Tiny Body, Major Occupation

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The aim of this study is to explore one of the most elusive, yet significant, spectacles made possible by the colonial situation in Israel/Palestine. It occurs in the ephemeral time-and-space in which the paths of Palestinian children and Israeli adults cross the former begging for money, cleaning windshields, and peddling wares, and the latter being passersby. The children are known as ‘children of the junctions’. In this article I will discuss the gap inherent in the surprising appearance of such tiny bodies contrasted with the large bodies of adults in open public spaces teeming with large vehicles. These are the tiny bodies of an underclass, of Palestinian non-citizens who are, despite everything, present in the Israeli space from which they are meant to be totally excluded. As I will argue, the tiny dimensions of these children serve as striking testimony to Palestinians’ complete otherness in the eyes of Israelis, in this case taken to the extreme. I will explore the reactions of horror/fascination evoked by the spectacle, reactions which expose its diverse contexts including class-related, economic and political disproportions of power. As I will illustrate, the presence of these children also undermine these power relations, which evokes questions as to their validity. On the backdrop of the spectacle of the children of the junctions, I will draw on an analogy of the freak shows displayed in the metropolins of Western Europe and North America from the 19th to mid-20th century.

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