project. Moreover, when Jewishness and queerness are defined as abnormal, it means that once Jews are "like all other nations" (i.e., exercising 'normative' statehood outside of the diaspora), they do it at the cost of their Jewishness. The other side of this equation is that once homosexuals are "like everybody else" (i.e., exercising heteronormativity within the Zionist boundaries), they do it at the cost of their queerness. In Boyarin's words, "diaspora is essentially queer," because it exists away from the Zionist homeland, away from the 'right', 'normal' Jewish state, outside of the boundaries of the mainstream, and "an end to diaspora would be the equivalent of becoming straight."[45] This statement is similar to Judith Butler's queer discourse, as she states that "normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish."[46] The equation is then: Jewishness = abnormality = homosexuality (= queerness), while Zionism =

[42] Mosse, 1985, 42.
[43] Boyarin, 1997, 277.
[44] Ibid., 222.
[45] Ibid., 231.
[46] Butler, 1994, 21.

normality = heterosexuality. This is the essence of the Zionist project as a "heterosexualizing project."[47]

[47] Boyarin 'sums up' the Zionist project as "the return to Phallustine, not to Palestine" (1997, 222).

## Chapter 2: Yearning for Authenticity

In this chapter I analyze the representation of Israeli gay lived experience as it is portrayed in two films by Amos Gutman (1954-1993): *Drifting* (1983) and *Bar 51* (1985). I argue that although he does mock and criticize the hegemonic narrative, the main theme threaded throughout his films is this existentialist, corrosive solitude and otherness, which are an inseparable component of each and every character's life. At the same time, Gutman does not want to 'give up' his otherness in order to join the hegemonic narrative; he encloses himself in his own queer universe and demands to be acknowledged as such, separately from the hegemony. I show how elements of camp and melancholy shape and articulate Gutman's point of view. Camp is a central aesthetic category in gay culture, and Gutman uses it defensively against the heterosexual world around him. It is coupled with melancholy, as the product of grief over two 'objects': heterosexual normalcy (perceived as 'stability') and the possibility for queer authenticity. I use here authenticity in its existentialist sense, thus, as the degree to which one is true to one's self and the way the self is expressed in spite of social pressures.[48]

### *Drifting* (1983) and *Bar 51* (1985)

*Drifting* tells the story of Robi (Jonathan Sagalle), a young man who lives with his grandmother (nicknamed "Savti," played by Blanka Metsner)[49] and works in a grocery store she owns. He has two obsessions in his life: men and cinema. His dream is to be a film director. He does everything he can in order to fulfill his dream, even having sex with potential investors. Robi's mother left for Germany when he was 14 years old, and she sends him monthly letters with monetary support. His best friend Ilan ('Ami Traub) is an unemployed married man (financially supported by his wife) who has occasional

[48] During his career, starting in 1976, Gutman produced four short films and four feature films. All but one of his works deal directly with his homosexual lived experience; his last film, *Amazing Grace* (1992), deals with personal and social ramifications of AIDS. He died from an AIDS-related disease in 1993.

[49] 'Savta' is 'grandmother' in Hebrew. 'Savti' could be translated as 'Granny.'

sexual encounters with men in gay bars and cruising locales. Robi tries to establish a relationship with Rachel (Dita Er'el), but realizes it is doomed to fail. During the day he works at the grocery; at night he goes out to search for sex. He brings home other troubled, marginal people like himself – Palestinian Arab men who flee from the Israeli police and Mizrahi youngsters who ran away from home: Effi (Bo'az Turgeman), Ezri (Ben Levin), and Sarah'le, Effi's sister (Hadas Turgeman). Ezri becomes a male prostitute while Effi and Sarah'le end up as erotic dancers in a gay bar. Robi falls in love with Ezri, but cannot see himself in a long lasting homosexual relationship. The film ends as it started: Robi cannot find a way to make his film and cannot establish a satisfying homosexual relationship.

In *Bar 51*, Thomas (Juliano Mer) and Mariana (Smadar Kilchinsky) are brother and sister engaged in an incestuous relationship.[50] They live with their depressed mother in a poor development town. After the mother commits suicide, they leave for the big city. In Tel Aviv, they struggle to survive and find themselves drown to the margins of the Israeli society. They are being 'adopted' by Apollonia ('Ada Valeri-Tal), an elderly prostitute who lives with her homosexual partner Karl (Mosko Alkalai). They both work at "Bar 51," a sleazy striptease club; Apollonia, an extravagant transgender, is performing her 'numbers' (cabaret songs accompanied by erotic dances) and Karl acts as her "choreograph and impresario."[51] The bar is populated by other characters, all alienated by the normative society: Zara (Irit Sheleg) and her brother Aranjuez (Alon Abutbul), and Nicholas (David P. Wilson) – all are striptease dancers. Thomas is trained to be a bartender while Mariana becomes a night club dancer. Apollonia is falling in love with Thomas. When she realizes he is not interested, she tries to commit suicide. Thomas is obsessively in love with Mariana, his sister, but she falls in love with Nicholas and

[50] We never see them in an actual intercourse until the last scene, when Thomas is forcing himself on Mariana.

[51] "Bar 51" was a night club in 51 Ha-Yarkon Street in Tel Aviv during the 1970s and early 1980s. Apollonia Goldstein's character and surname alludes to another Israeli transgender woman named Gila Goldstein, who used to work in bar 51. Gila Goldstein herself plays a transgender prostitute in Ya'ir Hochner's *Good Boys*. See chapter 5 below.

escapes from the intensive relationship with her brother. Thomas is devastated. When he forces himself on Mariana, she attempts to stab him, but he grabs the knife from her and commits suicide.

The Hebrew title of *Drifting* is *Nagu'a*, which translates as 'afflicted' or 'contaminated.'[52] Gutman's protagonists perceive themselves as 'contaminated' with queerness that marginalizes them and defines them as outsiders. Robi, the lonely, troubled homosexual (*Drifting*), Thomas, who is tied up together with his sister in an intensive incestuous relationship (*Bar 51*), and Apollonia, the transgender bar hostess and cabaret singer (*Bar 51*) – all embody the outcast, the 'afflicted' subject that is rejected from the mainstream society, and aimlessly drifts with the current of life.[53] As I show below, camp, melancholy and a desperate search for authenticity are all intertwined in *Drifting* and *Bar 51*. These motifs create a queer framework of the pessimistic, hopeless cinematic narrative. The campy artistic expression allows Gutman's protagonists to perform their queerness within a society that rejects it. This expression is coupled with an emotional struggle that is characterized by melancholy and social isolation. The characters are emotionally disconnected and always in a state of never-ending 'emotional exile' – disconnected from their own soul. While they always strive to express their authentic queer self, they are at the same time aware of their social status as outcasts. This tension between the actual expression and the profound cognizance of the nature of their existence brings with it melancholy and low self-esteem.

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[52] Gutman titled one of his short films with the same title (*Drifting*, 1981). The short *Drifting* tells the story of a young man in a heterosexual relationship who frequents gay bars and cruising locales at nights.

[53] 'Afflicted' characters are also featured in other films by Gutman, such as Yonatan, the troubled young homosexual, and Thomas, the HIV carrier in *Amazing Grace*, and the protagonists in his three short films.

The cultural connotations of the term 'camp' were first codified by Susan Sontag, identifying it as a distinct aesthetic phenomenon. Camp prefers and exaggerates the artificial, the theatrical, and the melodramatic over objectivity and seriousness of the content as-is. "Camp sees everything in quotation marks."[54] It calls for re-construction of social and cultural conventions and problematizes the 'normal' and 'natural.' Sontag asserts that camp is "dead serious," extravagant, and ironic;[55] it is a kind of sensibility and point of view which is expressed by a specific aesthetics and style: the love of the exaggerated, the 'bigger-than-life.'[56] Camp sensibility is "sensibility that … converts the serious into the frivolous … [sensibility] of failed seriousness, of the theatricalization of experience." It is "disengaged, depoliticized — or at least apolitical."[57] Sontag's view of camp as apolitical was later criticized by post-modern queer theorists; Meyer's (1994) definition is "based on identity performance and not solely in some kind of unspecified cognitive identification of an ironic moment." He understands camp as a queering agent that bears with it a *destructive political power*.[58] Following up on Butler's interpretation of drag,[59] Meyer suggests that camp aesthetic is a subversive, performative critique of gender. It gains its political validity as an ontological critique and embodies "a specifically queer cultural critique."[60] Dyer (2002) sees camp as a form of 'self-defense' against the heterosexual world; "it is a way of being human, witty and vital, without conforming to the drabness and rigidity of the hetero male role."[61] As I show below, by embracing the stylistic performativity of camp, queer subjects execute their point of view and their position against the hegemonic narrative through an aesthetical expression.[62]

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[54] Sontag, 1966, note #10.
[55] Ibid. notes #19, #25, #38, #43, #51.
[56] Ibid. note #8.
[57] Ibid. note #36, #2.
[58] Meyer, 1994, 5. As an example of this "political power," he refers to the 1991 Queer Nation mayoral campaign in Chicago. Joan Jett Blakk (Terence Smith, an African-American comedian and drag queen entertainer) ran to office in drag, promising to put 'camp' back into 'campaign.'
[59] Butler, 1990, 136-138 (especially in her discussion of Estehr Newton's *Mother Camp*). It should be noted that all the above refers to *gay men* camp. See also Halberstam's discussion regarding 'lesbian camp' (Halberstam, 1998, 236-239).
[60] Meyer, 1994, 1.
[61] Dyer, 2002, 49. See also Kirkland, 2002, 128.
[62] On the different definitions of camp, see also Cohen, 2012, 208, n.6.

Gutman's camp corresponds with Sontag's seminal definition but it is used as a *political* tool. In Gutman's films, camp *cannot* be "apolitical;" it is indeed a subversive queering agent.

What was coined by Sontag as "camp sensibility," turns by Babuscio into "gay sensibility."[63] He notes that "even Susan Sontag virtually edited gays out of her otherwise brilliant Notes on Camp, though she did acknowledge that 'homosexual aestheticism and irony' is one of the pioneering forces of modern sensibility."[64] This is partially true, as she does equate "camp taste" with "homosexual taste." Nevertheless, Babuscio asserts that "gay sensibility is a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream … awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression."[65] He makes the connection between camp and gayness, arguing that "the link [of camp] with gayness is established when the camp aspect of an individual or thing is identified as such by a gay sensibility." Dyer asserts that gay sensibility "holds together qualities that are elsewhere felt as antithetical: theatricality and authenticity … intensity and irony, a fierce assertion of extreme feeling with a deprecating sense of its absurdity."[66] Irony, aestheticism and theatricality as features of camp are also highlighted by Babuscio. "Camp is ironic insofar as incongruous contrast can be drawn between an individual/thing and its context/association; … [camp's] aestheticism is oppositional to puritan morality. Camp is subversive; … it challenges the status-quo." Furthermore, "in film, the aesthetic element in camp further implies a movement away from contemporary concerns into realms of exotic or subjective fantasies." Theatricality, continues Babuscio, "relates to the gay situation primarily in respect to roles." He makes the connection between camp theatricality and "the art of passing" as an acting art, referring not to the stage, but to the notion that life is "role and

[63] Babuscio, 1999, 117.
[64] It should be noted here that the other pioneering force of modern sensibility she mentions is "Jewish moral seriousness." Interestingly enough, she parallels Jews with homosexuals as two "outstanding creative minorities in the contemporary urban culture." (Sontag, 1964, note #50).
[65] Babuscio, 1999, 118.
[66] Dyer, 2004, 150.

theatre, appearance and impersonation."[67]

The irony used by Gutman is not merely an irony that is the product of the male/female polarity (e.g. a man in drag, or a feminine male). Rather, it is a product of nonconformity or a 'misfit' that negates the hegemonic narrative. It is an irony that "contrasts an individual/thing and its context/association" and "constitutes a criticism of the world as it is."[68] This irony is coupled with an aestheticism and theatricality that together place the queer alternative both as a personal, existentialist alternative of the individual subject, and as a political, defiant position against the national hegemonic narrative.

In *Drifting*, Robi encounters three teenagers who ran away from home to the big city, and are now strolling in Independence Park – a famous park in Tel Aviv that was an active gay cruising scène when the film was shot. The park's name itself is ironic, as it is named after the 1948 Israeli War of Independence and its fallen soldiers, and thus it is contrasted with the queer activity that takes place in it.[69] The group consists of two gay youngsters (Effi and Ezri) and Effi's sister, Sarah'le. The frolicsome trio dance and sing an Israeli popular song about the "beautiful and blooming land of Israel."[70] The negation between the locale and its nightlife – a dark, shady park inhabited with homosexual men looking for and performing sex in public – and the happy, Zionist lyrics, creates the ironic tension between the queer, personal narrative and the heterosexual, national narrative. The same song is also featured in *Bar 51*. Apollonia, the aging transgender cabaret singer, who realizes she could never get Thomas's love, attempts to commit suicide in the bathroom while Thomas and Mariana are watching TV in the living room. The Israeli folksinger Sarah'le Sharon,[71] known for her communal, patriotic singing events, performs the same

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[67] Ibid. 118-123.
[68] Babuscio, 1999, 120.
[69] The park was renovated and re-landscaped in 2009 and lost its 'position' as an active gay cruising locale. See http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1198797.
[70] "*Erets Yisrael Yafah*." ("*Beautiful land of Israel*." Lyrics by Dudu Barak, composition by Shaike Paykov).
[71] Note the satiric sameness of "Sarah'le" the 'weird', outcast youngster and "Sarah'le Sharon", the epitome of the mainstream Israeliness.

song about the beautiful land of Israel on television together with a group of soldiers; she urges the crowd to sing with her, saying that one should sing even when "you feel like crying," and "when you sing together, you feel great … this is an opportunity to sing only with soldiers, who might be tired, but are still eager to sing."[72] This scene portrays the polarity between the personal and the national, between the melancholic, miserable existence of the queer, and the positive, happy existence of the national, militaristic (broadcast on *public* TV) hegemony.

The misfit of the queer within the hegemonic sphere is also apparent in the cinematic aestheticism and style. The main aspect of the aesthetics of camp is the oppositional stand to the regular, normative societal order. Camp strives to transform the ordinary into special, and the common into spectacular. The aestheticism directs the scenery; Gutman prefers the expressionism over realism, artificial over natural, and fantasy over normative reality. The execution of these preferences in the cinematic text allows him to express the individual existence as possible only by othering itself from the collective. This is evident in *Bar 51*, in its ornamented décor design and its staff's and patrons' flamboyant costumes. Apollonia's apartment overflows with kitschy knickknacks:[73] colorful wallpapers, red feathers, lamps, replicas of classic paintings, plastic flowers, vitrine with vases, figurines, a sofa upholstered with flowery cloth, and heavy curtains.[74] Apollonia herself is 'larger-than-life;' she is tall, with a strong, dominant physique and appearance. Her outfit is always extravagant and glitzy, and her language is a grotesque mélange of florid phrases and obscenities in broken Hebrew and Romanian. These characteristics mark her otherness and marginality in the Zionist state, not only as an immigrant who

[72] All Hebrew text spoken or sung in the films discussed here, and any text cited from Hebrew resources is translated by me. U.K.
[73] It should be noted that "kitsch" is used here to describe decorative objects of questionable artistic or aesthetic value; a representation that is excessively sentimental, overdone, or vulgar. While kitsch is used to describe art and décor, camp has to do with theatricality and performance, and is expressed by exaggerated, intentionally vulgar gestures. See also above, p.18-19.
[74] Lahman (2006) notes that this was 'Ada Valeri-Tal's apartment in real life.

cannot express herself eloquently, but also as an 'inferior' Ashkenazi subject.[75]

The otherness is manifested not only thematically, but also aesthetically and stylistically. Motifs of seclusion, gloomy mise-en-scène, and fluid identities are the cinematic expression of the solitude and otherness of Gutman's protagonists. In both *Drifting* and *Bar 51*, Tel Aviv is portrayed as a delusional 'non-locale,' detached from any kind of normative public life. Most of the scenes take place in closeted, even claustrophobic locales: apartments, shady bars, night clubs, nightly cruising locales, construction sites and an underground bomb shelter. There is a strong sense of siege and seclusion in each frame. The characters are never seen walking, driving or moving in the public sphere; when they do, it is always at night, in the dark.[76] There is hardly any unique identification of locales; landmarks are tagged as "the grocery," "the apartment," or "the park."[77] In *Drifting*, the windows in Robi's apartment are barred, and he gazes through them at the bright and wide open outer world. The soundtrack is moody non-diegetic music with no lyrics, with the exception of the "beautiful land of Israel" folksong. In *Bar 51*, Apollonia is having breakfast by candlelight, and when Karl opens the shutters, she gets angry with him. The soundtrack varies; there is still moody, electronic non-diegetic music, but the soundtrack includes some songs as well.[78] Elaborating on the aesthetic element in camp, Babuscio mentions that it implies "the depiction of states of mind …; an emphasis on sensuous surfaces, textures, imagery, and the evocation of mood as stylistic devices."[79] As we have seen, this notion is demonstrated in the mise-en-scène, soundtrack, and the configuration of the protagonists in Gutman's films.

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[75] Romanian Jews, as well as other East European Jewish communities, are considered to be on the 'low' end of the Ashkenazi hierarchy, as opposed to German Ashkenazi.

[76] In *Drifting*, the only scene that takes place in bright day light is at the same park where Robi and his friends cruise for sex at night; Robi is sitting on a bench, dressed with a heavy trench coat and wears sun glasses; families are strolling and playing in the park, but he is distant from the normative Israeli sphere around him.

[77] This is more evident in *Drifting*. In *Bar 51*, the only named locale is the bar itself.

[78] As mentioned above, *Beautiful land of Israel* appears also in *Bar 51*. The melancholic song *My funny Valentine* (1937, composition by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart) is played a few times, in addition to a few other songs.

[79] Babuscio, 1999, 121.

Babuscio states that "to appreciate camp in things or persons is to perceive the notion of life-as-theatre, being versus role-playing … Camp, by focusing on the outward appearances of role, implies that roles, and in particular, sex roles, are superficial – a matter of style." [80] Indeed, Gutman's protagonists are ridiculous, pathetic, and mostly heartbreaking in their chase for a dream that will never come true. In *Drifting*, Robi is a failed artist, who never creates his film; after he meets Effi and Ezri in the park, he invites them to his apartment for a fake 'audition' for his 'forthcoming film.' Sitting on an armchair, dressed with an exotic silky night robe, like a Hollywood director, Robi asks the two eager youngsters to perform a sexy dance and oral sex in front of him. Effi's and Ezri's dream to build a new life in the big city as actors juxtaposes with Robi's dream to become a famous director. In reality, Robi still works at his grandmother's grocery, relying on financial support from his mother; Ezri becomes a male prostitute, and Effi ends up as an exotic dancer in a gay bar.

In *Bar 51,* Apollonia, Karl, Nicholas, Zara, Aranjuez, and Mariana are all 'masked' characters; they disguise themselves as a miserable ideal which is the embodiment of their dreams. Grandiosity and squalor are intertwined in their life. Apollonia and Karl are 'dead serious' about their theatrical performances and their 'art.' When Apollonia realizes that Thomas is not interested in her, she set up a theatrical, melodramatic suicide scene à la Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Boulevard*.[81] Karl tries to comfort her and says: "We have each other, and we have our art." This heartrending statement enforces the irony created by the tension between their miserable existence and the way they perceive it. Mariana, the naïve girl who became an erotic dancer, admires Nicholas, her 'tutor;' she takes her 'art' very seriously and dreams of the day when she will move with Nicholas to America. Aranjuez, the extroverted feminine homosexual who works as a server and a dresser, dreams of being 'upgraded' to perform as an exotic dancer. Babuscio asserts that

[80] Ibid. 123.
[81] Gloria Swanson (1899-1983) plays Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). See also Babuscio (1999, 121) and Kaminer (1987).

"to appreciate camp in things or persons is to perceive the notion of life-as-theatre."[82] Gutman's protagonists use theatricality as a way of life and self-expression. They play a role not only in Robi's apartment or Bar 51's cabaret itself, but also in their 'cabaret of life.'

Almost all of Gutman's characters, including Robi and Thomas, bear non-Israeli, foreign names; this is another way by which Gutman places his protagonists as detached from the Israeli, local sphere. Moreover, both in *Drifting* and *Bar 51*, all characters (with the exception of Apollonia) bear only *first* names.[83] Zara and Aranjuez do not bear their real names; they are actually Sarah and Yisrael Azoulay, a Mizrahi brother and sister who moved to the big city to find a better life than the one they had in Bat-Yam, a poor suburb of Tel Aviv. Gutman's protagonists are trying to escape their mundane existence. All are well aware of their miserableness and that of those around them. Apollonia teases Zara and Aranjuez for their origin ("Zara my ass! Sarah Azoulay from Bat-Yam"), but she also ridicules herself and declares she is "a big joke; an old mattress from the War of Independence." Theatricality and misery are intertwined in this portrayal of a desperate attempt to live a meaningful life and to satisfy the quest for authenticity and self-acceptance.

* * *

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) asserts that being authentic means being true to oneself and becoming "what one is." An authentic subject is a person who operates out of her genuine inwardness, and not by adhering to social conformity or some external authority. The authentic 'project' is "taking what we find ourselves with as beings in the world and imparting some meaning or concrete identity to our own life

[82] Babuscio, 1999, 123.
[83] It should be noted that the Arab men in *Drifting* are nameless. See more on the political meaning of Robi's "submission" to the Arab men in Cohen, 2012, 76-77. Apollonia's full name is "Apollonia Goldstein." See also below, p.25.

course. The self is defined by concrete expressions through which one manifests oneself in the world and thereby constitutes one's identity over time."[84] In my analysis here, I refer to authenticity in this existential aspect of oneself: the individual seeks some inward, authentic identity that awaits to be revealed and practiced. When authenticity cannot be exercised, either because of social pressures or self-deprecation, the individual is trapped in the tension between her 'real' self and its unauthentic expression. Moreover, in my discussion here, it should be emphasized that the quest is not only for authenticity that can be practiced but for authenticity that is accepted and acknowledged as queer.

Gutman expresses a unique cry for authenticity and acknowledgement, an unrealized determination to show the *possibility* of an authentic queer existence in a mainstream space that only has room for either heteronormative or homonormative subjects. Gutman's protagonists not only yearn for the possibility to perform their queer authenticity, but also for the acknowledgement of the society around them and its acceptance of them as such. There is a powerful scene in *Bar 51*, when Thomas is sitting on a bench at the gloomy and foggy bus station; suddenly, a colorful figure is approaching him through the fog and starts chatting with him: "I want to know myself," she says, stretching her hand to him, "Apollonia Goldstein, enchantée." It is obvious to the viewers that Apollonia is not a Sabra (i.e. born and raised in Israel) by her heavy Romanian accent and her misuse of the language. She uses the verb "to know" (לדעת) but means to say "to introduce" (להכיר). In Hebrew, as in English, what we hear is "I want to *get to know* myself." In the opening monologue of *Drifting*, Robi asks: "why should one continue to make a feature film on this subject?" [Homosexuality], and he responds: "For the ego, to prove that you exist, that you talk, that you are worth something." In their struggle to express their authentic self, Gutman's protagonists carve for themselves a place in the world as individuals within their own boundaries; they resist the normative society that rejects them by establishing their own separate, secluded queer sphere. They create an alternative world in order to overcome an unbearable reality. The only one that

[84] Kierkegaard, 1992, 130; Varga, & Guignon, 2014.

cannot do that is Thomas. He is not a 'survivor;' he is too naïve and does not find a way to express his queerness. When he realizes that his incestuous relationship with Mariana cannot materialize, he prefers to commit suicide. While Robi, Apollonia and others find some comfort and redemption through the artistic expression of their troubled existence - be it "making cinema" or performing a campy "art" – Thomas directs his frustration and anger towards himself.

* * *

In his *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud (1997) suggested that both mourning and melancholy take place as a response to the loss of an object – a loved one, a social status, or self-esteem. The emotional experience is similar, but the difference lies within the way in which the mourner perceives the loss. A normative mourning process is a consequence of an explicit loss of the object, when the mourner understands what was lost and acknowledges the absence of libidinal relationships to the lost object. However, while melancholy is also a consequence of a loss, the mourner is not always aware of the absence, need or deficiency in regard to the lost object. Also, melancholy includes in it a component of a low self-esteem; while the mourner occupies himself with the lost object and the personal change that was brought by its loss, the melancholic person is occupied with self-degradation and guilt. The melancholic person mourns the self and its existence more than the loss of the object itself.[85]

'Gender melancholy' was coined by Butler (1990) on the basis of the classic Freudian psychoanalytic analysis. As individuals, we are required again and again to alienate those 'components' in ourselves that do not 'match' our gender identity as it is constructed and perceived by normative society. Men are required to alienate 'feminine' elements and vice versa. Yet, this alienation is not 'complete,' and hence brings about "gender melancholy": the compulsory binary male/female (i.e. the loss of the same-sexed object)

[85] Freud, 1997, 164-179.

is described as a melancholic structure. Thus, the social othering and self-rejection of homosexual affection produce melancholy.

Gutman's protagonists, I argue, not only grieve the constant loss and absence of the desired homosexual affection, but they mourn the loss of an object *they never had and could never achieve*; their melancholy is the product of grief over two 'objects': heterosexual normalcy (which they perceive as 'stability') and the possibility for authentic expression of queerness which could be acknowledged by society 'as is.' They break away from the compulsory heterosexuality of the Israeli society, drifting day after day in a constant fluid state, desperately looking for stability and self-acceptance. Robi struggles with "homosexual dilemmas," dreams of a stable bond with a man but cannot imagine himself in a long term homosexual relationship. When he asks Ilan why he married a woman, Ilan responds: "I must have some kind of a frame. Otherwise, everything is broken open." When his wife dumps him, Ilan mourns the stability he had lost: "we will never have a part in this," he says to Robi, referring to the normative, heterosexual frame that kept him 'safe' within its boundaries.

On the other hand, Thomas cannot imagine his life without his sister's love. His depression and anger are the outcome of the loss of the only 'stability' he ever experienced: the intensive, incestuous love for his sister. At the same time, her refusal to take part in this taboo relationship does not allow him to express his queer authenticity. This possibility is taken away from him not only by Mariana but also by the queer world around him itself; Apollonia says: "I saw a lot of things during my lifetime, but I will not allow for *this* to happen in my house." On another occasion she says to Thomas: "Mariana is strong, she is not like us … she will manage; it is *you* I am worried about." Apollonia includes Thomas in "us," as she recognizes in him the same existential, inner struggle she and all others experience in their attempt to perform their authentic selves. At the same time, as queer as she is, this taboo is off-limits even for her.

## Conclusion

*Drifting* opens up with a powerful monologue by Robi:

> If the film dealt with a social problem, or if the hero at least had a political opinion: if he were a soldier, if he were a resident in a developing town, if he served on a naval destroyer, if he becomes religious, if he were a war widow. But if he must be a homosexual, then at least he should suffer; he shouldn't enjoy it. The state is burning; there's no time for self-searching. There's a war now. There's always a war. He left the army of his own will, without any reason. The viewers won't accept it. There are too many dead relatives. He's not sympathetic, not thoughtful; he scorns all those who want the best for him. He's not even a sensitive soul, a composed intellectual. Why should they [the viewers] identify with me? Why should they identify with him?
>
> The Association of homosexuals doesn't want even to hear about the short films I made; they are not positive films; they do not portray the homosexuals in the proper way. They also did not make any money, so why should one continue and make a feature film on this subject? For the ego; to prove that you exist, that you talk, that you are worth something. Where am I in all of this? Who is the audience of my films? What do you like? What would make you pay? What would make you cry?

Gutman presents us with the foreignness and otherness that are part of his experience in a society that does not allow any room for existentialism. In his view, this is the Israeli society that requires the individual existence to be mediated only through its hegemonic political and societal practices. According to Gutman, homosexuals in Israeli society have no right to visibility, not only because they don't serve national interests, but because even if they *are* visible, they must be presented as sad and suffering. He criticizes the petition for positive representations of homosexuality. He argues that

homosexual men cannot be happy because homosexual sex is unbearable in the phallocentric culture due to its 'risky' potential to shatter the boundaries of personal and national identity on which heterosexuality is based.[86]

Gutman is at times described as one who, if not for his untimely death, could have been turned into an Israeli counterpart of Jean Genet, Fassbinder or Almodóvar.[87] He portrays the 'curse' of queerness as a deviant, aberrant existence, when 'queer' was equal to 'not normal.' He describes the personal conflict and isolation that were part and parcel of his own lived experience, and preferred to concentrate on marginal characters that populated his world. The local gay community was eager to show the Israeli hegemonic society that they are 'exactly like anybody else', that Gutman is the outcast, while their homonormativity placed them as equal subjects within the boundaries of the heterosexual discourse.

By positioning the outcast in the center of the cinematic narrative, Gutman criticizes a society that does not allow for any kind of personal reflection. In the Israeli society of his time, the meaning of the individual was always derived from the "we." In a society in which the existence of its subjects is possible only by mediation of the heterosexual, militaristic, Zionist, Ashkenazi society, Gutman had realized that "I" does not come before "we;" there is no existence without co-existence, and there is no being without "being-with."[88] For Gutman, this insight was unbearable; he did not and could not

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[86] Yosef, 2004, 132. On the imagery of the homosexual man as a young sad man, see also Dyer, 2002, 116-136.

[87] Jean Genet (1910-1986) was a French novelist, playwright, poet, and essayist. Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945-1982) was a German filmmaker. Both dealt with sexuality, homosexuality, decadence, violence and death. Dan Lahman (2006), a close friend of Gutman who wrote the scripts for two of his films (*Safe place* and short *Drifting*), notes that shortly before his death, Gutman had started working on an adaptation of Jean Genet's *Notre-Dame des fleurs* (*Our Lady of the flowers*, 1948). Cohen (2012) analyzes Fasbinder's influence on Gutman's work. Klein (2007) and Zohar (2013) note that Gutman could have been turned into an "Israeli Almodóvar" (Pedro Almodóvar, 1949- , a Spanish filmmaker), because of the rich gallery of characters and the colorfulness of *Amazing Grace*.

[88] The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1940- ) deals with this question in his book *Être singulier pluriel* (*Being Singular Plural*, 2000). He imagines the "being-with" as a mutual

perceive himself as part of the collective. He wanted to present a personal narrative, to rip himself as a unique singular "I" from the Israeli homonormative, Zionist, masculine, militaristic "we." In that period, the 1980s and early 1990s, this was impossible; he lived all his life as an outcast, rejected from the mainstream into the margins of the Israeli cinematic project.[89] In his work he offers a possibility of an existentialist discourse that posits the individual against the collective; not the individual who is *part* of the collective, but one who struggles, grapples, and operates sexually outside of the oppressive heteronormative and homonormative discourses.

In an interview he gave in 1986, just before *Bar 51* was released,[90] Gutman referred to cinema as the "meaning of my life … a way to survive, to show that I exist." The cinematic creation was his way to channel his resentment and anger towards the normative society through an artistic expression. His protagonists must find a way to express themselves as queer in order to be able to operate within the oppressive world that surrounds them.

exposure to one another that preserves the freedom of the "I." "There is no meaning if meaning is not shared, and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, but because meaning is itself the sharing of Being." (Nancy, 2000, 2).

[89] Gutman was born in Hungary and immigrated to Israel with his family at the age of seven. As noted in Ran Kotser's documentary (1997), he felt alienated from society most of his life. In an interview by Kotser, his sister Miri retells that … "Amos *wanted* to be like everybody else, but he *could not* be like everybody else. He did not feel comfortable with 'buddies' and in PE classes." See also Zohar (2013).

[90] Shamgar, 1986.

## Chapter 3: Yearning for Normalcy

In this chapter I analyze the representation of Israeli gay masculinities as they are portrayed in two films by Eytan Fox (1964−): *Yossi & Jagger* (2002) and its sequel *Yossi* (2012).[91] An openly gay filmmaker, Fox is known by the Israeli public and mass media as an outspoken celebrity who, together with his partner Gal Uchovsky,[92] vocally supports and promotes outing of public figures in the Israeli entertainment industry and political arena.[93] His popularity has to do with the controversy he creates as a leading gay filmmaker who operates within the mainstream boundaries. As mentioned above, his films are conceived by the Israeli mainstream public as undermining the hegemonic discourse of Israeli heterosexual masculinity. The straight majority occasionally accuses him as over-supportive of homosexuals, while gay activists occasionally accuse him as over-supportive of the heterosexual Zionist hegemony.[94] Although his films are conceived by many Israelis as subversive, they indeed conform to the hegemonic Israeli national discourse.[95]

As opposed to Gutman's films, the sexual politics in Fox's films suggests that homosexual men should join the national hegemonic space while ignoring their otherness. Paradoxically, Fox presents his viewers with a heteronormative, strict agenda that does not allow for the possibility of homosexual existence, both in the military and the civilian life, unless it adheres to heteronormative conventions. Analyzing *Yossi & Jagger*, I show that the only two 'options' are either to be in the closet or out of the hegemonic sphere. This dichotomy repeats itself in *Yossi*, but with a 'twist:' gay

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[91] *Yossi* was originally released in Israel as *Ha-Sipur shel Yossi* (*Yossi's Story*).
[92] Gal Uchovsky (1958- ) is a journalist and a screenwriter. He wrote the script for some of Fox's works: *Florentine* (TV series, 1997), *Gotta Have Heart* (short feature, 1998), *Walk on Water* (2004), and *The Bubble* (2006). He also co-produced (together with Fox) *Yossi & Jagger*, *Walk on Water* and *The Bubble*.
[93] Segal, 2009.
[94] See above, p. 4-5.
[95] Nevertheless, it should be noted that his first film (*Time off*, 1990) was the most subversive of all, as it represented the possibility of gay existence within the military sphere. See also chapter 5 below.

existence is 'allowed' to some extent, as long as it is within the homonormative boundaries. But in order for it to be fully performed, it needs to take place outside of the hegemonic sphere. Moreover, as we see in the last scene of *Yossi*, it could only take place in a fantasy world. The homonormative agenda in *Yossi & Jagger* and *Yossi* reflects Boyarin's view of the diaspora as queer and the Israeli/Zionist sphere as heteronormative.

## *Yossi & Jagger* (2002)

*Yossi & Jagger* deals with a love story of two officers in a combat unit of the IDF. The film is set in an Israeli outpost in Lebanon. The time is the end of the 1990's, in the last years of the 'South Lebanon conflict" (1982-2000; also known as the 'First Lebanon war'). The two main characters are Yossi (Ohad Knoller), a tough and introverted company commander, and Lior (Yehudah Levi), nicknamed Jagger.[96] Lior is a cheerful, extroverted platoon commander under Yossi's command. The two are in a romantic relationship, but only the viewers and the two lovers themselves are aware of their sexual desire and their secretive romance. Yossi is torn between the image of the Israeli macho fighter and his sexual identity; he struggles with his emotions and is afraid that his soldiers and peers would realize his secret. Jagger, on the other hand, is very much true to himself in regard to his sexual identity and is eager to show Yossi his love. Yossi prefers to stay closeted and rejects any attempts by Jagger to act freely in public.

Other characters in the film are the battalion commander, Yo'el (Sharon Raginiano), an aggressive and chauvinistic heterosexual man; two female soldiers: Ya'eli (Ayah Koren), the unit's operation sergeant, and Goldie (Hani Furstenberg), the welfare sergeant, and Ophir (Assi Cohen), Yossi's second-in-command. Ophir is in love with Ya'eli, while she falls in love with Jagger. None of them knows about Jagger's sexual preference. Goldie is a promiscuous 'bimbo,' and has an affair with the married battalion commander who treats her rudely. In addition, the outpost is manned by other male soldiers.

[96] "Because he was like a rock star" as Ya'eli tells Jagger's mother.

In the last part of the film, the soldiers are going out for a nightly ambush. They are ambushed in return by the enemy; Jagger is wounded severely and dies in Yossi's arms. When the soldiers come to console Jagger's parents at their house, the mourning parents assume Ya'eli had a romantic relationship with their son, but she does not correct them. They admit that they hardly knew anything about Jagger's personal life and ask his friends to talk about him. But instead of hearing the truth, they hear Ya'eli's love illusions. Yossi is quiet and does not dare to tell his 'version'; Jagger, whose dream was to be fully out of the closet, cannot get out of it even in his death.

*Yossi & Jagger* gained enormous popularity in Israel. It was positively accepted both by heterosexual and homosexual audiences, and won several local and international awards.[97] Yet, some of the critical reaction was different; for example, Uri Klein (*Haaretz*) did recognize the film as "all but subversive" and claimed "it represents reactionism disguised as subversion."[98] In an interview of Fox by Pablo Utin in 2008, Utin suggested that Fox's films could be described as a "kind of cinematic Vaseline," as they are used as a means to "penetrate the audience, but the penetration is pleasant and painless."[99] Fox responded by saying that "he likes this image" and added that "One of the compliments that many Israelis made sure to tell me after watching the film was: "we totally forgot they are homosexuals." This [statement] could have been upsetting because they [the audience] are not supposed to forget they are homosexuals – this is the whole point. But yet, I get this compliment with affection, because in some way, I achieved something I wanted to get: I penetrated you [the audience], and I made you get it with love."[100] The audience's "compliment," and the mere fact that Fox *takes* it as a "compliment," is a perfect manifestation of Fox's agenda of 'yearning for normality.' The film normalizes homosexuality at the expense of leaving it in the closet. Its 'politics of the closet' allows for the inclusion of homosexuality in the national, hegemonic

[97] See IMDB at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0334754/awards?ref_=tt_ql_4.
[98] Klein, 2002. See also below, p. 45.
[99] Utin, 2008, 161.
[100] Ibid.

discourse, but at the same time it constructs homosexual identity that does not challenge heteronormative practices, and is still marked as the 'other' of a heterosexist society.

* * *

The closet, as explained by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "is the defining structure of gay oppression in the present [i.e. 20th] century."[101] It defines both the absence of homosexuals and their existence within the heterosexual society that dictates heteronormativity. The closet signifies not only the imaginary absence of homosexuals from the society, but also the oppression that comes along with getting out of it. The politics of the closet denies the incoherence between 'real' homosexuals and the 'fluidity of identity' which is "a structural element in heterosexual identity."[102] As Yosef (2011) notes, "Heterosexuality needs knowledge about homosexuality to construct its own self-definition, but it must disavow this knowledge … for fear of the dangerous proximity between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which is supervised by policing the knowledge of the closet. The closet, therefore, is a kind of transit point between revelation and concealment, between knowledge and ignorance, in which homosexuality is constructed as an 'open secret.'"[103]

In *Yossi & Jagger*, the politics of the closet normalizes homosexuality as an open secret, so that the viewer could read the many homosexual and *homophobic* hints and connotations and apply the homosexuality on various heterosexual characters. But at the same time, those same hints and connotations allow the *heterosexual* viewer to deny the homoerotic desire among the soldiers, and to confine it to Yossi and Jagger alone, and thus, signify them, and *only* them, as 'real' homosexuals. As long as Yossi and Jagger are in the closet, the heterosexual viewers are 'protected' from the acknowledgement of homosexuality being a "structural element" of their heterosexuality. If the homosexual

[101] Sedgwick, 1990, 7.
[102] Yosef, 2011, 107.
[103] Ibid.

protagonists were out of the closet, the heterosexual viewers would not have any choice but to acknowledge the homoerotic hints and connotations as signifiers of the homosexual structural elements of their own identity.[104]

The main and most famous scene of the film takes place in the first few minutes of the plot; Yossi and Jagger go for a tour to "check the area" near the outpost. Their goal is obviously to be together, just the two of them, away from the outpost. The area is all white, covered with snow. The ambiance is 'dreamy', romantic, and the two are rolling and playing in the snow while the soundtrack is soft-pop music. There is a clear distinction between the military outpost and the snowy area – the main two locations of the film.[105] The outpost represents the Israeli hegemonic consensus, of which the IDF is the most dominant institution, while the area outside of it, which is actually an occupied Lebanese territory, represents anything that is not part of the Israeli hegemonic sphere. The two gay lovers cannot perform their homosexuality but outside of the heterosexual dominant discourse. In this context, it should be noted that the enemy, the owner of the occupied territory, is never to be seen throughout the film, and is completely foreign to the cinematic narrative. The snowy, 'pure,' 'clean' area is the other's space, but the other (i.e. Lebanese, Arab) is absent. All the more so, the cinematic text situates the *Israeli other* (i.e. homosexual) in place of those who are absent.

When the protagonists come back from their 'tour,' the camera is posing on a sign in the outpost that reads (in Hebrew): "a closed military area" – as if they are back into the hegemonic sphere. This is the moment when Yossi puts on his straight mask and gets serious again; he commands Jagger to go and check the posts and "make sure no one is jerking off over there." Jagger is giggling and moaning playfully, but Yossi silences him. In a different scene later on, Jagger has to leave dinner early in order to man one of the posts, and misses the dessert; Yossi brings it to him, and when Jagger 'feeds' him,

[104] Yosef, 2010; 2011.
[105] A third location is Jagger's parents' house.

offering him a bite, Yossi is terrified that this would be seen and interpreted by others as an intimate gesture and aggressively rejects Jagger's hand.[106]

The enclosed, delineated military compound with its underground tunnels and stuffed rooms is the metaphoric closet in which Yossi and Jagger must stay if they wish to be part of the hegemonic consensus; the only 'safe' locus in which they could be free to perform their homosexuality is outside of it, in the open air, in an area that does not belong to the Israeli consensus.[107] If the cinematic text indeed would have been subversive, we could have expected to see the homosexual narrative performed within the outpost boundaries; i.e. within the consensual sphere.

Moreover, the alleged 'radicalism' and the "penetration" of the heterosexual order[108] do not occur in view of the sexual politics as it is demonstrated throughout the film. It is the yearning for normality that generates the de-sexualization of the homosexual sex[109] and replaces it with a heterosexual gaze. In the snow scene, there is much anticipation for sensational homosexual sex between the two soldiers. We see Jagger's bare chest under his winter suit, and some tender kisses, but the camera swiftly moves to the next scene, where we see the two female soldiers (Ya'eli and Goldie) as they arrive at the compound and the (male) soldiers gazing at them in lust. Ya'eli flirts with Ophir and Goldie struts erotically on her way inside, while the soldiers whistle at her. The homosexual sex must not be explicitly performed or seen, as it would undermine the heterosexual order, and thus it is replaced by the heterosexual (and heterosexist) gaze.

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[106] There is a parallel gesture on part of Yossi at the end of the film, when he and Jagger lie on the ground during the ambush, and Yossi affectingly tries to hold Jagger's hand. Since Jagger is still upset with him because of their argument back in the room, he rejects Yossi's hand.
[107] In fact, one could argue that even the snowy area is not a safe zone, as it is an occupied Lebanese territory, not far from the place where Jagger would find his death later on.
[108] See above, n. 15.
[109] Yosef, 2011.

When the camera is back in the snowy area, we get the impression that the two male lovers are 'done' with their sexual act. They lie on their back, breathing heavily, and Jagger has semen stains on his suit. They zip their suites, and when Yossi is reaching with his hand to Jagger's crotch, he feels a hard object and asks: "what, already?" We again anticipate another 'round' of homosexual sex. But alas, instead of Jagger's erected penis, Jagger pulls out a small portable radio. They listen to Rita's song "*Let's…*" ("*Bo*" in Hebrew).[110] Yet again, the homosexual sex is replaced with a performance of a heterosexual woman.[111] Jagger sings along with Rita, but he does not follow one of the lines; when Rita sings "tell me a little bit about the moments of fear, it is much easier to be afraid together," he changes to lyrics to say: "it is much easier to fuck in the ass" ("fear" and "ass" slightly rhyme in Hebrew). Instead of subversive sex, we merely get to hear a subversive text spelled out.[112]

Throughout the film, Yossi's and Jagger's characters are constructed through role-oriented, heterosexual, stereotypical lenses. Yossi is the tough manly commander; all his posture says 'normative straight' – his speech, his tone, his body language. Jagger is more effeminate, sensitive, and cheerful. Yossi is afraid that once he would be out, his outing would jeopardize his status in the army. He is torn and uncertain about his homosexuality, while Jagger is a 'free spirit,' is not afraid to be expressive, and all he waits for is to be done with the military service and to come out to his parents. This dichotomous heteronormative distinction between the two protagonists is demonstrated in a few scenes. When they roll on the snow, they struggle playfully while Yossi ends up on top of Jagger. Jagger teases Yossi and refers to him as his commander, asking: "Is this a rape, Sir?" When Yossi unzips Jagger's winter suit, he is surprised to see that Jagger is fully naked. He seriously says to him in a didactic tone: "Are you crazy? I throw soldiers in jail for less than that!" Jagger giggles and responds: "what can I do, I'm wild."

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[110] Yosef (2011) and Cohen (2012) refer to it as "*Your soul*", as it is titled in the English version of the film's credits.
[111] Rita Yahan-Farouz (1962− ), an Israeli pop singer and actress, one of the most successful female singers in Israel; known as a gay icon among the Israeli gay community.
[112] See below for further discussion regarding Rita's song.

Yossi's masculine traits and his fear of his own sexual identity, as opposed to Jagger's personality and positive self-image, are demonstrated in the scene in Yossi's room, just hours before the planned night ambush. Yossi studies the maps while Jagger is sitting near him, playing his guitar. Jagger gets 'philosophical' and asks Yossi if he would still care for him if he (Jagger) would get wounded in the ambush; "will you stay with me if I'd be amputated? And if I'll get all burnt and have only one eye, with no eyelashes? … What would be better? Just to get wounded or simply die?" Yossi gets irritated and doesn't want to 'speculate' anymore, but Jagger insists: "what if I'll die and you still didn't tell me today that you love me?" Jagger's character is constructed as a feminine homosexual, acting 'like a girl,' while Yossi is the busy man with the 'serious' military operation planning, bothered by 'silly' questions.

Yossi is annoyed by these questions and bursts with anger towards Jagger: "what do you want from my life? I can't promise you anything….sorry I don't surprise you with a damned ring….this is not some fucking American movie." From Yossi's point of view, Jagger's gayness is a dream, a fantasy like a Hollywood film. Jagger responds by saying that he's fed up with Yossi being in the closet: "… Our next vacation is going to be in Eilat,[113] and we're going to get a room with one bed, king-size or queen-size, I don't care … I'm fed up with pulling two [single] beds together … and when I'm done with my term, I'm going to tell my mother, and you will come with me to meet my parents." But Yossi is adamant: "this is how it is going to stay … I never promised you anything different [then that] … you have two options: either to live with it or get out of my life."[114] The heteronormative, national discourse speaks out of Yossi's mouth. Open gay reality cannot exist within the hegemonic sphere; it can live and be contained only in the closet, or outside of it, but outside of the hegemonic sphere as well.

[113] A tourist resort in the Southern tip of Israel; located on the Red Sea, near the Israeli-Egyptian border.
[114] The original English caption merely translates "leave" and not "get out of my life".

These harsh words by Yossi ("get out of my life") prepare the viewers for Jagger's death scene and for a harsh analogy: there is no place in the Israeli society for full, 'real' homosexual relationships; the only two choices are either to be closeted, or to be dead. In order to 'normalize' homosexuality into the Zionist discourse, the assertive, flamboyant gay character gets killed in a militaristic, heroic act and is buried in the 'national closet'. As shown by Yosef, "the politics of death is intertwined with the politics of the closet."[115] The national discourse must normalize Jagger's 'radical' homosexuality ("I'm wild" as he says in the snow scene) in order to be able to absorb it into the national narrative. This normalization is done by equating his death with the closet (i.e. Jagger's coffin), and thus, 'allowing' homosexuality to stay within the national boundaries.

## *Yossi* (2012)

*Yossi* is a sequel to *Yossi & Jagger* and tells the story of Yossi a decade later. Yossi (again played by Ohad Knoller) is now a successful cardiologist in Tel Aviv. Still in the closet, he still mourns the loss of his lover, goes through the motions, immersed with sadness and depression. His daily routine involves long shifts at the hospital, TV dinners, watching porn and having anonymous sex with occasional partners he finds online. He ignores courtship attempts of one of the nurses (Nina, played by Ola Schur Selektar), and rejects attempts of his co-worker and friend (Motti, played by Lior Ashkenazi) to take him out for a drink and "get women." His boss reprimands him for being a workaholic, insisting he should use his vacation days.

In one of his shifts, Yossi recognizes a new patient as Mrs. Varda Amihai, Jagger's mother (Orly Zilbershats). The encounter with Varda shocks him, as it brings painful memories again. Yossi is restless and cannot go through the motions anymore. One morning he is drawn to Varda's house and knocks on the door. Jagger's father (Raffi Tavor) recognizes him immediately, while Varda is perplexed and does not understand

[115] Yosef, 2010, 200.

the reason for his visit. Yossi tells them about the real nature of his relationship with their son, and about Jagger's plans to come out of the closet after the military service. Both are shocked, and Varda asks Yossi to leave.

After the encounter with Jagger's parents, Yossi goes on a trip to Sinai.[116] On one of his stops, he offers a ride to four IDF soldiers who missed their bus to Eilat. During the ride, he makes eye contact with Tom (Oz Zehavi), one of the soldiers. After dropping the four soldiers at their hotel, Yossi changes his mind and instead of crossing the border to Sinai, he drives back to Eilat and checks in at the same hotel. At the hotel, he is courted by Tom, but is reluctant to open up. After a few days, Yossi's heart softens; he and Tom get closer, and they make love in Yossi's room. In the last scene of the film, Yossi and Tom cross the border to Sinai.[117]

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Many motifs in *Yossi* correspond with themes in *Yossi & Jagger*. Yossi is now a workaholic cardiologist who has replaced one stressful environment – the army, with another one – the hospital. Nina's character revives the female soldier character (Ya'eli), unwilling to acknowledge that the object of her crush is gay. Motti is the chauvinistic male who objectifies women, similarly to the battalion commander and other straight male characters in *Yossi & Jagger*. Although now Yossi is ten years older, the character that pulls him out of his melancholy is again, a young, handsome and cheerful soldier – a replica of his dead lover. The motif of age is evident in the repeated references to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912) – the book Yossi reads during his stay at the hotel.[118] Moreover, while driving to Eilat with Tom and his friends, he listens to Mahler's Symphony N°5, the soundtrack of Visconti's cinematic adaptation of Mann's novella

[116] An Egyptian peninsula, known for its resorts and peaceful beaches on the Red Sea.
[117] See also Noh, 2012.
[118] See also below regarding ageism within the gay community.

(1971).[119] When Yossi decides to go on vacation, he goes south to Eilat,[120] maybe in hope that by fulfilling Jagger's wish[121] he would find a cure to his sorrow. And indeed, he again encounters a group of young, lively IDF soldiers, among them a new 'version' of Jagger. The last to final scene, when Yossi and Tom are 'fighting' over the light switch is a reference to *Yossi & Jagger* (and a sign of a closure), reminding us of Rita's song "*Let's*…": "Let's unveil the curtain of fog, let's stand in the light and not in the shade."

As we have seen in *Yossi & Jagger*, also in *Yossi*, the two main characters are constructed through heterosexual, stereotypical lenses. Tom is an officer in the IDF, but as opposed to his friends, he is not the macho type. He is "the homo," as one of his buddies (Nimrod) calls him. He is the one who likes to listen to Rita and treats himself with "salts and oils massage" at the Hotel's spa ("what can you do? He is a homo", says Nimrod). He is more gentle and sensitive than his friends (he 'defends' Yossi for his musical taste on their drive to Eilat), and is obviously more cheerful than Yossi, the old, lonely, sad man. Yossi is still a closeted gay man, not so young anymore, who is embarrassed by Tom's 'free spirit' (swimming naked late at night, or riding a 'toy giraffe' on the promenade) but yearns for intimacy.

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[119] The theme of *Death in Venice* bizarrely parallels the two plots: Tom (Tadzio), the handsome young, boyish soldier with the beautiful smile, and Yossi (Gustav von Aschenbach), the older man "with a musical taste of old people and weird laugh", who falls in love with Tom. Besides the obvious analogy – an old, lonely man being fascinated by an attractive younger man – the meaning of the equation is not so clear. In Mann's novella, Aschenbach decides to stay in Venice, even after the Cholera breaks out, just for the chance to meet Tadzio again; he gets sick and dies, without having a chance to express his hidden homosexual desire. In Fox's film, Yossi decides to get back to Eilat, instead of crossing to Sinai, just for the chance to meet Tom again; nevertheless, the encounter with Tom allows him to overcome his loneliness and melancholy, and supposedly, to mend his broken heart.

[120] This thematic connection is reinforced by a precedent scene when Yossi is watching a video clip of the song "*La-Midbar Sa'enu*" ("*Carry us to the desert*"), illustrated by camels wayfaring in the desert, and also by the banner he sees in Jagger's room at his parents' house, depicting an exotic landscape.

[121] As Jagger said to him in *Yossi & Jagger*: "…our next vacation is going to be in Eilat, and we're going to get a room with one [double] bed."

By depicting Tom as a gay young man 'just like everybody else', serving in the IDF with 'no issue at all' ("nobody cares about it," he tells Yossi), Fox portrays Israeli society as accepting and progressive. But in the same breath he lets us know that Tom's parents, similarly to Jagger's parents, do not know anything about their son's sexual identity. When Yossi asks Tom about his family's reaction, Tom says: "oh, my parents? They know nothing. I never told them. They know nothing about my personal life." Yossi is surprised that Tom's openness "stops at his family's doorsteps." It seems that Fox is still so eager to be part of the hegemonic establishment, that he neglects the personal, familial aspects of the Israeli gay reality. This is also evident by the way he allows Yossi's character to out Jagger after his death. After his encounter with Jagger's mother (Varda), Yossi feels that in order for him to go on and open a new chapter in his life, he must get a closure and tell Jagger's parents about the real nature of their son's relationships with him. Fox's agenda is very clear here, as what Yossi is doing is simply outing Jagger to his parents posthumously, whether they want it or not. Indeed, Varda asks him: "why are you doing this to us?" and he responds: "he [Jagger] wanted you to know."

Homonormativity is "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative forms but upholds and sustains them."[122] As evidenced in *Yossi*, homosexuality is 'allowed' only within the homonormative sphere. The heterosexual consensus embraces gay men into its arms, and the Israeli society is portrayed as liberal and progressive.[123] Motti does not care if his co-worker is into men or women, and in the bathroom threesome scene we see him drunk, touching Yossi in a sexual way on his chest and back. He even playfully suggests that Yossi would "get a blowjob tonight, even if I [Motti] would have to do it myself." Tom is openly gay; he claims that nobody in the Army cares about his sexual orientation, and his friends couldn't care less. But yet, the plot presents us with heteronormative norms that do not challenge the heterosexual consensus, but "uphold and sustain" it.

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[122] Duggan, 2002.

[123] It is interesting to note here, that even the gay porn movie Yossi is watching (*Men of Israel*, by Michael Lucas, 2009) was promoted, at time of its release, as the "first gay adult film made in Israel with an all-Israeli cast." (Kaminer, 2009).

Yossi is a successful surgeon, a grownup man in his thirties; however, he is eager to experience the intimacy he yearns for, with a handsome soldier, ten years younger than him, named "Tom" ("innocence", "naivety", or "purity" in Hebrew). Thus, our protagonist, who ten years ago was a closeted gay soldier in the most consensual institution of the Israeli society, is now longing to be 'included' in that same institution that is now 'accessible' to gay men; as if by way of his relationships with Tom, he would have a 'second chance' to be part of the consensus. This is that 'yearning for normality' that makes Yossi change his mind when he gets to the Israeli-Egyptian checkpoint, after dropping the soldiers off at the hotel, and draws him back to Eilat and to Tom, his young 'savior'; as if being a respectable cardiologist is not 'mainstream' enough, he is drawn to the reflection of his own previous military mainstream persona.

When Yossi is listening to Keren Ann's[124] concert at the hotel, the soundtrack that accompanies the scene is a cover version of *Lo dibarnu 'od 'al ahavah* (*We didn't talk about love yet*), originally performed by the Israeli male singer Matti Caspi.[125] The heteronormative lyrics praise heterosexual love, raising a family, and aging together, and by doing so, aim to include the protagonists in this heteronormative 'course of life':

> "We didn't talk about love yet, and we didn't explore it to the full … I want to sleep with you … We didn't talk yet about a family, and we didn't sing in its praise ... I want to wake up with you … We didn't talk about old age yet, and we didn't describe its beauty… I want to die with you ..."

Outwardly, Tom and his friends represent the progressive, liberal Israeli society; homosexuality is not an issue, the 'Father of the Nation' (David Ben-Gurion) is being ridiculed, and the "new Middle East" is being celebrated. But in fact, this is a heterosexist and racist society. Tom is a soldier, a 'good citizen' serving the hegemonic establishment; he is young, good looking, openly gay, and Ashkenazi. Yet, he is in the

[124] Keren Ann Zeidel (1974– ); an Israeli-French singer, songwriter and composer.
[125] Lyrics by Ehud Manor, composition by Matti Caspi (1978).

closet when it comes to his close family, and his friends homophobically name him "the homo" or "coccinelle" ("you are so 'coccinelle' in your musical taste") [126]. Motti is the typical straight, macho man who in spite of his liberal opinion about Yossi's sexual identity objectifies women and treats them rudely.[127] Female characters are portrayed in a rather misogynic way: Nina is forcing herself on Yossi, ignoring "rumors about his sexual preferences." Varda rejects Yossi's attempt for sympathy and banishes him from her house, and the female janitor at the bus stop on the way to Eilat is being mocked by the soldiers for her bodily appearance. Although there is some critique of ageism within the gay community (when Yossi encounters a sleek, muscular man he met online, he gets humiliated by him for his poor physique), Yossi, the "old" man with an "old musical taste", is actually surrounded by young, energetic men – Tom, his friends and the masseur at the Spa. The ethnic binary of Mizrahi/Ashkenazi is not absent either, as it is demonstrated during the car scene: popular Mizrahi music is tagged as 'inferior', while classical music and Israeli 'Ashkenazi' oldies are tagged as 'superior.'[128]

In the last scene of *Yossi*, we realize that homosexual love could only take place in a fantasy world. Yossi and Tom are crossing the border to Sinai. They sit on the beach in a Bedouin eatery facing the water, drink beer and chat. Yossi says that he would need to get back to work in a few days. Tom is challenging him: "do you *want*, or do you *need* to go back?" Yossi is grinning; "look around," he tells Tom, "does this look to you like real life?" Tom declares that he would not report back to his military camp and asks Yossi to stay there with him; "I am sure the army could manage without me," he says. Yossi ponders a bit and agrees they would stay there "forever." *Yossi* ends as a fairytale, a

[126] Coccinelle (1931-2006) was a French transsexual actress and entertainer. During the 1960's she performed in a night club in Tel Aviv and was the first transsexual to do so in Israel. Since then, the word *coccinelle* in Hebrew (pronounced *koksinel*) is used derogatorily in Israel as a synonym for transsexual or a feminine homosexual.
[127] There is an expressive scene near the vending machine, when Motti is kicking the machine which is out-of-order, and says "they [the machines, in *feminine plural*] only understand violence."
[128] See also chapter 4 regarding the Ashkenazi/Mizrahi polarity in Gutman's *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*.

"fucking American movie," to use Yossi's words in *Yossi & Jagger*. Yet again, homosexual relationships cannot take part within the establishment ("the army") and the hegemonic sphere (Israel). Similarly to the snow scene on Lebanese land, when Yossi and Jagger practice their homosexuality away from the hegemonic space, also in *Yossi* the two gay lovers choose to do it outside of the national consensual territory.[129]

Cohen notes that "Leo Bersani's observation [in his *Homos*, 1995, 32] that "gays have been de-gaying themselves in the very process of making themselves visible" … can be applied to Fox."[130] Indeed, Fox's films strive to take part in the national discourse, but they construct homosexuality that does not challenge heteronormative oppressive practices; moreover, they reproduce and preserve those practices by presenting a 'lacking' homosexual reality, which is defined by conformity and not by resistance.

The construction of closeted homosexuality in *Yossi & Jagger* as 'normal' is the reason for the film's popularity among both heterosexual and homosexual viewers; while heterosexual viewers 'forgot' that the protagonists are 'real' homosexuals,[131] homosexual viewers are presented with the normative fantasy of 'being like anybody else' at the expense of being in the closet. As Klein (2002) notes, *Yossi & Jagger* is a 'nice' film; so nice, that there is nothing subversive about it.[132] This 'quality' allures the audience to romanticism and sentimentality that are very 'Israeli' in the sense that they are matched with heroic death and sacrifice for the state. Fox could have undermined the romantic and sentimental myths that are inseparable from the Israeli militaristic heroism, but he chose to embrace them. He shows that also homosexuals 'deserve' to take part in these myths that so far were 'owned' only by heterosexuals; they too want to be part of the Israeli collective.

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[129] See further below on the significance of Lebanon and Egypt as 'non-hegemonic' locales.
[130] Cohen, 2012, 94-95.
[131] See above, p. 33.
[132] See above, n. 98.

## Conclusion

On the commercial DVD container of *Yossi & Jagger*, it reads: "Two soldiers and a love that lasts forever …." In the last scene of *Yossi*, he and Tom decide to stay forever in Sinai, which is "not in the real life." While in *Yossi & Jagger* it was the Lebanese territory that was the 'appropriate' place for the other, in *Yossi* it is the Egyptian peninsula, in which the two protagonists choose to experience their homosexual existence. Sinai, with its dreamy beaches, is the 'pure,' 'clean' equivalent of the Lebanese snowy area. Interestingly enough, also on the Egyptian land (previously occupied by Israel) the locals are not seen at all, besides the Bedouin restaurant owner at the background. Both of these locales are portrayed as a utopian space, which has nothing to do with the Israeli reality. In both cases we are shown that homosexual love could be experienced as long as it is not practiced within the national discourse. It seems that by placing his protagonists in these specific locales – Arab territories, devoid of any actual native Arab habitants – Fox reproduces the 'good old' colonialist Zionist practice that ignored Palestine's local residents in order to allow for the national project to materialize. By doing so, he adheres to the hegemony in which he is so eager to take part. Moreover, this directive choice brings to mind Boyarin's equation, as it parallels homosexual practice with Zionism's other (Arab, Levantine); hence, with the abnormal.

Yossi and Jagger practice their love outside of the outpost, away from the consensus. Jagger is killed in battle, on an occupied land, outside of the consensual Israeli territory, but is being joined to the heroic national discourse by his death. Yossi is 'allowed' to verbalize his love to Jagger and kiss him within that national sphere only *after* his death. Only then the homosexual expression can be performed. In *Yossi*, Yossi and Tom build their relationships during a vacation in a southern resort, but they never go back to "real life." Instead, they cross the border to the 'non-reality' of Sinai, as if this is the only way they could experience their homosexuality to the full. Yet again, homosexual love is 'allowed' to be practiced only outside of the consensual territory.

## Chapter 4: Zionism's Other

Examining the output of Israeli cinema throughout the years, one could identify several other films that place a homosexual protagonist as the other in the context of the Israeli/Zionist national narrative. The 'obvious' ones that come to mind are additional films directed by Fox: *Walk on Water* (2004) and *The Bubble* (2006). As I have mentioned above, these films got a lot of critical attention and are briefly discussed below in the fifth chapter. In this chapter I explore less researched films which clearly convey Boyarin's concept. Dan Wolman's *Hide & Seek* (1979) is the first Israeli long feature to place a homosexual character in the center of its plot. I show how homosexuality in this film is constructed as 'non-consensual' and how it is equated with the Zionism's enemy – the Arab. In addition, I highlight a unique film in Gutman's corpus of work: *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (1987). As opposed to all of his other films, this film does not deal directly with Gutman's homosexual identity. It is rather a unique 'queer adaptation' of a novel by the Israeli author Yoram Kaniuk. I show how Gutman interprets the plot and how he designs the scenery in order to portray homosexuality and queerness as the others of the hegemonic Israeli narrative. I show how these two films construct and present the tension between the Zionist national narrative and its queer other, and how Boyarin's equation is evidenced in them. Both films parallel between Zionism's abnormal other (Arab, homosexual) and the abnormal queer Jew, who joins this other.

### *Hide & Seek* (1979)

Wolman's *Hide & Seek* (1979)[133] is the first commercially distributed Israeli long feature film that places a homosexual man at the center of its plot.[134] The film takes place in Jerusalem under the regime of the British Mandate in Palestine. The time frame is 1946 - after World War II and before the establishment of the State of Israel. Uri Berman

[133] Dan Wolman (1941- ) is one of the senior film directors in Israel. Known for his cinematic adaptations of 'Amos 'Oz's *My Michael* (1974) and Shulamit Lapid's *Gei Oni* (2011).
[134] Gutmann's shorts *Repeat Premiers* and *Safe Place* were produced in 1976 and 1977, respectively.

(Hayim Hadaya) is a young boy whose parents are Zionist activists who are away from home due to their public service positions. His Mother (Gila Almagor) is an Aliyat ha-No'ar administrator,[135] who goes back and forth between Palestine and Europe, bringing orphans who survived the Holocaust to Palestine. His Father (never seen in the film) is a Zionist politician working abroad, promoting the establishment of the State in the international arena. Uri is raised by his grandfather (Binyamin 'Armon) and hardly sees his parents. He is lonely and spends most of his time with a group of friends, playing hide & seek and imitating the grownups' 'war games.' The Jewish Haganah underground movement, acting against the British administration and the Arab population, looks for a local spy who was discovered in the neighborhood, while the children form a secret group and launch their own hunt after the spy. Uri is a rascal and doesn't pay much attention to his studies. His grandfather invites a private tutor to help him with his homework. The plot reveals the relationships between Uri and his tutor, David Balaban (Doron Tavori).[136] Uri discovers that Mr. Balaban (he simply calls him Balaban) secretly meets with an Arab man (a nameless character played by Musabah Muhammad Halwani),[137] and the children believe that the tutor is the spy. As it turns out, the association of Balaban and the Arab man has nothing to do with the political situation; they are involved in a romantic homosexual relationship. Although the spy turns out to be a waiter in a local café, the Jewish underground is still planning on chasing the two lovers. The Arab man is beaten to death while Balaban, wounded and humiliated, leaves the neighborhood.

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[135] The "Youth immigration", a Jewish organization that rescued thousands of Jewish children from the Nazis from 1933 until after the war. Aliyat ha-No'ar arranged for their resettlement in Palestine in kibbutzim and youth villages that became both home and school, or for adoption by local families.

[136] We learn later on that Mr. Balaban is also Uri's teacher at school.

[137] Similarly to the Arab characters in Gutman's *Drifting*, Balaban's Arab lover does not bear a name; he is merely "the Arab." In an interview with Amir Sumakai Fink (Sorkin, 2002, 241), Wolman mentions that he saw "a beautiful Arab construction worker" near the filming site and asked him if he would take part in the production. This 'orientalist' statement by Wolman goes hand in hand with his directive decision not to name the Arab character. See also Yosef, 2004, 134.

Wolman tells this coming of age story through Uri's gaze. When Uri is playing with his friends, while they spy after Balaban, his gaze is the collective national gaze; it is that Zionist gaze that 'controls' the surroundings and gives them a political interpretation.[138] It is the same gaze of the Jewish underground gang that would eventually murder Balaban's Arab lover. While Uri is by himself, peeping through the window outside of Balaban's apartment, or looking at personal photographs of Balaban and his friend, he sees the human, emotional story behind the encounters of the two men; he sees two lovers. Uri's coming of age is this change of the gaze, from a gaze that controls the other, to a different, subversive gaze that allows to convert the national narrative into a personal one. Uri realizes that there is no one narrative, but many different ones; the new gaze would allow him "to see himself in the eyes of the other, and to see the other in his own eyes."[139]

*Hide & Seek* puts side by side the Zionist narrative of resistance and war and the 'war games' played by Uri and his gang. The children imitate 'the struggle' ('Ma'avak' in Hebrew – a collective term that indicates the struggle against the British regime in Palestine): they form a secret gang ("the black hand gang"), try to make a Molotov cocktail, and play an imaginary battlefield, squeezing wild strawberries for 'blood.' The struggle is presented as a homogeneous narrative that destroys or absorbs everything that does not fit in it, namely Arabs, homosexuals, or holocaust survivors. Wolman critics this homogeneity by positioning these characters in the center of the plot. Moreover, he shows Uri's coming of age as a process that allows for more than one narrative. When Uri confronts Balaban, telling him that he saw him and "an Arab" together, he asks angrily: "why are you meeting with the enemy? You are supposed to take part in 'the struggle'!" Balaban, in return, questions him: "what do you know about the struggle? Did you ever meet an Arab? Did you ever meet a Brit?" But Uri wants to know once and for all: "Are you taking part in the struggle or are you not?" In Uri's eyes, the struggle is

[138] Gertz (2004, 13; 53) notes that this is a gaze similar to the gaze in early Zionist films of the 1930s and 1940s – "a gaze that controls the individual and the landscape."
[139] Gertz, 2004, 54.

"against everybody" that is not 'us'; he cannot understand there are undercurrents under the homogenous narrative. Later on he understands that there could be other aspects to it. He slowly becomes aware of the soft, more 'feminine' attributes of his tutor. When Balaban picks up Uri's wounded dog and hugs him, Uri's look changes and he looks at Balaban in forgiveness; he suddenly sees him with different eyes. We see this look again, when Uri peeps through the window and is watching Balaban and his Arab lover caressing each other. He realizes that not everything in the reality around him is about 'the struggle;' the reality is comprised of individuals that do not wish to conform to the struggle's rigid boundaries.

The process of coming of age is completed in the last scene of the film that corresponds to the first one. The film is bound by two 'bookends': in the opening scene we see a group of frolic children, Uri among them, running down the hill with large branches in their hands. In the opposite direction uphill, a man is approaching on his bike. Uri's branch accidently hits the man, who stops and gives Uri an admonishing look. Uri stops, smiles at the man as a way of apologizing and then join his friends in their run downhill. That man is Uri's future tutor, Mr. Balaban. In the last scene, the location is the same trail on the hill. Uri is walking slowly downhill, this time by himself, carrying a heavy bag of potatoes on his way to a campfire picnic with his friends. In front of him, Balaban is walking uphill with his bike and passes him. Uri calls: "Balaban?" Balaban is turning back, looking at Uri in disappointment. Uri is approaching with questioning eyes, as if asking Balaban to engage in conversation, ensuring him that his point of view of the world is not so homogeneous anymore. Balaban does not say a word, turns his back and continues uphill. The first 'bookend' is characterized with a fast movement; Uri is a frolic rascal, running down the trail, while Balaban is cycling uphill. In the last scene both are walking slowly, carrying a metaphoric 'burden' – Uri is slowed down by the heavy bag, while Balaban pushes his bike uphill. Both are surrendered by reality, left with the poignant realization that the harsh reality around them is not that simple.[140]

[140] As Gertz (2004, 53-55) notes, similar process of shifting and changing of point of view is presented through Uri's look at the Holocaust surviving orphans who are invited by his Mother

In addition to the love relationship between Balaban and his Arab lover, homoerotic undertones are interweaved throughout *Hide & Seek*. Similarly to its mention in Fox's *Yossi*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* is also mentioned in Wolman's film. Uri's grandfather is working on a translation of Mann's novella together with his friend, Mrs. Rosenzweig (Rivkah Gur). Nevertheless, the thematic connection between the Novella's characters (an old man and a young boy) and Wolman's characters (an adult tutor and his young student) is not developed further than this. In addition to the first scene where Uri's smile could be interpreted as a seducing one, there is only one another scene between the two that might be interpreted as homoerotic. This is the scene when Balaban and Uri engage in a pillow fight in Uri's room; Uri refers to it as a 'war' and they both drop breathless on the floor at the end of it.[141] Another homosexual element is hinted by the letter that Balaban gets from the children's "black hand gang." It has to do with Jacob Israël de Haan (1881-1924), a Jewish anti-Zionist poet, novelist, journalist and legal scholar, who was assassinated in Jerusalem by the Haganah in 1924 for his anti-Zionist political activities and contacts with Arab leaders. De Haan published short stories and poems with homosexual themes[142] and expressed in his writings his attraction to young Arab boys. When the "black hand gang" suspects Balaban is the hunted spy, one of the kids snicks into the teachers' room at the school, and leaves him a magazine cutout letter in his mailbox. The text reads: "We know all about you and your Arabs, traitor! Doomsday is approaching." This is a verbatim citation of the letter De Haan received

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for dinner. He first ignores them, feeling uncomfortable while they chant in Yiddish. Later on he smiles when he notices one of the girls pocketing one of the napkin holders. Towards the end of the film, his mother asks him if he would want to stay with the orphans in the youth village for a few days. Gertz claims that he then realizes that he is also an 'orphan' (i.e. growing up with his grandfather while his parents are away) and thus, identifies himself with the image of those who the Zionist narrative strived to absorb and mold in its shape.

[141] There is an additional mention of Venice, when Balaban secretly goes to a shop in the old city of Jerusalem in order to collect a letter, possibly from his lover. The shop name is "Venisia" ("Venice" in Arabic).

[142] In 1908 he published a novel about a sadomasochistic relationship between a man and a young boy (Pathologieën: De ondergang van Johan van Vere de With (Pathologies: The Perdition of Johan van Vere de With)).

from the Haganah before his assassination.[143] Thus, Balaban is marked both as an anti-Zionist that does not take part in 'the struggle' and as a homosexual. Like De Haan, not only is he involved in homosexual relationships, but he has an *Arab* lover. This 'two folded' otherness, evidenced by both same-sex and interracial relationships, is equated with anti-Zionism, with acting outside of the conformist boundaries of the 'struggle.'

In his work about homosexuality in the British Mandate period in Palestine, Ilani (Unpublished) argues that the negation of the diaspora discourse (i.e. the parallel between homosexuality and diasporic Jewishness) does not play a significant role in the local media of that time period. In contrary, terms such as 'homosexual intercourse' and 'sodomy' bear a connotation of a threat; a threat that has to do with "the existence of the European Jew in the inferior East, while his body is exposed to the dangerous temptations of the foreign space."[144] The Zionist discourse about the aberrant sexuality at that time has colonialist attributes, as it makes the ideological connection between the encounter of 'Arab Jews' with Ashkenazi, European Jews in Palestine, and the national struggle against the local Palestinian Arabs. Homosexual intercourse is not merely "an oriental vice",[145] but it is constructed as a symptom of a much dangerous social threat – being 'absorbed' into the Orient or being transformed into Arabs. The Yishuv[146] leadership was concerned about over acclimatization and Levantinization[147] of the Jewish population. Thus, the 'contamination' of young Jewish men with sodomy was described as a severe symptom of an ideological infirmity and a bad influence of the Arab surroundings.

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143 See Sorkin, 2002, 240.
144 Ilani, Unpublished, 4.
145 Ibid., 8.
146 Hebrew for "settlement." The term refers to the body of Jewish residents in Palestine, before the establishment of the State of Israel. There is a distinction between the 'Old Yishuv' and the 'New Yishuv.' The Old Yishuv (Hebrew: Ha-Yishuv ha-Yashan; הישוב הישן) were the Jewish communities of the southern Syrian provinces (Palestine) in the Ottoman period, up to the onset of Zionist Aliyah and the consolidation of the New Yishuv by the end of World War I. Between then and 1948, the common term was simply "the Yishuv."
147 See Also Ilani, unpublished, n. 34.

*Hide & Seek* parallels between homosexuality as a sexual deviation and the diversion from the Zionist project and Jewish nationalism.[148] We have seen that Mosse and Boyarin characterize the Zionist project as a transformative course that asks to redeem the diasporic Jewish body from its feminine passivity. Zionism paralleled between the diasporic Jewishness and homosexuality. But by presenting us with interracial relationship with 'the Arab,' Wolman alludes to the Zionist discourse of the deviated sexuality as a colonialist/orientalist discourse, as it was characterized by Edward Said. The oriental subject is characterized by attributes and metaphors that construct an equivalence between him and marginal groups within the Western, colonial society itself: criminals, psychopaths, women, and homosexuals.[149] In the same way, Zionist texts imagined the oriental body according to orientalist perceptions that construct the East as inferior, deviant, and gender-aberrant. As stated by Yosef (2004), "Zionist colonial fantasy projected its own fears of and desires for homosexuality onto the male Mizrahi and Palestinian imagined sexuality and body."[150]

[148] When the children talk about Balaban, one of them mocks him: "he doesn't even look like a human being!"
[149] Said, 1979, 205-207.
[150] Yosef, 2004, 7.

## *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (1987)

Jerusalem is also the locale of Gutman's *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*. This film, produced in 1987, is an adaptation of Yoram Kaniuk's (1930-2013) novel by the same title, published in 1966. Kaniuk's book is a political text, in which the Palmaḥ[151] generation criticizes the heroic mythos of the Zionist ethos. The plot takes place in 1948, during the War of Independence, while the city of the Jerusalem is under siege. A group of wounded soldiers were evacuated to Saint Hieronymus monastery, which is used as a temporary hospital.[152] Hamutal Horowitz (Alona Kimchi), a young woman whose boyfriend was killed in battle, is sent from Tel Aviv to the monastery as a volunteer nurse. She falls in love with Himmo Peraḥ ('Ofer Shikartsi), the most severely wounded soldier; he lost his eyes, and his legs and right arm are amputated. Bandages cover his body due to severe burns. Only his torso, left hand, and mouth are visible. He cannot communicate with his surroundings and repeatedly utters only one phrase: "shoot me, shoot me, shoot me." No one dares to fulfill his wish. Finally, Hamutal injects him a lethal injection in order to end his misery.

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In an interview with Yaron Frid,[153] Gutman declares that "*Himmo* was my only diversion, my only attempt to deal with something else, but also there I didn't [handle it] according to what is appropriate or expected." Although Kaniuk's text has nothing to do

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[151] The Palmaḥ (acronym for Plugot Maḥatz, literaly "Assaulting companies") was the elite fighting force of the Hagganah, the underground army of the Yishuv during the British Mandate in Palestine. It was established in 1941, and by the outbreak of the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 it consisted of over 2,000 men and women in three fighting brigades and auxiliary aerial, naval and intelligence units. With the creation of Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the three Palmaḥ Brigades were disbanded. The Palmaḥ contributed significantly to Israeli culture and ethos, well beyond its military contribution. Its members formed the backbone of the IDF high command for many years, and were prominent in Israeli politics, literature and culture. Yoram Kaniuk was a Palmaḥ member. See Allon, 2007, 603-604.

[152] The filming took place at the Monastery of the Cross in the Valley of the Cross in Western Jerusalem.

[153] Frid, 1991, 40-41.

with homosexuality or queerness, Gutman's film is a 'queer adaptation' of it. The encounter between the young nurse and the emasculated man could never be materialized sexually or erotically; the heterosexual context is only an illusion. Queering the story, Gutman again depicts homosexuality as a fringe existence of its own.[154] As in *Drifting* and *Bar 51*, also in *Himmo* there is a strong sense of siege and the attempts to break out of it and gain recognition as a 'worthy' queer individual. Homosexuality is perceived in *Himmo* as a protest and an expression of individualism. While Kaniuk's protest is against the Zionist ethos of the 1948 generation,[155] Gutman's protest is private in nature. Yet, the two protests merge and in fact, intertwine in three different aspects of otherness. The other of the Zionist heroic ethos is the wounded soldier who is alienated, removed to a remote location and is forgotten within the monastery's walls, while enormous historical events shape the collective narrative outside. The other of the Zionist political project is the ethnic other, the Sephardi subject whose nature and customs do not fit the Ashkenazi regime's agenda. The other of Zionism as heterosexualizing project is the queer, diasporic subject who needs to be oppressed in order for the Zionist project to be successful. The cannons' roar and the Zionist pathos penetrate the monastery's walls and situate Gutman's attitude against the hegemonic, mainstream existence around him in a 'real' historical time and place. Because of the historical context, the homosexual motif could be perceived as merely metaphoric, but actually, it is the same personal cry for authenticity and acknowledgement expressed in *Drifting* and *Bar 51*.

Himmo, as Loshitzky observes, is depicted as the other of the "Zionist (European/Ashkenazi) dream of normalcy."[156] He is the first Oriental Jew to be presented as a literary hero of the War of Independence. A genuine Jerusalemite, he is a descendant

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[154] Several scholars and film critics such as Ne'eman (1987), Loshitzky (1993), and Munk (1997), mention the homosexual motifs of Gutman's cinematic adaptation of Kaniuk's literary text.

[155] "Dor Tashah" in Hebrew (דור תש"ח). As Munk (1997, 4) mentions, "Depicting the War of Independence slaughterhouse, Kaniuk's text blames the administration that is only interested in creating heroic text for the Israeli ethos. They [i.e. the administration] plastered the painful truisms and let them disappear in the abyss of oblivion."

[156] Loshitzky, 1993, 222.

of the Sephardi gentry of the Old Yishuv; he is the other of Elik, a Tel Avivian Sabra who was "born from the sea," the protagonist of Moshe Shamir's *Be-mo Yadav*: *pirke Elik* (1951).[157] Kaniuk's literary text posits the Jerusalem-born 'Sephardic Sabra' against the mythic 'ultimate' Ashkenazi Sabra from Tel Aviv. While Elik represents the New Yishuv, and is taking an active part in the collective effort to establish a new state, Himmo is "an Oriental 'golem' whose family history is flavored with mystical and kabbalistic stories so alien to the pragmatic and secular hopes of the 'Eliks' who fought for the foundation of the state of Israel."[158] Hamutal, the blond Ashkenazi young woman from Tel Aviv rejects the idea of Himmo's friends that she would marry him; a unity is not an option. Instead, his otherness is symbolically annihilated when she administers to him the fatal injection. These acts and the liberation of the monastery by troops from Tel Aviv symbolize the victory of the Zionism over its ethnic other.[159] But the Sephardic, oriental otherness is combined with a homosexual, aesthetic otherness. Loyal to the literary text, Gutman shapes Hamutal as a blond, cold and aloof Ashkenazi woman. Asa Rozencweig (Dov Navon), one of the soldiers, is also part of the Ashkenazi Tel Avivian elite. Himmo, together with his brother Marko (Amos Lavi) who visits him at the hospital, and his best friend Franji (Amiram Gabriel), a childhood friend who fought with him in battle and is hospitalized there as well, are all depicted as 'genuine' Sephardic

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[157] Shamir, 1951. The book tells the heroic life story of Shamir's brother Elik (Eliyahu), a soldier in the Jewish Settlement Police (a police force endorsed and trained by the British administration in Palestine) who was killed in an ambush by Arabs in the events preceding the 1948 war. At the time, the book was considered as a best-seller among the 1948 generation. The famous opening line of the book — "Elik was born from the sea" — is a symbolic expression of Elik's 'Sabra-ness', of a new fresh start which is embodied in his active, muscular physique, and of a complete negation of his parents' 'diaspora-ness'. The book was translated into English in 1970 (Shamir, Moshe. *With his own hands*. Jerusalem, Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1970).
[158] Loshitzky, 1993, 222. Himmo is dubbed "the golem" by the soldiers. In Jewish folklore, a golem is an animated anthropomorphic creature, magically created entirely from inanimate matter (usually out of stone and clay), often to serve its creator. In Hebrew, "golem" stands for "shapeless mass." The Talmud uses the word as "unformed" or "imperfect" and according to Talmudic legend, Adam is called "golem," meaning "body without a soul" for the first 12 hours of his existence (Scholem and Idel, 2007, 735-738). In colloquial Modern Hebrew, 'Golem' refers to an idle, somewhat stupid (or 'moron') person who stands still instead of reacting to the reality around him.
[159] Ibid., 223.

Jerusalemites.[160] Yet, as I show further on, in order to queer the plot for his purposes, Gutman's configuration of Franji's and Asa's characters and his use of certain visual elements and mise–en–scènes (similarly to those in *Drifting* and *Bar 51*) are characterized by theatricality, camp aesthetics and gay sensibility.

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First, there is the monastery itself. Like Robi's apartment in *Drifting* or Apollonia's apartment and the bar in *Bar 51*, it is an enclosed locale, a separate universe that leaves reality outside of its walls. With its thick walls, inner arches and wide staircases, it looks like a haunted castle, and in some of the scenes it appears more as a madhouse than as a hospital. Some of the soldiers are mentally ill, possibly because of traumatic episodes during battle; they frantically sing or laugh aloud and endlessly engage themselves with repetitive acts. Many shots are taken from a low-angle, crows caw and owls hoot while the monastery is covered with smoke from the bombings or with fog, reinforcing the impression of mystery, horror, and surrealism.[161] The atmosphere inside the monastery is claustrophobic; the windows are shut and fortified by sandbags, and most of the scenes take place in one room where all wounded soldiers are gathered. In a time of a temporary respite, the soldiers and staff go out to the balcony or roof, but the outskirts around the monastery are rarely shown; only when graves are dug for the dead. The monastery's spatiality in *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* is similar to that of the outpost in *Yossi & Jagger*; both films take place within an enclosed, claustrophobic locale. But while Gutman's non-Jewish, non-Israeli monastery is the locale where non-conformism is practiced and the consensus is being shaped outside of it, Fox's Israeli military outpost is the locale where

[160] Kaniuk describes Marko as a "primitive noble" and "too Jerusalemite" for Hamutal (Kaniuk, 1966, 77). It should be noted that all three – Himmo, Franji and Marko – bear Sephardi, foreign names, as opposed to the Israeli (some Biblical) names of other characters such as the nurses Hamutal, 'Ivriya and Shoshana and the soldiers Asa, Yoram, Aharon, Matityahu, Nahum and Sha'ul. See also note 177 below in regard to 'Ivriya's name.
[161] Loshitzky, 1993, 224.

the consensual, heteronormative agenda is practiced, and queerness is being distanced away from it.

The artificial, theatrical, and melodramatic elements are 'inserted' into the mise–en–scènes. The inner walls are covered with posters of Hollywood female stars of the 1940's, while Hamutal herself appears as blond and glamorous Hollywood femme fatale. Nun Klara (Alizah Rozen) calls her "the Divine," equating her to Greta Garbo.[162] Similarly to Apollonia's apartment in *Bar 51*, the monastery's rooms are cluttered with kitschy knickknacks and glitzy items: decorative chandelier, a china dove, and statuettes of golden-winged angels. Most of the dialogs are performed in a theatrical, melodramatic manner. This is evident when Franji and Asa playfully 'sit in' for Dr. Abayov (Yossi Gerber), the hospital's manager, in his office and greet Hamutal upon her arrival. Dressed up with his posh crimson gown, Franji welcomes her with a 'royal' hand gesture, while Asa is painting naked girls on his plastered leg. In another scene, Asa performs a funny skit in front of his friends; the soldiers clap their hands and throw confetti at him. Some scenes appear surreal and 'out of context:' two soldiers waltz on the balcony, embracing each other to the sound of a gramophone; a mute little girl, the guard's daughter, strolls around in the corridors, playing with an amputated doll; a group of naked soldiers dance happily, showering themselves with Champagne in celebration of the end of the siege.

The scenes of the waltzing and naked dancing soldiers bear homoerotic undertones. In another scene, when the soldiers say their farewells upon leaving the monastery, one of them is frantically kissing his friend again and again. Overall, one could clearly see that Gutman made sure to use images of young male bodies in all their glory in order to emphasize homoerotic elements. This is also evident in the depiction of Himmo himself – albeit severely wounded, we get to see his bare muscular torso. Many Christian elements are present as well: starting with the monastery itself with its crosses and bells (the main scenes take place in the bell room) and ending with pictures of the Madonna and baby

[162] This brings to mind Gloria Swanson's imagery from *Bar 51*. See above, p. 23.

Jesus on the walls. Nun Klara, covered head to toe with a black costume, is managing the monastery while the nurses appear as a Red Cross staff with their cross embalmed coifs.[163] The guard and his daughter seem like characters from a neo-realistic Italian film; the child befriends a chicken and plays inside the empty graves dug by her Father. He is drunk most of the time and steals medicinal alcohol from the nurse's room.

The whole spectacle in *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* is very 'European,' very 'non-Israeli;' a complete contradiction to the Zionist normalcy that is being performed and shaped outside. But from time to time, the heroic Zionist mainstream manages to penetrate that 'non-Israeli' sphere. During the course of the plot, those 'hegemonic instances' intensify until the climax is reached: the Ashkenazi Hamutal is administering the Sephardic Himmo the fatal injection, the Israeli army ends the siege, and Zionism overcomes its other. Once in a while the soldiers listen to a radio broadcast in which family relatives send their wishes together with a song or a musical piece to their soldier son, brother or uncle. In one instance, we hear Shoshana Damari's voice (1923-2006), the 'mother queen of Hebrew song,' as she performs the song "Yatsanu at" written by Hayim Hefer (1925-2012).[164] Both the song and its writer are identified with the War of Independence; Hefer was a famous songwriter of the Palmah generation, and the song became a soldiers' favorite, as it talks about love, farewell and heroic death in battle. Similarly to Sarah'le Sharon's patriotic voice in *Bar 51*,[165] Damari's 'Zionist voice' penetrates the monastery walls and makes the hegemony present.[166]

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[163] See Loshitzky (1993) on the Christian motifs in *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*.
[164] *We left* [for war] *slowly* (1946). Lyrics by Hayim Hefer, composition by David Zehavi.
[165] See above, p. 20-21.
[166] Shoshana Damari was Yemenite. Although it seems that her Mizrahi origin is secondary to her status as the 'mother queen of Hebrew song,' it could actually be seen as yet another aspect of Damari's voice marked as a 'Zionist voice.' One could argue that her voice represents not only the 1948 generation, but also the assimilative 'melting pot' Zionist agenda, which was an official governmental doctrine at that time. In 1988 Damari was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize. The judges' citation reads, in part: "Shoshana Damari, a daughter of Yemen, has been a part of our history since the days of the state-in-the-making. From an early age …, she won fame as a patriotic singer, earning the status of royalty. … , Shoshana Damari has succeeded in blending East and West, the traditional and the modern, with her warm, deep voice and her dramatic, lyrical personality …" (Shahar, 2009).

One encounters the critique of the Zionist heroic narrative in a few instances throughout the film. One of the soldiers shouts to Franji: "did you hear? Ben-Gurion declared in the radio that there is a state, the state of Israel." Franji responds angrily: "the state of Israel is in Tel Aviv, here we have a siege!" and adds "this is what you called me for?" Yet again, the polarity of Tel Aviv/Jerusalem and the Zionist acts that take place away from the non-Israeli universe is clear. When Asa scolds Franji for asking Hamutal about her fallen boyfriend, he declares that her boyfriend saved his comrades during battle by throwing himself on a grenade and that he [Hamutal's boyfriend] is "much more of a hero than you" (i.e. Franji); "how so?" asks Franji, and Asa responds: "because he is much more dead than you are!" In a similar scene, Asa complains that "since Himmo arrived, we are not even considered properly wounded; we seem as spoiled [soldiers] near him." When Hamutal states that the wounded soldiers should be respected, as they "gave their hands and legs" for the state, Dr. Abayov abruptly interrupts her: "They wanted a state, so they gave!" Thus, in order to be a 'real' hero, one should die a heroic death in battle or 'at least' be severely wounded. If the subjects want to be part of the heroic national narrative, they need to give their blood for it, they need to be part of the national effort, part of the struggle.

But as mentioned above, Kaniuk's critique of the Zionist narrative is intertwined with Gutman's private cry for acknowledgement. Gutman is using the historical trauma of the War of Independence for his own private agenda. In a way, his *Himmo* is not about the historical event of 1948, but about the 'War of Independence' of Gutman himself – a cry for authenticity and acknowledgement that is expressed by queering the original story. Individualism and deviation are threaded throughout the film and are mainly evident in the relationship of Franji and Asa and the configuration of their characters. The other is not only the ethnic, political or ideological other, but also the queer other of the heterosexual hegemony. The power relations between Franji and Asa embody Boyarin's equation discussed above, as they posit Jewishness, diaspora, and queerness against Israeliness, normalcy, and heterosexuality.

Franji and Asa are best friends; their beds in the bell room are adjacent to each other, and they spend all their time together. Franji was Himmo's best friend back in Jerusalem before the war, from childhood throughout the war. Back then Franji and Himmo were equals, both good looking men, strolling in the streets of Jerusalem, picking on girls, and later on fighting together in battle. Both emanate from the Old Yishuv; both are genuine Sephardic, dark-skinned 'exotic' men. But now Himmo is a "golem",[167] Franji is wounded, and they can't exercise their masculinity anymore. Franji has a new best friend – Asa. Ostensibly, Asa and Franji are not equals; in this relationship, Franji is the master while Asa is the slave.[168] Franji is the warm, un-educated Mizrahi manly man, while Asa is the childish, white Tel Avivian Ashkenazi, who uses big words and listens to classical music.[169] But as I show below, these two characters are on the same part of the equation, as they join each other in a common quest for self-expression of their otherness.

Asa's character represents the Ashkenazi elite. Like Hamutal Horowitz, he bears a salient Ashkenazi name (Rozencweig). His first name, also similarly to Hamutal's, has a Biblical/Israeli connotation.[170] He is skinny, pale, gentle, and has 'baby face.' His character is posited as a negative to that of Franji. Asa bears feminine manners,[171] has a child-like voice and yields to Franji, who calls him "my slave." Franji is depicted as a 'noble primitive' who cannot articulate his thoughts clearly (he asks Asa to speak for him in several occasions), a virile man with an authoritative voice. He is the only one among the soldiers with a flamboyant crimson gown that most of the time is wide open, showing off his dark-skinned manly chest. Franji is also the only one among the soldiers and nurses with a 'foreign,' non-Israeli name.[172] The etymology of his name alludes to the

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[167] See above, n. 158.
[168] Loshitzky (1993, 221) elaborates on the masochistic interpretation of this binary.
[169] He talks about Eros and Thanatos (referring to Hamutal and Himmo's relationship), and his favorite musical piece is Bach's requiem (also known as Mass in B minor).
[170] Asa was the third king of the Kingdom of Judah and the fifth king of the House of David. Hamutal was the mother of Zedekiah (Tsidkiyahu), the last king of Judah before the destruction of the kingdom by Babylon. See also Loshitzky, 1993, 228, n. 24 about the etymology of 'Hamutal.'
[171] This is mainly evident in the skit scene when he wiggles his hips like a belly dancer.
[172] See also above, n. 160.

oppositional binary of Sephardi-Old Yishuv/Ashkenazi-New Yishuv. As mentioned by Loshitzky,[173] this Arabic name is actually a "distortion of the Arabic word "fransawi" which means Frenchman. In the northern Levant (Syria and Lebanon) the expression 'à la Franji' (a derivation of the French 'à la française') meant 'European-like' and was used as a compliment indicating having good taste in dress, style, etc. In Israel, during the '50s and early '60s, the expression 'à la Franji' was used in Sabra (mostly Ashkenazi) slang to derogatorily describe Oriental Jews who paid attention to their appearance and whose style was not in line with the more casual one of the "mythological Sabra."[174]

In fact, Asa and Franji are placed by Gutman on the same side of the equation. The ethnic (Ashkenazi/Mizrahi) and ideological (Zionism/Levantism) polarities are only on the surface, while Gutman reveals an additional, different set of polarities by positioning heterosexuality and Israeliness against homosexuality and the diaspora. Asa and Franji seem as lovers. Their physical homoerotic intimacy is expressed in various scenes when they sit together, curled up on Franji's bed while playing cards or listening to the radio. In the theatrical greeting scene, Franji is sitting in Dr. Abayov's chair while his plastered leg is up on the desk. We first see only him, but suddenly Asa's head rises from beneath the desk, almost as if he was intimately occupied with Franji. It appears that he actually was occupied with drawing naked women on Franji's plaster. At night, when the bombings are heard from afar, and the nightmarish soldiers are trying to fall asleep, Franji asks Asa to sing him a lullaby. Asa starts chanting the popular Yiddish lullaby "*Rozhinkes mit Mandlen*" (*Raisins and Almonds*)[175] and Franji joins his singing. The two others of Zionism and of the Israeliness that is being shaped outside of their enclosed cosmos, join together in a defiant act against the Zionist/Israeli normalcy. Asa, the diasporic pale Ashkenazi, European Jew and Franji, the masculine Sephardic, Levantine 'Arab Jew' –

[173] Loshitzky, 1993, 228, n. 21.
[174] Moreover, as opposed to the other main characters, Franji bears only a first name; yet, another hint to his ethnic status inferiority.
[175] Written and composed by Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), a Yiddish poet, dramatist, and composer, founder of the modern Yiddish theater. The song was written for Goldfaden's romantic operetta *Shulamis* (1880) as a folksong and since then gained enormous popularity among Ashkenazi Jews (Liptzin, Berkowitz, and Bayer, 2007, v.7, 703-704).

both queer in their own way – comfort themselves in front of the rampant normalcy with Yiddish, a language that encompasses all-things-diaspora.[176] Boyarin's equation is clear; Gutman posits queerness, otherness, and diasporic existence against heterosexuality, normalcy, and the hegemonic Zionism/Israeliness.

The cry for acknowledgement by the hegemony intensifies towards to end of the film, when the soldiers and the monastery/hospital staff celebrates the end of the siege. Asa is drunk and bursts in a tirade against the regime in Tel Aviv: "If the decision-making administration would have come to the front instead of sitting and dealing with the shape of the nation, we would not have had all this shame and disgrace [of the long siege]." Klara asks him: "So the decision makers are also against you?" and Asa responds: "Yes, of course!" Following this scene, Kanuiuk's critique on the Zionist administration by an Ashkenazi soldier turns into Gutman's critique on the Zionist heterosexual normalcy by a queer subject. The soldier Aharon (Shai Kapon) gifts his sweetheart, nurse 'Ivriyah (Sivan Shavit),[177] with a neckless and they embrace and kiss each other passionately. Couples of soldiers and nurses dance together to the sound of a slow dance music.[178] Hamutal dances with Dr. Abayov and refuses to dance with Asa because he is too drunk. Marko joins the party and Hamutal kisses him sensually. Asa is disgusted by this saccharine heterosexual spectacle; infuriated, he removes the record from the gramophone, breaks it to pieces, and puts another one instead – Bach's requiem. "Now you will listen to *my* music!" he demands furiously, threatening those around him with a fork. 'Ivriyah giggles: "you castrated, we've had enough of you!" and Shoshana (Yarden Ross) adds: Asa, you [are] mentally sick, hand me the fork right away!" Asa gets even angrier; he throws the fork, snatches a rifle from one of the soldiers, and threatens again:

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[176] Yiddish was considered an inferior language in British mandate Palestine and later on in Israel during the 1950's and 1960's, as it symbolized everything that came 'from there', i.e. Europe, the (Ashkenazi) diaspora and the Holocaust. See Ya'el Chaver's work on this topic: *What must be forgotten: the survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

[177] Her name translates to "Hebrew [woman];" yet, another subtle symbolism of the Zionist heterosexual hegemony.

[178] *Bésame Mucho* (*Kiss me a lot*), written by Consuelo Velázquez (1916-2005).

"Now you will listen to *my* music!" Hamutal approaches him and asks: "I know you're not going to shoot, so what is all this performance for?" Asa responds: "For sanitizing all of this filth with some Bach."

This powerful scene summarizes well the equation. The homosexual subject is sieged in his unique world and is threatened by the heterosexual hegemony. Moreover, the queer, diasporic Jew – that abnormal, castrated (read 'emasculated,' 'homosexual'), mentally ill other of the Zionist project – is threatened by the heterosexual, Zionist/Israeli normalcy. Asa perceives the reality around him as filthy and inferior; he uses big words and listens to 'superior' kind of music. He is characterized as an elitist, non-Sabra, 'cultured' European. At the same time, he is on the lower end of the scale of normalcy; those 'healthy Israelis' around him perceive him is abnormal, sick homosexual.

When Hamutal finally takes the rifle away from Asa's hands, he yells at her: "Now Himmo's corpse is being cremated in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom,[179] while you are waltzing with a Baboon![180] You are not noble-minded! Neither is Marko! Only Franji." Asa whispers the last two words to himself, as if he acknowledges he was just defeated. Not only that his queer voice ("my music") cannot be heard, but he cannot practice his queer love with his friend. Franji, the Sephardic queer, is completely absent from this last scene of the film. He stays in the bell room, mourns the death of his best friend Himmo, and refuses to take part in the party. It seems that by positioning Asa by himself in the party scene, Gutman marks his otherness as an expression of the queer individual who is 'doomed' for solitude and social isolation away from the mainstream. While the party celebrates the victory of Israeliness and the national (heterosexual) project, the queer subject still remains within the boundaries of his own existential siege.

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[179] A valley outside the old city of Jerusalem. In the Bible, the site was initially where followers of various pagan gods sacrificed their children by fire. Thereafter it was deemed to be cursed. "Gehenna" is derived from this name place.

[180] African monkey. "Baboon" is used here as a derogatory attribute to describe inferior, un-educated Sephardi/Mizrahi man. See Rozental, 2005, 34.

## Conclusion

Similarly to *Drifting* and *Bar 51*, both *Hide & Seek* and *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* portray an attempt of the individual to separate himself from the larger social array beyond his individual existence. Balaban refuses to take part in the national struggle while he tries to 'pass' as a heterosexual man. He nonchalantly 'performs' as a 'real' man, bragging about his past as a ghaffir (guard) in the Jewish Settlement Police. In the last scene of the film, he is seen with a beard as if he tries to conceal his otherness and 'blend' in the surroundings. Asa, on the other hand, does try to pass, but to demand an acknowledgement of his otherness from a society that glorifies normalcy, militarism, and statehood. Both films parallel between Zionism's abnormal other (Arab, homosexual) and the abnormal queer Jew, who joins this other, and by doing so, exemplify Boyarin's equation. By placing homosexual interracial relationship between a Jew and an Arab at the center of its plot, *Hide & Seek* parallels between homosexuality as a sexual deviation, and "meeting the [Zionism's] enemy." In *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*, the other is not only the ethnic, political or ideological other, but also the queer other of the heterosexual hegemony. The film posits Jewishness, diaspora, and queerness against Israeliness, normalcy, and heterosexuality.

## Chapter 5: Between Gutman and Fox

In this chapter I examine the cinematic spread between Gutman's non-conformist treatment and Fox's conservative view of homosexuality, and the possible reasons for this change of course. I briefly discuss additional works by Fox: his less known short feature *Time Off* (1990), as well as two of his 'blockbusters:' *Walk on Water* (2004) and *The Bubble* (2006). I also identify several less researched films on the scale between Gutman and Fox: Ayelet Menachemi's *Crows* (1987), Nadav Gal's *A Different War* (2003), Ya'ir Hochner's *Good Boys* (2005), and Mysh Rozanov's *Watch over Me* (2010). I show that in regard to its treatment of queer subjectivity, *Time Off* is an exception among all other works by Fox. While in all of his other films he presents a homonormative agenda, in *Time Off* Fox presents a subversive possibility of queerness which is practiced within the 'ultimate' masculine Zionist establishment – the military. Menachemi's *Crows* is similar to Gutman's films, as it creates a secluded queer universe within the boundaries of the hegemony. Gal's *A Different War* and Hochner's *Good Boys* signify a new paradigm in queer cinema in Israel, as their queerness does not subject itself to misery, nor does it subject itself to normalcy. Hochner and Gal portray a queer subject who is equal among others in the Israeli heteronormative society. Rozanov, however, depicts an aggressive discourse of a racist and homophobic society that cannot tolerate its other. Boyarin's equation is clearly articulated in *A Different War* and *Watch over Me*; both posit homosexuality and queerness as a threatening element to the heteronormative, masculine Zionist/Israeli narrative.

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As mentioned above, Wolman's *Hide & Seek* (1979) was the first feature film to position a homosexual man as one of its main protagonists. Despite the fact the relationships between David Balaban and his nameless Arab lover are never fully expressed in a sexual intercourse (they are briefly seen shirtless at the end of the film, caressing each other), Wolman's film stood out as unusual among other films of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Other films of that time, like those directed by Ze'ev Revah or George 'Obadiah, portray a homosexual man who is either depicted as a marginal, not developed character, or as a ridiculed protagonist who bears effeminate attributes. In all of these films, homosexual desire is suggested or hinted upon, but is never consummated.[181] Blatant portrayal of homosexual sexuality in Israeli cinema first appeared in Gutman's *Drifting* (1983). The film was praised by local and international critics,[182] condemned by the local Israeli gay community, and ignored by the general public.[183] Ron Asulin's short feature *Tsel Aher* (*A Different Shadow*), which was also produced in 1983, portrays a love story of two men, while one of them comes out to his family. Although Asulin's film was commissioned by the Israeli state TV channel 1 – the only TV channel at that time, then to be considered as the State mouthpiece – it was eventually banned by its administration due to its "subject matter."[184]

## *Crows* (1987)

Gutman's *Bar 51* (1985) and Menachemi's *Crows* (1987) were the only commercially distributed films in the late 1980s that dealt with questions of sexual identity and depicted queer lived experience. Made as Menachemi's graduation project for her film direction degree,[185] *Crows* was screened a few weeks in Tel Aviv and got critical acclaim.[186] Similarly to *Bar 51*, it portrays the marginal life of a group of outcasts in Tel Aviv. Its plot tells the story of Margalit (Gili ben Ozilio), a runaway 'village girl' and her life among a commune of queer teenagers, using downtown Tel Aviv as a decadent background. In *Crows*, the enclosed cosmos is a rundown and messy apartment, shared by Daniel (Itsik Nini), Yuval (Bo'az Turjeman),[187] and Eli (Doron Barbi). They sleep all

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[181] See Cohen, 2012, 10-15.
[182] Uchovsky, 1986; Shamgar, 1987; Frid, 1991.
[183] See above, p. 3.
[184] Cohen, 2012, 15. Gutman's short *Drifting* (1981) was also banned by Israeli TV.
[185] At the Beit Zvi School of the Performing Arts in Ramat Gan, Israel. It is the same school from which 'Amos Gutman graduated.
[186] Hadar, 2007.
[187] Bo'az Turgeman also plays Effi in *Drifting*.

day, lead nocturnal life and occasionally work as dancers in murky night clubs or fashion shows. There is a constant commotion in their apartment; friends and acquaintances come and go in a non-stop parade of flamboyant, chatty transvestite gay men. Margalit is astonished to see their way of life. In a voice-over, she comments: "I never really knew what homosexuals are, but suddenly, somehow, it seems like the most logical thing in the world." She slowly becomes one of the group and falls in love with Daniel, a depressive teenager who routinely threatens to commit suicide. When he finally succeed in his quest and dies because of an overdose, the commune disintegrates and she leaves it.

Similarly to Gutman's 'non-Israeli,' 'European' mise-en-scène in *Bar 51*, Menachemi's Tel Aviv is a somber, decadent locale. As Cohen (2012) points out, "Menachemi depicted her protagonists' existence as the antithesis of the fundamental principles of Israeli society."[188] It is presented as the only place where queer life in 1980s Israel could take place, as it is positioned contrary to the moshav (a cooperative agricultural community, similar to a kibbutz)[189] from which Margalit has escaped. Her mother got depressed "because of her boring life in the moshav" and committed suicide, and her father abandoned her. As Cohen notes: "the moshav and the Zionist mentality it symbolizes … is rendered dangerous, as it rejects those who do not fit in the dominant culture … and pushes them to either suicide or escape."[190] After she joins the queer commune, Margalit changes her 'moshavnik' appearance, dresses up and changes her name to Maggie. Like Zara-Sarah and Aranjuez-Yisrael in *Bar 51*, Margalit-Maggie re-invents herself within an enclosed world of outcasts like her, away from the Israeli reality, where queer life "seems like the most logical thing in the world."

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[188] Cohen, 2012, 32.
[189] The moshavim are similar to kibbutzim with an emphasis on community labor. They were designed as part of the Zionist state-building program following the Yishuv. See above, n. 146.
[190] Cohen, 2012, 34.

As stated above, the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a shift in the visibility of gay men and women in the Israeli cultural and political reality. This shift brought with it a proliferation of liberal urban culture that branded Tel Aviv as "a city without a break;"[191] a bustling, secular, hedonistic metropolis where gay men and women can express their queerness openly and maintain civil life 'like everybody else.' The urban cultural infrastructure was expanded through the establishment of gay bars and night clubs, gay-themed festivals and gay parades.[192] This reality was bolstered by the development of the 'culture of the local weeklies' ('tarbut ha-mekomonim') – a journalistic platform that became an alternative to the established dailies. These weeklies reported on marginal, local topics, using a 'thin', 'lightheaded' language, emphasizing the concerns of the individual over those of the collective. Offering an alternative to the seriousness of the established newspapers, this 'new journalism,' situating Tel Aviv as an exciting, hip urban center and promoting new individualistic awareness, "created a cultural and social scene with a distinctive discourse"[193] which fitted in well with the nascent Israeli gay culture and lifestyle.[194]

One of the journalists most identified with the Tel Avivian "tarbut ha-mekomonim" is Gal Uchovsky: a well-known scriptwriter and TV personality. The films he authored together with Fox, his journalistic work, and TV art and culture shows, all promoted and stressed the notion of normalcy and casualness about gay life in Israel. As noted above,[195] Fox and Uchovsky are responsible for a corpus of work that promotes 'being like everybody else,' adhering to heteronormative agenda. Their works suggest homosexual existence that can materialize only at the expense of its queerness. Surprisingly enough, Fox's first film, short feature titled *Time off* (1990), is his only work that subverts the

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[191] "'Ir le-lo hafsaka" – a slogan coined by the late mayor of Tel Aviv, Shelomo 'Chich' Lahat (1927-2014), in order to promote its vitality as the largest metropolitan in Israel with a rich cultural and intellectual life.
[192] See http://www.glbt.org.il/he/history/articles.php?articleID=408.
[193] Cohen, 2012, 37.
[194] Ibid., 36-37; Klein, 1999.
[195] See above, n. 92.

Israeli militaristic ethos and suggests homosexual existence that operates within the hegemony but does not yield to it.

## *Time Off* (1990)

*Time Off* takes place in 1982, just before the first Lebanon War, and tells the story of Yonatan (Hanokh Re'im), a combat soldier in the IDF who struggles with his sexual identity, while his friends in the platoon are picking up on girls and are eager to "go to Lebanon and kill Arabs." The platoon is awarded an afternoon time-off in Jerusalem on its way to Lebanon. Yonatan aimlessly strolls the streets and finds himself in Independence Park, a gay cruising locale.[196] While passively watching the activity, he suddenly notices Erez, the platoon commander (Gil Frank) hooking up with a man. He follows both men to the public bathrooms and secretly witnesses their sexual act. After they leave, Yonatan realizes that Erez's officer identity card was dropped on the bathrooms' floor. He picks it up, hurries back to the meeting point, but is late for the roll call. As a punishment for being late, Erez commands him to perform push-ups; he does not let him stop unless Yonatan would tell him why he was late. Yonatan refuses to respond, as he afraid an explanation would reveal both his and Erez's secret. But after a while he cannot take it anymore and shows Erez his lost officer ID card. Erez grabs it without saying a word and asks Yonatan to go onto the bus.

The homoerotic tension between Yonatan and Erez is hinted upon throughout the plot. Yosef analyzes the use of sound and voice in the film, showing how homosexual subjectivity is constructed by a 'disembodied queer voice.' He identifies four key scenes by which this voice is emphasized. In the first scene, Erez 'hypnotizes' the platoon with his soft, caressing voice as part of a training punishment, while the soldiers are lying on the ground with their eyes shut, and thus "constructing for the soldiers an auto-erotic

[196] Similar to Independence Park in Tel Aviv (see above, p. 20) also the Jerusalemite cruising scene takes place in a park by the same name.

narcissist fantasy that also produces for Yonatan a homoerotic pleasure, as he moves his hand in the direction of his groin."[197] The second scene takes place in the bus, when the soldiers do their way to Jerusalem. Yonatan plays on his guitar *Love song for the sea*,[198] while all his friends are singing along. Played and sung by Yonatan, the song is re-appropriated as a homosexual voice. Erez is the only one with his headphones on, but he turns the volume down so he could listen to Yonatan's voice without taking part in the singing. A third key scene is in the public bathrooms: Yonatan listens to Erez's voice while he moans and groans during the sexual act; Erez does not see him, and he only sees Erez's red paratrooper boots beneath the stall's wall. The last key scene that also ends the film takes place when the bus does its way up north. All soldiers but Erez and Yonatan are asleep. *Love song for the sea* is being played on the radio. Erez turns the volume up and says, without looking at Yonatan: "Do you hear that, Yonatan? Do you hear me, Yonatan?"

In each of those four key scenes, the disembodied queer voice constructs homosexual subjectivity by sound and text. Moreover, by re-appropriating military items such as Erez's red paratrooper boots or his officer ID card, these objects gain homosexual subjectivity, representing not only a national, military identity, but also a homosexual identity. By doing so, Fox "reveals the homoerotic narrative which was concealed by the Zionist hegemony."[199] As Yosef points out, "the last scene of the film represents a mutual identification between the two men … through the disembodied queer voice, [which] envelopes the bodies of Erez and Yonatan." That queer voice embraces the "bodies of the other dozing soldiers, listening to the music, laying their heads on their comrades' shoulders. Echoing in the bus, the disembodied queer voice homoeroticizes the entire military space, challenging the fixity of male homosocial military identity." Thus, the

[197] Yosef, 2004, 159.
[198] *Zemer ahavah la-yam* (1953). Lyrics, Refa'el Eli'az; composition, Sasha Argov.
[199] Yosef, 2010, 182.

homoerotic narrative "allows a vast array of possibilities that bear male desire, but are not necessarily homosexual."[200]

* * *

Although *Time Off* constructs homosexual subjectivity that undermines the Israeli heterosexual military hegemony, it seems as an 'exception that does not prove the rule,' once compared to the rest of Fox's corpus of work.[201] Films such as *Ba'al Ba'al Lev* (*Gotta Have Heart*, 1997), *Yossi & Jagger* (2002), *Walk on water* (2004), *The Bubble* (2006), and *Yossi* (2012) — all convey an agenda that joins the heterosexual national consensus. As was stated above, the sexual politics in these films suggests that homosexual men should join the national hegemonic space while ignoring their queerness. This is evidenced not only in *Yossi & Jagger* and *Yossi*, but also in other films in Fox's corpus. Yosef (2004) points out, for example, that *Gotta Have Heart* is "an attempt … to ally with and to be part of the Ashkenazi middle-class consensus and the national ideology."[202] Telling the story of two Ashkenazi homosexual men and their search for love, the film "produce and enforces Ashkenazi gay normative [i.e., homonormative] identity through the repetition of a colonial fantasy that confines Mizrahi men to a rigid set of ethnic roles and identities."[203]

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[200] Ibid.
[201] See also above, n. 95.
[202] Yosef, 2004, 166.
[203] Ibid. Yosef elaborates further on the problems in the representation of Mizrahi gay men in *Gotta Have Heart* as well as in Fox's TV series *Florentine* (1997). He also identifies "ethnic disavowal" in Gutman's *Bar 51*, claiming that Gutman "creates Ashkenaziness as a norm." See Yosef, 2010, 137-143. See also my discussion above regarding the construction of Mizrahi music as inferior in *Yossi* (chapter 3), and the Ashkenazi/Sephardi binary in *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* (chapter 4).

## *Walk on Water* (2004)

In *Walk on Water*, Eyal (Lior Ashkenazi), an Israeli Mossad[204] agent, a second generation holocaust survivor, rough macho man, is charged with a mission to search for and kill a Nazi war criminal. He befriends the Nazi criminal's grandchildren – Pia (Caroline Peters), and her brother Axel (Knut Berger) – in order to get closer to his target and complete his task. As the plot progresses, Eyal discovers that Axel is a gay man, marries Pia, and retires from service. In his emotional journey, Eyal transforms from a cold, militaristic character, into a loving, sensitive family man. Various topics are intertwined in this film: memory and trauma of the Holocaust, relationships between Israelis and Germans, homosexuality, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Referring to Eyal's killing mission as a redemption of his 'feminine', diasporic, Jewish Holocaust survivor father from his status as a victim, Yosef (2010) analyzes *Walk on Water* as "an appropriation of the traumatic memory of the Holocaust in order to create the new Israeli masculinity. The re-invention of the heterosexual masculinity as sensitive, open and allegedly more liberal, is done at the cost of eliminating its subversive, 'feminine' potential."[205] Thus, Eyal has to kill the memory of his father as a feminine, weak victim, by doing what his father could not have done — killing the Nazi criminal. In this regard, "the film reproduces and preserves the heteronormative Zionist politics that aimed to cure and amend the Jewish diasporic effeminacy, through a fantasy of a new, proud and heterosexual Jewish masculinity."[206]

*Walk on Water* embraces heteronormative agenda and portrays some of its characteristics as signs of mental and physical health. At the beginning of the film, after Eyal's wife commits suicide, she leaves him a note, saying "he kills everybody around him." At the end of the film, Eyal chooses life over death; he quits his job in the Mossad (in itself a

[204] Literally meaning 'the Institute', short for 'Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations,' the Mossad is the national intelligence agency of Israel.
[205] Yosef, 2010, 225.
[206] Ibid.

symbol of an aggressive ethos), becomes a proud father to a newborn, after his marriage with Pia (a notion of a 'healthy,' heterosexual reproduction),[207] and moves with his new family to a Kibbutz (an epitome of the Zionist project). Eyal's journey is now complete, as he reached a healthy matrimony, parenthood, and heterosexual normalcy. However, the two homosexual characters in the film, Axel and Rafik (Yousef Sweid), a Palestinian man who has a love affair with Axel, cannot join the happy-ending. Both are marked as 'feminine,' non-Jewish, non-Israeli others. Moreover, as Cohen (2012) adds, homosexuality is "displaced from the Jewish-Israeli body to those of Judaism's and Israel archenemies, namely the Palestinian and the German."[208]

## *The Bubble* (2006)

Similarly to the homosexual protagonists in *Yossi & Jagger* and *Walk on Water*, also those in *The Bubble* do not experience a happy-end; not only are they 'displaced' from their actual existence (they die in the last scene), but they are also stripped of their sexual identity.[209] Depicting a tragic Romeo & Juliet-esque interracial love story between No'am (Ohad Knoller), an Israeli IDF reservist, and Ashraf (Yousef Sweid), a Palestinian young man, the plot moves back and forth between Tel Aviv and Nablus (a city in the Palestinian Authority), situating these two geographic locales with an orientalist "positional superiority of the west" in mind.[210] Nablus is depicted as an uncivilized, "medieval"[211] locale, from which Hamas[212] suicide bombers stem, and Ashraf could be murdered by a family member if his homosexuality would be revealed. Tel Aviv is a

[207] Eyal and Pia name their baby Tom; a name which means 'innocence', 'naivety', or 'purity' in Hebrew. Similarly to the young and 'pure' Tom in *Yossi*, it could be interpreted as a sign for a new, 'healthy' beginning.
[208] Cohen, 2012, 118.
[209] Friedman, 2008, 206.
[210] Ibid., 203.
[211] Ibid.
[212] A Palestinian Islamic organization, with an associated military wing (Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades). Al-Qassam Brigades militants were among the armed groups that launched both military-style attacks and suicide bombings against Israeli civilian and military targets during the Second Intifada (Al-Aqsa Intifada) between 2000 and 2005.

hedonist, free-spirited, liberal and secular urban metropolitan, where young [Ashkenazi!] gay men lead their life freely.[213] After many twists in the plot, realizing he could not lead a homosexual life neither in Tel Aviv nor in Nablus, Ashraf becomes a suicide bomber, and explodes himself together with his Jewish lover in the middle of Tel Aviv.

In what Morag calls a "self-centered gay fantasy,"[214] Fox links, yet again, between homosexuality and death, while constructing problematic ethnic and sexual discourses. The film "denies the reality of the occupation and ideologically makes it 'enlightened.'"[215] The cheerful, worry-free Israeli protagonists (No'am and his roommates) are given a privileged, superior position while the suppressed, closeted Arab undergoes a process of 'gay-ization' under their supervision. They give him shelter in their apartment, make sure he gets a job, and manage his "passing rituals – changing his name, biography, attire, accent, bodily gesture, and lifestyle."[216] In one occasion, when No'am is saddened after Ashraf had to flee from the Israeli police back to Nablus, they manage to go to his house, carelessly outing him to his family. By this 'forced' gay liberation, they deny the occupation through the semi-colonial act of gay-ization. Moreover, Morag rightly notes that the film does not present the suicide bomber as a radical fundamentalist Muslim, but rather as an individual whose sexuality is repressed. Once Ashraf realizes he cannot join the "sexual celebration of the Israeli white gay,"[217] and his options are either marrying a woman, or being murdered because of his sexuality, he chooses to blow himself up within the center of the peaceful Israeli 'bubble.' Thus, the film projects "gay-ization and the violence of the occupation on the destructiveness of the Palestinian suicide terrorist, while avoiding any subversive attitude towards the (ethnic or sexual) Israeli occupational order."[218]

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[213] Hence, "the bubble," – A prevalent reference in the Israeli media to Tel Aviv as a "hedonistic haven for indifferent people." (Cohen, 2012, 119). Another common term with the same notion is 'the State of Tel Aviv' ('medinat Tel Aviv').
[214] Morag, 2010, 950.
[215] Ibid., 942.
[216] Ibid., 943.
[217] Ibid., 950.
[218] Ibid.

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The wide acceptance, both locally and internationally, of Fox's and Uchovsky's works, as well as the agenda demonstrated in these works, illustrate well the notion of 'pinkwashing:' the appropriation of GLBTQ rights by commercial corporations or governments as an indicator of modernity and liberalism and as a smokescreen for questionable, oppressive practices. In the case of Israel, this notion has to do with its branding as the 'only democracy in the Middle East,' or by promoting Tel Aviv as the 'gay capital of the Middle East' and as a top gay tourist destination. By doing so, the Israeli government diverts both local and international attention away from the military occupation and violations against Palestinians both in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Thus, the liberal, homonormative acceptance of the GLBTQ community is used as an 'outlet' by a racist, conservative, militaristic administration, allowing it to ignore the human rights of Palestinians (or other minorities such as African refugees), and continue practicing an oppressive and discriminative agenda.[219] Films such as *The Bubble* and *Walk on Water* demonstrate well this agenda, as they deny the military occupation, not allowing their Palestinian protagonists any meaningful personal or political existence neither on their land nor within Israel. Both Ashraf and Rafik are doomed to disappear from the Israeliness' sight, in order for the occupation and the Israeli 'gay-friendly' human right discourse to continue and coexist side-by-side.

A similar agenda is portrayed in Michael Mayer's *'Alatah* (*Out in the Dark*, 2012). In yet another Romeo and Juliet-esque Jewish-Arab love story, Ro'i (Mikha'el Aloni) is an Israeli well-off lawyer from Tel Aviv, and Nimr (Nicholas Jacob) is a Palestinian student from Ramallah. Nimr has no choice but to illegally cross the border in order to practice his homosexuality in liberal Israel. They meet in a gay bar in Tel Aviv and fall in love. Nimr's family is portrayed as repressive, conservative and homophobic while Ro'i's

[219] Schulman, 2012; Puar, 2013; Gross, 2013.

Ashkenazi, 'white' family is progressive and liberal. When Nimr meets Ro'i's family over dinner, Ro'i 'teaches' him how to eat Sushi with chopsticks ("Do you need a pitta with that?" asks Ro'i). While the film does critique the Shabak's (the Israeli General Security Service) violent practice of threatening homosexual Palestinian collaborators with forced outing to their family, it presents an agenda that allows the same practice to continue. As it turns out, Nimr's brother is a political activist who is responsible for murdering homosexual collaborators in the West Bank. Outed by his brother, Nimr is shunned by his family and is 'exiled' to Israel. But once in Tel Aviv, he is chased by the Shabak, threatened to be sent back to Ramallah unless he becomes a collaborator. Ro'i, torn between his love and his professional ethics, takes advantage of his family's contacts with a mega criminal and illegally smuggles his Palestinian lover out of the country. Thus, while *Out in the Dark* is promoted both as a "political and societal commentary" and a "romantic story,"[220] it presents a corrupt and hypocrite Israeli administration. On one hand, Israel embraces local gay rights in order to 'score points' in the international arena, but on the other hand turns its back to Palestinian gays, allowing its security service to take advantage of their impossible situation. Eventually, Nimr's destiny is similar to that of Ashraf's: he cannot practice his homosexuality neither in his home nor in Israel and is being forced to choose either death or exile.[221]

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Reviewing the Israeli cinematic crop of the last few decades, one can identify additional films that deal with a variety of topics that have to do with homosexuality and gay lived experience in Israel. Films such as Gutman's *Amazing Grace* (1992) and Wolman's *Yadayim Keshurot* (*Tied Hands*, 2006), for example, deal with homosexuality and AIDS.

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[220] See http://outinthedarkthemovie.com.

[221] Nimr is smuggled to France on a private yacht in the dead of night. It seems that this ironic ending of the plot — while the homosexual Arab is 'exiled' to Europe — symbolizes well a Zionist wishful thinking: not only replacing the Arab with the Jew, but also, and similarly to the destiny of Fox's protagonists (Rafik, Ashraf, Tom and Yossi), removing the queer element away from the Zionist land.

Tawfiq Abu Wa'el's *Yomano shel Zonah* (*A Male Prostitute Diary,* 2001) and Ya'ir Hochner's *Good Boys* (2005) deal with male prostitution. Hochner also directed *Antarctica* (2008) – a 'feel good' queer romantic comedy that tells the story of a group of gay men and women in Tel Aviv. Ya'ir Ne'eman's *Shelakh li Mal'akh* (*Send me an Angel,* 2003) is a short feature, "light-hearted comic drama that tells the story of a young man and a rent boy (prostitute) he invites to his house on his birthday."[222] The growing visibility of queer minorities in the mainstream media and the increased political activity of the GLBTQ community in the beginning of the 21st century in Israel, were the catalyst for the public visibility of groups that were often secluded or mistreated, such as Jewish religious gay men and women, or transgender people.[223] At the same time, the proliferation of local film schools in the last two decades brought with it a new generation of directors who were teenagers in the 1990s, and thus, were exposed to a more liberal and accepting environment than before.

Some of the short feature films which were directed in the last few years by film studies graduates depict a personal narrative that has to do with emotional self-discovery and struggle in regard to the protagonist's sexual identity or coming out. Others posit homosexual subjectivity oppositional to an establishment or hegemony – be it social, sexual, political, or religious. Among those, I highlight below two short features with a

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[222] Cohen, 2012, 177.

[223] Hayim Elbaum's short feature *Ve-Ahavta* (*And Thou Shalt Love,* 2007) is the first film in Israel to deal with sexual identity of a religious homosexual man. It tells the story of a young students at a Yeshivat Hesder (higher education program which combines Talmudic studies with military service in the IDF), his deliberations and dilemmas regarding his homosexuality, the conflict it has with his religious belief, and the unreciprocated love he feels for one of his peers. Hayim Tabakman's long feature *Ena'yim Pekuhot* (*Eyes Wide Open,* 2009) deals with a love affair between two homosexual ultra-orthodox men (one of them is married to a woman), and the implications it has on their life in a conservative religious community in Jerusalem. Other short features made recently on this topic are Ya'akov Ben-'Eli's *Kibui Orot* (*Lights Out*, 2013) and Nadav Mish'ali's *Le-Ehov be-Koshi* (*Barely in Love*, 2013). See also Gil'ad Padva's *Gay Martyrs, Jewish Saints and Infatuated Yeshiva Boys in the New Israeli Religious Queer Cinema* in Journal of Modern Jewish Studies, Nov. 2011, Vol.10, Issue 3, 421-438. The first film in Israel that deals with a transgender MTF (male-to-female) is 'Eran Doron's *Names ba-Geshem* (*Melting in the Rain,* 2012). It recounts the story of a transgender teenager and her parents, the way they cope with their daughter's sexual identity and their journey from rejection to acceptance.

clear reference to the Zionist/Israeli militaristic ethos: Nadav Gal's *A Different War* (2003), and Mysh Rozanov's *Watch over Me* (2010). While Gal's film criticizes the Zionist militaristic ethos, it does not posits queer subjectivity as completely separate from it; rather, it defiantly allows for queer existence within this ethos, suggesting that queerness can be both practiced and contained within the Israeli society. Rozanov's film is a powerful critique of a violent, racist society that perceives queerness as an 'enemy' that needs to be eliminated; it shows that in its attempt to reject the 'old Jew,' the Zionist project might go a bit too far.

## *A Different War* (2003)

*A Different War* takes place in Giloh, a southern neighborhood of Jerusalem, during Al-Aqsa Intifada.[224] Suffering an ongoing fire from the nearby Palestinian town of Beit-Jala, the neighborhood residents are expected by the Israeli government to put up a courageous front in the face of this threat. Noni (Shim'on Amin) is a fourth grader, who lives in Giloh with his older brother Tsahi (Hillel Kapon) and their mother (Eveline Hago'el).[225] Noni's father is absent, as he was called up to the army as a reservist. The neighborhood kids play 'soldiers'; they climb on the security wall on the skirts of the neighborhood, and demonstratively shout "death to the Arabs" while standing on it, facing the Palestinian town. Tsahi is embarrassed by his little brother's 'sissyness' and enforces him to perform the wall 'ritual.' But Noni is afraid and refuses to take part in the manly spectacle. At school, Noni's teacher (Beatriz Hal) decides that he should play King David at the end-of-the-year theater play, but Noni secretly desires the role of Princess Michal.

Noni is mommy's sweetheart; a sensitive, gentle boy with 'feminine' attributes. He wears an earring on his left ear, secretly puts on his mother's make-up and tries on her négligée

[224] Also known as the 'second Intifada,' it was the second Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, taking place between 2000 and 2005. The first Intifada took place between 1987 and 1993. See also above, n. 212.
[225] The mother, as well as Noni's teacher, are not identified by name.

behind a locked bathroom door. At school, the boys bully him and his best friend is a girl. Tsahi is constructed as the 'man in the house,' replacing the absent father. He is constantly embarrassed by his little brother's sissyness and is afraid to be identified with it. Wearing his Chicago Bulls shirt, or being shirtless, his character is constructed as a complete opposite of that of Noni's. The mise-en-scène is abundant with similar binary imageries that posit gentle, 'feminine' subjectivity against a heroic, 'masculine' ethos. This is mainly evidenced by the end-of-the-year play and its Biblical connotations. The play is "David and Goliath – the Musical!" When the teacher determines that Noni would play King David, she encounters some resentment from other kids: "Noni is the weakest one in the class, why should he be the king?" During the rehearsal, Noni unwillingly declaims the text, acting a 'weak,' 'feminine' King David. The Teacher loses her patience: "this is a Philistine guard! Don't you understand that he kidnapped the princess and that his people are a threat to your kingdom?? There is no place for deliberations! Either you kill him or he would kill you!" In another rehearsal, Noni declares he "can't handle the spear" and asks to be replaced with someone else. When the teacher tells him he could be one of King David's soldiers, he says desperately: "but I don't want to be a soldier." To this, the teacher responds: "It's impossible, we need as many soldiers as we could get!" The Biblical heroic ethos of 'one against many' and 'kill or be killed' joins the Zionist/Israeli militaristic mindset of 'us against them.' Moreover, the kids are told they would perform in front of "the Prime Minister, who comes to visit Giloh and show his support." Thus, Noni's refusal to take part in this nationalist spectacle, which is fed by the Biblical and Zionist ethos, reinforces the binary consensus/otherness.

Noni's queerness functions as a disruptive force, rupturing the Zionist/Israeli narrative in which machismo, militarism, and heterosexism are intertwined.[226] During one of the rehearsals, wearing his King David's custom, he demonstrates to the 'princess' how to perform her dance. Tsahi notices this 'queer performance,' and angrily drags him out to the wall. There, he enforces Noni to climb and perform the 'manly ritual.' Noni climbs

[226] Cohen, 2012, 184.

the ladder, but when he reaches the top, Tsahi removes the ladder, daring him to shout "death to the Arabs." Shots are heard, and Noni starts crying. Tsahi regrets his action, puts back the ladder, and extends his hand to Noni. But Noni stands upright, and with his King David's custom on, he demonstratively performs the princess' dance on the wall. With his back to Beit Jala, facing Giloh, he is entirely absorbed in the movement, ignoring the shots around him. When he is done dancing, he gets down the ladder, gives Tsahi a defiant look and walks away while Tsahi bows his head in shame.

In *A Different War*, the 'feminine,' queer subject is not marginalized or let himself being ridiculed, nor does he adhere to the hegemonic ethos. Rather, by demonstratively performing his queerness facing the hegemony, actively refusing to take part in its militaristic discourse, he situates queerness as a legitimate option of sexual expression. Unlike Gutman's queerness, Gal's does not 'exile' itself into a secluded universe within the hegemony, nor is it 'punished' or pushed away from the hegemony like that of Fox. Gal's otherness claims its legitimate place within the hegemony without apologizing for it or adhering to the hegemonic ethos. Gal's 'war' is different from that of 'the conflict;' it is a struggle about the legitimacy of queerness as an equal alternative to existing, oppressing model of masculinity.

## *Watch over Me* (2010)

Sexuality, militarism, and oppositional models of masculinity are also at the core of Rozanov's *Watch over Me*. It tells the story of Eytan Niv (Guy Kapulnik), an IDF soldier who is a member of an elite combatant unit. In order to celebrate his admission into the unit upon a successful training period, he goes out with his peers Re'a (Raz Weiner) and Ze'evi (Omri Tessler) for a night out, after which, he would be awarded the unit pin and officially become one of its valuable members. Sitting at a bar in Tel Aviv, the soldiers encounter Shahar (Davidi Hoffman), a gay party promoter, who flirts with Ze'evi and blatantly checks Eytan out. Re'a and Ze'evi exchange racist and homophobic remarks, and command Eytan to kill Shahar, at the completion of his training. Eytan refuses,

saying it is illegal to kill an Israeli citizen. He runs after Shahar in order to warn him that he is in danger because the other soldiers want to kill him. It is a full moon night, and they end up on the beach, take their clothes off and kiss in the water. Suddenly, Eytan knocks Shahar down and bites him with his vampire fangs. Eytan's eyes become black, as the musical score pays homage to the theme of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.[227] Eytan sits by the seashore next to Shahar's corpse while Re'a and Ze'evi join him. Re'a hands him the unit pin — vampire wings surrounding two daggers[228] — and says: "Welcome to the unit, man!"

Rozanov's "political vampire movie," as he self-defines it,[229] is a powerful critique of the militaristic discourse in the Israeli society. As suggested by Hagin and Yosef (2012), "The film's blunt metaphor obviously suggests that the homophobic and racist Israeli army makes soulless bloodthirsty monsters of its recruits and that its deadly violence cannot be contained and will return to claim civilian lives in places like Tel Aviv."[230] However, Rozanov chooses to express his critique through a discourse that ties nationalism, militarism, and sexuality together. Positioning Israeli militarism against queerness, Rozanov's queer vampire film deals with Israeli masculinity and its relation to homosexuality. Furthermore, it seems that its critique does not only deal with Israeli militarism, but also with the Zionist discourse of 'muscular Judaism' that 'goes out of proportion' in the Israeli sphere, when the weak 'old Jew' transforms into an aggressive 'new Jew.'

[227] An American television series about a woman who is a 'vampire slayer.' It was aired in the United States from 1997 to 2003.
[228] The pin is designed as a variation on the pins awarded to IDF elite units, which have wings on them. It particularly resembles the pin of Shayetet 13, an elite naval commando, which has bat wings on it.
[229] Peri, 2012.
[230] Hagin and Yosef, Eds., 2012, 170-171. They also discuss *Watch over Me* (in relation to the Israeli queer film in a global context) as a "provocative and politically incorrect stance … [that] rejects the standard festival film formula of gay liberation."

The film posits the Israeli militaristic ethos against the free-spirit, liberal gay scene of Tel Aviv. The IDF soldiers are constructed as racist, sexist, and homophobic men; they jokingly call 'derogatory' names and phrases towards each other: "You are so Ashkenazi" … "You are an Arab" … "Your sister is an Arab" … "Your sister fucks with Arabs." When they realize what the nature of the party Shahar promotes is, they call it "a Coccinelle revelry."[231] The tension rises, as Shahar insolently flirts with Ze'evi ("would you like to join the revelry, I've heard elite combatants give the best head"), and thus, sentences himself to death. Ze'evi and Re'a decide that Eytan's final mission before 'graduation' would be the killing of Shahar. They all go to the club where the party takes place. Eytan does not understand: "What are we doing here?" he asks. Re'a responds: "What do you think, the enemies are only in Ramallah?" According to this mindset, homosexuals are equated with 'the Arabs', Israel's enemy. Moreover, when Eytan protests: "but he is an Israeli! A Jew!" Re'a responds: "[but] he gives head to Arabs in Bil'in![232] … Believe me, they [homosexuals] are worse than Arabs." Rozanov's critique links between a 'deviant' sexuality, the Arab as the Zionism's other, and Israeli leftists as the 'enemy.' All of these 'social elements' need to be eliminated in order to protect the Zionist project. In *Watch over Me*, the Zionist quest to get rid of the image of the weak, 'feminine' Jew is reinforced by the Israeli national militaristic agenda that views any non-consensual political discourse as a dangerous social element.[233]

Rozanov exaggerates his critique by using the vampire motif; it could be read as a metaphor for an inhuman, brutal aggressiveness, as opposed to a human sexuality. Eytan realizes that his homosexuality makes him 'less manly', and thus, he compensates this 'lack' with aggressiveness. At the bar, he does not take part in Re'a's and Ze'evi's racist and homophobic banter as it makes him uncomfortable. On the beach, he feels insecure, not sure if he should express his sexual 'deviancy,' as he knows that being a 'coccinelle'

[231] 'Coccinelle' is a derogatory name for 'feminine' homosexuals in Israel. See above, n. 126.
[232] Palestinian town west to Ramallah. Known for demonstrations held in it by Israeli and international left-wing groups against the erection of the Israeli West Bank barrier on its lands.
[233] This is also evident by the appearance of the soldiers, who are staying with their uniform on throughout the film.

is ‘not an option’ for him as an elite [Zionist] soldier. Moreover, he is hesitant to take his military uniform off and leaves his dog tag on his neck.[234] Yet, he gets naked and lets Shahar kiss him as he reciprocates with lust. But when he realizes he must eliminate his own ‘feminine’ element, he yells to Shahar: “I’m sorry!” and bites him with his fangs. Eytan puts his uniform back on, and when Re’a and Ze’evi arrive, the banter starts again: “I hope you didn’t suck his dick!” Ze’evi teases Eytan; this time, Eytan responds: “What do you think, everybody is like you, you Ahmad?” The “Arab” is now replaced with the common Arab name “Ahmad,” as a pejorative term. Eytan is now ‘officially’ one of the [heterosexual] ‘goodfellas.’ The homosexual/Arab is dead, the ‘feminine element’ is removed, and Eytan becomes a ‘real’ man.

## *Good Boys* (2005)

*Good boys* portrays the life routine of two teen male prostitutes: Meni (Daniel Efrat) and Tal (Yuval Raz). Both are focused on their survival in a harsh reality of Tel Aviv nightlife and its sex trade. Meni is a father to a toddler, who was born after a one night stand he had with Mika (Nili Tseruyah), a drug addict prostitute. He has an ‘adoptive mother,’ a transgender prostitute named Grace (Gila Goldstein), with whom he consults and finds compassion. Tal sells drugs, and occasionally mugs other sex workers for an ‘easy money’ (one of them is Grace herself). The two rent boys meet each other at an elderly client’s house, where they perform a sex act for him.[235] They fall in love, and desperately try to hold to it in the arduous reality around them.

The film depicts a variety of queer identities as legitimate options of existence in a heterosexual society. Meni and Tal transform from ‘good boys’ to ‘good men’ with a masculine subjectivity that challenges the heterosexual, hegemonic Israeli model of

[234] When Eytan bites Shahar, the dog tag is covered with blood. This imagery alludes to the connection between nationalism and aggressiveness.
[235] This scene corresponds with a similar scene in Gutman’s *Drifting*, when Robi ‘auditions’ Effi and Ezri, asking them to perform a sexy dance and oral sex in front of him.

masculinity. Operating within an emotionless, commercial environment of give-and-take, they don't "believe in love." Meni 'promotes' himself as a 'consumer product,' sells his body for the highest offer, and does not let himself get emotionally involved. First, he refers to his daughter as "the mistake of my life," and tries to hand her off. But once he falls in love with Tal, he softens and takes responsibility for her. He gives shelter to 'Eran (Uri Urian), a runaway homosexual teen who has nowhere to go and tries to rescue Mika from a hopeless cycle of drugs and prostitution. In the last scene, Meni, with his daughter on his arms, and 'Eran stand with their back to the camera and watch the sunrise; their queer familial unit, consists of three marginal subjects, is given a positive outlook to the future.

Tal's character also transforms throughout the plot from an exploited object into an independent subject. One night he encounters Lior (Tomer Ilan), a client who turns out to be a police officer. Lior handcuffs Tal to his bed, rapes him, and invites another man to do the same. That man is the homeland security minister, who pays Lior for raping "young boys." Lior treats Tal as "his whore," and when Tal wonders why a police officer would act as a pimp, while he is supposed to help hopeless citizens, Lior responds: "because you are a trash, nobody cares what is going on with you!" In reaction to that, Tal takes his own destiny into his hands, stabs Lior in his neck and sets himself free, saying aloud: "*I* [do] care what happens to me, *I* do." By killing the character who represents the establishment, Tal constructs his individual queer subjectivity. In order to gain equality and recognition as a subject within the Israeli society, he does not eliminate his own 'feminine' attributes as Eytan does in *Watch over Me*. Rather, Tal stands up against the violent masculinity of the hegemony and kills Lior. While Rozanov 'allows' the establishment to eliminate the queer subject, Hochner 'allows' the queer subject to eliminate the establishment, and thus, to construct queerness that undermines the militaristic, heterosexual society.

The characters of Mika and Grace could also be read as destabilizing the oppressive Zionist narrative. Hochner's Mika brings to mind Moshe Shamir's Mika from *Hu halakh*

*ba-sadot* (*He walked through the fields*).[236] In this 1948 generation novel,[237] Mika is a Holocaust survivor who does not wish to take part in the Zionist project. She immigrates to a kibbutz in Israel, but does not acclimatize, refuses to work for the collective, and is opposed to the militaristic views of her Sabra boyfriend, Uri, who joins the Palmah.[238] When she discovers she is pregnant, she wishes to have an abortion, but Uri's parents try to convince her to keep the baby. Once Uri dies in a heroic deed during training,[239] his parents, yearning for a trace, are determined to stop Mika from having an abortion. The novel ends with Mika's naïve, optimistic anticipation for peaceful life with her new family, without knowing that Uri is killed. Thus, Shamir's Mika is 'drawn' into the Zionist project, merely because she carries its offspring.[240] On the contrary, Hochner's Mika constructs an opposite narrative. She is trapped in an endless destructive cycle. On one hand, she needs to support herself and her daughter, but, on the other hand, she wishes to abandon her so that she could work. When Mika tries to abandon her daughter in the middle of the Tel Aviv promenade, she starts crying and Mika utters: "I hate you!" Mika cannot take part in the 'healthy,' reproductive Zionist project, but rather prefers to give up her motherhood and be drown into misery. Doped and drugged, she leaves her child with Meni, asking him to hand her to social services, and goes to work in a brothel.[241]

Grace, the motherly transgender prostitute who takes Meni under her arms, undermines the hegemonic masculine model in her own way. When Tal robs her in a dark alley, she swears and yells: "You maniac, I am more a man than you are!" When Meni takes care of her after this incident, she tells him she wants to "cut it," [i.e., her penis] in order to become a "whole woman." Grace is well aware of her queer hybridity, while she uses it (i.e. her body) to earn money that actually would help her erase her queerness. She does

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[236] Shamir, 1947.
[237] See above, n. 155.
[238] See above, n. 151.
[239] He throws himself over an explosive grenade in order to save his peers' lives.
[240] Mendelson Maoz and Gertz, Eds., 2010.
[241] Ramati, Unpublished.

not deny her marginality, but rather uses it to her advantage. Thus, she establishes her 'feminine' subjectivity within a heteronormative mainstream society.[242]

Objectification of the female body (mainly one that occurs in the sexual realm) and the notion of 'masculine unity' as opposed to 'feminine plurality,' are concepts central to feminist theory. As Laura Mulvey (1975) shows, the unconscious mind of patriarchy and the heteronormative codes of 20th century mainstream Western cinema construct the cinematic image via the male gaze which objectifies the female body, and thus, view it as an erotic object.[243] The image of the woman is constructed as an object that is 'being observed', while the man is constructed as a subject who is an 'observer.' Luce Irigaray (1985) asserts that the female body is not a one, firm, defined phallic subject (like the male organ/body), but rather a penetrated, non-coherent, amorphous object.[244] As Connell (1995) mentions in her discussion about hegemonic masculinity, the male body is conceived, on one hand, as impenetrable, and, on the other hand, as the one that penetrates. The coupling of muscular physique with sexual control is the basis to the notion that hegemonic masculinity implies power and control. Thus, men who voluntarily give up their 'bodily coherence,' letting other men penetrate them, 'give up' their masculinity. Discussing Freud's definition of "the sexual" as "an aptitude of the defeat of power by pleasure, the human subject's potential for a jouissance[245] in which the subject is momentarily undone," Bersani (1988) asserts that "to be penetrated is to abdicate power."[246] Thus, jouissance is "self-shattering in that it disrupts the ego's coherence and dissolves its boundaries."[247]

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[242] Interestingly enough, maybe as a homage to both Gutman and 'Ada Valeri-Tal, who played Apollonia Goldstein (the transgender bar hostess and cabaret singer) in *Bar 51*, Hochner chose to cast Gila Goldstein, a well-known transgender 'celebrity' and a gay icon in Tel Aviv, for Grace's character. Apollonia's character in *Bar 51* was based on Gila Goldstein's image herself. See http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/124/012.html, and also above, p. 4 and p. 16.
[243] Mulvey, 1975.
[244] Irigaray, 1985.
[245] French for 'enjoyment', or 'pleasure.' Also refers to sexual pleasure, or sexual orgasm.
[246] Bersani, 1988, 212.
[247] Bersani, 1995, 100-101.

In *Good Boys*, it is the male body of Meni and Tal that is either self-objectified or being objectified by other men. Hochner's protagonists sell their body as a 'product,' show it off to their clients (as well as to the film's spectatorship) and are sexually exploited by them. But as the plot progresses, not only do they defy the construction of hegemonic masculinity, but they also transform from powerless objects into independent subjects. The film coerces its [heterosexual] spectatorship to objectify the male body while it also allows its protagonists to gain a confident queer subjectivity. Thus, not only that *Good Boys* challenges the patriarchic, binary model of masculine subjectivity/feminine objectivity, it also proposes alternative models to the heterosexual Israeli masculinity.[248]

*Good Boys* is situated on the scale between Gutman and Fox; between a presentation of homosexual life as rooted in a miserable reality with no [reproductive] future, and their normalized presentation as an organic part of some fictitious [mainstream] Israeli agenda. The film brings back Gutman's depressive homosexual existence to Israeli cinema, while it undermines the 'rosy' normalcy of Fox.[249] Hochner does not 'submit' to the Gutmanian somber burden of homosexuality with no future, nor does he join Fox's consensual, assimilative agenda. He posits his alternative in-between these two ends. *Good Boys* portrays a queer imagery which is a synthesis of Gutman's and Fox's imageries; a synthesis that accepts queer existence in all its diversity.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the change in treatment of homosexuality by Gutman and Fox could be indeed characterized as a change from a non-conformist point of view to a conservative one. On one hand, Gutman portrays a harsh inner world of a suffering individual who cannot fit in and thus, creates his own secluded space. In *Drifting* and *Bar 51* he prefers to stay true to his emotions, depicting an enclosed universe where queer people conduct

[248] In the same way, Grace also self-objectifies herself in order to transform herself from an object to a subject (i.e. "whole woman").
[249] Simon, 2005.

their lives totally separate from the heterosexual society around them. In *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*, he provokes the hegemony a bit more, as he demands that it would 'listen to his music.' But still, he portrays the homosexual as 'afflicted.' Fox, on the other hand, expressed a subversive approach in *Time Off*, positioning subversive homosexual subjectivity at the heart of the Israeli establishment, but quickly 'regressed' to a homonormative, assimilative agenda that eliminates any traces of queerness in order to be 'absorbed' and accepted by the heterosexual society. More than a decade after *Time Off*, Yossi and Jagger are again at the heart of the establishment, but their homosexuality is either erased or sacrificed on the altar of Zionism. After yet another decade, Yossi is still in the closet, Tom is 'partially' in the closet, and both are 'exiled' away from the hegemony.

Apparently, the change of course of the queer Israeli cinema since Gutman's times seems as an advancement. Indeed, political achievements of the gay community, together with the increased visibility of homosexual subjectivity in the media and social discourse, made possible the appearance of Fox's films and their wide acceptance by the mainstream Israeli public. But as we have seen, these same films that are partially responsible for that public visibility are not tolerant towards their own protagonists' queerness. On the contrary, they are rather conservative and assimilative, and could even be read as racist and homophobic. I argue that, in fact, Fox's ideological assimilative agenda goes hand in hand with the same political achievements that promote, and are fed by the political agenda of 'being like any other nation.' In an interview with Pablo Utin (2008) about his 'directive choices,' Fox says: "I ask myself, 'what could you say, and [make sure] they would still accept you'?"[250] Thus, it seems that his 'cinematic' wish to experience homosexual subjectivity and still be 'accepted' (read: 'respected') by the mainstream society, correlates with, and serves the actual political discourse of his milieu: homonormative gay men who strive to be 'just like anybody else.' In another interview, with Ari Karpel (2013), Fox states that watching Gutman's *Drifting* at the age

[250] Utin, 2008, 162.

of 17, "he was disturbed that the character was on the fringes of society, cruising for sex in public parks," and he thought to himself, "… I don't want to be gay if that's what gay means … I started my first short film with an Israeli flag because I fought in a war, I know the Israeli songs by heart … I am not an Amos Gutman character. I don't live in these underground bars. I'm gay, and I'm a part of Israel."[251] Fox, I argue, situates himself as a proud gay man who takes part in the 'Israeliana' while yielding to its assimilative agenda. He is so scared to be "on the fringes of society," that he becomes part of the mainstream, even at the expense of his queerness.

Although the different points of view of Gutman and Fox could be merely read as different, objective possibilities of representation, they actually have do to with the directors' personal history, as well as with the political reality of their time. Fox was born in New York to a Jewish-American family, but immigrated with his family to Israel as a toddler and was raised as an "Israeli man" from "a good family," where "not enlisting was not even an option."[252] Gutman, on the other hand, a son of a Holocaust survivor, emigrated from Hungary at the age of seven, and was the "[European] polite new immigrant with a foreign accent" at school.[253] He testifies on himself that he "was a lousy athlete and a lousy soldier … [and] failed in all things normative."[254] It is not surprising, then, that the personal background of these two directors has a direct impact on their treatment of queerness. As we have seen, Gutman strives to 'prove that he exists, that he talks, that he is worth something.' But he could not have done that in his time without erasing his queerness and being part of the collective. While Gutman was rejected both by the gay and mainstream communities of his time, and Fox chooses to join the mainstream at the expense of his queerness, Gal and Hochner do not wish to join the hegemonic discourse; they rather provocatively challenge it by presenting their queerness 'in its face.' Nino, Meni, Tal and 'Eran demand acknowledgement in their status as queer

[251] Karpel, 2013.
[252] Ibid., 165.
[253] Shamgar, 1986, 28. See also above, n. 89.
[254] Ibid.

subjects who equally have the right for sexual self-expression as others in the society. Moreover, they demand to be equal subjects of that society without taking part in its militaristic, masculine discourse.

## Conclusion: A Different War, a Different Sex

In an article titled: "Calm down, the homo dies at the end," Yotam Reuveny (2005) criticizes the "idyllic representations of homosexuality in the Israeli popular culture which do not reflect the current Israeli reality, but rather the reality within a narrow domain in Tel Aviv."[255] Reuveny's criticism points out that the proliferation of positive, idyllic imageries of homosexual men in Israeli TV shows, cinema, and literature is untruthful to reality. He claims that the acceptance of gay men in Israel, both in popular culture and in reality, does not indicate a genuine change which is a consequence of a profound social process; it rather reconfirms the "homosexual stereotypes of the Israeli [heterosexual] majority."[256] Moreover, Reuveny asserts that representations of homosexuality in the Israeli media are not merely idyllic, but utopic. He claims that there is a "complete discrepancy between the representation and [that which is] represented."

Publishing his criticism parallel to the screening of Hochner's *Good Boys*,[257] and apparently without being aware of it and its alternative agenda, Reuveny uses the works of Fox and Gutman to illustrate his observation. He asserts that Fox's agenda is assimilative and that it represents only a minority of 'self-identified' gay men who 'hold cultural authority,' and believe they represent the majority. According to this agenda, "the homo is an IDF combatant soldier, [he] eats hummus in pitta,[258] watches Maccabi soccer games,[259] and serve in the military as a reservist." Bar 51, on the other hand, "is a closed homosexual universe. No one goes out from there to serve in the army, and no one is interested in soccer."[260] Indeed, we have seen above the two ends of the scale. Fox

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[255] Reuveny, 2005.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Reuveny published his article in April 15, 2005, whereas *Good Boys* premiered two weeks earlier.
[258] A popular dish in Israel and other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries.
[259] 'Maccabi Tel Aviv.' A famous soccer team, named after the Maccabees, who were Jewish rebels against Hellenization in the 2nd Century BC. Many Jewish sport clubs in Israel and around the world are named 'Maccabees.'
[260] Reuveny, 2005.

celebrates his 'normal' queerness amidst the Israeli mainstream, while Gutman mourns his 'abnormal' queerness, confined within his own self-enacted boundaries. Although Gutman's homosexuality is more 'agonized upon' than celebrated, it does not erase itself in order to be part of the 'normal' world around it. Fox erases his own queerness in order to become part of the heterosexual Zionist project. By striving to be "like everybody else," he does it at the expense of his queerness; for him, homosexuality could be expressed only outside of the Zionist boundaries.[261] The same way Boyarin reads Freud's Zionism as outing itself as homophobic, one could read Fox's homonormativity as internalized homophobia.[262] In this analogy, Fox tries to pass as heterosexual/normal. He wants to stay homosexual, but at the same time, to transform himself in a way that his homosexuality would become invisible, so he could take part in the Zionist project. Moreover, he tries to 'pass as Zionist;' on one hand, by reproducing the Zionist practice of "being like all other nations," and on the other hand, by practicing queer life in a land 'void of locals' (Lebanon and Egypt). Gutman, on the other hand, does not give up on his queerness, and enacts his own 'diaspora within Zion;' a separate cosmos that exists apart from the Zionist world around it. In *Drifting*, he brings into it other others: male prostitutes and Palestinians. Bar 51, similarly to Saint Hieronymus monastery, operates as an enclosed cosmos, separately and oblivious to the 'normal' outer world around it. Gutman does not try to pass, but to be authentic. He stays faithful to his queerness, but in order to do so, he has to 'exile' himself to his own existential world.[263]

As I showed above, the relationship between gay Israeli cinema and the Zionist ideology of 'being like all other nations,' could be analyzed through 'Boyarin's equation,' as it posits Jewishness and homosexuality against the normalizing Zionist project. In *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*, Gutman posits queerness, otherness, and diasporic existence against

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[261] See also Kobi Niv's interpretation to Fox's *Walk on Water* for similar analogy (Niv, 2011).
[262] Boyarin, 2000, 79.
[263] See also above, p. 65, in regard to Blaban's passing in *Hide & Seek*, and p. 75, regarding Ashraf's "passing rituals" in *The Bubble.*

heterosexuality, normalcy and the hegemonic Zionism/Israeliness. In *Bar 51*, as Reuveny asserts, Gutman's "homosexual protagonists are exiled, [they are] immigrants … [who are] suspicious like Jews or Gypsies within the societies they live in."[264] Fox's directive choices in both *Yossi* and *Yossi & Jagger*, parallel homosexual practice with Zionism's other (Arab, Levantine); hence, with the abnormal. This is also evident in *Walk on Water*, as homosexual subjectivity is equated with the German and the Palestinian protagonists who are 'exiled' both from Israel and the cinematic plot itself. Wolman's *Hide & Seek* parallels between homosexuality as a sexual deviation and the diversion from the Zionist project and Jewish nationalism. In *Crows*, Menachemi portrays a Gutmanian cosmos which is negated with the normative Zionist mentality around it, while Gal's *A Different War* depicts a queer King David who is not afraid to speak up and establish his queerness within a militaristic Israeli normalcy. Queer subjectivity is also established in Hochner's *Good Boys*, as the hegemony is defeated, and its normative masculinity is defied. The parallel of homosexual practice with Zionism's enemy, be it an 'Arab from Ramallah' or a 'queer Jew,' is also evident in Rozanov's *Watch over Me*, as Israeli society 'feminine elements' are removed in order to practice militaristic masculinity in a racist, homophobic society.

While Rozanov criticizes the racist, homophobic mainstream Israeli discourse, one could identify racist and homophobic undertones in some of the Israeli gay cinematic discourse itself. We have mentioned above the internalized homophobia and the disavowal of homosexual subjectivity in works by Gutman, Fox, and Wolman.[265] As far as racist elements, there is, for example, an ambivalence in *Himmo, King of Jerusalem* in regard to Asa's racist name calling of Marko as "Baboon." By surfacing the ethnic tension and the binary Ashkenazi/Sephardi, Asa, the queer Ashkenazi, indicates his ethnic superiority over the heterosexual Sephardi. As if he is the oppressed who channels his frustration

[264] Reuveny, 2005.
[265] See also Niv (2011) on Fox's internal homophobia in *Yossi & Jagger*, *Walk on Water*, and *The Bubble*.

onto his 'own' others.[266] In this regard, this directive choice, as well as the dichotomy of inferior/superior music, is similarly patronizing as that of Fox. We have encountered both in *Yossi* and *Yossi & Jagger* the same positioning of inferior/superior music as an expression of the ethnic superiority of Ashkenazim over Mizrahim. This binary brings to mind Wolman's and Gutman's treatment of the Arab characters in *Hide & Seek* and *Drifting* respectively. Although it seems that Arab queer characters are equally positioned with their Jewish queer counterparts in those films, in fact, they are not given any identity whatsoever. They are nameless, hardly speak, and their faith is deadly. Balaban's lover is killed, while Balaban continues to live, and the Arabs invited to Robi's apartment (presumably for paid sex) are marked as 'terrorists.'[267] A similar ethnic and homophobic silencing practice is evident in Fox's treatment of his Arab homosexual protagonists. In *Walk on Water*, Rafik, the homosexual Palestinian, is not allowed to express his political views on 'the conflict,' and is constructed as the 'enemy.'[268] In *The Bubble*, Ashraf is constructed as an 'oriental Arab,' who goes under 'gay-ization' and 'jew-ization' process by his Israeli friends.[269] Moreover, similarly to Balaban's nameless Arab lover and Robi's nameless 'terrorists,' also Rafik and Ashraf are not given any history or personal biography.[270]

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[266] This, in addition to emphasizing Asa's otherness, might be another reason why Gutman leaves Franji's character out of the party; so that he could let Asa insult Marko while Franji is not present. See also p. 64 above.

[267] See also n. 137 above in regard to Wolman's casting choice of Musabah Muhammad Halwani as Balaban's Arab lover in *Hide & Seek*.

[268] In a telling scene, Eyal, the Mossad agent, shuts his car window in Rafik's face, not allowing him to complete his words during their conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[269] Morag, 2010, 943-944.

[270] It should be noted, though, that as mentioned above, in both *Drifting* and *Hide & Seek*, biracial homosexual relationships are used as a critique of the heteronormative national ideology. Robi invites one of the Arab 'terrorists' to fuck him, and thus renounces his position as a 'white' Jew/Israeli, and challenges the national discourse. The relationship between Balaban and his Arab lover is constructed as a threat to the Zionist project, both sexually and ideologically. See more on the "racism of Ashkenazi homosexuals" (i.e. Gutman and Fox) in Yosef, 2010, 137-143, and on the representation of Palestinian men in *Drifting* and *Hide & Seek* in Yosef, 2004, 132-138.

As we have seen above, some of the very first Israeli films that deal with homosexuality (made in the early 1980s) were banned from screening on national TV.[271] While Wolman's *Hide & Seek* (1979) was an independent film which did not seek any institutional funding, Gutman's *Drifting* (1983) was rejected by the "Fund for the Encouragement of Quality Israeli Film Production," and was eventually produced with the help of personal funding.[272] When Gutman was invited to screen *Drifting* at the Montreal World Film Festival in 1983, the local Israeli consular office applied diplomatic pressure to cancel the screening, claiming that it "did not meet the standards of taste and quality which should be expected of Israeli films as reflective of the modern Jewish state."[273] This national mainstream agenda was still practiced in 2005, when Hochner asked the Israeli Film Fund, (previously the "Fund for the Encouragement of Quality Israeli Film Production") for financial support in order to make *Good Boys* technically suitable for screening in international film festivals.[274] This time, the response was that the film is "not appropriate."[275] When Hochner applied for funding from the Rabinovich Foundation, another institutionally supported fund for Israeli cinema, their response was that the film is "not Israeli."[276] Thus, it is no wonder that a film such as Rozanov's *Watch over Me* presents a valid critique even in 2010, when it seems that both the Israeli mainstream public and the establishment embrace homosexual subjectivity as long as it carries out homonormative agenda.

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[271] See above, p. 67.
[272] Cohen, 2012, 77-78.
[273] Lazarus, 1983.
[274] Independently produced, *Good Boys* cost was $500. See http://www.yairhochner.com/goodboys/index_iw.htm
[275] Halperin, 2005.
[276] Ibid. A similar critique was expressed by Nachman Ingber of *Himmo, King of Jerusalem*. In an interview with Kotser (1997), he argues that the film "does not have a deep connection with Jerusalem or with the term 'Palmah generation.'" See also above, n. 151.

In one of the scenes in *Good Boys*, 'Eran sings a lullaby to Meni's little girl, as he tries to put her to bed. It is Yona Wallach's[277] poem *Shir Kdamshnati* (*Presleep Poem*), which talks about a 'different sex:'[278]

*They hint to us that there's different sex.*
*It's good someone knows about it.*
*If there's different sex, br*
*ing it here and we'll know it we'll sp*
*eak openly, there is or there isn't.*[279]

While Yossi, Jagger and Tom practice their queerness and gain visibility by subordinating their sexuality to heteronormative agenda, Robi, Apollonia, and Maggie enclose themselves within their own private world, alienating themselves from the mainstream society. Others construct their queerness in a subversive, rebellious way. Their battle is different from that of the hegemony, as they defy the national project. Balaban refuses to take part in the consensual militaristic struggle, while Noni fights his own war, which is not part of 'the conflict.' Asa insists that his music should be heard and listened to while Meni and his friends challenge the heteronormative sexual politics of an aggressive and dysfunctional society. Each one of these protagonists takes part in a different war, in order to express their own 'different sex.'

[277] Yona Wallach (1984-1985). An Israeli poet who was self-identified as bisexual. Many of her poems "deconstruct the binary binding of sex/gendered Hebrew" (Leap and Boellstorff, Eds., 2004, 120).
[278] *Presleep Poem*, also known as *Seks Akher* (*Different Sex*), was written by Wallach in 1969, and composed by Ilan Virtsberg in 1982. In 1997 it was performed and recorded by the Israeli transgender singer Dana International, and thus was given a new queer meaning. See also Padva, 2006.
[279] Translation by Linda Zisquit (in Wallach, 1996, 34). Others, such as Barged and Chyet (in Arkin and Shollar, 1989, 1018) and Cohen (2003, 66-67), translate it as "another" sex.

## Appendix A: Amos Gutman's filmography

- *Premyerot Ḥozrot (Returning Premieres)*, 1976 – Short feature
- *Maḳom Baṭuaḥ (Safe Place),* 1977 – Short feature
- Sipure Badim (*Fabrications*; literally: 'Stories about Fabrics'), 1978 – Short Documentary[280]
- *Nagu'a* (*Drifting*; literally: 'Afflicted'), 1981 – Short feature
- *Nagu'a* (*Drifting*; literally: 'Afflicted'), 1983 – Long feature
- *Bar 51* (*Bar 51*), 1985 – Long feature
- *Ḥimo, melekh Yerushalayim* (*Himmo, King of Jerusalem*), 1987 – Long feature
- *Ḥesed Muſla* (*Amazing Grace*), 1992 – Long feature

280 This short film was done for and broadcast on Israeli TV only once, and was slashed by critics. Since then Gutman had omitted it from his official filmography and it was never shown again during his life time. It was rediscovered in the Israeli TV archives in 2010, was publicly screened only once in December 2010, and retrospectively got much more positive critique. See Cohen, 2012, 207, n. 1, and also http://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/1.1234928.

## Appendix B: Eytan Fox's filmography

- *After (Time off)*, 1990 – Short feature
- *Shirat ha-Sirena (Song of the Siren)*, 1994 – Long feature[281]
- *Florentin (Florentine)*, 1997 – TV series
- *Ba'al Ba'al Lev (Gotta Have Heart)*, 1997 – Short feature
- *Yossi ve-Jager (Yossi & Jagger)*, 2002 – Long feature
- *La-lekhet 'al ha-Mayim (Walk on water)*, 2004 – Long feature
- *Ha-Bu'ah (The Bubble)*, 2006 – Long feature
- *Tamid oto halom (Mary Lou)*, 2009 – TV series
- *Ha-Sipur shel Yossi (Yossi)*, 2012 – Long feature
- *Bananot (Cupcakes)*, 2013 – Long feature
- *Mishpahah Tovah* (*A Good Family*), 2014 – TV series (writer)

[281] *Song of the Siren* is an adaptation of a book by same title by Israeli author and journalist Irit Linur, published in Israel in 1991.

## Appendix C: Hebrew Abstract


### תקציר

# מלחמה אחרת, סקס אחר

## פוליטיקה של זהויות הומוסקסואליות בקולנוע ישראלי

## ויחסה אל האתוס הציוני



אורי קולודני, MA

האוניברסיטה של טקסס באוסטין, 2014

מנחה: קרן גרוּמברג



תיזה זו עוסקת בפוליטיקה של זהויות הומוסקסואליות ויחסה אל האתוס הציוני, כפי שהיא מצטיירת במספר סרטים ישראליים. בעיקרה, מנתחת התיזה שתי נקודות השקפה שונות של שני במאי קולנוע אשר ההומוסקסואליות שלהם משחקת תפקיד מרכזי בעבודתם הקולנועית – עמוס גוטמן ואיתן פוֹקס – ובוחנת את הדרך בה הם תופסים את נסיון החיים ההומוסקסואלי שלהם. בניתוח סרטיו של גוטמן *נגוע* (1983), *בר 51* (1985), *וחימו, מלך ירושלים* (1987), אני מראה איך הוא מסתגר ביקום קווירי משל עצמו ודורש במפגיע את ההכרה ביקום זה, בשעה שהוא מוציא אל הפועל את האֲמיתוּת (אותנטיות) שלו בנפרד מן השיח השליט. לעומת זאת, הפוליטיקה המינית בסרטיו של פוֹקס *יוסי וג'אגר* (2002) *והסיפור של יוסי* (2012), גורסת שגברים הומוסקסואלים צריכים לחבוֹר למרחב הלאומי השליט תוך כדי התעלמות מן האֲחֵרוּת שלהם. מכיוון שהסרטים הנידונים משתמשים בסִיפֵּר (נרטיב) הציוני ובזהות הלאומית של גיבוריהם כנקודות התייחסות, נידונות שתי גישות אלה בהתייחסות לאתוס הציוני. מספר סרטים אחרים בעלי נקודות התייחסות דומות מנותחים גם כן, כולל עבודות של דן וולמן (*מחבואים*, 1979), איילת מנחמי (*עורבים*, 1987), נדב גל (*מלחמה אחרת*, 2003), יאיר הוֹכנר (*ילדים טובים*, 2005), ומיש רוזֶנוב (*שְׁמור עלי*, 2010). סרטים נוספים של פוֹקס נידונים בקצרה אף הם: *אַפֶּטֶר* (1990), *ללכת על המים* (2004) *והבועה* (2006). בדיון על האתוס הציוני אני מדגיש את הרעיון של דניאל בּוֹיארין בנוגע להקבלה בין יהוּדיוּת, קווּיריוּת, וחֲריגוּת. אני מראה איך הכמיהה הציונית לנורמליוּת (המשאלה 'להיות עם ככל העמים') והזיהוי של ההומוסקסואל כחריג, מוטבעים בייצוגים הקולנועיים.

הניתוח בתיזה זו מבוסס בעיקרו על תיאוריה קווירית, בשעה שזו שואפת לערער על ההיפוכים המַגדריים של ההטרוסקסואליות, לכוננם מחדש, ולהראות איך השיח השליט מבוסס על אותם היפוכים מוגבלים. היא מאתגרת כל שיח פוליטי אשר כופה פרקטיקות הטרונורמטיביות על ידי הצגת ההטרוסקסואליות כטִבעית. על ידי הבלטת שוּלִיוּת קווירית בטקסט הקולנועי, ויצירת זיקה בינה לבין יסודות מן התיאוריה הפוסט-קולוניאלית וניתוחה את האחר, מראה תיזה זו כיצד השיח של הפוליטיקה של זהויות הומוסקסואליות בקולנוע ישראלי חותר תחת האתוס הציוני, או חובֵר אליו.

## Appendix D: Hebrew Title Page

**מלחמה אחרת, סקס אחר**

**פוליטיקה של זהויות הומוסקסואליות בקולנוע ישראלי**

**ויחסה אל האתוס הציוני**

**מאת**

**אורי קולודני, BA; MSIS**

**תיזה**

מוגשת לסגל של בית הספר ללימודים גבוהים של

האוניברסיטה של טקסס באוסטין

כמילוי חלקי

של הדרישות

עבור התואר

**מוסמך במדעי הרוח**

**האוניברסיטה של טקסס באוסטין**

**דצמבר 2014**

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